LATER-LIFE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF FIRST- AND SECOND GENERATION LATINOS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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By

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature Page</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Purpose of Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Research Questions and Hypotheses</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Literature Review</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 History of Later-Life Migration</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Attachment to Home</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Factors Influencing Later-Life Migration</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Characteristics of Later-Life Migrants</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Economic Factors of Later-Life Migration</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Retirement Migration Destination Locations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Seasonal Migration</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Later-Life Migration of Minorities and Immigrants</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 Approaches to Later-Life Migration</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Lifecourse Model</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Biographical Approach</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Geographic Identity and Idiotope</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Transnational Approach</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 Research Methods and Data</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0 The Interviews</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1 Findings
5.2 Origin of Participants
5.3 Experiences of Place
5.4 Sacred Places
5.5 Negative Place Experiences
5.6 Descriptions of Home
5.7 Transnationalism of Participants
5.8 Retirement Plans of Participants
5.9 Factors Influencing Retirement Place
5.10 Retirement Activities
5.11 Importance of Family in Retirement Place Decisions
5.12 Seasonal Migration
5.13 Travel in Retirement
5.14 Financial Impact as Factor
5.15 Climatic Preferences for Retirement Place
5.16 Summary of Results (Table)

6.0 Conclusions

Bibliography
ABSTRACT

LATER-LIFE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF FIRST- AND SECOND GENERATION LATINOS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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This paper looks at how national identity and biographical experiences affect the retirement migration plans of Mexican-Americans living in southern California. Using a biographical approach, interviews of thirteen Mexican-American professionals in a pre-retirement age group were conducted. This research indicates that transnational ties are maintained and influence place decisions. Economic factors were much less significant than family ties, while amenities were of high importance. Many demonstrated a preference for seasonal migration that would allow them to continue to travel and maintain relationships in Mexico and the United States. Philanthropy and creative pursuits were important, as were concerns about their health and health care.
1.0 Introduction

Because of declines in fertility and improvements in health care, the proportion of the world’s population that has reached retirement age is increasing rapidly. In developed countries, especially in the United States, this aging is at an unprecedented rate. Older adults are experiencing longer and healthier retirement years (Schoeni 2010). By 2030, the population of the United States over the age of sixty-five is estimated to be 22% (Clark, et al. 1996). Because of this rapid demographic change, the American baby-boom cohort, born between 1946 and 1964, is having a great deal of economic influence on the places in which they decide to live. (Rogerson and Kim 2005, Haas 2002).

Retirement brings with it a great deal of freedom for Americans with a pension to move where they wish to live (Kallan 1993), but there are many factors that determine later-life migrations. Economic considerations are the most important for some retirees (Haas, Bradley, et al. 2006). Others may decide to use this time to pursue those activities and interests that they were always too busy to do (Walters 1999, Bradley 2011). Many may seek environmental amenities, such as climate and scenery, which may be a “pull” factor to retirees (Longino 1994, Carlson, et al 1998, Jensen 2007). Increased concerns with family may influence locational preferences as seniors age (Oh 2003), while some retirees may relocate to live in an area with a higher concentration of their own ethnic group (Sandeful 1991, Clark and Knapp 1996).

Previous research has attempted to understand the factors that cause older people to migrate to various locations in the United States (Kallen 1993, Carlson, Junk et al 1998; Walters 2000; Longino and Bradley 2003, Oh 2003, Serow 2003). Most of these studies are quantitative in nature and utilize public use microdata samples (PUMS) to
draw conclusions about the motivations of retirees. Most examine only interstate moves. The focus is on the motivations of Americans in general and not immigrants. Very little has been written about the Latino population, although Hispanics comprise 15.8% of the total population of the United States in 2009 according to the United States Census. Many of the studies use a “push-pull” model of migration that assumes the migrants respond to stimuli and are passive dupes to forces of environmental differences (Halacree and Boyle 1993).

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the retirement migration ambitions of Mexican-Americans, either immigrants themselves or whose parents were immigrants, living in Southern California. Their retirement decisions may have serious effects on their current communities, as well as the receiving communities, if they should decide to relocate due to the large number of Latinos living in California. According to the Los Angeles Times (2011), 37.6% of the population of California are Latino and among these Latinos 9.1% were 45-54 years old in the 2000 census. This implies that 3.4% of Californians fall into this demographic of interest. This study focuses on information obtained from open-ended interviews with Mexican-American professionals who are anticipating retirement in the next five to ten years. I use a biographical approach, which considers the story lines of peoples’ lives, to explore the migration history and the narrative identity of the participants (Gutting 1996). The goal of this study is to discover how migration histories and transnational connections (Pries 2004) affect retirement place decisions of Mexican-Americans living in Southern California.
1.2 Research Questions and Hypotheses:

In this research project, I focused on the retirement place decision-making process of Mexican-Americans living in Southern California. Specifically, I wanted to examine the following questions: Where do professional Mexican-Americans, who have the means to retire anywhere they wish, prefer to relocate? What factors are involved in this decision-making process? How does their migration history or their sense of place play a role in their decision to move or to remain? Does their place of birth or origin make a difference in their place ambitions?

The personal migration history and sense of place of Mexican-Americans may play a major role in a decision to relocate after retirement. Many Mexican-Americans, especially those born in the United States, may follow patterns of other Anglo-Americans in moving to follow a lifestyle accommodation. They may seek to fulfill a dream associated with an amenity offered by one place or another, such as surfing or golf. Others, especially immigrants, may find in retirement the opportunity to return to their homeland with which they feel a strong pull of nostalgia (Newbold 2001). Due to the strong sense of family in Latino families, potential retirees may move to or decide to remain depending on location and connections with family (Wilson 2010). If they have family networks in two countries, they may hope to be seasonal migrants to spend time with families in more than one location. They may have numerous connections with cultural aspects of Southern California that would tie them here such as church, parks, music, and cultural networks. Many may decide not to retire at all, finding sufficient gratification and stimulation within their careers.
It is my hypothesis that not all Latinos share the same ambitions, dreams, experiences, or migration histories, and will not desire the same things from retirement. Further, family is foremost in the thoughts of nearly all of the participants no matter to which generation they belong. Many want to continue to live in their current neighborhood where they have long-term contact, community history, church affiliation and common interest groups. They are also transnational, maintaining contacts and connections in both countries.
2.0 Literature Review

2.1 History of later-life migration

Later-life migration has become increasingly more significant over the years and may have great impacts in the future. Historically there was no retirement, as people worked until they died (Boyle 1998) or were put in an almshouse for the poor (Laws 1993). With the creation of Social Security and retirement benefit programs and increasing longevity, the “young-old” have the freedom to change their lifestyles including changing locations. Later-life migration is of importance to planners because even though elderly migration is half that of the general population, migration increases the concentration of the older population as they leave a wide range of origin communities but tend to choose from a smaller number of primary destination regions. The retirement decisions of the baby-boomers may have major effects on local economies in the near future (Haas 2002; Rogerson 2005).

