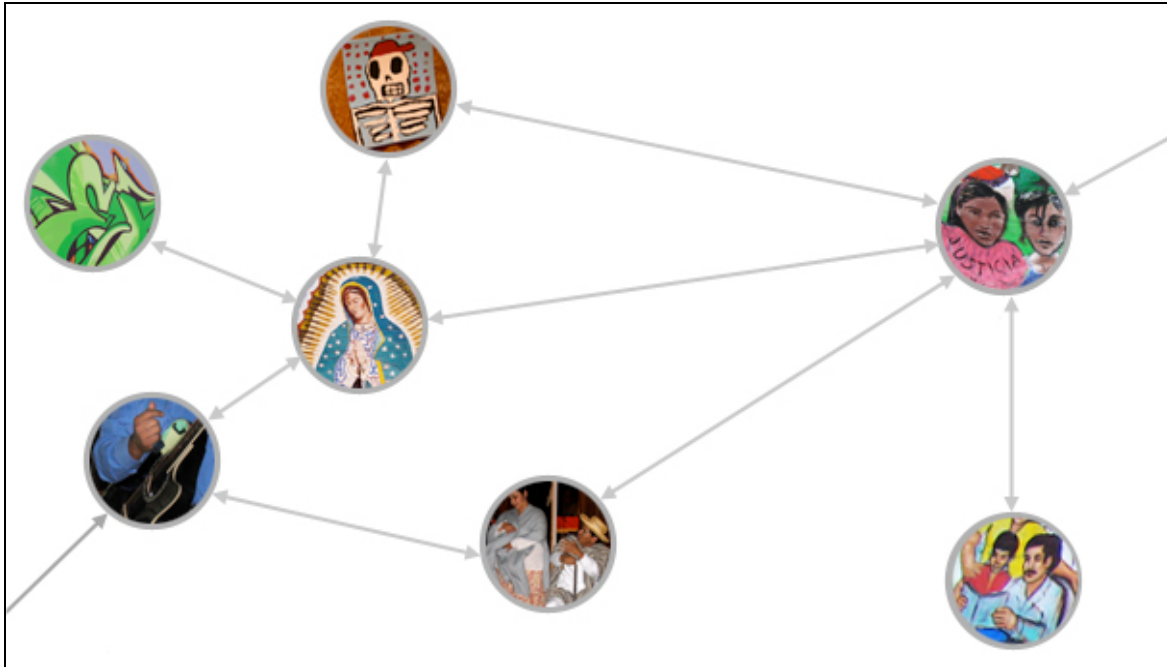


Creative Networks: Mexican Immigrant Assets in Chicago



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Center for Cultural Understanding and Change (CCUC), The Field Museum
Team Engineering Collaboratory, University of Illinois (TEClab), Urbana-Champaign
Science of Networks in Communities Research Group (SONIC), University of Illinois,
Urbana-Champaign

Rockefeller Foundation Grant # 2004 CC 034



October 2006



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Center for Cultural Understanding and Change at The Field Museum and the Team Engineering Collaboratory at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign would like to express their deep appreciation to the countless participants in the Creative Networks: Mexican Immigrant Assets in Chicago study. Starting with three focus groups held early in 2005, we benefited from the ideas and input of those who are part of, or work with, Mexican immigrant communities in Chicago. People across the city and the region generously shared their time and their stories with us, and our hope is that the information in this report can be of use in illuminating their many assets for the rest of Chicago and indeed the United States. We also extend our gratitude to the dozens of organizations in the Chicago region that participated in the project.

We would also like to thank the multifaceted research and research support teams who worked on this project. Yarimar Bonilla, Heather McClure, Jesse Mumm, Sarah Van Deusen Phillips and Sujei Vega stepped up to the challenge of short-term team ethnography, and their contributions and hard work deserve praise. The project benefited tremendously from the help of volunteers and interns. Sofia Castillo helped out with ethnographic interviews, photography, participant observation and administering IKNOW social networking surveys. Sofia Narvaez-Gete helped with locating respondents, administering IKNOW surveys and translation. Andrea Rincon helped with inputting paper IKNOW surveys into the computer program. Chad Taylor helped with bibliographic research for the project. Celine Vaaler helped with copy-editing the executive summary and final report.

