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FÚTBOL IN THE HEARTLAND: MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS, TRANSNATIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND RECREATIONAL SPORT IN OKLAHOMA CITY

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FÚTBOL IN THE HEARTLAND: MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS, TRANSNATIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY, AND RECREATIONAL SPORT IN OKLAHOMA CITY

A DISSERTATIONAPPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

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This dissertation is dedicated to all those who love the beautiful game. There is no other sport like it. ¡Viva el juego bonito!

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Abstract

When immigrants traverse international borders they bring with them many cultural practices and traditions from their lives back home. This research focuses on how a modern sport, fútbol (soccer), operates as a cultural practice that facilitates transnational cultural identities for Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City. For Mexican immigrants, playing and/or watching recreational fútbol is paramount in the maintenance and performance of their cultural identities in the United States. For these immigrants recreational fútbol is much more than a game; it is a cultural tradition that facilitates connections to hometowns, cities, regions, and nations of origin. Recreational fútbol is also vitally important for men and masculinity in Mexican immigrant communities as many of these men consider fútbol a man's game and the leagues masculine social spaces. The cultural practices that are a part of the social world of La Liga indicate that being transnational is a performance that relies heavily on a symbolic embodiment of identity, on recreating and maintaining cultural practices and traditions from one's homeland, and that transnational cultural practices and traditions contribute to those already existing in immigrant receiving destinations.

Keywords: Fútbol, Immigration, Transnationalism, Identity, Mexico

Chapter 1: Sport and Transnational Identity

Modern Sport and Transnational Identity

The final score was 2-1. Deportivo Mexico, a team wearing a replica Mexican national team uniform, had just beaten crowd-favorite Acatic in the 2011 final of the A division in *La Liga Latina y Americana* (The Latin and American League), the largest adult recreational fútbol (soccer) league in the state of Oklahoma. It had been a hard fought contest but Deportivo Mexico had emerged victorious. Deportivo Mexico may have worn the jersey of the Mexican national team, but they were anything but "*Mexicano puro*" (purely Mexican); the team fielded Brazilians, Kenyans, Americans, as well as Mexicans paralleling the sort of team composition found in professional soccer leagues around the world. This is not coincidental as many of the coaches of the top teams in La Liga recruit the best players they can in the Oklahoma City area, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or race. Acatic, on the other hand, was comprised exclusively of Latinos and had one of the league's star players on its roster. The crowd, split between a smaller faction of Deportivo Mexico fans and a much larger set of Acatic fans, was a bit restless but the final closing ceremonies marking the end of the 2011 season, which included trophy presentations and prize giveaways, soon placated them. Though the crowd favorite was not victorious, the huge showing of several hundred people for this final championship game and the festivities surrounding it demonstrate the immense importance the game of fútbol has to the Mexican immigrant community in Oklahoma City.

When immigrants traverse international borders they bring with them many cultural practices and traditions from their lives back home. This research focuses on

how a modern sport, fútbol (soccer), operates as a cultural practice that facilitates transnational cultural identities for Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City. For Mexican immigrants, playing and/or watching recreational fútbol is paramount in the maintenance and performance of their cultural identities in the United States. For these immigrants, recreational fútbol is much more than a game; it is a cultural tradition that facilitates connections to hometowns, cities, regions, and nations of origin. Recreational fútbol is also vitally important for men and masculinity in Mexican immigrant communities as many of these men consider fútbol a man's game and the leagues masculine social spaces. The cultural practices that are a part of the social world of La Liga indicate that being transnational is a performance that relies heavily on a symbolic embodiment of identity, on recreating and maintaining cultural practices and traditions from one's homeland, and that transnational cultural practices and traditions contribute to those already existing in immigrant receiving destinations.

Recreational fútbol leagues also create one of the most popular and well-attended community events for Mexican immigrants living in the United States (Pescador 2004; Price and Whitworth 2004). Rather than focus on previously studied Mexican immigrant communities in historical receiving areas such as Los Angeles, Chicago, or Miami, this research focuses on the city of Oklahoma City and the social and cultural aspects of the largest adult recreational fútbol league in the state of Oklahoma, La Liga Latina y Americana, hereafter referred to simply as La Liga. Oklahoma City lies at the nexus of newer receiving areas for Mexican immigrants in the United States as it is often associated, both culturally and geographically, with the American South and American Southern Plains simultaneously. The American South

and American Southern Plains have recently experienced influxes of Mexican immigrants. Because of this, Oklahoma City offers a unique context for understanding the experiences Mexican immigrants encounter when moving to these newer receiving areas.

Being involved in La Liga as a player, spectator, or both, is about the performance of identity and a demonstration of Mexican immigrants' transnational ties to their homelands. La Liga also operates as a space that preserves culture for Mexican immigrant men living in Oklahoma City, a place where their game is the dominant game, and where they are the dominant social actors. Fútbol in La Liga is much more than a game; it is a crucial aspect of immigrant life and transnational identity for Mexicans living in Oklahoma City.

Anthropology of Sport: Why Sport Matters

Sport has a unique place within culture. Robert R. Sands, author of a seminal text on methodology in the anthropology of sport, argues that "all cultures in some ways participate in sport, and more important, sport has come to play an important role in determining and shaping this thing that anthropologists call culture" (2002:3). According to Sands, sport provides a social space that reflects some of the crucial aspects of the cultural lives of its participants, "ethnography of sport provides a valuable perspective on cultural lifeways, beliefs, relations, and universals. It is through ethnographic research, including participant observation, that the statement 'Sport reflects culture, and culture reflects sport' yields greater understanding" (2002:8). For

example, sociologist Loïc Wacquant immersed himself in the boxing gyms of South Chicago and while he nearly became a professional boxer, his research revealed that much of the culture of boxing in South Chicago both reflects and reacts to the urban culture of this part of the city (2004). Boxers from South Chicago find solace in the gyms where their toughness and physical prowess find a more positive outlet than what may occur on the city streets; the boxing gym becomes, "an island of order and virtue"(2004:17). Ethnographic research on sport reveals that sports have belief systems according to which players will make decisions and fans will make judgments. Sports have their own ways of defining bodily comportment and evaluations of the aesthetics of human movement. Sports have their own codes of behavior, their own codes of how games are played, i.e. rules, and sports have their own customs and traditions. Sport then has its own social structures that are reflective of those found in the culture(s) of its players, spectators, and other participants. In terms of this study, understanding the culture of La Liga gives insight into the power of sport in society, the power of sport in the lives of Mexican immigrants living in Oklahoma City, and the role of sport in the formation of Mexican immigrant transnational identities in the United States.

What sport is and why it is important is an aspect of social and cultural life that anthropologists have not dealt with adequately. "Imagine, if you will, a field of inquiry that comprises a wide range of recurring, complexly patterned activities, relationships, beliefs and purposes that revolve around competitive performances that combine physical, social and cultural elements. The forms of these activities are reported to vary across space and time, featuring continuity, discontinuity, particularity and dispersion"

(Dyck 2000:13). This definition of sport, provided by anthropologist Noel Dyck, illuminates why sport has become an obsession of the modern world. Sport is a part of human experience that reflects many aspects of our lives, such as a complicated relationship to space and time or issues of dis/continuity. It is not clear why sport has evaded heavy anthropological analysis for so long, but as anthropologists Niko Besnier and Susan Brownell argue, "A distinctly anthropological approach, with its unique research methods, approaches to theory, and holistic thinking, can utilize insights from the construction of sport as human action to illuminate important social issues in a way that no other discipline can" (2012: 443-59). Because anthropology can yield new insights into the importance of sport to human social life, anthropology and anthropologists have a crucial role in explicating why sport matters.

Sport matters because it is a part of our daily lives. Our ties to geographic spaces or nostalgia for the past are often reflected in sport. The types of exercise people enjoy or that their children might enjoy are often types of sport. Professional sports are a massive industry, generating insane profits while entertaining billions of people. Sport provides us with discourses that can be used in casual conversations with strangers to build bonds or it can create animosities that may not otherwise exist. It can be the medium used to express religious tensions, national tensions, racial tensions, ethnic tensions, and tensions between genders. Sport is a unique part of the human condition where the mental and the physical intersect and the comportment of a body can become a crucial aspect towards better understandings of the cultural lives of people worldwide, "over the past three decades, the important role that anthropological theory has bestowed on the body, nationalism, modernity, globalization,

transnationalism, the state, citizenship, gender, and sexuality has placed sports at the core of questions central to the discipline" (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 444).

In terms of anthropology, sport helps to build a better understanding of the importance of play. Play is vital throughout a person's life. Play is one of the first aspects of life that young children understand and play is vitally important in terms of childhood development. Play can be structured or unstructured, dictated by rules or free from constraint. Play helps children to experiment in the world, to learn from trial by error, and it helps children to build social bonds. The word play connotes a childish carefree approach to life, an opposition to that which is adult and serious. We do not stop playing as adults; we just change how we play as our play often becomes sport.

Sport may be understood as highly structured play. Rules are implemented to ensure "fair play", a time and/or space constraint is constructed, and how one moves one's body within these confines becomes an expression of cultural identity, skill, and a reflection of what humans can and cannot do with their bodies. One of the more comprehensive definitions of modern sport comes from preeminent sociologist of sport Allen Guttmann, who argues that modern sport consists of seven aspects: secularism, equality, bureaucratization, specialization, rationalization, quantification, and an obsession with records (1994: 2-3). Guttmann states that while modern sports do have rituals and often these are rituals that can evoke strong emotions, they are secular in nature which differentiates them from pre-modern sports that may have had a religious or sacred component (1994:2). While many players will attribute their success to a higher power and/or make the sign of the cross when entering or leaving the playing field (a very common behavior among Latino fútbol players), games are not played for

any religious significance. This stands in contrast to the ancient Maya ball game, for example, where games were religious rites reflecting conflicts among the gods and often players who lost were sacrificed to appease the gods of the underworld, (Wilkerson 1984).

Modern sport is also about equality in that theoretically no one is excluded from participation, although this is not always the case in practice (Guttmann 1994:2). In La Liga, for instance, a player must generally know somebody on a team to get a chance to play as La Liga does not really place individual players on teams. Once on a team not every player gets the same amount of playing time but most teams generally give every player a chance to play at some point during the games. Not every player on a team is equal, however, as preferences are often given to the most skilled players. For example, a skilled player may be excused from a practice or allowed to substitute into a game immediately if they are late while a less skilled player would not enjoy these advantages.

Modern sports are governed by bureaucracies that set and change rules, among other duties (Guttmann 1994:3). Even at the amateur level this is the case. The most powerful people in La Liga by far are the league's administrators who can decide if a player must be suspended or cast out of the league for poor behavior and/or fighting. The La Liga administration can decide whether or not to cancel games and when games are to be rescheduled; they hire the referees, and they can instigate rule changes if desired.

Modern sports often involve very specific roles for players, such as defenders or strikers (forwards-goal scorers) in fútbol. On teams, players are groomed to occupy specialized roles such as those mentioned above. It does not mean that they cannot transcend those roles, much as might be expected from time to time in the workplace or at home, but generally it is a tacit understanding that a player do his or her job while on the field or the court.

Rationality is concomitant with modern sport. As Guttmann argues, "[T]he rules of modern sports are constantly scrutinized and undergo frequent revision…athletes train scientifically, employ technologically advanced equipment, and strive for the most efficient employment of their skills" (1994:3). In La Liga, for example, teams generally hold two training sessions during the week before weekend games. When I was playing for Deportivo Hidalgo, a team in the lower divisions of La Liga, these would take place on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. They were often structured, consisting of a warm up run of about a mile, then drills to hone certain skills such as dribbling or practicing shooting, and at the end of training we would divide up and play a *cascarita*, or pick-up game.

Finally modern sports involve quantification: statistics, scoring, and records all reflect this aspect of sport. Records are an especially important part of modern sports as they offer a chance, according to Guttmann, "[t]o achieve a modern version of immortality" (1994:3). This is somewhat similar at the amateur level as well. Both La Liga and ISA (an indoor soccer facility in Oklahoma City) track the statistics of teams and individual players. In terms of standings, tracking the statistics of teams such as goals scored and goals scored against helps to organize divisions and decide league or

division champions. Tracking individual players, however, is not crucial but it is a nice gesture that players and fans appreciate. It offers players recognition in a sporting context and for Mexican immigrant players who are often inconspicuous social actors in their working lives who may not always be recognized for their hard work, tracking their statistics provides the opposite effect. By tracking statistics, these players are recognized for their hard work and success.

It is arguable that this last point of Guttmann's is what drives the power of modern sport not just professionally but on an amateur level as well. In La Liga the star players are well known among the fans and sometimes throughout the Latino community in South Oklahoma City. That is not to say that they will be immortal, but they have a sort of fame that they achieve through their performance on the pitches (a British term for playing fields) in South Oklahoma City on Sundays. At all levels of sport, players generally want to play with players who are considered good or of quality. A player's status on a team often hinges on this perception of being a good player just as one's status in the working world or at home often hinges on others' perceptions of being a good worker or a good parent.

While sport has often been described as distracting from more pressing everyday realities or a substitute for war, sport also has a power to unite, to bridge conflicts, and to bring disparate people into contact who may not even speak the same language. This is because, as Dyck, Besnier, and Brownell mentioned above, sport reflects so many aspects of what it means to be human. Our lives are constrained by time and space and we create definitions of time and space to help us better organize ourselves and to help us better understand our place in the universe. Modern human life is punctuated by

periods of consistency and continuity followed by periods of inconsistency, discontinuity, and change, much like sport. Sport appeals to us because we can mold it to reflect our lives and collective experiences.

Sport also creates "imagined communities" much in the way Benedict Anderson describes the construction of nations (2006[1983]). Through an understanding of the history of a sport, the language used to talk about a sport, and an ability to analyze and describe the often mundane aspects of a sport, "nations" of sports fans emerge, such as the professional baseball team the Boston Red Sox and their "Red Sox Nation". For example, in a prior study, I found that for Mexican immigrants playing in Latino fútbol leagues in northern San Diego County, fútbol is an impetus in community development. These leagues hold fundraisers to help people who need medical treatment, for example. So while someone participating at these fundraisers may not know the person in need or may not be a part of a Mexican immigrant community in Northern San Diego County, their donation helps to bind them to both that person as well as the entire community. Thus through fútbol, Mexican immigrants in northern San Diego County create both real and "imagined" communities (Kleszynski 2007).

In La Liga most players speak a common language, Spanish, but they also speak a common fútbol language that demonstrates knowledge of the game. Past games in La Liga as well as professional leagues are invoked in discussions about plays that may have happened on the field that day. Other discussions about how the Mexican men's national team may have played recently are also themes that bind people together in La Liga. Finally, fan clubs, referred to as *porras,* often have their own lexicon, cultural practices, and traditions that also bind people together in La Liga.

This phenomenon is not unique to fútbol or La Liga. Anthropologist Thomas Carter describes how discussing professional baseball and having an extensive knowledge of professional baseball creates a sense of community among men in Cuba (2002). According to Carter, notions of masculinity and *Cubanidad* are bolstered by a man's ability to argue about professional baseball and these arguments rely on an extensive knowledge of statistics and baseball history (2002). What it means to be a man in Cuban communities relies on obscure knowledge of professional baseball. Anthropologist Alan M. Klein also speaks of baseball and community, but his work with the Tecolotes de los dos Laredos describes the personal dynamics and senses of community fostered between players of a minor league baseball team playing in the bi-national space of Laredo, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas on the U.S./Mexico border (1997). Klein describes how similar cultural and national backgrounds create mini-communities within the team. For example the Mexican players bonded together while the imports, generally players from the U.S., were left to create their own mini-communities outside of those created by the Mexican players (1997).

AFA: Associación Fútbol de Argentina
COASL: Central Oklahoma Adult Soccer League
CONCACAF: Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football
FIFA: Fédération Internationale de Football Assocation
HB 1804: Oklahoma House Bill 1804
IRCA: Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986
ISA/ISA OKC: Indoor Soccer Arenas Oklahoma City
La Liga: La Liga Latina y Americana
LCDA: Latino Community Development Agency
MLS: Major League Soccer
OKC: Oklahoma City
OKCPD: Oklahoma City Police Department
UNAM: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico

Figure 1: List of often used acronyms and abbreviations in this dissertation

A Brief History of Fútbol in Latin America

While soccer is often considered an invention of the English, or at least the English are often recognized as the first to formally codify the rules of the game, fútbol exploded in popularity when English sailors and workmen brought the game to Latin America in the nineteenth century (Goldblatt 2006). One of the first strongholds of the game in Latin America was in Argentina, specifically Buenos Aires, where English

workmen, many of them railroad workers, established some of the first fútbol clubs in the city. Many of the oldest clubs in Buenos Aires are linked to this establishment of the game on the Rio de la Plata. Italian immigrants in Argentina also helped to spread the popularity of the game and it was not long before the Associación Fútbol de Argentina (AFA) was born in 1893 (Goldblatt 2006).

The popularity of the game then spread across the Rio de la Plata to Montevideo in Uruguay. In terms of Latin American fútbol, Uruguay and Argentina were the first two national powerhouses. As the British spread the game throughout the rest of the continent, largely due to the construction of railroads, the game continued an exponential rise in popularity. The Brazilians were next and they took on a famous love of the game that continues to this day. The game was relatively simple in its basic rules so it was easy to pick up and understanding it on a basic level was not difficult (Goldblatt 2006).

