A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF LEISURE AMONG MEXICANS IN THE STATE
OF GUERRERO, MEXICO AND MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS FROM GUERRERO IN
THE UNITED STATES

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to (a) Examine the existence and the understanding of the concept of leisure among Mexicans from the state of Guerrero, Mexico and among Mexican immigrants from Guerrero, residing in Chicago, IL with specific emphasis on age, gender, and marital status; (b) Identify forces that shape the experience of leisure among Mexicans from the state of Guerrero and among Mexican immigrants from the state of Guerrero, residing in Chicago, IL; and (c) Identify changes in the understanding of the concept and the meaning of leisure, and in leisure behavior among Mexicans from Guerrero caused by immigration to the United States. In order to collect data for this study, 14 interviews with adult residents of Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico and 10 interviews with adult first generation immigrants from Guerrero to Chicago, Illinois were conducted in 2008 and 2009. The findings of the study revealed that the understanding and the meaning of leisure, *tiempo libre,* among this population was largely similar to the Western notion of leisure, as it was considered to be a subset of time, free from obligations and compulsory activities. Leisure was also considered a state of being where the individual is free to participate in the activity, desires to participate in the activity, and strives to obtain positive outcomes from participation. The way the immigrants from Guerrero defined and understood leisure did not seem to change with immigration. The important role that family played in the lives of both people in Guerrero and Mexican immigrants in the U.S. had a major impact on their leisure activities. Leisure was planned mostly around the family and each member of the family had a pre-established role depending on his or her age and gender. Some of the activities done in the company of family members included family gatherings where the adults could talk with each other and where the children could interact during an unstructured play. In both locations family factors, economic conditions, social influences, religion, and safety were the major forces that shaped leisure behavior of the participants. The main differences between interviewees residing in Guerrero, Mexico and in Chicago, IL were related to the feeling of having more freedom and choices with regards to leisure activities and increased participation in structured leisure activities after immigration. On the other hand, long work hours, physically strenuous employment, and lack of knowledge of the available leisure options constrained leisure of Mexican immigrants in Chicago. Participants believed that although their incomes in the U.S. were higher than in Mexico, leisure activities were more expensive in the U.S. and, thus, money was a major constraint on leisure. Picnicking and family gatherings were among the most popular activities in both Mexico and the United States, yet they took a new dimension after immigration. Because many immigrants had come to the United States by themselves or with few friends or family members, leisure occasions were used to rebuild social networks. Children and adolescents also had more after school opportunities, which, in turn, allowed parents, and especially mothers, to have more free time for themselves. Women were able to participate in more individual leisure activities mainly because they believed American society was more open to gender equality. However, family roles still played a vital role in their personal lives and women were still expected to put family as their top priority.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

Immigrants are not something new to the American social, political and economic system. For example, Irish, Italians, Jews, and Germans have immigrated into this country and tended to integrate to what is today known as American mainstream for centuries. Yet, this integration, or as many social scientists call assimilation (e.g., Alba & Nee, 1997; Gordon, 1964), did not come without confrontation with what in their time was mainstream Anglo-Saxon Protestant society. Most newcomers were faced with some sort of resistance to their culture, language, and customs. Then, after two or three generations, immigrant children would lose their home customs and values to that of mainstream society. Hispanics today face the customary resistance of American society to their culture, language, customs, and even race. Yet, many theorists believe this group of immigrants faces a new era of assimilation, which does not demand conformation to the Anglo-Saxon American mainstream core values. As Greeley (1974) explained, many cultures practice *ethnogenesis*, which is very similar to Gordon's concept of *cultural pluralism* and to Keefe and Padilla's (1987) process of *selective acculturation*. It involves some immigrant groups retaining certain home customs and values, but still acquiring many customs and values of mainstream American society.

Hispanics are only one of a number of ethnic minorities practicing cultural pluralism. As argued by Yo (1995) and Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), many groups (e.g., Asians and Poles) have retained certain traditional traits, but also have integrated some customs and values of American mainstream society. If ethnic groups do practice cultural pluralism or ethnogenesis, than it is of paramount importance to conduct cross-

cultural studies to understand to what extent current leisure theories apply to immigrant groups that are a part of the American ethnic mosaic. Additionally, cross-cultural studies of leisure can test new grounds and examine the understanding of the concept and the meanings of leisure among non-Western populations (Walker & Deng, 2003/2004) and the changes in the practice of leisure related to immigration. As Stodolska (2000) also noted, "studying [minority groups] not only enables us to investigate the validity of mainstream theories, but also provides the opportunity to detect relationships that could otherwise escape our attention" (p. 434).

One can argue that the majority of the existing leisure theories have been developed by Western scholars who rarely took into account how other cultures may understand the very essence of the concept of leisure. In the Western literature, leisure has been conceptualized either as a block of time which is free of work (e.g., Brightbill, 1960; DeGrazia, 1962; Dumazedier, 1974), free of compulsory activities (e.g., Brightbill, 1960; Fairchild, 1970; Godbey, 1985; Neumeyer & Neumeyer, 1958), when one is free to act and choose (e.g., Brightbill, 1960; Dumazedier, 1960), as an activity (Brightbill, 1960; Dumazedier, 1974), or as a state of being / experience (Cushman & Laidler, 1990; Iso-Ahola, 1980). Although these frameworks have been generally used to define leisure, non-Western cultures may differ in what they considered to be leisure, when leisure exists, and how leisure is defined.

Similar, much of the research conducted on leisure of racial and ethnic minorities and of people who reside in non-Western countries have been done using concepts and frameworks developed by researchers from the United States and Canada. However, in order to understand how leisure exists in a culture one cannot start mapping it with

preconceptions of westernized theory, frameworks, and concepts. As Chick (1998) argued, through immersion in and observation of a culture, as well as the questioning of members of that culture, one may map an unknown element inside a culture. That is, the people of other cultural backgrounds are given an opportunity to establish the parameters and essence of the element in question. Chick also noted that "Leisure ethnography will help to determine not only its nature and distribution, but also the degree to which leisure as a concept is valid in other cultures and the ways in which it can be discussed meaningfully from a cross-cultural comparative perspective" (p. 115). Thus, before we begin to examine leisure behavior of people of different cultural backgrounds, we should give each culture the opportunity to express how they define and understand the very concept of leisure.

2.   Leisure as Defined by Racial and Ethnic Groups

Although research on leisure behavior of ethnic and racial minorities has developed significantly in the last three decades, only a few studies have investigated what leisure actually means to minority populations and how it is defined by them (Juniu, 2000; Li & Stodolska, 2006; Walker & Deng, 2003/2004) (see the Literature Review section for a discussion of these issues). Further, the majority of the existing research on the topic has explored the understanding of leisure among immigrants, or minority groups within the Western society, while the understanding of the concept of leisure might be different among the same groups of people living in their home country.

Such issues might be of particular importance when one considers cultural richness and diversity of the Mexican-American community in the United States. The

culture of Mexican-Americans residing in the U.S. is not only different from that of

mainstream American society, but also from Mexicans residing in their home country

(Neidert & Farley, 1985; Portes & Zhou, 1993). First of all, the position that the

immigrants may find themselves in the social hierarchy of the United States is likely to

be different from what they had experienced in Mexico. Second, mainstream Americas

tend to classify minorities using broad racial and ethnic categories such as "Blacks" or

"Latinos" (Espiritu, 2001). As a result of being assigned to ethnic and racial labels,

minorities may reevaluate their ethnic traits and find commonalities with people of their

own group that have previously been unnoticed. In the process, pan-ethnic identities such

as "Asian" or "Latino" are being developed and embraced (Schimdt, Barvosa-Carter, &

Torres, 2000). Third, as Portes and Zhou (1993) suggested, minority groups assimilate to

the culture of the mainstream society but, at the same time, retain some of their original

customs and values. The culture they once shared in Mexico evolves and immigrants may

develop sub-cultures that differ both from the culture of their host and home countries

(Huddy & Virtanen, 1995). Further, some immigrant groups embrace transnational

behaviors (Portes, 1999) and, while living in the U.S. for often prolonged periods of time,

maintain strong economic, political, and socio-cultural ties to their home countries. Such

transnational linkages lead to the development of yet another form of immigrant

subculture. In the end, these dynamics that characterize Mexican immigrant communities

in the United States underscore the importance of examining the understanding of the

concept of leisure and the meanings of leisure among both Mexicans residing in their

home country and among Mexican immigrants in the United States. Not only would we

benefit in comparing the phenomenon of leisure inside two distinct cultures, but we can

also examine the transformation in the understanding and the practice of leisure among Mexican immigrants as they settle in the United States.

3.   Population of Interest

Part of the population of interest in this study consists of Mexican adult residents of the city of Chilpancingo in the Mexican state of Guerrero. A second population of interest consists of adult immigrants from the state of Guerrero who now reside in Chicago, IL. Both of these groups include primarily individuals of working class background. Due to the large influx of Mexicans from the state of Guerrero to the American Midwest, it is imperative for the purpose of this study to understand current and historical demographics of the region, and possible factors that may influence daily life of its residents.

3.1   Mexicans in Mexico and in the State of Guerrero

3.1.1   Demographic Information

According to the second official government census of the Mexican population

and housing demographics (INEGI, 2005b), Mexico has an estimated 103.3 million inhabitants, making it the 11th most populous country in the world. Mexico is divided into 32 state entities and one federal district. Guerrero, one of the states of the republic, has an estimated 3.1 million inhabitants (ITER, 2005), 214,000 of whom live in the city of Chilpancingo. The state of Guerrero, located on the

Map 1: Mexico (Guerrero Highlighted)

Midwestern side of Mexico, is inhabited by people of diverse ethnic groups who speak a number of different languages.

In Mexico, because of the Spanish and native ancestry of its population, indigenous languages and Spanish are recognized as the national language. More than 6 million Mexicans (6.7% of the population 5 years of age and older) speak 200 native/indigenous languages. Out of this population, around 720,000 Mexicans do not speak Spanish. In the state of Guerrero, 14% of the population speaks at least one native/indigenous tongue. Out of this population of native indigenous speakers, 25% does not speak any Spanish.

3.1.2 Education

The levels of education in Mexico vary considerably depending on the region and the age of the population. For instance, in 2005, 47.1% of the general population of Mexico between the ages of 15 and 19 was not attending school. The school attendance among younger children (6-14 years old) was higher at 94.2%. At the same time, 48.9% of Guerrero's residents in the 15-19 age category were no longer attending school, while only 92.4% of the 6-14 year olds were attending school. On average, Mexican citizens had completed only 8.1 years of formal education (8.4 for males and 7.9 for females), which in the United State's education system would be equivalent to the completion of the early stages of 8th grade. The average school completion for the residents of the state of Guerrero was at 6.8 years.

In 2005, 8.4% of the total population of Mexico and 19.9% of the population of Guerrero was officially considered illiterate. Illiteracy rates were particularly high in the

older age categories -- 25.3% of Mexicans in the 60-74 age group and 36.9% in the 75 and older age group were considered illiterate. In addition, in every age category, illiteracy rates were higher for women than for men, with 35% of women ages 60-74 and 46.9% of women 75 years of age and older being illiterate.

3.1.3 Economics

Since the 1960s, Guerrero has suffered a diminishing GDP (Gross Domestic Product). In the early 1960s, the state's GDP growth was 3.1% for the year. In 1990 it was 1.6%, and recently it reached the low of 0.3% (INEGI, 2005b). Additionally, job opportunities in Guerrero are very limited. The tourist industry is the only major revenue producers in the state. The "Triangle of the Sun" formed by three famous tourist resorts: Acapulco, Ixtapa-Zihuatanejo, and Tax brings the majority of Guerrero's income. Agriculture is also important to the state's economy, but has been hampered by the mountainous landscape and lack of technology. Livestock production and fishing predominate in the southern and central parts of the state and in the coastal region, respectively. Industry in Guerrero is not very well developed, with the majority of revenue being brought by the mining operations that focus on silver extraction. The state is also known for its production of soccer and volleyballs, as well as for its pottery, woolen and cotton textiles, wood work, leatherwork, paintings on amate paper, silverwork, lacquerwork, and goods made from palm trees (Gobierno del Estado de Guerrero, 2008a).

3.1.4 Culture

The culture of Guerrero is influenced by many indigenous tribes that reside in the area. Six major ethnic groups can be found in the state: Mixtecos, Tlapanecos, Nahualts, Amuzgos, Mestizo (racially mixed), and an Afro-Mestizo (African Descent with mixed races).The culture of the local population is also influenced by its Spanish heritage. After the conquest of the Aztec empire, submission of many tribes was quick and extensive (Gobierno de Guerrero, 2008b). Following the conquest, the land around the state of Guerrero was repartitioned and given to Spanish soldiers to compensate them for their military service. Additionally to the control the Crown has given the soldiers over the land, the local population was also forced to work for their new owners by extracting rocks and minerals. This Spanish rule has also given rise to a new intermix of cultures. The Spanish influence can be seen in the main language spoken, Spanish last names and town names, and the fact that more than 90% of the population practices Catholic religion and that the urban architecture and design are based on Spanish traditions (e.g., plazas and cathedrals are found at the center of every town).

There are four major regions in the contemporary state of Guerrero -- the coast, the mountains, the central arid lands, and northern plateaus, each having a different sub-culture characterized by different traditions. For instance, the music and dance of the central arid lands are fast beet and have indigenous and Spanish roots. The coast of Guerrero has its own music and beat, which have roots in the Tixtleco indigenous group, while in the Northern part of the state the music and dance are more rooted in the Spanish culture. In the mountains, the dances and beat of music are a mix between native jaguar-imitating dances and French influence of a violin (Gobierno de Guerrero, 2008c).

In the state of Guerrero, 90% of the population five years of age and older are Catholic, 4.1% are Protestant, and 3.5% are atheists, with a few diverse and scattered faiths practiced by the rest of the inhabitants (INEGI, 2005b). Based on the religion and the ethnic indigenous influences, the festivities in the state are often related to religious holidays, but are practiced by residents dressed in ethnic costumes and performing ethnic music and dances.

Cultural background is also heavily responsible for differences in responsibilities and expectations among Mexican men and women and among people of different ages. For example, in 2006, 33.7% of all Mexican women older than 12 years of age participated in the labor force, while the same were true for 73.6% of Mexican men (INEGI, 2006). On the contrary, 84% of women older than 12 participated in domestic work, whereas only 15% of men participated in domestic work. In regards to most popular ways of spending free time, both men and women participated equally in watching TV (80% of the population). Family socialization was also a popular -- 58% of all women and 48% of men older than 12 participated in family parties, family outings, and family time. The main differences were related to active ways of spending free time -- while only 13% of Mexican women declared they participated in play and exercise, 31% for men were involved in these activities.

Responsibilities and expectations among Mexican residents also change during the course of their life. For example, children are expected to participate in domestic work and have household responsibilities. These responsibilities, however, are also heavily dependent on gender. According to INEGI (2006), 41% of all female children ages 12-19 participated in domestic work, while the same was true for only 14.5% of

boys. These proportions increase for women and decrease for men as they grow older and the domestic roles are left to the domain of females (86.3% of women and 17.6% of men between the ages of 20-39 participated in domestic work). In Guerrero, women tend to become more dependent on their male partners as they grow older since men are the providers of the family and are responsible for the financial well-being of the household (Cristiani & Barroso, 2009).

3.2   Mexican Immigration to the United States

3.2.1   Mexicans in the United States

Demographic data from the U.S. Census show that the Latino population[1] in the United States is growing at unprecedented rates. In the year 2000, there were 31 million foreign-born immigrants in the United States, 9.1 million of whom came from Mexico (U.S. Census, 2001, 2004). In the year 2002, there were 29,070 foreign born Mexican women and 93,231 foreign-born men in Illinois alone (INEGI, 2006). The Mexican immigrant population[2] in the United States also tends to be fairly young, with a median age of 31.5 years. There are significantly more young Mexican men than women residing in the United States, reflective of the nature of the immigration. For instance, in 2005, 33.3% of foreign-born Mexicans between the ages of 15-35 were men and 24.7% were women. Further, most of the Mexican immigrants came from urban areas (69.7% of females and 59% of males).

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[1] "Group of people who self-identify as people from Spanish speaking countries of the Americas.

[2] Individuals whose heritage comes from Mexico.

Mexican immigrants in the United States are also characterized by low levels of education -- 29.8% of Mexican immigrants have had some college training, while only 4.3% had finished a Bachelor's degree. In general, Mexican immigrant women had higher levels of education than men. In 2005, 26% of the female foreign-born Mexican immigrants had attended High School, while only 19% of males had done so (INEGI, 2006). Most foreign-born Mexican immigrants[3] work in service occupations and in production and tend to make low salaries and wages (Census, 2001). For instance, in 2000, 38% of the Mexican foreign-born population made less than $25,000 and 75.6% made less than $50,000. Almost a quarter (24.4%) of the foreign-born Mexicans lived below the poverty rate.

The Mexican immigrants come to the United States for a variety of reasons and through different means. Out of the entire population of foreign-born Mexicans, 80% came to work while 16% claimed family reunification as their main reason for immigration. Moreover, 24.5% entered the United States legally, while the rest came through illegal means. Also, 44% of immigrants already had a network in the United States that facilitated their entry and establishment, while the rest had no friends or relatives in this country. It is interesting to note that between 1990 and 1995, 22.4% of Mexicans returned home after immigrating to the United States. Retuned migrations decreased to 14.6% between 1995 and 2000, further suggesting that the majority of these immigrants made the United States their permanent home.

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[3] First generation Mexican immigrants.

3.2.2 Immigration from Guerrero to the U.S. and to Illinois

According to Diaz and Juarez (2008), the state of Guerrero is not one of the traditional states of Mexico that have produced large inflows of migration to the United States. However, since the last decade, the rate of out-migration from Guerrero to the United States has increased significantly. According to INEGI (2005a) -- an official Census of Mexico -- in the year 2005 Guerrero experienced an outflow of 77,828 citizens into the United States. This number of migrants to the United States was slightly higher than in previous years. Based on the same data from the 2005 Census, 8% of Guerrero households received remittances from family members in the U.S. In some of the towns in the state, 34% of the local population received remittances. In 2005, Mexican citizens received 23 billion dollars in remittances. More than 1 billion dollars was received by the residents of Guerrero, placing the state eighth in the Union in terms of the amount of money received from abroad (Banco de Mexico, 2009).

In recent years, Illinois and the Midwestern United States in general experienced large immigration of Mexicans, including those from the state of Guerrero. According to the U.S. Census (U.S. Census, 2003), in 2000, 1.5 million foreign-born individuals resided in Illinois, of which 40.4% (617 thousand) were of Mexican descent. The majority of Mexican immigrants lived in the Chicago area, where 21.7% of the total population (628 thousand individuals) was foreign-born. This included 39% (244 thousand) people from Mexico. The majority of the immigrants from Guerrero, when resettling to the U.S., first tend to arrive in Phoenix (41%), Chicago (15%), Los Angeles (11%), and Dallas (8%) (Diaz & Juarez, 2008). Today, Chicago is home to the largest population of citizens from Guerrero outside of Mexico -- almost one-third (30%) of all

immigrants from the state of Guerrero reside in this city (Diaz & Juarez). It is for this reason that Chicago holds the largest number of ethnic clubs from Guerrero - 56 - mostly named after Mexican hometowns of residents (Diaz & Juarez).

4.   Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The goal of my research is to investigate the concept of leisure among Mexicans from the City of Chilpancingo, Guerrero, Mexico and among immigrants from this state to Chicago, IL. A particular emphasis will be placed on gender, marital status, and age-based variations in the understanding of leisure and in the experience of leisure. Specifically, with the use of in-depth interviews, I will examine local beliefs and perceptions regarding the concept of leisure and the meaning of leisure, and identify forces that shape the experience of leisure among Mexican men and women from Guerrero, Mexico. Subsequently, I will examine changes in the understanding of the concept of leisure and in the characteristics of leisure among immigrants to the Midwestern U.S. who originate from the same area of Mexico. Further, the goal of the study is to understand changes in leisure behavior and in factors that shape leisure behavior among this population of Mexican immigrants. In particular, the objectives of the study are:

1) To examine the existence and the understanding of the concept of leisure among Mexicans from the state of Guerrero, Mexico and among Mexican immigrants from Guerrero, residing in Chicago, IL with specific emphasis on age, gender, and marital status.

2) To identify forces that shape the experience of leisure among Mexicans from the state of Guerrero and among Mexican immigrants from the state of Guerrero, residing in Chicago, IL.

3) To identify changes in the understanding of the concept and the meaning of leisure, and in leisure behavior among Mexicans from Guerrero caused by immigration to the United States.

In general, because of the growing diversity of the United States and its increasing population of Mexican immigrants, studies of the meaning of leisure and of leisure behavior among ethnic populations are needed. The goal of this cross-cultural study is not only to provide an increased understanding of the concept and meaning of leisure among Mexicans in their home country and after immigration to the U.S., but to provide practical recommendations for leisure practitioners working with this group. Although research on ethnic minorities, including Mexican-Americans, has been conducted in our field before, this is the first study that investigates the understanding and the experience of leisure among a group of Mexicans in their home and host country.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

1.   The Concept of Leisure

The phenomenon of leisure has been the "concern of men [and women] through the ages" (Neuligner, 1974, p. IX). Yet, despite the many decades of research on the topic, there seems to be lack of consensus on the definition of the term and of a universal understanding of the concept (Edginton, Coles, & McClelland, 2003; Neulinger, 1974). For instance, as Brightbill (1960) commented, "defining leisure involves so many implications that it defies definition" (p. 3). The term, the concept, and the understanding of leisure are dynamic, can also vary across time, and have gone through transformations across the ages (Godbey, 2003). Further, "no single meaning or dimension is likely to exhaust all that we will find under the general rubric of leisure" (Kelly, 1987, p. 18). A consensus is further complicated as researchers also realize that leisure has also meant, and still means different things in different cultures (Brightbill, 1961). As Godbey stated, "Every culture must categorize human behavior in ways that characterize its way of life" (p. 11) and leisure is one of the concepts that can have these multiple meanings.

Nonetheless, the major concepts that have been used by the researchers to define leisure include: time (Brightbill, 1960; De Grazia, 1964; Kelly, 1987; Leitner & Leitner 2004), activity (Brightbill, 1960), and a state of mind and/or state of being (Neulinger, 1974). Further, leisure has been seen as contributing to the quality of life (MacLean, Peterson, & Martin, 1985; Weiskopf, 1982), as means to personal self fulfillment (Miller & Robinson, 1963; Murphy 1981), as a form of human expression (Murphy, 1981), as way to participate in society (Sessoms, 1984), and as an instrument of therapy (Kaplan, 1975). Given the many ways in which leisure has been defined, it has also been argued

that leisure is holistic in nature (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1982). That is, it does not exist as an essence of its own and can only be understood in relation to other areas of life.

1.2   Leisure as an Element of Time

The concept of leisure as an element of time assumes that leisure is a phenomenon which can be quantified in time (Kelly, 1996). That is, leisure exists in a moment of time lived by an individual. Thus, one is able to identify when one is or is not in leisure. Within this framework, leisure time has been seen as: (1) A block of unoccupied time when one is free to rest or do what he or she chooses (discretionary time), (2) residual time or time beyond what is needed for existence, and (3) time that is not used for subsistence (Brightbill, 1961; Godbey, 2003; Kelly, 1996).

Although researchers have widely embraced the idea that leisure contains an element of time, some criticisms were raised against the use of time as a sole defining characteristic of leisure. Godbey (2003), for instance, argued that we must first determine what constitutes free time. Although the question has been so far answered by stating that free time is the unoccupied time, outside of obligatory activities, that is not used for subsistence, this argument can also be problematic. For example, Kelly (1996) stated that using time to define leisure can be deceptive, since there might not be "any time really free from obligation" (p. 18). Winnifrith and Barrett (1989) also argued that "No one, not even the unoccupied – Pre-school children, tramps, the idle rich, the sick and infirm, loafers, prisoners in solitary confinement – are completely free from the necessities of life" (p. 13). Further, as De Grazia (1964) mentioned, the "free time we have is unfree from the start" (p. 57), meaning that we are always obligated to do something. De Grazia

expanded this idea by stating that when we juxtapose time that is "free" from time that we spend working, we make work the dominant element of people's lives. On the other hand, Brightbill (1961) argued that if we remove the element of time away from the definition of leisure, we are left with an empty understanding of the term.

1.2.1 Leisure Time and Work

Defining leisure as the unoccupied time outside of obligatory activities has major implications for the way we view the relationship of free time and work, especially since leisure time has generally been considered as free from the obligations of work. For example, Kelly (1996) and Bammel and Burrus-Bammel (1996) defined leisure as the time leftover from obligations of work and self maintenance, while Berger (1962) claimed that leisure is the time that is not devoted to paid occupations. Both arguments revolved around the idea that leisure time and work time cannot overlap. Yet, as Godbey (2003) argued, some of us "freely and voluntarily choose to do certain things for which we are paid money" (p. 3).

Brightbill (1961) also questioned if an individual could be free while at work. In other words, can an individual have free (i.e., leisure) time while performing his or her occupation? Leisure has been viewed as the anti-thesis of work (Neulinger, 1974), and yet "for many people, work does have aspects of both leisure and non leisure activity" (p. 7). Work carries feelings of purposefulness and usefulness which are essential for self-respect, and some activities are seen as work which could be considered leisure (Kelly, 1987). On the other hand, some employment activities have been described as not truly "work," as they do not result in economic or social benefits. At the same time, individuals

feel obligated to participate in many activities that do not involve earning money, such as attending weddings or exercising to lose weight (Brightbill, 1960).

Kaplan (1960) and Brightbill (1960) also argued that there are some groups of people, such as older men and women who have retired, and those whose work has been replaced by automated machines, who are forced to have leisure time. According to Kaplan (1999), there are at least five different types of free time in our society: (1) the permanent, voluntary leisure of the rich, (2) temporary, involuntary leisure of the unemployed, (3) regularly allocated, voluntary leisure of the employed, (4) permanent incapacity of the disabled, and (5) the voluntary retirement of the aged. While all involve a sense of free-time, the involuntary free time is considered as enforced leisure -- leisure that we do not seek (Brightbill, 1960).

As Neulinger (1974) stated, "No one has leisure who has no time he can dispose of as he [or she] will" (p. 21). Yet, only a small portion of this free time may be truly free, "free from obligations and free to do what one wants to do" (Iso-Ahola, 1999, p. 36). Although this argument has lead to other conceptualizations of leisure (Kelly & Freysinger, 2000), for comparison purposes (i.e., free time of young adults versus older adults), the time definition of leisure remains quite useful and important.

1.3   Leisure as an Activity

Leisure has also been conceptualized as an activity; apart from work, family, and society (Dumazedier, 1967; Kelly & Freysinger, 2000). In this framework, individuals engage in leisure at will, out of personal choice, for relaxation, diversion, or broadening of their knowledge, and as a spontaneous social participation (Dumazedier). Such

understanding of leisure allows researchers to quantify and compare groups and individuals. Defining leisure as an activity also provides an opportunity to include the social context of the activity and the meaning of the activity to the individual (Kelly & Freysinger). Thus, leisure is not necessarily the left over time (Kelly, 1983), but an activity that must possess certain essential elements. They include: (1) perceived freedom, (2) having a purpose of its own (being auto telic), and (3) expectation of a beneficial outcome. That is, one is able to freely decide when to participate and when not to participate, the activity is done for its own sake, and with a beneficial outcome in mind.