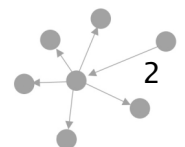
Stanley Wasserman of Indiana University provided assistance with randomization strategies for the quantitative portion of the study. UIUC thanks Elizabeth Aronson for help with bibliographic research and other duties early in the project. CCUC thanks senior administrative assistant Meganne Lube for help with various logistical aspects of the project, Hannah Anderson, Samantha Johnson and Madeleine Tudor for assistance with visual research methods and the creation of the MIA website; and Kimberlee Guenther, Mixed Income Housing Informal Arts Coordinator, for copyediting.

Funding for this study was generously provided by The Rockefeller Foundation as part of their North American Transnational Communities Initiative. Special thanks to Joan Shigekawa, for her vision, wisdom and continued support.

Primary Investigators: Dr. Noshir Contractor, Director SONIC and TECLab, NCSA, UIUC; Rebecca Severson, MA, Urban Research Programs Manager, Center for Cultural Understanding and Change (CCUC), The Field Museum; and Dr. Alaka Wali, Director CCUC, The Field Museum

Coordinator, interviewer, data analyzer, editor, writer: Josh Ostergaard, Urban Research Programs Coordinator, CCUC, The Field Museum

Full-length research report writers: Dr. Harold D. (Hank) Green, Jr., TECLab, SONIC, NCSA, UIUC; and Dr. Heather McClure, Research Associate, Latino Research Team, Oregon Social Learning Center



INTRODUCTION

Creative Networks: Mexican Immigrant Assets in Chicago, a joint research project of The Field Museum’s Center for Cultural Understanding and Change (CCUC) and the Team Engineering Collaboratory (TECLab) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, investigated the cultural, artistic and social networking assets of recent Mexican immigrants in the Chicago region. From March through August of 2005, five anthropologists conducted field work in Chicago and its surrounding suburbs, with support from a team of three anthropologists at CCUC who provided expertise on the qualitative asset-mapping component of the investigation and two UIUC TECLab social scientists who provided expertise on the elicitation and analysis of social networks.

Study findings below trace overall trends as described by Mexican immigrants (most of whom arrived in 1994 or later) on aspects of cultural, artistic, and social networking among individuals and organizations in this community. Research illuminated a range of important artistic, cultural and networking activities. Like CCUC’s previous work on the informal arts, this study also conceptualized arts and cultural production as existing on an “informal-to-formal” continuum. Informal practices—such as singing with a mariachi band at a family gathering, preparing tamales or listening to Spanish-language radio—often fall outside traditional non-profit and commercial arts experiences, and occupy a significant place in the social infrastructure of communities. These practices help to build individual and collective identity, bond Mexican nationals within Chicago, and between Chicago and Mexico, and bridge Mexican immigrants with other U.S. born groups. Researchers discovered that key individuals and organizations facilitate this bonding and bridging, from social and cultural organizations that arise from or target the recent Mexican immigrant population, to schools and churches that sponsor arts education with a Mexican emphasis, to individuals who are unusually active or well connected.

The current research builds on recent studies of the informal arts as a force for stimulating civic activism and bridging social divides based on ethnicity and class (Wali, Severson and Longoni, 2002) and as an important facilitator of network-building among immigrants (see Garcia, 2005; Moriarty, 2004; Dominguez and Watkins, 2003; Raijman and Tienda, 2003; Enchautegui, 2002; Hernandez-Leon and Zuniga, 2000; Menjivar, 1997). The current study further considers the role of artistic, cultural and networking practices in surmounting social barriers due to language and length of U.S. residency, and the consequences of these practices for individuals and communities both in the Chicago metropolitan area and in Mexico (Monge and Contractor, 2003). Ultimately, this research revealed that Mexican immigrants in Chicago possess a wealth of artistic and networking assets that contribute to the social, cultural and economic well-being of neighborhoods, organizations and institutions in the Chicagoland area.

