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Ay dolor, ya me volviste a dar: Loss and Cultural Mourning among Mexican Origin Immigrants to Oregon[1]

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Everything begins with a question and our journeys are the processes of finding answers to the things we don't know. This study represents my journey of learning and researching about Mexican immigrants. This journey began when I was asked to participate on a long-term immigration project conducting oral life histories of Mexicans immigrants in Oregon. During this time, an article written by Ricardo Ainslie (1998) caught my attention with its discussion about cultural mourning among Mexican immigrants. Hence, this study seeks to explore how Mexican immigrants cope with separation from their homeland. Ainslie's article suggested that "*la pulga*," or the flea market, serves as a potential space for alleviating cultural mourning. I hold that the *futbol*, or soccer, field in Salem, Oregon also functions as a potential space for lessening Mexican immigrants' cultural mourning for both players and fans.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

It is clear that the contemporary U.S.-Mexico border no longer resembles what it once was when the border patrol was created in the 1920s (Magaña 2003). Whereas both documented and undocumented immigration in the earlier twentieth century was fairly free flowing, now prospective immigrants face a gauntlet composed of helicopters, walls, hi-tech surveillance, and some 16,000 border patrol agents, all determined to halt undocumented migration. Operation Gatekeeper, Hold-the-Line, and Safeguard are the predecessors to Operation Triple Strike, a decade old strategy that concentrates INS resources in urban areas to force undocumented immigrants into the harsher inhospitable terrain (Migrant Rights International 2003).

Ironically, the United States is systematically trying to erect a wall between Mexico and itself. This urgent construction of a tangible and symbolic wall between these two nations as a solution for undocumented immigration overlooks many facets in the complex web of immigration. The very nature of globalization serves as a catalyst for immigration. It is a phenomenon that encourages the movements of capital, goods, services, and communications across international borders. Hitchhiking along, as unforeseen variables are people, cultures, and languages. Sassen (1996) argues that there is a connection between those countries that receive massive amounts of foreign capital and those that receive high numbers of immigrants, undocumented or otherwise.

Immigration policies are also to blame for immigration flows. The failure of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) to reduce immigration by sanctioning employers who hire undocumented workers led Americans to question its rational. The United States arrived at the conclusion of controlling immigration through non-enforcement methods (Acevedo and Espenshade 1996). This became an important aspect for the passing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). As a byproduct of globalization, NAFTA's many provisions set out to reduce trade barriers and encourage foreign investment in the respective countries involved. Embedded in this view is the logic that foreign investment creates jobs, which in turn will reduce migration flows. This became a goal

for NAFTA: economic buildup in migrant sending countries to reduce immigration. Acevedo and Espenshade (1996) conclude that NAFTA, in the initial and middle stages, will tend to exert migratory pressures on Mexicans propelling them into the United States mainly as undocumented workers. They conclude, "The overall effect of free trade will be to foster migration" (p. 210). In brief, the economic policies that have been designed to deter undocumented immigration simply have not worked and consequently have produced more migration.

Through globalization and programs like NAFTA, the transfer of U.S. manufacturing plants across borders has been facilitated and fast tracked. This has significantly changed the labor structure in the U.S. Sassen (1996, p. 223) notes, "There has been a rapid expansion in the supply of low-wage jobs in the United States and a casualization of the labor market, both associated with the new growth industries, but also with the decline and reorganization of manufacturing." It is important to note the usage of the term 'casualization,' because the definition points to a trend in the United States labor market.

Casualization can be described as the increase in transitory and part-time employment, reduced promotion prospects, and the undermining of various types of job security. These trends can be attributed to the reduction of manufacturing jobs and the maturation of service type employment (Sassen 1996). Sassen concludes: "The resulting casualization of the labor markets facilitates the absorption of immigrants, including undocumented immigrants" (p. 226). So as the United States switches to a postindustrial or service sector economy, the high paying blue collar jobs are disappearing fast. Roger Rouse describes the trend in the current labor structure as one that has changed, "from the pyramid to hourglass" (Rouse 1996, p. 253). The jobs that were stepping stones for the upward mobility that previous immigrants enjoyed are becoming a thing of the past. These changes in the labor structure have created low paying jobs, but to immigrants they still remain crucial.