According to Kelly (1983), "one difficulty with such an approach is that it opens the question of the possible functions of leisure without being exhaustive" (p. 14). Kelly (1996) claimed that almost no one defines leisure as a list of activities and there are no comprehensive lists of activities that would accurately capture the concept of leisure. Moreover, "no activity is always leisure because of its form" (p. 20), but because of its relative freedom to choose and its motivation.

Although leisure involves doing something by choice (Kelly, 1983), it also has a purpose, and is chosen in some way to enhance the self (Dumazedier, 1967). Leisure as an activity, according to Kaplan (1960), provides opportunities for recreation, personal growth, and service to others. Further, according to Kaplan, leisure is an activity that falls into the perception of free time by the participant, is psychologically pleasant in anticipation and recollection, has commitment and intensity, and can have constraints. Thus, to understand the concept of leisure, one must also understand the motivations for involvement in leisure.

1.4   Leisure as a State of Being / Experience

Kelly (1987) noted that defining leisure as a state of being may provide a better understanding of the concept. Under this premise, leisure is an attitude of mind or a quality of the experience. It is assumed to be pleasurable and have anticipated benefits. It is intrinsically motivated, is an end in itself, and is valuable for its own sake (Cushman & Laidler, 1990; Iso-Ahola, 1980). Further, leisure as a state of being gives people an opportunity to choose what they wish to experience . Leisure as a state of being, thus, represents the ideal state of freedom to be in leisure (Kraus, 2001). For these reasons, defining leisure as an experience or a state of being provides an opportunity to study the state of mind, the orientation, the attitudes, the conditions, the experience, and the understanding of leisure by the participant (Kelly, 1996).

Neulinger (1974) proposed that three dimensions -- perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and noninstrumentality, summarize the experience of leisure. That is, the activity is chosen for the sake of doing the activity or experiencing leisure and the participant understands that the activity he or she is performing has been personally chosen with intrinsic motivations in mind. According to Iso-Ahola (1999), when people consider leisure in relative freedom, they must also have some sort of self-determination and intrinsic motivation to engage in the activity. More likely than not, the higher the levels of self-determination and intrinsic motivation, the more likely the non-work activities are to become leisure. That is, non-work and free time activities can become leisure if an individual has a greater sense of perceived freedom and control (self-determination) in doing that activity. Additionally, non-work and free time activities can

become leisure when individuals understand what they want from their involvement in the activity.

According to Iso Ahola (1999), although it has been argued that "leisure means full autonomy, freedom, and control" (p. 39), the activities in and of themselves may not be intrinsically or extrinsically interesting. "It is the individual who through psychological needs and processes finds some activities intrinsically and others extrinsically motivating" (Iso Ahola, p. 39). Thus, sense of freedom (autonomy) is the regulator of what will become leisure and what will not. With it, people seek activities that provide intrinsic rewards such as the need for competence (sense to compete and master challenging environments), as well as social and flow experiences (seeking activities that allow an individual to match his or her skills with challenges).

The desire to achieve competence also provides opportunities to master challenging environments by participating in activities that have behavior-performance-outcome contingencies. People become serious about leisure and engage in activities to achieve intrinsic rewards which, in turn, reinforce further participation and involvement. Intrinsic rewards provide durable benefits and can be found more in serious leisure than in casual free time activities. Engaging in optimally challenging activities allows people to experience states of flow, which are in themselves psychologically beneficial as they satisfy the need for competence and help to "minimize negative states" (Iso-Ahola, 1999, p. 39) such as anxiety and depression. Leisure also allows people to express themselves and to develop intimate, social relationships with others. Such social interactions between people, in turn, help improve their mental and psychological well-being.

2.   The Meanings of Leisure

2.1   Complexity of the Meanings of Leisure

In an attempt to understand the concept of leisure, researchers have also concentrated on the actual meaning leisure has to the individual and society (e.g., Juniu & Henderson, 2001; Kleiber, 2001; Unger & Kernan, 1983). Although, as we shall later see, a universal definition of the concept has not been agreed upon, the *meaning of leisure* has often been conceptualized as the process by which leisure can gain value or meaning to an individual's life (Iwasaki, 2008; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). The meaning of leisure not only encompasses the understanding of what is considered to be leisure (e.g., what kinds of activities, settings, or time periods are leisure) (Walker & Wang, 2009), but also what the subjective leisure experiences mean to participants and the value people gain from participation (Mannell & Kleiber; Neulinger, 1974; Walker & Wang). The possible meanings of leisure are numerous considering how diverse the American society is, how many activities people participate in, and how many factors can affect leisure experience. For instance, all the factors that can be meaningful to an individual (e.g., money, family, health) can also influence the meaning of his or her leisure experience (Watkins, 2000).

It is because of this complexity of the concept that "finding the meaning of leisure is not easy" (Kelly, 1996, p. 414) and the term has not been clearly defined. Further, in their attempts to find the most fundamental meaning of leisure experience researchers have realized that there is an overlap between defining the concept of leisure and discovering the actual meaning of leisure to the individual (Walker & Wang, 2009). That is, the meaning of leisure integrates several concepts that are used to define the nature of

leisure (e.g., time, place, space) (Juniu & Henderson, 2001; Kelly, 1996; Walker & Wang), and also includes the social, economic, religious, political, cultural, psychological and philosophical factors that condition lives of individuals (e.g., Dare, Welton, & Coe, 1998; Kaplan, 1975; Kelly, 1983). Unfortunately, most attempts to find the meaning of leisure have been limited to already set "premises about how leisure should be explained" (Kelly, p. 414). It is for this reason that since there may not be a 'one size fits all' theory of the meaning of leisure (Henderson, 1996), one of the main challenges for researchers in this field has been to understand how leisure provides meanings at the personal level (Lee, Datillo, & Howard, 1994; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997). The challenge for the researchers so far has been to take the abstract definitions of leisure and find what leisure really means to the individuals, what it involves, and how the participants value their leisure experience.

Although, according to traditional definitions, leisure has been separated from the domains of work, obligations and family roles, some researchers (e.g., Kelly & Kelly, 1994) found that these three domains and leisure share certain similar meanings and experiences. For example, people can derive satisfaction from and show commitment to family roles and leisure activities at a similar level. Further, development and learning can happen in all four domains. Kelly and Kelly, thus concluded that some meanings that have been attributed to the experience of leisure are not solely subject to that domain, but can carry over to other areas of life.

Iso-Ahola (1999) also commented that "to understand the essence or true meaning of leisure is to understand why people participate (or fail to participate) and what they strive [to obtain] from their involvement" (p. 35). Iso-Ahola mentioned that the meaning

of leisure largely depends on the motivation of a person to participate in a leisure-like activity, the need to pursue intrinsic rewards (e.g., the mastery of challenging environments), and the inclusion of the social experience with leisure. According to Iso-Ahola, people seek out activities that will provide intrinsic rewards, such as competence. Leisure also provides an opportunity to engage in a social experience conducive to creating social contacts, developing friendships, and obtaining social support. Other potential intrinsic motivations for involvement in leisure may include stimulus seeking, self actualization, achievement, challenge, competition, killing time, avoiding boredom and intellectual aestheticism (Hutchinson, 2004; Kleiber, 2001).

People strive to find meanings in life (Frankl, 1985) and leisure-like involvement can help them gain these meanings (Iwasaki, 2008). According to Kelly (1996), leisure is important to many people due to the numerous benefits it can provide. Self-expression, companionship, integration of mind and body, physical health, rest and relaxation, opportunity to experience something new, to meet new people, to build relationships, to consolidate the family, to be with nature, to test oneself, to meet the expectations of people who are important to them, and to just feel good are some of the many benefits that can be experienced through leisure (e.g., Caldwell, 2005; Kelly, 1996; Kleiber, 2001; Kyle & Chick, 2007; Shaw, 1984).

2.2   The Meanings of Leisure in Diverse Contexts

Western-dominated leisure research has rarely taken into account cultural differences in the concepts of leisure and in the experiences of leisure (Iwasaki, Nishino, Onda, & Bowling, 2007). Although research on leisure behavior of ethnic and racial

minorities has developed significantly over the last three decades (see the section three of the Literature Review for a discussion of this topic), few studies have undertaken cross-cultural comparative research to better understand the differences and perhaps similarities in people's leisure experience (Chick & Dong, 2005). Cross-cultural studies can also help researchers understand the meaning of leisure and, thus understand how different cultural groups can have a diverse range of leisure experiences (Chick, 1998). Further, through different leisure experiences many groups can obtain social, cultural, and spiritual meanings. For example, Iwasaki's (2007) research attempted to conceptualize leisure as a contributor to quality of life within an international and multicultural framework. That is, the study aimed to analyze how leisure could help to promote quality of life in multicultural societies. Findings showed that leisure-like activities can create meanings to the individuals that can lead to a better quality of life. In particular, (a) positive emotions and well-being can be a result of leisure participation; (b) leisure can lead to the development of positive identities and improvement of self-esteem; (c) social and cultural connections and a harmony can be developed through leisure; and (d) leisure can contribute to learning and human development across the life-span.

It is important to note that leisure meanings not only vary in cross-cultural contexts, but can also change throughout the life course of an individual. Changes in social roles that people experience throughout their lives significantly affect their leisure experiences (Kelly, 1996). For example, different role obligations and expectations are likely to condition leisure of married couples differently than that of single men or women (Kelly, 1996; Parker, 1976). Moreover, locality in which people live can condition their leisure meanings. For example, people who live in an urban, suburban,

rural, or small town environments are likely to experience the community life differently, which in turn may lead to differences in their experience leisure (Kelly; Kraus 1964). Moreover, different environments may also be more or less accepting of people of alternative sexual orientation, lifestyle, religious beliefs, race or ethnicity, which is likely to condition meanings obtained from leisure participation among these individuals.

3.   Leisure Behavior of Latino Americans

3.1   The Context: Research on Leisure Behavior of Ethnic and Racial Minorities

Leisure of racial and ethnic minorities has attracted sustained attention in the past several decades. Studies on leisure behavior of racial and ethnic minorities began in the 1960s and the 1970s. During this period, Americans developed a heightened awareness of racial inequality, and thus research questions dealing with race and ethnicity became popular within the field. Early research focused mainly on identifying differences in recreation participation between Whites and African Americans (e.g., Craig, 1972; Lindsay & Ogle, 1972; Mueller & Gurin, 1962) In general, studies examined why members of some minority groups (African Americans) displayed lower participation patterns in certain recreational activities (e.g., outdoor recreation).

As the demographics of the United States continued to change with increased immigration rates and the population of ethnic and racial minorities continued to grow, the field of leisure studies began to examine racial and ethnic identity issues related to leisure participation, experiences, preferences, motivations, perceived benefits, and constraints among minority groups (e.g., Allison & Geiger, 1993; Carr & Black, 1993; Floyd, Shinew, McGuire, & Noe, 1994; Ho et al., 2005; Juniu, 2000; Li, Zinn, Absher, &

Graefe, 2007; Stodolska, 1998; Stodolska & Jackson, 1998; Stodolska, Marcinkowski, & Yi-Kook, 2007; West, 1989). Further, inspired by the necessity to service the needs of racially and ethnically diverse communities, leisure research has also expanded to examine intra-ethnic differences in leisure behavior and the relationships among race, gender, age, social class, religion, and immigration status (e.g., Floyd, Bocarro, & Thompson, 2008; Juniu; Li & Stodolska, 2006; Shinew, Floyd, McGuire, & Noe, 1995). In the 1990s and 2000s, researchers also began to examine racial discrimination and inequality in leisure faced by minority members (e.g., Blahna & Black, 1993; Floyd & Shinew, 1999; Philip, 1999).

Historically, Washburn's (1978) marginal-ethnicity framework has been the mainstay of research on leisure behavior of minority populations. As Floyd (1998) noted, "the marginality-ethnicity framework stands as a useful benchmark to gauge where the current literature is positioned both theoretically and empirically with respect to race and ethnic relations" (p. 4). Washburn's theory allowed researchers to examine how societal constraints and ethnic differences can lead to variations in activity participation among minorities. Moreover, it helped to identify and classify reasons for the existing differences in recreation participation between minority groups and the "mainstream" American society. On one side, the concept of marginality asserted that racial and ethnic groups participate less often in certain leisure activities because of socio-economic difficulties. Ethnicity, on the other hand, claimed that variations in recreation participation patterns can be attributed to differences in racial or ethnic group value systems, norms and socialization patterns (Floyd et al., 1994). The marginality-ethnicity framework has allowed researchers to examine recreation under-participation among

some minority members using socio-economic factors and ethnic sub-cultural value systems.

Despite the popularity and wide embrace of the marginality-ethnicity theory, many scholars claimed that there is lack of reliable data to support either of the proposed explanations (Floyd, 1998; Hutchinson, 1988). According to Floyd, the marginality framework fails to map out how marginality impacts leisure choices, does not explain how marginality should be measured, does not recognize socioeconomic differences within ethnic groups, and fails to explain what behavioral or affective outcomes beyond participation are subject to racial and ethnic influences. Floyd also argued that the ethnicity framework does not specify which aspects of ethnic culture affect leisure and assumes that racial and ethnic groups are monolithic in their norms and values.

Apart from the marginality and ethnicity theory, there have been several other theoretical frameworks used to examine intra-racial and inter-racial differences in leisure behavior. These included multiple hierarchy stratification hypothesis and class polarization perspective (Shinew et al., 1995), which examined leisure preferences of subgroups defined by gender, race, and subjective social class; interest group theory, which examined inter and intra-group differences in leisure preferences among African Americans and Whites (Floyd et al., 1994), and interracial contact hypothesis, which explored interracial differences in leisure preferences among individuals with varying levels of interracial contact (Floyd & Shinew, 1999). Other frameworks used to examine leisure of minority populations included collective identity theory that was employed to examine how an individual's culture can become part of his or her own self image (Ogden & Hilt, 2003), theory of planned behavior that was used to examine leisure

motivations of members of different racial and ethnic groups (Walker et al., 2006), social network theory that was used to analyze leisure patterns of interracial couples (Hibbler & Shinew, 2002), and social capital theory that was employed to explore socialization of ethnic groups within communal spaces (Glover et al., 2005). Assimilation theories (e.g., segmented assimilation, selective acculturation, transnationalism) have been also used to understand leisure behavior of immigrant groups (Floyd & Gramann, 1993/1995; Floyd et al., 1993; Gramann et al., 1993, Shaull & Gramann, 1998; Stodolska , 1998; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Although these frameworks have been used in research on leisure of ethnic and racial minorities, they are not the focus of my study and thus will not be explained in detail in this study.

3.2. Research on Leisure Participation Patterns among Latino Americans

Research on leisure of Latinos has significantly expanded over the last 25 years. Early studies have generally examined differences in leisure participation between Latinos and mainstream American society. For instance, McMillen (1983) operationalized leisure participation in terms of extensity (when participation occurred) and intensity (how many times participation occurred). His findings showed that Mexican-Americans[4] participated in very similar activities and with similar frequency to members of the "mainstream" society. Further, use of language and social isolation factors were tested and revealed to make no difference in leisure behavior patterns of Mexican-Americans and Anglo-Americans.

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[4] Individuals from Mexican descent residing in the United States.

Unlike McMillen (1983), Hutchinson (1987) found significant differences in the types of activities Blacks, Whites and Hispanics[5] participated in. Hutchinson conducted field observations of people from different racial and ethnic groups in 13 neighborhood parks in Chicago. He observed that the majority of Hispanics (56%) participated in stationary activities and only a quarter engaged in active recreation. These patterns markedly differed from those observed among Whites and African Americans, whose majority was involved in mobile activities. Among Hispanics, walking, bicycling, the use of playgrounds, picnicking, watching sporting events, and lounging on the grass were the most common activities. Hispanics were also found to be more family oriented. Results showed that nearly a quarter (24.3%) participated with a family member, whereas less than 10% of Blacks and Whites participated with a family member. Further, the average size of Hispanic group was 5.7, while for Whites it was 2.5 persons and 3.8 for Blacks. More Hispanic women were found to be taking care of children than White or Black women. In general, Hutchison's (1987) results demonstrated significant differences in recreation behavior between ethnic and racial groups. To some degree, they may be a product of specific demographic patters of each group (e.g., larger family size among Hispanics), but also can be attributed to different cultural preferences among ethnic populations.

Whereas Hutchinson (1987) and McMillen (1983) concentrated their attention on urban settings, Irwin, Gartner and Phelps (1990) studied Mexican-American and Anglo campers who used a minimally developed U.S. Forest Service campground in New

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[5] Americans who identify themselves as being of Spanish-speaking background and trace their origin or descent from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America and other Spanish-speaking countries.

Mexico. Their results showed that Mexican-Americans visited campgrounds with larger groups than Anglos, expressed preference to be close to other campers and placed a high priority on tangible campground design features. For example, Mexican-American campers cared more about the availability of toilets, camping space, water, fire rings as important characteristics for the campsite. On the contrary, Anglos listed items such as quiet surroundings, privacy and space between campers as the most important attributes of a campsite.

A series of studies done by Chavez (1991, 1992, 1993) focused on wildland recreation areas in southern California National Forests. In her 1991 study, Chavez evaluated visitors' perceptions of crowding, discrimination, favorite activities, and feelings of displacement from recreational areas. Results demonstrated that in general Anglos and various sub-groups of Hispanics had similar views on the crowding of recreational areas, although Hispanics reported higher expectations of crowding than most groups. There were no significant differences in activity enjoyment between ethnic groups; however, Hispanics felt greater exposure to discriminatory acts than Anglo Americans.

Gobster (2002) examined outdoor recreation patterns and preferences among diverse visitors to the Lincoln Park in Chicago. Specifically, his study focused on Latinos[6], Blacks, Asians, and Whites. Gobster's study suggested that park users share some common interests, preferences and concerns about parks and park management. For example, regardless of race or ethnicity participants enjoyed walking, swimming, or

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[6] Group of people who self-identify as people from Spanish speaking countries of the Americas.

sunning at the beaches, picnicking, barbecuing, going to the zoo, sitting and relaxing, and bicycling. However, there were also some important variations in leisure participation patterns among groups. For example, Whites were more likely to engage in walking and bicycling than other groups, while Latinos and Asians preferred picnicking and visiting the zoo. In general, Whites were more likely to be involved in active-individual sports, while all racial and ethnic groups preferred active-group sports. Additionally, all minority groups were more likely to engage in passive activities than Whites and were more likely to come to the park with families than White visitors. Whites were more likely to perceive the park as unsafe than the minority groups, while minorities were more likely to report experiencing discrimination. Overall, Whites visited the park more frequently than other groups, lived closer to the park, and were more likely to walk to the park as opposed to driving or using public transportation.

3.3   Research on Cultural Change among Latino Americans

Many studies conducted in the last 15 years examined not only leisure participation patterns among Latinos, but also the effects of cultural change on other aspects of their leisure behavior. For instance, Floyd, Gramann, and Saenz (1993) explored the effects of perceived discrimination, subculture, and marginality among Mexican-Americans on their use of selected public outdoor recreation areas. The results for the study showed that cultural distance was significantly and negatively related to the use of recreational areas by Mexican-Americans. That is, people who spoke primarily Spanish and were less acculturated were significantly less likely to visit recreational settings where Anglos were the dominant group. Further, Mexican-Americans of higher socioeconomic status were more likely to visit Anglo-American settings. Lastly, those

Mexican-Americans who reported higher rates of perceived discrimination were less likely to visit Anglo-American recreation settings.

Floyd and Gramann (1993) examined how the maintenance of Spanish language, structural assimilation, and educational attainment affected Mexican-Americans' perceptions of discrimination. Based on Gordon's (1964) concept of assimilation, Floyd and Gramann hypothesized that the greater the level of acculturation or primary structural assimilation, the more Mexican immigrants would be similar to the mainstream society in terms of their outdoor recreation behavior. Results demonstrated that acculturation and primary structural assimilation did have an effect on the recreation patters of Mexican immigrants. That is, participants with higher levels of education and lower use of Spanish language were less likely to perceive discrimination within recreational settings. Shaull and Gramann (1998) also used Gordon's (1964) assimilation theory as a conceptual framework in their study that examined the influence of Hispanic-American ethnicity on the family-related and nature-related benefits of outdoor recreation. Their results showed that the more assimilated the respondents were, the more similar they were to Anglos in their perception of nature-related benefits. For example, as education attainment increased, the importance of family-related recreation decreased. Moreover, family-related recreation benefits were more important to people who had higher number of young children in their households.

Juniu's (2000) study took a slightly different approach to examining leisure behavior among Latinos. In her research, she examined changes in socialization patters, views about work, and perceptions of time among South American immigrants to the United States. Juniu also explored cultural differences among different sub-groups of

South Americans and the impact of immigration on recreational preferences and participation rates. Her findings suggested that most respondents placed high value on group-oriented activities and events. According to the interviewees, the main barriers to participation in leisure in the United States were lack of time and increased work responsibilities and obligations. Results also indicated that participants felt that life seemed to be more isolated, and that there was a "lack of informal communication between people" (p. 370). With longer work hours and greater geographic distances, most informants felt that there were fewer opportunities to socialize in the U.S. than in their home countries. On the other hand, unlike in their home countries, the United States provided more opportunities for the interviewees to interact with people of diverse cultures. Further, the United States offered more recreational and cultural activities in which to participate. Social class differences were also found among the interviewees, with working-class immigrants spending more time socializing with friends and family members, and middle-class immigrants creating social relationships with individuals from other cultural groups and participating more in culturally-oriented activities. When the participants were asked to describe what the meaning of leisure was, middle-class informants had a very similar view of the concept of leisure as mainstream Americans. Perceptions of freedom and perceived choice were common among the middle-class immigrants. To the contrary, working-class respondents viewed leisure as a waste of time and a period when people were unproductive.

Stodolska and Santos (2006) investigated how the transnational status of Mexican migrant workers affects their leisure motivations, constraints, styles, and participation patterns. The findings of their study showed that family, work, economic, social and

cultural networks as well as the legal status had an effect on leisure of Mexican migrants. Due to separation from families, children and friends, many of the workers have developed feelings of loneliness and depression. Close associations with acquaintances in the U.S. as well as with co-workers were formed to help to offset lack of traditional social networks. Further, Mexican interviewees used leisure to recuperate after strenuous workdays and to maintain contact with their families and communities of origin. Social contacts with communities abroad were maintained through frequent phone calls, sending cards, tapes and videos. Mexican workers also frequently travelled to their country of origin. Travel to the home country was quite difficult for the undocumented migrants who had to cross the border illegally. Additionally, the undocumented workers lived in a constant fear of deportation. All of these factors acted together to constrain leisure behavior among temporary Mexican migrants.

The list of studies on leisure behavior of racial and ethnic minorities, and in particular Latinos, reviewed in this chapter is not exhaustive, but rather constitutes a selective sample meant to illustrate the type of research that has been done on these populations. An exploration of studies that examined leisure of ethnic and racial minorities, including Latinos, helps us identify research themes that need further explanation and understand how essential it is to provide a better understanding of the meaning of leisure among Mexicans and Mexican immigrants in the United States.

III. METHODOLOGY

Research studies that examine the concept and the understanding of leisure among foreign nationals and the transformations in leisure behavior related to immigration are exceedingly rare. For that reason, I followed an inductive approach in this study in order to allow participants to explain how they understood the concept of leisure, what activities they considered to be leisure, and how and when their leisure occurred. Through qualitative interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) and active interviewing (Gubrim & Holstein, 2002) this study prescribed a set of questions using current theories and concepts to set a point of reference. The questions were designed to obtain the personal insights from the interviewees rather than to confirm the existing theories or concepts.

The main goal of this research was to give the participants an opportunity to explain in their own words what they understood as leisure, what forces shaped their experience of leisure, and what transformations their leisure has undergone after immigration to the United States. I did not explain to the interviewees what I understood as leisure. Instead, I encouraged the interviewees to construct their own understanding of the activities, state of being, and time they considered to be leisure. It is important to note that I was not looking for a translation of the word "leisure" from English to the Spanish language, but my goal was to understand what people in Guerrero, Mexico considered to be "leisure," how they defined this concept, what were the properties of "leisure," and if other concepts existed in their culture that could be considered equivalent or similar to the Western notion of leisure.

1.   **Locations of the Study**

The interview questions and procedures used in this research project were approved by the UIUC Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter). The data for this study were collected in two locations. One was the city of Chilpancingo in the state of Guerrero, Mexico, and the other was the city of Chicago and its surrounding suburbs in the state of Illinois, United States. Chilpancingo was selected because of my familiarity with the area, because of its importance to the state of Guerrero (Chilpancingo is the capital city of the state), and because of the high immigration rates to the United States from this city. Chicago, Illinois was selected as a research site because of access issues and because it has high immigration rates both from Mexico in general and from the state of Guerrero, specifically.

2.   **Recruiting and Interviewing Sites**

The study began with 14 semi-structured interviews conducted in Chilpancingo during December, 2008 and January, 2009. First, I identified two possible locations in Chilpancingo where the interviewees could be recruited. These locations were selected on the basis of two criteria: (1) The recruiting site had to be a popular and well known location among the local population, and (2) the site had to be visited by a demographically diverse group of residents. Based on these criteria, two recruiting sites were identified. They included "El Zocalo," which is the main plaza in Chilpancingo and "La Alameda," which is a large and important park located next to a public High School, the state University, and the general hospital. A total of fourteen participants were interviewed over a seven day period – seven men and seven women. After arriving to the

site, I would spend 30 minutes observing the site and then I would approach the first woman or man who would seem to be a good candidate and ask if they would like to participate in the research study. If the candidate refused, I would ask the next available person if he or she wished to participate. A person became a candidate if he or she looked older than 18, had lived in Chilpancingo for at least half of their life, and identified himself or herself as a member of the community. To keep the interviews private, I gave the participants an opportunity to select three possible interview locations: their own home; a centrally located coffee shop; and a conference room at a local hotel. I was able to recruit eight interviewees at "El Zocalo" and six interviewees at the "Alameda." All interviews but five (done at a local coffee shop) were completed at participants' homes.

The second phase of the study took place in Chicago, Illinois. Snowball sampling (Patton, 1990) was used to recruit participants. First, I contacted two immigrants from Chilpancingo residing in Chicago who were acquaintances of mine. These two individuals participated in the study and helped me establish contact with other possible interviewees. A total of 10 participants were recruited and interviewed at the private home of each individual. It is important to note that a few individuals were skeptical of the study or feared that we were telemarketers or people who would divulge their personal information even after reaffirming confidentiality.

3.   Author's Role in the Research Process

I was born in Guerrero, Mexico before immigrating to the United States at the age three. I moved back to Mexico when I was 10 and later returned to Illinois at the age of 13. Further, one year of my college career was done in Mexico. When conducting this

study I was a Masters student fluent in Spanish and English with a broad knowledge of Mexican culture both in Mexico and Mexican-American culture in the United States. I have also conducted several previous interviews, surveys and focus groups with first, second, and third generation Mexican-Americans. My interest in Latin America and leisure behavior spurred an interest in how the concept of leisure can vary among cultures, how leisure is transformed across time and space, and what factors influence the understanding and the meaning of leisure.