Much of the more recent work on lifestyle migration incorporates qualitative research. Karen O'Reilly and Michaela Benson (2009), preeminent researchers in the field of lifestyle migration, have written various articles and books describing this modern phenomenon predominately in the European context. Their work addresses the motivation of the modern affluent migrants and their decision-making process of relocating. They define lifestyle migration as the “spatial mobility of relatively affluent individuals of all ages, moving either part-time or full-time to places that are meaningful because, for various reasons, they offer the potential of a better quality of life” (p. 3). These migrants are seeking the “good life” by escaping perceived negatives of the Western lifestyles to a more fulfilling new life in places that are perceived to be more
authentic. Many of these migrants want to relocate in places that they experienced as tourists and have a permanent vacation. This phenomenon can be “an anti-modern, escapist, self-realization project” O'Reilly 2009, p.1). They seek a change in work life, freedom from constraints of the modern world, and their migration can become a life project.

2.2 Attachment to Home

In cultural geography, the concept of attachment to home was explored by the humanist geographers in the 1970s. Yi-Fu Tuan, in Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (1977) and E. Relph in Place and Placelessness (1976) examine the concept of home and homeland to our perception of place. “Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to one and long for the other.” (Tuan, 1977, p. 3) He discusses our emotional ties to place, such as a child to its neighborhood and how children of migrant farm workers suffer because of this lack of attachment (Tuan, 1977, p. 32). These migrant working children see their future in America is bleak and their response is to look back wistfully to their past (Tuan 1990). He questions the consequences of rootlessness, especially when workers are forced from place to place for survival (p.158). He says that attachment to one’s homeland is a common human emotion. To the young child the parent is the primary “place” (Tuan 1977, p. 138). “There is no place like home. What is home? It is the old homestead, the old neighborhood, hometown or motherland.” (Tuan 1977, p. 3)

Relph finds that place has a deep significance in human experience and that to be human is to live in a world that is filled with places that are significant. Places have
meaning and are characterized by the beliefs of humans. It is not only the factual aspects of the geography that is important, but what beliefs people hold about a place which determines how people will interact with the environment.

Our attachment to home is based in biology from the observations of animals and insects that display attachment to secure and safe places. To humans home is the center of the world and one’s universe. All inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home. Home is the foundation of our identity as individuals and as members of a community, the dwelling place of being. Home is more than the house you happen to live in (Relph 1976, p. 39). He found that relocated people experienced grief, a painful loss, a sense of helplessness, and a tendency to idealize the lost places (Relph 1976, p. 40). Home is where we know and are known, where we have experienced significant events, and is the foundation of human existence and activity. It also provides a security and identity for individuals and groups (Relph 1976, p. 41). Relph quotes Erick Dardel (1952, p. 56):

Before any choice, there is place which we have not chosen, where the very foundation of our earthy existence and human condition establishes itself. We can change places, move, but it is still to look for a place, for this we need as a base to set down Being and to realize our possibilities—a here from which the world discloses itself, a there to which we can go.

Cuba and Hummon (1993) examine the role of place identity and the sense of being at home in modern American society and its relationship to mobility. They analyzed data from an investigation of a five-year period comparing migrants and nonmigrants from three communities in Cape Cod. Their sample size was 432 who completed surveys on demographic characteristics, migration history, and place identity. From this data, they were able to conclude that age at the time of migration and the
reasons for migration may interact to the sense of home. They conclude that American migrants of different age groups differ significantly in how they construct place identities. Older Americans base their sense of home in their destination community on the basis of long-term prior experience through tourism. Place affiliation is part of a process of self-interpretation in the context of relocation in a mobile society.

Specific geographic places hold certain meanings for migrants in terms of their potential for self-realization. Later-life migrants find representations of destination chosen are drawn from personal experiences of place that they have gained through prior tourism and travel. Also they have derived place experience from wider cultural narratives including the rural idyll, the coastal retreat, and the cultural/spiritual attraction (O’Reilly and Benson 2009).

Seniors may perceive retirement migration as an opportunity to recast their identities, to wipe clean past mistakes and misadventure, and to break free of ties and commitments. Migration can be seen as aspirational, not only in the sense of what it holds in store for the migrant, but also in what someone may become. It may also be a response to personal crises or watershed events in life (Oliver 2007).

Home is not only a physical place or dwelling, but may have a wide range of psychological and symbolic meanings. Especially with transnational migration, there tends to be a de-territorialized understanding of home which refers to belonging, identity, community and memories over place. But these psychological and symbolic meanings of home may be strongly connected to the physical settings especially among older people. Residential strategies may be used to highlight these concrete experiences and considerations (O’Reilly and Benson 2009).
### 2.3 Factors influencing later-life migration

Three major themes of later-life migration in Europe and the United States are the decision-making process, geographic patterns of migration, and the impact of migration on origin and destination communities (Walters 2002a). Climate, recreational amenities, cost of living, tax and welfare policies are factors that influence migration decisions. In the United States, property crime is related to outmigration and is a predictor of mobility according to Walters. This paper will focus on the factors involved in the decision-making process of retirement migration.

Walters (2000) describes three types of later-life migration. The first is amenity migration, in which migrants seek an attractive climate and leisure activities, are in good health and live independently. The second is assistance migration, which involves low income seniors with the possible loss of a spouse often moving in with an adult child. The third is in response to severe disability which may include institutionalization or hospice care. Only amenity migration shows a distinctive spatial distribution. One focus of this study will be on amenity migration.

Retirees are drawn to certain amenities more than others as evidenced by Jensen and Deller (2007). They found that older migrants tend to be attracted to warmer weather, but not necessarily to areas with lakes and forests or traditional crop agriculture. They are attracted to natural areas with built amenities such as camping facilities, boat docks, golf courses, and hiking trails. Walters (1999) introduces the concepts of intention and enabling attributes. *Intention* refers not to the intention to migrate but the intention to utilize a specific amenity. *Enabling* attributes are available only to those with enabling
attributes such as sufficient income, skills, or equipment. Some place characteristics influence all the residents of a place such as climate, others influence only those who take advantage of them such as high-quality restaurants are valuable to those who can afford expensive dinners.

2.4 Characteristics of Later-Life Migrants

The age range of later-life migrants varies according to various researchers. Bures (1997) identifies a group of pre-elderly migrants (ages 55-64) whose migration decisions are more similar to young elderly migrants (64-75) than to midlife (45-54) migrants determined by imminent retirement rather than workforce considerations. Jensen (2007) found that older migrants are not a homogenous group and divided them into four age ranges: 55-64, 65-74, 75-84 and 85+. He found spatial variation according to the age groups. The focus of this study is the pre-elderly or young olds.

There are many factors that determine whether the young olds will relocate. Seniors who rent housing and those with fewer years in residence are more likely to move. Colsher and Wallace (1990) examine whether the intent to move is a reliable indicator that a move will actually take place, but find that it is an ineffective predictor as only 39% who expressed a wish to move, actually moved. However, more recent work by Bradley, et al (2008) following households over an eight-year period, found that there was a strong correlation with the decision to move and actually moving. Oh (2003) found that urban social bonds (friendship, social cohesion and trust, and informal social control) are important factors in deterring mobility. Newbold (1996) looks at the factors for interstate migration by seniors that encourage seniors to move away from states of
origin, to another state, their choice of destination, including educational level, marital status, age, climate, economic status, and race. He looks at distance-decay effect that long moves are more likely than short-distance moves. Clark et al. (1996) found that the recently retired, without disabilities, married, and higher education levels—are more likely to move to another state, but that these factors vary with age.

