

The Emerging Community Leadership and Transnational Politics of Mexican National Immigrants in New England

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Abstract

This chapter presents an analysis of how Mexican national immigrants, a minority subgroup within the larger Latino groups of Puerto Ricans, Colombians, and Central Americans in the Northeast have been organizing since the 1990s in the New England area through the creation of their community based organizations. The paper addresses the type of emergent leadership which directors and presidents of these Mexican organizations report they have been developing and how such leadership bridges transnational politics between Mexico and the United States.

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, a study was undertaken during 2004-2005 that identified “leaders” within the Mexican communities of New England. As directors or presidents of Mexican organizations, these leaders could act as proxies in identifying the needs of the Mexican communities they serve, the types of organizations they are developing and the conceptualization of leadership used. A 3 hour in-depth interview which addressed the background of the identified leaders, information about their organizations and their roles, leadership styles and decision-making, and expectations held with regard to the Mexican Consulate, the government of Mexico and the U. S. was undertaken with 12 male and female Mexican leaders or community based organizations. In addition, a survey, which also included half of these leaders, was also administered to 60 Mexicans who attended a seminar sponsored by the Gaston Institute of the University of Massachusetts-Boston and the General Consulate of Mexico in Boston. While the survey serves as a backdrop for the issues presented and provides a general perspective of the status of Mexicans in New England, the in-depth interviews provide a more in-depth examination of the personal perspectives shared by these leaders and their emerging leadership.

Because the history of Mexicans in New England and the evolution of the Mexican community organizations is detailed in other publications, this paper focuses solely on: 1) the conceptualization of leadership shared by these leaders, 2) the leadership styles that these nascent and seasoned leaders rely on, 3) the types of relationships and support these leaders need from the Mexican Consulate, the Mexican government and the U. S. government, and 4) the roles, social and political networks that have been developed by these leaders. Identified are the social and political implications of the settlement of Mexicans in the New England area, particularly Boston, Massachusetts; Nashua, New Hampshire, and Providence, Rhode Island, the political and democratic transnational bridges that are being created, the role of the Institute for Mexicans abroad and emerging type of leadership which can be envisioned for the future of Mexicans in New England.

Introduction¹

The presence of Mexican nationals² in the United States has been historically, socially, and politically well documented and researched during the past one hundred years (Suro 1998; C. Suarez Orozco and M. Suarez-Orozco,2001), ³yet the dimensions of their impact in terms of their growing numbers in the U. S., identities, settlement patterns, social and cultural modalities, as well as their integration into U. S. society have become more recently debated from a U. S. and Mexican perspectives as the current focus on immigrants and immigration in the United States intensifies (Corchado and Solis 1999; Custerd 2003; Edwards, 2003).

Mexicans have been one of the largest and most continuous immigrant populations to the United States from Latin America and are the largest single source of new arrivals (Suro, 2005, Camarota, 2004). In fact, Mary Waters and Tomas Jimenez, argue that “Mexicans are the only immigrant group to span the Great European Migration, the past 1965 era of immigration, and the period in between” (2005: p. 119), covering close to 100 years. Yet while their presence has been evident over such a time, the surge in large-scale migration of Mexicans according to Steven Camarota (2001) is a recent phenomenon which has increased tenfold to 8 million since the 1970s, when the Mexican immigrant population in the U. S. was less than 800,000.

¹ The research in this study was funded by the Gaston Institute of the University of Massachusetts-Boston under the directorship of Andres Torres and has contributed to the development of several publications identifying the presence of Mexicans in New England.

² Among Mexicans in New England and in this study are: Mexican nationals, referring to those who are in the U. S. of Mexican nationality with U. S. visas. These include students at diverse universities, many of who have scholarships from the Mexican government, and are transient in nature; visitors and tourists who are in the U. S. for limited periods and who visit their families and general visa holders. Some of the students once they graduate, obtain work permits as professionals in the public and private sector, receive H-1B visa program authorizations, or solicit their alien registration card once they have completed the required five year stay. Mexican nationals with U. S. permanent residence who have lived in the U. S. for more than the five year limit to obtain U. S. citizenship and have rights to study, work, but not vote. Mexican dual nationals, many of who became American citizens after being in the States, but because of the change in law in Mexico in 1993, have opted to regain their Mexican nationality, and which has been sustained since 1996 without limitation of time. For these dual nationals, travel with a U.S. and or Mexican passport provides them with greater flexibility,² yet for some U. S. politicians this practice is being viewed as unfavorable. Undocumented Mexicans who are unauthorized to work in the U. S., but with access to a social security card, are in the labor force, pay taxes, and make up much of the informal infrastructure in childcare, elder care and house and office leaning services, restaurants, residential care facilities where their legal status is not questioned and Migratory Mexicans who are brought to work in the food industries managed by diverse employees, or are seasonal cranberry, potato, broccoli, onion or other produce workers who return to the Southern United States or Mexico based on bilateral agreements between the U. S. and Mexico and who use H2-B visas.

³ See the growing literature on first and second generation immigrants in the research of Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, (1995). Transformations. Migration, Family Life, and Achievement Motivation among Latino Adolescents. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, Marcelo Suárez-Orozco, and Mariela M. Paéz (2002). Latinos: Remaking America. Los Angeles, CA. University of California Press, and David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Cambridge, MA and Carola Suárez-Orozco, and Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco (2001). Children of Immigration. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press.

Such has been their growth that by 2004, Mexicans were estimated to be close to 26 million of the 40 million Latinos in the U. S. based on the U. S. Census, or 29% of the 34 million foreign-born persons living in the U. S. according to the Current Population Survey (CPS). Moreover, of the foreign-born immigrants in the U. S., reported by the Pew Hispanic Center (2004), of the close to 10.3 million who are undocumented, 6.3 million are Mexicans.⁴ The increase in numbers of undocumented immigrants as well as growing anti-immigrant sentiment has placed immigration reform at the center of the political debate. Measures ranging from stronger legal enforcement of immigration policies, to the current implementation of legislation in building a reinforced wall along the entire United States-Mexican border, to increments in the numbers of raids to be conducted by the INS—have been advanced to stop what is being called an “invasion” of the United States (Montero-Sieburth and Meléndez, in press).

From the perspective of the Mexican government, the massive exodus of Mexicans each year is engendered by the growing demand for workers, the massive supply of Mexican immigrants eager to find work, and the reunification of Mexican families. While the exodus of Mexicans has been steady since the 1960s, the numbers of Mexicans have increased during the last two decades with 200,000 immigrants per year in the 1980s growing to 300,000 per year in the 1990s leaving Mexico (Alba, 2003; Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI), 2003).

This has decreased the population of Mexico who are lost to the U. S. over several decades: from 1980 to 1990 of 2.1 million to 1.5 million citizens; from 1990 to 2000 of 3.3 million citizens, and from 2000-2004 of 1.6 million citizens (López Vega, 2003). Talk of the “reconquista” (reconquest) of California and other states has been expressed by several social

⁴ In a San Francisco Gate commentary on immigration dated May 21, 2006, the percent of Mexico’s labor force was estimated to be about 15 percent working in the United States, and one in every 7 Mexican workers was stated to migrate to the U. S. Retrieved on November 17, 2006.

scientists in Mexico and the U. S. (Suarez-Orozco 2000, Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994). Calculations from the National Council of Population in Mexico in 2003 stipulated that close to 26.7 million people of Mexican descent lived in the United States and of these, 16.8 million were born in the U. S. and the remaining 9.9 million were legal or undocumented Mexican nationals (López Vega, 2003).