These personal interests and knowledge have affected the interview process and data analysis in several distinct ways. First, I was familiar with the customs, norms, and values practiced in both Guerrero, Mexico and in Mexican-American neighborhoods in the United States and I was able to ask questions from a local and personalized point of view, using language and terminology that was familiar to the participants. Second, since semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection tool in this study, I was able to expand on questions that could otherwise escape our attention. For example, when a participant's statement contained several properties not previously researched, I was able to ask for better clarification; whereas an individual with no previous knowledge of the culture could find himself or herself guessing or omitting important factors and properties within the statements.

On the other hand, it is possible that my personal characteristics have had a negative impact on the data analysis portion of this study. My personal views and preconceptions could have led to biases, as it is possible that I have expected some of the information provided by the interviewees to be consistent with my personal beliefs. Additionally, some of the participants might have assumed that I had some knowledge of

the subject matter and omit certain information from their accounts. They might have also

shaped their answers to fit my assumed expectations.

4.   Data Collection

The data collection process for this study involved 14 semi-structured interviews

conducted in Chilpancingo Guerrero, Mexico and 10 semi-structured interviews

conducted with first generation immigrants from the state of Guerrero Mexico residing in

Chicago, Illinois. The format of semi-structured interviews allowed me to use a

predetermined set of questions that could further be explored during the interview process

(Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This predetermined set of questions gave me a clear guideline

regarding the topics of interest while allowing me to retain some flexibility to expand

upon any new issues that I wanted to pursue in greater depth or detail. In this study, the

interviewees were asked a series of four general questions – personal understanding of

the culture of their town/neighborhood, what is considered to be "leisure," how and when

it occurs, leisure activities and constraints on leisure among different groups of people

(based on their age, marital status, and gender), and factors that influence the

understanding and the meaning of leisure. For a detailed list of questions see Appendix

D.

The target population in Chilpancingo, Guerrero (Mexico) included native

Mexican residents, primarily of working class status. The target population in the

Chicago, IL included first generation immigrants from the state of Guerrero, Mexico, also

primarily of working class background. The participants in both locations had to be adults

who had lived in the area for at least two consecutive years prior to the time of the

interview. Participants in Chicago had to be born and raised in Guerrero, Mexico.

Although there are many individuals in the Unites States who are considered by

definition as first generation immigrants, I excluded any person who had come to the

United States prior to the age of 15. The reason for this decision was that I wanted to

interview people who had been exposed to the culture of Guerrero before immigrating to

the United States. I performed all of the recruitments and interviews myself. As a

research coordinator in various studies, I was trained in data collection techniques.

Following an IRB-approved introduction (see Appendix B: Recruitment Script), I briefly

described the research and asked for the participants' permission to conduct interviews. I

informed them that they will be participating in a research project designed to better

understand their free time and fun activities and that a comparison will be made with

immigrants from the same city now residing in the United States. All participants were

asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix C: Consent Form). The strictly voluntary

nature of their participation was stressed at the beginning of each interview. Further, it

was made clear that there was no penalty for non-participation, that all answers would

remain confidential, that pseudonyms will be used to avoid any linkages between

participant and answers, and that they could stop the interview at any time.

Following each interview, two sets of notes were created. The first set included all

the contextual information regarding the interview and information to help in the recall of

initial ideas and thoughts. The second included a preliminary interpretation of the

information in order to understand and analyze any existing or new topics that arose

during each interview. Interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one and a half

hours. All interviews in Mexico and in the United States were conducted in Spanish. The

interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. I performed all of the

transcribing and translation myself immediately after each interview. Two people fluent

in Spanish and English helped me to verify the accuracy of translation.

5.　　The Participants

The interviewees in Mexico included seven females and seven males primarily of

working class status who represented a variety of occupations (see Tables 1 -3). Their

personal stories are recapped in more detail in the Findings chapter. Names and some

other details have been changed in order to preserve confidentiality of the interviewees.

Table 1: Participants in Guerrero

	Monica	Samantha	Paulita	Yashim	Gely
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	35	19	36	19	28
Number of Years in Chilpancingo	35	16	28	19	20
Occupation	Teacher Aide	Student	Unemployed	Student	Unemployed
Marital Status	Married	Single	Married	Single	Married
Number of Children	3	0	2	0	3

Table 2: Participants in Guerrero

	Maribel	Eva	Pedro	Jose	Jorge
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male
Age	26	47	50	45	55
Number of Years in Chilpancingo	26	47	40	45	40
Occupation	Teacher	Cashier	Taxi Driver	Taxi Driver	Farm Worker
Marital Status	Married	Divorced	Married	Married	Married
Number of Children	0	3	2	3	1

	Epigmenio	Daniel	Polo	Antonio
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age	39	25	48	73
Number of Years in Chilpancingo	30	23	45	42
Occupation	Soldier	Student	Construction Worker	Retired
Marital Status	Married	Single	Married	Married
Number of Children	3	0	2	6

The interviewees in Chicago included five males and five females of medium to low socio-economic status. Tables 4-5 include a description of each of the participants.

Table 4: Participants in Chicago

	Lilia	Esther	Maria	Itzel	Violetta
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	52	44	38	27	30
Number of Years in Chilpancingo before emigrating to the US	25	30	19	19	20
Occupation	Customer Service	Teacher's Aide	Unemployed	Nanny	Maternity Leave
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married
Number of Children	3	2	3	0	1

Table 5: Participants in Chicago

	Andres	Ariel	Carlos	Chris	Jose
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age	43	44	52	29	47
Number of Years in Chilpancingo before emigrating to the US	24	19	21	15	30
Occupation	Construction Worker	Construction Worker	Taxi Driver	Taxi Driver	Postal Office Worker
Marital Status	Married	Married	Married	Single	Divorced
Number of Children	2	3	3	0	1

6.   Data Analysis

Constant comparative method was used to analyze data in this study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to Glaser and Strauss, constant comparative method facilitates generation of complex "theories of process, sequence, and change pertaining to organizations, positions, and social interaction" (pp. 113-114). Constant comparison helps the analyst to consider the diversity in the data by comparing different categories and observing any uniformities or differences. To do this, the researcher must set aside theoretical ideas that can lead to preconceptions (Urguhart, 2001). In this study, although I used several theoretical frameworks as a point of reference, I did not use these ideas to form preconceptions of the data.

Analysis of data began after the first interview had been completed and continued throughout the duration of the study. After each interview was completed I created two sets of notes. This first set of notes included contextual information related to each interview and the second included preliminary analysis of the main ideas and themes. I analyzed each interview by reading the responses and noting how each participant's answer contributed to the main questions raised in the study. When certain patterns were noticed, I would ask future interviewees to elaborate more on the topic of interest.

After all the interviews had been completed, the tape recordings were transcribed and translated into English. The transcripts were then analyzed by employing two strategies: "categorizing" and "memos." The categorization strategy allows for coding and thematic analysis which, in turn, helps to sort data into themes and issues. The data were divided into two main categories based on the location of the interviews. One set of

information came from the set of data gathered in Mexico and the other set of

information came from the data collected in the United States. By using constant

comparative method, I identified five main categories and multiple subcategories in the

data from Mexico (see Findings section for more information). These categories

included:

- Life in Chilpancingo
- Favorite ways of spending free time
- What is considered to be "leisure" among this group and when/in what situations it occurs?
- Functions of leisure activities and properties of the most satisfying leisure experiences
- Factors that shape the experience of leisure among Mexicans in Guerrero

Similar, I identified five main categories and multiple sub-categories in the data obtained

in the United States (see Findings Section for more information):

- Leisure life in the United States: Family the cornerstone of leisure
- Changes in leisure patterns among Mexican immigrants from Guerrero
- What is considered to be "leisure" among members of this group and when/in what situations it occurs?
- Functions of leisure activities and properties of the most satisfying leisure experiences
- Factors that shape the experience of leisure among Mexican immigrants in Chicago

Due to the large quantity of information that the research yielded, for the purpose of

discussion, the data were filtered to focus on issues most pertinent to the purpose of this

study. Thus, five main themes were further elaborated on in the Discussion section. These

five themes included:

- The culture of Chilpancingo, Guerrero and the importance residents of this region

place on family, family traditions, and insecurity

- What Mexicans in Guerrero and Mexicans in the United States consider to be leisure and how they define leisure
- Similarities and differences in leisure activities between Mexicans in Guerrero and Mexicans from Guerrero residing in the United States
- Similarities and differences in factors that condition leisure in Guerrero and among Mexicans from Guerrero residing in the United States
- Changes in leisure behavior among Mexicans from Guerrero caused by immigration to the United States

7.   Research Quality

To increase trustworthiness of the study, I employed peer debriefing and external audit during the four phases of the study -- literature review, developing interview questions, participant recruitment, and analysis phase. Before collecting data for this study I shared the literature review with two professors in the fields of Mexican Anthropology and Research Science and two leisure science professors. After obtaining feedback from these individuals, I also shared with them the interview questions and asked them to provide comments and feedback. An expert in Mexican anthropology and a professor who is an expert in diversity leisure research further provided suggestions as to possible research sites and recruitment methods. During the analysis phase, I presented the preliminary findings of the study to knowledgeable colleagues and professors and asked them to provide their comments on my analysis and findings. By doing peer revising and external audit, I improved the research quality of this study.

Overall, the study was designed in such a way that two sets of data could be collected – in Mexico and in the United States. It is also important to note that since it was an exploratory study and many of its findings could not be quantified, qualitative

method had to be chosen. Further, it is also important to note that although I had an

insider position in this study, I made every effort to represent the stories and comments of

the participants as accurately as possible.

IV.   FINDINGS

1.   Guerrero, Mexico

The findings of this part of the study are based on interviews with Mexicans residing in Guerrero, Mexico and are divided into five main sections. First, I discuss the general life in the town of Chilpancingo where the interviews were conducted. Second, I discuss favorite ways of spending free time among the local population. Third, I analyze the understanding of the concept of leisure among Mexicans from Guerrero. Fourth, I examine functions of leisure activities and properties of the most satisfying leisure experiences. Lastly, I examine forces that shape the experience of leisure among Mexicans from Guerrero.

1.1   Background – Life in Chilpancingo

The respondents were given an opportunity to describe how they viewed life in Chilpancingo. Most interviewees mentioned that Chilpancingo was a bureaucratic town with a service based economy. The majority of the general population was quite poor and there were few places or things to do for fun in the town itself.

1.1.1 Service Based Economy and Poverty among the Local Population

Chilpancingo is the capital city of the state of Guerrero, Mexico. My interviewees mentioned that the city was home to a substantial number of state institutions and governmental offices that oversaw the political, social and economic life of the state of Guerrero. The local economy was mainly based on bureaucracy or services to the bureaucratic society. For example, Pedro (50 years old, taxi driver) mentioned,

Chilpancingo is the capital city of Guerrero and you will find a lot of state institutions in here. All the governmental offices from the state are placed here and thus many people come to this city. If you do not work in a governmental office, then you have the options of providing services to these offices. It is like any normal town as far as culture and daily life.

Other interviewees agreed that bureaucracy was the backbone of the local

economic life, and that without it the city would be non-existent. For example,

Daniel, (25, student /waiter) mentioned,

Everyone you know is a laborer, a service provider, or a politician. The center of life revolves around the governmental offices. I think if they weren't here, this town would be non-existent. Look where we are located. On top of a mountain. There are better places that you can place this city on, or the people could choose a different town to have as a capital, like Acapulco or Zihautanejo, or even Iguala.

The majority of the participants also believed that bureaucracy provided jobs and

economic means for the local population, but also led to economic hardships

among those who were not employed in the service sector of the economy. For

example, Paulita (35, unemployed) commented,

Chilpancingo is a really political and bureaucratic town. There are a lot of politics running through the city, but the majority of the people are poor. You can really see where the money is going.

Polo (48, construction worker) agreed,

I had a job but lost it because the economy here has been decreasing constantly. You see lot more people than before and since we don't produce anything as a town, we rely on the money that comes from the politicians' salaries. Chilpancingo, if you don't know, is the capital city of Guerrero. All the offices of the state are here, so there is a big disparity between the politicians and the people. We the people have a hard time finding good jobs. If you don't own your own business, then you rely on the government jobs.

Other participants also commented that the city of Chilpancingo and the state of Guerrero

were very poor, and although Chilpancingo was the political, social and financial

headquarters of the state, it lacked opportunities for many of its residents. For example, Monica (45, teacher's aide) stated,

> *If you do not work with the government, then there are very few jobs you can have here. You can either be a teacher, like me, and be part of the education system or you can just work in a store, or be part of the service group. They usually have stores or just work in them. The job market is really bad. I think those who want to do something with their lives have to get away from Chilpancingo. And that usually happens. Like my son who had to leave... In this town either you work in government or you simply have a business. Both are really hard to do so the majority of the people work in farms and low level jobs. It is a poor town despite the fact that there are many government offices. You have to keep in mind that Guerrero is not really a major state in the country.*

The scarcity of jobs has forced many individuals, such as Monica's son, to consider emigrating to other cities and towns around Mexico, and to other countries in search of better opportunities. For example, Daniel (25, student/waiter) mentioned,

> *This town does not have a lot of jobs. I am young and want to leave to Canada with my brother to do something with my life. I went to school, but I really don't see myself living in this place unless I find a job with the government. I can be a bureaucrat, but, to be honest, that job is not really honest and doesn't pay that much. Either you are corrupt to have a decent salary or you must leave to find better jobs.*

Gely (28, unemployed) also mentioned her desire to leave the area. She commented,

> *I had to leave Chilpancingo because there were no jobs for me. I wanted to do something with my life. I eventually came back after having realized that it's not easy out there either. I am now a stay at home mom. But, to be honest, I don't want my kids to grow too long in Chilpancingo.*

Both Monica and Gely believed that in Chilpancingo not only them, but also their children lacked professional growth opportunities. As a consequence of the poverty among the general population, Chilpancingo also offered few places or things to do for fun.

1.1.2 Limited Leisure Opportunities

Interestingly, although Chilpancingo was home to many government offices, the
majority of the participants believed that it lacked adequate resources and provided few
recreational opportunities for its residents. For example, Daniel (25, student/waiter)
commented,

> *To be honest, I hate this town. There are very limited things that you can
> do here. It's just that businesses don't survive whenever they are placed.
> When you have a new business come up, it goes bankrupt fast. The
> economy is not good to have venues that require high expenses. They had
> a bowling alley not far from here a while back, but it didn' survive a
> year. It's just expensive for most people [to participate in these activities].*

Similar to Daniel, many interviewees commented that recreation that was available in
Chilpancingo was too expensive to participate in. Salaries of many people were
insufficient to allow them to pay for movie tickets or for other entertainment
opportunities. As a substitute, low cost leisure was chosen. For example, Jose (45, Taxi
Driver) mentioned,

> *I don't think anyone has much to do here in Chilpancingo for fun as far as
> places to go. We do have a couple of movie theaters but it's really
> expensive for the kind of salaries that we have. It is cheaper to buy a
> bootleg, even though people know it's wrong, at least your whole family
> can see it. I am a taxi driver and I don't make that great of money. When I
> take my kids some place, it's either swimming or a movie. Otherwise, they
> find their own fun by staying at the computer. They just play games there.
> When I was a kid I would play more outside, but this town is getting
> bigger and more unsafe. It's not really safe to have them outside. I do take
> them to their running courses. Like, they run in a track team… Or simply
> just a movie, a dinner, or swimming. That is about all.*

Many participants commented that people in Chilpancingo would go to the Zocalo and
Alameda for fun or just to hang out. For example, Jose mentioned "Most people just go to
the Zocalo or Alameda to hang out there." The Zocalo and Alameda are green spaces that

are located in the central part of the city. Given that many Zocalos and Alamedas are surrounded by business, churches and government offices, they serve as business, political and religious centers of the town.

1.2   Favorite Ways of Spending Free Time

The participants were given the opportunity to explain, in their own words, how they spent their free time and the activities they engaged in for fun. Further, the respondents were encouraged to speculate on differences in leisure activities and the time devoted to leisure between people based on their gender, age, and family status.

1.2.1   Spending Time with the Family

Lives of the majority of the participants revolved around their families. It had a direct effect on people's leisure patterns. For instance, it was a custom among the interviewees to spend most of their leisure time with their family and, for many of them, family time was the most enjoyable part of leisure. Some interviewees commented that they would sacrifice other ways of spending free time just to be with their family. Yashim (19, female student) remarked,

> *People here are very family oriented. You can still see a lot of family values. So life and time here is spent around the family. It is typical for mom [to] take the kids to school and for the father [to] work at whatever he does. Women are starting to have more and more jobs, but they still are in charge of maintaining the household.*

Maribel (26, teacher), similar to the majority of the participants, believed that daily life in Chilpancingo revolved around people's families. She commented,

> *I think people spend their time here in Chilpancingo around the family. I*

mean, family values are still very well placed. So a typical day is that of children going to school, then home with the family. If you are young, you can hang out with your friends for a little while after school, but then you go home to help at whatever must be done at home. Adults work and come home. Then you usually have dinner at 5-7pm. Many businesses close during this time because their own workers must go home with their families. Everything is done around the family.

The majority of the participants believed that spending time with the family was the highlight of their leisure experience. For example, Jorge (55, taxi driver) and Daniel (25, student) commented that the best way to spend free time for them was to be with their family. According to Daniel:

I think most people here are like me, they just spend a lot of time with the family. Since it's a small city, they [society] know you well. I have been here my whole life, so I know pretty much everyone. Although there are a lot more people now. I like being with my family first, then I do whatever I have to do.

Jorge mentioned,

I think the best way that I like to spend my time is with my family. I work like 60-70 hours a week and I do it for my family. So when I'm done working, I like to spend time with them. We go to this swimming pool near the edge of the city and just relax on the weekends. Now that you ask me this question, I do not spend too much time with them like I used to do. They usually complain that I am never home, or that I'm working a lot because I must work on weekends as well. When I do get a chance, I like to take them somewhere. Just us.

Daniel believed that almost all residents of Chilpancingo shared his preference for spending free time with their family, although local customs might have been changing due to new people migrating to the city. Similar to other interviewees, Jorge's life revolved around his family. Although he worked over 60 hours a week to sustain his family, whenever possible he would spend his free time with them. Monica (45, teacher's aide) and Jose (45, taxi driver) told a similar story about how as parents they preferred to spend time with their children. Monica stated,

I don't see me having too much fun without my family. I love my children. I mean, they can annoy me, but just by being with them I feel that I have a fulfilling life. Like they tell me their stories about their friends and school, and I remember when I was a young person. I don't mind them telling me about their crazy life in school. I enjoy it.

Jose commented,

I love spending my time with my family. I have friends, but they have families too, so whenever we can, we just combine the families so the children can play with each other and we can just take a few beers and relax. But even if we don't do that, I just like coming home and being with my family. I don't make a lot of money but I was able to make this really small pool in the backyard of my house. It needs some serious fixing, but I did it because I wanted for my family to be together. As soon as I can fix it, I want my children to go in there and bring their friends.

Interestingly, many businesses in Chilpancingo would close their doors at certain times of the day to allow people to spend time with their families. Moreover, Eva (47, cashier) mentioned that people were judged based on how well they took care of their families and how well they kept up their households, suggesting that not only people preferred to spend the majority of their free time with their families, but also that it might have been a social expectation. Eva mentioned,

I think a normal day in Chilpancingo is simply like this: Everyone does their activities in the morning. Children go to school, parents go to work. At around 4pm everyone is back home to eat dinner. Then people go to the stores, or stay at home. Children play and adults just relax or do their evening activities. It is very common to visit other family members or just talk with neighbors. People and families are rated by how they hold their households. You can say that everything revolves around the family. You are expected to take care of your family.

According to Eva, family time and activities may not only be a personal choice, but an expectation which has been internalized to the point that fun time and fun activities revolve around it.

1.2.2 Going out with Friends

As the majority of the participants reported, one of their favorite ways of spending free time was socializing with friends. Spending time with friends was particularly popular among the younger interviewees. For many of them spending time with friends was an option after spending time with the family. For example, Samantha (19, student/coffee shop worker) mentioned,

> *I like spending time with my friends. I like going out with them and just spending time laughing and joking around. My mom works a lot and I don't have a dad so I just spend a lot of times with my friends.*

Interestingly, Samantha revealed that she socialized with friends when spending time with her immediate family was not on option. Others, like Daniel (25, student/waiter) commented,

> *After spending time with my family I like hanging out with my friends. I think that's what most young people do. They spend time with their friends. If you go at around 3-4pm when everyone is getting out from school or work, you will see the main plazas and parks full of young people and children just sitting there. It's like gossip time. You find the more popular guys and girls in certain plazas, usually the most popular. It's like they take that little area as their own. Either way, you just hang out and talk. It's also a time to spend time with your girlfriend before she has to go home.*

Daniel mentioned an important role plazas played in shaping leisure lives of young people. They not only seemed to provide spaces where the youth could hang out with friends, but also a popularity/power structure among the youth was established based on whom they spent their time with and which plaza they visited.

1.2.3 Going to the Main Plaza

Visiting plazas was one of the favorite ways of spending free time not only among the youth but also among the adult residents of the city. The fact that plazas were surrounded by businesses and government offices made them convenient places to visit and spend time with friends. Polo (45, construction worker) mentioned,

> *I like going to the Zocalo to talk to friends and colleagues. I think you can find anything you want there and it is just fun to see a lot of people at the same time. At around 5pm you see so many people, so many familiar faces that I just like to sit there and wave to anyone I know. Also I eat a little dinner there, at some local restaurant and go back to work. It's just a nice place to eat and see friends.*

Angelica (28, unemployed) mentioned that going to the plaza was a good way to meet new people, especially people of the opposite sex:

> *I like going to the plazas. They have many things there and you just find so many people there. It is a good way to meet guys too. If you go to the main plazas, you better go dressed up because you will see so many people. I go there and just use an Internet café that they have there because I don't have Internet at home. Then I just walk around, talk to people if I know them, and then just go home.*

Jorge (55, farm worker) mentioned that although new commercial centers were being built in the city and many people did not use the Zocalo as the main center of business, the Zocalo still offered many entertainment opportunities:

> *I think the central part of the city is the Zocalo, but you know, there are also some commercial areas coming up that you no longer go to the Zocalo so much. But nonetheless, I like going there because you can just find the most things to do there. They have stores, books, offices, food, and a lot of things that at least if you go and you are bored, you can find something small to entertain yourself with.*

Going to plazas where one could find local vendors was a main attraction for many residents of Chilpancingo. It provided opportunity for social interaction and "window

shopping" for those who could not afford other forms of leisure.

1.2.4 Leisure among Children

Interviewees revealed that leisure activities in which children in Chilpancingo participated in were affected by safety concerns and traffic problems in the growing urban environment. Most organized activities were provided by the local school system, as other recreational opportunities for the youth were scarce and too expensive for the parents to afford.

1.2.4.1 Children Spending Free Time in Close Vicinity of their Homes

Given that Chilpancingo has grown from a medium size town of around 40,000 residents about 10 years ago, to a city of around 300,000 residents in 2009, many mothers preferred for their children to participate in leisure activities in the vicinity of their house. Safety and problems with transportation were the main reasons many mothers wanted their children to stay close to their home. For instance, Monica (47, teacher's aide) commented,

> *I like having my children near me, so my children usually play near my house whenever they want to have fun with other children. I think most moms do this because they are really concerned about the safety of the children. Also, this city is growing pretty fast and there are a lot more people than what you used to have. I think it's just a common norm that when your children are going to go outside to play, they just go near your house, to a neighbor's house, or your own house and thus you can have an eye over them.*

Monica mentioned that it was the norm in Chilpancingo that most mothers would keep an eye on their and their close neighbors' children. Gely (35, unemployed) made a similar comment:

I let my kids go to other people's houses as long as they are near mine. I just feel safer like that. I can't really drive my kids to another house. I don't have a car, so for me to go all the way to the house of whoever they want to be at, it just would take so long. I wouldn't be able to do that.

Due to the growing population of Chilpancingo, the city had more traffic and dangers. Many people who were born in Chilpancingo believed that children did not have the same opportunities to play outside as in the past. Further, they felt that the city lacked outdoor leisure spaces where children could safely participate in physical activity, which lead to decreased amount of exercise they were getting. TV/computer use also contributed to the problem. For example, Polo (45, construction worker) mentioned,

It's bad. I don't think children can play like I used to. I used to just run on the streets because this was only a town, so we could play outside, and when a car passed by we would just be careful and let the car pass. Now, children don't have many spaces to play freely. They just play at home, stay with computers and TVs or they find their own fun. Little kids are even tagging graffiti on the walls. If you don't provide services to the children, they'll find their own things. No services and no space is means for trouble.

Polo believed that many problems troubling the city, including graffiti, could be attributed to the lack of recreational opportunities for children. Antonio (73, retired) also mentioned a similar problem:

I am a retired man and for so long I have been seeing that this city is going bad. We have new problems we didn't used to have and the children are the ones that suffer the most. Look at the streets, you see no kids playing outside. Safety though is a major major concern. Where are these kids going to end up if they play in these streets with these new problems we have? We have graffiti all over the place, and we have even drug crime on the streets now. I wouldn't let my children play if I still had any of that age.

The population growth in Chilpancingo had a negative impact on leisure behavior of many individuals. Instead of having more leisure opportunities, the growth of the city led to increased traffic, crime, and fewer spaces per capita for people to recreate.

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1.2.4.2 Few Opportunities for Children to Participate in Structured Activities

Interviewees believed that children in Chilpancingo had few opportunities to participate in structured leisure activities due to the lack of institutional support and funding. For instance, Maribel (26, teacher) commented,

> *I don't think children have a really good opportunity to practice structured activities. I mean, you have leagues for children but these are really reserved for those who can pay the fees. A lot of kids just play at home, or near their houses, but they do not have really structured activities.*

Epigmenio (39, soldier) agreed,

> *Chilpancingo has nothing for the kids. I mean, I tried putting mine with a soccer league, but they didn't train them properly. My children were just getting hot and not really learning anything. There are some courses out there but not really for fun. They have some computer and English courses at night for children, but if you are talking about fun activities in which they can learn something while they play, we have nothing.*

Other interviewees commented that the majority of structured recreational opportunities were provided by the schools. They were popular since they were free of charge and provided safe and controlled environment for the children. For instance, Jose (45, taxi Driver) and Epigmenio (39, soldier) mentioned,

> *Jose: Schools provide the most structured activities for children. They have some leagues in there, but they just compete between schools. You don't really have much outside of schools for children to participate in sports, etc. There is this center at the edge of town call El Deportivo. There you can take your children to practice sports. It is a sports facility but to be honest there are not programs. I pay this guy $30 pesos a day for him to train my children to run. They run in little matches that he organizes but the guy is not even involved with the facility. He does it on his own, and sometimes he is very disorganized.*

> *Epigmenio: Chilpancingo sucks at providing services for the children. They did create this museum called la Avispa which is a children's museum and they do have a few things in there, but tell me, how can people afford going to a museum all the time? It's just a one- time thing and then that's it. Schools provide the most resources to the children. They learn different things there, depending on the school. For example, they have school plays and sports and just different little fun activities for the children.*

Many interviewees blamed the City for not providing adequate number of leisure opportunities for the children. Most parents and children who wished to participate in structured activities could only find them in the school system or in few public spaces that residents felt were inadequate for their needs.