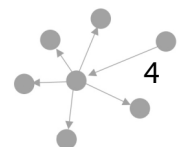


RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

The Mexican Immigrant Assets study had three specific areas of inquiry relating to recent Mexican immigrants' artistic, cultural and social networking practices in the Chicago metropolitan area. The goals of the study were to:

- Identify the cultural, artistic, and networking practices and capacities of recent migrants (post-NAFTA) from Mexico.
- Analyze how these act to buffer challenges or obstacles faced by immigrants as they traverse the transnational landscape.
- Understand the creation of new forms, new applications of existing forms, and emerging hybridities in cultural practices and network formation in order to explore identity formation, community building strategies and creative potential of immigrants.

Researchers conducted 105 qualitative interviews with ninety-four different people and conducted participant observation ninety-seven times at various events and activities resulting in over 1,000 typed pages of notes and interview transcripts. In-person quantitative surveys were administered with seventy-seven individuals and twenty-six organizational leaders. A major strength of the project is its unique combination of traditional qualitative anthropological methods of focus groups, participant observation and interviews with quantitative social network analysis using a computer-based survey to gather information on the structure and content of social relations and to map the relationships between individuals and organizations in the immigrant community. Computer software called IKNOW (Inquiring Knowledge Networks on the Web) enabled the electronic collection of network data from a sample of organizations identified as important to the Mexican Immigrant community in Chicago and, more importantly, from a sample of Mexican immigrants in a range of Chicago metropolitan area communities.



FINDINGS

Study findings fall into five interrelated areas.

I. IMMIGRATION AND IDENTITY

Ethnographic Vignettes

As the links to home attenuate, [recent Mexican immigrants] are more likely to actively self-identify as Mexican.

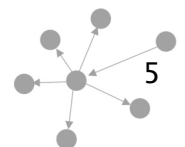
Over there, traditional customs are less necessary to who you are. It's not important to have an understanding of your history and culture when you are a part of it, when you see it all around you. Here...there is more attention to detail and the accuracy of recreations of culture.

The population is majority Mexican in this school. And they don't have much identity... They are in limbo, neither here nor there...the [Mexican dance] project was an example of the positive [influence] that we can give to the students, to make an impact by talking about their roots. The intent was to make them proud of their origins...so that they would know their roots...so that their culture could shine.

The meaning of the dance was very important. It means to give, and to receive nothing in return... It's something that happens with our students in this city, in this country, with others who do not treat them as equals. We come here to work and to give, and we don't get back the same respect.

Study data reveal that the processes of self and collective identification among Mexican immigrants in the Chicago area are intimately related to cultural and artistic production and social networking in environments that encourage cultural and artistic production. In turn, shared cultural recognition and strong networks among Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in the U.S. may increase the possibilities for civic and economic participation on a local and national level.

'Networking' as a theme emerged over 200 times in field notes and ethnographic information. Most networking behaviors occurred within the context of artistic and cultural activities and organizations. Many Mexican immigrant respondents connected to home and to one another in the Chicago area through re-creating (and, at times, carefully researching) customs, artistic forms, and material culture (including food grown in community gardens) they once may have taken for granted through formal and informal arts. Social network survey data indicate that immigrants who have lived here longer report learning artistic and cultural practices from more members of their support groups (60%) than do more recently arrived individuals (47%). This may provide evidence that those individuals who have lived here longer may consider learning artistic and cultural practices a way to reconnect with Mexican cultural heritage. Further, many parents, educators and community leaders in the study described Mexican artistic and cultural practices as protective factors for children of Mexican immigrants raised in the U.S. Simultaneously increasing young people's knowledge of and connection to uniquely Mexican customs while affirming youths' self-worth were described as buffers to negative messages they received in the U.S., where Mexican immigrants are often regarded with ambivalence if not outright hostility.