Notwithstanding, the settlement patterns of Mexicans in the United States has also dramatically changed during the past ten years. Research conducted by the National Council of Population in Mexico (CONAPO) and statistical studies conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center (http://www.conapo.gob.mx/mig_int/03.htm.; Lowell and Suro, 2002), reflect these new trends: 1) a reduction in the circular migration leading to greater permanency of Mexicans in the United States, Mexicans are staying in their newfound areas;⁵ 2) an increase in the flow and stock of documented and undocumented Mexicans, with many having entered legally but overstaying and others simply entering irregularly; 3) a greater heterogeneity in the make up of the immigrant profile, with greater numbers coming from urban centers, more females than males, and with higher educational levels; 4) greater occupational and sector work diversification shifting from agricultural to construction and service oriented work; and 5) the widening of the sending regions of Mexico and the receiving states in the U.S., from regional to more national. Mexicans from non-traditional states such as Chiapas, Puebla, and Oaxaca have joined the northward trek to the U. S. Mexicans are settling in great numbers in Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, but also Wyoming, Oregon, Washington, Iowa, and continue to replenish the Mexican communities in Michigan. Mexicans can be found throughout most of the United States.

⁵ The circular migration, once most commonly undertaken by single males who came to the U. S. to earn dollars and returned to their towns or villages in Mexico has changed due to several factors: 1) immigration law changes, 2) family reunification, and 3) the creation of community bases in the U. S. That circular migration in the present embodies families and includes females and children who accompany husbands and single females. Provided they can legally return, have the money to do so, are able to take the whole family and can do so within the parameters of their work, Mexicans tend to travel at least once a year to Mexico or if not every two years. If they can't travel, they save until the dia de santo or saints day, or the birthday of a beloved family member. This is a pattern which was also observed for many Mexicans in New England particularly around Christmas and Easter.

Logically with such inroads, even the New England area⁶ has been affected by such trends where over the past fifteen years, tremendous demographic changes brought on by a combination of factors have been experienced (Marcelli, 2000). Miren Uriarte and Charles Jones (2002) have identified two major factors: 1) “white flight” and out of state migration, with many European whites leaving the area to move either out of state to nearby states such as New Hampshire and Vermont, or to Southern states and the West; and 2) the greater diversification of incoming groups.

In fact, immigrants to the area have offset the economic losses that have been experienced by some states including Massachusetts. During 1990 to 2000, the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston’s demographic profile indicates that New Englanders represented a smaller share of the total U. S. population, dropping from 7.3 in 1990 to 5%. However, New England is also represented by a larger fraction of baby boomers, those between 35 and 54 years old, than the rest of the United States. While five of the six New England states have lagged relative to U. S. population growth, Connecticut and New Hampshire⁷ have seen the greatest gains in population in head counts. New Hampshire’s population has tripled since 1900, doubling from 1960 to 2000 (FRBB) and it has grown at a rapid pace since the 1960s, whereas Connecticut’s growth in population was rapid in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, and has tapered off in recent decades. Southern New England and particularly, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island are more racially diverse than the northern states where all but 3 percent are white (Demographic Profile of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston).

⁶ According to Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, ’s Demographic Profile, for 2000, New England is racially less diverse than the rest of the U. S., with 87% of its population considered white in relation to 75% of the nation’s white population.

⁷ See Yoel Camayd-Freixas, Gerald Karuch and Nelly Letjer. (2006).). *Latinos in New Hampshire: Enclaves, Diasporas and an emerging middle Class*. In Andres Torres (ed.). *Latinos in New England*: Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 1-17

The arrival of Mexicans,⁸ while relatively new into this area, has been documented through newspaper and anecdotal evidence in some of the New England states such as Rhode Island since the 1920s,⁹ Maine since the late 1980s,¹⁰ Connecticut since the 1950s,¹¹ New Hampshire and Vermont since the 1990s,¹² and Massachusetts since the 1960s (Fieldnotes 2004-2005). However, the greatest surge in the Mexican population of New England has occurred since the 1990s and has continued into the present (Marcelli, 2001). Concentrations of residents from Sombrerete, Zacatecas have clustered around the Nashua-Manchester, New Hampshire area; residents from El Refugio, Jalisco now into their second generation are in East Boston, Massachusetts; while residents from Alfayayucan, Hidalgo have made Central Falls and Pawtucket, Rhode Island their home (Rico, 1995). Poblanos from the state of Puebla can now be found in Waltham, Massachusetts, in growing numbers. Mexicans are thereby transplanting their towns from Mexico to New England (Fieldwork data, March 2004; Creuheras, 2001; Smith, 2006).

Although visible throughout New England, Mexicans account for 2% or 26,000 of the 1,376,317 total foreign born immigration populations in New England according to Mamie Marchuss and Ricardo Borgos (2004). In fact, from the observations conducted in Mexican communities and the statements made by leaders interviewed in this study, these numbers do not

⁸ Of those Mexicans who live in New England, they range from privileged students at academic institutions, to professionals, entrepreneurs, businessmen, contractors, house cleaners, day laborers and even prisoners according to former Consul General Carlos Rico (2001). Included among these are a Nobel Prize winner, several prosperous restaurant owners, a number of established professionals, high numbers of students, service oriented workers who are housecleaners, elder care helpers, and multiple numbers of musicians, artists, and numerous potato and cranberry pickers.

⁹ See the report by Miren Uriarte and Charles Jones in Miren Uriarte, with Maria Estela Carrion, Charles Jones, Natalie Carithers, Juan Carlos Gorlier, and Juan Francisco Garcia. *Rhode Island Latinos: A Scan of Issues Affecting the Latino Population of Rhode Island*. Boston: Mauricio Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts-Boston, Prepared for the Rhode Island Foundation, 2002, pp. 23-26 and Martha Martinez (2002). In Uriarte, Miren with Maria Estela Carrion, Charles Jones, Natalie Carithers, Juan Carlos Gorlier, and Juan Francisco Garcia. *Rhode Island Latinos: A Scan of Issues Affecting the Latino Population of Rhode Island*. Boston: Mauricio Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, University of Massachusetts-Boston, Prepared for the Rhode Island Foundation, pp. 33-50.

¹⁰ As reported by Benjamin Guiliani, President of the Maine Migrant Workers' Advocacy Group in Portland, Maine.

¹¹ Personal records of Martha Montero-Sieburth who lived in Norwich, Connecticut during the 1950s-1960s and recalls Mexican gatherings of professional and working class people in homes and during Latin American celebrations.

¹² As reported by Margarita Fernandez-Letowski, President of the Mexican Association of New Hampshire and by her board members (field notes, 2005).

come close to representing the actual numbers of documented/undocumented Mexicans in New England. The figures are more likely double these numbers (Fieldwork notes, May 2005). Just the sheer numbers of Mexican restaurants,¹³ panaderias (bakeries), mariachis bands, tiendas de abarrotes (grocery shops) which have sprung up throughout New England to keep up with the growing demands for Mexican products and services attest to such growth.