In Mexico, the situation was very similar. Englishmen who worked to build Mexico's extensive railway system, largely tied to the mining industry, brought the game in the late nineteenth century. These British workers first brought the game to the state of Hidalgo around 1900 and by 1902, the professional club Pachuca was founded in the state (Goldblatt 2006). For much of the early 20th century baseball remained Mexico's most popular sport but after 1940 rapid urbanization in the central and southern part of the country enabled the spread of the game and its popularity exploded (Pescador 2004). In contrast, the northern and Caribbean states in Mexico were to remain baseball strongholds, a holdover from American military occupation and American economic presences earlier in the century. Even with the popularity of

baseball, the Federación Mexicana de Fútbol Asociación (Mexican Fútbol Federation) had set up professional leagues by 1903 and some of these teams are the oldest professional fútbol clubs in North America (Murray 1996).

In 1943 the Federación Mexicana de Fútbol Asociación was reorganized and this reorganization was a catalyst for the development of professional fútbol in Mexico that helped to drive the popularity of the game throughout much of the country for the latter half of the 20th century (Pescador 2004). Then in 1970, Mexico hosted its first World Cup. The tournament was originally scheduled to be held in Argentina but military concerns drove FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association, fútbol's international governing body) to select another host nation (Goldblatt 2006). Mexico won the honors and held the tournament successfully with Brazil the tournament's winners.

The importance of this World Cup to bolster the popularity of fútbol in Mexico cannot be understated. Los Tricolores, the nickname of the Mexican national team, were able to make the quarterfinals for the first time and this success fueled the popularity of fútbol in Mexico even beyond the widespread popularity it already enjoyed. The 1970 World Cup spawned a generation of young men who flocked to fútbol pitches and fútbol enjoys unparalleled popularity and ubiquity in Mexican society, even though Los Tricolores have not advanced past the round of 16 in subsequent World Cup competitions.

For many of the men I spoke with in La Liga, fútbol is more than a national pastime. Many spoke about tradition, as in fútbol is a cultural tradition they bring with

them after immigrating to the United States. Fútbol binds fathers and sons or uncles and nephews and the fútbol fields on Sundays are a gathering place to hang out, drink beer, and experience the joy of belonging to a community. For these immigrant men from Mexico and other countries in Latin America, the tradition of fútbol has become a vitally important part of their transnational lives. Fútbol binds these men to their homelands, the game transcends the geopolitical borders they have traversed, and fútbol helps to bind them to other Latino immigrants as well as non-Latinos living in Oklahoma City. Because of this, fútbol is a vital aspect of their transnational lives and identities.

Fútbol, Immigration, and Transnationalism

Fútbol truly has become Mexico's national pastime and sporting obsession. During the 2005 qualification tournament that led up to the 2006 World Cup, I was living in Oaxaca City in the state of Oaxaca in southern Mexico and not one commercial break came on the TV in which the ads did not have some sort of Mexican National Team tie-in. I remember watching a U.S./Mexico Gold Cup Final, the trophy given to the champion of the Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football, generally referred to as CONCACAF, at a local bar and the passion of the fans was fervent and exhilarating. Judging by some stares, many of these fans were not too thrilled to see a U.S. Men's National team fan watching in their midst but even older men and women were fanatical in their passion for La Selección (another nickname of the Mexican National Team). In that part of the country, all manner of

fútbol merchandise can be found at the *abastos* (large open air marketplaces), in grocery stores, and even in small *bodegas (*corner stores).

Fútbol is an integral part of Mexican society for huge swaths of the nation. Men play, kids of all ages play, and sometimes women play. There are small concrete fields at the parks that are similar in size to those found in indoor fútbol facilities (in Mexico the game is often called "mini fútbol" or "mini"), and there are no shortage of small, impromptu pick-up games going on in the streets of barrios and small areas of *zócalos* (central town squares) and other city parks. Because of the popularity of fútbol in Mexico it really is no surprise that the game experiences such immense popularity and importance in Mexican immigrant communities throughout the U.S. Fútbol is more than a game in these contexts, it is a powerful social connecting force, a tradition and crucial aspect of Mexican identity, and it provides a link to place and a link to home: home nation, home state, home region, and one's home town.

La Liga exemplifies how sport uniquely ties us to place and to home. As global interconnectivity increases, having an affective association with a particular place or places is salient to the human psyche as we become more and more migratory and as many people often find themselves spending large parts of their lives in locales other than what they often consider home. The concomitant movement of people that has accelerated with modern technologies such as air travel or communication via cellular telephone and internet technologies like video chatting allows us to be psychologically in more than one place at once (Appadurai 1996). Immigration in a number of contexts worldwide brings the importance of place into our lives. Certain places are desirable for people emotionally and spiritually, and sport can bind us to a place and allow us to

remain tied to that place even if we are not physically present in that locale. In this way, sport can allow us to stay connected to "home" even if someone is living thousands of miles away. For the men who play in La Liga, this is perhaps the most important function of fútbol. It allows them to remain tied to their homelands in ways that are similar to rituals or other cultural traditions. This is one of the reasons why the men in La Liga have unique team names and wear certain jerseys as these names and jerseys symbolize their connection to place.

In La Liga, the social space used for athletics provides a means of escape from the often harsh realities of life for many of these men. According to philosopher Maxine Greene, "Perhaps particularly in this country, the very notion of space has been associated with departure, with escape, with personal rebellion against confinement or extrinsic control" (2000:294). La Liga provides these men with a social space that simultaneously acts as a means of escape and resistance, as well as a venue for providing agency regarding their social presence, "There is a signal difference between choosing to come together to sustain each other's desire to adjust, to accommodate to conditions assumed to be unalterable-and choosing to come together to transform somehow" (Greene 2000:297). It is in this transformation from a somewhat invisible social actor to the center of a social world that the men in La Liga find some form of liberation and cultural expression.



Figure 2: A player and a referee argue on La Liga field 3, September 2010. Photo by Kleszynski.

Figure 2 above illustrates this transformation. This photo depicts a La Liga player and a La Liga referee having an argument after the end of a game. In this photo, the player is pointing out to a referee that a decision he made was wrong and that he should have made a different call. In La Liga the referees have power as they adjudicate game play; they are the managers of the game. In a working context this player may not challenge a decision made my management but in the sporting context of La Liga he feels empowered to challenge the decision making of the referees. In this way the player is experiencing an inversion in the social world of La Liga, a transformation of the role he may occupy in his daily working life. Thus this La Liga

player is openly resisting the referee and expressing his agency in terms of this resistance.

Participation in athletics as a means of resistance and agency is also analyzed by historian Steve Stein in his discussion of soccer in early twentieth-century Lima, Peru. According to Stein, "For the Lima poor who suffered the humiliation and 'defeats' of daily life, these feelings had enormous significance. In a society that continually denigrated their basic human worth, soccer was one of the few areas in which players who were poor could feel valuable, whole, accepted, and even revered" (2002:19). For many men in La Liga, this is what Sunday fútbol matches are all about. These men are adept fútbol players and through their proficient play, men in La Liga display a cultural and social strength they may not have in their everyday lives. For many of these men, walking onto the fútbol pitch every Sunday involves a major social transformation and escape from their weekday working lives.

The rise in popularity and size of Latin American recreational fútbol leagues in the United States is directly tied to the migratory flows of the last forty years. Yet while immigration from Latin America to the U.S. is now on the wane, the popularity of La Liga has never been higher (as of the 2013 season, the league had expanded to 5 divisions from the 4 it had during my fieldwork from 2009-2012). The waning of immigration from Mexico to the United States has had one effect on large receiving areas such as Los Angeles and a different effect in newer receiving areas in the Southern United States, such as Oklahoma City. According to the 2010 U.S. Census the Latino population, the vast majority of them Mexican, in Oklahoma County grew by 89% from 2000 to 2010. This stands opposed to Cook County (the county of the city of

Chicago, one of the major historical receiving areas in the U.S. for Mexican immigrants), where the Latino population grew by 16% during the same time frame. Numerically a 16% rise in a vast metropolis like Chicago likely outnumbers an 89% rise in Oklahoma City, but the effect this rapid growth has on a metro area like Oklahoma City is a drastic change. Up until 20 years ago Latinos, predominantly Mexicans, were a very small minority of the Oklahoma City population. Today, roughly one in ten persons in Oklahoma City is Latino, the vast majority are either from Mexico or have Mexican heritage. Because of this change, understanding what these fútbol leagues mean in terms of Mexican identities for both recent immigrants as well as subsequent generations is a crucial part of understanding the Mexican immigrant experience in the United States.

While there are other Latin American fútbol leagues in Oklahoma City (2 or 3 during the time I was doing fieldwork from 2009-2012), I chose La Liga for a number of reasons. First of all it was recommended to me as the league to observe by one of my first interview participants, Juliana Stout, who worked for the most circulated Spanish language newspaper in Oklahoma City, *El Nacional de Oklahoma*. Secondly, once I had conducted some observations of La Liga as well as other leagues I decided that following La Liga for this project would best allow me to understand the importance of fútbol to the Mexican immigrant community in Oklahoma City. La Liga is a very large recreational league by any measure with over 80 teams in 4 divisions totaling more than 1200 players in 2010 (by 2013 it had grown to over 120 teams). Even though most of the players in La Liga are of Mexican origin or descent, its size allowed me opportunities to interact with the greatest number of community participants and people

from many places throughout Latin America beyond Mexico. La Liga has a field complex that it has leased for several years which meant that games would happen with regularity, I always knew where the games were taking place, and because La Liga has a well maintained website I could keep up to date on the names and schedules of teams.

The social world of La Liga involves a distinct set of cultural practices. Some of these practices include a symbolic opening procession event to begin the season, the way the game is played in La Liga, the language used on the field during game play, the role of women in La Liga, and La Liga operating as a masculine social space. These cultural practices are striking when juxtaposed with those in non-Latino leagues in Oklahoma such as Central Oklahoma Adult Soccer League (COASL), a league comprised of a majority of players who are not Latino or Mexican. Fútbol in La Liga involves both stated and unstated rules that define behaviors both on and off the field, the deployment of cultural and symbolic capital, and the performance of identity through both symbolic representations and bodily comportment. These cultural practices, behaviors, and representations of identity that are to be found in La Liga help to better understand the experiences of immigrants to the United States and their sense of transnational identity. Many of the aspects of the social world found in La Liga mirror those found in these immigrant's homelands and it is the love of the game of fútbol that facilitates transnational cultural identities for Mexican immigrants living in Oklahoma City.

Methods

This study was conducted using qualitative ethnographic methodologies, largely participant observation and interviewing. Participant observation is a methodology in which ethnographers immerse themselves in a community for an extended period of time with the goal of first observing and then participating in community life in order to gain a thorough and nuanced understanding of said community. Interviewing can take on many forms. Some interviews are structured using a set of prepared questions and are often scheduled ahead of time with a distinct meeting place arranged. Other interviews are unstructured and take place spontaneously and can involve a set of prepared questions or questions that are thought of in the moment. Finally some interviews are more like conversations with research participants and these involve a give and take where the ethnographer may be interviewed by research participants as well. I made use of all these forms of interviewing while gathering this data.

For over three years from 2009-2012 I studied the social world of La Liga, eventually becoming a member of a team, Deportivo Hidalgo, during the 2011 and 2012 seasons. During these three years I interviewed 25 people, some more in-depth than others, I befriended quite a few people in the league, and sought to develop rapport and trust with my teammates and other research participants. This trust and rapport resulted in the development of several friendships, some of which included time spent with research participants outside of La Liga. In order to develop and build this rapport, being a participant observer was crucial. Showing up week after week demonstrated that I was a person who was not just there in passing. My consistent presence signaled interest in La Liga.

Initially I went to league games and would watch whoever was playing, but after observing the second half of the 2009 season I identified some of the themes that would become the focus of this study. Thus this account focuses on a few select teams that play in La Liga: Chivas OKC, Pumas, Acatic, Deportivo Mexico, Honduras, Real Madrid, and Deportivo Hidalgo, among others. These teams were chosen for several reasons. Chivas OKC, as is explored later in this account, is exemplary of notions of Mexicanidad and the professional team Chivas de Guadalajara is considered the quintessential Mexican team by many people in La Liga and in Mexico as well. Teams such as Acatic, Pumas, Deportivo Mexico, and Honduras are popular among spectators in La Liga and generally draw larger crowds for their games. They are also some of the better teams in La Liga as all of them play in the highest division, Division A. At the time I was doing fieldwork in La Liga, Real Madrid fielded a team of players from several national backgrounds other than Mexico and in many ways they reflected the way professional teams are comprised in leagues worldwide. Finally, Deportivo Hidalgo was the team I ended up playing for and offered an opportunity to get insights on what it's like to be a player in La Liga, a vital aspect of the social world of La Liga.

Each time I went out to conduct fieldwork, I would take my camera bag with a recorder, notebook, and camera. At the end of each fieldwork session, I would go to my car and quickly outline all the things I had observed and/or talked about with research participants for that day. Immediately upon return to my home office, I would use this outline to record extensive field notes. I would record with as much detail as possible in my field journal. Upon completion of my fieldwork, I read my field journal several times and began to identify themes that were emerging repeatedly in my field journal.

Because I had been conducting fieldwork in La Liga for 3 years, I had a general idea of what themes seemed the most significant, but this textual analysis helped me to concretely identify what I wanted to further analyze and write about. This analysis also helped me to design a coding system that I initially used to organize the notes in my field journal. I then coded my field journal using Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software and began data analysis. Even while writing I referred to my field journal countless times for vignettes, quotes, and to ensure there was not something substantial that I had forgotten.

La Liga leases a property in the south side of the Oklahoma City metro area (see Figure 3). At the time I was doing fieldwork, there were five fields: four that were adjacent to each other forming a large rectangular field complex, and one that was three blocks away from this main complex. As of 2013, there were 6 fields all located on one property. The outlying field was not used during the 2013 season, but was back in use during the 2014 season bringing the complex total to 7 fields. The complex also includes a concessions building, a bathroom with a huge mural of the league's 2013 logo that faces the fields and is visible when one enters the complex, and stands for spectators. Five of these stands are roofed. Some large trees on the sidelines and in the corners of the fields provide additional shade when the covered stands are full.

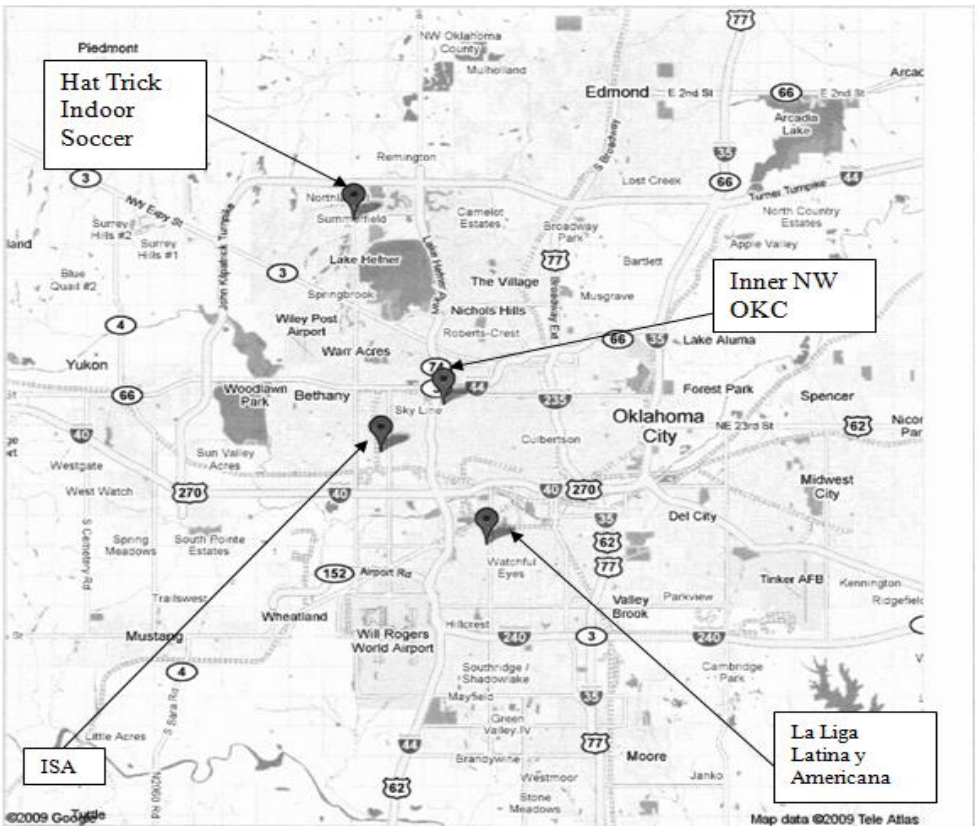


Figure 3: Map of Oklahoma City and Fútbol Field Sites; Hat Trick is now called Soccer City. Source: Google Maps, 2009.