The findings in a survey regarding attitudes towards Latino immigrants revealed that it was generally understood that immigrants take jobs that Americans don't want (Cornelius 2002). This infers that the United States

has a niche for immigrants, a niche that has been created by casualization. While the earlier discussion about intensification of the border patrol's efforts stressed the intent to reduce immigration, the country's policy on interior enforcement points to a glaring contradiction that relates to the casualization of the labor market and its need for immigrant workers. "Even as it [Congress] poured unprecedented sums into border enforcement, Congress actually cut the budget requests of the U.S. INS for worksite enforcement in recent years. In fiscal year 1998, only two percent of the INS's total enforcement effort was devoted to enforcing immigration laws in the workplace" (Cornelius 2002, p. 169). The implication is that immigrants are needed and wanted in the United States because of the contemporary labor infrastructure.

If they are needed and wanted, this view must be from a business standpoint. The public reaction towards immigrants appears to remain negative, and seems to have hardened since the tragic events of 9/11 (Bender 2003). In Oregon the legislature is considering a bill that would require proof of citizenship or permanent residency to obtain a drivers license (Chuang 2003).[2] In Arizona, voter proposed initiatives have enacted similar anti-immigrant proposals that "require state and local government agencies to verify the immigration status of applicants for public services not mandated by the federal government" (Bender 2003). Armed citizen patrol groups along the U.S.-Mexico border have formed "people's militias" to stop undocumented immigration (Quintanilla 2003). Paradoxically, many business and government agencies have begun accepting the *Matrícula Consular* (Mexican embassy issued id's) as an acceptable form of identification. Yet this dream arrangement for Mexican immigrants has come under attack. In fact, the *Matricula* is in danger of being recalled pending results of the treasury department's recently held online vote regarding its continued acceptance (American Immigration Lawyers Association 2003).

If globalization is the river that takes immigrants to the land where the streets are paved with gold, then social networks are the rafts which support the migrant until he or she reaches land safely. In their book *Return*

to Aztlán, Massey et al. (1987) dedicate an entire chapter to the significance of social networks. They summarize as follows:

> Mexican migration to the United States is based on an underlying social organization that supports and sustains it…Together they compose a web of interconnecting social relationships that supports the movement of people, goods, and information back and forth between Mexican sending communities and the United States (p. 169).

Rouse (1996) echoes the same sentiment but uses the concept of "transnational migrant circuits" rather than social networks. He posits, "Just as capitalists have responded to the new forms of economic internationalism by establishing transnational corporations, so workers have responded by creating transnational circuits" (p. 254).

Even businesses have learned to appreciate the value of migrant networks, and have used them as their main recruitment tool for labor (Krissman 2000). The "networks" of social capital are indispensable to immigrants, especially the undocumented as this is where one goes to borrow money, to seek information, to hear of employment opportunities, to secure shelter, or simply to find somebody to communicate with. The networks facilitate the transition between two countries, two worlds (Massey et al., 1987), and without them, immigrants would drown in the river of globalization.

However, not all networks are created equal. Feminist scholars focus on the role of women in migration studies (Crummet 1998). Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (1996) explores women's role in these social networks and challenges the validity of the "household model." She offers a different framework that "acknowledges the power relations operating within the family or household unit" (p. 187). In a similar fashion, María de los Angeles Crummet (1998) studies the uneven effects of migration on women when they are left behind to care for family households with limited resources. Crummet posits, "[t]hat the household approach is deficient unless it is accompanied by an analysis of class structure that locates

the domestic unit within a broader context of social relations of production" (p. 150).

While the previous studies seek to address theoretical shortcomings, Adela de la Torre (1993) investigates the "real" costs of immigration in terms of family health and the role of women, which many times is overlooked by emphasizing the financial benefits of immigration. In addition, de la Torre suggests that women's participation in the seasonal workforce did not alter, "[t]raditional gender roles in the household…[and] for many women the overall work burden increases as the household responsibilities continue to stay within the women's domain" (1993, 178). There is no doubt that the study of women in immigration is a field vastly untapped. The research of these scholars has helped rethink women's roles that were initially overlooked and propel a greater understanding of immigration phenomenon.