Although Mexicans of the first and second generation represent 65% of the majority of the total 41.3 million Latino populations in the U. S. or 14% of the current 292,801,000 million inhabitants projected in the U.S. as of July 1, 2004,⁶ they are a silent, yet fast growing minority population within the rest of the Latino populations of New England (Sum, et. al., 2005). Based on the 2000 U. S. Census, Mexicans account for 5.2%, or 60,173 of the total 875,225 Latino population made up by 9.6% Puerto Ricans, 3.5% Cubans, 2.2% Dominicans, 4.8% Central Americans, 8% South Americans, 17.3% other Latinos and 0.3% Spaniards in the New England area. Their numbers in 2000 for Connecticut were 23,484; for Massachusetts, 22,288; for Rhode Island, 5,881; for New Hampshire, 4,590; for Maine, 2,756 and for Vermont, 1,174. While their numbers are small, they are nevertheless growing at a fast rate as evidenced by the statistics of several cities in New England, which have doubled or tripled their numbers between 1990 and 2000. For example, in Massachusetts, Mexicans in Boston grew from 2,640 in 1990 to 4,126 or 56.3% in 2000; Mexicans in Chelsea, grew from 120 in 1990 to 660 or 450% in 2000; Lynn's Mexicans grew from 167 in 1990 to 853 or 410% by 2000. In Rhode Island, Mexicans grew in Central Falls from 91 in 1990 to 677 or 644% by 2000; in Pawtucket from 254 in 1990 to 581 or 128%; and in Providence from 738 in 1990 to 2,237 or 203% by 2000. In New Hampshire, Nashua's Mexicans grew from 554 in 1990 to 1,306 or 135% by 2000, and in Manchester from

¹³ In 2006, well over 80 Mexican restaurants were listed in the Boston greater metropolitan area yellow telephone directory with smaller taquerias (taco bars) springing throughout towns and cities, yet it should be noted that not all are owned by Mexican nationals but by Central Americans and North American entrepreneurs.

391 in 1990 to 1220 or 212% by 2000. Mexicans in Bridgeport grew from 402 in 1990 to 2,687 or 568% by 2000, and in New Haven from 781 in 1990 to 3,483 or 345% by 2000, and in Norwalk from 182 in 1990 to 1,897 or 942%, and in West Haven from 76 in 1990 to 451 or 493% (U. S. 2000 Census).

Given this growth, an examination of how Mexicans who are settling in New England have been organizing over the past fifteen years, how the directors and presidents of Mexican community-based organizations report the development of leadership infrastructures, and at the same time maintain political transnational ties to Mexico, is eminent in undertaking this study.

Purpose

Because gaining entry to the Mexican communities as an outsider to their communities is made difficult by identifying who is a Mexican, and is further complicated by the sensitivity surrounding their legal status, this study attempts to provide a first cut description and approximation of the perspectives of directors and presidents of Mexican organizations as leaders and potential political actors within the New England area.

The intent is not to present a representative sample of the Mexican community since this would require a longitudinal and concentrated study of Mexicans in each of the New England states, but rather, identify such “leaders,” as proxies to these communities who can report on the salient issues affecting Mexicans, identify the leadership strategies they are using in managing Mexican organizations and describe the political strategies they employ drawn from their migration and transnational experiences as Mexicans residing in New England. To that end, this study concretely focuses on 1) the conceptualization of leadership shared by these leaders, 2) the leadership styles that these nascent and seasoned leaders rely on, 3) the types of relationships and support these leaders need from the Mexican Consulate, the Mexican government and the U. S.

government, 4) the roles, social and political networks that these leaders are developing and the implications that this leadership points to for future Mexicans in New England. Among the basic questions this study explores are:

1. What type of leadership is emerging from the work of directors and presidents of Mexican organizations within the Mexican communities they are organizing and how can it be characterized?
2. What kinds of leadership styles are evident and how are these described by such leaders?
3. What kinds of relationships do these Mexican immigrant nationals have with the Mexican Consulates in the New England area?
4. What expectations do these Mexican leaders hold of the Mexican Consulates, the Mexican government, and the U. S. government?
5. What does the research of these nascent and seasoned Mexican leaders indicate about the local and transnational political leadership for future Mexicans in New England?

Highlighted from the survey and the in-depth interviews are the demands Mexicans are facing at the local grassroots level particularly in Boston, Massachusetts, Providence, Rhode Island and Nashua, New Hampshire, the development of leadership through their organizations, the attainment of the right to vote for the President of Mexico in the U. S., and the political and democratic transnational bridges currently being created.

Research Methods and Theoretical Lens:

A combined qualitative and quantitative approach was used to gather data on identified Mexicans leaders within the New England communities of New England. As directors or

presidents of Mexican organizations, they act as proxies in identifying the needs of the Mexican communities, and the types of leadership and organizations being developed.

A 3 hour in-depth interview was undertaken with 12 male and female Mexican leaders of community based organizations during 2004-2005. The interview addressed the background of the identified leaders, education, work experiences, their organizations, membership characteristics, members' education and standard of living, leadership aspects including the role of women in such organizations, decision-making, leadership styles, conceptualization of leadership, the role of the organizations with the Mexican communities, the Mexican Consulate, and expectations from these leaders with regard to the Mexican Consulate, the government of Mexico and the U. S. Of particular important were the decisions which such leaders made, the frequency of such decisions and actions, the vision, mission, and range of responsibilities shared by these leaders, and the operant leadership used in achieving goals.

In addition, a survey, where half of these identified leaders participated, was also administered to 60 Mexicans who attended a seminar from the Institute of Mexicans Abroad on the programs and actions being implemented. This seminar was sponsored by the General Consulate of Mexico in Boston in collaboration with the Gaston Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, on December 11, 2004. During the seminar, educational, cultural and community program information was shared, salient data was collected and the survey was administered. The analysis of the survey was jointly done by the author and Bertha Lucia Fries, a Masters candidate in the Program for Creative and Critical Thinking of the Graduate College of Education of the University of Massachusetts-Boston. The survey is used herein as a backdrop for the issues that are presented and as a general perspective of the status of Mexicans in New England. Additional data sources used included census data for Massachusetts,

New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Rhode Island and Connecticut; web searches of documents from the Mexican government and from published reports and research studies,¹⁴ anecdotal accounts from Mexican community members, newspaper articles and data provided by the General Consulate of Mexico in Boston with jurisdiction over New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island and Massachusetts and the General Consulate of New York with jurisdiction over Connecticut.

Using a snowball effect and drawing upon the data provided by the General Consulates of Boston and New York, through a list of identified “leaders,” a total of 12 male and female leaders out of 25 were selected who are concentrated mostly in Mexican organizations found in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Maine. Leaders within the states of Vermont and Connecticut were not identified given the fact that the only viable Mexican organization in Vermont became inactive after 2001, and the three organizations headed by Mexicans in Connecticut were also not viable since one was a sports organization, the other existed only for a short period, and a new organization was being organized at the time this research took place. Hence this paper reports only on the Mexican national immigrant leaders of the social, civic, and legal organizations that were viable in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Maine.

Once the interviews were transcribed, mapping using matrix analysis was conducted to identify any of the emergent themes and these were tied to the extant literature that exists for political incorporation and transnationalism of immigrants found in the research of Guarnizo, Haller, and Portes (2002), Jones-Correa (1998, 2002) Barreto and Muñoz (2003) and Cano (2004 a and b). A more in-depth explanation of the settlement patterns of Mexicans in New

¹⁴ These included reports from the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (Rico, 2001; Suarez-Orozco 2001, Creuheras), newspaper articles (Boston Globe, Star Ledger) and reports from the Mauricio Gaston Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Boston (Marcelli, 2001, Uriarte and Jones, 2002).

England and the relationship of community based organizations to leadership development can be found in Montero-Sieburth, (in press, a and b).

While the sample populations of Mexicans in both the survey (N=21/60) and interviews (12/25) were quite small, the survey served to present an overview of the Mexican community and the interviews of 12 directors and presidents of Mexican organizations on the leadership of Mexicans shows a more in-depth analysis.