Most of my fieldwork was conducted on Saturdays and Sundays from April to November each year. The majority of interviews took place in Spanish, but occasionally I would conduct an interview in English or even a mix of the two. I asked for permission to audio record each interview and was only denied two times. When audio recording of interviews was denied, I requested permission to take extensive notes throughout the conversation which was approved by these research participants. Fifteen of the interviews were structured and formal, while others were informal conversations that often occurred while drinking after games. The vast majority of my interviews were with men but I was able to interview two women for this project, both

of whom were under 40 years old. These women were from two different national backgrounds, Mexico and Colombia, and their insights regarding La Liga and gender were invaluable. The men I interviewed varied in age with the oldest being in his late 50s. Many of the men I spoke with were in their 20s and 30s. While men tend to emigrate from Mexico more than women, the majority of Mexican immigrants in the United States are between the ages of 20 and 50 years old (Pew Hispanic Center 2013). Playing fútbol tends to be the purview of younger men and while the older men are often fans and/or coaches of certain teams in La Liga, interviewing young men helped me to best represent the age range of the majority of participants in the league. Interviewing the older men was important, however, as it gave me some perspective on the importance of fútbol for immigrants who may have lived in the U.S. and in Oklahoma for a longer period of time.

During the beginning phases of my research I took many pictures of players during games and had originally planned to give them away to use them as ice breakers to initiate conversations and to ideally line up interviews. This strategy worked from time to time, but the most effective means of finding participants was through my connections in La Liga. Many of my interviews resulted from this snowball technique, which was more useful than approaching people I did not know for a number of reasons. I happened to be doing fieldwork in a context where anti-immigrant sentiment ran high due to the recent passage of very stringent anti-immigrant legislation in 2007 by the Oklahoma State Legislature (HB 1804). As a white male entering a social space where white males were rarely seen, trust was central to my ability to speak with anyone in the league. Even after more than three years of fieldwork, I often found

myself the butt of jokes suggesting that "*el güero es La Migra*" (he is the white guy who works with U.S. immigration authorities).

House Bill 1804 made conducting this research difficult and risky. Passed in November of 2007, this legislation dictates that anyone who knowingly transports, shelters, harbors, or conceals a person of undocumented status in the State of Oklahoma risks being prosecuted for felonious violation of this law. I did not ask about any research participant's immigration status but it is likely that many men in La Liga are undocumented. House Bill 1804 amplified my outsider status as a white man in this social world as my identity metaphorically projected the power of the state. In other words, many people in La Liga are suspicious of white people who are not Latinos as they represent the threat of deportation that House Bill 1804 represents. This is most likely the main reason it took me quite some time to build trust and rapport with research participants in La Liga who were only trying to protect themselves and their families. Because of this, building connections over several years and ultimately playing on a team were vital towards gleaning what it means to be a part of the social world of La Liga.

One of the larger obstacles I faced while doing this research was getting on a team. While conducting research on social networking and community development in leagues similar to La Liga in northern San Diego County in Southern California, the invitation to play came from a research participant who was the president of the league in the city of Encinitas that I was researching at the time. Although I wanted to replicate this process, getting access to the president of La Liga was very difficult and while I met him many times I could not get him to agree to a sit-down interview. He

did not voice any concerns about my research project and approved of me taking pictures at the games, but I was told by a local Oklahoma City Spanish language media entrepreneur that getting an interview with the La Liga president is exceptionally difficult. Because of this I knew that the invitation to get on a team in La Liga was not going to come from the administrative ranks. I tried filing for team placement as an individual through the website but it was only through a friend of a friend that I found myself playing for Deportivo Hidalgo.

Playing for one of the teams was a crucial aspect of this research. I was able to move from the sidelines and into the games to get firsthand experience of what game play is like. Playing on a team also allowed me to bond with some of the men I was working with. Being teammates created rapport and allowed me to build the trust that I greatly needed in order to conduct research. Being a native English speaker also helped when we had referees for our games who did not speak Spanish. Most of the men I played with spoke some English or were fluent in English, but often I would speak with referees about contentious or questionable calls. When the referees spoke Spanish, teammates would often explain to me what the call was if I did not quite understand the referee's decision.

Playing on a team also increased the amount of time I could spend on fieldwork. I was able to attend games on Saturdays and Sundays as well as practices on Tuesdays and Thursdays. At these practices I could chat with teammates, the atmosphere was more casual, and we would often have beers afterward. The situation was the same on game days as being on a team allowed me more opportunities to hang out with teammates afterward.

I only wish that I had been a better player as I would have potentially been able to join a team sooner. I did not find myself playing for a team until I had already conducted research for two years, but once I was playing for Deportivo Hidalgo, the pace of my fieldwork quickened intensely. I was invited to play again by the Deportivo Hidalgo coach during the 2013 season but had to decline in order to write this dissertation. He did tell me, however, that I could come back and play if the opportunity presented itself.

Part of this research also involves the world of indoor soccer in Oklahoma City. For the first two years of my fieldwork, I played indoor soccer at the Oklahoma City location of Indoor Soccer Arenas (ISA). When I played at ISA, I rotated between a few different teams. For 18 months I played on a team that could be considered international. Our team name was "Anklebreakers", and we had players who were Colombian, Mexican, Iranian, and European-American. In terms of this research, my time playing for another team named "Illegal Imports" allowed me to talk with some of my teammates who were Salvadoran about the themes in this research such as fútbol and cultural identity. The team name Illegal Imports was voted on by my teammates but it was originally proposed by a legal Mexican immigrant on our team. The team name was an inversion; a play on words that represented a humorous challenge to the discourses of illegality surrounding undocumented immigrants in Oklahoma City that House Bill 1804 created.

I also played in another outdoor soccer league called COASL (Central Oklahoma Adult Soccer League) from 2007-2010 for a team called "Strikers". I did not do very much direct fieldwork while playing for COASL but my experiences in

both COASL and La Liga are used for comparison as the social worlds of La Liga and COASL are quite different. The crowds at La Liga games are much larger and if there's a crowd to watch a COASL game, it is generally the relatives and significant others of the players involved. COASL is also much smaller: 3 divisions with about 5-6 teams each and about 300-400 players. I hesitate to call COASL a fútbol league as most of the players were not Latino and the style of game play was quite different; I would say COASL was more of a soccer league. Fútbol connotes a more Latin American style of playing and generally refers to leagues whose players are majority Latino.

While vacillating between the fútbol scene of La Liga, the soccer scene of COASL, and the indoor soccer scenes of ISA and Soccer City, whiteness was an ever present aspect of my identity that shaped my ethnographic research. Philosophers such as Plato, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre have argued that reflection is at the crux of any cogent way of perceiving and understanding our human social reality, just as understanding one's position in the social matrix is crucial to any conception of society. An issue anthropology has grappled with is this sense of reflection as it relates to the production and transmission of research and what this understanding of the anthropologist as fieldworker means when doing ethnographic research. As Bernard (2000) has demonstrated, ethnography is a scientific methodology in the sense that it is rigorous, although results can be difficult to replicate, but it is constantly tempered by a large number of uncontrollable variables; variables beyond the control of even the best ethnographers. Ethnography, however, also offers the fieldworker some control of extraneous circumstances. What to wear, how to speak, how to carry one's self, what to write down, what to bring to the field interaction; all of

these are aspects of the ethnographic interaction that the fieldworker can directly control. What the weather is like, what happened to participants last night or that day, how they feel that day, which language will be used, how skin tones affect social interactions, the history of the ethnographer's ethnicity or nationality to the community; these are all issues that are beyond the control of the fieldworker and must be approached seriously in order to better understand just what our data is really telling us.

Central to current anthropology is the understanding of the body as text that is read by those we encounter (Kavanagh-Alavi 2004; Lee 2004; Levine-Rasky 2002; Moya 2000). How our bodies are read by others occupies a central role in anthropological identity, gender, and sexuality studies. What clothes you wear, how you eat, what you smell like, how you talk, and the color of your skin are some issues that the ethnographer must be aware of when entering the field. These semiotic layers will influence whether or not we are accepted by our communities; for others these issues will remain unrecognized and as such will not be examined in terms of data analysis. Because ethnographers conduct research in unstable conditions, understanding our body as a cultural text is often the only somewhat controllable research condition we have. This is not to say that the ethnographer should, or must, change every mannerism they have, but if one understands oneself in this way mitigating potentially destructive social interactions becomes much easier.

Understanding the body as text simultaneously complicates and simplifies the ethnographic interaction. The initial distance and skepticism many participants can have towards curious ethnographers is better understood through a realization of the bodily textual factors that could have caused such a reaction. On the other hand,

understanding the body as text complicates the ethnographic interaction in some very serious ways. An ethnographer can become easily discouraged that s/he will constantly be read the same way over and over and cannot break the cycle; that his/her body is just too symbolically layered with too many things for the ethnographic interaction to overcome. The ethnographer must constantly be aware of his/her manners, their appearance, and his/her bodily comportment. This provides a richer understanding of the data, but keeping these issues in mind is incessantly difficult. Ethnographers need to be cognizant of him/herself in this way, but s/he cannot become consumed by him/herself in such a way that research progress is hindered or abandoned.

A cross-cultural "inscription" of the bodily text, so to speak, is intimately linked to issues of phenotypical appearance. What it means to have a certain skin color is constructed socially and as such the ethnographer needs to be versed in the racial history of where they are doing fieldwork. This is integral to the ethnographer's understanding of the social situations being examined. These issues are absolutely crucial when doing ethnography in the United States, as we have a culture and history mediated by social racial constructions. These constructions are imbued with myriad meanings, classifications, and stratifications. In the United States, race is the foundation of social stratification as race belies ethnicity and even gender as a social organizing principle. As such, the issue of race must be a part of any ethnographic undertaking.

This has been difficult for many ethnographers and for my own research this became difficult when dealing with a Latino population. Much like many lighter-skinned African Americans, many Latinos do not have a skin tone or phenotype that is

easily categorized by the current racial classification system in the United States. Latinos, rather, fall into a category that lies at the nexus between that which is white and European and that which is dark and African. This is best reflected on many bureaucratic forms in the United States which list racial categories such as Caucasian of non-Hispanic descent and Black of African descent. What this type of form indicates is how one can be white skinned, but because of some other identifying, stratifying issue such as last name, one may be no longer considered "white". This is exemplary of how racial meanings are never static, they are constantly undergoing change and contextual adjustment, "The meaning of race is defined and contested throughout society, in both collective action and personal practice. In the process, racial categories themselves are formed, transformed, destroyed and re-formed" (Omi and Winant 1986:61).

What is more, within the Latino population as a whole in the United States, there is much difference as to how even certain Latino communities are classified depending upon ethnic and/or geographic origins. For example, a light-skinned Argentine is going to be classified much differently than a light-skinned Mexican. The light-skinned Argentine will face racism and discrimination among the larger US population, no doubt, but not at the elevated level the Mexican may experience. This is due to the discourses built into our cultural understandings of each of the nation-states of Argentina and Mexico and the discourses that surround each country's inhabitants. This classification operates on levels much deeper than that of the nation-state, however, as even within the Mexican communities themselves, there are differences of stratification based on one's region of origin within Mexico.

Analyzing what it means to be a white ethnographer is just as important as what it means to conduct ethnographic research. The white ethnographer, especially in the United States and even more so in a state such as Oklahoma, must understand that they often exist on the more powerful side of the interaction, that they are easily perceived as threatening, and that this can be a hindrance to any ethnographic progress. According to Lipsitz, "All racialized populations suffer from the possessive investment in whiteness in some ways, but the historical and social circumstances confronting each group differ" (2006:58). Actual phenotypes and skin tones cannot be controlled by the white researcher, who carries more than just white skin into the interaction. What can be managed by the white researcher are the ways they unconsciously, or bodily signal any socially conditioned, unconscious tinges of racial intolerance. There can be little doubt that the dominant white culture in the United States acts as an immensely powerful conditioning factor in terms of how people from many racial backgrounds think about racial hierarchies. Lipsitz states, "alliances and antagonisms, conflicts and coalitions, characterize the complex dynamics of white supremacy within and across group lines" (2006:58).

This lingering sense of white supremacy that forms the backbone of the racial classifying power dynamic in the United States is ever present in most aspects of everyday interactions for both peoples of color as well as whites. As much as many whites, and non-whites, would not like to admit it, this is a reality of life in the United States. This is often relayed on a subconscious or unconscious level through the way you talk to others, your willingness to perform certain actions, your in/ability to speak

in other languages, and even through the way you do something as simple as sit and watch a sporting event or wait at the doctor's office.

What is more, the researcher must be conscious of how whiteness is understood within the population participating in their research. What whiteness signals to research participants is more important than what whiteness means to the ethnographer. In the same vein the ethnographer must be concerned with what their participant's non-whiteness means to them as the discourse surrounding non-whiteness will affect how an ethnographer views a participant population on some level because according to social geographer Alastair Bonnett, "whiteness remains the most important element in the organization of racial identity" (2001:73). When these understandings are reached, the ethnographic interaction becomes truly a sharing event where there is give and take between the ethnographer and research participant. Both are on some level of understanding and there is true rapport, "…the one-way street does not exist in ethnography" (Sands 2002:109).

Crucial Research Participants

In November of 2007 the Oklahoma State Legislature signed into law House Bill 1804 which at the time was one of the more stringent anti-immigration laws in the United States. This complicated my ability to do fieldwork because as discussed above, I was a white man seeking to do research with Latin Americans, many of whom were immigrants. I did not directly ask about anyone's status in terms of being documented or undocumented for this project. Building trust was extremely difficult as white faces

became equated with “La Migra” (immigration authorities) by many players and others involved in the league. I had to prove that I was not some sort of mole or secret immigration agent. Once the people I was working with realized that I was not La Migra, however, my relationships with research participants blossomed. Because of some of the implications of HB 1804 in Oklahoma in terms of persons who may be undocumented, pseudonyms are used for participants who may or may not be undocumented. Although I never directly asked about this status it is likely that a lot of Mexican immigrants living in South Oklahoma City may be undocumented. Thankfully through the delicate process of building this rapport, I developed friendships with several players and others associated with the league. Most notable was the friendship I developed with a key research participant, Guillermo.

Guillermo found out about my project after reading an article about it in *El Nacional de Oklahoma*. Guillermo is an anthropologist by training who made his way to the United States from Mexico to do research on migration for his Master’s thesis. Several years later he was working as a machinist but still every bit as interested in migration theory and performance theory as he was when he left Mexico to conduct fieldwork. When Guillermo and I met we had almost instant rapport not only because we were both anthropologists, but also because we both had experience conducting research on migration in the state of Oaxaca in Southern Mexico. Because of this I was able to run many of my ideas past Guillermo for his insights. Guillermo often contributed his perspectives to my fieldwork as well. For example, he was always curious about comparisons between La Liga and other leagues such as COASL.

Another key research participant, Matias Menis, wrote an article about this project as a way to help me recruit participants. Matias expressed interest in the project and in addition to interviewing me, Matias agreed to be interviewed. Matias also produces a local Spanish language television show that focuses on local Latino sports leagues entitled "*Fiesta Deportiva*". Originally from Buenos Aires and what he considered a rough part of the city, Matias had come to the United States to play fútbol at St. Gregory's University, a small Catholic university in Shawnee, Oklahoma. Matias had always found that fútbol helped to keep him away from the violence in his neighborhood in Buenos Aires so when the offer to play college-level fútbol in the United States came through, he jumped at the opportunity. After college Matias played in La Liga for Pumas, one of the league's elite teams. He married a Colombian journalism major at the University of Oklahoma, and together they produced not only the "*Fiesta Deportiva*" TV show, but also a monthly magazine on Latino sports in Oklahoma by the same name. Matias had built a small media business covering Latino recreational sports in Oklahoma.

Another key research participant was Raul Font. Raul was the league's resident doctor, he was born in Oklahoma but was of Puerto Rican heritage, and he was fluent in Spanish as well as a devout Catholic. Raul and I would talk nearly every Sunday that I went out to do fieldwork and his insights into the league's culture and finances were invaluable. Raul also helped me to meet some of the players and coaches in the league. Raul was seen by many of the players in the league as a knowledgeable authority figure and he would often get asked questions dealing with topics well outside the medical realm.

Alvaro Posadas, a referee from Bolivia, provided countless insights into some of the interpersonal dynamics taking place in the league. Alvaro was also seen as an authority figure by many players in the league and was consulted on a variety of issues ranging from medical issues like impotence to financial issues to issues surrounding citizenship and naturalization. Alvaro also told me about the Mexican drug cartels in Oklahoma City, which I appreciated knowing so I could be careful while doing fieldwork.

While Guillermo helped me to gain entry into Deportivo Hidalgo, it was one of the team's captains, Ricardo, who offered me an opportunity to play when he got hurt during the 2011 season and asked me to take his place. Even though he returned for the 2012 season and returned to playing center back, I continued to play with the team. Ricardo offered many insights that contributed to this account such as outlining some of the league's player policies and strategies that teams use on the playing field. Ricardo is a good friend and he even invited me to attend his daughter's *quinceañera*(15^{th} birthday party), a hugely important rite of passage in Mexican culture.

There were many other research participants who made this study possible, from the league's Vice President, Arturo Cardenas, who was the coach of Chivas OKC (a team I followed closely), to Enrique an immigrant from Tamaulipas, Mexico (who shared my longing for fresh seafood while living in America's Heartland). Roberto Abramowitz from *ESPN Deportes* (ESPN's Spanish language sports channel) also offered invaluable insights on fútbol and Latinos in the US. Juliana Stout from *El Nacional* provided me with abundant information about La Liga and other fútbol leagues and where they were playing in Oklahoma City. The insights I heard and the

perspectives that were expressed by research participants in this study ranged widely. Some were saddening, some were surprising, some were sophisticated, some absolutely hilarious, and all were fascinating. I feel very lucky to have been a part of the social world of La Liga and to be able to provide this account of a very important aspect of the social and cultural lives of many in the Mexican immigrant community in Oklahoma City.