1.2.5 Leisure among Adolescents

Similar to children, adolescents in Chilpancingo had very limited opportunities to participate in structured leisure activities. Cost and lack of facilities and programs were the major obstacles identified by the interviewees. For example, Polo (48, construction worker) commented,

> *I have two teens and I do see them wanting to go to more activities but there are not available. Then if you want to put a business you don't know if you will succeed. It's hard to get people to pay for fun.*

The younger participants wanted to participate in structured activities but felt the available options were very limited. For example, Yashim (19, student) who was a dance teacher commented, "I don't think it's that people don't like structured activities, it's just that we don't have many. I teach a dancing class, but to be honest, participation rates are not that high. It's very unfortunate."

As it was described in the previous theme, the majority of youths' leisure involved socializing with friends. Young people found their own ways to have fun by visiting zocalos, theaters, cafes, and night clubs. As Jose mentioned, "We have a few clubs here. They have become pretty popular and that is mostly what young

people do. They go dancing. Otherwise, they spend it with friends." Monica and

Epigmenio (39, soldier) agreed,

> *Monica: Chilpancingo really lacks places for young people. You can go to a movie theater, or a café shot, or dancing. From that, there is nothing for them. They have to find their own ways to have fun.*
>
> *Epigmenio: I think youth here have it hard. It is a time of their life that they are making quick changes, and I just think they just want to be with friends and watch movies. Also, it's the place to have a girlfriend. I mean, if you have a girlfriend, either you go visit her or take her to a movie. A movie is more private so that is pretty much what they do.*

Daniel (25, student/waiter) was quite critical about young people "just wasting

their time." According to him, those who wanted to take advantage of leisure

opportunities had to travel to Acapulco. In his words:

> *Young people just waste their time with their friends. It's just the norm. Go out with your friends, go dancing, go to a movie and that's it. I wish we had more places to go. If you really are tired to be here, then you go to Acapulco which is not far from here. But that involves a higher expense that very few of us can take.*

Although the opinions of the respondents with respect to the benefits of socializing for

the youth varied, most of them agreed that Chilpancingo offered very few opportunities

and spaces where young people could participate in alternative leisure activities.

1.2.6   Leisure among Women

Women in Chilpancingo placed high priority on family recreation. Social

expectations and norms further strengthened their desire to take part in family leisure.

Women who were single had more time and freedom to participate in individual activities

than woman who were married and who had more family responsibilities.

1.2.6.1 Placing High Priority on Family Recreation

The majority of female interviewees expressed desire to share leisure activities with their families. Although women were expected to be the care providers, such expectations seemed to be well internalized by most women. Few of the female interviewees voiced the need or desire to be apart from their families, even when participating in individual leisure activities. For example, Monica (45, teacher's aide) mentioned,

> *I don't see myself far from my family when having fun. I mean, my fun surrounds me being with my family. I like being home not because I want to clean or do things, but I like seeing my children and having fun with them. When they are happy I am happy.*

It is likely that Monica internalized her maternal role and desired to be with her children and family most of the time. Paulita (35, unemployed) mentioned something similar,

> *I think women are expected to be the home care providers. With that being said, they have to find ways to have fun with their families. I don't see them really having fun by themselves. Either you are with the children, your husband, or your friends. When they go out with friends it's just a cup of coffee or a simple chat.*

The majority of younger female interviewees also felt the need to spend their free time with their families and did not believe that this has been forced upon them by the social norms. For example, Yashim (19, female student) mentioned,

> *Women are used to being with their family, so they just have fun with them, very rarely alone. So it would be uncommon to see women in a bar by themselves if they are married. If they are single, it's normal, but if they are married they usually find fun with the family... I am young but even at my age I just like to be with my family. I don't do many things if my family does not approve of them. I like being with my family and just having fun with them. Married women have to be with their family. Well not by force, but it's just norm.*

There were other young interviewees, however, who resisted the idea that women had to be with their families in order to have fun. They believed that women should be able to separate their leisure activities from their family responsibilities. For instance, as Samantha (19, student/coffee shop worker) mentioned,

> *Women here are so used to just not being free. They have to be with the family all the time and, well, I don't want to be like that. I think women should be able to go out more often besides a coffee shop or to buy things. Men don't go out much either though, so I think it's both ways.*

Daniel, (25, student/waiter) added,

> *Women, if they are married they tend to just be with the family. But that also means that we, the young ones, must be with the family. So it goes both ways. I wish there was more separation. It's not exaggerated but it is a problem. We will see if the new generations change this.*

Several other interviewees also commented on differences in leisure behavior of women based on their marital status.

1.2.6.2 Differences in Leisure Behavior Based on Women's Marital Status

As hinted by Yashim, Samantha, and Daniel, there were clear differences in the leisure behavior of married and single women. Married women tended to be more dedicated to family life and to their husbands. Going out with friends meant going out mostly with female friends to places where they could chat or hang out. Single women were given relatively more freedom to go out with friends of both genders. As Gely (28, unemployed) explained,

> *Married women dedicate most of their time to the family. I think that when you are young and single, you can just have fun. It doesn't mean you get to disrespect yourself, but that you are more free to do what you think its best. You can to go out with whoever you want, unless you have a relationship with a guy. I think that when you are married you make a commitment to have fun with the family. You still get personal time, but not as before.*

Younger participants also believed that this difference in behavior between married and single women was natural. As Yashim (19, female student) commented,

Married woman are dedicated to the house and single women have more freedom to choose their fun. Many people think that single women just do whatever they want, but it's more that when you are single you still get to choose who you want to be with or what career path you want to go for. When you are married, a lot of your time goes to the family. That's just normal.

Many participants mentioned that most single women had the freedom to go out and visit places where they could find a partner. This liberty was not extended to married women who no longer had the reason to visit such leisure locations. As Monica (45, teacher's aide) for example explained,

Well it's obvious that married woman just do not do the same things single women do. Marriage is a big thing in this town. When you are single, well you are trying to find a partner so you go to places that you will find a partner. If you are married, you have no business going to club to dance by yourself or with girlfriends. If you do go, then you stay with your group. You do not go dancing to find guys. Or if it's to dance, you make it obvious that you are there with your girls.

In general, most respondents believed that married woman had more responsibilities that prevented them from participating in leisure activities outside of the family and household. Although they experienced constraints that restricted their participation in these activities, many women had internalized these responsibilities to the point that they no longer felt like giving up their free time to be with their family was an obligation.

1.2.7   Leisure among Men

Interviewees revealed that men tended to include family in most of their leisure pursuits, yet had more freedom than women to go out with friends and acquaintances

while being apart from the family. At these gatherings, men usually incorporated alcohol as means to facilitate socialization among friends.

1.2.7.1 Leisure Involving Alcohol and Get-Togethers with Friends

The majority of the participants revealed that men's leisure revolved around get-togethers, drinking and chatting with friends. Drinking alcohol seemed to be one of the favorite activities men chose to do in order to relax after a long day or week of work. Samantha (19, student/coffee shop worker), Epigmenio (39, soldier), Monica (45, teacher's aide), Gely (28, unemployed), Jose (45, taxi driver), and Jorge (55, farm worker) commented about men's most popular ways of spending free time: "Men drink to have fun" (Samantha), "We drink together, and just talk" (Epigenio), "Men just get together and drink and relax" (Monica, 35), "They drink and drink" (Gely), "We drink to socialize with other people" (Jose), and "After a day of hard labor, we just have a beer to relax. We also play pool, poker or dominos" (Jorge).

Although alcohol seemed to be the main distracter for men, many of the activities chosen by men also involved family. Many times, drinking alcohol came in conjunction with being with the family. As Jose (45, taxi driver) explained,

> *I mean we do drink, but a lot of the times the family is there with us. I like to spend time with the family, and [if] I can drink a beer with my friends and their families, that's really great… Yes, I have to take care of my family and even friends when we do something for fun. I don't have to, but I have this unwritten obligation to listen to them and take care of them.*

Certain gender-role expectations also had an effect on the leisure of men. For instance, men were expected to provide for their families and to take them out to have fun. As Monica (45, teacher aide) explained,

Men have fun with their families too. They are expected to take us somewhere or pay for the weekend expenses. Like, I don't cook on a weekend because he is supposed to come home and spend time with the family and take us out to eat somewhere.

Polo also helped me understand how men experienced leisure while facilitating leisure engagements of their families. He mentioned, "I like to take my daughters out and my wife to a nice place to relax. I take them to the river, or to go swimming. Just spend a nice day with the family." Younger men also expressed their strong family values that affected their leisure. For instance, as Daniel (waiter, 25) commented,

Even though I'm out having fun activities I know that I must be back at certain hours of the day and that I must still keep track of time and responsibilities. For example, I must be sure that if I'm out near a place that my family needs something from, I will just buy it.

Although men participated in social gatherings that did not involve their family members and often incorporated alcohol, they still placed a high priority on family recreation. Further, men were often expected to provide financial and moral support and to facilitate their families' leisure engagements.

1.2.7.2 Men Having More Freedom in Leisure than Women

The majority of the interviewees agreed that men had more freedom in deciding what leisure activities to participate in than women. Some of the participants could not explain the reason behind this state of affairs. Epigmenio (39, soldier), for example, mentioned that "Men really just go out with other men to have fun. They do have more freedom than women but I would not know why." Others had strong opinions about why women had less freedom in their leisure than men and attributed it to the male-dominated culture of Mexico. As Samantha (19, student) commented,

Men have a lot more freedom than women. I think they just think they can go out and do whatever they want and the women [should] shut up. Look, there is a man I know who is looking for a woman who can serve him. Other men I know look for a woman who can serve them and attend them. They seek the woman who [would] take care of them. Most women do feel abused. Not to the full extent of physical abuse, but more of an abuse where the woman feels utilized. Sometimes this is not the fault of the man; many women do this with joy. Yet, many older men take advantage of this culture.

Daniel (25, waiter) further explained the relative position of men and women in Mexican society and how it affected their leisure behavior. His discussion of the evolving gender roles and expectations placed on men and women with respect to leisure is particularly worth noting.

I'm going to be honest. I think young women now will not tolerate a man who is a macho. I guess this is a good thing, but it can also be dangerous if they are not careful. Many men like me do care about women. We want them to feel free, not repressed. Yet some women have taken an extreme view and now do not know what role they should have inside a relationship or at home. They want a man who is a gentleman, yet they do not behave ladylike. Yet, still men have more rights than woman and this is wrong. For example, they can go out more. They can cheat, and although you will make the girl really unhappy and society thinks this is wrong, you are forgiven a lot faster than if you were a woman. Also, for some reason they let us [men] be dumb and thus we find different ways to have fun without being too afraid of the consequences. We know it's wrong, yet the temptation of doing something bad for fun outweighs the minimal consequences we will suffer. Women also have fun, yet they do have less freedom than men. They cannot commit too many mistakes because society will criticize them a lot more than if they were men. It is expected that they should be gentle, careful, family oriented, and smart [laughter]. It is really bad!

Polo's (48, construction worker) comments provided further insight into the "macho culture" and gender roles typical to many Mexican families. He used examples of leisure spaces reserved for men to illustrate the relative freedom afforded to men in Mexico.

A man who respects a woman loves his woman. He protects her. But there is also a man who is problematic. He likes to go out to distract himself. These places were made for men. As a family they go out with friends and with the extended

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family, yet men have another space that women cannot go to. They have this space because culturally society has given men this space to go to and women do not fit here. Women have this space too but it's with the family and with the church. Women have groups too, but it is not for fun. Men who do not go out as much they have come into agreement with the wife. Such as going to places only where the women can go. This percentage is very minimal, though! It would be like a 5%!

Some of the participants, such as Paulita (35, unemployed) tried to explain the origin of

the "macho culture" in Mexico and used involvement in leisure activities (computer

classes) to illustrate her point.

Men are supposed to be the providers of the family. For example, I take a computer class and a man in the class mentioned that he wants to study computers because he is the provider of the family. If he falls behind with society, then the whole family falls behind. He feels responsible that he is the provider of the house, but because of this responsibility the woman stays at home. Culturally, the woman looks bad if she is the provider and if the man is being lazy, there is a lot of criticism because he is not even responsible. This comes from Biblical stuff, saying that the man is the provider. This does not take anything away from the woman, because it leaves her and the children protected under the man's support. It is a hierarchy, the children follow the mom, the mom follows the man, the man follows the church, and the church follows God. They all have roles to play. They must complete these roles.

Yashim (19, student) believed gender roles and freedom to participate in leisure were

closely tied to men's and women's socio-economic status. In her own words:

Men can do anything they want, but these are machos. Men do not even feel like machos, they just think they are following the tradition. Some girls go to school, but they are taught to be submissive to what the man wants. Women do not have fun. Some women who are married even complain that they don't even go to the movie theater once they are married. Women's freedom in Mexico has a lot to do with social status. Poor women do not have anything! The difference comes when you belong to a higher social class. When you have a higher social class women can go, for example, clubbing. If you belong to the middle class or upper class you are not really criticized as much. You have to keep in mind that in Mexico dancing is different than in many countries. I know that in many countries dancing is really sexual. [In Mexico] dancing is sensual, but limits are intrinsically placed. Nonetheless, middle class and upper class women are given more freedom, mainly because they are more educated

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which in turn makes them more liberal individuals. Poor women depend a lot on men, so they get stuck to what they say. Since he is the one provider, she tends to follow what he says. On the contrary, a rich woman can decide for herself.

Yashim's comment illustrated that although machismo is still pervasive in the Mexican culture, socio-economic mobility among some segments of the population and among women in particular is changing this dynamic. Since wealthier women can provide for themselves, they have more control over their lives and more freedom to choose their leisure opportunities than less economically fortunate women. Poor women tend to follow a more "macho culture" because men are the one's providing financially for the family.

Monica and Samantha explained how the freedom that men have is associated with many rules, expectations, and responsibilities. Family values should always guide men's behavior. Men should not only provide resources for the family, but they are supposed to represent their family when they are outside of the home. Men are also expected to respect their love relationships and to be faithful to their partners, even if they are not married. As Samantha (19, student) explained,

Single men are supposed to be faithful and respectful. Although many young individuals are not, there is still this expectation that they value relationships. These relationships can be among friends, lovers, or the family. What I mean is that men are not literally just completely free to do what they want. Yes, they have more freedom than women to go out, mainly because our parents do not let girls to just go out at night. They think it is dangerous and that we as women should really take care of how society will see us. Men, they have more freedom because parents really feel safer with them outside at night. They feel they will know how to protect themselves. Yet, in general, if a man is being a player or is not respecting his family or relationships, then he is really seen as a bad individual. He has to portray family values and respect to woman at all times.

Monica (45, teacher aid) further explained the social expectations that guided men and women's leisure behavior.

> *Men have different rules than women. They separate these rules based on what is expected of them. Society separates the expectations of men and women. Men do a lot of things without telling anyone. Society does expect men to be more in the outdoors. A man who stays at home all the time is seen as lazy. The men, young or old, are supposed to know how the world works. He is supposed to protect his family and relationships. I think the biggest concern about men being free is infidelity. Although infidelity is always present, neither men nor woman are supposed to be unfaithful. The next big concern is your behavior. Mexico is a very Catholic country and a lot of the expectations come from religion. You cannot cheat and you cannot behave ungodly. Men are supposed to work hard and take care of the family. They are supposed to learn how to be strong yet respectful.*

Although most participants agreed that a visible gender hierarchy was still pervasive in Mexico and that it affected people's leisure behavior, there were also other, however, who believed that there were not that many differences in the extent of freedom afforded to men and women in their leisure. For instance, Monica (45, teacher aid) mentioned,

> *I think because men are supposed to provide for the family, they are out there more. So they can easily just do some fun activity before coming home. It is still wrong if they cheat, but they do have their games and guy poker nights to play. But to be honest, I don't think there is much of a difference between men and women.*

Gely (28, unemployed) commented that although she believed gender hierarchy still existed in Mexico, both men and women were afforded many freedoms in their leisure.

> *Older men are used to the dynamic, it is expected. It's not like they don't see you [a woman] as an equal but that's their role. I understand it, I don't blame it, but I don't agree with it. If a woman also works outside the home, I would like the man to work at home too. Think about it, women can also do things before the man comes home. Everyone does it! Oh, I went grocery shopping, but I went to the shoe store as well. They go out to places and not mention it. They hide it because perhaps there is this expectation that they shouldn't do that. They don't want to deal with the consequences. Yet both men and women have fun outside the home.*

The variety of perspectives on the extent of freedom in leisure afforded to men and women indicates the complexity among the views on gender roles in the Mexican culture. While the younger interviewees tended to believe that women and men should have equal amount of freedom in their leisure, their older counterparts still held on to more patriarchal beliefs. Further, some respondents believed that religion and economics played a major role in why women tend to follow the culture of machismo. There were also those who believed that although many Mexican women complain about the pervasive "machismo culture," in reality some of them engage in similar things as men, yet do so in a more discreet way.

1.2.7.3 Differences in Leisure Behavior Based on Men's Marital Status

Most interviewees believed that there were visible differences between the leisure behavior of single and married men. The main difference was related to the commitment to families which was expected of married men. Single men had a little more freedom when going out with friends, even when they were committed in a relationship. For example, Jorge (55, farm worker) explained,

> *Single men can go out with girls and have fun. By that I mean that even if you have a girlfriend, you can go out. Married men are expected to be faithful so they should avoid places were hooking with girls is common.*

Andres provided a clear example of the big difference between single and married men. He mentioned that: "There is a big difference. When you are single you don't care about anyone except your parents. When you are married, you must stick by your family."

Similar to women, single men had more freedom than married men mainly because they had less obligations and responsibilities toward their immediate families.

Although single men participated in more leisure activities outside the home, family values still played an important role in their leisure behavior.

1.3 What is considered to be Leisure among this Group and When / In What Situations it Occurs?

Participants were given an opportunity to explain in their own words what they considered to be leisure by identifying what activities, at what time, and what state of mind was needed to have an enjoyable experience.

1.3.1 How the Concept of Leisure is Labeled among Members of this Group?

When asked "What do you call the activities that you do for fun?" all of the respondents replied "free time." Only three participants called it *Ocio*, meaning "to be lazy" in Spanish. Other interviewees found similarities between free time, hobbies, recreation, and sports, yet felt that the best word to describe any activity that could be done for fun, for relaxation, and for enjoyment was "free time." *Ocio* had a negative connotation and was rarely used by the participants. For example, Polo (48, construction worker) mentioned,

> *Ocio means "to be lazy," but you can have fun while you are doing Ocio. For example, if you are watching TV you are being ocio. But it mostly means doing nothing. I think we call them "free time." We also have hobbies and recreation. Sports are sports, they can be for fun, but that's a separate category. You can do sports during your free time, but it doesn't mean they are fun. Some sports, like running, they are not fun. But you can enjoy them.*

Some interviewees used other words besides "free time" to describe leisure, yet in each of their responses the notion of time was brought up. Monica, for example, mentioned that fun activities could be called "recreation." She commented, "[Recreation] is like a *time* [emphasis added] that you use to recreate and have fun. Free *time* [emphasis

added] sometimes can be interpreted but people do understand it as a time to do fun activities." Maribel (26, teacher) used her own word to described leisure. She called it "fun time." In her own words:

> *You can say "fun time." A time that is for fun. There is really no word that encompasses "fun time" but "fun time." Free time is also a good comparison for that time. But not all free time is fun time.*

Her comment was interesting, as she made a conscious distinction between the concept of "free time" that potentially could be used for a number of different activities and "fun time." Although fun time can happen during free time, free time is not always considered a time of joy.

1.3.2 Defining "Free Time"

In order to help us understand the meaning of leisure among Mexicans from Guerrero, participants were given an opportunity to explain what "free time" meant to them. When asked about their definition of "free time" and what "free time" could be used for, most respondents replied that "free time" happened when they were out of work. Jose (45, taxi driver) mentioned, "Free time is when you are out of work, when you have free time to do whatever you need to do or want to do." According to Monica (45, teacher aide): "I think free time is when you are out of work, and you can choose to do whatever you want with your time." Daniel (25, waiter) commented,

> *Free time is that time that you can just do whatever you want to do with it. It's like the time you get after you work, or have done what you consider work, which can be different to different people. I mean, I study, so when I'm done with school, that is my free time. I can do homework or play. It is my time.*

Many interviewees also believed that free time could be used to do house labor or chores.

That is, free time could be used for work purposes, but only if it was a personal choice.

The respondents made comments such as:

> Epigmenio (39, soldier): *Free time is that time for you. I usually fix the house in my free time… I mean it's my time, I don't have to do the work inside my house. It can be postponed, so when I have some free time I fix my house.* [Do you enjoy fixing your house?] *Yes and no. I just use that free time to do some chores that I must do. I can fix the car, fix my house, or just relax. It's free. No one is paying me for that time, so I get to do whatever I want with it.*

> Monica (45, teacher aide): *In my free time, I just spend it with the family. Sometimes I clean the house.* [Are you supposed to enjoy your free time?] *No. Free time is just time. It's not supposed to be fun. You just have the freedom to do whatever you want. I can clean, cook, or have fun.*

> Yashim (19, student): *In my free time I go to my grandma's house and help her with her activities.* [Do you enjoy doing this?] *I like spending time with my grandma, but I just go voluntarily because I know she needs help. I have some extra time so I go help her.*

> Polo (48, construction worker): *In my free time sometimes I go shopping for groceries to help my wife out. She works too and has very limited time at times. So I go for her.* [Is it a necessity to go buy groceries, or do you go because you enjoy it?] *I go because it is needed and I have some free time to go.*

Many of the interviewees commented that although they had free time they could spend

on fun activities, they chose to use it for work-like pursuits. Although they did not

completely enjoy these tasks, they were still done out of their own free will.

When asked when their free time was truly free, most respondents replied that it

was the portion of the time after work when they were free from any outside

responsibilities. For example, Jorge (55, farm worker) commented,

> *Free time to me is that time I get to enjoy and do whatever I want to do. I can do whatever I want because no one is bossing me. I am the boss of that time. It's like a soccer game. You can play for the 45 minutes each half is supposed to be, but then you have some extra time given by the referee in the end. That is like free time. You get more time to do whatever*

you want to do. So you can go dancing, or relax, or just go anywhere you want. You can use it to get more work time.

For many interviewees, however, family responsibilities did not belong to the sphere of "occupation." For example, Gely (28, unemployed) mentioned,

Hmm, free time is the time that you are free from people's orders. [You said before that you spend your free time with the family. If you spend it with them, and still have obligations to do family things, such as taking care of the children, do you still consider that free time?] *I do. Because I choose to be with my family. I like it. No one is forcing me. I know it feels like I must be there, and in a way I do, but because I want to be there and provide that service, it is my own time.*

Similar, when asked to elaborate on the concept of free time, Jose (45, taxi driver) mentioned,

Free time is free time. Time that is free. Free to do whatever you want to do with it. It's yours, it doesn't belong to anyone. Not your boss, not your work. [What about your family?] *My family is different. I want to be there. If they ask for something, is like being with your girlfriend. You do it because you want to. It is not forced nor demanded. I want to do it.* [What if someone didn't want to do it, would it still be free time?] *Hmm, then no. If they didn't want to be there with the family, then it's forced. Free time is time that is not forced, it's free. You have to feel free.*

In general, the understanding of free time among Mexicans from Guerrero was remarkably similar to the Western notion of free time as described by Iso-Ahola (1999) and others. The Western notion of leisure is often equated with a portion of free time that is left over after all the necessities of life have been taken care of, reminiscent of the classical Aristotelian notion of leisure (DeGrazia, 1964). It was striking, however, how strong family values among this population made family responsibilities exempt from the notion of "tasks" or "chores" and equated with true leisure.

1.4   Functions of Leisure Activities and Properties of the Most Satisfying Leisure Experiences

Respondents were asked to identify the functions and properties of what they considered to be the most satisfying leisure experiences. The most common responses fell

into two categories (1) leisure that allows for relaxation, satisfaction, enjoyment and freedom, and (2) leisure that provides relationship opportunities.

1.4.1 Allows for Relaxation, Satisfaction, Enjoyment, and Freedom

Fun activities were perceived as having relaxation, satisfaction, enjoyment and freedom properties. Most respondents believed that fun activities were needed to keep a person healthy and sane. In other words, they increased people's quality of life. For example, Epigmenio (39, soldier) felt that:

> *Fun activities are like a drug that we all need to keep ourselves sane. We must have them and they are special because they allow you to relax a breath a new air that is not the unhealthy work air.*

The majority of the respondents believed that fun activities provided relaxation and thus were essential in life. For example, Gely (28, unemployed), commented, "Fun activities make you smile, and smiling helps you relax and enjoy life. They are essential for our lives."

Interestingly, to be able to enjoy fun moments and activities, many respondents believed that one needed to be relaxed in the first place. Jose (45, taxi driver) mentioned, "To have fun one must really feel relaxed. You cannot have fun if you are tense or have many things on your mind. You must be there in the moment and relaxed." Daniel (waiter, 25) agreed, "You need to feel relaxed so you can enjoy whatever your doing."

Many respondents also believed that to enjoy fun activities one must be excited about the activity and must feel free to enjoy the present. For example, Monica (45, teacher aide) stated that "[one] must feel that [one has] done something that satisfies [the] soul. Something that turns excitement in oneself and can have fun." Gely (28, unemployed) also mentioned, "You must feel that whatever you are doing, you are

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enjoying the activity. You are there and only there. Your mind cannot be in many places. You must be able to enjoy the present." According to Pedro (50, taxi driver), the optimal level of fun was when one was free "to laugh, to enjoy, or free to do whatever you want. I think most people have fun when they are free."

In general, the majority of the respondents felt that to have leisure, one needed to feel free, relaxed, and be able to enjoy the time and place of the leisure experience. In turn, the leisure experience had many positive consequences to the individual and allowed people to be mentally, physically, and emotionally happy.

1.4.2 Provides Relationship Opportunities

Fun activities also provided opportunities to be with others. When asked when they were enjoying themselves the most, the majority of the respondents said that it occurred when they were with their family and friends. Leisure activities were essential in helping these relationships to develop. They provided a space to socialize and allowed people to get to know each other better. Many of the respondents commented on these unique properties of leisure. Some of their answered included:

> Daniel (25, waiter): *I think the fun activities allow you to know people better. A better side of them. When you are at work, or just doing normal activities, you don't know people that well. For example, when you go to a party, then you get to see a side of them that allows you to connect with them at a deeper personal level.*

> Yashim (19, female student): *Fun activities are special because you can enjoy being with other people. You can laugh and feel connected to them.*

> Monica (45, teacher aide): *They allow you to socialize and you can feel you have other people around your life. You know them better and actually can connect with them better because you feel comfortable when you are smiling and enjoying your time with others.*

In general, the participants believed that one of the most important functions of leisure was that it provided the necessary resources to create and foster the development of interpersonal relationships.

1.5 Forces that Shape the Experience of Leisure among Mexicans in Guerrero

Interviewees were given an opportunity to explain the forces that shaped their experience in leisure, *"tiempo libre,"* and/or fun activities. The five main themes that were identified included economics, family, society and culture, religion, and safety.

1.5.1 Economics

The majority of the respondents belonged to the middle or lower socioeconomic class. Lack of finances was mentioned as an important constraint on their leisure participation. For instance, Gely (28, unemployed) commented, "If you cannot cover the basic needs, people lose interest in doing other activities. They focus on looking for more money. People work more because they are looking for money."