Findings

Overview of Survey Findings. At the December 11, 2004 seminar, the survey¹⁵ was administered to the participating Mexicans who had been invited from the rosters of registered Mexicans at the General Consulate of Mexico in Boston. The intent of the survey was to gather data on the demographics, economic issues, educational levels, leadership concerns of those Mexicans participating in the seminar and in that sense, obtain a first cut analysis of their issues. Mexicans from the states of New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Maine and Massachusetts were included since they fall under the jurisdiction of the General Mexican Consulate of Mexico in Boston. However, there were no participants from the state of Connecticut since they would fall under the jurisdiction of the General Mexican Consulate of Mexico in New York.

A total of 60 participants attended the seminar and of these, 21 responded to the survey and six of the 21 also were participants in the in-depth interview. The overview represented by the 12 males and 9 females who responded to the survey can be synthesized as follows:

¹⁵ An earlier questionnaire was developed by Latino Leadership Opportunity Program students of the Gaston Institute under the guidance of Professor Jorge Capetillo, of the Sociology Department and researcher in the Gaston Institute and was disseminated at a September 2004 Latino Public Policy Conference. That survey was reviewed by Professors Capetillo and Montero-Sieburth, and was updated and translated from English to Spanish by Montero-Sieburth for use at the December 11, 2005 seminar. The survey entitled: "Intake Questionnaire for Participants in the Seminar for the Exchange of Information and Opinions on the Mexican Community in New England" was administered and the data was analyzed by Dr. Martha Montero-Sieburth and Bertha Lucia Fries, a masters' candidate in the Critical and Creative Thinking Program of the University of Massachusetts Boston during Spring 2005.

- Demographics of Mexicans who completed survey: Even though the Eastern, Central, and Western states of Mexico were represented by the attending participants, over 70% came from the federal district of Mexico, with the majority being “Chilangos,” or Mexico City dwellers. Half of the participants reported they were married while the rest were single, divorced, or separated. While not all of the participants had children, 17% reported they had no children, 17% cited children ages 1 to five, 33% had two children, 25% had three and 8% had five children. Of the children reported, 78% were born in Mexico and 22% in the U. S. In terms of their age ranges, 5 were between 18 to 19 years of age, 12 were between the ages of 30-40 and 4 were between 45-64 years of age respectively.
- Representation of Participants: Respondents from Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Hampshire¹⁶ present represented most of the New England states where Mexicans tend to be concentrated. Close to 47% reported they came from cities with over 500,000 inhabitants, whereas 26% lived in median size cities of 100,000 11% in rural areas and the remaining evenly distributed at 5% for small towns, suburban areas.
- Length of Time in the United States: A few had been in the U. S. less than 1 year, with a larger percentage 1-5 years, but 14% reported they were in the U. S. more than 5 years, 20% more than 10 years and 20% close to 20 years. It appeared that those who have been in the U. S. over ten years were more likely to stay.
- Educational Backgrounds: Overall 15 of the 21 or close to 71% had university studies: 4 had a Masters degree, 1 had a doctorate, 2 had completed technical studies, 1 completed preparatory school, 2 completed secondary, and 1 had completed primary school. This is noteworthy in that in 2000, a larger fraction of New Englanders had received a higher

¹⁶ The one representative from the state of Maine who is also a director of his own organization was not able to attend, hence his perspective as a leader was not included in the survey, but was later captured in the in-depth interviews.

education degree than other residents in the U. S., with 21% of the region's population holding a college degree and 11% advanced degrees (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston)

- Language Use: The majority reported they used Spanish, yet 77% reported they were yet not bilingual while 23% considered themselves to be fully bilingual. Spanish is preponderantly used at home and more of their children speak Spanish than English, only 18% reported they equally spoke Spanish and English.
- Employment, Income Status and Use of Remittances: None of the respondents were unemployed, close to 75% worked full time, with 5% part time, and 20% were not in the labor force and not seeking employment. Of those not in the labor force, 38% were housewives, 50% students and 13% volunteers. In terms of their occupations, 11% were administrators, 11% were consultants, 11% were laborers, 6% were childcare providers/elder care providers, and the remaining were coordinators of projects, entrepreneurs, jewelry workers, special education teachers and salespersons. Their personal net incomes were reported to be in the following ranges: 24% earned less than 20,000 a year, 47% earned between \$20,000 to 49,000 a year, 18% earned between \$50,000 to \$74,000 and 12% earned above \$74,000 a year. However, in terms of family net income: 53% reported they earned between \$20,000 to 49,000 per year, 27% between \$50,000 to 74,000 per year and 7% above \$74,000 per year. Eighty one per cent rented their apartments or houses while ten percent owned their apartments or homes. All of the respondents sent from less than \$100 to over \$300 in remittances to Mexico each month.
- U. S. Citizenship Status: Of the 21 participants, 29% reported they were U. S. citizens, 6% were soliciting U. S. citizenship, 12% were soliciting permanent residency, 24% were planning to become U. S. citizens, and 29% were not planning to become citizens. Thus it

appears that there are equal numbers who plan to become citizens and those who do not. Close to 78% responded they did not vote in the U. S. election signaling that even those who are U. S. citizens did not vote, and only 22% voted in the last national U. S. election. However, 83% of the respondents voted in the previous Mexican election prior to the absentee vote granted to Mexicans while 17% did not.

- Country Representation: Seventy five percent of the respondents identified with Mexico as the country that best represents them, twenty five per cent responded that the U. S. and Mexico equally represented them, but none identified being represented by the U. S. The implication of these responses point to a strong national Mexican identity.
- Media Representation: The representation of Mexicans made by the media were reported with 45% considering such representation as negative, 41% as neutral and only 14% as positive. Yet close to 90% felt they could influence such image making, compared to 10% who felt they could not. Their responses indicate that even though almost half view media representation of the Mexican as negative, most feel they can influence such negative portrayals in positive ways. The responses are indicative of the need to explore this issue in closer detail.
- Discriminatory Practices among Mexicans and Towards Mexicans: Regarding the question of discrimination practices among Mexicans, 55% stated they were frequent or continuous, whereas 45% stated they were occasional. However when asked about discrimination towards Mexicans, close to 95% stated they were frequent and only 5% stated there was none. Such responses demonstrate that while discriminatory practices are evident among Mexicans, greater discrimination from outsiders towards Mexicans is felt.

The analysis of the survey indicated several concrete issues. The Mexicans who responded to this survey: 1) have a wide range of backgrounds, occupations, and incomes, but they tend to be by and large educated; 2) have a high labor participation in the workforce and all send remittances to Mexico and 3) tend to settle permanently in New England after their first initial ten years. 4) In addition, they consider themselves bilingual, but frequently use Spanish at home and with their children; 5) identify preferentially as Mexicans, and not as North Americans, and 6) consider discrimination among Mexicans to be significant, but more evident against Mexicans. 7) Many are dual citizens of the U. S. and Mexico, but vote more in Mexico than the U. S. and 8) consider the media presents negative rather than positive images of Mexicans. Interestingly, such negative imagery they felt they could overturn and change. The responses to leadership were combined with the findings from the in-depth interviews of the Mexican leaders of organizations and are expanded upon in the following sections.

The In-Depth Interviews. A total of twelve (6 male and 6 female) participants were identified as leaders for the in-depth interviews because they have either been directors or presidents of Mexican organizations or had been deemed so by the Mexican communities at large including the General Consulates of Mexico in Boston and in New York. However because the leaders who represented viable Mexican organizations were primarily from Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and not Connecticut nor Vermont, references to the General Consulate of Mexico in Boston and not the Consulate in New York are made.