The aforementioned has been a partial overview on immigration. Yet, it serves to give an idea of the complexity of this topic. While immigration can be approached on many levels, the psychological dimension to immigration is what will be explored in this paper. It is against the broader spectrum outlined above that I will contextualize my own study on the role of soccer in the process of cultural mourning.

CULTURAL MOURNING THEORY

The idea of cultural mourning stems from the theories of object loss as conceptualized by Freud, Engel, Abraham, Klein, Loewald, and others (Frankiel 1993, ix). Object loss, in turn, is linked to identity formation, which is connected to first impressions of the "me" and the "not me" (Winnicott 1971). The loss felt by the infant at the initial break from the mother compels the infant to repeatedly attempt to "fill the gap." Ainslie, citing Freud, asserts that the act of 'filling,' whatever forms that might take, perpetuates attachment to the mother (Ainslie 1998, p. 285). In the cases of loss experienced through death, something similar occurs. "Freud argues that object loss and identification in mourning are paralleled by identification leading to the formation of the super-ego and the ego ideal" (Frankiel 1993, p. 36). Object loss or loss from death result in grief, the

latter defined as, "the characteristic response to the loss of a valued object, be it a loved person, a cherished possession, a job, status, home, country, an ideal, a part of the body etc. (Frankiel 1993, p. 10)." Severe object loss, such as that caused by death, can be devastating and lead to a psychological imbalance with feelings of extreme sadness, guilt, or an "impairment of the capacity to function right" (Frankiel 1993, p. 11).

However, in most cases individuals are able to mourn their loss in a way that prevents derangement. According to Volkan (1981), the mourner finds "linking phenomena" that provide, "a locus to externalize contact between aspects of the mourner's self representation and aspects of the representation of the deceased" (p. 20). This process gradually forms "identification with the lost one which promotes growth" (Ainslie 1998, p. 287). In addition to linking phenomena, "linking objects" may also play in a role in mourning in that they create "a symbolic bridge to the dead person" (Volkan 1981, 20).

Winnicott (1971) posits the idea of a "potential space" as important in managing grief caused by separation and loss. This potential space is the area where culture unfolds. Ainslie's theory of cultural mourning is grounded on the works of Freud, Volkan, Winnicott, and others. According to Ainslie (1998), "the immigrant experience represents a special case of mourning in which mourning revolves around the loss of loved people and places occasioned by geographic dislocation… [It] represents a psychological context that colors an immigrant's emotional world and that becomes represented at the level of motivation and engagement in ways that are both conscious and unconscious (p. 286)."

While object loss is typically an individual experience linked to personal and familial history, cultural mourning results from the intertwining of individual and environmental factors such as cultural experiences. Upon leaving the homeland immigrants experience loss, not only of loved ones, but also of cultural objects, practices, etc:

> When an immigrant leaves loved ones at home, he or she also leaves the cultural enclosures that have organized and sustained experience. The immigrant simultaneously must come to terms with the loss of family and friends and also cultural forms (food, music, art, for exam-

ple) that have given the immigrant's native world a distinct and highly personal character. It is not only the people who are mourned but the culture itself, which is inseparable from the loved ones whom it holds (Ainslie 1998, p. 287).

Ainslie draws on Winnicott's theory of the potential space to argue that immigrants make use of the potential space to engage in activities, "that bridge the emotional gaps and spaces" created by dislocation and loss (Ainslie 1998, p. 289). This space allows immigrants to restore what is lost, for in it they engage in activities that create the "illusion of restoration of what was lost (p. 289)." Ainslie further argues that the use of the potential space is twofold. In addition to filling this space with activity or objects that keep alive the illusion of continuity with the homeland, the potential space also contains artifacts from the new environment. In this regard, the potential space serves as a platform where immigrants can begin to negotiate their adaptation to the new environment. As an example of a potential space, Ainslie studies the flea market in Austin, Texas and argues that the activities that go on in this space alleviate the pain of personal and cultural loss. This process, then, is what he calls cultural mourning.