Chapter overview

This dissertation focuses on transnational cultural identity among Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City. Gender, performance, authority, and power are some of the more salient aspects of La Liga that provide a window into how Mexican immigrants express transnational cultural identities while living in a newer receiving area for immigrants that itself lies at the intersection of the American Southern Plains and the American South.

Chapter 2 focuses on transnationalism and immigration to the U.S. The movement of peoples worldwide has accelerated and taken on new forms as global economic and cultural interconnectivity manifest in ways never before seen in human history. When people move across international borders, they do not just transcend geopolitical zones of demarcation. They transcend social borders of race, class, culture, ethnicity, and gender that become important aspects of immigration experiences (Stephen 2007). In order to adequately explain the complexity of traversing all these borders, anthropologists and other social scientists developed the concept of

transnationalism to describe this movement and the concomitant cultural and social changes that occur therein. These changes have been pronounced in a newer receiving destination such as Oklahoma City as the population of Latin American immigrants, mostly Mexicans, rose rapidly during a 20 year period between 1990 and 2010. This rapid rise in the population of Latin American immigrants in newer receiving destinations has had profound social and cultural effects on the local communities they arrive into, especially in the Southern Plains and the American South. In Oklahoma City, this rapid increase led to the passage of House Bill 1804 in 2007, which at the time was one of the strongest anti-immigrant laws in the country. This is not unique to Oklahoma City, however, as similar xenophobic reactions have taken place throughout small cities and towns in the Southern Plains and American South (Striffler 2005).

Chapter 3 focuses on the social world of La Liga. La Liga operates as a community hub through which Latino community organizations and local churches can access Latino community members in Oklahoma City, especially young men. The location of the La Liga field complex was carefully chosen and though in proximity to a major thoroughfare in South Oklahoma City, the field complex in many ways remains "hidden". The logistics of La Liga such as how many teams, the history of the league, and aspects of the league such as food vendors are examined. Refereeing in La Liga is prestigious and there are linguistic issues at play between players and referees during La Liga games. Finally, the role the Oklahoma City Police Department (OKCPD) has within the social world of La Liga is explored as OKCPD provides security services for La Liga games.

Chapter 4 examines gender, authority, and power in terms of the game of fútbol, as well as in the social world of La Liga. Latin American men are often stereotyped as exhibiting *machismo*, or an exaggerated sense of masculinity. Machismo refers to qualities of hyper-masculinity, such as aggression, power, the ability to be an autonomous social actor, the ability to dominate women, and the ability to provide for one's family and be the head of a Latin American household. What is problematic with this idea of machismo is that, in some sense, it stereotypes Latin American men limiting them within a narrow idea of what is masculine and how to be masculine that fails to reflect the varied reality of masculinity in multiple Latin American cultural contexts (Gutmann 1996). In the context of Mexican immigrant communities in Oklahoma City as well as La Liga, understanding differences in the domestic/societal versus public/political realms in Mexican immigrant life illuminates what happens to gender role norms when people traverse geo-political and cultural borders. In terms of gendered power dynamics in the context of La Liga, many research participants offered differing opinions on the role of women. Some felt that fútbol is a man's game, that women are to be spectators and make good vendors of tacos, *paletas*(fruit popsicles), and the like. Others feel that women can and should play fútbol. Women are a part of the social and cultural fabric of La Liga where they play many roles but these roles are reflective of those they play in the broader social context of the Mexican community in Oklahoma City.

Chapter 5 delves deeper into notions of embodiment, performance, and cultural practice. The meanings of a presentation of identity do not just exist within the appropriation of symbols as there is an unconscious element to presenting one's

identity. Social actors may appropriate some symbols of identity, such as wearing certain clothes or listening to certain styles of music but other aspects such as the language they speak, how they navigate the mundane, or even how they move their bodies are often unconscious uses of certain symbolic aspects of identity (Butler 1990, Mauss 1973). These parts of cultural identity that are to be found in La Liga are aspects of what anthropologist Marcel Mauss called "techniques of the body" (1973). These techniques of the body are part of a transnational cultural identity and how one plays the game in La Liga is a reflection of a cultural tradition and is a cultural practice that is important in recreating a Latin American version of fútbol while living in Oklahoma City.

Recreational fútbol also offers multiple arenas for the performance of identity among Mexican immigrants in the United States. Team names signify national and regional identities, as do the jerseys teams choose to wear. There is also a distinct way of playing fútbol, an embodied way of *performing* fútbol, which is unique to these leagues. A research participant once remarked that there is a "Mexican way of playing and an American way of playing." As I will explain in the coming chapters, what this means is that to play the Mexican way is an embodied performance of a transnational identity and alongside team names, jerseys, and other aspects of recreational fútbol, is a way to communicate your sense of belonging, alongside team names, jerseys, and other aspects of recreational fútbol, to a distinct cultural community in the United States. In La Liga the team Chivas OKC exemplifies this realm of the symbolic. The professional team Chivas of Guadalajara is often considered the quintessential Mexican team by Mexican and American fútbol fans as well as some of the men I interviewed in La Liga.

Yet this idea of Chivas as the representation of "Mexicano puro" (pure Mexican) persists even when there are non-Latin Americans playing for the team.

Chapter 6 concludes with an overview of this ethnography of La Liga and a summary of how a cultural practice such as recreational fútbol helps to better understand what it means to have a transnational cultural identity. Transnational cultural identities revolve around embodied performances, recreating and maintaining cultural practices and traditions that bolster connections to homelands hundreds or thousands of miles away, and that these transnational cultural practices and traditions contribute to those already existing in immigrant receiving destinations. The recent waning of migration from Latin America raises questions as to what the future holds for Mexican immigrant communities in the United States. No matter what changes take place, fútbol is an integral part of life in these communities, a tradition that spans generations, unites community members, and offers a connection to place and home to members of Latin American communities across the United States.

Chapter 2: Mexican Immigration to the U.S. and Transnationalism

Factors that drive immigration

In order to understand the importance of recreational fútbol for Mexicans in Oklahoma City, it is imperative to understand the immigration experience, why people choose to emigrate, and what happens socially and culturally when large numbers of people traverse international borders. Other states in the region such as Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona were part of the far northern reaches of Mexico in the 19th century while Oklahoma remained a territory that was part of the Louisiana Purchase. Even though Oklahoma was not part of Mexican territory prior to the Mexican-American war, many Mexicans lived in the region. Sizeable populations of Mexicans remained in areas that are now part of states like Texas and these Mexicans laid foundational social networks for the waves of migrations from Latin America to the United States that were to ensue for the next 150 years. Because of economic push and pull factors, Mexican immigrants have been living in and have been emigrating to the U.S. for the past 150 years. Yet because the numbers of Mexicans immigrating to the United States grew exponentially during the last 20 years or so, many people in the United States have perceived this immigration as a new aspect of United States history. Part of this perception of newness is based on Mexican immigrants settling in parts of the United States that did not previously have large Mexican populations, such as Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City was part of a wave of immigration to areas in the southern United States as new job opportunities in industries such as meat processing, construction, and service oriented businesses spurred the growth of Mexican immigrant communities.

Many factors drive emigration from Mexico to the United States, chief among them a desire to improve one's economic and financial status. Existing immigrant networks can make life as an immigrant somewhat easier, but whether or not to emigrate is not an easy choice for any Mexican and the immigration experience is fraught with peril. Beyond the dangers of crossing geo-political boundaries lay the numerous social and cultural consequences for Mexican immigrants who choose to move to the United States. Immigration from Mexico has waned for a number of reasons, such as the Great Recession in the United States and an increase in deportations due to intensified border security measures, but the fact remains that tens of millions of Mexican immigrants still live in the United States.

Immigration to the U.S. from Mexico

The 2010 United States Census shows that more than half of the Mexican immigrants in the United States live in the West. Many of the historical receiving areas for Mexican immigrants over the last 20 years, such as Texas, Arizona, and California were once a part of Mexican territory. Other historical receiving areas for Mexican immigrants include Chicago and Miami. Because immigrants tend to focus on moving to destinations that have existing populations from the same country of origin, it should come as no surprise that these areas of the United States have experienced the highest influx of Mexican immigrants.

Mexican immigration to the United States after 1848, the year of the end of the Mexican-American war, remained steady and did not experience rapid growth until the

development of the Bracero Program in the 1940s. The Bracero Program was developed by the U.S. government to fill a need for labor, largely agricultural, that began with the outbreak of World War II. World War II created a vacuum for labor in a number of sectors, as the men who had filled these occupations were drafted into combat. During the Bracero Program, 1942-1964, large numbers of Mexicans migrated to the United States in order to fill this need for labor. This was the first large-scale movement of Mexican immigrants into the United States since the end of the Mexican-American War. By the time the Bracero Program was terminated by Congress in 1965, 465,000 Mexicans had crossed the border and set up new lives in the United States (Martin 2003). These immigrants developed the social networks that came to play a role in facilitating the mass immigration of Mexicans that began two decades later in the late 1980s.

Throughout the 1980s, 8 million Mexicans made their way across the border of the United States and into ethnic enclaves in cities throughout the U.S. Southwest, including Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Dallas (Suarez-Orozco & Sommer 2000). Many industries, including agriculture, took advantage of this large influx of undocumented immigrants and were levied no fines and faced no consequences for hiring them. The rapid influx and subsequent exploitation of these immigrants, many of them undocumented, pushed the Reagan Administration to take the issue to Congress, who passed the Immigration and Reform Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) which set up a system to fine businesses who employed undocumented immigrants while giving those individuals who had been in the country since 1982 amnesty (Muzaffar, Meissner, and Bergeron 2011). When millions of undocumented Mexican immigrants were granted

amnesty under IRCA this reinforced the existing social networks that would facilitate the greatest emigration of Mexicans to the United States which began in the late 1980s and lasted for over 20 years. The economic boom of the 1990s in the U.S. coupled with the economic recessions occurring in Mexico and other Latin American nations as a result of neoliberal economic policies drove many immigrants to the U.S. in search of employment and higher wages than what could be earned at home. Demographers Sara Curran and Estela Rivero-Fuentes argue that it is imperative for immigrants to have existing social networks upon arrival in other countries as these networks aid in the transition to life in a foreign social and cultural milieu (2003). Without these social networks many immigrants would choose either to not make the move across international borders or would find themselves in a very precarious social situation upon arrival. Mexican immigrants are no exception to this phenomenon.

While earlier waves of Mexican immigrants settled in cities in the American West, especially the Southwest, during the late 1990s the new arrivals began to settle in other areas of the country such as the American South. The 2000 U.S. Census estimated that 31% of Mexican immigrants living in the United States lived in the American South. This remained constant in the 2010 U.S. Census as well, although Central Americans were more likely to reside in the South than Mexican immigrants, as 52% of Mexican immigrants still live in the West (2010 Census Briefs 2011: 5).

As mentioned above, social networks that facilitate migration were strengthened by the mass migration that began in the early 1990s. Mexicans often faced a difficult decision: stay in Mexico with limited job opportunities or immigrate to the United States with the hopes of better job opportunities and a chance to accumulate some

wealth, a reasoning that drove Mexicans to the United States in record numbers. As sociologists of migration Patricia Fernandez-Kelly and Douglas Massey argue:

> That voluminous stock of social links between Mexicans and Americans, combined with heightened economic integration, presents a formidable obstacle for U.S. attempts to seal the border selectively…restrictive border policies are not only ineffective; they are counterproductive. Instead of deterring Mexicans from moving to the neighboring country, they have promoted a more rapid growth in the size of the undocumented population…the greater the risks involved in reentry, the more they have tended to stay in the United States rather than returning home; and the longer they remain north of the border, the more likely they are to bring in their spouses and dependents to live with them (2007: 109-110).

When the U.S. economy went into a deep recession from 2007-2009, often referred to as the Great Recession, the jobs that had been employing Mexican immigrants either disappeared or were filled by U.S. citizens. For example the construction industry, an industry that employs Mexican immigrants in large numbers, was drastically affected by this recession.

By 2012 the Pew Hispanic Center indicated that the population of Mexican immigrants had fallen to an estimated 11.7 million people (2013). This most recent data for 2012 from the Pew Hispanic Center indicates that net migration from Mexico, for example, declined from 2007-2009 but has recently begun to rise slightly (2013). As mentioned above many of the industries that had employed Mexican immigrants before

The Great Recession never recouped the jobs that had existed before the recession. Now that these jobs no longer exist, many Mexican immigrants returned home even though the economic, political, and social state of Mexico remains dire in comparison to that of the United States.

Even though Mexican immigration has declined, there still remains a sizeable Mexican migrant population in the U.S. that has largely chosen or been forced to remain in the country as they have decided that it is too risky to return home and to continue dangerous border crossings. Beyond these risks, many Mexican immigrants have built social networks, raised families, become part of Mexican immigrant communities, and have developed relationships that have made the U.S. their home. The U.S. government has taken steps to curb border crossings with increased surveillance, the construction of a massive wall along the border, and increased deportation efforts. As mentioned above, this is causing migration to the U.S. to become an increasingly insecure and risky endeavor. The presence of cartels back home and the dangers of using smugglers, often cartel affiliated, to get across the border has always been quite dangerous but has become extremely volatile as of late. All of these factors have contributed to the decline in the migration of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. Yet the factors mentioned earlier such as having families, homes, social networks, and being a part of Mexican immigrant communities also serve to keep Mexican immigrants living in the U.S. within the nation's borders.

New Receiving Destinations: Mexican Immigrants in Oklahoma

This research focuses on Oklahoma, specifically Oklahoma City, a state and city that have experienced a rapid influx of Mexican immigrants from 1990 to the present (see Figure 4). Even though there have been Mexicans living in south Oklahoma City for generations, the population of Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma in 1990 was only about 27,000 (Pew Hispanic Center 2006). By 2006 that number had increased to nearly 87,000, roughly 80% of the total Latino population in Oklahoma of 98,000 (Pew Hispanic Center). By 2009 the total Latino population was estimated to be 111,000 (Pew Hispanic Center 2009). This rapid increase occurred over two time periods. Between 1990 and 2000, an estimated 38,000 Latin Americans moved to Oklahoma, the majority of them Mexican, in effect doubling the Latino population in 10 years (Pew Hispanic Center 2006). From 2000 to 2006, another 33,000 more Latin Americans, the majority of them Mexican, moved to Oklahoma. Oklahoma rapidly became a destination for Mexican immigrants and this rapid influx has changed the social, political, and economic landscape of the state.

Because industries such as meatpacking are moving from urban settings to rural ones, areas of the United States are experiencing rapid increases in populations of Mexican immigrants that they have not historically dealt with and this is often causing social and cultural conflict. In their analysis of a town in rural Iowa whose Mexican immigrant population grew very rapidly, sociologists of migration William Kandel and Emilio Parrado show how this rapid increase resulted in a cultural rift within the town between the immigrants and the U.S. citizens who viewed these new residents as a cultural threat (2005). Differences in language, culture, and tradition caused the town's

residents to become alarmed at the rapid increase in the presence of Mexican immigrants. Many of these residents worried that the town would become more culturally connected to Mexico than to the United States.

Oklahoma County, Oklahoma

	1990	2000	2007
Hispanic Population	25,452	57,336	86,033
Total County Population	599,611	660,448	701,807
Hispanics as Percent of County Population		9%	12%
		Change from 1990	**Change from 2000**
Hispanic Population Change		31,884	28,697
Percent Change in Hispanic Population		125%	50%

Figure 4: Hispanic Population, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma 2007. Source: Pew Hispanic Center, 2009.

Anthropologist Steve Striffler found a similar cultural rift occurring in small cities and towns throughout the American South in his examination of the chicken processing industry (2005). Striffler discusses an incident in Siler City, North Carolina where a county commissioner became so frustrated with the rapid influx of Latin American immigrants that he wrote a letter to the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service demanding more federal dollars to help offset the costs he perceived affected his police and other social services. This garnered national attention, eventually resulting a KKK rally in Siler City led by David Duke, "A white supremacist group organized an anti-immigration rally featuring David Duke…Siler City would be

the staging ground for future Duke demonstrations across the South and Midwest" (Striffler 2005: 149). Striffler argues that these rallies were not particularly successful but they do reflect the cultural tensions and reactions of xenophobia that have accompanied this mass immigration of Latin Americans into newer receiving destinations across the American South.

This is not just the case in Iowa and the American South as this cultural rift can also be found in Oklahoma. Especially in rural Oklahoma, in areas like the Oklahoma panhandle and the small town of Guymon, the restructuring of the economy that has resulted in business owners in industries like meat packing moving their facilities into rural areas has fueled a political reaction to Mexican immigrants. Instead of a discourse describing these immigrants as "undocumented", they have been described as "illegal", which allows for the development of a political argument that these immigrants are criminals and as such should be prosecuted under the powers of the law of the state.

The most powerful political reaction of this sort occurred in 2007, when the Oklahoma legislature passed House Bill 1804. This measure gave local law enforcement, teachers, and other government workers the power to detain undocumented immigrants until Immigration and Customs Enforcement could come and take custody of them. It became criminal for persons in these roles to fail to take action as proscribed by this law when dealing with someone they know is undocumented. The law was not veiled in its intent as it was fairly clear it targeted undocumented immigrants from Mexico and other nations in Latin America as opposed to immigrants from Asia, Europe, or Africa. Coinciding with the passage of this law were ballot measures whose goal was to make English the official language of the state.