The demographic, linguistic, social and economic composition of these leaders indicates:

- All are first generation Mexicans in the U. S., except for one who was born in the U. S., taken back to Mexico, and brought back to the U. S. as a child. As an adult, that leader has reclaimed his Mexican citizenship. All of these leaders have been in the U. S. from 7 to 24 years, with some having arrived at age 11 to 47 years, and with more than half, having lived elsewhere before New England. Seven of the twelve hold U. S. citizenship.
- Like many other Mexicans, they are from Northern, Southern, Central, Eastern and Western Mexico but of these five are from Mexico City and all but one volunteers their time to the six organizations throughout New England. The non-volunteer works directly with the Mexican community through his own business which caters to their legal and social needs.
- These leaders vary widely in their educational backgrounds, from one leader who completed primary school, to four who completed secondary or preparatory school only, to two with a bachelors' degree, to four with a Masters' Degree and one with a medical degree. Of the twelve, four continue to study and one is completing a doctorate.
- Eight of these leaders classified themselves as middle class, two as working class and two as upper class. They work as dentists, business administrators, urban planners, childcare providers, cars salesmen, jewelry cleaners, language teachers, special education teachers, agricultural workers, lawyers, and legal rights advocates. Their incomes range from baseline existence above the U. S. poverty level to being comfortable and affluent, five rent and seven own homes, with two owning more than one house.
- Seven reported being fully bilingual in Spanish and English, with two additionally being fluent in French and other languages, four fluent in English and one not fluent in English. All were Spanish speakers who read and wrote in Spanish but few had difficulties with

Spanish orthography. Their English fluency however varied from barely using English for a few, to total speaking fluency for the majority. Their language skills appeared to have been influenced by the numbers of years they have been in the U.S.

- Ten of the twelve uses the computer on a weekly basis; four uses the computer extensively, in advanced programming (the creation of posters and graphics, urban planning programs and legal programs) and six use the computer for daily communication and interactions. The remaining three do not use computers, because they either have not bought one, or if they own one, have not yet learned to use it. One of these leaders spends an inordinate amount of time (6 hours daily) communicating daily missives and issues about Mexican concerns.

The demographic profile of these leaders shows that while these Mexican leaders represent a wide range of backgrounds and interests, language skills and professions, they are by and large educated, use computers in their communication, and are full-time employees, financially stable, with some being affluent and others having a limited but acceptable standard of living. In addition, all of these leaders speak Spanish, with many being somewhat proficient in English, to totally proficient in English, and consider themselves, bilingual. More are homeowners than renters with some being able to afford two houses and all are involved in social, civic and cultural activities of the Mexican community. In this regard, the profile of these Mexicans seems to fit the findings drawn from the survey for the larger group of Mexicans, and demonstrates that irrespective of the time Mexicans have been in New England, they closely identify with their Mexican roots, identity with their language and culture, and are settling more permanently in the New England area.

Conceptualization of Leadership and the Types of Leadership. The interpretation of “who?” is a leader within the Mexican communities of New England appears to have different interpretations based on the findings from the survey and in-depth interview findings. The General Consulates of Mexico in Boston and New York provided lists of leaders which identified not only the presidents of Mexican organizations, but also entrepreneurs, religious leaders and non-Mexicans, highly committed to Mexican concerns. The community affairs coordinators from the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, in each of the Consular offices also identified focal people that were either point persons or had the power to “convoke” or congregate people as “leaders” of the Mexican communities. Included were shop owners, restaurant owners, religious leaders, and information point persons. The Consular officers talked about “leaders” in a symbolic manner, and appeared to anoint those who were able to live up to such a role, could provide a social and communal space for people to gather and be able to congregate people as leaders. This included often the directors of dance groups and even Mariachis bands. Whether such individuals saw themselves as leaders or not, they are entitled to the role by the perception shared by others. This perception of “leader,” appears to be confirmed by the survey results.

The survey responses, indicated that in the definition of leader, 3% associated this with a restaurant owner since they felt he/she was able to gather people, 15% referred to educators as leaders, 18% used such a word to describe information bearers within the community, 24% used the term for those persons who were recognized by the community, and 41% used it for those who advocate for the needs of people and try to help them in their problems. Moreover, when asked if there were leaders within the Mexican community, 55% responded in the affirmative and 45% in the negative. When asked if they were leaders within their community, 45% said yes,

and 55% said no. As to whether Mexicans are represented in the leadership throughout New England, 25% said yes and 75% said no, implying that 45% may feel that there are leaders in the community, but somehow they do not have the force to be represented in New England. Answers to the questions as to whether Mexican leaders are marginalized in New England, 48% responded in the positive and 52% responded in the negative. When asked whether Mexican leaders were organized in New England, close to 80% said no and 20% said yes, detecting a lack of unity among Mexicans. When asked if Mexicans shared projects between themselves and other Latinos, 65% responded that only on occasion, 15% stated frequently and 20% never. This shows a lack of interaction between Mexicans and other Latino groups in terms of project sharing. More significant was the responses made on the issue of discrimination, where close to 55% of the Mexicans reported frequent and continuous discrimination against Mexicans, while 45% reported occasional discrimination. When asked the same question about discrimination amongst Mexicans, close to 95% reported frequent and occasional statements of discrimination towards Mexicans, and only 5% stated never. Such findings indicate that there is occasional to frequent and continuous discrimination being experienced by these Mexican respondents. In responding to the question on how the means of communication represents Mexicans, 45% stated the image were negative, 41% neutral and only 14% positive, yet 90% of the respondents felt they could influence such image making compared to 10% who felt they could not.

The responses of these leaders to the in-depth interview questions, revealed that majority of these Mexican leaders, characterized their leadership as a vocation they were born with, one acquired on the basis of their experiences, or crafted from the commitments made to their Mexican counterparts. In fact, the male leaders distinguished the leadership of females from that of males. Several, described the leadership of Mexican women as “decisive, continuous,

feminine, and visionary” and stated these were attributes they did not have. Instead, they identified with the attributes represented by such leaders as César Chávez or Benito Juárez and were humbled when they were called “leaders” What was important they said, “Was not how they viewed or defined themselves, but how others saw and judged them.” Mexican women leaders were more outspoken. Several spoke of their leadership in the following ways: “I do not define myself as a leader, but as a person who likes to problem-solve issues and who likes challenges and takes them on to see them come to fruition. So for me a leader has to have satisfaction and pleasure in being one.” Another characterized the leadership of women by stating that “women were the motor of the Mexican community’s consciousness.” Thus the leadership for this cohort is not only differentiated by ascribed or inherent attributes but also by gender. From these findings, one can describe the leadership of Mexican directors of organizations as being driven by: 1) symbolically imbued leaders, those who are attributed the role simply because they symbolize a degree of participation within the Mexican communities, 2) self-appointed leaders, those who claim their leadership based on the power of information they hold, knowing their constituents and being capable of resolving problems, and 3) leaders by default those who assume such a role because no one else steps in to make decisions and carry out actions.

Such leadership is apparent between the nascent or new and more seasoned and established leaders. The nascent leaders appear to have gained much of their leadership ideas and strategies as university student organizers when they were in Mexico, from their current job situation where leadership skills and training are part of their work, or from their affiliation to organizations and board membership knowledge. For some, the leadership they experienced in Mexico becomes reproduced in their new communities, in other cases, they try out new

modalities through the functions and activities of their organizations or boards, or they learn leadership skills from their workplace. The more traditional leaders use the patterns of *compadrazgo* (godparenting) and *cacicazgo* (patron or chief of group) from Mexico, the less seasoned yet nascent leaders tend to use newly appropriated strategies from boards, imitating some of the Anglo processes, but the more progressive leaders seem to incorporate what might be identified as bicultural strategies, that secure the support of their constituents in the Mexican communities and members from the Consulate of Mexico and at the same time, procure the interests of local people and politicians in the communities where they live. Such dexterity allows them to be local on the one hand, but also transnational catapulting their interests beyond New England.