Other respondents remarked that if they had more money they would go for vacations or visit their families in the United States. For example, Maribel and Monica commented, "I would visit my family that is in the U.S. a lot more often" (Maribel, 26, teacher), "[If I had money] I would probably travel to more distant places. To get to know more. You get to do the same things but have more opportunities to do them differently. [You are] more relaxed because money is not an obstacle" (Monica, 45, teacher aide). Yashim (19, student) comment also provided a good illustration of how financial constraints shaped her leisure behavior. She remarked,

> *Money is not life, but it does give you food and dictates the quality of food you can get. Money lets you know what kind of things you can do. For example, I like to dance. It doesn't matter if I have money or not, I would*

still dance. Since I don't have a lot of money, I dance at home, or simply dance at family gatherings. I love to dance with my friends at parties. If I had more money, maybe I would take private lessons. I would probably go clubbing a lot more, or I would go to dance shows. It is the same thing with a lot of people. We don't need money to do the things we like, but money definitely tells you how you can do things.

Some respondents, such as Yashim, found ways to negotiate their financial constraints. For example, Monica (45, teacher aide) commented,

I don't think money is a problem. I mean, I don't have much, but you can do the same activities for cheap. Like you can watch a movie at home or at a friend's house. You can buy popcorn and eat it at home for way cheaper prices, you can go swimming in public places, you can dance with your family or at a family party. It's just a matter of adapting and enjoying.

Gely's (28, unemployed) narrative provided an interesting illustration of another way in which financial issues affected leisure behavior of some of the interviewees. She used her knowledge of the Mexican history to argue that feudal relations typical to Mexico in the past, where the rich controlled the life of the poor have led to a development of a specific consciousness among working class Mexicans. Their result was the belief among some people that they are not entitled to certain leisure opportunities. Moreover, fear of a negative reaction from other members of their social class prevented many working class Mexicans from being involved in leisure activities that were perceived as typical to middle or upper classes. In the words of Gely:

The low classes of Mexico were slaves of the wealthier people in the past. They were slaves of work because the rich people would tell you what to do. They did not have freedom to do with their time what they wanted to do. The boss would tell them exactly what to do, and it was very exhausting. They were left with a feeling of abuse, so they now feel that they do not have the right to do certain things. If a woman goes out to do exercise, society and family would think you were trying to imitate the rich people. I would go out to study, and my family actually thought I was being rebellious. My family taught me that my role was to get ready to be a good mother and a good wife, and a good homemaker. My husband would play tennis, and his friends would make fun of him so much. They

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would make comments letting him know that his activities did not belong to their social class.

Gely's comment further explained why some people might not have even developed an interest in leisure activities that are not popular among their social class. Except for travel that was listed by some participants, most interviewees did not mention any desire to be involved in activities that are typical to wealthier classes.

1.5.2 Family

Most respondents felt that family had a major influence on what leisure activities they participated in. The nature of the family culture in Chilpancingo and the gender roles that came with family expectations had major implications for the types of activities that most participants were involved in.

Although the majority of the interviewees did not feel that their families dictated what they could or could not do in leisure, it seemed that internalized family roles and values had a major influence on each of the participants. For example, Jose and Jorge stated, "I would like to have more time alone, but I have a family and they pretty much tell me what I can or can't do. I usually follow my family because they are the people I love. I have learned to have most of my fun with them" (Jose, 45, taxi driver). Jorge (55, farmer), added, "I don't think my family tells me what to do, but I do consider what they have to say." Yashim (19, student) also commented on the chemistry of the relationship that developed between children and parents and how it influenced what she was involved in leisure.

I'm a family girl and my family can dictate a lot of what I do or don't do. I still have fun, it's just that maybe it was not my number 1 choice. My family

will not pick something I don't really like. They still consider my opinions, but theirs count as well.

Some of the participants also believed that since people seek optimal experiences for their children, children have an inadvertent influence on what leisure activities parents are involved in. For instance, Monica (45, teacher aide) commented, "I like my kids, and they are my priority so they can pretty much dictate what I do, not because they tell me to, but their well being is my priority. I can still have fun within these activities."

Respect for parents and for older people in general was also an important value that many participants mentioned. Respect for elders was not only apparent in Yashim's quote discussed earlier. Daniel (25, waiter) also commented on this phenomenon:

Most people in this town follow family values. You really do not disrespect elders or your family. You can have fun as long as you don't break these rules. Girls follow this rules closely too. Like my girlfriend, she is a family girl and I have to be really respectful with her family. Everyone I know is a family person and everything follows the family. Fun, dinner time, work, etc. Yet I think people are so used to it that it no longer seems like an impediment.

In general, the majority of the respondents felt that family values and norms had major implications for the type of leisure activities parents, children and older members of the community were involved in, and for how they interacted with each other.

1.5.3   Society and Local Culture

Respondents were asked if they believed the sub-culture of the town affected (both constrained and facilitated) their leisure behavior. Almost all of the respondents expressed that they did not experience any constraints on leisure imposed by the local sub-culture. Interestingly, many revealed that they did not care what other people, except

for their family members, thought about their leisure involvement. For example, Monica (45, teacher aide) stated, "I think it is more like the family culture that dictates what you do." Jorge (55, farmer) added, "I don't care what others say, maybe just my family."

The exception constituted activities that were considered illegal or that could have an effect on the personal space of others. For instance, some of the respondents mentioned that local residents would not have approved of using drugs or being involved in violent behavior. Daniel (25, waiter) and Monica (45, teacher aide) mentioned, "Well I don't think people tell you what to do, except the normal things that shouldn't be done like drugs and violent acts, such as gangs or abusing girls, etc." (Daniel), "The town doesn't really tell you what to do. I just say that unless it's not illegal, no one minds what you do" (Monica).

On the other hand, local culture facilitated many leisure activities among the local population. The main activity that provided a space for leisure engagements was Christmas Festival (La Feria) that included games, ethnic traditions, dances, and food. Maribel (26, teacher) explained this festival in more detail:

> *Every December we have a huge festival that brings so many people to this town. During this day, the four main neighborhoods come together and organize this big festival. But they compete in it too. Each neighborhood brings their best fighter and the guys fight during the festival. Whoever wins, wins the honor of the festival. They also bring big artists and big names in the bull fighting sport.*

The festival also included an event called *El Pendon* where, as Polo (48, construction worker) said, "each neighborhood picks their most beautiful girl and they get to win the honor of being the prettiest lady in town." Ethnic dances performed by *Tlacololeros* also accompanied *La Feria* and other celebrations in Chilpancingo. As Daniel (25, waiter) explained, "Each day there is a festival, like September 15 (Independence Day, or 5 de

Mayo) we tend to have indigenous dancers who are dressed as Spaniards or French

people in really funny costumes. It's a way of celebrating our freedom."

1.5.4 Religion

The majority of the interviewees were Catholic. Most of them, as well as the

followers of other faiths seemed to internalize values of their religion. Although many

respondents had difficulties in expressing how religion influenced what they did for fun,

many religious values could be detected in their responses. For example, Monica (45,

teacher aide) stated,

> *I am Catholic, but I don't think that affects me at all. I mean, it does teach you*
> *values, and what you can and can't do, but I think one internalizes these norms*
> *and just has fun with whatever is to be done. Otherwise, you don't really get away*
> *from it too far because it is no longer desired.*

Other interviewees closely followed religious norms in every aspect of their lives. For

example, Polo (48, construction worker) and Jorge (55, farmer) mentioned,

> *Polo: I am not Catholic but Presbyterian, so I really follow the norms of*
> *my church. No dancing and no drinking. I do not like that my daughters*
> *are exposed to this town culture, but I think most Catholics don't mind*
> *dancing or drinking.*
>
> *Jorge: Well, I am a Jehovah Witness and I don't do a lot of things because*
> *they are not Godly. But that is my personal choice. Most people don't*
> *have a problem doing what they want even if they have a religion.*

A few of the participants chose to participate in leisure activities solely with other

members of their church. Religious experiences played a major role in their leisure

engagements. For example, Polo (48, construction worker) commented,

> *I am Protestant and I follow my faith everywhere I go. It is very hard to*
> *find other people that are outside my religion to follow certain things that*
> *I like to do, thus I usually only hang out with people from my church. We*
> *go camping together and we involve our religion and faith in it. For*
> *example, we have walks of faith within the forest. At some point during the*

night, we go and take a hike without flashlights. We rely that our God will take care of us in everything we do. Some people are scared of this activity, yet it can be quite interesting. After a while, you start trusting that nature is not bad. You start to realize that you are not alone. Now tell me, how many people would do this? The members of my church understand this activity. For example, we do not drink and most members of my church do not drink. I like this. I like that I can hang out with them and feel comfortable.

There were also some interviewees, such as Epigmenio (39, soldier), who believed that religion dictated and controlled too much of people's everyday life. Epigmenio did not seem too happy about the influence of the Catholic Church on Chilpancingo's residents. He commented,

I think the Church gets too involved in people's lives. They tell them what to do, or what not to do and it affects what you can or can't do for fun. Like drinking is seen a little bad, but everyone drinks. Otherwise, I think the Church just tries to control but most people don't follow.

The religious background of the interviewees in this study was representative of the diversity of religious faiths typical to Mexico's population. Many of the participants were non-Catholic, which is the main religion practiced in Mexico. For some, their religious beliefs dictated which leisure activities they could or could not participate in. Others chose to associate only with members of their church and involved their faith in many of their leisure engagements. In general, religion played a major role in affecting respondents' leisure choices. Some of the interviewees acknowledged that religious customs and norms had been intrinsically and subconsciously integrated into the culture and expectations of Chilpancingo's population, which, in turn affected leisure activities that they could or could not participate in, even if they were not religious.

1.5.5 Safety

Most respondents felt that the current safety problems caused by activities of drug cartels had a negative effect on people's leisure experience. Many participants mentioned a recent murder of 9 soldiers who were killed in Chilpancingo about 10 days before the interviews took place. The soldiers had been decapitated by drug cartels and their bodies had been dropped off near a popular commercial area. This type of activities that have been going on in Mexico, including Guerrero, has left many participants concerned for their safety. As Jose (45, taxi driver) explained,

> *Safety is a big problem nowadays. For example, it is December right now, and we have a festival going on, but no one is going because we have had threats of bombs and killings from drug cartels. Here is what's going on. I think there are many drug cartels coming to Chilpancingo because it is the capital city of Guerrero, it is literally on top of hills, and it has a lot of forests. It is a perfect place to hide and commit extortion. The offices of the state are here, so they can control a lot from here, and well, it is a growing city. They can buy land, and do whatever they want. We don't have the police power nor man power to destroy them.*

Paulita (35, unemployed) had a first-hand knowledge of the operations of drug cartels and explained in much detailed recent murder of her nephew. Due to the graphic nature of her comments only a small portion of this interview will be presented. She explained,

> *There are three main drug cartels that are fighting for this territory. They really really want it. Why? Look around, it is all forest, we have so many hills, and we have virtually no police power. Well, the military just came in, but this is after a whole year of massive killings. My nephew was just killed two weeks ago, and it was horrible. I don't want my kids to go outside. I'm scared. They will just do about anything to terrorize the city. They just killed eight [nine] soldiers. Eight soldiers! They were beheaded and what do you think people will do? They are not going out!*

Many interviewees, such as Daniel (25, waiter), were scared to go outside because they did not want to be confused with drug cartel members or someone who drug cartels would like to target. This fear led to some changes in Daniel's life. As he explained, he

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used to do be involved in many fun activities in the past and now had to scale back his leisure.

> *I remember how I used to walk the streets at 1am to just relax. I remember walking with my friends outside and going to the store or walking home from a movie. I can't really do that right now. I don't know how they will attack. I don't know who they are after. I easily get confused. I am a little white, and that, to be honest, is not good here. They think you have money or they will just mess with you. Just to create panic.*

Mothers, such as Paulita (35, unemployed), did not want to go outside with her children. Her fear of cartels made her contemplate emigration to the United States. As she explained,

> *I don't let my kids outside. It's too dangerous right now. Besides the traffic, my kids go to a private school. I don't have a lot of money, but I rather have them go there. Otherwise, I think we will move too. I have some family in the U.S. My husband wants to move there and give my children a better opportunity.*

Later in the interview, Paulita commented that other areas of Mexico were also unsafe and that safety problems were the main reason why she was planning to relocate her family to the United States.

In general, the data collected in Chilpancingo revealed that residents of this bureaucratic town believed that the city lacked adequate leisure opportunities as well as structured leisure activities for the local population. Children and youth mostly participated in free play and socialized with friends and family members. Most of the structured leisure activities were organized by schools and local parishes. Women had fewer opportunities for leisure participation than men mainly because of the expectation that they had to serve as the caretakers of the home and the fact that local culture afforded men more freedom to pursue leisure opportunities. Leisure was described as *tiempo libre*

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and had very similar properties to its Western equivalent. Family was the cornerstone of leisure and the main factors that could influence leisure experience were the family, economics, religion, and safety.

2.   Findings - The United States

The findings presented in this section are based on interviews with Mexican immigrants from Guerrero to Chicago and are divided into five themes. First, I provide a brief overview of leisure activity participation among immigrants from Guerrero. Second, I examine changes in leisure behavior among Mexicans from Guerrero related to immigration to the U.S. Third, I analyze the meaning and the experience of leisure among immigrants from Guerrero (what is considered to be "leisure" and in what situations it occurs). Fourth, I examine functions of leisure and properties of the most satisfying leisure experiences. Lastly, I explore forces that shape the experience of leisure among Mexicans from Guerrero residing in Chicago.

2.1   Leisure Life in the United States: Family the Cornerstone of Leisure

Participants were given an opportunity to describe, in their own words, their leisure lives in the United States and types of leisure activities they participated. When asked about their "fun" activities, the majority of the interviewed immigrants mentioned that they enjoyed picnicking, barbequing, and/or having family/friends gatherings as a form of fun.

In general, family was still considered a cornerstone of their leisure lives. The culture of Mexican immigrants was very family-oriented and, as a result, most of their leisure activities revolved around spending time with the family. Although many of the participants commented that American culture tends to allow younger individuals to have more freedom, the expectation was that young Mexican immigrants would still devote a large proportion of their free time to their families. For example, Alex commented,

I think we are still a family oriented culture. Most of the events surround the family. Young people have more freedom, but I think we still try to have a family relationship and family fun as a priority. Young people tend to divert a little, but as adults, we tend to stay together. We have a lot of picnics, barbeques, and parties to unite the family. These are done in any occasion. Big family parties are pretty common.

Alex's comment illustrated an important role picnics and barbeques played in bringing Mexican immigrant families together and allowing them to spend quality time. Carlos (52, factory worker) and Maria (38, unemployed) also mentioned that their leisure was centered around social gatherings with friends and family members. Although Carlos enjoyed his time with the family more while Maria preferred to socialize with her friends, both of their leisure was very social in nature. Carlos and Maria mentioned respectively: "I like to be with my family. I don't like to have too many friends over. I just don't like all the mess. But I like being with the family. [Spending time with a family] makes a good weekend fun" (Carlos) and "I like having friends over. They are my girlfriends and we just talk and drink at my house. We barbeque things outside. I also invite family when it is a family birthday" (Maria).

There were many reasons why the respondents showed a strong preference for socializing around food as their main leisure activity. Among the most common responses were the ability and ease of maintaining contact with family and friends, the low cost of having family gatherings, and the fact that being with family and friends was a form of relief from work and life stressors. Esther (44, teacher aide) for example mentioned,

I have a lot of parties during the summer. I think any birthday is an excuse for a party. We don't have a lot of money, so inviting people over can be

cheap if everyone brings something. It is a nice way to enjoy time with others.

Other respondents felt that social gatherings also helped family members relax. For example, Ariel (44, construction worker) mentioned, "I like to take my kids and family to picnics or to other families. I think it is good for them to relax with other people that are their family." Andres (43, construction worker) believed that Mexican immigrants needed social gatherings that involved alcohol as a way to relax from the stresses of hard physical labor. He commented,

> *I like to have picnics. We are stressed all the time, we work so much, and just drinking some beer relaxes me. I think we, Mexicans work so much that just being outside for a little bit is so relaxing… When the family comes, I can just relax and talk about anything. Seeing my children play and swimming in the pool that we bought, just makes me rethink what I'm doing. My children are growing pretty fast, and these picnics help me catch up with them. It just helps me relax by knowing that we as a family are doing OK.*

Andres' belief that family gatherings helped ease the strains of work was shared by many interviewees. For example, Carlos (52, factory worker) mentioned,

> *Many of the people I work with are so tired after work that they really do not want to do anything that requires a lot of physical movements. They also do not see their families a lot because they work a lot of hours. For example, I work about 12 hours a day and I really do not see my family. When we organize family gatherings, I am able to be with them and forget about work. Unfortunately, we don't have enough family gatherings.*

Other immigrants, like Lilia (42, customer service) felt alienated in the mainstream American environment. Lilia's poor spoken English limited her social interactions at work. Family gatherings provided her opportunity to escape stressful work environment and to socialize with people she felt cultural affinity to. She commented,

> *I like to have family over. I work at a department store and don't have a lot of people that I talk to because my English is limited. When I get home,*

I want to talk so much. Having family or friends over is a nice way of enjoying myself, of feeling that I'm next to people.

In general, most of the respondents felt that the majority of their leisure time revolved around socializing with family members and friends, often during picnics and barbeques. Family gatherings provided a space for children to spend time with others, and for adults to relax, drink, and engage in conversations.

2.2   Changes in Leisure Patterns among Mexican Immigrants from Guerrero

The participants were also given an opportunity to explain how their leisure patterns have changed after immigration to the U.S. I have paid particular attention to changes in leisure behavior of children, adolescents, as well as men and women.

2.2.1 Lack of Time, Longer Distances, and Weather as Important Constraints on Leisure

Many of the respondents felt that they used to spend more time on leisure activities in Mexico than in the United States. Some interviewees, such as Jose (47, postal office employee) simply said that they had more free time in Mexico: "In Mexico I had time to at least visit some friends, or watch some nice TV. I don't know why. I worked a lot in both countries; I just had more fun time in Mexico." Others attributed their more extensive participation in leisure to the nicer weather in Mexico, better transportation system, and shorter distances to recreation sites. Carlos (52, factory worker), for example, commented,

> *To be honest, I had more time to do things in Mexico. Distances were shorter, and I was not used to driving so much for long distances. The weather was nicer and I think I could do more things in a day. Here I just work and sleep.*

He also believed that faster and more convenient means of transportation in Mexico facilitated his leisure.

> *In Mexico we have a very extensive network of buses. Man, do we have buses! You can miss a bus and still catch another one in 5 minutes. You can grab a cab for cheap prices, or walk in short distances. I know that when I want to do something here, it's really a minimum one hour round trip. I went to Jewel last night for example, it's only 20 blocks away, but that is 20 blocks. I cannot walk it, so I drove. I got there, parked, 15 minutes passed by. In Mexico, you have a lot of little local stores around the corner of your house. Also, you can just grab a taxi and it will drop you right off in no time. Distances are not that large.*

Many of the respondents also felt that days were longer in Mexico than in the United States, and thus one was be able to participate in more leisure activities. Lilia (52, customer service), for example, commented, "I remember it being 9 pm and I was seeing sundown. Oh my, I miss those days! Here, it is summer, hot, and it's 7:30 and its dark! You can get really depressed too." Andres (43, construction worker), like many other respondents, felt that the cold winter weather negatively affected leisure participation of his family. During the summer, the cheapest form of leisure was to have barbeques with the family. Andres mentioned,

> *Winter here is horrible. It is so cold, so we don't go outside. I work outside, so when I want to have fun, it's really not outside. Summer is really nice, but most activities require money. Lots of it. So we bought a house with a backyard. We have barbeques there. We just invite the family and have nice talks.*

Although both Carlos and Jose, as well as other respondents, believed that in Mexico they had more time, one has to note that since the participants were young in age and thus had less responsibilities before they emigrated to the United States, they might have felt that their youth was filled with longer and happier days. In the narratives of other interviewees, cold Illinois weather, shorter

days, lack of time, and high cost were mentioned as important constraints on

leisure participation.

2.2.2   Undocumented Status Constraining Leisure Behavior of Many Immigrants

Most of the respondents believed that the immigration status also played a major

role in the types of activities and the amount of time they could spend on leisure. The

majority of the respondents acknowledged that although many immigrants reside in the

United States legally, a large portion of immigrants from Mexico are undocumented.

Being an illegal immigrant in the United States imposed additional constraints on the

types of leisure activities immigrants could participate. These constraints ranged from

fear of exposing oneself and being caught, the extra steps needed to obtain services, to

the lack of knowledge of the English language and culture of the United States. For

instance, Chris (29, valet parking assistant) mentioned,

> *There are many illegal immigrants from Guerrero in Chicago. Being an*
> *illegal immigrant is so harsh on them. For example, just going for a cup of*
> *coffee is hard because you must drive and you must really do a lot of*
> *things that exposes you. For example a friend lost his phone and could*
> *not really get a new one because he didn't buy it, a friend bought it for*
> *him, so he had to call and find his friend just to change his phone. Simple*
> *things become hard.*

Chris' comment demonstrates how illegal immigrants must live in the shadows of

society and have a hard time accomplishing daily tasks because they lack proper

documentation. Maria (38, unemployed) further explained this problem: "You

don't go out. You stay in. Not because you are hiding, but because you really

can't go out. No license, no phone, no security if something happens to you, etc."

Other respondents, like Esther (44, teacher aide), commented that many *legal* immigrants also had certain fears that negatively affected their leisure participation. For example, Esther mentioned, "Those like me that are legal are still afraid. You don't know the language, you don't know how to move around, and everyone looks at you like you're an alien. It's just not fun." Esther comment demonstrated that immigrants, legal or not, still face many fears and constraints due to their lack of experience and knowledge of the system and language in the United States. For example, the fear of not being able to communicate in English or the fear of being seen as an outsider negatively affected many immigrants' participation in their desired leisure activities.

2.2.3   Changes in Leisure of Children

The participants were encouraged to describe leisure activities that their children, if they had any, participated in and the constraints they faced. In general, the participants believed that Mexican immigrant children spend most of their leisure time indoors because of safety and weather constraints. Yet, unlike in Chilpancingo, children had more opportunities to participate in structured leisure activities.

2.2.3.1 Free Time Spent Indoors Due to Weather and Safety Problems

Many of the respondents felt that children spent very limited time outside, especially during cold Illinois winters. Also, many of the children only played inside their homes due to safety problems. Summer provided more opportunities for play and fun activities. Those who had backyards were able to allow their children to play more. For example, Esther (44, teacher aide) mentioned,

I have a backyard, so that helps me a lot. I allow my kids to go play outside, as long as they are within eyesight. They can bring their friends here. I just think that many children don't have this opportunity and are exposed to the streets pretty quick, and it is not really safe out there. When Josh [her son] was a little kid, he just played inside. He is 14 now and now he can go outside more. As long as he is not doing anything bad, then I can let him. But his friends are not the best. Winter also doesn't allow the kids to go out much. They don't even want to be outside.

Although most respondents knew about winter leisure activities, they generally felt that they were too expensive for their children to participate. The majority of families coped with winter weather by organizing leisure activities inside, but still felt that their children's participation was significantly reduced.

2.2.3.2 Increased Participation in Structured Activities

Most of the interviewed parents commented on good opportunities for participation in structured leisure activities provided by American schools and parks. The extracurricular activities offered in American schools, especially after-school programs, allowed Mexican immigrant children to participate in structured leisure. These programs were less costly than private extracurricular activities and made parents comfortable that their children were spending time in safe surroundings. Further, many parents worked long hours and leaving their children at school for a few extra hours was convenient as well.

Many respondents enrolled their children in structured leisure activities because they felt they provided opportunities to learn new things and to meet new people. For example, Ariel (44, construction worker) mentioned,

In Mexico I didn't have a lot of opportunities to learn anything. Here my son is already a black belt in Tae Kwan Do. My daughter does cheerleading. I think it helps them learn new skills. Yet, I also miss that

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they don't have a lot of free play. I used to play outside so much, and I loved it. Here, I see that sometimes they get tired. I like it. I like that they can have fun, get tired and come home. All while being safe.

Ariel compared his childhood in Mexico with the experiences of his children in the U.S. and observed that children in Mexico enjoyed more free play, while children in the U.S. had an opportunity to specialize in leisure activities such as Tae Kwan Do and cheerleading.

Lilia (52, customer service) was another parent whose children participated in activities organized by schools and parks. She mentioned, however, that many Mexican parents did not involve their children in extracurricular activities due to the lack of information, high cost of participation, lack of time to drive them to activities, and lack of transportation. Lilia commented,

My kids did a lot of activities. We took advantage of what the schools and parks provided. My son did gymnastics, running, soccer, and baseball. My daughters did piano, gymnastics and volleyball. It is good to have these activities. Unfortunately, a lot of people don't use these resources not because they don't know of them, but they are not used to doing it. It takes a little bit of effort, and one's time, but the kids have so much fun and learn a lot. It helps them succeed and meet new people. Those that don't really participate, to be honest, are parents who do care about their children, but just either don't have the time or money, or simply are not used to looking for these programs.

Other respondents believed that sometimes it was difficult for parents to take their children to the location of the activities. Esther (44, teacher aide), for example, commented, "It is hard to take my children to activities even though there are a lot. One, they cost money and two; I don't have a car to take them." Maria's (38, unemployed) comment reflected Esther's concerns.

In the United States the distances to everything are very large. Everywhere we want to go requires a car or a bus ride. My children

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participate in activities, yet I think it is very exhausting. My son wants to practice wrestling but it is too far for me to drive him there just for an hour practice. On top of it all, I'm not used to driving long distances or to places that are far away from home.

While high cost of activities and transportation problems are likely to affect participation of many mainstream children in structured leisure activities, it is possible that these constraints took on a different dimension among Mexican immigrants, many of whom did not have a car or a driver's license and whose finances were severely restricted.

2.2.4   Changes in Leisure of Adolescents

Mexican immigrant teenagers had more options to choose from when it came to sports and extracurricular activities offered in high school, and they tended to participate in leisure activities such as movies, bowling, dancing. Many of the respondents said that they were astonished by the amount of resources available to the youth in the United States and that these resources were not available in Mexico. For example Chris (29, valet parking attendant) and Carlos (52, factory worker) mentioned, respectively,

> *Chris: The youth here has so many options. I don't know why many youth are in trouble with crime. You can do any sport you want, even the weird ones like cricket or water polo. Never in Chilpancingo did I have an opportunity to do those things!*
>
> *Carlos: I used to play tennis in Mexico and it was really weird for my friends. I see how many tennis courts high schools have here and I am amazed. These kids have so many resources! They can do so much during their evenings.*

Not only did youth seem to have more leisure opportunities available in the United States, but they have become more accustomed to the American society and understood less about Mexican culture. For example, Maria (38, unemployed) mentioned,

I am 39 but I came here when I was 16. It was weird for me to see this American culture because it is just like Mexico but everything is so expensive. I see my son who is 15 now and he doesn't see what I see. He is in high school and is in the football team. He doesn't really know what it is to go dancing at a young age. In Mexico, you can enter clubs a little before your 15th birthday. He is so accustomed to this society.

Similar to other interviewees', Maria's teenage children had more opportunity to participate in structured activities, but did not appreciate the differences between their experiences and those of their parents who grew up in Mexico.

2.2.5   Changes in Leisure of Women

The majority of female interviewees revealed that they had more opportunities to participate in leisure activities in the United States than they did in Mexico. Many believed that women were able to have these opportunities because of their higher spending power and, related to that, increased decision-making power in their families. Further, immigrant children had more opportunities to participate in after-school activities, which gave mothers extra time to spend on their own leisure.