House Bill 1804 and English-only language legislation reflect the cultural rift that arose as a result of the rapid increase in Mexicans immigrating to Oklahoma.

Immigrants who had arrived in Oklahoma to fill jobs in industries such as meatpacking and construction became subject to persecution by the state in ways that they had not been before. The sustained effect of this political reaction to Mexican immigration means that the lives of undocumented immigrants are filled with the constant fear of being apprehended by state authorities, handed over to Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, and then deported back to Mexico. The situation in Oklahoma has come to resemble what Leo Chavez described for San Diego County in the late 1980s, where those without papers lived a life full of fear in the shadows, constantly burdened by concerns about being picked up by "La Migra" and deported over the border back into Mexico (1993).

If a Mexican immigrant owns a house, cars, or other assets, s/he is much more likely to stay in the United States rather than returning to Mexico (Reyes 2001). While many of the research participants I spoke with only planned on living in the U.S. for a few years at most, they often found themselves owning these sorts of assets and developing social networks, becoming part of a Mexican immigrant community, and possibly starting a family. Owning a car or a house is a big symbol of success for Mexican immigrants and along with bringing family members and/or starting a family signal an intention of settling down or establishing a foothold in Oklahoma. The decision to stay is a logical one because Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma have established roots to the state and many of the research participants involved with La Liga that I spoke with considered it home.

While it is arguably important to keep track of undocumented statuses because of the policy implications involved, especially in terms of social services (Bean, et al. 2001), it is also important to keep perspective on whether or not Mexican immigrants will even access social services at all. One of the arguments made by Oklahoma State Legislators to aid in the passing of House Bill 1804 was that undocumented Mexican immigrants were causing a drain on the social service budgets of the state of Oklahoma. These Legislators argued that because many immigrants were not carrying health insurance and belonged to the working poor, they would access social services and hospital services adding burden to an already over-burdened systems. However, the Report of the Task Force on Illegal Immigration in Oklahoma, a group convened by the Oklahoma State Legislature, found that undocumented Mexicans access less than 1% of all social services in the state of Oklahoma compared to all other population groups (Report of the Task Force on Illegal Immigration in Oklahoma 2007). The Task Force finding did not hinder the passing of House Bill 1804 even though it was submitted on March 12, 2007, nearly 8 months before the eventual passing of the bill.

While the state legislature may have members who seek to oust Mexican immigrants from the state or to make life so difficult for them that they have no choice but to leave, many Mexican immigrants weathered the initial storm of House Bill 1804 and have remained in the state. In Oklahoma City, a research participant explained to me that the initial shock and fear among undocumented Mexican immigrants after the passing of House Bill 1804 caused many to leave and others to live their lives in fear of deportation. After a couple of months, however, many Mexican immigrants decided

that they were there to stay as many had jobs, homes, and families which gave them good reason to remain in the state.

The answer for Mexicans who have moved to the rural areas of Oklahoma in search of work in meatpacking, agriculture, or ranching, for example, is not quite as clear. While arguably still a difficult life, it is much easier to navigate social life in a city like Oklahoma City where there are 98,000 Latinos who can provide social networks and social support than it is to navigate social life in a small rural town such as Guymon with a population of approximately 12,000 people where Mexican immigrants can find little social support or have to make sure they are very careful in how they lead their everyday lives. The political and economic decision making that sends some of the more undesirable and dangerous work such as meatpacking to rural areas will continue in the United States. Unfortunately, many Mexican immigrants who choose to live in rural Oklahoma will likely continue to experience many social tensions.

Other Factors that Drive Immigration

For much of the history of Mexican emigration to the United States, the movement of people from Mexico across the border was generally a gendered phenomenon. Making the decision to emigrate was wrought with many dangers, dangers that were perceived to be risks that only men should take. This is reflected in the work of anthropologist Jeffrey Cohen and his examination of what he calls the "culture of migration" that exists within the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero in southern

Mexico (2004). Cohen argues that within these sending contexts, migration is considered the purview of men and that women are more likely to migrate internally, to Mexico City for example, where they often find work as domestic servants (2004). Similarly, Curran and Rivero-Fuentes explain that much of the history of Mexican migration across the U.S./Mexico border has been dominated by men, and that internal migration within Mexico has been dominated by women (2003).

The demographic data show that Mexican immigration is still mostly undertaken by men, but the proportion of women has grown. The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that the gender ratio between Mexican immigrants in the U.S. in 2008 was about 57% male to 43% female. Within the state of Oklahoma, an estimated 60,000 are male and 39,000 female (Pew Hispanic Center 2006). That means that the state of Oklahoma generally reflects the gender ratio among Mexican immigrants across the United States.

Ever increasing numbers of women are emigrating to the U.S. and are arriving either with husbands or getting married while living in the United States. One of the social ramifications of this is changing gender roles. In Mexico, traditional gender roles can be understood in terms of the idea of the *casa* (home) and the *calle* (street) (Adler 2008). The *casa*, or the domestic sphere, is considered the realm of women; women are homemakers and take care of children and attend to the needs of the family. The *calle*, or the public sphere, is considered the realm of men; men are politicians, they drink with their friends in cantinas, and provide income to meet the needs of the family. In her work with Mexican immigrants from the Yucatan in Dallas, anthropologist Rachel Adler found that these traditional gender roles changed upon arrival in the U.S. (2008). This, however, does not mean gender roles are radically changing among Mexican

immigrants in Oklahoma City. During the course of my research, Mexican women remarked during interviews that gender roles are not changing for several reasons which will be explored in depth in Chapter 4.

Correlated with these social and cultural issues are some surprising findings regarding return migration, who stays in the United States, and the development of bi-national families as a result of Mexican migration. Latina/Latino studies scholar Belinda Reyes examines why most immigrants desire to return within 5 years of entry into the United States (2001). Men are much more likely than women to return, and there are two reasons for this. First of all if women are coming with husbands or getting married while, then the men who are more likely to return are largely single men, as it is less dangerous for a single man to make the journey back to a country of origin. Second, if women are coming with husbands or getting married while living in the U.S., then this is a migration experience that involves two people which means that it is twice as hard to come back to the United States if the couple wants to return to the U.S. for any extended period of time (Reyes 2001). Using Oklahoma as an example, roughly 4000 Mexican women give birth every year in the state, which means that these women now have children who are U.S. citizens with access to U.S. education, U.S. social services, and to other rights of U.S. citizenship, which are all major factors deterring women from returning to Mexico making Oklahoma home for many of the Mexican immigrants I spoke with and interviewed (Pew Hispanic Center 2008; Reyes 2001).

Another issue that Mexican immigrants face involves employment opportunities. One of the reasons that Mexican immigrants moved to the American South and Southern Plains was due to the restructuring of certain sectors of the U.S.

economy. The stereotype of Mexicans as agricultural workers is belied by the reality that much of the work done by Mexicans in the U.S. is in the service sector, such as hospitality industries, and in construction. In terms of farm work, agricultural economist Philip Martin found that while some Mexicans still work as farmhands or crop pickers, it is extremely rare for a Mexican migrant to actually become a farmer in the U.S. (2002). The structure of employment in agriculture and the constant movement of Mexican migrants who follow crop production around the country ensure that they do not move up the ladder from farm work to owning their own farms. They are thus caught in an occupational web that keeps them in the realm of unstable and underpaid work as agricultural work is usually an occupational dead end (Martin 2002).

A similar situation exists within the industry of meatpacking. As mentioned earlier, Kandel and Parrado examine how the meatpacking industry in the United States has increasingly moved out of large cities and into small towns and rural areas, especially in the American South (2005). These meatpacking jobs are dangerous and often unpleasant, but meatpacking does offer Mexican immigrants some opportunities for upward mobility. This mobility, however, is tempered by the dangerous aspects of this work keeping turnover rates high and non-migrant U.S. citizens out of this line of work (Kandel and Parrado 2005). Thus within the meatpacking industry there exists a job where Mexican immigrants can easily obtain employment that pays a decent wage. Because the working conditions in the meatpacking industry are considered abhorrent to most non-migrant U.S. citizens, these jobs can offer some job security (Kandel and Parrado 2005). In fact, several of my teammates on Deportivo Hidalgo had jobs working at a meat cutting business in Oklahoma City.

While Martin and Kandel and Parrado examine farm work and meatpacking, the data shows that Mexican immigrants still predominantly work in the service and construction industries in the United States as well as in the state of Oklahoma (Pew Hispanic Center 2006, 2008). This means two things. First of all, as argued by Marcelli and Cornelius, Mexican immigrants remain largely concentrated in urban areas where work in service industries such as construction, restaurants, hotels, and as domestic servants (largely the purview of female Mexican immigrants) is to be found (2001). Secondly, because Mexican immigrants are apt to live and work in urban areas, they are often invisible social actors who can avoid detection, especially desirable if they lack documentation. Urban areas in many parts of the U.S. can offer Mexican immigrants the opportunity to live in Latino ethnic enclaves. These enclaves are often quite insular and offer Mexican immigrants a social life surrounded by people who share cultures from their homelands. Yet many Mexican immigrants find themselves living and working in new receiving areas of the United States such as the rural American South and as discussed above, because this part of the U.S. has not historically been an area where Mexican immigrants choose to move, this can result in social and cultural conflicts.

Transnationalism

What happens to social ties and cultural identities when people move across international borders has always been of concern in anthropology. The movement of peoples worldwide has accelerated and taken on new forms as global economic and

cultural interconnectivity are manifest in ways never before seen in human history. When people move across international borders, they do not just transcend geo-political zones of demarcation. Questions of identity and culture also become paramount aspects of this movement. What is more is that this movement does not just traverse international borders, but social borders of race, class, and ethnic identity as well. Thus anthropologists and other social scientists are faced with developing a new concept to describe this movement and the concomitant cultural and social changes that take place with this movement. Migration is no longer a sufficient term to describe the movement of people around the world, hence the development of the concept of the transnational.

People and cultures coming into contact through migration has always been a part of human history. For much of human history, migration was the hallmark of human existence. This continued movement perpetuated even in light of the development of sedentary civilizations, for example the Roman Empire, where disparate cultural groups often came into contact. Thus the idea of global cultural interconnectivity is not exactly new. What are new are forms of this interconnectivity that are a result of new technologies, the development of the idea of the nation, and the changing nature of what the term nation means. Anthropologists conducting fieldwork within the last 30 years have been in a special position to observe these changes in global cultural interconnectivity and see the need for the development of a way to conceptualize this new interconnectivity.

Thus the concept of transnationalism arose due to the need to describe what the concept of migration could not. Migration carries multiple meanings and can be applied to contexts as disparate as the early human history of nomadic hunter-gatherers as well

as the more modern contexts of migrating for employment and/or economic advancement. What migration fails to address are the social and cultural contexts of interaction that are part of human movement. Transnationalism, as a concept used to describe these social and cultural aspects of human movement, is a necessary concept for anthropologists because of the rise of a fairly recent form of human social organization, that of the nation.

The nation, etymologically at the core of the term transnationalism itself, did not arise out of some sort of social and cultural vacuum. Forming a nation and creating a sense of bonding that the idea of the nation instills in its members is a purposeful project and one that lies in specific historical contexts. Benedict Anderson theorizes that the development of the printing press during the rise of early capitalism in Europe gave birth to the first industry, that of book printing (2006[1983]). Early printers eventually ran out of material to print and had only a limited buying public to print for because most people who were actually literate in the 16th century were elites who wanted to read classics written and printed in Latin and ancient Greek which meant that there was an inherently limited market for books. Printers needed a new market for their wares and a way to increase rates of literacy among the greater populace. Anderson argues that this is what drove these early capitalists to begin printing in local vernaculars, but books were not the focus of this printing. Instead these printers came up with the idea of the newspaper, a way to spread information about events happening in local contexts that had the effect of changing the consciousness of people from disparate individuals into a sense of a cohesive community (Anderson 2006[1983]). What is more is that these newspapers were printed in local vernaculars and dealt with

local issues so that the average person could appreciate the material and it was material that made some sense in terms of their daily lives (Anderson 2006[1983]).

By bringing together stories that dealt with localized events, these early printers had discovered a way to boost sales as these newspapers would be printed daily or weekly and once read the reader had little desire to re-read them and so readers would buy the newest editions as they rolled off the presses (Anderson 2006[1983]). What the use of local vernacular and printing about local events caused was a change in local consciousness. People became aware of events happening around their locality that they may not have been aware of before and this awareness bonded them to each other, even though they would likely never meet most of the people whose stories were printed in the newspaper. This created the idea of the "imagined community"; namely that through these associations people began to feel an affinity for fellow members of a locality without actually knowing them (Anderson 2006[1983]). This sense of the imagined community was seized upon by local leaders and eventually used to forge the idea of the nation: people who shared the ability to speak and read using a specific vernacular and who felt a bond of togetherness without actually knowing each other (Anderson 2006[1983]).

Ernest Gellner, another theorist of the rise of the nation, has similar ideas to Anderson yet Gellner's focus on the development of the nation lies in educating the populace to fuel capitalist demands for skilled labor (1983). For Gellner, the use of local vernaculars in printing was more directed at increasing rates of literacy and educating local persons who would be necessary to provide the labor for the burgeoning capitalist industries developing in Europe during the 16th and 17th century (1983). It

was through the use of printing in local languages that developed widespread literacy and allowed the populace to be educated. This education made them skilled laborers and their labor was used to fuel capitalist enterprise (Gellner 1983).

The use of these vernaculars and the creation of this sense of "imagined community" are tied to geographic contexts. To speak a local language and to feel a sense of belonging to an "imagined community" were initially tied to specific localities and part of this sense of belonging is one's identity being tied to these specific localities (Anderson 2006[1983]; Gellner 1983). As people move across national borders in the modern world they bring these senses of local identity with them. It is this transcendence of traditional notions of national identity that precipitated the development of the concept of the transnational. Transnationalism describes a social and cultural identity that is not necessarily tied to one's position in geographic space. Anthropologists doing fieldwork in the last 30 years realized that many of the people they were working with had brought aspects of their local, or national, identities with them as they moved across international borders and that this movement of identity across borders was not adequately explained by the term migration. Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc were some of the first anthropologists to describe this aspect of the movement of social and cultural national identities across geographic spaces (1992, 1994). Because of this movement of socio-cultural and national identities, Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc decided that the term transnational was a more appropriate conceptualization of the social reality they were witnessing. Because someone moved from Mexico to the United States, for example, did not mean that crossing the national border between these countries inherently meant that one

exchanged Mexican national affiliation for U.S. national affiliation. What is more is that this person may feel ties to both countries in different ways and as such does not appropriate one specific cultural or national identity at all times. Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc also did not mean that the transnational migrant had some sort of identity that was "betwixt and between" or some sort of identity tied to a "third space". Rather these transnational identities are culturally and nationally authentic as these persons remain tied to both countries simultaneously and this molds both their sense of identity and ties to each nation (Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1992, 1994).

Social actors are able to facilitate transnational identities because of the modern world's technological advances, especially in terms of communication. Michael Kearney, an anthropologist of migration and transnational identities, argued that transnationalism is facilitated by technologies such as telephonic communication, the internet, and recorded media where immigrants can very rapidly communicate with people back in their home nation and where immigrants and those they are connected to back in their home nation can share events in each other's lives via video and audio recordings (Kearney 1995). These technologies facilitate a sort of hyperspace that allows the transnational person to maintain ties to their home nation while developing a social life in their current nation of residence, thus facilitating the perseverance of two or more national identities (Kearney 1995). These technological advances have de-centered the nation as a geographic space and instead highlight how the nation has become more of a social and cultural identity that can transcend geo-political boundaries (Kearney 1995).

Pelotas y Paletas: Transnational Cultural Practices of Mexican Immigrants

Media occupies an important role in La Liga Latina y Americana, as well as in the lives of Mexican immigrants living in Oklahoma City. In many ways, Spanish language media help to create a sense of imagined community among Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City. For example *El Nacional de Oklahoma*, the most widely read Spanish language weekly newspaper in Oklahoma City, creates this sense of community in several ways. First of all they cover stories on a local level that are very relevant to the mundane aspects of Mexican immigrants' lives. Stories covering local dance studios, local events, ads for car dealers and lawyers in Spanish, recipes, love advice, and happenings involving local Latino children are exemplary of an entire section devoted to Latino life in Oklahoma City, "Ritmo de Oklahoma" (Rhythm of Oklahoma). The main section of the paper is largely devoted to news that is relevant to Latinos and many articles deal with immigration issues, news regarding the drug war in Mexico, a sports section that largely covers professional Mexican and European fútbol leagues, and an opinion page that offers a "point" and "counter-point". One other section of "Ritmo de Oklahoma" that is part of this notion of the creation of community is a "man on the street" section where local Latino community members are asked their opinions on pressing issues of relevance to the community. For example in 2010, I was interviewed for this section and the question asked about who we would vote for in the upcoming Oklahoma gubernatorial race.