Many young people's identities were informed by multiple influences, and their capacity for being bi- (or multi-) lingual, bi-national and/or bi-cultural facilitated the formation of networks across class, race and even nation-state boundaries (examples from the study include youth engagement in leadership development training in Chicago and Mexico through hometown associations, and popular international music and dance forms, such as Reggaetón). Adult immigrants, similarly, transformed their self-definitions as a result of their interactions with other Mexicans in Chicago. For instance, Mexicans from rural and urban areas settled in the same neighborhood or town grew to rely on one another. Respondents described these interactions among diverse Mexican immigrants as catalysts for the exploration and presentation of distinctive regional Mexican artistic and cultural forms in Chicago. In the U.S., social, class and other differences that would have been salient in Mexico lost their potential to divide Mexican nationals. Instead, Mexicans' increased identification with one another against the backdrop of an Anglo-American and English-speaking majority has tremendous implications for political unity among Mexicans and between Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, as was evident in the enormous demonstrations for immigrants' rights beginning in February 2006 and continuing through the present (for a chronology of immigrant rights marches in this time period, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_U.S._immigrant_rights_protests).

IIa. BUILDING CAPACITY

Ethnographic Vignettes

When people want to have a big event, like a wedding, quinceañera or baptism, the whole community [comes] together to pull it off in grand fashion.

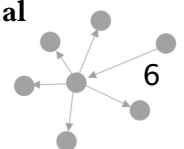
In the program, they helped...my son [to be] more sociable. And there I met other mothers who recently arrived...I've told them that it's sad at the beginning. When you don't know anything or anybody, and some of them don't have papers, then it makes it harder. I told them that I also arrived without knowing anything but when they have problems, I tell them, don't worry, you go here for this and there for that.

The tamales being made were for an order from the Lincoln Park Zoo. The [social service agency] apparently had an agreement to sell tamales there as part of the fundraiser for their summer programs.

Mexican immigrants in the Chicago area often used artistic and cultural practices to break down social isolation, create new social networking relationships, strengthen existing bonds of affinity among group members and, in specific instances, create local and transnational ties with institutions outside the church, school or neighborhood in which an artistic group first formed. These practices help to build individual and community assets by fostering social interactions and skills critical to civic renewal.

These include greater tolerance of difference, trust and consensus building, collaborative work habits, use of innovation and creativity to solve problems, the capacity to imagine change and the willingness to work for it.

Study data suggest that church, school and primary service-based informal arts played unique and important roles as catalysts for Mexican immigrants' (and particularly immigrant women's) development of leadership skills and financial



power that ultimately contributed to the expansion of institutional networks both in the Chicago area and between Chicago and Mexico.

For example, one church-based group paid for an artisan in a group member’s hometown to create a Virgin of Guadalupe who was brought to the church by a Mexican priest. Gender emerged as an important factor in the study, with women reporting they participate in or attend artistic and cultural events with about 53% of the members of their support groups compared to 46% for men. Activities that seemed particularly female-gender-specific included decorative, textile and culinary arts. The shared creation of food, handicrafts and clothing helped to create camaraderie and trust among group members. This bonding had an important spillover effect; bonds created through women’s shared participation in informal arts increased their commitments to one another and to the group, even if the focus of the group was not informal arts but, instead, diabetes management. The collective nature of production, whether making tamales for sale at the Lincoln Park Zoo or knitting caps and booties for newborns, strengthened and expanded women’s social networks, knowledge base and fundraising finesse. These informal artistic and cultural groups, through their increased social cohesion, fundraising talent, and leadership contributed in measurable ways to the well-being of organizations and neighborhoods to which a group was devoted both in Chicago and in Mexico.

IIb. IMMIGRANTS’ RIGHTS AS WORKERS’ RIGHTS

Ethnographic Vignettes

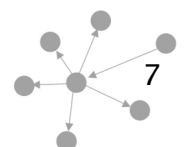
Life is hard in this country, but if you know your rights, at least you have something to hold on to.