2.2.5.1 More Leisure Opportunities

Female respondents believed that Mexican women had more opportunities to participate in leisure activities and to go out more often in the United States than in Mexico. Some respondents like Maria (38, unemployed), for example, felt that American society was more open, which allowed them to take part in more out-of-home leisure activities. Maria mentioned, "I go out more. I go to the movies with my kids or to coffee shops with my friends. Society is more open here." Lilia (52, customer service) and Esther (44, teacher aide) were able to join a gym and learn swimming, which was reserved for the rich elite in Mexico. Lilia and Esther mentioned, respectively:

Lilia: Here I tend to go shopping a lot. Even if I don't by anything I go out and have fun. I take my daughters and we just go and look at things. We eat something and then come home. Sometimes I visit my friends at their houses and just chat for a while. I also had the opportunity to join a gym and have been learning how to swim better.

Esther: I joined a gym, thing that I never did in Mexico because those activities were reserved for the elite. Like there were really social clubs and really noticeable. The rich politicians would have their own gym membership. I was really poor. I used to run on the streets. People were not used to see girls running on the streets. I joined a running club and then ran more. I love that I joined a gym here.

However, Lilia also believed that Mexican women did not take advantage of as many leisure opportunities as they could because they were not socialized to participation in structured activities in Mexico and because many activities that were offered in the U.S. were not culturally sensitive. Violeta (30, dental assistant) commented that she immigrated to the U.S. as a child and, thus was socialized to participation in structured leisure through her school, but that was not the case for her mother who left Mexico as an adult.

I came to the United States when I was eight. I grew up with a Mexican mom and an American school. I grew up exposed to many opportunities, so I really do not have an excuse of why I do not participate in many activities. There are a lot of activities I can do. For example, I go to bars with my friends, we go downtown, to a concert, or we simply just hang out at a friend's house. On the contrary, women like my mother, who came here when they were a little older; they grew up in a different environment. For example, my mom likes doing "migajon" which is a craft practiced in Mexico where you design little figurines from a material that is composed of corn flour and glue.

Itzel (27, nanny) further commented on the fact that many leisure activities to which Mexican immigrant women were socialized were not offered by American recreation agencies, that leisure culture of the two countries was significantly different, and that the lack of knowledge of recreation opportunities limited leisure participation among Mexican female immigrants. In her own words:

I see many Mexican women just staying at home because they really do not have an interest in the things that are available to them. For example, I mean, we all like looking good. Many women go to the gym, but Mexican immigrant women are not always the ones that are exposed to these activities. Let's be honest, a lot of the immigrant women come from poor towns and are not used to these sort of things. What they are used to is a more communal society. For example, for a birthday, all the women get together and help out. They enjoy doing this. Or for a special religious event, the women are the ones who organize themselves and organize the whole event. Here in the United States these women do not have these activities. Although some communities are providing these opportunities now, many of the women do not know of them.

2.2.5.2 Higher Spending Power and Fewer Child-Related Responsibilities

More involvement in out-of-home work seemed to allow immigrant women to participate in more leisure activities than in Mexico. The higher purchasing power also allowed these women to spend more on leisure and to decide what to do with their money. Moreover, since many children were involved in after-school activities, women had more opportunities to participate in leisure. For example, Jose (47, post office employee) mentioned,

Women [in the U.S.] do go out more than in Mexico. They still take charge of the house, but at least they can go out more. Why? I would say it's because they have more money to spend and the kids are longer in school. The kids can come home later, and thus women can take more time for themselves. Also, I think these kids have so many gadgets. It might not matter for one, but just think about it. My son has a Playstation and an I-phone. He is on that thing for so long that he easily gets entertained if my wife needs a break. It is not good, I know, but at least there is that distraction.

Carlos (52, factory worker) shared Jose's views. He commented,

My wife goes out a lot more than what she used to in Mexico. She works and when she is out at work she has more opportunities to explore. She is the one that knows more about Chicago than I do. She knows where all the stores are, where the rich and poor suburbs are, where to go for fun or to

eat… I think she is able to do this more here than in Mexico. Also no one really cares if she is out alone. Like, no one really knows her here in Chicago. Chicago is too big. In Chilpancingo everyone knew who you were and they quickly started gossip when something seemed wrong. Also, she works. She has money she can spend and she spends it however she wants. It's her money, so I can't really say if I approve of what she is doing or not. I really don't mind that because I trust her. She is a church woman and really doesn't do anything bad. If she goes out, it's shopping or with other women from church, or my daughters.

Carlos' and Jose's comments revealed that they believed that Mexican immigrant woman had more freedom because they were able to work and thus had more money for themselves. Moreover, women who worked outside of home learned to expect to have certain freedoms and felt entitled to participate in more leisure activities by themselves.

2.2.5.3 Traditional Gender Roles Still Affecting Leisure Activities of Women

Although women worked more and felt more entitled to free time for themselves, traditional gender roles still persisted among the immigrants from Mexico. There were particularly restrictive for married women who were still expected to be solely responsible for the upkeep of their households and for raising their children. Lilia (52, customer service) for example, commented,

Although women do more here as far as going out, I don't think it is much better. I think that married women are still the holders of the house and that single women have more freedoms. I think that single women can have fun, dance and relax by themselves. Married women have other compromises, but almost the same norms as they had in Mexico. Unless they married a guy from another culture, Mexican men and women still have gender roles.

Many of the interviewees believed that Mexican married women were submissive to their husbands even though they lived in the United States. Clearly defined gender roles were reflected in the ways in which Mexican immigrants participated in leisure. For example,

Violeta (30, dentist assistant), commented, "You know, even when I'm having fun, I still have the expectations and obligation to know where my kid is, and what will be for food when I get home." Esther (44, teacher aid) also added,

> I cook and clean, and I work, my husband works and fixes whatever needs to be done around house. We both have that expectation wherever we go, even when we do a fun activity. He buys the food, I serve it. Or I'll prepare the food, but he prepares the grill and cuts the lawn when we have people over.

Violeta and Esther commented that even during leisure activities women were still expected to take care of the family and men were supposed to provide the equipment and necessary resources. Carlos (52, factory worker) also believed that women and men must follow gender roles at all times, even during leisure activities. He commented,

> When we go out as a family, for example when we go to the beach, I know what I'm supposed to be doing and my wife knows what she is supposed to be doing. I get everything ready such as the car, the grill, the equipment and anything that we will need when we are there. My wife provides the food and any small thing that we might use when we are there.

Andres (42, construction worker) further explained his role as a man during his family's leisure activities and the expectations he had of his wife.

> My wife knows that I work a lot and I come home really tired. It would be really hard for me to work and take care of everything that needs to be done with the children. I do fix the garage, I paint the house, I fix the cars or anything that needs to be done around the house. When we go out, I make sure the car is clean and that we have enough money to go where we want to go. My wife takes care of the kids. She knows what they need, what they like or what they should be doing.

Andres' and Carlos' comments demonstrate that not only Mexican women, but also men have well-defined responsibilities in their households. These gender roles do not seem to change after immigration to the U.S.

2.2.5.4 More Leisure Constraints Related to Hard Work

Many of the participants mentioned that although immigrant women participated in more activities outside of home in the U.S. than in Mexico, their leisure was also constrained by physically hard work and by long work hours. For instance, Lilia (52, customer service) and Esther (44, teacher aide) commented,

> *Lilia: In Mexico I would go out more with the family. Here it is a little harder. Yes, I go to the mall more often, or visit my friends, but I haven't had a vacation day in years. It is hard. You must work really hard. Keep in mind that in Mexico you own your house. You pretty much buy the land and build as you have money. Here, I have a 230k loan and have 25 years left to pay. I am a slave of work.*

> *Esther: In Mexico I would run so much. Here, even though I have gym membership, I rarely run or have time to go. It's far, and I work so much. I am tired. I think I am actually going to cancel my membership.*

Esther and Lilia demonstrated how American culture allowed them to have more freedom than in their home country, yet they still felt constrained. Violetta (30, dental assistant) further explained why she believed hard work affected women's leisure participation.

> *I think women in Mexico and in the United States work a lot. I don't think there is a difference as to the amount of work they perform, yet I do think that life is simply harder here. In Mexico, a woman who works might work 10 hours a day, yet at the end of the day she is in an environment where she can be closer to her family and nature. She can walk home because the weather is not bad. She can go home and talk to her neighbors, or she can visit a family member. These things make the work more bearable. Here, the woman who works tends to work at a factory. She rarely sees the light and comes home to a property that is usually not hers because she rents. She goes home and must take care of the family, and the only time she has to relax is when she sleeps. The main difference is that the Mexican woman in Mexico is already in a familiar environment, and here she is alone.*

Violeta's comment along with those of other participants helped us understand difficulties experienced by Mexican immigrant women in the United States.

Although they have more freedom than in Mexico, not all women are able to enjoy these freedoms because of the strains of hard work, traditional gender roles, and their commitment to families.

2.2.6 Changes in Leisure of Men

Many of the participants believed that Mexican men had fewer opportunities to participate in leisure in the U.S. as opposed to Mexico. Soccer games often played during their lunch breaks were their only distraction. These lunch break games were used as a respite from work, as well as helped to maintain cultural norms that dictated that Mexican men must be involved in soccer. As Andres (43, construction worker) commented,

> *Most guys that are here just enjoy their time with their families. A few play soccer in leagues or even at break. In the factory that some friends work, they have their soccer time. They just take a soccer ball and play soccer during the break.*

The main reasons for the low participation in leisure among Mexican immigrant men were the lack of time due to long work hours and lack of energy. As Carlos (52, factory worker), explained,

> *I think in this country men have less fun activities than women. We work a lot. I work from 6am to like 7pm. I am tired when I get home. I just have time to eat, do something small and I'm back to sleep. I know some friends that play soccer. But they are very few of them that do that… I also work Saturday mornings, and sometimes my family is at a family party but I cannot be there because I get out of work at 5 PM. I do catch up to them most of the time, yet I am usually sad that I can't be with them as much as I would like to.*

Ariel (43, construction worker) believed that because men were the main providers, it was expected that they had to sacrifice their leisure for their families' leisure. Ariel commented,

I work a lot. I'm working around 70 hours a week and there are many times that I do not make to the family gatherings or family activities. This past summer my family went four times to Six Flags Great America [theme park] and I could not go with them because I was working. I wasn't really sad, yet I was not happy either. I think I am already numb to the idea that I must sacrifice my fun for my family's fun. What I do for fun is simply watch soccer on TV. I go home and relax. I watch a movie and then I'm off to sleep again.

Lilia (52, customer service) further illustrated the lives of many Mexican immigrants using her husband as an example.

My husband is rarely home. He wakes up at 4 AM, then goes to work at 5 AM and does not come back until 8 PM. When he gets home, he eats and then simply watches TV and goes back to sleep around 10 PM. His routine is pretty similar to most men. They overwork themselves to make payments and rarely have time to enjoy themselves. That is why men tend to have these little soccer games during their breaks. I think it helps them relax a little bit from the systematic routine. It is not very different for women who work as well. Yet I do believe men sacrifice a lot of time and energy. Whenever they have a little bit of free time, they just want to relax or be with the family. They really don't think much about going camping, or to join a league or even to go out running. They are exhausted.

In general, most respondents believed that Mexican men worked long hours and thus had little time or energy to participate in leisure activities. Most of their time outside of work was spent interacting with families or watching TV. Whenever possible, men played small soccer games during their breaks to disrupt the monotony of work.

2.3 What is considered to be Leisure among Members of this Group and When / In What Situations it Occurs?

Participants were asked about their state of mind when they participated in leisure activities. Respondents recalled that they felt free from rational thinking, relaxed, joyful and happy. For example, Maria (39, unemployed) and Jose (47,

postal office employee) commented, "You feel really relaxed and happy. You feel like time passes by so quickly. You feel really happy" (Maria) and "When you're in a fun activity you know it's fun because you feel joy. You want to do it over and over again and want to remember that moment" (Jose). Violeta (30, dentist assistant), added.

> When doing leisure activities you feel like you're free. You feel that nothing matters but the moment that you are living. It is hard to explain. You feel free from your own thinking, from rational thinking. It's like if your subconscious takes over and your consciousness just relaxes.

Itzel echoed Maria's, Jose's, and Vileta's comments:

> When I participate in leisure activities I tend to feel happy, free, and relaxed. For someone to feel like they participated in a leisure activity, they must first feel like they are enjoying the moment. In your head you are free. You are happy and you do not care about anything else at that moment.

The participants were also asked how they labeled any activity that they performed for fun. The most common answer was *"tiempo libre"* (free time). When asked what *"ocio,"* a word often used in leisure research, meant to them, all respondents believed that it meant "laziness" or "to do nothing." For example, Esther (44, teacher aide) stated, "*Ocio* is a word to say that you are being lazy. Doing nothing. That you're not even doing anything productive for yourself." There were a few other responses used to describe fun activities, such as "recreation," "enjoyment," and "escape," yet the majority of the interviewees believed that any activity that was done for fun or for recreation, such as a hobby or a sport, was best described as *"tiempo libre."*

2.4 Functions of Leisure Activities and Properties of the Most Satisfying Leisure Experiences

Participants were asked to identify what role(s) leisure activities played in their lives and what were the characteristics of their most enjoyable leisure experiences. When asked "What is so special about the activities that you like to do for fun?" most of the respondents stated that fun and enjoyable activities allowed them to connect with people, relieve stress and allow to explore new activities and places.

2.4.1 Providing Relationship Opportunities

In a direct parallel to the interviews with Mexicans in Guerrero, Mexican immigrants in Chicago commented that the activities they participated in for fun allowed them to connect with other people, especially family and friends. For example, Lilia (52, customer service) stated,

> *Fun activities allow you to really connect with your family and friends. I mean, they allow you to laugh and laughing is good. Other activities like hobbies also allow you [to] smile. It's pleasurable, but more when you get to share it with others.*

Leisure activities also seemed to serve an additional function for the immigrants. They allowed some of the respondents to meet new people, a circumstance valued greatly by many immigrants who left their family and friends in their home country and were new to the region. For example, Violeta (30, dentist assistant) and Carlos (52, factory worker) mentioned,

> *Violeta: By participating in activities I get know more people. I didn't know anyone in this country, but through church sponsored activities I was able to learn more about the people around my neighborhood.*

*Carlos: You really meet new people. You leave your family behind and…
well, when you do fun activities you get opportunities to meet new people.
Like when we barbeque, there will always be a new person because a
friend of a friend came.*

Violeta and Carlos brought up an interesting point discussing additional benefit

leisure activities may provide for immigrants. Leisure activities are valued

because they allow immigrants to re-build their social networks, meet new

neighbors, and learn about the new place of settlement.

2.4.2   Relieving Stress from Hard Work and From Living in a New Environment, and Allowing Exploration of New Activities and Places

Many respondents stated that leisure activities in Mexico had similar attributes to

the ones in the United States (they allowed for relaxation, satisfaction, enjoyment, and

freedom), but that in the United States leisure additionally helped them cope with stresses

and tension of living in a new environment and to learn about new activities and places.

Many respondents felt that participation in fun activities helped them improve their

mental and physical well-being by releasing stress and tension. For instance, Andres (43,

construction worker), commented,

*Fun activities allow you to release stress and that is good for your well
being. I work in construction and it is so hard. When I sit and drink a beer
and enjoy my family, I remember why I am working so much. It relaxes
you, but mostly, it helps your well being.*

Andres, a construction worker, worked long hours often in adverse weather

conditions. He mentioned that his job left him with physical pain and that

participation in relaxing leisure activities helped him regenerate his body and his

mind. He strongly felt that if it was not for this leisure time, his well-being could

be greatly affected.

Many of the respondents also believed that participation in leisure activities helped them feel connected to the new environment, but at the same time, to remember old times. For example, Jose (47, postal office employee) mentioned,

I used to work a lot in Mexico too. Yet, in Mexico when I had fun activities it was to relax. Just to relax and enjoy. Here, I also think about a way of actually liking this place. Fun activities make me feel more connected to this new environment.

Many immigrants made conscious effort to learn new leisure activities and to use their leisure time to visit new places and to get acquainted with the Midwest. For example, Maria (38, unemployed) commented,

Look, when you do fun activities, outside your house, you get to explore your surroundings in a different way. I was about to ride a rollercoaster and go on water rides in Wisconsin. I was able to know the place and do new activities.

In general, leisure activities helped immigrants cope with the strains of hard work and ease the difficult process of initial establishment. Further, they helped immigrants rebuild their social networks and to explore their new environment.

2.5 Factors that Shape the Experience of Leisure among Mexican Immigrants in Chicago

In the last part of the interview, I asked the participants to name and explain the forces that they believed shape the experience of leisure. Although the context of many of their responses differed, leisure-conditioning factors could easily be classified into the same categories as those identified by the interviewees in Mexico – family, economics, society and culture, religion, and safety.

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2.5.1 Family

The majority of the participants had high respect for and valued their family's opinions and concerns regarding their participation in leisure activities. Most of the respondents felt that the influence of their families on their leisure engagements remained unchanged after immigration. For example Carlos (52, factory worker) and Lilia (52, customer service) commented, "My family has a lot to say, but they also did in Mexico. So nothing has changed" (Carlos) and "My family was in Mexico and still is here the only people who can actually tell me what they would like from me. Otherwise, nothing has really changed. Family is still my priority" (Lilia).

There were also other respondents, such as Esther (44, teacher aide), who brought up the issue of life course-related changes. Esther, for instance, commented that now she was older and had a family of her own and that when she was in Mexico she was relatively young. Since the time of immigration to the U.S. she has grown older and had more responsibilities. Thus, her family had a bigger influence on her leisure choices.

2.5.2 Economics

Similar as their Mexican counterparts in Guerrero, the majority of the respondents mentioned that they would participate in more activities if they had more money or other resources available to them. The majority of the respondents said they would travel to new places, take their children and family to recreation locations, or purchase things that would allow their families to have more fun. For example, Lilia (52, customer service) and Esther (44, teacher aide) mentioned, "I would take my kids to more theme parks.

Those are fun and they seem to enjoy them" (Lilia) and "I think I would buy a house with a big yard and have more family over" (Esther).

Other interviewees mentioned that they would participate in more resource-intensive and expensive activities. For example, Carlos (52, factory worker) mentioned, "Since now I know many activities I can do and have experienced them a little, if I had more money I would play golf and tennis more." Interestingly Carlos' desire to play golf and tennis as well as Lilia's desire to take her children to theme parks was sparked by their exposure to these new activities. Although they participated in these activities in the past, money seemed to be a major reason why they did not participate in them as often as they would like to.

Violeta (30, dental assistant) also mentioned that some leisure activities that were free in Mexico and that the immigrants "took for granted" were quite expensive in the United States. Swimming was an example of one such pastime. As Violeta commented,

> *I would really like to have more money so I could go out more. We are really poor in this country. We have more, but things are more expensive. Things that I used to take for granted now I miss them. Like when we would go to the river in Mexico, it was free. Here, it is so expensive to just grab your things and go camping next to a river. I don't even know where to go.*

Violeta's comment echoed answers of many other respondents who were disappointed that after immigration they had to pay for many activities they previously enjoyed free of charge. Moreover, it seemed clear that increased exposure to additional leisure opportunities affected immigrants' leisure needs and the perception of money-related constraints.

2.5.3 Society and Local Culture

Similar to the respondents in Mexico, almost all of the participants in the U.S. portion of the study claimed that they did not experience any constraints on leisure imposed by the local community. Interestingly, they felt even less constrained by the local norms, since many of their spouses and family members lived far away in Mexico. For example, Jose (47, postal office employee) mentioned,

> *I don't think anyone minds what you have to say or do in this country. I think I can do whatever I want. Here, in Mexico or even China. Well, no one really cares what I do. My family is in Mexico. I am here alone. So whatever I do my family won't even know. But in reality, as long as I'm faithful to my wife, I can do pretty much anything and they would be supportive.*

Jose further explained that since immigrants were often away from their families, they were relieved from many social obligations. They did not care too much about what others in the United States had to say about their leisure choices and did not consider local community as a factor restricting their leisure participation.

The majority of the participants in the U.S. portion of the study (seven out of ten) resided in predominantly Latino neighborhoods (at least 60% of residents being of Latino origin). When asked whether there were any special norms or values that governed lives of local Latino residents, their opinions differed, although most of the participants believed that no special norms of behavior were followed in their neighborhoods. For example, Andres (43, construction worker) and Lilia (52, customer service) mentioned, "I don't think there are any norms that are followed in this neighborhood. In fact, that is the problem. I think everyone has his or her own values and norms" (Andres) and "I think that people really don't follow the norms of the neighborhood. We all have our family

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ones. So it would be hard to say. I think everyone just does whatever they want" (Lilia).

Most interviewees believed that each family or individual lived by their own norms and

that Mexican customs practiced in the communities were related more to the celebrations

of major religious or historical holidays than to their everyday life. As Jose (47, postal

office employee) commented,

> *During the weekend closed to September 15 [Mexican Independence Day]*
> *our neighborhood has a big parade and festival. I could say that*
> *thousands of people show up to see the parade. At night, at the park a*
> *member of the community follows the traditional "Grito de Dolores"*
> *where he commemorates the call for arms of the Mexican people again the*
> *Spaniards many many years ago. Or for example, during Christmas you*
> *can traditional Mexican Posadas in some of the houses. That is, people go*
> *and sing carols in remembrance of the Nativity story.*

2.5.4   Religion

When asked about their religious affiliation, the majority of the respondents

declared being Catholic, but revealed that they did not belong to or assist any church in

the U.S. Lilia (52, customer service), however, commented that even though few

immigrants from Guerrero were practicing Catholics, Catholic faith was still at the core

of their value system and, thus, shaped their leisure behavior. In her own words:

> *Religion has an impact on how we perceive our free time. Although many*
> *people do not practice the religion fully here [in the United States], our*
> *culture is based on religion. We have festivals that follow religious*
> *celebrations, gender roles that are based on biblical studies and we even*
> *have rules that follow religious teachings. A lot of the people just believe*
> *in the religion but do not really participate in it. Keep in mind that most*
> *people are too lazy to go to church because they are tired of working and*
> *Sunday is a family day. Others really do not want to travel too far to go to*
> *church.*

Lilia's comments were confirmed in conversations with other participants. Although only three of the immigrant interviewees were active church members, the majority of the respondents felt that religion, especially the Catholic faith, played somewhat of a role in shaping their family values and the types of activities they and their families participated in.

Others, like Andres 43 (construction worker) felt that many religious activities such as traditional holiday celebrations were incorporated into their leisure repertoires, but that people were practicing them without understanding of their religious significance or origin. As Andres mentioned,

> *Well, I was raised Catholic but I really don't practice it. I know that for most Mexicans we need to be good people, not do bad things such as drugs, prostitutes, etc. I think we really don't do them because they are bad, not because it's a religious thing. What I do see is that many celebrations, like Christmas or Holy week, we celebrate it, even though we don't truly follow everything, It's more of a tradition.*

2.5.5 Safety

Similar as in Mexico, the majority of the respondents felt that crime was a major issue and factor that impeded their participation in leisure activities. It was the type of crime that they had to contend with that was different, however, in Chilpancingo, Guerrero, and in Chicago, Illinois. For example, Lilia (52, customer service) mentioned,

> *A lot of things are in gangs and crime is a major factor of how these kids are growing and the fun activities they chose. I mean, look at many of the kids here. They go by what the trend of gangs tell them to do. That is really not American as I know, nor from my country. It is a thing that happens when young kids want to belong to society, but neither they are American, nor from their home country. I think they are just following the*

*trend, and being poor, and having many difficulties just makes it really
easy for them to join one, or choose their fun activities with that mentality.*

Most respondents, like Lilia, felt that Latino neighborhoods were infiltrated with crime,

drugs, and gangs. Since the majority of the participants lived in inner-city Latino

neighborhoods, crime was a prevalent problem for most of the interviewees. Some of

them believed that gangs and crime were a form of leisure for many of the youth of the

area, mainly because Latino children tried to imitate others, were confused about their

identity, lacked material resources, and hope for a brighter future. For example, Carlos

(52, factory worker) mentioned,

> *Crime is a big problem in Latino neighborhoods. Why? Because the kids
> don't have a future. I mean, they don't go to school and they can't work.
> They just join gangs or crime. Not all, but just a small percentage can
> make a bit difference.*

Other respondents mentioned that crime made many Latinos concerned about

their safety and forced them to participate in leisure activities indoors. Maria (38,

unemployed) and Ariel (44, construction worker) for example, commented, respectively:

> *Maria: Well, I feel really lonely here and scared. I mean, I can't go out
> because there is a lot of crime. It seems so insecure here. I don't let my
> kids go outside. A normal day is simply a day where I take the kids to
> school, and then bring them back. And they just stay here do their
> homework, or play something inside the house.*
>
> *Ariel: Because there is crime out there, my daughter cannot go outside.
> She can only go out if another girl invites her and I know where she is
> going to and who will be there. Crime is a big problem.*

In general, crime in Latino neighborhoods had a direct impact on the types of activities

residents could participate in by making areas with high criminal activity off limits for

the local population. Further, the fear of crime led to feelings of loneliness among some

immigrants like Maria who felt completed to stay indoors and who missed opportunities to socialize with others.

When comparing crime experienced in Chilpancingo and in the United States, immigrants commented that gang crime experienced in the U.S. was prevalent in poor neighborhoods and that more affluent immigrants could isolate themselves from the effects of criminal activity by moving to more suburban areas. This was not the case in Mexico where crime was related to activities of drug cartels. For example, Itzel (27, nanny) commented,

> *A lot of Mexican immigrants live in very bad neighborhoods because they are cheaper. These neighborhoods are infiltrated with gangs and crime, yet many Mexican immigrants also live in suburbs. They are less afraid of the gang and drug crime because their neighborhoods are nicer… In Mexico we have a problem of drug cartels. It didn't used to be like that. It used to be quite common that people would be walking late at night and feel safe. Really, the crime in Mexico has gotten out of proportion all over Mexico. If you are rich, you are even in greater danger because drug cartels are really attacking the whole nation and not solely a group of citizens.*

Similar to Itzel, many respondents believed that the crime in Mexico was directly related to the operations of drug cartels, while in the United States it was associated with low socioeconomic status of the neighborhoods. That is, crime in the U.S. was more a product of the environment, while in Mexico it was directly related to the control of drug territory, and thus, more difficult to escape for the average citizens.

The findings obtained from interviews with Mexicans in the United States revealed five main trends. *First,* Mexican immigrants from Guerrero believed that there were more possibilities for participation in structured activities in the U.S., yet lack of knowledge of leisure opportunities restricted their leisure participation. Women had a

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higher purchasing power, and thus more freedom to participate in leisure than in Mexico, yet family obligations were still considered a priority by most women. *Second,* the understanding and the meaning of leisure was very similar to the western concept of leisure. Leisure was described as a block of free time (free of work and compulsory activities), as an activity, and as a state of being. *Third,* the findings demonstrated that the there were many changes related to immigration in regards to the leisure experience. They included more constraints related to colder weather, undocumented status of some participants, larger travel distances, and less knowledge of leisure opportunities. *Forth,* family was the cornerstone of leisure activities and participation and thus was also a main factor that could influence the leisure experience of Mexican immigrants. *Fifth,* religion, economics, and safety also shaped leisure behavior among the immigrants from Guerrero.