The Relationship of Organizations to Leadership Development. Without doubt, the leadership of Mexicans in New England has grown in spurts and over time spurred by the interest of Mexican community members, professionals, students and the growing support from the General Consulate of Mexico in Boston including the initiatives of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (See Montero-Sieburth, in press). Students within private and public universities and music schools throughout New England have formed groups and organizations that represent Mexican interests. Mexican communities have developed organizations of a secular nature linked in some cases to the celebration of religious festivities. The General Consulate of Mexico in Boston through specific initiatives, activities, and delivery of seminars has also galvanized Mexicans in their leadership efforts. Because the role of student groups, Mexican organizations linked to religious groups, and the General Consulate of Mexico is discussed elsewhere in depth (See Montero-Sieburth, in press), how Mexican nationals are emerging as leaders and the types of transnational politics that is evident is discussed here.

From 1980 to the present, six Mexican organizations have been developed by various community groups and individuals. These organizations are of four types, those that: 1) serve immigrants at the grassroots levels on specific entry personal issues such as labor force access, housing, etc. 2) those that help migrant worker needs for legal or social support, 3) those that provide social and cultural regeneration of cultural activities and civic functions, and 4) those that act as springboards for leadership development.¹⁷ Each organization has its own vested groups, small in numbers, but able to organize events and functions that draw great numbers of other Mexicans and Latinos. The organizations serve as a template for these leaders to test out their either newfound skills or to hone in on their developed leadership brought from their earlier experiences and practices in Mexico. For many of these leaders, growing an organization, learning how to use parliamentary procedures, identify board members, develop the organization's mission and vision, create yearly plans, carry monthly meetings are newfound knowledge and skills. In other cases, the village democratic models used in Mexico are replicated in New England. Yet within these gender-balanced organizations, the leadership of women is still fraught with challenges giving rise to the belief that Mexicans still have organizing to do and need to develop a culture of civic empowerment (Hondageu-Sotelo, 2003).

While the organizations experience the ebb and flow of many similar U. S. based community organizations, with some developing strong infrastructures and others quasi or no

¹⁷ The Maine Migrant Workers' Advocacy Group, Inc. an organization serving migrant workers in Maine founded during the early 1980s is the oldest and most targeted to meeting legal and social needs of migrant Mexican workers, yet the rest of the Mexican organizations are more directed towards meeting the social, cultural, civic, and educational needs of Mexicans in New England. The Mexican Organization of New England, OMNI was the first of such organizations, founded in 1992 in Boston, Massachusetts, to promote Mexican cultural and social events of a civic and social nature. The Social, Cultural, and Mexican Sports Organization of Rhode Island, founded in 1995 originated as a sports organization, working within church related social and cultural activities, but has taken on a more political agenda due to its only Presidents in power since its founding and his connections with the local politicians in Rhode Island and the Mexican government through the Institute of Mexicans Abroad. The Mexican Free Association of Rhode Island, is an offshoot of the previous organization, but was created by a team of directors in 2001, but officially founded in 2003 to attend to more concrete community needs which include providing aid to families, payment of medical needs, sending of remittances to rebuild schools and funding of social and civic activities. The Mexican New Hampshire Granite State Organization, founded in 1999 to help Mexicans in the Nashua-Manchester area with information, the mobile consulates, access to obtaining their driver's licenses and other community needs and Fronteras Unidas, founded in 2003 to help Mexicans and other Latinos access needed information, social services and training in obtaining loans and their drivers' license.

infrastructures in terms of their boards and membership growth,¹⁸ they are without doubt identified as symbolically significant in the activities that Mexican nationals address. The ability to mobilize members, act in response to crisis, convoke Mexicans around cultural and civic celebrations, are the attributes that characterize them.

In 2001, the Federation of Organizations of Mexicans in New England was founded as an umbrella non-profit organization for the other organizations. Its goals have been to conduct greater outreach to other emerging Mexican organizations in New England, model leadership, identify critical issues and potentially train leaders. Projects such as the matricula or identity card, remittances, and the absentee vote in Mexico, as well as educational scholarships for Mexican youth, have been the focus of the Federation (O'Neil, 2003).

The General Consulate of Mexico in Boston since the 1990s has also played a role in supporting the growth of these organizations. Through the use of mobile consulates, the General Consulate of Mexico has conducted greater outreach, offered direct services to the Mexican communities, provided support for civic celebrations such as the 15th of September, and has presented collaborative fora and seminars where Mexicans are updated on the types of social, economic, and cultural programs in finances, education, and community growth made available through the Institute of Mexicans Abroad. The fact that there is a representative of the Institute for Mexicans Abroad within the Consulate, that is a liaison to the Mexican students, organizations and communities, and who communicates information about events and activities to all registered Mexicans via internet about special seminars, has made the presence of Mexico and the Mexican government in New England evident and influential.

¹⁸ Some of the apparent infrastructural issues are how Mexicans decide to create their boards, follow Roberts Rules of Order, develop their board and committee membership and functions, and conduct their business meetings. In some cases, this is new knowledge which is learned on the job and from workplace experiences where the responsibilities demand organization. In other cases, they learn from joining other organizations and becoming board members. Yet for others, who are seasoned, it is expanding on the democratic principles they either brought from Mexican experiences as students or organizers or are adapting into their leadership as they develop the organization.

Notwithstanding during this time period since the 1990s, the role of the General Consulate of Mexico in Boston has shifted from its official, authoritative and deferential stance to a more communal and invitational stance, allowing Mexicans to seek the Consular offices for needs beyond their visas and passports. The fact that the Consulate issues the matricula, or identification card, one of the most debated issues in the United States, is just one such instance of how the Mexican government is supporting its nationals in using the identification card to be able to obtain their automobile licenses or open bank accounts. It should be noted that the identification card has been in use since 1871, yet in recent years, it has become the focus of much heated debate at local and national levels (Donohue, 2003).

Thus the combined efforts of student groups and leaders, the Mexican organizations linked to religious and civic celebrations and the Consular office through the Institute of Mexicans Abroad has done much to link professionals with working class Mexicans, and with nascent and seasoned leaders. Each of the organizations are at different stages of leadership development, with two working at the grassroots level attempting to meet individual and community needs, with one using social or cultural events as a catalytic and centering experience, with another focused on the development of their professional careers and in bringing particular speakers to their universities, with one dedicated to fostering legal support for migrant workers and with one working at a more sophisticated political level with strategies and networks that include other Latinos and non-Latino groups. Still needed is the type of leadership training and development of a core of Mexican rather than individual leaders, who will train their followers and develop coalitions with Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Colombians and non-Latinos.