Most [immigrants] were not politicized in any way in their home countries and the center exposes them to ideas and politics that they hadn’t previously thought about.

Since I know my rights, he [the respondent’s boss] doesn’t attack me the same way he does the others.

Study data revealed that men principally engaged in workers’ center activities, and in social, cultural and artistic organizations, and increased their social cohesion, knowledge and civic participation as a result.

In particular, church-based worker-center organizing was gaining strength in the years leading up to the study and emerged as a rich arena for the study of artistic, cultural and social networking practices among recent Mexican immigrants. Survey results suggest that 25% or more of Mexican immigrants’ support group members have information about work and workers’ rights groups. The only subject areas noted with higher percentages were healthcare, social services, and financial institutions. For some respondents, involvement in workers centers marked the first time they had ever learned about civil rights or considered engaging in public protest to demand respect for these rights. During the study, recent immigrants’ protests for the recognition of workplace-based rights were deeply informed by Mexican devotional practices that were collective, performative and public. In these devotional protests, recent Mexican immigrant workers asserted their collective presence in a way that proclaimed their legitimacy—by emphasizing a public identity as religious devotees and dedicated workers as opposed to illegal aliens.



Through these public performances, recent Mexican immigrants insisted that social relationships in that public space be marked by mutual recognition of one another’s humanity as the basis for mutual respect, not by threat and intimidation. These public devotional performances ultimately carved out precious public space for recent immigrants who may otherwise have felt they had no right or that it was too dangerous to engage in political protest. The particular form of these protests, like other forms of public religious devotion noted during the study, also shifted social relations in the space in which they were performed. By conducting workers’ rights devotions outside businesses, devotees invited spectators to become co-participants or, at the very least, witnesses to a public and deeply Mexican show of faith in the pursuit of social justice. Recent nationwide immigrant rights marches are evidence of the once latent potential of immigrants’ social networks fostered through churches, workers’ centers and Spanish-language radio to catalyze political action. Though the impacts of these marches on federal legislation are not yet known, the power of artistic and cultural practices to forge social relationships and spur forms of civic participation that are meaningful to Mexican immigrants can no longer be underestimated.

Data suggest that artistic and cultural engagement both encourage and are encouraged by bilingualism.

Bilingual speakers reported the highest number of individuals in their support groups with knowledge of artistic and cultural practices. Interestingly, bilingual respondents reported much higher levels of attendance and participation with their group members (60%) than did monolingual speakers of English or Spanish, and Spanish speakers reported higher levels (52%) of attendance and participation with their support group members than did English speakers (42%). Whether this is due to the increased opportunity to enjoy artistic and cultural events allowed by multilingualism, or to other factors associated with bilingualism remains to be seen. It does suggest that those who are able to hybridize their language (and likely their cultural patterns) emerge as more active in artistic and cultural activities with their support group members.

If artistic and cultural practices are crucial to the formation of both diverse social networks and strong community bonds, which in turn can contribute to engaged and informed civic participants, it appears that bilingual speakers active in artistic and cultural production are uniquely positioned to emerge as civic leaders, which was borne out in the study. Study data reflect that individuals who are social network nodes—who serve as bridges between predominantly English and Spanish speaking communities—are largely bilingual. Survey data reveal that bilingual individuals tended to be the most culturally and artistically engaged as well as the most active in the public sphere; as a consequence, they enjoyed strong political influence in both Anglo-American-majority and Mexican-majority forums.

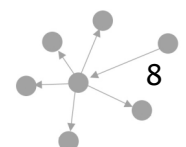
III. TECHNOLOGY AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURAL PRACTICES

Ethnographic Vignettes

Cultural practices change. Now, there are several godmothers for quinceañeras: one for the shoes, one for the limo, etc.

There is a small store where Mexican immigrant women in their 70s scan photographs and email them to Mexico.

I send stories about Chicago to my daughter through the internet.