Conway and Houtenville (2003) studied migration behavior of younger and older elderly and found several differences. The oldest elderly were more likely to return to their state of origin. They were more likely to be economically driven out of their states by public policy. The younger elderly were more likely to “shop around” and were drawn to more attractive destinations.

2.5 Economic Factors of Later-Life Migration

Other researchers studied the impact of fiscal variables such as taxes and government expenditures. Clark and Hunter (1992) found that seniors were attracted to destinations with high employment growth, high home values, low poverty, low annual temperature variation, clear skies, coastal location, low property taxes, low estate taxes, and high income taxes. Conway and Hunter (1992) however, find that high property taxes have little net effect. There is not a strong link between tax rates and later life migration, but that the economic prosperity is an attraction (Serow 2001). Steines and Hogan (1992) expected to find that rising home values in sending communities would result in increased migration as seniors sell their homes for the equity, but their results only proved weak support for their hypothesis. Duncombe (2003) found that retirees are seen as a potential windfall because they have above average income and property
wealth. He also found higher income tax rates are a deterrent to retirement migration, but that this is a secondary issue for most retirees.

Serow (2003) addressed how the migration of seniors affects the destination community. There has been a trend for many localities to actively recruit young retirees, but few longitudinal studies have been conducted to evaluate the long term effects to this strategy. The receiving communities benefit from the higher incomes and higher expenditures of retirees. Their earnings are independent of the local economy and are recession-proof as their income is from past earnings. Because of Medicare, they spend more on health care in excess of their incomes. They also increase the tax base of the community while bringing improvement to public facilities because of their needs (such as sidewalks). Another benefit to the communities is an increase in volunteerism.

Communities wishing to attract seniors have difficulties because retirement communities grow out of tourist areas, therefore, a tourist industry must be created to attract retirees. For example, Jeb Bush appointed a Destination Florida Commission with the task of evaluating Florida’s competitive position in attracting retirees and to recommend ways to make it friendlier to retirees. But many places lack the amenities that attract seniors such as climate or natural beauty and there is also competition from other communities for these immigrants. Changes in federal policy can affect the community dramatically; the service jobs that are generated pay relatively low wages; the competition for housing raises rents in the community; the long-term costs may be higher than expected for aging population; rapid immigration can cause congestion and overdevelopment and put strains on local infrastructure which can change the local social and political climate negatively; and unplanned and uncontrolled housing development
for retirees may attract new immigrants in the short term but render it impossible to deliver the quality of life that older migrants may be seeking (Longino 2003). It is assumed that older migrants will stimulate the local economy with their *mailbox economy*, that is, that their income is portable, and that they will not compete for jobs in the local economy, but Hass (2006) found that a substantial number of later-life migrants are not really retired and still may compete for jobs.

Public policy may be a deciding factor for foreign migration. Currently, seniors who have paid into the Social Security system in the United States may take their pensions with them outside of the country, but Medicare is available only in the United States. As many as 300,000 American retirees living in the coastal areas of Mexico either travel to the United States for medical treatment covered by Medicare or pay out of pocket for treatment in Mexico (Kiy 2010). The number of Mexicans over 60 years of age living in the United States is estimated to be 710,000 in 2003 with 43% living in California (CONAPO 2005). Forty-eight percent of these Mexican immigrants are US citizens and most have worked in the US for over 30 years. If these immigrants return to Mexico, they will not be able to take their Medicare benefits with them. This may deter return migration.

### 2.6 Retirement migration destination locations

Many variables may determine the retirement destinations of Americans. When enough people have retired to a certain area, services and amenities follow to accommodate them. This development serves to attract more retirees and then becomes known as a “good place to retire”. The place’s success as a retirement community
depends on how long it can maintain this reputation before it becomes too crowded or old (Longino 1994).

The top ranked states to retire have varied only slightly from 1960 to 2000. Longino (1994) analyzed the U.S. Census Data and found that Florida and California have maintained the number 1 and number 2 positions respectively over this time period with Florida’s percentage ranging from 22.3% in 1960 to 26.3% in 1980, and California at its lowest percentage of 6.9 in 1990 to its highest percentage of 13.6 in 1960. In 1990, Arizona was ranked third with 5.2%, followed by Texas (4.1%), North Carolina (3.4%), Pennsylvania (3.0%), New Jersey (2.6%), Washington (2.5%), Virginia (2.4%), and Georgia (2.3). In 2000, while Florida remained in the top rank, it declined to 19%, and Arizona topped California with 6.5% and 6.2% respectively. Texas (4.9%) and North Carolina (3.6%) maintained in 4th and 5th rank, with Nevada in 6th place (2.9%), followed by Pennsylvania (2.9%), Georgia (2.8%), and New Jersey (2.6%) (Longino and Bradley 2003).

2.7 Seasonal migration

Seasonal migration is a way for seniors to take advantage of mild winter climates while maintaining homes in their place of origin. Research suggests that seasonal migration is a precursor to permanent migration as a means of gathering information about destination communities. “Snowbirds” are younger and wealthier than the older population in general, married, and well educated. McHugh and Mings (1996) proposed three types of snowbirds: rooted couples who see migration as a break from their usual
environment, suspended couples who maintain dual residences, and footloose couples without strong ties to any particular place.

More recently, Bjelde and Sanders (2012) added to “snowbird” research in a qualitative study by interviewing participants from North Dakota and Minnesota. Numerous themes emerged from their research. Snowbirds were flexible and adaptable to change in dealing with the challenges of leaving home for long periods of time and continuing migration despite life changes such as widowhood. There was continuity in lifestyle in such daily activities such as volunteering, church attendance, and maintaining family contact in both locations. New friendships were established and old ones maintained through common interests in Sunbelt communities and the use of email and cell phones. They demonstrated diversity in lifestyles—some preferring age-integrated living, some viewing their winter experience as a vacation, while others had family that lived near their winter residence. They sought continuity in health care and were affected by safety concerns. Internal and external forces shaped their snowbirding experience such as the effect of local culture and economic considerations of getting good value. And lastly, their seasonal migration was developmental with the length of time of the winter residence increasing over time and a transition from renter to homeowner in the Sunbelt destination.

In a qualitative study looking at seasonal migration, Gustafson (2009), found affluent Swedes sought an improved quality of life with a relaxed, leisurely lifestyle. These retirees acquired houses where they had previously had tourism experience in order to have the best of both worlds. They combined a desire for mobility and variation with a quest for home. Many maintained two residences in Sweden due to pressure from
their adult children who demanded that their parents maintain their principal residence. The size and location of the houses made family reunions more convenient.

2.8 Later-life migration of minorities and immigrants

Various researchers have looked at the later-life migration patterns of minorities in America. Newbold (1996) found that black seniors are underrepresented among interstate migration, but Hispanic seniors are more likely than non-Hispanic whites to make interstate moves. Immigrants make up a large proportion of the Hispanic elderly migration population. But Belanger and Rogers (1992) found that immigrants are no different from natives in their migration patterns by age group; however, native-born Americans are more likely to stay where they were living in childhood and thus be more “attached” to their homes than foreign born residents. Choi (1996) found that black elderly migrants select kinship and not money from a list of ten potential reasons for moving. Longino and Smith (1991) found that an increasing number of older African-Americans have been moving back to the Southeast since the 1960s returning to their previous communities. Biafora and Longino (1990) found that Hispanic seniors are likely to select Sunbelt destinations because of the attractiveness of the South and the West and because of the established Hispanic communities in these regions. Frey et al. (2000) looked at only migrants who were born in the US, lived in their state of birth in 1985, and moved to another state between 1985 and 1990. He looked at six personal attributes, eleven place characteristics, and racial interaction terms. He found that the
impact of winter temperature on destination choice was very strong among whites, but nonexistent among blacks, and that these migrants prefer destinations with more of their own race.