V. DISCUSSION

This chapter highlights the major findings of this study and discuses how they are related to the past research on the topic. First, I will discuss the culture of Chilpancingo, Guerrero and the importance local residents place on family, family traditions, and insecurity (e.g., drug cartels and crime). Second, I will discuss what Mexicans in Guerrero and Mexican immigrants to the U.S. consider to be leisure and how they define leisure. Third, I will examine similarities and differences in leisure behavior between Mexicans in Guerrero and Mexican immigrants in the U.S. I will focus on gender and age differences in leisure activities and constraints in both countries. Fourth, I will discuss similarities and differences in factors that shape the experience of leisure in Guerrero and among Mexicans in the United States, and finally I will analyze changes in leisure behavior among Mexicans caused by immigration to the United States.

1. The Culture of Chilpancingo, Guerrero and the Importance Residents of this Region Place on Family, Family Traditions, and Insecurity

In a cross-cultural study such as this one it is important to explore the culture, norms and values of the society in question. If we can understand how the residents of Chilpancingo, Guerrero interpret different aspects of their society such as the meaning of different ideas, symbols, artifacts and behaviors, then we can understand the day- to-day living patterns of the participants of this study (McGee & Banks, 1989). In this research project, the first set of questions focused on the culture and daily life of the residents of Chilpancingo. In particular, the interviewees were asked (a) how was time spent in the town of Chilpancingo, (b) what were their favorite ways of spending free time, (c) what

activities people engaged in for fun, and (d) if there were any differences in age, gender, and marital status in how people spent their leisure time.

According to the participants, Chilpancingo is a bureaucratic town with a service based economy and no sources of production (e.g., factories, mining). Chilpancingo's main source of income comes from salaries of politicians and bureaucrats. For this reason, there is a large income disparity among the local population. The participants also believed that Chilpancingo is a very poor town with scarce jobs, especially for those individuals who do not participate in the political arena. Although Chilpancingo is considered the political and financial headquarters of the state of Guerrero, many of its residents are leaving the city in search of jobs to other towns, cities, states and even abroad (mostly the United States). Because of the low income levels among the local population, Chilpancingo also offers very few recreation facilities or structured leisure activities. The majority of the interviewees commented that most of their leisure involved going to public plazas and parks, such as "El Zocalo," or spending time with family and friends through social gatherings and trips.

According to the participants, people in Chilpancingo place high importance on family and family traditions. Regardless of age, the majority of the participants' free time revolved around their families. Further, the majority of the interviewees stated that family time was the most enjoyable part of their leisure. These findings confirmed what many leisure researchers found on leisure patterns of Latinos in the United States. Hutchinson's (1987) study, for example, showed that nearly a quarter (24.3%) of Latinos observed in Chicago public parks visited the location with a family member. Further, the average size of Latino groups was 5.7 people versus 2.5 people among Caucasians and

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3.8 among African Americans. Irwin et al. (1990) also found that Mexican-Americans tend to participate in camping trips in larger groups than other visitors (12.8 people versus 6.9 among the Anglos).

The importance placed on family and family traditions by the residents of Chilpancingo can partly explain the higher preferences for family leisure among this population. A study by De La Riva (2005), which examined characteristics of Mexican families, revealed that the majority of Mexican families believe in positive family aspects such as preservation of cultural and family traditions. Additionally, De La Riva found that Mexican families believe that family leisure time should be spent in unison. Unfortunately, the study did not explain why family members held these beliefs. In my research project, women expressed their desire to share most of their leisure with family members, while men also revealed that most of their leisure time was spent with their families. Further, social expectations and norms in Chilpancingo strengthened people's desire to take part in family leisure. Many of the activities that were chosen by the participants included family get-togethers, social gatherings among two or more families, family parties and family outdoor recreation (e.g., visits to rivers and creeks, camping).

Along with family traditions, the effect of gender roles was clearly seen in people's leisure patterns. A report on the "Mexican Family" by the National Institute of Informational Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2009) reported that 80% of all Mexican households were composed of a father, a mother and children. In terms of the division house labor between men and women, women predominantly were responsible for household chores suggesting that women have an expected role of being the caretakers of the household. .In the surveyed households, 98% of women spent on average 39 hours

per week doing domestic work while only 18.4% of men participated in some kind of household activity. Although the majority of women interviewed in this study had internalized their gender roles and expectations, a few females voiced their desire to be apart from their families when participating in leisure. They rejected the norms and expectations that women should be solely responsible for the housework or family chores even when taking part in leisure. These participants were generally younger and believed that in Mexican culture women are never free to spend time on their own. Yet, the majority of the female interviewees did not feel obligated to have family leisure, but believed that it was their personal choice to spend time with their families.

The majority of the participants revealed that safety was a main concern in Guerrero. *First,* they attributed safety problems in Chilpancingo to the internal migrations and to the fact that the city has considerably grown in size in recent years. The increase in population and accompanying heavy traffic has created a sense of insecurity among the local residents. The majority of the interviewees commented that they were afraid of going outside during late hours and were hesitant to let their children participate in free play outside of their own lands or properties. Interviewees commented that during their childhood they used to be able to play outside without having to worry about traffic or whether their neighbors were "good people." A sense of community was typical to Chilpancingo and everyone in town knew everybody else. Today, those participants who had lived in the city for at least two generations believed that the influx of migrants brought with it crime, drugs and insecurity.

Second, almost all of the participants commented that they were fearful of the drug wars that Mexico has been experiencing in the last couple of years. According to the

Congressional Research Service Report on Mexico's Drug Cartels (2007), the entire country, including the state of Guerrero, have seen an increase in drug cartels who now dominate the wholesale of illegal drugs in the United States. The report states that along with drug trafficking, Mexican cartels have used crime as a tool to intimidate the public and to corrupt the Mexican government and police. Increased efforts by the federal government to control drug trafficking have led to a war between the Mexican armed forces and the drug cartels. Further, the desire among many major cartels to dominate the illicit drug routes to the United States has led to widespread violence in Mexico and in Guerrero, which is one of the major producers of illegal poppy seeds in the nation (Steinberg, Hobbs, & Mathewson, 2004). Fernandez-Menendez and Ronquillo (2006) commented that given that Guerrero is a major producer of poppy seeds, many drug cartels and peasants have also used violence to protect their illicit crops.

It is important to note that during the time of the interviews a drug-related mass murder occurred in the city of Chilpancingo that captured national and international attention. On December 22nd, 2009, nine Mexican soldiers were decapitated and their heads were left outside the main commercial center in town by a drug cartel that was retaliating against the capture of its important member (AP, 2008). It is understandable that in light of such wave of violence, fear of crime was a major constraint on leisure behavior mentioned by the interviewees. They were afraid of going outside during late hours because they did not know how and when the drug cartels would hit with a violent attack. Parents were concerned about the safety of their children, as kidnappings were not unusual in the state of Guerrero and all over Mexico. One of the participants in this study was personally affected by the violence, as her nephew had recently been kidnapped and

killed. This insecurity created a desire among many of the participants to leave the area or at least to stay indoors and to find alternative leisure options.

2. What Mexicans in Guerrero and Mexicans in the United States Consider to be Leisure and How They Define Leisure

Based on the findings of this study we can infer that the definition of leisure among Mexicans in Guerrero and Mexican immigrants from Guerrero residing in the Unites States was very similar to the Western notion of leisure. *First,* the participants defined leisure as a subset of free time. All of the respondents mentioned that activities people do for fun are called *tiempo libre,* or free time. *Ocio* was another word used by a few of the respondents, yet there was a consensus among the participants that *ocio* had a negative connotation and was equivalent to being lazy, or not doing anything productive. To have *tiempo libre* a person had to feel free to use his or her time in whatsoever way he or she chooses, must be free from obligations or compulsory activities, and there should be no one who can direct or give orders as to how to spend this time. Similar, in much of the Western literature, leisure is described as a block of unoccupied time when one is free to rest or to do what he or she chooses, a time beyond what is needed for existence, and a time that is not used for subsistence (Brightbill, 1961; Godbey, 2003; Kelly, 1996).

Second, and consistently with the Western understanding of leisure, the participants in Guerrero also considered leisure as a state of being or experience. Under this premise, leisure was assumed to be pleasurable, intrinsically motivating and valuable for its own sake (Cushman & Laidler, 1990; Iso-Ahola, 1980). Further, leisure as a state of being also gave an individual an opportunity to choose what he or she wishes to experience and offered an ideal state of freedom (Kraus, 2001). The participants in

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Guerrero mentioned that to be in leisure a person must "feel free," must be excited to participate in the leisure activity, and must be able to enjoy the moment. Mentally and emotionally the participant must feel happy. Lastly, the interviewees believed that if these properties are present, then positive outcomes will occur.

Third, the properties of leisure experience identified by the participants from Guerrero matched, to a large degree, those identified in the Western literature on the topic. Leisure allowed for relaxation, satisfaction, enjoyment and social interaction with others (Maclean et al., 1985; Miller & Robinson, 1963; Murphy 1981; Weiskopf, 1982). Participants believed that leisure played a major role of helping people maintain a healthy lifestyle and increased their quality of life. A few of the interviewees commented that leisure was an essential part of life.

Mexican immigrants in the United States provided similar responses to the interviewees from Guerrero, but identified different properties of leisure that were reflective of their unique experiences related to immigration. Many immigrants from Guerrero commented that they came to the United States by themselves, leaving their families and friends behind. Participation in leisure activities provided opportunity to meet new people and to develop relationships for those immigrants who were otherwise living by themselves and who had few possibilities to socialize due to long work hours. These findings are similar to those obtained by Juniu (2000), who described changes in leisure behavior among South American immigrants who relocated to the United States.

The findings of this study suggest that the main constraints on leisure experienced by Mexicans after immigration were lack of time and increased work responsibilities.

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Further, the respondents tended to spend more time alone and their lives were more isolated than in their home countries. The results of Stodolska and Santos' (2006) study on the effects of transnational status on the lives of Mexican migrant workers revealed that family, work, economic, social, and cultural networks and legal status shaped their leisure experience. Similar as in this research project, immigrant workers from Mexico interviewed by Stodolska and Santos were often separated from their families, children and friends, and many of them experienced feelings of loneliness and depression.

Although the findings of this study revealed major similarities in how the concept of leisure was defined in Mexico and in the Western literature, they also confirmed much stronger family orientation among Mexican participants. Lives of the majority of the interviewees revolved around their families and family time and family leisure were a preference for most of the participants. Spending time with the family was not seen as an obligation and was the highlight of many participants' leisure. Individual pastimes were not as strongly valued as among mainstream American recreationists.

3. Similarities and Differences in Leisure Behavior between Mexicans in Guerrero and Mexicans from the State of Guerrero Residing in the United States

While the findings of this study helped us learn more about the similarities and differences in the understanding and the meaning of leisure among people in Guerrero and immigrants from Guerrero residing in the United States, they also shed some light on the types of activities Mexicans participate in and their motivations for participation.

The important role that family played in the lives of both people in Guerrero and Mexican immigrants in the U.S. had a major impact on the leisure activities of the

interviewees. Spending time with the family was the leisure activity most often mentioned by the participants in both Mexico and the U.S. Some of the activities done in the company of family members included family gatherings where the adults could talk with each other and where the children could interact during an unstructured play.

Family trips were also common among the interviewees in Mexico. They were less popular among Mexican immigrants in the U.S., as their leisure was more constrained by the lack of knowledge of leisure options, higher cost of participation in activities, lack of time due to long work hours, longer distances, and weather challenges (e.g., colder weather than in Mexico). Swimming was a popular activity among all of the participants because the entire families could participate in it and it allowed for relaxation and physical activity at the same time. Picnics and barbeques in natural environments were also quite popular among the interviewees in Mexico and in the U.S. These activities allowed for family interaction and also provided spaces for those who wanted to participate in more physically demanding activities, such as soccer, in close proximity to their families. Participants in Mexico and in the U.S. mentioned that during these outings they could socialize, drink, relax, and forget about the stresses of hard work.

Going to plazas, called *zocalos*, was a common activity among Mexican families in Guerrero, but not in the United States. Interviewees in Guerrero mentioned that *zocalos* were a place where people could go to buy food or interact with others who were there to buy gifts, magazines, or arts and crafts that were sold around the plaza. Further, local musicians and entertainers would perform around the area or in set locations such as *kiosko*, which is a circular-shaped structure in the middle of the *zocalo* that can be used as a stage.

These findings are somewhat consistent with the research done on Latinos in the United States. For instance, as it has already been discussed, Hutchinson (1987) found that the majority of Hispanics observed in Chicago parks participated in stationary activities and only few engaged in physically demanding pastimes. Their party groups were much larger than those of Caucasians or African Americans. Gobster's (2002) study confirmed that Latino visitors to Chicago Lincoln Park tended to participate in more passive activities such as picnicking, barbequing, sitting, relaxing or going to the zoo. Similar to Hutchison, Irwin et al. (1990) found that Mexican immigrants in the United States visited national forests in large groups and preferred to camp in the vicinity of other Latino families. Juniu's (2000) study on the changes in leisure behavior of South American immigrants also established that Latinos placed high value on group interaction and socially oriented activities. The findings of my research support these studies, as interviewees in Guerrero and Mexican immigrants in Chicago also showed a strong preference for socializing with other Latino families or groups and tended to choose activities and areas where the whole family could be comfortable. It is important, however, to be cautious while making such comparisons among studies. Most of the research done on Latinos in the United States has focused on people of multiple Latin-American nationalities and representing different generations. This study examined leisure patterns among people from one region – Guerrero, residing in Mexico and in the United States.

3.1   The Role of Gender in Shaping Leisure Behavior

The findings of this study showed that Mexican women from Guerrero put a high priority on family recreation. Family and social expectations and norms placed certain

boundaries on the activities that women could engage in and added many constraints on their leisure behavior. According to the participants in Guerrero and in the United States, the role of woman, regardless of marital status, was to take care of the household and to focus on the needs of other family members. Further, the participants explained that Mexican culture favored men's leisure activities over women's leisure, which led to more leisure opportunities for men. Men were able to go out more often or participate in many leisure activities that have been traditionally male-dominated such as going to bars and playing "rough" sports which involved strenuous physical activity. Despite this, the majority of the participants did not feel that men had the right to abuse the rights of women, yet that social and family roles simply added more constraints on their leisure. Because of their obligations to the family and to the household, women tended to have busy schedules and would sacrifice their own free time for that of their family. For example, during out-of-home activities such as picnics, women would be responsible for the food and the child care. Further, women were responsible for taking their children to and from their own activities. According to the findings of this study, improvement in economic conditions and education helped to diminish many of the constraints experienced by Mexican women. That is, women of low socio-economic status were forced to rely on their husbands' salaries, while those who were employed outside of home and who were more affluent had more decision making powers in their households and could spend more money on themselves. Further, higher incomes allowed women to hire domestic help which freed up time for their own leisure.

Although research on leisure behavior of Mexican women is very scarce, previous studies on leisure of mainstream American women have obtained findings similar to

those of this study (e.g., Henderson, Hodges, & Kivel, 2002; Jackson & Henderson, 1995). Women in the United States, in general, also place a high priority on the care of their families and often sacrifice their own leisure for the sake of their children. Further, although considerable progress has been made, many American women still do not participate in many leisure activities to the same extent as men do. Thus, my findings with respect to leisure of Mexican women show many similarities to those obtained in studies of mainstream American population.

3.2. The Role of Age in Shaping Leisure Behavior

Children and adolescents in Mexico participated in many activities similar to that of their peers in the United States. Adolescents in Guerrero went out with their friends to movie theaters, to the main plazas in the city, or would simply hang out at each other's houses. Nightclubs and discotheques were very popular among the older youth. The main difference between the leisure behavior of Mexican youth in Guerrero and their Mexican-American counterparts was related to low rates of participation among the youth in Mexico in structured activities. The interviewees, both in Mexico and in the United States, believed that children in Guerrero did not have many opportunities to participate in organized activities and that they were left to play with other friends and/or rely on technology-based entertainment (e.g., video games, TV, computer networking sites). Most of the structured leisure came from the activities that schools and churches would provide, which was very limited. Further, urbanization and safety problems have led many parents to seclude their children inside homes further limiting out-of-home activities of the youth. The changes that are taking place in Chilpancingo are reminiscent

of the developments in many other cities in developed countries of the world where leisure of local residents is constrained by the lack of open green spaces and safety problems.

4.   Similarities and Differences in Factors that Condition Leisure in Guerrero and among Immigrants from Guerrero in the United States

While the interviews helped to understand much about the meaning of leisure and leisure behaviors among Mexicans in Guerrero and Mexican immigrants in the United States, they also shed light on the factors that condition leisure of people in Guerrero and their counterparts in the U.S. The findings showed that in both locations, family factors, economic conditions, social influences, religion, and safety were the major forces that shaped leisure behavior of the participants. First, most of the interviewees in Guerrero and the U.S. were of lower socio-economic status. Money was often a major constraint not only on their leisure participation but also on their daily lives. The majority of the participants commented that if they had more money they would organize more leisure activities for their families, travel with their relatives, or buy bigger house with a pool. Thus, it can be said that the participants considered money as a stepping stone that could lead to improved family recreation. Interestingly, some of the interviewees claimed that socio-economic status conditioned not only the activities that people could participate in, but also their leisure preferences. These participants believed that for centuries Mexican society was highly socially stratified and that many activities were considered to be reserved for the elite. For instance, women of lower socio-economic standing were hesitant to participate in education courses and men who showed preference for participation in "elite" sports (e.g., tennis, golf) opened themselves to criticism.

Second, the participants from Guerrero and from the U.S. claimed that much of their leisure revolved around festivities such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, Independence Day, Christmas, local regional ethnic celebrations, beauty pageants, and Catholic holidays. Families and friends would plan outings and large parties around these holidays. Such festivals and celebrations have been so internalized by the Mexican interviewees that they were the source of pride and a sense of belonging. Participants who resided in the United States also followed this holiday calendar, although celebrations among immigrants were infused with American customs and traditions invented in the new environment of the U.S.

Third, the findings showed that religious obligations and teachings conditioned leisure activities of the majority of participants. Many interviewees believed that their family roles and daily life were shaped by the religious culture of Mexico. Interestingly, although many of the interviewed immigrants in the U.S. revealed that they were no longer practicing Catholics, they still believed their religious upbringing in Mexico had a strong effect on the choices they made with respect to leisure.

Lastly, safety was a major factor that conditioned leisure behavior of all participants. In Mexico, drug cartel violence and activity limited the types of activities that many interviewees could participate in. People in Guerrero no longer felt comfortable to spend their leisure time outdoors at night, a custom that seemed to be practiced by many participants. In the United States, high levels of crime and gang activity in particular were common in low income neighborhoods where the majority of immigrants from Guerrero resided. To avoid encounters with crime, participants limited spending time outdoors and only allowed their children to play in the close vicinity of

their houses. These findings are reminiscent of the results of a recent study by Stodolska, Acevedo, and Shinew (2009) on the effect of fear of gang crime on leisure behavior among Latino residents of urban Chicago communities.

5. Changes in Leisure Behavior among Mexicans from Guerrero Related to Immigration

Throughout this chapter many comparisons were made in regards to the understanding of leisure, involvement in leisure activities, and the factors that condition leisure participation among residents of Guerrero, immigrants from Guerrero in the United States, and mainstream Americans. In addition, the findings of the study revealed certain transformations that had occurred in the leisure lives of Mexicans from Guerrero related to immigration. For instance, participants believed that although their incomes in the U.S. were higher than in Mexico, leisure activities were more expensive in the U.S. and, thus, money was a major constraint on leisure. Interviewees commented that in Mexico they were able to swim in local rivers for free or to have a simple outing near their home. In the United States the distances were longer and the costs seemed to be higher. Further, immigrants were less knowledgeable about the places they could go to for barbequing or picnicking.

Picnicking and family gatherings were among the most popular activities in both Mexico and the United States, yet they took a new dimension after immigration. Many participants claimed that they had few family members and friends in the United States. Thus, family outings not only were valued because they allowed for spending time with others, but also gave opportunities for socialization among those participants who lived isolated and lonely lives.

The new culture, the availability of additional resources and the influences of the American society also brought changes at the individual level. Children were exposed to more organized activities in the U.S. and parks and recreation departments provided sports and leisure activities that children could sign up for. Children and adolescents also had more after school opportunities, which, in turn, allowed parents, and especially mothers, to have more free time for themselves.

Women were able to participate in more individual leisure activities mainly because they believed society was more open to gender equality in the United States. Female interviewees mentioned that they would go out with a few friends to coffee places, to each other's homes, or to gym classes. Although women participated in more activities, many respondents also believed that there were few structured leisure options that were culturally sensitive to the needs of Mexican female immigrants. Most of the interviewed women from Guerrero belonged to the lower socio-economic class and had never been exposed to the activities that were available in the United States. Although female immigrants did have a higher economic power in the U.S., the options that were available to them did not necessarily match their interests or needs.

It is important to note that the findings of the study clearly showed that although women had more freedoms in the United States, family roles still played a vital role in their personal lives. Women were still expected to put family as their top priority. Despite higher spending powers and more leisure options, fatigue and lack of energy prevented many women from enjoying participation in leisure activities. Similar to immigrant women, immigrant men from Guerrero were also highly constrained by long work hours

and lack of energy to take part in many new leisure opportunities that were available to them after immigration.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

1. Summary of Major Findings

The purpose of this study was three-fold: (a) To examine the existence and the understanding of the concept of leisure among Mexicans from the state of Guerrero, Mexico and among Mexican immigrants from Guerrero, residing in Chicago, IL with specific emphasis on age, gender, and marital status.; (b) To identify forces that shape the experience of leisure among Mexicans from the state of Guerrero and among Mexican immigrants from the state of Guerrero, residing in Chicago, IL; (c) To identify changes in the understanding of the concept and the meaning of leisure, and in leisure behavior among Mexicans from Guerrero caused by immigration to the United States.

The in-depth interviews with the 14 participants in Chilpancingo, Guerrero demonstrated that the residents of Guerrero place a high a value on family time and family traditions. The understanding and the meaning of leisure, *tiempo libre,* among this population was largely similar to the Western notion of leisure, as it was understood to be a subset of time, free from obligations and compulsory activities. Leisure was also considered a state of being where the individual is free to participate in the activity, desires to participate in the activity, and strives to obtain positive outcomes from participation. Although the understanding of *tiempo libre* was very similar to the Western notion of leisure, family values, roles and traditions played a more important role among the residents of Guerrero. Leisure activities and time were planned mostly around the family, and each member of the family had a pre-established role depending on his or her age and gender.

Women were expected to take care of the family needs. Further, regardless of marital status, many women were unable to participate in leisure activities that were considered to be outside of the female domain and that would undermine their obligations as the caretakers of the household. Interestingly, most women had internalized their roles and obligations and did not show a desire to participate in activities outside of the norm and did not feel as if their leisure was constrained by family roles and obligations. On the contrary, most men had the freedom to participate in many leisure activities outside of the home and family. Despite that, the majority of the male respondents demonstrated strong desire to participate in leisure activities with their families. The only activities that men participated in by themselves were drinking with male friends and free soccer play. The study also showed that the majority of children, adolescents, and adults in Guerrero did not have many opportunities to participate in structured leisure activities. Most of the activities that children participated in consisted of free play with friends, family and neighbors. The majority of leisure activities that the adults were involved in included outings, barbeques, and family gatherings.

Residents in Guerrero also outlined many factors that conditioned their leisure participation. Lack of security was a major constraint on their leisure. Drug violence and crime have increased in the area forcing residents of Guerrero to find leisure activities inside the home, and thus, restricting their outdoor recreation and physical activity. The majority of the interviewees were of lower socio-economic status and, thus, their leisure behavior was also affected by economic constraints. Social class seemed to not only *constrain* their leisure participation but also to affect their leisure *preferences*. Leisure

choices were also heavily influenced by the religious background of the participants and by the sub-culture of the local community.

The way the immigrants from Guerrero defined and understood leisure (as *tiempo libre)* did not seem to change with immigration. Family traditions and values were still highly regarded after immigration. The main differences between interviewees residing in Guerrero, Mexico and in Chicago were related to the type of activities they participated in and the feeling of having more freedom and choices to be involved in structured leisure activities after immigration. Many women revealed that in the United States they were able to work outside of home and thus gained economic power that allowed them to have more freedom to choose how to spend their discretionary incomes. Despite the fact that some still commented about the *machismo* attitudes among many Mexican men, there was a consensus that after immigration women were able to participate in more leisure activities. Nonetheless, women were still the main caretakers of the households and the long work hours and lack of culturally sensitive activity options constrained their leisure. Similarly, men believed that they worked long and strenuous hours, and although they wanted to participate in leisure activities that were offered in the United States they were too tired and exhausted to be able to enjoy their time off. Children and adolescents had more opportunities to participate in structured leisure activities after immigration. However, lack of knowledge among the parents, long distances, and high fees were the major constraints on participation their families had to contend with.

The new environment of the United States has created new factors that conditioned participation in many leisure activities. Because many immigrants had come to the United States by themselves or with few friends or family members, many of them

felt lonely and isolated after arrival. Moreover, long work hours and lack of knowledge of the activities and resources available to them were big impediments to their leisure participation. Immigrants still took part in many "old" leisure activities and celebrations, but in the new environment of the United States many of their old pastimes were reinvented and infused with new American elements. For example, festivals were still celebrated, yet they took slightly different forms, as the participants adapted American cultural element (e.g., picnics, food).

2.   Contributions of the Study

2.1   Contributions to Research

The findings of this study provide some important contributions to the field of leisure and ethnic and racial studies. First, according to my knowledge, this study is the first one conducted in our field that has undertaken a cross-cultural comparison of a Mexican immigrant population residing in the United States with Mexicans from the same region residing in their home country. As Walker and Deng (2002/2003) mentioned, cross-cultural studies of leisure, such as this one, can test new grounds and examine the understanding of the concept and the meanings of leisure among the non-Western populations. This study has allowed us to make comparisons and identify transformations that many immigrants go through as they migrate not only from their native country, but away from culture, norms, values and traditions, and adapt to the new culture of the United States. Although research on leisure of Mexican immigrants in the United States has significantly developed during the last couple of decades (e.g., Chavez, 1991, 1992, 1993; Floyd et al., 1993; Floyd & Gramann, 1993; Gobster, 2002; Juniu, 2000; Shaull & Gramann, 1998; Stodolska & Santos, 2006), few studies have captured

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such changes among Mexican-American populations. Moreover, this study not only enabled us to investigate the understanding and the meaning of leisure among citizens of another nation, but as Stodolska (2000) noted, helped us examine "the validity of mainstream theories [and] detect relationships that could otherwise escape our attention" (p. 434).

The findings of this study suggested that the understanding of leisure among residents of Guerrero is very similar to the Western notion of leisure, as a block of time that is free from work (e.g., Brightbill, 1960; De Grazia, 1962; Dumazedier, 1967), free of compulsory activities (e.g., Brightbill, 1960; Fairchild, 1970; Godbey, 1985; Neumeyer & Neumeyer, 1958), and when one is free to act and choose (e.g., Brightbill, 1960; Dumazedier). Further, there was evidence that leisure is also perceived as a state of being / experience, which bares striking resemblance to the notions of leisure put forth by Cushman and Laidler (1990) and Iso-Ahola (1980).