The quinceañera is a much bigger deal here than it was in Mexico and now is being exported back to Mexico. I recently saw some pictures of a quinceañera at a little ranchito out in the middle of nowhere in Mexico and the girls were standing in the horse corral in all of their American finery—bright pink dresses and everything.

Many Mexican immigrants rely upon technology (Internet, cell phones) to maintain transnational social networks.

Furthermore, some seek out Spanish language technology training courses offered by social service providers, libraries and churches, among others. Though Mexican immigrants of many generations in the Chicago area appeared to embrace technology, as evident in the quote above, youth are particularly adept at cultivating technologically mediated social networks. Cell phone text messaging and the Internet site MySpace.com were credited with mobilizing tens of thousands of immigrant youth nationwide in recent months (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_U.S._immigration_reform_protests).

Some rites of passage (many with culture-specific characteristics associated with informal cultural and artistic practices), such as baptisms, birthdays, quinceañeras, and weddings have become more ornate among recent Mexican immigrants in the U.S. Though there are many possible reasons for this phenomenon—lavish large events can convey social status and economic well-being, while affirming uniquely Mexican traditions and forms—the advent of the Internet, email, and digital photography may have contributed in important ways to the transformation in Mexico of customs that Mexican immigrants adapted in the Chicago area.

IV. SOCIAL NETWORKS AND ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

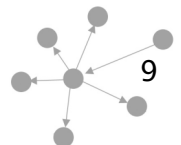
Ethnographic Vignettes

People attend things with their relatives and their compadres [close friends or associates]. That's a very important social category. And the success is due to word of mouth. 'My cousin did this,' that sort of thing.

[The club manager] made it clear that...the community builds the customer base themselves by word of mouth.

Active engagement in cultural and artistic practices popular with recent Mexican immigrants not only can foster civic engagement, but also can be extremely lucrative.

Survey data have revealed the importance of networking, resource sharing and meetings to coordinate collaborative activities. Many Mexican immigrants are also such avid consumers of music that producers and venues compete actively for their patronage. As a result, certain Chicago institutions that had fallen into neglect, such as the historic 1920s Aragon Ballroom, were revitalized once they headlined bands popular with Mexican immigrants. Of interest is not only evidence of Mexican immigrants' positive economic impacts upon Chicago, but also the shifts in marketing strategy utilized by struggling business owners eager for Mexican immigrant audiences. Despite the large publicity budgets of some venues, respondents continually pointed to the single most effective way recent Mexican immigrants learned about goings-on: word of mouth. Individuals and organizations that successfully piggybacked on immigrants' personal social networks to promote their own messages and products often successfully revitalized their



businesses. The power of personal and community-based social networks to influence the behavior of its members is now recognized as the most influential form of advertising [See www.bzzagent.com and the discussion of BIGresearch's Simultaneous Media Usage Survey (SIMM VII) in December 2005] pursued by Fortune 500 companies.

Recent and other Mexican immigrants' participation in peripheral economies that surround popular artistic and cultural sites has had an important economic ripple effect both locally and transnationally. Live performance venues, such as large theaters or summer festivals, support a related service economy that provides goods (food, popsicles, t-shirts) and services (cell phones and calling cards) to those in attendance. This also was true of churches and a few non-profit organizations and schools in which popular Mexican artistic and cultural activities were held. Peripheral economies that sprang up around large gatherings of recent Mexican immigrants were so strong that some institutions charged for access to their patrons, such as churches that required vendors buy a permit and pay a monthly fee to operate their carts on church property. These same institutions were besieged by businesses eager for access to their parishioners, and often heavily monitored businesses that wished to market their services. Vendors interviewed during the study reported supporting family members both in the U.S. and Mexico off their vending sales, evidence of the local and transnational impact of these peripheral economies.

V. FOSTERING WELL-EDUCATED AND ENGAGED CITIZENS OF THE FUTURE

Ethnographic Vignettes

The youth of the community mobilize the adults to attend events.

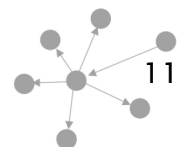
[U.S. born children of immigrants] are not afraid of the United States. They know African-Americans, [whites], and other Latinos.