In this study I use Ainslie's theory to explore cultural mourning among immigrants in Oregon. The soccer field in Salem is an example of a potential space linked to mourning. In particular, I explore how the game and the objects related to soccer serve as "linking objects" that help resolve issues of sadness, loneliness, and grief as players and fans perform their cultural mourning. I expect that resolving these issues allows for immigrants to successfully integrate into the new setting (Ainslie 1998, p. 290).

SITUATING SELF AS RESEARCHER

My interest in immigration is two fold. First, it is an intellectual interest that grew out of my involvement with the immigration project, *Mexican Immigrants in Oregon: Their Stories, Their Lives*. Secondly, immigration is deeply rooted in my own life experiences and cultural identity. Thus, I am able see immigration through the lens of the migrants themselves. My parents and three older siblings were all born in Michoacán, Mexico. I

was the first in my family to be born in the United States. My family came to the U.S. as undocumented workers and most of my extended family did so as well. Their struggles as undocumented workers are ingrained in my soul.

Growing up in the fields of Yakima Valley in Washington State, that is what I witnessed daily. Living amongst undocumented immigrants was a normal thing for me. It was so normal, in fact, that when my brothers and sisters were "fixing papers," I cried because they wouldn't give me a mica (green card). I was too young to understand the legal difference between being born in Mexico and in the U.S. Presently, my interactions with undocumented immigrants has not diminished. I work in a bakery owned by my parents where all of the employees are immigrants from Mexico, the majority of whom are undocumented and have arrived within the last five years. My conversations with them almost never deviate from their lives in Mexico; the times they crossed, their lives in the U.S., and/or what they miss most about Mexico. It is through them that I receive knowledge of what it means to be an immigrant in the 21st century.

While I am very close to the reality I am investigating, there are some limitations. I was not born in Mexico. I did not have to cross a border "illegally." I was educated in U.S. public institutions. The first time I visited Mexico was in 1988 when I was about six years old, and I have visited several times since. I point out these limitations because although I have an adequate understanding of the culture, language, and customs, I am not an expert on immigration. My understanding of Mexico and the conditions that propel immigration is partial at best.

Yet I am perceived as Raza (one of them) and this gives me valuable insider access. My insider status gives me access to the languages of my subjects and to the nuances of non-verbal communication. Moreover, it enhances my 'trustability' in gathering data.[3] My 'outsider' status allows me to view the subject matter in relation to the broader social landscape, and to reflect on it from a different perspective.

METHODS AND DATA

Qualitative study is the overarching term that best describes the methodological orientation of this project. *The Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* defines qualitative methods in a general way as, "procedures including unstructured, open-ended, interviews and participant observation that generate qualitative data [i.e. data in the form of words]" (Schwandt 2001, 213). Moreover, this approach can be further distinguished by the methods one employs to generate data. Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991) describe three potential modes of inquiry under the heading of case study. They define a case study as "an in-depth, multifaceted investigation using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon" (p. 2), in this case the soccer field in Salem, Oregon.

Ethnography, biography, and/or social history are tools that a researcher can utilize to gather data. Briefly defined, an ethnography is a study of the actions and/or lives of a group people, behaviors, beliefs and feelings (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991). While ethnography is based primarily on observation, biography involves dialogue between the researcher and participants. To further define what biography is, it is important to discuss what it is not. Biography is not meant in the traditional sense, i.e. the biography of Jackie Robinson, but rooted in a "sociobiography of a particular social type or social role" (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991, p. 4). Life histories, either partial or total, of participants become the data in relation to the study. The last form of inquiry is guided by the social historical approach. Researchers employing this method "[s]eek therein to elicit discoveries and insights that can illuminate the experience of other, similar groups" (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg 1991, p. 5). The present study is composed of these methods and cannot be defined as one or another but a blend of all three.

Curt Dudley-Marling (1996) informs my decision to take a qualitative approach based on the following examples. First is his example of a politician's response to economic crisis when trying to reassure the general public. Politicians use the phrase that "key economic indicators" are resuming to pre-crisis levels. But when you ask the general public, their experience indicates that they have not yet weathered the storm (Bartlett

and Steele, 1992 cited in Dudley-Marling 1996; Saul 1992 cited in Dudley-Marling 1996). In another example, Marling questions his professor's invocation of the principle of Occam's razor "that the simplest solution was always preferred." He does this because he realizes that Occam was wrong. Occam was wrong because the simple solution overlooks "[the] reality that denies the complex lives of ordinary people living in the real world" (1996, p. 111).