Relationships and Support from the Mexican Consulate, the Mexican government, and the U. S. government. From the survey and the in-depth interviews, it is evident that there are

several types of support that these leaders require from the Mexican Consulate. On the one hand, the Consulate offers the mobile consulates based on the needs identified, but depending on the lobbying done by the presidents and directors, some may have more mobile consulates than others. Hence, a more accurate count and database of the growth of Mexicans in urban and rural communities are needed in order to match resources to needs and in order to favor those most in need. Many of the leaders professed their role as clients demanding that they be acknowledged and legitimized. They feel that while the General Consulate of Mexico in Boston has made an effort in their outreach, much more needs to be done. As one of the directors expressed, “they don’t understand that we are growing by the minute and that we need to be heard now, not tomorrow.” The support these leaders expressed they needed from the Mexican government was to be recognized as a potentially significant group, especially since through the initiatives of one of the leaders of these organizations, the absentee vote in Mexico was spearheaded. This same leader wrote a missive during the election period for the President of Mexico where he decried the Mexican government’s lack of hearing “the forgotten ones” in New England.

The relationship sought out by these leaders from the U. S. government is one of greater respect and appreciation of the role that Mexicans play in the communities and in the economy through their work and sending of remittances. As a group, these leaders reinforced the idea of providing for amnesty, the worker’s program, and greater bilateral relationships that benefit Mexicans and Americans. They also consider that construction of a wall on the border between Mexico and the United States is a direct affront to Mexicans throughout the U. S., including those in New England, but as one of the leaders stated, “The wall will not keep Mexicans out, it will simply make them more ingenious.” (Personal communication, December 10, 2005).

The Roles, Social and Political networks of Leaders. The types of roles, social and political networks that have been developed by these leaders can be described as fostering: 1) grassroots politics, working directly with individuals and groups within the Mexican communities to meet immediate crisis or issues; 2) cultural and social networks which are developed, expanded and nurtured through the activities and functions groups play in promoting Mexican social, cultural and educational events, and 3) strategic politics which uses local, national and international influences to bear upon issues of greater transnational meaning, such as the Presidential election in Mexico, remittances, educational scholarships, etc. This role is limited to those leaders who have identified how the local politics of the towns and cities they live in operate and they can negotiate their entry into such influential spheres while they also find ways to meet the needs of the Mexican community by lobbying for scholarships or funds, procure funding for the creation of the César Chávez statue and park, or meet with local police and U. S. immigration officers to reduce raids on undocumented workers. At the same time, these leaders use their understanding of such social and cultural capital to also make demands of the Mexican government via their representative roles as Counselors and community advocacy and by aligning themselves with other Mexican groups particularly around the voting initiatives, use of the absentee vote, and Presidential elections. At the grassroots level, several of the leaders interviewed are overwhelmed and burnt out from trying to meet all of the growing demands of their constituents. Delegating responsibilities is not a tactic used, and often the same leaders do all of the required tasks. This has led to frequent turnovers in the directorships of these organizations and to limited influence beyond the local community. In establishing cultural, social and educational activities, there is a fair amount of information exchange and foundation building of the Mexican community, however much of this is tempered by galvanizing efforts of

a non-political nature without necessarily leading to leadership formation. At the level of strategic policies, only a few of these leaders have been able to develop both their immediate and local networks to influence public and also their own personal causes. Of the few who are politically knowledgeable, they have made inroads with local and state politicians and key stakeholders. In this regard, the Consul General of Mexico also plays an important role as it seeks counsel and support from these leaders, but also advances their issues and helps catapult them into representative roles. The founding of the Federation of Mexican Organizations in New England was in great part due to the initiatives of former Consul General Hector Vasconcelos, but became crystallized through Consul General Carlos Rico and the leadership of Elizabeth Canali, its first president who had notable organizational board and directorship knowledge. In addition, the seminars and meetings called forth by the Institute of Mexicans Abroad serves to inform and update the Mexican community on changes taking place in Mexico, but also to foster a degree of unity and response to their local communities. As one Consular Officer remarked, “Reaching Mexicans is no small feat. We are so different and have such diverse agendas that to get people to the table takes enormous energy and commitment.” (Personal statement from field interview, March 2005). A next step in the development of the Mexicans in New England is to reach the nascent leadership which is found in recent arrivals and to use the learning of more other Latinos who have galvanized their communities, and seasoned Mexican leaders in developing mentoring, leadership training, and a cohesive platform that empower Mexicans. Significant in the results will be the role that community-based organizations have in creating spaces where such leadership emerges and evolves to become a political community platform for action.¹⁹

¹⁹ Mexicans are also politically split in the U. S. and back home with many maintaining strong ties to Mexican party affiliations, but once able to vote in the U.S., they generally support the Democratic Party. Within New England,

Implications of Transnational Politics of Mexicans

The arrival of Mexicans in New England, even in small numbers, has changed from being transitory to becoming permanent. As they have made New England their home, their identity as a group has become consolidated through the development of their organizations and maintenance of religious, civic, social and cultural celebrations but also their incursion into political life (DeSipio, Pachon, de la Garza, and Lee 2003). As Jones-Correa (1998:132) has remarked about Latin American organizations, which are oriented to the home country, "...the autonomous space they create here lends itself (perhaps unintentionally) to the expression of multiple identities that allow them to avoid the closure demanded by formal politics."

Among the transnational implications that can be drawn are the way that the a) organizations foster experimentation for political development and b) how the leaders work within the communities extends their understanding of their power in dual frames, in their local communities and in Mexico. Heeding the needs of their Mexican constituents, c) these Mexican leaders galvanize their members around critical situations, but also maintain connections to the politics of Mexico. They recognize d) the power of remittances and the ways it affects their communities here and there and make use of e) transportation and f) telecommunication to live dual existences.

Affiliations to parties in Mexico are evident in the leaders of Mexicans in New England as some still hold the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) in high regard, despite its loss to the PAN (Party for National Action). Others recognize the PAN (Party for National Action) for generating needed change and vision and a small non-vocal group, advocates for the PRD,

Republicans have a strong following and several of the directors of the organizations identified as Republicans.

(Democratic Revolutionary Party) initiated by Cuauhtémoc Cardenas. These leaders appear to keep the political party affiliations they knew in Mexico, but one naturalized, make choices at the local and national levels that will directly bear on their life in the U. S. Few if any, during the interviews, wanted their party affiliations in Mexico made known, but were less reticent in identifying as Republicans or Democrats. Their views appear to fit Nancy Foner's (2001) notion of dual engagement in politics,²⁰ which does not make exclusive their engagement in Mexico nor the U. S. and the findings made by Guarnizo, Portes and Haller's (2003) in their study of Columbians, Salvadorans, and Dominicans that Latinos do not necessarily shed their loyalties and identities after they emigrate and depending on their educational level, continue to be politically active in the host country if they were already active in their home country. The survey results of the Mexicans in New England seems to confirm this since 83% voted in the last Mexican election, prior to the absentee vote of Mexicans in 2005, with 17% who did not and only 22% voted in the last U.S. election and 78% did not.

At the same time, the study demonstrates that even though the leadership in these Mexican organizations is balanced by gender, the women appear to be more politically active, at least within their communities, and in attaining important positions that afford them prominence. For many, the attainment of English fluency becomes a vehicle for political participation as they parlay their knowledge of Mexico to local politicians, while also demanding recognition from Mexican officials in the U. S. and politicians in Mexico. Even in cases where leaders lack English fluency, their participation at the local level, in meeting the sheriff or counselor of the city, in knowing key people, are ways in which they participate.

²⁰ See also Nancy Foner, Ruben G. Rumbaut, and Steven J. Gold (eds.). (2000). *Immigration Research for a New Century*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

At one level, the glue that holds the Mexicans in New England together is the characterization of culture and social values, manifested through celebrations of national festivities, social and civic events--the commemoration of Cesar Chavez, or the 15th of September. But at a deeper level, local situations such as the setting up of the local soccer football junior team, the crisis created by earthquakes in Mexico, the death of a paisano, countryman, who needs burial in Mexico or the needs of an indigent family or of a sick child needing medical assistance draw families, merchants, and the community together to pool their resources and offer support.