The chances of being rescued [from high risk behavior] are greater here [in Chicago] than in the suburbs due to all the agencies here and cultural institutions. My greatest concern right now is our Latino males. We're going to lose more and more of them into violence, into drugs. The kind of social isolation they face, combined with all the problems associated with poverty, is like a powder keg waiting to go off for this next generation.

This study points to the ways recent Mexican immigrant families are using social networks and artistic and cultural practices to further the successful acculturation of themselves, their families and their fellow immigrants (e.g. locating and pursuing ESL classes via a personal support network, in referring youth in a Mexican dance class to empowerment and leadership skills training classes and groups). There were many instances in the study of parents and other members of this group engaging in activities and practices to further opportunities for children of immigrants. This is a particularly powerful finding because of changing demographics in the U.S. Roberto Suro, Director of the Pew Hispanic Center, notes that between 2000 and 2030, the U.S. Latino population will grow by about 17.7 million (Suro 2006). Over the next twenty-five years, the number of second-generation Latinos in U.S. schools will double, with nearly one-fourth of all labor force growth from children of Latino immigrants. As Suro writes,

[These children of Latino immigrants] will be moving into the workforce just as the huge Baby Boom generation of non-Hispanics is moving out... The Baby Boom did not produce a lot of children to take its place. According to Census Bureau projections, in 2004, there were 44 million non-Hispanics between 40 and 50, boomers heading toward retirement, but only 35 million who were 10 or younger to replace them. The gap will be filled by some 9 million Latinos 10 or younger. Latinos, especially the children of immigrants, will play key roles supplying the labor market and then supporting a very large elderly population (Suro 2006).

The education and job readiness of these children of immigrants, therefore, should be a priority for these future retirees, and for all of us in the U.S. Artistic and cultural activities/practices, such as those described in this report, that further the education, leadership development and community/civic engagement of children of immigrants, therefore, should be central components of local, regional, state and federal policies. Policies that support existing cultural, artistic and network assets within this community of recent Mexican immigrants (in Chicago and elsewhere) ultimately will contribute to the positive life chances of children of immigrants, a group of young people that all of us in the U.S. are relying upon to succeed.



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows how cultural and artistic practices contribute to identity formation, strengthen collaborative bonds, stimulate economic activity, and extend social networks for Mexican immigrants. Based on these insights into the artistic and networking assets of Mexican immigrants in the Chicagoland area, we offer the following policy recommendations:

1) Support increased access to arts and support local artists in the Mexican community.

Arts practice provides critical opportunities for developing civic skills, building social support networks, and economic participation. Through engaging in informal arts and through continued and constant innovation of cultural practices, Mexican immigrants are creating significant social resources and reaching out to non-immigrants. The broad range of arts and cultural practices documented in this study are a vital part of the social fabric of the Mexican community. Supporting arts and cultural practices through funding initiatives, more availability of public space, and recognition and validation of their importance will be a major contribution to assuring that Mexican immigrants can continue to contribute to the economic and social development of the Chicago Metropolitan region. Local artists are a growing sector of the community and their efforts to foster creativity, promote transnational relations, contribute to educational efforts and neighborhood vitality should be recognized and supported by public and private institutions.

2) Support institutions, such as churches, social service organizations, public parks, libraries, and small businesses that serve as critical sites for Mexican artistic and cultural practices.

Also support the individuals within them who are bridges between recent Mexican immigrants who are predominantly limited or non-English speaking and non-Mexicans in Chicago communities who are limited or non-Spanish speaking. The cultural bridging that these institutions facilitate and make possible is invaluable to the greater understanding and increased possibility for civic action for the collective good involving both Mexican and non-Mexican community residents.

3) Expand opportunities for immigrants to obtain employment training, English as a Second Language, and information on rights and responsibilities.

This study documented the initiatives and strategies that immigrant workers are taking to improve their livelihood under difficult conditions.