During an interview conducted in 2009 with Juliana Stout, a highly educated immigrant from Colombia and one of the editors of *El Nacional* at the time, she explained that while the paper is dedicated to covering local Latino community events

in Oklahoma City one of their other missions is to improve the Spanish language literacy of the immigrant population in the city. Juliana, along with other educated Latinos in the city, have expressed dismay at the use of certain slang, not necessarily expletives but words that are modified versions of English words, for example "troca", for pick-up truck. Juliana felt that it was important for *El Nacional* to present a version of Spanish that is grammatically correct and that uses "proper" Spanish language vocabulary. This effort aims at providing some sort of Spanish language education to a populace that may not have completed much more than grade school, if any schooling at all, back home in Mexico. This also offers second generation Latinos an opportunity to read in Spanish; this is an opportunity that they may not have in Oklahoma City public schools. This effort, however, has one more dimension as *El Nacional* publishes one page in the "Ritmo de Oklahoma" section in English with the explicit purpose of offering its readers an opportunity to practice reading in English.

In terms of televised media, "*Fiesta Deportiva*", occupies a different niche in the lives of players in La Liga Latina y Americana. A television show locally produced and broadcast in Oklahoma City, "Fiesta Deportiva's" first few episodes were largely comprised of happenings within La Liga such as game play highlights and low lights, player profiles, and top goals of the week. Roughly half of its air time would be devoted to La Liga with the other half being devoted to other fútbol leagues and/or basketball leagues and volleyball leagues. "*Fiesta Deportiva*" offers La Liga players the opportunity for local media exposure and not just any media exposure, but media exposure directly targeting other Latinos. In fact, for some players finding their way into an episode of "*Fiesta Deportiva*" is an accomplishment of which they can be

proud, especially if one is featured in the segment highlighting the top plays of the week.

Both of these forms of media help Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma maintain a transnational identity while living in Oklahoma City as they provide news regarding traditional cultural practices while helping create a feeling of being at home while living in the United States. These media also contribute to already existing cultural practices in Oklahoma City. Spanish language media complement English language media and many of the issues covered in *El Nacional* are those covered in English papers such as *The Oklahoman*, the largest print newspaper in Oklahoma City. A good example of this is the section mentioned above that operates as a point, counter-point in *El Nacional*. Quite often the issue tackled in this section is one that is not only important to the Latino community in Oklahoma City but to other communities in Oklahoma City as well. If, for example, school reform is a current story thread in mainstream English language media, it will be in this section in *El Nacional* as well.

Anthropologist Daniel Linger's work explores Japanese-Brazilian identities in Japan where he explores other aspects of social life other than media that allow for a facilitation of transnational cultural identities. Many Japanese migrated to Brazil in the late 19th century as a result of the abolition of slavery which resulted in a Brazilian need for labor. Because of this historical migration, there are roughly 200,000 Japanese-Brazilians living in Brazil. Linger focuses on what happens when some of these Japanese-Brazilians return to Japan where they confront a very different social reality that changes their sense of national affinity and cultural identity. Linger describes how in Brazil, Japanese-Brazilian identity is accepted and considered somewhat exotic and

curious (2001). Yet, when many of these Japanese-Brazilians decide to move to Japan because of a Japanese need for labor in manufacturing industries, they find themselves as marked ethnic social actors. Their Brazilianness is derided and negatively marks them as not truly Japanese (Linger 2001). Linger describes how this social mitigation causes many Japanese-Brazilians to begin to feel more connected to the nation of Brazil and their Brazilian national identity than that of Japan and their Japanese ancestry. This sense of Brazilianness is facilitated by another aspect that is important to the facilitation of transnational identity, that of the ability to buy Brazilian imported products and to locate Brazilian social spaces in Japan. Linger describes Restaurant 51, a social sanctuary of sorts where Japanese-Brazilians can find solace and strength in their Brazilianness while living in Japan (Linger 2001). At Restaurant 51, Japanese-Brazilians can buy Brazilian food, Brazilian musical recordings, and can place phone calls to relatives and friends back home in Brazil thus helping them to maintain transnational ties to the nation of Brazil (Linger 2001). Restaurant 51 is considered exotic and kitschy by many of the Japanese who may visit for a meal or a soda but through this restaurant, Japanese-Brazilians are able to bolster their sense of Brazilian identity while working as transnational laborers in Japan.

Rather than an establishment like Restaurant 51, for Mexican immigrants living in Oklahoma City, where they remain a highly inconspicuous minority, La Liga offers social sanctuary. While Mexican immigrants live "shadowed lives" in most of the United States, they are truly invisible social actors in Oklahoma (Chavez 1993). Because of this invisibility and much like the Japanese Brazilians Linger describes, social sanctuaries such as La Liga take on a crucial importance. In this league

Mexicans are the dominant social actors where the game is played on their terms, where their language is spoken, where their foods are served, where their music is heard, and where their other important cultural practices and traditions mold the social atmosphere.

Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City do not necessarily have the ethnic ties to the U.S. that Japanese-Brazilians have to Japan in Linger's work, but the notion of social spaces that cater to the needs of transnational immigrants are a very important part of immigrants' lives while living and working so far away from home. These spaces are one aspect of immigrant life that allows them to maintain ties to two countries simultaneously. La Liga symbolically reflects this notion through the deliberate representation of nations. During the first two years of my fieldwork, the flags flown at the field complex were generally the league flag, the Mexican flag, and the state of Oklahoma flag. As of 2012 the league flies a multitude of flags that represent the origins of all its players, even flags from Africa. The 2012 season marked the first time that La Liga flew a U.S. flag; research participants did not know why the U.S. flag had not been flown before 2012 but this has something to do with the ties Latin American immigrants, especially Mexicans, have to their home states or provinces back home.

Transregional identities are very important in La Liga as evidenced by the way teams are named as team names go beyond indicating Mexican or Latin American origins and instead reflect the origins of players from very specific locales such as states, provinces, and cities. Transregionalism, or translocalism, is a vital aspect of the formation of transnational identities for Mexican immigrants throughout the United States as, "Translocal placemaking is a process of immigrants' exerting agency on their

locality…and the production of power, meaning, and new identities" (Main and Sandoval 2015:73). Exemplary of this phenomenon is the team Chivas OKC who flies the flag of the Mexican professional team Chivas de Guadalajara as well as an Oklahoma flag for their La Liga games (see Figure 5). Much like the flags that La Liga flies at its complex more generally, the flying of the Oklahoma flag for so many years as opposed to a U.S. flag signifies that a link to the state of Oklahoma may be stronger than a tie to the United States as a whole. This is a reflection of the importance those involved in La Liga put on regional identities, so while these Mexican immigrants are transnationals, they are also transregionals as they associate with a specific part of their home country as well as a specific part of the United States, the state of Oklahoma.

La Liga also facilitates transnational cultural events for Mexican immigrants such as the season opening ceremonies that include teams parading their uniforms, banners, and *porras* (fan clubs) around the field complex for all to see. One important transnational tie to Mexican homelands is that each team has a *reina* (queen). These *reinas* are judged by Mexican beauty standards, not necessarily U.S. beauty standards. The winning *reina* in 2011 was a mestiza teenage girl, most likely no older than 16. These *reinas* tend to be daughters of a team member in her late teenage years, i.e. older than 15, and the outfits they wear rival those seen at quinceañera (see Figure 6). To have one's *reina* chosen as champion is seen as prestigious and as a demonstration of the "Mexicanness" of one's team (the symbolic nature of the *reinas* is further explored in depth in Chapter 4).



Figure 5: A Chivas OKC Player takes a corner kick: the two flags flown from the white pickup in the background are a Chivas flag and a State of Oklahoma flag. Photo by Kleszynski 2010.



Figure 6: 2011 Chivas OKC *rein*as. Photo by La Liga Latina y Americana, www.lasloi.com, accessed 11/10/2011.

The season opening ceremonies are also an example of the embodiment of transnational cultural identities. Through the parade of uniformed players accompanied by their *porra* and *reinas*, these teams demonstrate a tie to cultural traditions found in their homelands that is presented as part of their bodies. The body becomes read as a text as uniforms are worn on bodies, *porras* are a body of fans supporting the team, and the presentation of a young woman in a dress are symbols of cultural traditions found in their homelands that are reproduced in Oklahoma City as part of a presentation of a transnational Mexican identity.

Lok Siu provides a similar example of how transnational social actors remain tied to two or more nations via cultural practices and traditions that are centered on the body. There is a sizeable population of Chinese in Panama who have a much different experience than Japanese-Brazilians working in Japan. Chinese-Panamanians are accepted by the state as a viable part of the nation as evidenced by their ability to speak Spanish, the teaching of Chinese in schools, and the overall acceptance of Chinese-Panamanians in greater Panamanian society (Siu 2005). What is a fascinating prism for examining transnational social life among Chinese-Panamanians are beauty pageants that are held in Panama. These pageants have multiple categories that reflect both Chinese and Panamanian cultural norms. One category within the pageant describes classic senses of Asian beauty, i.e. gracefulness, high cheekbones, pale skin, a refined beauty and a sense of respect for Chinese cultural traditions. Another category describes classic senses of Panamanian beauty, i.e. a curvaceous figure, mocha skin, a sense and respect for Panamanian tradition, and the ability to dance to Latin rhythms (Siu 2005). What is most interesting, however, is that the Chinese-Panamanian judges

respect a contestant's ability to compete in either category, sometimes both, thus demonstrating that there is a transnational value given to what it means to be Miss Chinese-Panamanian (Siu 2005). This reflects an embodied transnational understanding of beauty in that there is a sense of Chinese beauty that is maintained and valued while living in Panama, but there is also a sense of Panamanian beauty that is respected and appropriated as well by Chinese-Panamanian women living in this dual cultural context. To merely describe this as the result of immigration fails to address the real cultural values that are placed on beauty and the body in these pageants and the ability for a contestant to be considered beautiful in terms of multiple cultural contexts. More specifically these pageants reflect a transnational evaluation of beauty among a transnational populace that is simultaneously tied to Panamanian cultural norms and Chinese cultural norms (Siu 2005).

Both examples of Restaurant 51 and Chinese-Panamanian beauty pageants speak of the value of the ability, or inability, to deploy cultural capital within transnational social contexts. Chinese-Panamanians have the ability to speak Spanish and to understand Panamanian cultural norms in terms of beauty, two aspects of cultural capital that allow Chinese-Panamanians to be thriving transnational social actors living in Panama (Siu 2005). While Japanese-Brazilians do have the sanctuary of Restaurant 51, they lack the ability to speak Japanese or the knowledge of Japanese social customs that would make their social lives less inconspicuous while living in Japan (Linger 2001). This lack of cultural capital is also discussed by Aihwa Ong in her work among wealthy Chinese transnationals living in the San Francisco Bay Area (1999). Ong's work focuses on immigrants from China who possess massive wealth. Contrary to

Linger's work among Japanese-Brazilians who are hired in Japan as cheap labor, the Chinese Ong works with come to the United States with massive wealth as a result of the opening of the Chinese economy to capitalist enterprise (1999). While these Chinese arrive in the United States with massive wealth, this does not translate directly into their acceptance into the upper echelons of U.S. society. This is because these Chinese immigrants do not possess the cultural capital that translates to upper class status in the United States (Ong 1999).

Like Japanese-Brazilians, wealthy Chinese transnational immigrants in the U.S. do not necessarily speak good English, which is perhaps the first prerequisite to acceptance into the upper classes of U.S. society. What is more is that these Chinese transnational immigrants have little knowledge of the U.S. upper class life such as appreciation for Western European classical music, theater, opera, or knowledge of what private schools children should attend, etc. Once these wealthy Chinese transnational immigrants discover what some of this cultural capital is, they then try to instill this knowledge in their children realizing that as the first generation of immigrants, they will likely not be able to access true upper class U.S. status in ways their second generation children may be able to (Ong 1999). While wealthy Chinese transnational immigrants living in the U.S. want their children to speak Chinese and retain aspects of Chinese cultural identity, they see the need for their children to be able to speak English fluently, to play instruments, and/or attend certain schools in order to obtain the cultural capital that will one day allow them entry into U.S. upper class society (Ong 1999). In this way, wealthy Chinese transnational immigrants want their children to be even more comprehensive transnational actors than they themselves

could be with not only the money to be considered upper class, but the cultural capital to be considered U.S. upper class as well. Yet these first generation wealthy Chinese transnational immigrants also want their children to maintain ties to traditional Chinese culture (Ong 1999).

El Partido, Identidad, y Fronteras (The Game*, Identity, and Borders)*

The Mexican immigrants playing in La Liga have some cultural capital in some contexts, but little in others. In terms of language, the de facto lingua franca of the league is Spanish. This being said, there are referees who do not speak Spanish and in these instances a team captain or other team member who speaks English becomes the representative for the team. Being unable to speak Spanish in La Liga, however, is detrimental which is unlike the greater cultural context of Oklahoma City. The Spanish language is often derided in many contexts in Oklahoma City and has been the target of "English Only" political movements in the state of Oklahoma. In terms of my fieldwork, speaking Spanish was essential and was one of the ways I had to build trust with the players in this league. To not speak Spanish clearly marks one as outside the norm in this league and the only way to overcome this barrier is to be a second/third generation Mexican immigrant in the league in which case one's ethnic background comes to mark acceptance in lieu of linguistic ability.

Other types of cultural capital deployed in La Liga include jerseys, team names, and *porras*. *Porras* are fan clubs where the same group of people will often go to La Liga games to support friends and/or family who play in the league. The *porras* in La

Liga mirror a social phenomenon that is found among fans of professional leagues worldwide and it is a socially significant aspect of La Liga for several reasons. First of all it gives people, especially men, who do not play in the league a relationship with the team. *Porras* are mainly comprised of men as some are friends of the players while others are fathers, uncles, nephews, cousins, or sons of players. Some *porras* have women members as well. To be a part of a *porra* of a team in La Liga provides a metaphorical sense of belonging; *porras* offer the ability to be on the team without actually playing for the team.

The teams that play in the A division, the league's highest, that are popular and powerful almost always have a large and well organized *porra*. Having a large and well organized *porra* is prestigious and demonstrates to other spectators and teams that your team has a deep history in La Liga and a strong fanatical following. A striking example of this is Pumas, a perennial fan favorite in La Liga. The professional team UNAM in the first division of Mexican professional soccer is the Pumas and their *porras* are renowned for being rowdy, noisy, and operating under the philosophy of "*desmadre*", a concept that signifies going against nearly every proper societal convention when the *porras* gather for games (Magazine 2007). *Desmadre* signifies a defiance of society and polite behavior. The *porra* for Pumas in La Liga is very similar. They are noisy, rowdy, and often do things that could be classified using the term "*desmadre*". The *porra* for Pumas often hooks up a public address system for very important games and plays actual recorded chants of the Pumas *porras* who follow this professional team in Mexico City. Because of these often intense displays, when the Pumas play in La Liga,

their *porra* is a source of support for the team, excitement for the spectators, and inspiration for the players.

The *porra* for Deportivo Hidalgo, the team that I played for, was much smaller but it is a very dedicated group of friends and family who would come to our games. Drinking beer and yelling at the referees in both Spanish and English were favorite pastimes of our *porra*. Having their support was crucial and in a sense brought recognition to our team that we might not have otherwise had. Our *porra* was comprised of wives and girlfriends of players, children of players, and good friends of players. The Deportivo Hidalgo *porra* would also share the mood of the team; often angry and despondent when we were losing, jovial and humorous when we were winning, especially so if the game was a blowout (more analysis of *porras* in terms of a performance of transnational cultural identity is offered in Chapter 5).

While cultural capital is crucial for transnational immigrants to be able to navigate two or more national and cultural worlds at once, the reality is that international immigration and transnational identities are a result of global capitalism. Ong's work with wealthy Chinese transnational immigrants demonstrates one aspect of how global capitalism is changing cultural, national, and social life (1999). Yet while global capitalism drives international migration and transnationalism, to understand transnationalism anthropologists must understand people's lives as lived "on the ground" or "from below" (Smith and Guarnizo 1998). Smith and Guarnizo argue that while the actions of international corporations or national governments may result in the movement of people around the world, transnationalism can only be understood through examining people who live transnational lives (1998). Transnationalism as a descriptor

can be applied to governmental policy or the reality that a corporation has offices in multiple locations around the globe, but to understand how transnationalism as a concept works, the anthropologist must examine those who are living transnational lives (Smith and Guarnizo 1998).

The ethnographic data from La Liga as well as the works described above provide examples of this lived reality of transnational lives. Japanese-Brazilians working in Japan, wealthy Chinese transnational immigrants living in the U.S., Chinese-Panamanians living in Panama, and Mexican immigrants living in Oklahoma City all provide unique examples of transnationalism as lived and while some of these cases focus on issues such as cultural capital, one issue that is omnipresent in the lives of transnational social actors is the concept of the border. Robert Alvarez first called upon anthropologists to understand the border as a conceptual tool (1995). The border is not just a line that marks where one national geo-political space ends and another begins, according to Alvarez, but rather the border can be extended to social and cultural life as well. People who decide to cross national geo-political borders also face social borders dealing with race, class, and ethnicity that mold their migration experiences (Alvarez 1995).