I employ the first example because I believe that numbers aren't capable of telling the entire story, and thus, my choice for a multiple method strategy. In the name of logic and reason, quantitative studies tend to sanitize human emotions and experience. In the example about 'key economic indicators,' they may forecast that the times are improving, but the people who have to deal with the crisis may tell you otherwise. I use the second example to point out that in the world of science and theories, there is a real world, and that we are very much a part of it. Experiences and emotions are just as important as numbers. In brief, qualitative inquiry seeks to explore the world of knowing in an alternative way that seeks to render the richness and complexity of the human experience. In the end it is another method to seek answers for our understanding.

My first step in this multiple method strategy was to go to the soccer field and observe the interactions that were taking place. With a journal in one hand and a digital camera on the other, I set off. I took photos of the game and the surroundings of which I was immersed. Using a friend as a liaison between the stakeholders and myself, I set out to find possible contacts for personal interviews. However, things are always easier said than done. I had seven contacts for possible interviews, but out of those seven only two would bear fruit. I ran into several hurdles that effectively hindered the process. For example, they would give me wrong numbers, change meeting times, not show up, etc. I understand the stakeholders are very busy people with little or no free time. Furthermore, while frustrating, this experience taught me some important lessons about how researcher assumptions may clash with reality. Stakeholders' information has to be treated with great respect. They are trusting one with very personal information and their trust cannot be violated. With this, it is very hard to "dump" feelings to a complete stranger who only offers his word

of why he needs the information. In any case, I set up the interviews so they would be conducted at a later time at the stakeholders' convenience. It was agreed that I could record the interviews.

The interviews began with a general interview guide that consisted of closed type questions borrowed from the long-term Mexican Immigration Project of oral life histories of Mexican immigrants in Oregon. After the questionnaire, I proceeded with open-ended questions specific to the topic at hand. The average length of the interviews was 30 minutes. It is important to note that after the field observations and interviews, I wrote freely about what I had just seen or heard. Later, I listened to the two interviews and was able to acquire and transcribe the relevant passages that substantiated the claims for my project. In addition, I used information gathered in interviews from the larger project, *Mexican Immigrants in Oregon: their stories and their lives*, particularly as it pertained to feelings of loss and grief.

FINDINGS

Overall, the data indicated that study participants felt symptoms of grief related to immigration. In particular, interviews from the Mexican Immigration Project suggested that family is what immigrants missed most. The following are typical responses to the question, "What did you miss most when you first arrived?":

> Sergio: My sons, my sons, the little kids, they were small…I missed them.
> Armando: My mother.

When I asked two soccer stakeholders[4] the question, "What do you miss most when you first arrived?" Their answers were:

> Antonio: My parents…and my family, because in this country it is very difficult to be without family.
> Semeon: My family.

Semeon went as far as to say that, "the nostalgia even makes you feel a little bit sick."

Now that Antonio and Semeon have their families here in Oregon, their sense of loss has been projected elsewhere. What they were referring to was the actual space of Mexico and the cultural accoutrements left behind when they emigrated. That was precisely what Ainslie (1998) referred to in his theory of cultural mourning. Immigrants simultaneously mourn the loss of their family and culture because of immigration. Family and culture are not two separate entities, but intricately woven and indivisible as demonstrated by the interviews.

The soccer stakeholders reported that sports, mainly soccer, was the source to forget about feelings of grief. When I asked Antonio if playing soccer reminded him of Mexico, his response was ecstatic, "that was the reason that I started to play there [in Los Angeles]." When I asked Semeon the same question, he responded, "When I played soccer it would make me remember over there, Mexico… More than anything else, it makes me forget, I would feel relaxed, I mean in those moments that I would be playing, I wouldn't be thinking of nothing." In brief, immigrants do experience loss when they immigrate to the United States. A more extensive study of cultural mourning is in order.