The literature regarding later-life migration of immigrants to the United States is sparse. King and Newbold (2008) compared later-life migrations of native born and immigrants in Canada and found the later to be more prone to migrate having already moved once. Family ties were found to deter the native born from migrating. They also found that English language fluency, higher levels of education, and income are favorable factors for migration.

Mexicans have had a long history of post-Columbian migration throughout Mexico including the lands that have been annexed by the United States. This includes migration associated with various types of labor—forced, involuntary, escape-oriented, and voluntary. Wilson (2010) discusses the culture of migration in light of this history. Mexicans fill multiple economic niches, often mediated by kin, fictive kin or friends. Reciprocity networks encompass kinship groups, communities, and neighborhoods. They assist migrant in orientation to a new place. Compadrazgo is a form of ritual kinship that binds people together like a family, and economic aid is provided through these relationships.
3.0 Approaches to Later-Life Migration

A number of approaches have been adopted to examine later-life migration. The traditional approach is a “push-pull” model which primarily considers economic factors. The lifecourse model examines the factors throughout a person’s lifespan. The biographical approach factors in events in people’s lives that precipitate moves. The transnational approach analyzes connections of migrants to more than one country. Geographic identity and idioype refers to an approach that examines the emotional attachment to a place. These approaches utilize qualitative, quantitative research, and mixed methodologies.

3.1 Lifecourse Model

Much of the migration research uses a “push-pull” framework in which the characteristics of the origin “push” a migrant out and the characteristics of the destination “pull” the migrant to a particular location. There is an assumption of homogeneity of the composition and preferences of the migrant group (King 2008). It is generally used in migration studies because it is easy to operationalize and interpret and is a model of group behavior assuming that all people in a particular population will find the same place characteristics attractive or unattractive. The retired population is not uniform in their preferences and using a push-pull model produces inconsistent and contradictory results (Walters 2002b).

The lifecourse model is more often used in later-life migration studies as it more closely examines personal attributes and place preferences, labor force entry pressure, and is based on the idea that mobility often arises in response to particular life-course
events such as retirement, disability, income decline or loss of a spouse (Walters, 2003). These studies focus on identifying the events that are associated with mobility in later life, classifying and describing individuals most likely to move in response to an event, and the place characteristics associated with the mobility of migrant groups.

Warnes (1992) expanded the lifecourse model in that migration upon retirement for the search of leisure amenities is prominent only in late industrial societies and that moving because of declining health is an even more recent development. Moving in the fourth stage of life has developed with increasing longevity, rising expectation of formal support and assistance, the expanding of institutional health care and economic support into old age. The first transition after retirement often involves long-distance moves to small towns or fringe areas of cities and that low-maintenance housing is attractive to these seniors. The second transition occurs upon widowhood or economic collapse, perhaps moving in with an adult child. The third is when there is a serious illness or frailty often necessitating institutionalization.

Cuba and Hummon (1993) examine how the attachment to place varies over the lifecourse. Both the young and the old establish emotional ties to destination communities. While the young feel “at home” in the presence of family and friends, the older respondents have strong attachments to permanent dwellings, home ownership, possessions in the home, and individualization of the home.

Findly and Li (1999) and McKendrick (1999) argue in favor of multi-method research in migration decision-making and processes, using both qualitative and quantitative methods and both macro- and micro-level analyses. Lin (1997) discusses the
advantages of a house-hold level approach because decisions are often made at that level for the benefit of family members.

3.2 Biographical Approach

A biographical approach has been advanced by Halfacree and Boyle (1997) which emphasizes the migrant’s decision-making process based on life experiences. Much of the migration research treats the migrants as “passive dupes of the forces of environmental difference” (p. 334). This biographical approach is more subjective and avoids ‘intellectual fallacy’. This refers to the tendency that researchers assume that “the potential migrant calculates the expected benefits to be gained from a range of destinations and weighs these against the cost of movement”.

An advantage to the biographical approach is that the researcher is able to sort through the large number of issues that are entangled in the decision to migrate rather than just checking off one or two from a list. A second advantage is that it is possible to gain a better understanding of the circumstances that influence motives such as place preferences, how they get information, and to fulfill lifelong aspirations.

As an example of this type of research, McHugh and Mings (1996) interviewed twelve couples living in recreational vehicle parks in Phoenix, Arizona, to determine the factors that lead to migration which vary from couple to couple and are strongly influenced by serendipity, past associations, and random events.
3.3 Geographic Identity and Idiotope

Gutting (1996) argues that a narrative identity and residential history should be used in migration research. The emphasis is shifted from ‘behavior’ to ‘identity’ which examines the decision to move from a stimulus-response framework to the cultural, social, economic and political context. Often there are interacting narratives that lead to actions and “it is therefore necessary to examine both the meaning and salience of a particular ‘story-line’ within people’s narrative identity, formed by the totality of ontological narratives.”

Also advocating a qualitative approach to migration, Pascual-de-Sans (2004) sees the migration decision as inseparable from the development of ‘idiotope’ or geographic identification and belonging to a place. He sees the idiotope as a concept of places that comes from choice rather than determinism or fate. Throughout life there are factors that favor permanence and others that favor migration, including physical surroundings, personal emotional environment, collective context, material situation, social situation and previous migration. He proposes using in-depth personal interviews focusing on thematic life stories and life place histories.

3.4 Transnational Approach

Another model used by Mendoza (2006) is the transnational approach of international migration in which the migrant is connected to two or more societies simultaneously. He argues that the construction of place plays a vital role in preserving transnational ties, as well as influencing immigrants’ intentions, to stay or to return. He interviewed immigrants in Albuquerque and had them draw mental maps of the city to
establish a sense of place. He found, however, that real transnational lives were scarce among those interviewed. This model was also used by Pries (2004) to examine transnationalism in the labor market using a mixed-method approach. In studying the migration of Mexican laborers to New York, he used a biographical approach in analyzing the events that precipitated moves and the complicated social and family networks which determined the transnationalism that occurred over several generations. He found that later-life migration decision making was complicated by the complexity of social and family networks. When he asked a matriarch of a transnational family where she planned to grow old, she replied, “My homeland is where my family is.”
4.0. Research Methods and Data

The approach used for this study is a biographical approach with a focus on geographic idiotope and transnationalism. I was particularly interested in how the life experiences of Mexican-Americans affect their perception of home. I was curious as to how much transnationalism affected their place perception and how many connections were maintained between people and places in their lives between Mexico and the United States. Although children have no power to determine where they will live, successful adults with a lifetime of place experiences have many options in making their own home.

Because this is a qualitative research project, the data for this research has been obtained from interviews. Interviewing allows access to an understanding of meanings and how they differ among people. The advantage of the interview is that it shows respect for the people who provide the data and allow them to reflect on their experiences. It is advantageous to examine the complexity of behaviors that are not apparent in statistical data. (Dunn 2000).