Ong's work explicates this crossing of the social border of class among wealthy Chinese who have moved to the United States (1999). What about those immigrants who arrive without wealth, who carry inconspicuous identities in their home nations that continue to mark them as "other" upon arrival in other countries? This is the focus of Lynn Stephen's work with Mixtec immigrants in California, Oregon, and Washington. Mixtecs who decide to move to the U.S. carry with them a doubly marked

social identity upon arrival. In Mexico, Mixtecs face social borders as indigenous peoples in a nation that values mestizaje as a reflection of a national identity that is tied to the Mexican state and being able to speak Spanish. What is more is that the Mexican state often values indigenous peoples as nothing more than tourist attractions. In Mexico Mixtecs face ethnic discrimination from their fellow countrymen because they often come from isolated villages that have little interaction with the Mexican state and they sometimes do not speak Spanish. I was witness to this while spending several months in 2005 in the state of Oaxaca in southern Mexico where I met many Mixtec men who had immigrated to the United States and had returned home for important religious festivals. Many of them approached me and wanted to converse in English but when I tried to respond in Spanish quite a few mentioned that they spoke only Mixtec and English.

When Mixtecs migrate to the United States they confront double ethnic discrimination not only from non-migrant U.S. citizens who mark them ethnically and racially as Mexicans, but also from non-Mixtec Mexicans who are living in the U.S. who continue to deride their indigenous identities and see them as "others" (Stephen 2007). For Mixtecs who migrate to the United States, they must cross an actual national geo-political border only to be faced with the social borders of linguistic, ethnic, and racial discrimination upon arrival in the U.S. (Stephen 2007). This makes life in the U.S. even harder for Mixtecs than non-indigenous Mexican immigrants as they face the reality of social borders that separate them from not only non-migrant U.S. citizens but fellow Mexicans as well (Stephen 2007).

These ethnic and racial social borders are also a part of the lives of Japanese-Brazilians living in Japan. Anthropologist Takeyuki Tsuda, much like Linger, examines Japanese-Brazilians who migrate to Japan in search of work as laborers in manufacturing (2003). Tsuda's identity as a Japanese man allows him insight into why Japanese did not wish to have much to do socially with the Japanese-Brazilians who are often their co-workers or neighbors. What Tsuda finds is that Japanese-Brazilians face similar social borders in Japan as those Mixtecs face while living in the United States. Like Linger, Tsuda also describes how Japanese-Brazilians often lack the cultural capital to be seen as truly Japanese but Tsuda also focuses on how Japanese racial discrimination marks Japanese-Brazilians as "others" (2003). Tsuda describes how Japanese-Brazilians cross international borders to find work in Japan, but once there they face the social border of race that values the "truly" Japanese as purely Japanese. In Japan, to be truly Japanese is to be purely ethnically Japanese and Japanese-Brazilians must face this social border as they are considered ethnic and racial "half-bloods" who are not truly Japanese (Tsuda 2003). Tsuda finds that this social border is what keeps Japanese-Brazilians inconspicuous as social actors in Japan. Even if Japanese-Brazilians deploy appropriate cultural knowledge such as speaking fluent Japanese and/or practicing aspects of traditional Japanese culture, because of their racial and ethnic background they can never cross the social border that would allow them to be perceived as truly Japanese in Japan (Tsuda 2003).

The Mexican immigrants who play in or are associated with La Liga deal with multiple borders themselves. The most obvious of these borders are the ones they face in their daily lives outside of La Liga. As a white man conducting fieldwork among

Mexican immigrants in La Liga, I can safely vouch for this reality. Outside of La Liga, most of these men are invisible or barely visible social actors. Inside of La Liga, they are the protagonists, it is their world. Outside of La Liga, a person like me is the powerful social actor. Inside of La Liga, I am the strange gringo (slang for white American in this context) searching for acceptance; the gringo who asks too many questions and who may or may not be La Migra (Immigration and Customs Enforcement). One of the main issues I faced while conducting this research, especially in Oklahoma with its very stringent anti-immigration laws, was this perception of the gringo as La Migra. Not only did I represent the social and cultural borders that usually separate Latinos and gringos in Oklahoma City, I represented the threats of the actual geopolitical border that separates the United States from Mexico. This was a constant challenge and to this day I am pretty sure there are persons in La Liga who still believe I am associated with La Migra.

There are many other borders as well. While the Mexican immigrants who play in La Liga are the powerful social actors, they are subordinate to one group of people who may or may not be Mexican and who may or may not speak Spanish, i.e. the referees. During the first couple of years I was conducting research, conflicts with the referees were an ever present fact of La Liga games. A couple of times these conflicts escalated to fist fights, which caused the league administration to up its penalties for disrespecting the referees. Ultimately, whether the fans and players like it or not, the referees have the ultimate power in the games and the non-Latino referees symbolize the power of the world outside the social confines of La Liga. It is not easy to deal with being a subordinate social actor during the weekdays only to find one self a subordinate

social actor on the weekends as well, especially in a social context like La Liga. The Latino referees are much more welcomed by players and have many more friends in the league than the non-Latino referees.

Similar to the Mixtec immigrants in Stephen's work, there are internal ethnic divisions within La Liga. There are borders that separate players, especially if they do not speak Spanish (a not entirely uncommon phenomenon), including the African players from the Latin American players, and divisions between Mexican immigrants depending upon their state/province or hometown of origin. Many of these latter conflicts are cursory or playful in nature as there seems to be a sense of camaraderie in La Liga but if tempers flare or conflicts arise, these borders become apparent.

There is a border similar to that of the referees that separates the league administration from the players and those who run the league as they have absolute power over teams and individual players. Being *castigado* (punished) is not a status any player or team desires to achieve. The league administrators demonstrate their power in some very demonstrative ways. One of the most striking is how they often drive around the field complex in gigantic pick-up trucks and if one wants to chat one ends up physically standing much lower than the administrator they are communicating with. In another capacity, however, the league administration adjudicates power via security officers who are usually commissioned through the Oklahoma City police department. These officers are paid by the league to come and watch games on Sundays and while I always found their ability to deploy power hard to believe being that the ratio of security guards to players and fans must be somewhere in the hundreds to one, these officers represent the border that divides not only the league administration

from those involved in the league but they also symbolize the border of social relations between police officers and Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City. These officers also symbolize the geophysical U.S./Mexico border because as mentioned earlier, the Oklahoma City police were given powers by House Bill 1804 that essentially allows them to operate as extensions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Transnationalism and migration speak to the ability of people to transcend national boundaries in terms of the formation of their identities. In this way, they do not necessarily need to assimilate to the cultures that may dominate the social context of where they are currently living. While the deployment of cultural capital, the ability to navigate multiple social borders, and even having immense wealth are important aspects of transnational lives, what transnationalism demonstrates is that people who migrate need not abandon cultural identities upon arrival in new cultural contexts (Linger 2001; Ong 1999; Siu 2005). Assimilation is often seen as the only alternative to the person who moves across national geo-political and/or cultural borders. This perspective assumes that if one does not assimilate they run the risk of remaining an inconspicuous social actor for not only their lives, but perhaps for the lives of succeeding generations as well. What transnational lives demonstrate is that while moving across geo-political and cultural borders can and often does create difficulties in one's life, people in the modern world with technologies that facilitate cultural and social ties to more than one nation need not assimilate and abandon their traditional cultural identities in favor of one more closely aligned with the social context within which they are living. Transnationalism necessarily describes the social reality where a person can remain affiliated to one or more national and cultural contexts and thrive within these contexts.

National and cultural identities are not constrained by national geo-political borders and because of this reality transnationalism will remain a viable concept for understanding the lives and movements of many people worldwide well into the future.

Chapter 3: La Liga Latina y Americana

The Social World of La Liga

I originally began conducting research into the social world of Mexican recreational fútbol leagues in the United States in northern San Diego County in 2006. My first findings demonstrated how these leagues facilitated the development of social networks and community among Mexican immigrants in San Diego County, largely in the city of Encinitas (Kleszynski 2007). Extending this work into Oklahoma City led me to an exploration of the relationship between these leagues and transnational cultural identities, but La Liga, much like the Ocean Pacific League in Encinitas, also operates as a community hub for Mexican immigrants living in Oklahoma City. La Liga games are well attended, politicians have been seen at games trying to court the Latino vote during election cycles, and local Spanish-language media cover the La Liga games for the Latino community. I have often heard La Liga described by people who work with the Latino community simply as, "the fútbol/soccer fields", implying that it is THE league for Latinos in Oklahoma City.

A good example of La Liga operating as a community hub is the championship playoff in November each year. Upwards of 500 people attend this one game while the usual weekend may draw 200-300 people stretched out over two days and numerous games. At the La Liga final one can find local non-profits who work in the Latino community such as the Latino Community Development Agency, or LCDA, handing out educational materials and/or manning an informational table. After one game while I was playing for Deportivo Hidalgo, a representative from LCDA was going around the field complex and handing out condoms to young men in their efforts to combat

sexually transmitted diseases in the Latino community in Oklahoma City, specifically AIDS (SIDA in Spanish). The LCDA knows where to find many Latinos on Sundays and they know that a great way to reach young Latino men is to focus their efforts on La Liga games. Figure 7 illustrates what the La Liga field complex looks like when empty, a striking juxtaposition to Figure 8 which shows what the sidelines look like when full, in this case for the 2010 La Liga Division A final championship game.

La Liga has a unique relationship to local churches as well. One team that was generally pretty good during my fieldwork was a team named Juventud Catolica (Catholic Youth). This team wore uniforms on which the crest was a cross and a cross even adorned their socks. It was not clear what church they may have been affiliated with if they were affiliated with any one Catholic parish at all, but they were strikingly different from many of the other teams in terms of their team name and the uniform they wore as most other teams wore mock uniforms of professional teams from leagues around the world (this is explored in depth in Chapter 5).



Figure 7: Entrance to the La Liga field complex, 2010. Photo by Kleszynski, 2010.



Figure 8: Spectators line the field at the 2010 La Liga Final. Photo by Kleszynski 2010.

La Liga always keeps the same schedule for games as they are played from 5:00-7:00pm on Saturdays, 7:00am-7:00pm on Sundays. Mass schedules do not interfere with league scheduling although the league does not hold games on most holidays. The most well attended games tend to be those held from 1:00-5:00pm on Sundays even though many Christian churches in Oklahoma City offer Spanish language services in the early afternoons and evenings on Sundays.

La Liga also acts as a community hub due to its location. The La Liga field complex is in close proximity to a major thoroughfare in South Oklahoma City and it is easily accessed from this main road. Lining this road are numerous businesses that directly target Latino customers as their signs are in Spanish and they are often similar to businesses one might find in Mexico. For example there are lots of *carnicerias* (butcher shops), *paleterias* (ice cream shops/popsicle shops), stores selling ranchero wear (cowboy boots and hats), and tons of tire shops and car dealerships. The anchor grocery store in this part of town is part of a chain called Buy 4 Less although the Buy 4 Less on this street is called a *Supermercado* (supermarket). Using the term *Supermercado* indicates direct marketing towards a Spanish speaking clientele.

In many ways South Oklahoma City is another cultural world compared to the rest of the city. The Oklahoma/North Canadian River divides the city into a Northern half and a Southern half where the majority of residents are Latinos. Most of these residents come from Mexico or are of Mexican heritage and some are likely undocumented. One of the striking things about the La Liga field complex is that it is very much a "hidden" geographic space. It is proximal to rail road tracks and what appear to be abandoned buildings. The field complex was not readily visible from any

major street until about 2 years ago when two more fields were added to the complex, which exposed its western edge to a fairly heavily traveled street. This exposure has not diminished attendance at games and behavior at games on those fields was no different than that occurring on the fields in the main complex.

This location was chosen purposefully and the hidden nature of the field complex was a deliberate choice when the La Liga administration began building La Liga. Arturo Cardenas (real name, he gained amnesty under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986), the vice-president of La Liga and coach of Chivas OKC, relayed this to me during an interview in 2011. Arturo mentioned how the field complex is hidden and that the La Liga administration likes it that way. The hidden nature of these fields helps them to feel like a safe place for many Mexican men as some of them are likely undocumented. Because the fields are hidden, it is also amenable to creating an atmosphere of intimacy where men drink beer freely, have comfortable conversations with their friends, and relax on Sundays.

This is why I chose not to reveal the exact location of these fields in this exploration of La Liga (the marker in the map in chapter 1 is in the general vicinity, not the exact location). I also never shared the exact location with most people I knew outside of the world of La Liga. It is important that the location of these fields remains known only to those who play or are connected to the leagues. I played for Central Oklahoma Adult Soccer League (COASL) before joining Deportivo Hidalgo. COASL is a league largely comprised of players who are from the U.S. and who are non-Latinos in terms of their ethnic backgrounds. A few of my teammates in COASL would ask about what they called the "Mexican Leagues" when I told them I was doing

anthropological fieldwork. I was always very careful not to tell them where the league field complex was as I felt they would need to figure that out themselves.

I was given directions to the leagues by Juliana Stout from *El Nacional*. I remember the smell of grilling carne asada, the loud *cumbia* music coming from open car and pickup truck doors, and many other aspects of the cultural world I entered that first time I drove to the leagues. Being that the leagues have this hidden geographic location, there are not a lot of other white faces (besides referees and players) that come to watch these games. It took a few years to build trust in these leagues as my whiteness was a violation of sorts in terms of the hidden nature of La Liga. Whiteness was problematic in this context as it was associated with La Migra and forms of persecution that were effecting Oklahoma City's Latino community at the time such as House Bill 1804 mentioned earlier in Chapter 1. Speaking Spanish, being versed in some aspects of Mexican culture, and consistently showing up on Sundays eventually helped to bridge some trust with players in La Liga. Never the less, Anglo-American whiteness remains problematic in the social world of La Liga.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, whiteness can be problematic when doing ethnographic research in minority communities but whiteness has a different meaning when doing ethnographic research with Latinos. Focusing on Mexico, the racial system that developed in Mexico was not based on hypo-descent like that of the United States but instead on mestizaje, a word that signifies cultural, racial, and societal intermixture. Mestizaje is focused on a distinction between that which is white and Spanish and that which is dark brown and indigenous, or not-Spanish. Packed into the idea of mestizaje is a devaluation of indigeneity, so within the idea of mestizaje there are differing values

placed on being various shades of brown and white. Having very dark brown, or black, skin in the racial system of mestizaje is a marker of indigeneity, or even African ancestry, and as such people with these skin tones face more racial discrimination (MacLachlan and Rodriguez 1980). This valuation is the backbone of the racial system that exists in Mexico today; a system that values the mixed racial and cultural identity of mestizaje at the expense and devaluation of the racial and cultural identity of indigenista. Much like whiteness is consciously/unconsciously the more powerful racial identity in the U.S., mestizo is consciously/unconsciously the more powerful racial identity in Mexico. To be mestizo is to be Mexican. Mestizaje, however, involves a complex and fluid racial categorization based on brown skin tone.

Some Mexicans have darker brown skin, others have lighter brown skin, and still others look phenotypically "white". The term many Mexicans use for a white Mexican is "güero", meaning "light skinned one" (Güero was my nickname on Deportivo Hidalgo, which was a sign that I had been accepted on some level as I was not referred to as "gringo", a general derogatory term for a white person from the U.S.). So how does a white Mexican have a mestizo identity? A Hispanic first name and/or surname operate as a marker of mestizaje as does speaking Spanish fluently and practicing Mexican cultural practices. Thus in La Liga, and in the United States more generally, to be mestizo is a racial identity that is marked by several aspects beyond just skin tone. As anthropologist Alfredo Mirandé argues, Latinos in the United States suffer from discrimination that is based on a "race/plus model", "Latinos are subjected not only to racial discrimination but, as I contend here, to discrimination based on language, culture, and real or perceived immigration status" (2014:189).

In La Liga, the inverse proves to be true. To be white and operate in the social world of La Liga without any of the cultural markers mentioned above lingers over a person like a black cloud. Generally, unless you are welcomed into the world of La Liga by a player, other spectator, or a friend who is associated with the league in some way and you only speak English, you are marked as "La Migra". Being marked as "La Migra" reflects an association that many Mexicans, at least in South Oklahoma City, have of white people and whiteness in general. Whiteness is associated with oppressive power and authority and one is to remain highly suspicious of whiteness if they are to remain safe, especially if undocumented. Even at the end of my fieldwork, jokes about me being "La Migra" still arose from time to time meaning that although I had built some trust, the distrust of whiteness in general, especially "gringo whiteness", remained a stigma that was hard to shake.

Logistics of La Liga

When I was doing fieldwork in La Liga from 2009-2012, there were upwards of 100 teams classified into 4 divisions: A, B-1, B-2, and C. Somewhere in the neighborhood of 1200 players played in La Liga each season during that time. Games in the A and B-1 divisions would involve three referees, two line judges and one field judge. Games in the B-2 and C divisions would usually involve two referees who each worked one half of the field. From 2009-2011 there were 5 fields, 4 in the main complex, and an adjacent field about 4 blocks away. By 2012, as mentioned above, the complex had expanded to 6 fields. If a division had teams from Enid, Clinton, or El

Reno, Oklahoma, teams were generally required to play at least one game out in those locales. Clinton was the furthest away, approximately an 80 minute drive from Oklahoma City.

A brief history of La Liga was given by Arturo during an interview in April of 2011. The league I played in before joining Deportivo Hidalgo in 2012 was COASL (mentioned above). Arturo told me about COASL in the 1980s and how he and Antonio began to organize teams from the small Mexican immigrant population in Oklahoma City at that time. During the infancy of La Liga, games between La Liga teams and COASL teams would occur from time to time.