EL CAMPO

The following findings are based on my observations of the soccer field in Salem, and my informal conversations with the fans during the games. For the most part, the soccer field serves as a potential space where mourning takes place and culture is reproduced. First, the soccer field is a *different* space than other recreational areas in the vicinity. As one drives into Wallace Marine Park on a Sunday Morning, one notices something very peculiar about it. The faces are mostly brown and the parking lot is full of vans, 'tricked out' 1980s Hondas and Buick Regals, and the ever important *camioneta* (pickup). This is in stark contrast to the Mercedes Benzes, BMWs, and Volkswagens you see on their way to the neighboring softball tournament. Furthermore, and as one approaches the soccer field, all one hears is Spanish. English is only heard in sprinkles from the little

kids running around in the field or from the coaches who are swearing. The music that blares from the *camionetas* or *ranflas* (cars) is the latest *Norteño* or *Banda*. There is no Snoop Dogg here.

The majority of fans and players are dressed with apparel displaying icons from their favorite soccer team in Mexico. Hats with Mexican flags or *Viva Mexico* are the norm. People dressed in cowboy outfits do not stick out, as they would at the mall where people wear Birkenstocks or clogs. The wonderful smell of roasted corn permeates the air. *Paleta* vendors sell traditional ice cream from Mexico in little three-wheeled carts. The aroma of *carne asada* wafts from the taco stands.[5] This space is different from mainstream U.S. space because it is filled with accoutrements of Mexican culture.

Moreover, I discovered that the soccer field in Salem is a symbolic microcosm of Mexico. When talking about the differences between soccer in the U.S. and Mexico, Semeon noted, "It is a little bit different because you see people from all over [Mexico], over there in Mexico you are used to seeing people from the same town and here [U.S.] you see different people all the time." Here, the field is constructed as a national space in that regional identities are sharply visible. For example, the core team is usually made up of family and friends from a certain region. The team names denote their state or city, like *Deportivo Jalisco*, *Las Archillas*, *Morelia*, *Veracruz* etc. Following the teams are the fans. They are usually from the same town or state, which further highlights these regional differences. In this space all players and fans play out their regional identities much as they would in the national space, which is Mexico. Ainslie, in his analysis of the flea market, notes that it is, "A setting that creates a temporary visual/sensory illusion that one is back home in Mexico, thereby replenishing these immigrants via a reimmersion in the lost familiar" (1998, p. 291).

I found this to be true in my observations of the soccer field. In this process of "reimmersion" in the "lost familiar," fans and soccer players play out their cultural identities as if they lived in Mexico. Contrasting their actions here to their actions in the spaces of the "other," or mainstream culture, an immigrant's old identity is highly transparent. In the space of the "other," immigrants are quiet, to themselves, not wanting to draw attention, especially if they are undocumented. In the soccer field the

immigrants are very different. In fact, I was able to witness the enactment of "another" identity. Because this is a safe space where the dominant gaze is not present—their only representatives were a pair of Euro-American sentries—fans and players alike unwind, joke around, and engage in what we call in Spanish, cotorreo. This literally means talking freely and liberally like a parrot; words and their meanings should not be taken seriously.

On the flip side of this humor and joviality is a display of exaggerated masculinity, much like that observed by Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner (1994, p. 214) who state that, "Marginalized and subordinated men, then, tend to overtly display exaggerated embodiments and verbalizations of masculinity that can be read as a desire to express power over others within a context of relative powerlessness." For example, when the referee asked the fans to step back from the marked boundary so he could see it, the fans, especially the men, would respond by not moving and by swearing at him. This led to a showdown, with the referee finally leaving, just shaking his head.

Mexican males' public status in the U.S. is low because they are targets of racism, relegated to jobs which are insecure and low paying, and often lack proper documentation (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Messner 1994). In their home country there are more spaces that allow for the performance of masculinity. The lack of similar spaces here constricts that enactment. The soccer field, because it recuperates a "lost and familiar" space, seems to encourage some males to not only perform their masculine identities, but to exaggerate them. In doing this they may be reacting to their marginalized and disempowered position in the U.S. In the safe space of the soccer field the players and fans reenacted another identity, one that detaches from the mainstream norm. Soccer allows mourning by letting fans and players enact an identity akin to their home country identity.