I interviewed Latino professionals who fit the description of “young old” or “pre elderly” who have begun to make retirement plans as my criterion. This would include anyone over fifty years old who is still working. I only interviewed professionals who had ample pension plans. I expanded my original criteria to include some who were still in their forties who had made retirement plans. The number of interviews is less important than the quality of the interview (Bradshaw and Stratford 2000). The amount of time needed will be a consideration of the number of interviews as a one-hour interview takes approximately four hours to transcribe (Dunn 2000). I interviewed people that I know in the education field and then used a “snowball” technique
(Brandshaw and Stratford 2000, Pries 2004) that is, referrals from those interviewed to others who qualify.

The format was semi-structured and open-ended so that the participants may add as much biographical information as they feel is necessary in describing their ambitions for retirement and the factors that contribute to their decisions. Through this process, I was able to determine the respondents’ sense of place and what they consider “home”. It was also my ambition to learn about their sense of transnationality (Pries 2004, Mendoza 2006).

In order to gain a place history for a biographical approach, the following inventory from Pascual-de-Sans (2004) was used to prompt interview questions, all of which can be applied to later-life migration decision making.

Place histories:

- Place of identification/one’s own secondary place/someone else’s place
- Place of origin/later place
- Personal place/ancestors’ place/descendants’ place
- Inherited place/elected place/assigned or imposed place/found place
- Gained place/lost place/left place
- Place of permanence/place of passage
- Place lived in/place envisaged, imagined
- Place where one has (or has had) experiences/irrelevant place/sacred place

Factors affecting ways of relating to places (positively or negatively):

- Physical surroundings: climate, smells, sounds, geographical landscape
- Personal emotional environment: loves/hatreds, friends/enemies, family (living or deceased) memories, familiarity with the present place and other places.
- Collective context: Projects, customs, laws, religions, social and political circumstances and events
- Material situation (real and potential): production, property (land, house, business), income
- Social situation (real and potential): living conditions, social relationships, gender, languages, socio-cultural identity, engagement, contacts
- Movement in the life course
- Negative place experiences
In addition to these questions regarding the migration and place histories, I asked questions about their future plans.

- When do you plan to retire?
- Where do you plan to live when you retire?
- Have you started to research places to move to?
- Where would you like to live if you could?
- What factors would make a difference in this decision?
- Have you considered buying a second home and living part time in each?
- Where would you like to travel when you retire?
- Are there factors that would make you want to move out of your current home/neighborhood?
- What factors would you look for in a new home/neighborhood?
- What additional activities do you expect to participate in when you retire?
- How important is your family in making decisions about moving?
- What impact will finances have on your decision making?
- Will health care be a consideration to where you live in retirement?
- Is climate an important factor for you? If so what is your preference for climate?
- Do you have connections (family or friends) in another country or other countries that you may go to visit or stay with when you retire?

A transcription of each interview was made immediately following the interview. A compilation of these interviews was examined. A latent content analysis has been done to look for themes that were then coded. These coded themes were then amalgamated into a single file. This allowed me to grasp the various perceptions and unravel the motivations of the interviewees (Dunn 2000).
5.0 The Interviews

A total of thirteen interviews were conducted over a one-year time period. All of the people interviewed were either born in Mexico or had parents or, in one case, grandparents who were born in Mexico. Although all of the subjects had lived in Los Angeles, only nine still lived in Los Angeles County. Eight of those interviewed were men and five were women. All but two were parents of American-born children. Although their professions were varied, most were quite successful educationally and professionally. All of the interviews were conducted in English.

5.1 Findings

A number of themes emerged in this study: (a) most of the participants have led transnational lives maintaining contacts in Mexico while establishing lives and careers in the United States; (b) they expressed pride in the Mexican heritage while identifying as Americans; (c) they felt a strong connection between home and family; (d) Religion is an important consideration in retirement; (e) the arts, music, and history are integral to their lives and will play an important role in their retirement plans; (f) they are concerned about crime and corruption in Mexico; (g) they view retirement as freedom; and (h) health and financial concerns and stability affect their retirement plans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transnational: Part of two worlds</td>
<td>Have family in both countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visited, attended celebrations in Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Own residences in Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride in Mexican heritage</td>
<td>Seek to learn more about Mexican culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify as Americans: Do not want to completely sever ties in US
House is center of family: Reluctant to sell house in US
Religion is important aspect of life: Plan to become missionaries or activists
Importance of art, music, history: Plan to continue to pursue the arts, education
Concerns of crime and corruption: Plans may be affected by Mexican policies
Retirement as freedom: Are able to pursue life ambitions
Health and financial stability: May affect where they retire

5.2 Origins of participants

Seven of those interviewed were born in the United States, while six were born in Mexico. Those born in the United States were from Mercedes, Texas; New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Hopeville, California; City of Orange, California; and Los Angeles, California. Those from Mexico were from the states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Baja California, Guerrero, and one respondent stated he was born in a north central part of Mexico.

When asked where they were from, the majority responded with their birth place, but some also stated where they grew up. So, for example, Antonio, who was born in New Mexico was sent to Tijuana because his mother could not afford to take care of him. Rigoberto, who was born in Hopeville, California lived in Mexicali from age two to age thirteen.

But when asked “What do you consider home?” the responses from all but three questioned were either the United States or places in the United States, while two of the other three claimed Mexico as home. Antonio said, “Home? My family. My wife and kids. Being able to help them with homework. Have dinner together.” Luz, who
responded that Phoenix was her home, commented later in the interview, “I think that a home is what you make it. Actually a home can be anywhere. I’m the mom, I’m the head of the house so when it’s the holidays, I really get into whatever city I was in, I would try to make the best of it.” She went on at length about how she would create a sense of home at the holidays of Christmas and Thanksgiving inviting friends and family. Veronica, after stating where she lived, immediately told me about the home she would like to have when she retired that she already owns in Morro Bay, California. But to most of those interviewed just told me where they currently lived.

As to the question about ancestry, most of the respondents were very well informed about the exact origins of their ancestors. All were from Mexico, but some elaborated on which generation came from Spain and from which side. One had French ancestors that came to Mexico. Nearly all commented on their indigenous ancestors including one that had grandparents from the Kora tribe that spoke their indigenous language. Several commented on the physical features of their ancestors, whether they were tall or short, eye and skin color, even describing the long, black braid that a grandmother wore. A couple had vague responses or no response to this question, with one not having any information due to being raised by a sister. Some just listed the places of origin of their ancestors.

5.3 Experiences of Place

The respondents listed where they have traveled and where they have lived during their lifetime to give a sense of their experiences with geographic regions and how this might affect their choice of retirement migration. Several had migrated with their
families when they were young as the children of migrant workers in the Bracero Program. This was a policy which allowed Mexicans to come to the United States as temporary agricultural workers from 1942-1964. For example, Ricardo described having a home base in Texas but travelling to Florida, Arizona, New Mexico, Michigan, Ohio, California, Washington, and Oregon following the crops. They finally settled down in Washington when he was in the third grade because they found winter employment in a potato chip factory.

Cesar worked alongside his parents picking cotton and grapes in the Central Valley of California. His family followed the crops yet was able to stay in one house year round by “camping” near the crops. This gave him more of a sense of home than other migrant farmworker children had. He was able to stay in one school and didn’t miss school to work in the fields.