4) Support school-based efforts to use arts and cultural education and increase arts education opportunities for teachers.

Many schools serve as important sites for parents' and students' broader civic engagement, whether in relation to security and community policing, public health, or other issues of concern to neighborhoods and cities. Data from the MIA study indicate that teachers who incorporate the arts and culturally specific content and forms in their classes—including in non-arts focused courses—can simultaneously teach basic concepts, affirm students' family and ethnic/racial experiences and identities, and encourage curiosity among students about their own and other students' cultural uniqueness. Teachers should be encouraged to expose their students and themselves to the diversity of Mexican culture (for example, by taking trips to predominantly Mexican neighborhoods in the Chicago area and to Mexican artistic and cultural events in Chicago). MIA study data also suggest that teachers who incorporate Mexican subjects and forms

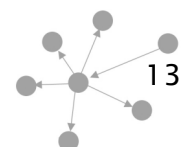
in bilingual events for parents also provide a point of entrée for parents to engage in the schools and become partners with teachers in assuring children’s successful educational development. This approach allows schools, teachers and parents to shift away from a deficit-based to an asset-based relationship between families and schools in which parents are regarded as valuable and knowledgeable practitioners of personal and collective artistic and cultural practices and traditions. Arts education opportunities for parents at schools should also be increased so that they can become equal partners with teachers in the school-based element of their child’s educational development.

5) Create an information-sharing mechanism by convening local researchers, government personnel, hometown federations and other immigrant organizations, and social service organizations to facilitate information sharing, improve services to immigrants and strengthen support networks.

Creating an information-sharing mechanism through which organizations, researchers and city government personnel can remain informed of one another’s missions, objectives and projects will make delivery of social services more efficient. This information-sharing could catalyze more effective and informed collaboration to build on the assets and meet the needs of the Chicago area recent Mexican immigrant population, including its informal and formal artists and cultural practitioners.

6) Support legislative efforts at the federal and state levels to allow undocumented students in America’s junior high schools and high schools to apply for legal status if they have good moral character and have lived in the U.S. for at least five years.

With legal status, these students can go to college and eventually become U.S. citizens. In addition, undocumented students who are college bound would be able to pay in-state tuition (rather than foreign student tuitions, which are typically much higher).



REFERENCES CITED

- Domínguez, S., & Watkins, C.
2003 Creating Networks for Survival and Mobility. *Social Problems* 50:111.
- Enchautegui, M. E.
2002 Household Members and Employment Outcomes of Recent Immigrants: A Network Approach. *Social Science Quarterly* (Blackwell Publishing Limited 83: 594-211.
- Garcia, C.
2005 Buscando Trabajo: Social Networking Among Immigrants From Mexico to the United States. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 27: 3-22.
- Hernandez-Leon, R., and Zuniga, Victor
2000 Making Carpet by the Mile: The Emergence of a Mexican Immigrant Community in an Industrial Region of the U.S. *Historic South. Social Science Quarterly* 81(1): 49-67.
- Menjivar, C.
1997 Immigrant Kinship Networks: Vietnamese, Salvadoreans and Mexicans in Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 28: 1-24.
- Monge, P. R., and Contractor, Noshir S.
2003 *Theories of Communication Networks*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Moriarty, P.
2004 *Immigrant Participatory Arts: An Insight Into Community-Building in Silicon Valley*. San Jose, CA: Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley.
- Raijman, R., & Tienda, M.
2003 Ethnic foundations of economic transactions: Mexican and Korean immigrant entrepreneurs in Chicago. *Ethnic & Racial Studies* 26: 783.
- Suro, R.
2006 Special Section: Hispanic Americans: A Growing Minority. *The World Almanac Reference Database. Electronic Document* <http://www.facts.com/wfea70050.htm>, accessed July 11, 2006.
- Wali, A., Severson, R., & Longoni, M.
2002 *Informal Arts: Finding Cohesion, Capacity, and Other Cultural Benefits in Unexpected Places*. Chicago: Center for Arts Policy and Columbia College.