Within the male dominated safe-space, however, there is also room for family. Hence, it is also a family space. This is an important facet of Mexican life, for family, we know, is central value in the Mexican culture. The idea of family is not only drawn around the nuclear family, but also the extended family (Condon 1997). In other words, family may consist of cousins, aunts, uncles, and/or friends. All forms of social activities, including parties, outings, and sporting events make room for family. In

Salem, evidence of the importance of families in the social realm was abundant. Strollers were parked in areas surrounding the field. The laughter and cries of little children filled the air. During the intermissions, the children would race to hug the fathers, or practice shooting penalties into the goals. In one example, I discovered through an informal conversation that one of the referees had thirteen children. His wife and his kids would accompany him to the games he was refereeing. The prominence of family in this space mirrors practices in Mexico, thus adding to the sense of the soccer field as an illusion of the homeland.

In another light, family can be seen as a network that supports each of its members. Soccer then can also be seen as a "family" that supports the involved stakeholders and branches out to create community. Soccer is a social construction that creates, supports, and brings the Mexican immigrant community together. Moreover, within this tight community environment a space opens up for the incorporation of non-immigrants. Mexican-Americans, Euro-American wives and players, and sometimes even Euro-American players are found in this simulated Mexican environment. By opening up or socializing with those different from Mexican immigrants, soccer expands the parameters of community. This signals the beginning of adaptive negotiations that could promote individual acculturation and increased societal integration (Gordon 1964).

CONCLUSION

Throughout my observation and inquiries I found that my study parallels Ainslie's research. Like 'la pulga' studied by Ainslie, the actions and social practices related to soccer create an illusion of the homeland, re-presenting Mexico in the potential space. On the soccer field players and fans literally feel as if they are in Mexico. It is a 'different' space vis-à-vis mainstream culture. The space of soccer has the sights, sounds, and smells of the home country. In this potential space, immigrants enact 'other' identities, the positive and negative characteristics of which can lie in between the extremes of an extra sense of joviality, a heightened sense of familia, or an exaggerated masculinity. Regional identities are sharp, because the soccer field acts as a symbolic microcosm of the national space of Mexico. Finally, soccer is a link that connects the immigrant community together.

Soccer also incorporates non-immigrants, and in so doing it branches out and expands the boundaries of the immigrant community, offering a glimpse of integration strategies.

My study diverges from Ainslie's in an important aspect. Ainslie argues that, in addition to linking immigrants back to Mexico, the flea market is a platform for acquiring the necessary accoutrements and social skills to function in this country. According to Ainslie, "La pulga serves as a potential space where Mexican immigrants simultaneously live in the old country and the new, a kind of 'as if' world wherein they can momentarily be home again, in the plazas of their village and towns, while, at the same time, 'playing' with the materials of the new culture" (291). In my study, aside from the presence of Mexican Americans and Euro-American wives of the soccer player, the potential space of soccer is fairly insulated and closed off from mainstream culture. In this sense, the soccer field functions exclusively as a space for cultural mourning. This does not mean that its efficacy is mitigated in any way. Immigrants will find numerous ways to acquire and 'play' with the materials of the new culture. What is significant about soccer is that, in providing a venue for mourning through 'reimmersion in the lost familiar,' it creates a connection between their homeland and their new land.

Endnotes

1 This study was funded by a McNair Scholars research stipend.

2 At this point in time the legislature has not passed this bill. It was stalled on the Senate floor. And because the state was embroiled in record setting budget talks, this bill was put aside.

3 For example, in an interview with Antonio, when I explained to him the right to pass on any interview question he told me, "No no no, I must answer every question that you ask me."

4 The two contacts for the interviews were both males in their 30's. Both of them had been in the United States for at least ten years. Antonio had never played soccer in Mexico, but when he arrived in Los Angeles he started to play their. He continued to play when he moved to Salem, Oregon, however he had irreparable damage to his knee and now considers himself a fan. Semeon however, played in Mexico and then in the United States. He is a referee within the league of which he once played. Semeon also coaches a team within the first division of the Willamette league (Salem).

5 Recently, the city of Salem halted all vending at public parks. Their reason was that a lot of trash was left by park goers. The paleta vendors would clean up after

the games so they could still sell their product, but the city still would not budge on the decision.

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