Antonio, who was born in New Mexico, spent his early years in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico, having been sent to live with his grandmother. His mother could not afford to take care of the children and the father was an alcoholic. He later moved to Pacoima, California where he became involved in boxing through a police department program. While still in high school, he traveled to many places including Wyoming, Colorado, Tennessee, Fresno, California, and Tijuana participating in various boxing competitions.

Not all of those interviewed grew up in poverty. Veronica grew up in Florida because her father, who was a mechanical and electrical engineer, worked for the United States Department of State and was the lead electrical systems engineer for the Apollo
Command Module. She had the opportunity to travel with her senior class to the Bahamas and sang in Austria and in Italy.

Most of the participants have travelled throughout the Southwest United States, but some has travelled internationally as well. Rosa, who is married to a Hungarian man, has been to Hungary three times, but has only returned to Mexico twice. Several have vacationed in Hawaii, while one has been to east Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Elena has travelled to Paris, New York, and Canada.

5.4 Sacred Places

The responses to which places they would consider special or sacred varied considerably from religious responses to the secular, which demonstrated in most cases how much religion played in their lives. Elena responded that church is a special place where she found peace. But then she continued to describe the geographic place that was special to her which was Mexico and the values she was taught in Catholic school there. Veronica responded that she loved the Vatican and singing in the abbeys, but thought that Nepal and Tibet would be sacred as well. She also felt that “any place that is God’s creation” is very special talking about the underground caverns with stalactites and stalagmites, Yosemite, and “any place where you can be in the outdoors and see mountains and you can see water.”

Most of the respondents indicated that it was their home that was special or sacred. Ricardo, one of the former migrant farmworkers cited Mexico, going down into the wine cellars or where there is a lot of earth that triggered the memories like fragrances of adobe. Antonio cited the experience he had during his college days of touring
southern Mexico with his backpack and spending months travelling up the Yucatan Peninsula. He was impressed by the culture and traditions of the Mexican people living there. He also found them to be honest and trustworthy in contrast to how the Mexicans he knew from his neighborhood in Pacoima. Juan also named his hometown in Mexico where everyone looks out for each other, and there is a feeling that they are all one big community. Angel said that there were several places in Mexico that were sacred to him, but only described the mountains where his Kora ancestors lived. He said that he was trying to find his own sacred place in the cathedral in Los Angeles, but still felt very connected to nature and the mountains. Rosa said that there were places that she went to hide when she was growing up in Mexico to stay away from everybody.

Those who grew up in the United States also mentioned their homes here as special places. Ricardo, one of the farmworkers, cited Washington as well as well as Mexico because he spent his formative years there. The other former migrant farmworker, Cesar, felt that where he had spent his childhood in Hanford, California was special because his extended family lives there. Maria told me that she was torn between two places where she had grown up, Santa Rosa and San Diego, California. Luz, who grew up in Colorado, told me that she felt that she had left a part of herself in the mountains there.

A few listed places that were special for other reasons. Jorge said that historic places, in general, both important to histories of the United States and to Mexico were special to him. Carlos found Southeast Asia to be sacred because the cultures had been able to “stay intact” and especially Thailand which he felt had not been altered by other cultures. Rigoberto joked about going to the “Holy Land”, apparently it was a family
joke as his mother and wife were religious. But his “Holy Land” was Liverpool, England. He said that he knew that it is only a factory town, but he really wanted to go because it has special meaning to him and his love of music. He did say that he would like to go to Jerusalem as well as other famous places. He concluded that, “Just being in another country is sacred enough for me, being in another part of the world, breathing the same air other people breathe and see if the sun looks the same over there.”

5.5 Negative Place Experiences

When asked about negative experiences with place, most of the respondents did not associate the experience with the place but with people. Antonio described the corruption in the City of San Fernando, but said that everywhere there is dirt that people cover up. Juan cited South Central Los Angeles, because of problems that come with the inner city such as crowding and overpopulation. Jorge said that he could live in any place, but that it would bother him to not feel safe, although he did not elaborate on what that meant. Carlos told me that his experience in Spain was negative because the Spaniards were not welcoming to people who look like South Americans. Elena found the people of Paris, France, very rude to her. Although she thought it was a beautiful place, she would never return.

Maria said that although San Diego, California, had its positives, she did not think it was the right place to raise a family. She described it as segregated and she had a hard time adjusting to the social life of high school there where ethnic groups kept to themselves. Eventually she was bussed as part of an integration program to a white school where she was able to fit in. But she had witnessed too much crime in her
neighborhood including murders in her front yard. Because of that, she did not want to raise her children there.

Luz did not like the crime of Los Angeles, but didn’t like the prejudicial attitudes prevalent in Denver. In Los Angeles she was able to advance professionally due to her work and abilities, she didn’t find that to be true in Denver where being a woman and Latina kept her from managerial jobs. Ricardo, one of the migrant farmworkers, described the trauma of going to new schools frequently, but did not assign this to any particular place.

Rigoberto described an incident that he describes as more comical than negative, when he was in Texas waiting for a plane. He and his friends wanted to buy a beer on the sidewalk where they were being sold. But they were turned back by the looks of the older men that communicated that they were not welcome. He described it like a scene from the movies where the Texan cowboys look at the strangers walking into the bar, “What are you strangers doing over here? You’re not Texan!” But in other places, such as Madison, Wisconsin, he met very nice people who welcomed him into their houses. He did not attribute these attitudes to the place.

One exception to the general trend was Angel who told me that he did not like the cold or the desert, and needed to be connected to water humidity, vegetation, and being cool. He also did not like big cities. Another was Veronica who described a place in Mexico, Penjamo, where pork is raised and the places in California where cattle is raised because of the overwhelming odor. She also found the Great Basin and the Mojave Desert boring.
5.6 Descriptions of Home

The question of the description of home was very open-ended so the responses were quite varied. The purpose of the question was to determine their attachment to home and whether that contributes to their retirement decisions.

The types of things that emerged from their descriptions included memories of how the adobe smelled after the rain, the food and celebrations of holidays, the vibrant colors of the flowers and cabbages, the dark fertile soils, the juxtaposition of the farmland with the ocean, eclectic neighborhoods, the fragrance of eucalyptus trees, the smell of the sugar cane being burned before being chopped down, the dirt floor, the smell of Mexican limes growing in the backyard, how all household chores were done outside with no plumbing, outhouses, the clean smell after the rain, the grapevines everywhere, the mountains, lakes, rivers, green, earthquakes, the rich culture, the sound of the train whistle. This type of description demonstrates a connection with the land and the environment of their home.

The question also referred to their social relationships and cultural identity. Antonio said that he was afraid to be Mexican because of the racism and prejudice in the Latino culture there. They make fun of his Spanish and called him derogative names such as wetback and huarachero (Mexican sandal maker). Jorge explained that school in Mexico was like an extended family to him. But when it came to social identity, he stated that he is an American of Mexican descent, “It’s that simple.” Maria who identifies her home as Santa Rosa, California, said that she has never experienced racism.
there and described the neighbors as friendly. Carlos, from Orange County, California, expressed the social situation in terms of percentages: 79-80% Hispanic with a split of those who have lived in the United States “for a while” but with a significant number of new immigrants. To him, food was the most salient part of his description, listing of what type of foods and businesses were available in the area.