Multiple examples were cited by Mexicans, whereby local restaurant owners provided soccer or marathon shirts with their logo, mothers raffled tickets or sold Mexican food at a kermes, local tortilla factories paid for the dresses of the Mexican dancers needing to perform, the local artist donates television time to keep the Mexicans informed, or the folkloric ballet donates their dances for a worthy cause. Family members, arriving from Mexico also contribute to this sense of culture maintenance by bringing back suitcases full of inexpensive soccer outfits, the canastitas (little baskets) and golosinas (sweets) for the Posadas, or the mole and other food dishes (Fieldnotes, March 2005=.

While these Mexicans like others elsewhere exhibit the traits that Manuel Orozco (2003) argues affect the global economy, that is, the five T's: transfers of remittances and grants, transportation, tourism, telecommunication and nostalgic trade, I would argue that remittances, transportation and telecommunication appear to be central in allowing these Mexicans, as diverse and dispersed as they are, to maintain a strong sense of culture and national identity that is tied to Mexico and its political scenarios on the one hand, and on the other develop the grounding and political knowledge that helps them integrate politically into the New England landscape.

The remittances of Mexicans in New England, while small in relation to the total remittances of Mexicans in the U. S. totaling 18 billion dollars in 2005 (Suro, 2005), and total remittances sent by foreigners in New England of close to 775 million in 2003, which is 3% of total volume of U. S. remittances according to Mamie Marcuss (2005), are nevertheless significant in the types of linkages which they create.

Remittances alone play a significant role particularly in rural Mexican economies and in developing needed hometown infrastructure and opportunities (de la Garza, Rodolfo and Manuel Orozco, Miguel Baraona, 1997; De Sipio,).²¹ This study identified that at least in two of the six organizations, the remittances and the decisions being made in New England affected the rebuilding of schools and the expansion of water sources in two of the towns and villages these members belonged to. Such initiatives seem to have a circular democratizing effect in identifying specific needs of their home towns in Mexico through emails, internet and letters written by local officials that become decisions and actions undertaken by the directors of these Mexican organizations in New England. As a response, fund raising activities are put into action, monies are accumulated within the Mexican communities, and sent to their respective towns and cities, thereby setting up the infrastructure that builds schools and makes education a reality. Notwithstanding, the Institute for Mexicans Abroad (IME) through its financial and educational programs and the establishment of plazas comunitarias, or community schools in the New England to serve Mexican nationals, also stimulates the creation of such linkages as Mexicans realize they can create many of these infrastructures in their own local contexts to aid their communities. Such relationship helps to foster the transnational processes that Cano (2004a: 5) alleges to exist at “the federal government level, local and state level and ...exerts influences on

²¹ In 2003, President Vicente Fox remarked that remittances were Mexico’s “biggest source of foreign income, bigger than oil, tourism or foreign investment.” (<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/mexico/20030924-2051-us.mexico.html>)

the immigrant community of the sending state and on the government structure of the receiving state, within a context of urban politics.” At the same time, the IME through its Advisory Counsel (Consejo Consultivo del IME) is also fostering personal networks among Mexican government officials and local U. S. politicians as well as church and community leaders (Cano and Delano, 2004 b).

Remittances also appear to have a role in influencing the local political participation that Barreto and Muñoz (2003:444) have identified appears to take place for non-citizens. They state: “...an immigrant who has come to the United States for more opportunities, but continues to stay in close contact with his host country by sending money home, as someone who is more likely to get involved in politics in America.”

Several of the Mexican leaders of these organizations are well aware that remittances are well regarded in Mexico by politicians and policy makers. Several of the Mexican leaders of these organizations felt they had a say in what happens in Mexico since they were “footing the bill” in keeping Mexico economically and socially stable. One leader remarked: “Mexico’s government should recognize that part of Mexico’s economy is based on the money that families send home, and that is what keeps Mexico above water.” (Personal communication, February 2005). At the same time, these leaders also recognize the economic power that Latinos have in the U. S. and the interest that financial and lending companies, such as Wells Fargo have in courting them. These same visions are shared by the Mexicans in New England who see investment practices and commodities made easily in the U.S. and abroad (Crowley, 2001).

Given such knowledge, and sense of the say they have, it is not surprising that three of the twelve leaders are highly involved in the local politics of their towns and in knowing about the politics in Mexico. It could be argued that the flow of remittances, indirectly influences

Mexico's non-restriction of immigrants to the United States insofar as the remittances are viewed as safeguards for continued development of Mexico's economy and stability on the one hand, and on the other, contribute to the reduction of poverty, a feat which President Fox has credited to his administration.²²

Greater access and availability of air travel, direct routes to Mexico, and reduced costs have also contributed to the transnationalism of Mexicans in New England. Attempts at establishing direct routes between Boston and Mexico by Aero Mexico and other airlines has made it possible for Mexicans to come and go. Airline travel, once a commodity of the elite and wealthy, has with reduced costs, become accessible for many. Travel to Mexico is not only affordable and easily obtained through internet and travel agency purchases, but is promoted via television and radio so that Mexico City is seen as being only four or five hours away. Helping to foster this sense of a "borderless" Mexico, is the availability of favorite novelas or novels in Spanish, linked by Latino television networks such as UNIVISION. The celebration of the Virgen of Guadalupe on December 12th can be viewed in New England via multiple channels, as it is taking place. Advertisements that link Mexicans to family and culture in Mexico are extensive. The telephone companies aware of this market have made it possible for telecommunications to thrive. In Mexico points out Robert Suro (2003:18), "...transnational remittance receivers are nearly three times as more likely to have telephone conversations with their relatives abroad at least once per week than those not getting money (31% versus 11%)."

Family in Mexico becomes for many Mexicans in New England, both an extraneous motivation in their individual work and social and cultural practices, but also an internal

²² Extreme poverty in Mexico according to the World Bank in the 2000-2004 period, was reduced to 17.6% in 2004, yet much of this reduction took place in rural communities, whose rate of poverty declined from 42% to 27.9% although urban poverty stagnated at 11%. Retrieved, November 17, 2006 from <http://en.wikipedia.org>

encouragement for advancement, demonstrated by residual gains for the family and communities in Mexico.

Conclusion

This study while exploratory in nature, is significant in highlighting how Mexican nationals arriving in New England, with their growing numbers settling in the area, are beginning to shape their emergent leadership along local and national linkages to Mexico. While yet a tentative voice, these Mexicans through the leadership of their organizations, student groups and support from the General Consulate of Mexico are acquiring the types of knowledge and skills to lobby, negotiate and arbitrate for changes in their own New England backyards with sponsorship of the counselors of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad, and local representatives in Mexico. Mexican organizations appear to provide a platform for leadership development and the extension of democratic processes, but how such initiatives are consolidated and refined needs to be next steps in developing political incorporation and accountability. Several of the seasoned Mexican leaders acknowledged the need for coalition building with Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Colombians and the need for legal status, education and leadership training as those vehicles for harnessing the power of their local communities into greater political incorporation and leadership platforms. The future of nascent Mexican leaders, needs to be mentored and supported at the local level, through the Mexican organizations and their social and cultural grounding, through the support of Mexican student groups as collaborators and pipelines to education, and by the Mexican Consulate in Boston and the Institute for Mexicans Abroad who through their information sharing, program development, and leadership training help link Mexicans in New England to Mexico.

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