This study also confirmed the important role family plays in the life of many immigrants from Mexico who now reside in the United States. As a result, it shed new light on the findings of studies by other leisure researchers (e.g., Hutchinson, 1987; Irwin et al., 1990), who suggested that immigrants from Mexico prefer stationary activities and participate in leisure in large family-oriented groups. Further, this study helped us understand why, despite the fact that many immigrants from Mexico have more opportunities for leisure participation and more discretionary incomes after settling in the U.S., their rates of participation in some pastimes are still very low as compared to other groups.

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Lastly, the results of this study also provide new insights into how the culture of Mexican-Americans residing in the U.S. is not only different from that of mainstream American society, but also from Mexicans residing in their home country (Neidert & Farley, 1994; Portes & Zhou, 1993). New conditioning factors have caused Mexican immigrants in the U.S. to feel more isolated, segregated and lonely than when they were still residing in Mexico. In this respect, results of this study support Juniu's (2000) and Rublee and Shaw's (1991) research on Latino Americans and Stodolska's (2000) research on Poles that suggested that isolation and lack of informal communication between people are important obstacles immigrants have to struggle with after arrival. Also, this study demonstrated that fear of crime is a major constraint on leisure that, until recently (see Stodolska et al., 2009) has not been researched in-depth among members of this minority group.

2.2   Contributions to Practice

In light of the fact that the Latino population is likely to rapidly increase in the United States, leisure practitioners should understand not only the activities and programs that Latinos, and in this case Mexican-Americans, wish to participate in, but also their values, norms and traditions. This study has reiterated the fact that the Latino population in the U.S. is very diverse and that even among the Mexican population important differences may exist based on people's region of origin, gender, age, marital, and immigration status. For instance, the fact that lack of knowledge of the American system, lack of time and energy, and the priority placed on family add to cultural constraints on leisure experienced by many Mexican-American women can lead to very low leisure participation rates among female members of this group. It is important for

leisure practitioners who serve this community to understanding that most women from this group have limited time and energy to participate in physically demanding activities and are always conscious of their roles as care takers of the home. Practitioners should also understand that alike women, many Mexican-American men feel stressed and tired after long hours of hard work, and that when participating in leisure they put family time as their top priority, even if it leads to unhealthy lifestyles and low rates of participation in physical activity. Based on the findings of this study we can speculate that children and adolescents are the most adapted to the American system and participate more in leisure programs and activities than immigrant adults. At the same time, they still feel the responsibility to take part in family recreation. Further, their participation is constrained by the lack of time and money on the part of their parents, who struggle to get by in the new environment after immigration and to cope in difficult economic times. Leisure opportunities that are available to the children of immigrants in the urban Chicago area are plenty, yet because the parents cannot drive their children to these activities and because they value the time they spend with their families, their participation in organized recreation is limited.

Second, when designing recreational programs for this population, practitioners should consider the demands of family recreation and the complex traditions and norms that are still practiced by members of this group, even years after settling in the United States. The traditional family time is still very important to Mexican immigrants, although to a lesser degree because many immigrants no longer live with their extended or close family members. Socialization during picnics, barbeques, and outings has an

important meaning for members of this group as they attempt to relax by having the family together while they drink, talk and participate in free play.

Third, and most importantly, leisure practitioners should understand that Mexican-Americans, as a group, are very complex and value leisure very highly. The sacrifices that they make are generally because of the family needs. Men and women give up their leisure time for long hours of work and for the time they spend taking care of their families. Immigrant children and adolescents adapt quicker to the American society and thus participate in leisure activities that their parents have never had the opportunity to enjoy. Competition and serious leisure do not seem to play an important role among adult Mexican-Americans, yet many parents are glad that their children learn competitive sports and other leisure activities typical to the American society.

Lastly, many immigrants from this group are undocumented. They spend most of their leisure time indoors and are often segregated from others due to their fears of being caught and prosecuted by the police and immigration services. Therefore, leisure practitioners who want to promote leisure services to members of this group need to understand the collectivistic nature of this population as well as differences in immigration status among many Mexican-Americans. Proper programming and management can lead to significant improvements in health and well-being among members of this group.

3. Limitations of the Study

Although this study can contribute to both academia and practice, it has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First and foremost, it needs to be stressed that

this study focused on a very narrow sub-group of the Mexican population and, thus it results need to be treated with caution. Guerrero is one out of the 32 states in Mexico and participants in this study were selected from one of the cities of this state. Further, Mexico is one of the 20 nations that compose Latin America. Thus, any generalizations of the findings of this study to Mexicans and to Mexican-Americans should be made with extreme caution and to Latina/o Americans should be avoided. Even further, our group consisted of members of a low socio-economic class and, in the second part of the study, of first generation immigrants. This underscores the need to acknowledge the limited generalizability of the study's findings.

Second, this study has been done from an "insider position." In the past, it has been argued that being a member of the studied population can lead to biased results (Henderson, 1998), although more current scholarship actually embraces such a position and argues that it allows for a more meaningful and in-depth insight into the studied group (Collins, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2000). I acknowledge that the selected population had a special meaning to my personal history as an immigrant from the same region. I was born in Guerrero, Mexico and emigrated to the United States when I was three years old. As I was growing up I have traveled several times back to my native town of Chilpancingo. On several occasions I have stayed for prolong periods of time in Chilpancingo and even went to school there. My transnational status has allowed me to detect numerous differences and similarities between the residents of Guerrero and immigrants from this region to the United States. Although I acknowledge that an ethnographic study can take years to conduct as the researcher needs to immerse himself or herself in the local culture, being an insider in this society has helped me to develop a

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point of reference as I began this study. In order to collect data I have used semi-structured interviews, encouraging participants to express their own opinions and to provide their own interpretations of the phenomena under study. This has also allowed the interviews to venture into new areas that would have otherwise escaped my attention.

Third, crime levels in Guerrero have significantly increased prior to the data collection phase of this study, and thus it is safe to assume that the factor of insecurity was present in the minds of the participants. This can lead to safety seem a bigger problem than it usually is and my interpretation of the results could be reflective of the special time and circumstances in the history of this area.

Fourth, a limitation of the study can be related to my attempts to investigate the meaning of leisure and the understanding of leisure among this population. In order to ask questions about the understanding of leisure, first I had to assume that a concept of "leisure" in fact exists. I designed questions in such a way as to explore if the notion of leisure existed without influencing the outcomes of the interviews. For instance, the questions that I asked allowed the participants to explain their "fun" activities in the context of all other activities they participated in during the course of a normal day. As my understanding of their concept of leisure increased, I encouraged participants to try to find a word that would best describe the activities that people from this region did for fun, relaxation, or enjoyment.

The last limitation is related to the number of people who participated in this study. Only 14 interviews were conducted in Mexico and 10 in the United States. It is

possible that a larger sample could have confirmed many of the findings or could have brought new insights into the topics under investigation.

4.   Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused on members of a small group of Mexicans in Mexico and a small percentage of immigrants from Mexico who reside in the United States. A suggestion for future researchers who attempt to explore the understanding of leisure among Mexicans and the transformation of leisure related to immigration would be to conduct similar studies with people from other regions of Mexico to see if these results are consistent across different sub-populations. Future research should also investigate people from different regions of Mexico to identify the impact of culture, region, and local traditions on their understanding of leisure, the meaning of leisure, and the activities that they choose to participate in.

Future studies should also acknowledge the nationality of participants and avoid generalizing Mexican culture to cultures of other Latino countries. During my interviews the word "Latino" came up only twice and was not used to describe the group or the community the interviewee belonged to. Further, the results of the study showed that there are many differences *within* groups that past research has generalized. For example, future researchers should recognize that immigrants who reside in urban communities can have different experiences and leisure participation patterns than immigrants who reside in suburbs or in rural communities.

Lastly, and most importantly, future research should consider that many of these groups have constant communication with family members and friends that reside in both

countries, Mexico and the Unities. Members of the Mexican-American community frequently travel between Mexico and the United States and have an in-depth understanding of both cultures. Their own sub-cultures are also dynamic, they are constantly changing and adapting to new circumstances related to the world's economy and social and cultural processes. These changing conditions are likely to have a significant impact on people's leisure patterns and should be acknowledged in future studies on the topic.

5.   Concluding Thoughts

The experience of being a Mexican *and* American, and of being a Masters student who has worked a variety of jobs has helped me understand the need to investigate immigrants not as minority members, but as small communities with very rich and complex cultures. As I advanced in my education, I learned that many Mexicans closely resemble their American counterparts in terms of their feelings and desires, and yet display significantly different leisure and recreation patterns. Despite the fact that they may participate in similar leisure activities, their styles of participation can be markedly different. Being a member of this community has helped me not only understand views of people who share my ethnic background, but to experience the same challenges that many immigrants face. I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Business where I was the only ethnically and racially "different" student in many of my classes. I could not understand why I felt isolated and alone when I had lived most of my life in the United States. My journey began as I felt the need to research minority groups whose experiences I shared or who grew up in circumstances similar to mine. That is, people

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with poor economic means, isolated, fearful, tired of working long hours, and who acknowledge that they are ethnically and racially different.

I am thankful that I met my advisor during my early college career as she empowered me by helping me understand that as a researcher I could approach these questions and potentially not only understand many of my doubts, but to share the results of my work with the academic world. As the population of minorities in the U.S. is increasing and as members of "minority" groups are expected to become the majority by the year 2050 (Census, 2008) I plan on helping academics and practitioners to understand Mexican-American communities and how to serve the people who have the same desires and rights to live fulfilling, healthy and happy lives.

VII.   REFERENCES

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VIII. APPENDICES

Appendix A

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research

Institutional Review Board
528 East Green Street
Suite 203
Champaign, IL 61820

September 9, 2008

Monika Stodolska
Recreation Sport and Tourism
104 Huff Hall
M/C 584

RE: *The Concept of Leisure among Working Class Mexicans from the State of Guerrero and Mexican*
        Immigrants in the United States: A Cross-Cultural Study of the Elements of Leisure
        IRB Protocol Number: 09097

Dear Monika:

Thank you for submitting the completed IRB Application for Exemption form for your project entitled
The Concept of Leisure among Working Class Mexicans from the State of Guerrero and Mexican
Immigrants in the United States: A Cross-Cultural Study of the Elements of Leisure. Your project was
assigned Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol Number 09097 and reviewed. The research
activities involving human subjects are exempt from Title 45 – Public Welfare, Part 46 – Protection of
Human Subjects, Subpart A – Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects per the following
category:

> 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2): This exemption applies since this study involves interviews with
> working class Mexican residents of the State of Guerrero and Mexican Immigrants in
> Chicago, Illinois. The goal of the study is to investigate the concept of leisure among
> these individuals and how the concept of leisure is transformed to the United States.
> Although interviews may be audio recorded for transcription purposes, any disclosure of
> the participants' responses outside of the research context would not reasonably place
> them at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing,
> employability, or reputation. Therefore, the category 2 exemption is applicable.

This determination of exemption only applies to the research study as submitted. **Exempt protocols are
approved for a maximum of three years.** Please note that additional modifications to your project
need to be submitted to the IRB for review and exemption determination or approval before the
modifications are initiated. To submit modifications to your protocol, please complete the IRB Research
Amendment Form (see http://www.irb.uiuc.edu/?q=forms-and-instructions/research-amendments.html).

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subject research. If you have
any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me
or the IRB Office.

Sincerely,

Sue Keehn, Director, Institutional Review Board

c: Juan C Acevedo

telephone 217-333-2670 • fax 217-333-0405 • email IRB@uiuc.edu

Appendix B

Interview Recruitment Script

Hello! My name is Juan Carlos Acevedo. I am a graduate student at the University of Illinois and I am conducting research for a project that is examining the concept of leisure among Mexicans in Mexico and Mexican immigrants in the U.S. We are particularly interested in how the concept of leisure may be transformed as one emigrates from their home country into the United States. If you have time, I'd like to interview you. The interview will only take about 30 to 60 minutes. Would you like to participate?

Appendix C

Informed Consent Letter

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Juan Carlos Acevedo. I am a Graduate student at the University of Illinois working under the direction of Dr. Monika Stodolska from the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism. I am conducting in-depth interviews for a research project whose purpose is to examine the concept of leisure among Mexican nationals and its transformation among Mexican immigrants.

I really appreciate your taking the time to share your experiences and perspectives with me. Your opinions will help me accurately represent the role of leisure and recreation in the lives of Mexicans and Mexican immigrants. The expected length of the interview is approximately 30-60 minutes (40 minutes on average).

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate nor are there any risks to participating beyond those that exist in everyday life. In order to ensure that I accurately record your comments, I would like to audiotape the interview. The information collected will be kept confidential and the only people who will have access to the interview tapes are me and Dr. Stodolska. Furthermore, you can skip any question that you prefer not to answer. The audiotapes will be destroyed within one month of the interview and a pseudonym (fake name) will be used on any written notes and transcripts instead of your real name so that the interview cannot be traced back to you.

There are no expected benefits for individual participants in this study. However, the information provided by participants may result in generalized benefits for Mexican citizens and immigrants, as well as a better understanding of this population among businesses and scholars. For example, research regarding the leisure and recreation of Mexican citizens and Mexican immigrants may help identify factors that this population considers important and is not currently being assessed by leisure service providers. The findings of this study may be used to develop recommendations that could be used to improve the conditions and opportunities for leisure and recreation among Mexican Americans in the United States. I sincerely thank you for your help with this study. The results of this research will be disseminated through journal articles and conference presentations. If you would like to receive a copy of the results or if you have any questions or comments, please contact me or Dr. Stodolska at:

Mr. Juan Carlos Acevedo
Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
104 Huff Hall, 1206 S. Fourth Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Email: jacevedo@illinois.edu
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Dr. Monika Stodolska
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Champaign, IL 61820

Email: stodolsk@illinois.edu
Phone: 217-244-5644

I will make sure you receive the results once the data collection and processing have been completed.

If you have any further questions regarding your rights as a project participant you may contact University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at (217) 333-2670 (collect) or by email at irb@uiuc.edu. The Institutional Review Board is the office at the University of Illinois responsible for protecting the rights of human subjects involved in studies conducted by University of Illinois researchers.

All participants will be given a copy of this consent form for their records.

By placing a check in the spaces below:

_____ I certify that I'm at least 18 years of age.

_____ I have read and understood the information on this form.

_____ I have had the information on this form explained to me.

_____ I grant permission for my interview to be audiotaped.

_____   _____

Participant's signature   Date

Appendix D

Interview Script

Questions for Mexicans in Guerrero

I. TO EXAMINE THE UNDERSTANDING AND THE MEANING OF THE
    CONCEPT OF LEISURE AMONG WORKING CLASS MEXICANS FROM THE
    STATE OF GUERRERO, MEXICO

    i. *To identify what is considered to be "leisure" among this group and when / in
    what situations it occurs.*

        1. How is time spent here in this town?

        2. How does a typical day look in this town?

        3. What are your favorite ways of spending free time?

            Do you do those things for fun?

        4. How much free time do you have in your daily life?

        5. What are the activities that people do for fun in Guerrero?

        6. What are the activities that children participate in for fun?

            a. Are these activities structured?

        7. What are the activities that the youth participates in for fun?

            b. Are these activities structured?

        10. What are the things that adult women participate in for fun?

            c. Are these activities structured?

            d. Is there a difference between married and single women?

        11. What are the things that adult men participate in for fun?

            e. Are these activities structured?

            f. Is there a difference between married and single men?

    ii. *To identify if "leisure" is considered a 'state of being,' i.e., when one is in
    "leisure," according to members of this group.*

1) When are you enjoying yourself the most?

2) In what situations are you able to have fun? / When do you participate in most of your fun activities?

iii. To identify what properties activities need to posses to be described as "leisure" by members of this group.

1) What is so special about the activities that you like to do for fun?

2) Who can influence whether or not you are participating in an activity for fun?

3) Are there any obligations you must perform during your fun activities?

4) Are there any expectations that you must fulfill when you are participating in these activities?

iv. To examine the meanings of leisure activities for members of this group.

1) What do those fun activities mean to you?

5) How do you feel when participating in those activities?

2) Why do you do these activities? What do you get out of participation in these activities?

v. To identify how the concept of "leisure" is labeled among members of this group.

What do you call the activities that you do for fun? You may use more than one word.

What do you call the time that you use to participate in activities for fun?

What do you understand when I say 'free time (Tiempo Libre and Ocio).'

II. TO EXAMINE FORCES THAT SHAPE THE EXPERIENCE OF _____ (ANSWERS GIVEN TO v.1)

Economics

1) Are there any fun activities that you would like to participate in but are unable to because of the lack of money?

2) Are there any fun activities in which you take part in, would like to participate in differently, more frequently, or in another location if you had more resources?

3) How would you describe your and your family's economic situation?

4) What do you do for living?

5) Does the type of work that you do affect the fun activities that you can participate in?

6) Can you have any leisure during work?

7) How would you describe the financial situation of this town?

8) Where do most people work?

9) Are there any fun activities that those in the upper classes participate in that people in the lower classes do not participate in or participate in differently because of lack of money?

10) In general, how important is your economic situation in affecting what you do "for fun"?

Society

1) Are there any fun activities that people of this town expect you to participate in (I'm asking here more about your neighbors and perhaps some distant relatives than about your close family)? [If YES] Why do they expect you to participate in these activities? Who expects you to participate in what?

2) Are there any fun activities that you would like to participate in, but people in this town would not approve of? [If YES] What are those activities? Who would mind if you participated in these activities? What would happen if they saw you participating in these activities? Is it important for you to do what other people expect you to?

3) Could you describe some important customs practiced by people in his town?

4) Would any of these customs affect your participation in fun activities?

5) What are the fun activities that people in this town would generally not approve of?

6) In general, how important are people around you in influencing what you do for fun?

Family

1) Are there any [fun] activities that you must participate in because your family expects you to? Do you consider these activities fun?

2) Are there any fun activities that you are expected to participate in solely with your family?

3) Are there any [fun] activities that you would like to participate in, but your family would not approve of? [If YES] Could you give me examples of such activities? Who would not approve of your participation and why?

4) Are there any fun activities that you wish to participate in but cannot do so because you must fulfill other family obligations?

5) Do you have kids? [If YES]

6) How much time do you spend taking care of your kids?

7) What are the expectations that you must fulfill regarding the care of your kids?

8) When participating in family activities for fun, what is the role you are expected to provide?

9) How much importance do you give to your family opinions on what activities you should or should not participate in?

10) In general, how important is your family in influencing what you do for fun?

Culture

1) What are the most important norms and values that must be followed in your town?

2) Do any of these norms and values affect your participation in [fun] activities? [If YES] In what activities? In what way? Could you give me examples?

3) Are there any religious or cultural celebrations that you participate in? Do you have fun participating in these activities or do you do it more because of an obligation?

4) In general, how important is your cultural tradition in influencing what you do for fun?

Religion

1) Do you practice a religion or faith?

2) Do your religious practices or faith practices affect your preferences or choices for [fun] activities? [If YES] In what way?

3) Do you still feel you are having fun when you must choose activities based on your religions norms and values?

4) In general, how important is your religion (or lack thereof) in influencing what you do for fun?

Education

1) What is the highest grade you have completed?

2) Do you feel your education has impeded or helped you participate in your desired fun activities?

3) Do you think if you had a higher education you would participate in different fun activities?

4) Do you think if you had a lower education you would participate in different fun activities?

5) Were you able to learn or enjoy new [fun] activities while in school? [If YES] Which ones?

6) In general, how important is your educational background in influencing what you do for fun?

Politics

1) Are there any laws that prohibit you from participating in fun activities of your choice?

2) Does your political affiliation affect the type of fun activities that you participate in?

3) Does the local government have any influence on the types of fun activities that you can participate in or that are offered in this town?

4) In general, how important are political matters in influencing what you do for fun?

Other

1) Are there any other factors that influence your participation in fun activities?

Questions for Mexicans Immigrants in the Midwest

I. TO EXAMINE CHANGES IN THE UNDERSTANDING AND IN THE MEANING OF THE CONCEPT OF "LEISURE" RELATED TO IMMIGRATION AMONG WORKING CLASS MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS FROM THE STATE OF GUERRERO, RESIDING IN MIDWESTERN UNITED STATES.

   i. *To identify what is considered to be "leisure" among this group and when / in what situation it occurs.*

      1) How is time spent in this Latino neighborhood?

      2) How does a typical day look like in this Latino neighborhood?

      3) What are the activities that people in your Latino community do for fun?

      4) What are the activities that people in your Latino community do for fun during their free time?

      5) What are the activities that children in this community participate in for fun?

         a. Are these activities structured?

      6) What are the activities that the youth in this community participates in for fun?

         b. Are these activities structured?

      7) What are the things that adult women in this community participate in for fun?

         c. Are these activities structured?

         d. Is there a difference between married and single women?

      8) What are the things that adult men in this community participate in for fun?

         e. Are these activities structured?

         f. Is there a difference between married and single men?

      9) What are your favorite ways of spending free time?

         What do you like to do for fun?

      10) How much free time do you have in your daily life?

11) How different is your life compared to Mexico when it comes to participation in fun activities?

12) How is your situation as an immigrant impacting your participation in fun activities? [Prompts about family, economic, legal situation].

13) Do you think you have more or less free time than you did in Mexico? / What makes you have more/less free time than you did in Mexico?

14) Are there any fun activities that you participated in Mexico that you no longer participate in here, in the U.S. [If YES] Can you give me examples of such activities? Why did you stop participating in these activities?

15) Are there any new fun activities that you started participating in after coming to the U.S.? [If YES] Could you give me examples? Why did you start participating in these activities?

16) Have you noticed that after coming to the U.S. your participation in some fun activities has changed? [If YES] In what activities? How is your participation different?

ii. *To identify if "leisure" is considered a 'state of being,' i.e., when one is in "leisure," according to members of this group.*

1) When are you enjoying yourself the most?

2) In what situations are you able to have fun? / When do you participate in most of your fun activities?

iii. *To identify what properties activities need to posses to be described as "leisure" by members of this group.*

1) What is so special about the activities that you like to do for fun?

2) Who can influence whether or not you are participating in an activity for fun? Is this any different from the influences you had in Mexico?

3) Are there any obligations you must perform during your [fun] activities? Are these obligations any different than they were in Mexico?

4) Are there any expectations you must fulfill when you are participating in these activities? Are these the same expectations you had to fulfill while you were in Mexico?

iv. *To examine the meanings of leisure activities for members of this group.*

1) What do those fun activities mean to you?

2) How do you feel when participating in these activities? Was this feeling

different when you were in Mexico?

3) Why do you do these activities? What do you get out of participation in these activities? Is it the same or different than when you were in Mexico?

v. *To identify how the concept of "leisure" is labeled among members of this group.*

1) What do you call the activities that you perform for fun? You may use more than one word.

2) What do you call the time that you use to participate in activities for fun?

3) What do you understand when I say 'free time (Tiempo Libre and Ocio).'

II. TO EXAMINE FORCES THAT SHAPE THE EXPERIENCE OF _____ (GIVEN ANSWERS TO v.1) FOR YOU HERE IN THE UNITED STATES?

Economics

1) Are there any fun activities that you would like to participate in but are not able to because of the lack of money?

2) Are there any activities in which you take part in, would like to participate in differently, more frequently, or in another location if you had more resources?

3) How would you describe your and your family's economic position? Has it changed after coming from Mexico?

4) What do you do for living?

5) Does the type of work that you do affect the leisure activities that you can participate in?

6) Can you have any leisure during work? Were you able to have fun during work in Mexico?

7) Are there any fun activities that you were not able to participate in Mexico but can participate in now because they cost less or because you have more money?

8) Are there any fun activities that you were able to participate in Mexico but cannot participate in here because they cost more?

9) How would you describe the financial situation of this Latino community?

10) Where do most people work?

11) Are there any fun activities that those in the upper classes participate in that people in the lower classes do not or participate differently because of lack of money?

12) In general, how important is your economic situation in affecting what you do "for fun"?

Society

1) Are there any leisure activities that people of this Latino community expect you to participate in (I'm asking here more about your neighbors and perhaps some distant relatives than about your close family)? [If YES] Why do they expect you to participate in these activities? Who expects you to participate in what?

2) Are there any leisure activities that you would like to participate in, but people in this Latino community would not approve of? [If YES] What are those activities? Who would mind if you participated in those activities? What would happen if they saw you participating in these activities? Is it important for you to do what other people expect you to?

3) Could you describe some important customs practiced by people in this Latino community?

4) Would any of them affect your participation in "fun" activities?

5) What are the "fun" activities that people in this Latino community would generally not approve of?

6) In general, how important are people around you in influencing what you do for "fun"?

Family

1) Are your family members also in the US? Who are they? Do they live in this community or somewhere else? How often do you have contact with them?

2) Are there any [fun] activities that you must participate in because your family expects you to? Was it the same way when you lived in Mexico? Do you consider these activities fun?

3) Are there any "fun" activities that you are expected to participate in solely with your family?

4) Are there any fun activities that you would like to participate in but your family in Mexico would not approve of? [If YES] Do you care about the

opinions of your family in Mexico?

5) Are there any fun activities that you would like to participate in but your family here in the U.S. would not approve of? [If YES] Do you care about the opinions of your family here in the U.S.?

5) Are there any activities that you wish to participate in but cannot do so because you must fulfill other family obligations? Was this the same in Mexico?

6) Do you have kids? [If YES]

7) How much time do you spend taking care of your kids?

8) What are the expectations that you must fulfill regarding the care of your kids?

9) Was it different when you were in Mexico?

10) When participating in family activities for fun, what is the role you are expected to provide? What was your role when you were in Mexico?

11) How much importance do you give to your family opinions on what activities you should or should not participate in?

12) In general, how important is your family in influencing what you do for fun?

Culture

1) What are the most important norms and values that must be followed in this Latino neighborhood?

2) Do any of these norms and values affect your participation in fun activities? [If YES] In what activities? In what way? Could you give me examples?

3) Are there any religious or cultural celebrations that you participate in? Do you have fun participating in these activities or do you do it more because of an obligation?

4) Did cultural norms and values of your home town affect your participation in fun activities while you were still living in Mexico?

5) In general, how important is your cultural tradition in influencing what you do for fun?

Religion

1) Do you practice a religion or faith?

2) Did you practice a religion or faith in Mexico?

3) Do your religious practices or faith practices affect your preferences or choices for fun activities? [If YES] In what way?

4) Do you still feel you are having fun when you must choose activities based on your religions norms and values?

5) In general, how important is your religion (or lack thereof) in influencing what you do for fun ?

6) Did your religious practices or faith practices affect your participation in fun activities and/or preferences while you were still living in Mexico?

Education

1) What is the highest grade you have completed?

2) Did you complete any education while in the U.S. or was your entire education done in Mexico?

3) Do you feel your education has impeded or helped you participate in your desired fun activities?

4) Do you think if you had a higher education you would participate in different fun activities?

5) Do you think if you had a lower education you would participate in different fun activities?

6) Were you able to learn or enjoy new fun activities while in school? [If YES] Which ones?

7) In general, how important is your educational background in influencing what you do for fun?

Politics

1) Are there any laws here in the U.S. that prohibit you from participating in fun activities of your choice? Does your legal status here in the U.S. affect in any way what you do for fun?

2) Does your political affiliation affect the type of fun activities that you participate in?

3) Does the local government have any influence on the types of activities that you can participate in or that are offered in this community?

4) In general, how important are political matters in influencing what you do for fun?

Other

1) Are there any other factors that influence your participation in fun activities?