In describing their material situation of their home, the majority responded that they came from impoverished circumstances. Rosa explained that she had experienced both wealth and poverty in that she lived with her mother’s family that was rich until her mother abandoned her and nine siblings. After that she was raised by her older sister and they were poor. Angel said that he had been poor in his childhood according to modern Western standard, i.e. no car, television, etc, but they had a ranch with barnyard animals, and they grew mangoes, corn, and other fresh fruit. They had everything that they needed to live. He explained that it was different being poor here and there.

5.7 Transnationalism of Participants

The earliest immigrants were the grandparents of one man who came because of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The parents of two of the participants immigrated during the 1930s and 1940s. One came when she was three years old in the 1950s. Three came in the 1960s. The rest have come since 1979 with the last in 1993. There were several who went back and forth over the border when they were young.

Most of the participants traveled to Mexico frequently to visit family. A few had no family to visit there, but all had gone to Mexico as tourists. Some used to visit more
often than they do now because of crime, and added that they would go to Mexico more
in the future if there were less crime.

The purpose of the questions, “How well do you feel that you know Mexico?”
was to gain a sense of their connectedness to Mexico. It seemed that the ones who had
traveled the most were the ones who thought there was so much more to learn about
Mexico. For example, Ricardo, who travelled every year for a while, but now only every
ten years said that he had “just scratched the surface” there. Antonio, who visits Mexico
three to four times per year, responded that he didn’t know much about it and would like
to study more about it in the future. Juan said that he has assimilated so much to
American culture and society, that he knew Mexico the way he left it, but it has changed
a lot due to globalization, even though he visits often as well. And Angel, who visited at
least once a year, claims that he doesn’t know it at all even though he has driven all the
way from Los Angeles to Nayarín, Mexico.

5.8 Retirement Plans of Participants

Age did not seem to be a factor in how much planning the participants had done
in planning their retirement. Some in their forties had detailed plans to retire, while some
in their fifties had not thought it out well at all. Most said that they would retire
immediately if it were possible. One person said that she was planning to retire this year
or next, one said two years, another said three years, three said five to seven years, one in
eight years, and the rest were not planning in the foreseeable future. The most salient
factor on when they would retire was if their children were finished school or college and
were able to take care of themselves.
Initially when asked where they planned to live when they retired, three said that they would continue to live in their current home. Four were undecided, although they did express some interest in moving to other places. Three are planning to move to Mexico. It was clear that most of them were considering various options. As the conversations continued, they often added other possibilities to their initial response.

5.9 Factors Influencing Retirement Place

When asked about the factors that could influence their retirement place decision, the most frequently given response was their health condition at retirement and the availability of health facilities. This was somewhat unexpected since in the literature health concerns are more important factors in older retirees migration decisions than in this young-old age group (Walters, 2002). It was also somewhat surprising in that only one actually had any health problem that would affect retirement at the time of the interview. She complained of arthritis which might prevent her from moving to a tri-level home that she owns in Los Osos, California, by the coast. Antonio whose brothers had suffered from cardiac problems thought that it would be healthier choice for him to live in Mexico where he could eat a healthier diet. Rigoberto added that living where there was clean water and air would be healthier for him and therefore an important consideration.

The following factors all were mentioned by two participants, economic, environmental, climate, and family. Other responses were crime, social justice, and career. It was surprising that only two people mentioned economic concerns since the literature on later-life migration lists economic factors as a top factor (Walters 2002).
Maria said that if she were to receive a lot of money, for instance in the form of a large inheritance, that would affect her decision. And one man, whose retirement income should be quite ample, said that he was interested in “going to a place that gets more bang for the buck” such as moving to a place with lower costs of living.

The environment was mentioned by two people. Ricardo was interested in a “quiet place to enjoy and relax.” The other mentioned the environment in a different sense. Veronica was looking at an environment where she could explore new things, to be a part of new things, and to be useful. This actually was a similar response to Juan who said social justice. He has considered joining the Peace Corps or Habitat for Humanity which may take him to other places, but continue to maintain his residence in Northridge, California. He believes that because of his religious faith, the next thing that he is to do in life is to help the less fortunate and to give of his time and talent wherever that is.

Family was mentioned at this point by only two respondents. Rosa said that she wanted to spend her later years providing a college education for her children and her grandchildren so that they may have a better start than she had had. Jorge mentioned family ties as a factor. Even though only two people mentioned the importance of family in answer to this question, family was discussed in every interview at length.

5.10 Retirement Activities

Responses regarding retirement activities fell into two categories, creative arts and volunteerism. Creative arts, including music, visual arts, writing, dance, and needle arts, was mentioned by six of the participants. Two people wanted to spend time improving their musical skills on different instruments with one wanting to expand his
knowledge of Mexican music. One wanted to play in a band with other retirees. Two mentioned spending more time on needlework projects including sewing, crochet, embroidery, and quilting—transforming photographs into wall art. Four people responded that they would like to pursue some sort of volunteer or missionary work. One man is considering joining the Peace Corps or Habitat for Humanity and assisting in developing countries. One woman would like to work with terminally ill patients and the disabled in a missionary capacity. One man wants to become more involved with a group that is bringing the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer (LGBTQ) community into the Catholic Church. Another woman would like to continue working as a social worker with abused children in the foster care system. Other answers included spending more time with family, politics, buying property to construct houses, hiking, home improvement, and gardening.

5.11 Importance of Family in Retirement Place Decisions

With only one exception, family was given high priority by all respondents when asked specifically about it. Examples of their comments were: “I’m always thinking of their wellbeing.” “My family is first.” “Extremely important. I need to have that grounding and connection.” “Very important—I miss them now and they live in the area.” Luz said that she is the main one in her family and is very involved with them. Cesar added that he and his wife realize that they will have to rely on their children for extra support as they age.

The only exception was Elena who has never married and has no children. She added that she would just make up her mind and do it. Because she is single, she doesn’t
consider her family, her brothers and sisters, too much. Carlos responded that it was only his spouse that was critically important, but not extended family. I assumed that he, too, was childless as he made no mention of children.

Most of those interviewed discussed family in their narratives and it was apparent that family was of the highest priority in their decision making. Two of them said that their children were insistent that they keep the current house even if they were to move somewhere else. The house would continue to be a place for family reunions similar to what Gustafson (2009) found with seasonal migrants in Sweden. Not only do the Mexicans that I interviewed have an attachment to their home, their children perceive it as the center of their family life.

5.12 Seasonal Migration

Most of them said that they would consider having two houses or maintaining two residences in some form or another during their retirement. One already owns two homes, both in California, but would like to spend time in each. Others are planning or would like to maintain two places so they could go back and forth seasonally. When asked that question, two responded that they would like to buy a recreational vehicle to travel around the United States, apparently thinking of the RV as a second home. Angel man responded that this was what was going to have to happen: he would have to have his home in Mexico where he planned to retire, but because his daughter is an American, he would have to spend time here as well.
5.13 Travel in Retirement

With only one exception, they all expressed interest in travelling during their retirement. Most were intending to travel to tropical, exotic places such as Fiji and Indonesia. Some were interested in Europe. Two expressed interest in exploring the United States.

All but three were very anxious to at least travel to Mexico during retirement. But several expressed concern with the safety in Mexico currently. Ricardo wanted to travel around Mexico to learn more about regional music. Cesar wanted to look up family historical documents and learn more about his culture.

5.14 Financial Impact as factor

In response to the question of finances as a factor in their retirement, five said that they were set or that they were OK or that it wouldn’t have any impact. Two said that they had not looked into it yet. Only two expressed fear that they would not have enough and didn’t want to think about it yet. My sense was that economic concerns were not the highest priority for any of the participants because their answers to this question were brief, while other questions elicited much more information.

5.15 Climatic Preferences for Retirement Place

Most of the respondents preferred cool, moist climates as ideal for retirement, such as coastal California areas such as Camarillo, Santa Barbara, and the San Francisco Bay area. Antonio said that although he liked how clean it was after it rained in Mexico,
he preferred the climate of the San Fernando Valley because he was used to it. Rigoberto said that he did not like desolate, dusty, and hot areas such as where he grew up in Mexicali, but preferred the beach with a cool breeze. Only one person preferred a very hot, dry climate, like Palm Springs.

### 5.16 Summary of Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Retirement Destination</th>
<th>Time in United States (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Ricardo</td>
<td>b. Mercedes, Texas migrant farm work</td>
<td>Family, climate</td>
<td>Camarillo Maintain two homes</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>#2 Antonio</td>
<td>b. New Mexico Tijuana, Pacoima</td>
<td></td>
<td>undecided</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>#3 Veronica</td>
<td>b. Long Beach, CA</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Central Calif. Coast not definite</td>
<td>90</td>
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<td>#4 Juan</td>
<td>b. Tuxpan, Jalisco, Mexico</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Mexico Maintain two homes</td>
<td>32</td>
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<td>#5 Rigoberto</td>
<td>b. Hopeville, CA Highland Park Mexicali, Mexico</td>
<td>Family, music</td>
<td>Los Angeles Maintain two homes one in Mexico</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6 Jorge</td>
<td>b. North central Mexico</td>
<td>Family, economic</td>
<td>Sylmar Travel in RV</td>
<td>50</td>
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<td>#7 Angel</td>
<td>b. Valle de Banderas, Nayarin, Mexico</td>
<td>Family, land ownership/politics in Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico, daughter in LA</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td>#8 Carlos</td>
<td>b. Orange County, CA</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>Undecided—maintain two home in California</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>#9 Maria</td>
<td>b. Tijuana, Mexico San Diego, Santa Rosa, Ca</td>
<td>Climate, crime</td>
<td>Santa Rosa, CA</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Birthplace</td>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Living Areas</td>
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<td>#10</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>b. Acapulco, Mexico</td>
<td>Climate, family</td>
<td>Mexico/California Maintain two homes</td>
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<td>Elena</td>
<td>b. Guadalajara, Mexico</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Chapala, Jalisco, Mexico</td>
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<td>b. Denver, CO Los Angeles, Arizona</td>
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<td>Arizona</td>
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<td>#13</td>
<td>Cesar</td>
<td>b. Los Angeles Hanford (migrant farm work)</td>
<td>Family</td>
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6.0 Conclusions

Initially I wanted to investigate whether Mexicans who immigrated here and Mexican-Americans differed in their retirement migration plans from other Americans. In many ways, they were very similar. All but one of the participants told me that they were American or Californian. They seemed to be very proud of their participation in American society. These people have achieved the dream that they or their parents had come here to pursue. They, like other Americans, feel entitled to the rewards of a lifetime of work in an opportunity for a fulfilling retirement.

Like many Americans, they look forward to travelling when they retire. A few want to get a recreational vehicle and explore the United States and see the sights. Many want to have two homes so they can be “snowbirds” and take advantage of seasonal advantages of two locales. Some want to be philanthropic and volunteer helping others either in their present communities or in other regions in the world, either as missionaries or in less religious ways. Two had no plans to retire at all, but planned to work many more years.

But all of them were proud of their Mexican heritage. They expressed great interest in learning more about their own culture and travelling in Mexico to pursue this learning. They wanted to make sure their American-born children knew their culture and language while attaining success in the United States. Several showed interest in learning more about the music, dance, or art in various regions in Mexico.

But most of them were proud to be Americans as well.

Rigoberto said, “And so I go back to my father and say that that is the best decision you could have made. I would rather be here and be a US citizen than well off with some property in Mexico. Some people ask ‘What’s your
nationality?’ Mexican, yes, but I am an American, with American values and everything that goes along with that. I love my cultural background!”

I wanted to learn how transnational Mexicans living in the United States were. I found that they maintained ties to family still living in Mexico. Some owned land or had close family that owned land in Mexico that they felt that they would be welcomed back to live there. One man is considering establishing a second home with a cousin that he doesn’t know very well because they have been separated all of their lives. Only three had no connections in Mexico at all anymore.

As I had hypothesized, family was overwhelmingly the most important consideration in their retirement migration decisions. Concern over the welfare of their children and grandchildren was top priority in every case of individuals who had children. Two were childless. Of those, one stated that his spouse was of critical importance, and the other was single and childless and was the only case where family was not important at all. In case after case, the participants told me what their children were expecting of them in retirement, insisting that they maintain their family home or that they would establish a home in which the parent/s would live. This caused some to consider maintaining two homes, one near their children and the other for themselves.

What I did find was that the nostalgia of their home was an important theme for most of the participants, but many considered home to be more than one place. As evident in the summary chart, four of those who were from the United States want to retire in the United States, while three from Mexico want to retire to Mexico. Although many had expressed a fantasy of living in other places, none actually planned to retire to those fantasy places.
In the literature, crime is a factor for moving from a place for retirees (Walters, 2002). What I found was the crime was a factor only in moving to Mexico. One man had always intended to return to Mexico when he retired, but is reconsidering this plan because of the situation there. Another woman does not even utilize the condo that her brother owns because of her fear. Nearly every person interviewed discussed the crime situation in Mexico as being an important consideration.

I did not find negative place experiences an important factor in their considerations of retirement place. They did not associate these experiences with the place, but with people, which they felt could happen anywhere.

Although climate was a topic that everyone liked to talk about, only a few actually mentioned it as a deciding factor. One woman, who had developed arthritis, was considering changing her dream of retiring to the California coast to a home that she owns because of the climate. A few mentioned that they would be like to be snowbirds to take advantage of seasonal weather patterns, especially between Colorado and Arizona.

Many Americans choose amenity lifestyle retirement locations, but this was not the case for the Mexican-Americans that I interviewed. All of them were interested in pursuing many varied activities when they retired; none of them were place related. Many wanted to travel to learn more about their interests and to gain more experiences, but none stated that they wanted to move to pursue one.

I expected that more would want to pursue their careers past normal retirement age, but I only found that in two cases whose work was their primary interest. Most would retire immediately if they felt they could. Some would like to continue working in some capacity, such as consulting, during their retirement but not in a full-time capacity.
Although I expected to find attachment to their community, I did not find any evidence of this in their responses. The closest was that one man said that he would remain in the area because he was “used to it”. Otherwise the attachments that were mentioned were all about family, not even friends.

Even though this study was a small sampling of Mexican-Americans, it demonstrates the need for further study of what will happen in the next few years in return migration of Mexicans who will be retiring. Their children who were born and raised in the United States are definitely Americans and will stay and participate in American society. But there may be many who were brought here by their parents, became successful in their careers who will return to Mexico to take up retirement in their homeland.
Bibliography