Arturo told me that Deportivo Mexico used to play a team named Cosmos from COASL in the 1980s. Both of these teams continue to be flagship teams for their leagues to this day. During the 1980s, the Cosmos were the dominant amateur team in Oklahoma City until the development of La Liga. Arturo recounted one matchup in particular and from his perspective, the referees were terrible, the players on Cosmos were allowed to play too physically, and the Deportivo Mexico players eventually ended up abandoning which ended in a forfeit. Being a team comprised of non-Latinos, Cosmos was likely playing fútbol using an English or German style during this game. Playing fútbol in an English or German way is often very physical and at times can stand in contrast to a Latin American style that is based more on skill than physicality as is explored in depth in Chapter 5.

Arturo told me that 2012 was the 20th anniversary of him and Antonio running the league. La Liga began with 18 teams, then 21, then 32, then it dropped back to 24,

then hit 38, then 40 and Arturo mentioned that once they hit 40 teams the growth began to explode until they had reached 80 teams. Arturo felt that La Liga now attracts all the best recreational fútbol players in the city no matter what race or ethnicity.

Arturo and Antonio were both from Jalisco, a state in north central Mexico. Arturo was the first research participant who told me about Chivas, the most popular professional team from Guadalajara, Jalisco, being the quintessential Mexican team. In La Liga's earliest days, all teams were comprised entirely of players from the same towns in Mexico. In fact, these teams would require a player to be from that town to join the team. Many teams still have a lot of players from the same town to this day, but as is explored further in Chapter 5, not every player on each team is always from the same place in Mexico.

One thing that can be found at many Latino community hubs are taco trucks. During my fieldwork in La Liga, the same taco truck, El Jalapeno, would be parked in the middle of the field complex every Sunday during the games (see Figure 9). During the 2012 season, a concessions building that had sat empty during the first few years of my field work once again opened for business. While they may have been competitors, the volume of people attending games on weekends gave both vendors plenty of business.



Figure 9: Tacos "El Jalapeno" food truck working in the La Liga field complex. Photo by Kleszynski 2009.

There are also men pushing carts which sell *paletas* (frozen treats), *dulces* (candy), and *bocadillas* (snacks). These *paleta* carts also sell things like soda and bottled water. The La Liga administration has no interest in trying to sell alcohol. All the beer that was consumed while La Liga games were going on was purchased outside of the complex and brought in by players, coaches, and spectators. I found this intriguing as the sign at the entrance of the field complex specifically indicates that alcohol is not allowed, although the league administration strictly enforces a rule that does not allow glass containers in the field complex. It is entirely possible that a complete and enforced ban on alcohol would seriously cripple participation in La Liga. While competing leagues in South Oklahoma City do exist, they are quite small but if

an enforced alcohol ban was instituted many current La Liga participants would possibly move on to another league.

One thing that always struck me during my fieldwork in La Liga was the amount of trash that is left at the complex after games are over. A good friend and teammate from Mexico City, Guillermo, always found this upsetting and often lamented that it was what he claimed to be an aspect of Mexican culture. That part is debatable but what is interesting is that if you drive by the fields on Monday morning, they are immaculate as all the trash is gone. There are many trash cans throughout the field complex and many people do not litter but I always wondered how that trash basically disappeared overnight.

One Sunday afternoon while watching games, I found the answer. I saw 3 people walking around with huge trash bags picking up garbage. When I asked Alvaro, a referee from Bolivia, about this he told me that they are from a local church and that they clean up the fields. He was unsure of which church it was but they were the crew that would come and clean things up during and after the game on Saturdays and Sundays. Also, because much beer and soda is consumed at these games there are people who come and pick up the aluminum cans to redeem them for money as Oklahoma has a bottle bill allowing empty bottles and cans to be returned for cash. These two groups work in tandem to keep the fields clean.

Finally, La Liga had a resident doctor who was present at games on Sundays to provide acute care when needed. His name was Raul Font and he was a Puerto Rican American who had a chiropractic practice in South Oklahoma City. He was paid for his

services by the La Liga administration and Raul would often be treating a player when I arrived on Sundays to conduct fieldwork. Raul had all he needed to provide emergency, temporary care but if an issue was serious enough he would not hesitate to advise a trip to the emergency room, call 911, or advise a visit to a doctor.

Raul would often be approached by some of the men in the league with medical questions that were outside of the scope of his expertise. Men would ask him about impotence, digestive issues, and even issues outside of the medical realm. Raul did have a lot of knowledge about naturopathic medicine and could offer advice in terms of some of these issues but sometimes he would tell me he would be amazed at some of the questions he would get while working on Sundays. Raul, like many other men who were either from the States or who were legal immigrants, was seen as an authority figure that could be turned to for advice on many matters. He was not the only research participant who experienced this while working at La Liga.

Alvaro Posada is a referee in La Liga from Bolivia and another good friend while I was conducting fieldwork. Many of the men saw Alvaro as an authority figure as he was a small business owner and computer engineer. In fact he also ran a small business on the side taking team pictures and assembling team calendars and enlarging photos for men to purchase. Alvaro was also asked about many topics from time to time. Alvaro had been asked about impotence and immigration law among other topics. Alvaro was happy to share whatever knowledge he had with men who would ask him about such things and admittedly they made for good stories whenever I would see him on Sundays.

These two men are examples of authority figures in the social world of La Liga. Men who are older, legal residents, and/or U.S. citizens are considered sources of knowledge and they are viewed as connected to services that some men in La Liga believe they cannot access. These older men are seen as valuable resources, a sort of paternal figure that the men trust. Even when it was far outside of the realm of their knowledge, both of these men tried to come up with some sort of lead, some idea of how to help. The men who occupy these roles in La Liga are important in helping immigrant Mexican men, especially those who are undocumented, navigate life in Oklahoma City.

Refereeing in La Liga

Refereeing a fútbol match is no easy proposition. Often calls are subjective and as is the case in many other sports, players will insult and badger a referee over a bad or missed call. Imagine this sort of situation when the players all speak one language and the referee another. For example, in La Liga, many of the referees speak Spanish but there are several who do not. This is not unique to La Liga as I had experienced the same thing while conducting fieldwork in San Diego County. When I asked the coach of the team I played for while doing fieldwork in San Diego County, Vicente Campos, he told me something along the lines of, "It works for the World Cup so it should work for our league". Vicente had a point as at the highest levels of international fútbol often the referees and the players do not speak the same language.

When conducting fieldwork in La Liga, this issue of referees who did not speak Spanish and who were not Latinos seemed perplexing. Once I began to interview referees it started to make sense. Fútbol refereeing works on a merit system. The more games you work, the better you generally become at refereeing, which means you get to work games with players of higher quality in higher quality leagues and so on. When I asked referees in La Liga why they liked working La Liga games, the answers were strikingly similar. For these referees La Liga represented the pinnacle of recreational fútbol in Oklahoma. Simply put, there is a prestige in refereeing games in La Liga. La Liga is the best recreational league a referee can work in the state and many referees have a desire to eventually find themselves calling games in La Liga.

I asked Spanish and English speaking referees about this issue of prestige and why La Liga was a prestigious league to work in Oklahoma. These referees cited many reasons they enjoy working in La Liga. Some told me that they liked how the players were of quality, the feel of the flow of the game, and one even remarked that the guys in La Liga, "…actually play fútbol. In COASL they play football." He explained that in La Liga they play with a style often referred to as "the beautiful game" meaning that they play using deft passing, speed, and a Latin American style (explored further in Chapter 5). To play football is to play with (too) much physicality and with a reliance on the long ball, more of an English style of play.

Another reason why many referees enjoy working games in La Liga is that the players respect their calls (see Figure 10). One referee, an Ethiopian man named Tec, mentioned that the players "respect the card", as in they respect the authority of the referee to adjudicate game play especially once a player has been cautioned for their

play. The yellow card shown by a referee in a fútbol match symbolizes a warning that their play has exceeded what is acceptable, generally in terms of physicality. If a player receives two yellow cards in a match, it equals a red card which signals an automatic ejection from the match. To "respect the card" means that players will often alter their game play to be less physical and test the limits of the rules less throughout the rest of the game.



Figure10: A referee (yellow) adjudicates a foul call that resulted in a free kick during a La Liga match in 2010, photo by Kleszynski 2010.

Similarly, another referee mentioned that he appreciated how players in La Liga only question calls for a short period before letting whatever perceived transgression on the part of the referee go after a few minutes. He said that in other leagues this was not

always the case as players in other leagues will often pester a referee throughout the rest of the game based on their anger over one missed or controversial call. This issue of respect is important for men who are expected to keep control in an environment that involves two groups of eleven grown men going into direct competition with each other. I have witnessed games in La Liga where the players have lost respect for the referees and those matches tended to end early due to actual physical conflicts and in one case, when a player physically attacked a referee.

Those incidents, however, are exceedingly rare and when they do occur the La Liga administration moves to take swift action. In the case of the player who attacked the referee, that player was *castigado* by being kicked out of the league and his team suspended for several games. It is important for the players, the La Liga administration, and for the referees that the players respect the referee's decisions and control themselves when a possible human error has occurred. One reason for this is tied to the issue of prestige and the merit system mentioned above. I was once witness to a La Liga referee watching a game as a spectator disputed a call with a referee who was calling the game. This off duty referee said that the referee in the game was doing a horrible job and that this referee should listen to him because his referee rating was quite high, "Mine is 6, that's only 2 away from TV, he should listen to me." His comment shows the level of merit these men must achieve to referee in La Liga; it takes hard work, dedication, and commitment to achieve a rank as a referee that is two steps from being in the professional ranks.

Because of this merit system and because of the prestige, referees of many linguistic backgrounds seek out work in La Liga even though it does not pay

particularly well. Referees are drawn from a labor pool adjudicated by the Oklahoma Soccer Association so your ability as a referee is judged by this merit system, not by whether or not you speak Spanish or some other language other than English. The La Liga administration wants to field the best and most experienced referees regardless of whether they are monolingual or bilingual. This is a quality assurance measure that ensures refereeing will be as fair and as error free as possible.

La Liga and OKCPD

The role of La Liga as a community hub means that throughout Saturday afternoons and all day on Sunday, hundreds of people flow through the league complex each weekend. As the season progresses, the crowds for games between teams in playoff contention often grow to one or two hundred as each week draws teams closer to the playoff rounds. Games between rivals, teams vying for positioning heading into the playoff rounds, or teams trying to avoid being relegated to a lower division because of poor play intensify and the possibility for physical conflict increases. Increased crowd sizes and the possibility for physical conflict beg the question of who provides security for La Liga.

The answer is somewhat surprising. During vast stretches of the regular season and throughout the playoffs, the Oklahoma City Police Department provides officers to work as security for La Liga. Throughout my fieldwork there were generally three officers present at the field complex for most of the day on Sunday and maybe one or two on Saturday nights. It was generally the same officers working security each

weekend. These officers were not in full uniform but they did wear tee shirts emblazoned with "Police" on the back (see Figure 11). The only time these officers received assistance in terms of extra security guards was during the playoff rounds when a private firm would be hired to bolster security forces.



Figure 11: OKCPD and La Liga administration having a discussion in 2010, photo by Kleszynski

As explored in Chapter 2 House Bill 1804, which was passed in November of 2007 by the Oklahoma State Legislature, gave police forces the authority to detain persons who could not provide federal or state identification. So when I first realized that the Oklahoma City Police Department was supplying security for La Liga I was shocked. If these officers knew somebody was undocumented and they did not detain them, they ran afoul of the law and could potentially be charged with a felony.

Knowing this, I found it quite curious that the OKCPD was supplying officers to provide security for La Liga. Surely the OKCPD was aware of the potential consequences of violating HB 1804 but persisted in allowing officers to work for the league. One explanation for this is that the OKCPD wants to have a good relationship with the Latino community and wants to build trust with Latinos in Oklahoma City. Enforcing HB1804 at La Liga games would likely result in at least two outcomes. First of all, there are probably many undocumented Mexican immigrants at La Liga games on Sundays so there would be plenty of people arrested. This would have a ripple effect in terms of breaking up families, causing fear of the OKCPD to become deeply embedded in the Latino community, and it would stretch thin jail facilities in the city. Second, any officers that did so would likely only work one weekend in La Liga as they would not be asked to return. Subsequently, La Liga administration would hire private security for the weekend games, although these security officers would also risk running afoul of the law if they did not detain someone they knew was undocumented.

As my fieldwork intensified and I was attending more and more games, I became more and more curious about the presence of the police in La Liga which led me to speak with one of the officers who worked in La Liga about this arrangement. He told me that La Liga pays him to work security for the league but that he also gets overtime pay from the City of Oklahoma City for his work on weekends as an off-duty police officer. Therefore during my fieldwork in La Liga, the OKCPD was knowingly risking trouble for these officers in order to provide security for La Liga.

I witnessed a few incidents during my fieldwork where the police presence was definitely needed. During one fight between two teams a spectator was seen throwing a

beer bottle into the melee and the security on scene quickly found him. Instead of arresting him, they escorted him to the edge of the field complex and instructed him to wait for his friends and/or family to pick him up there when they were leaving the complex. This incident demonstrates that the off-duty officers who were hired to work La Liga games were not there to arrest people and that they were not there to ask about immigration status and detain people for deportation. The role of the off-duty police officers was crowd control and the reason only a few officers could generally handle so many people was an implied sense of power and authority, along with the fact that they would sometimes be armed.

Towards the end of my fieldwork, in 2011, another entity with power and authority began to increase its presence in Oklahoma City: the Mexican drug cartels. I learned about this while discussing my fieldwork with a research participant and I explained that I was always worried about being perceived as associated with Immigration Authorities. This person did not think that many of the people necessarily felt that way but one thing I should be aware of is the presence of the cartels while poking around, asking questions, and trying to get interviews.

Initially I was surprised to hear this as I figured a large, multi-national drug trafficking organization would prefer to operate in a much larger city such as Dallas or Houston, which are also more proximal to the Mexico-U.S. border. This person explained to me that the reason the cartels set up in Oklahoma City was the presence of the proper infrastructure to move illicit narcotics: the Interstate highways in Oklahoma City. Oklahoma City lies at the nexus of three major Interstate highways: I-44, I-40, and I-35. Interstate 44 connects Wichita Falls, Texas to St. Louis, Missouri. Interstate

40 connects Kingman, Arizona to Wilmington, North Carolina. Interstate 35 connects Laredo, Texas on the U.S.-Mexico border to Duluth, Minnesota close to the U.S.-Canada border. These are three major interstate highways that facilitate the long range transport of narcotics via a variety of vehicular transports.

As we talked more about this it became clearer that Oklahoma City had many qualities that made it a good place for cartel operations. As mentioned above, there are the interstates to move narcotics and it was not a big city like Dallas or Houston which would seem a likely draw for drug trafficking much as I had perceived. I was very appreciative that this person had shared this with me although I found it quite alarming. From this point forward I was very careful who I approached for interviews and who I spoke with casually at La Liga games.

While La Liga operates as a community hub with relationships to the church, local non-profits that serve the Latino community, and in a location that is geographically in the center of the Latino community in South Oklahoma City, power and authority are central aspects of the social world of La Liga. Older men who are citizens or are legal residents are seen as authority figures that can draw upon a multitude of resources to help Mexican immigrant men navigate life in Oklahoma City. This is a transnational perspective on age that Mexican immigrants bring with them to Oklahoma City as older persons are often revered and highly respected in Mexico. Referees also have the power and authority to control games. Off-duty Oklahoma City police officers have power and authority to control players, spectators, and anyone else who attends games at the La Liga field complex even though they risk breaking anti-immigration state laws. Finally the La Liga administration has power and authority

over who gets to referee in the La Liga, who is hired to work security, and to discipline player behavior. Power and authority order the social world of La Liga and help to keep La Liga an ever burgeoning part of the Latino community in Oklahoma City.

Chapter 4: Is Fútbol a Man's Game? Gender and Power in La Liga

Fútbol and Gender

One of the constants throughout my research into recreational fútbol and Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City was playing indoor soccer. For over a year I played on a team called "Anklebreakers" at the Oklahoma City Indoor Soccer Arenas (ISA) location. This team was an over 25 years old co-ed team so fielding women who were quality players was always a goal of every team in our division as teams were comprised of 3 men and 3 women on the field at all times. I can remember one team in particular that was comprised almost entirely of Latino/as and one Latina specifically comes to mind. She was not the fastest nor did she have the best ball handling skills but this woman, without doubt, could fire the ball at the goal with impressive force. She would often just hang out by the goal, waiting for rebounds or an incoming pass that she could hammer at the goalkeeper, quite often resulting in a score. The bottom line was that this woman could play. She commanded respect from my team whenever we played against her team. Because of her goal scoring ability she often logged in more minutes than other women on her team, at least during the games in which I was playing. This was not the only Latina who was a very good player I would come across while playing indoor soccer, but I did notice that women were never present in outdoor fútbol games in La Liga as players. This stood in contrast to a league such as COASL, which had a women's league and where sometimes a men's outdoor team would field one or two players who were women.

When asked whether or not women should play fútbol, the responses I received from men involved with La Liga were quite varied. I had some men say that women

can and should play fútbol while others would vehemently express their disdain for the idea of women playing fútbol. Generally the younger the man, the more he was accepting of women playing fútbol. For many of the older men the games at La Liga reflect their social world. La Liga is a world that they control where they are dominant social actors and where they can go on a Sunday to play fútbol, drink beer, and hang out with their friends. In many ways, some men who play and/or come to watch games in La Liga games see it as a social space for men where women can attend but should not and do not play. While some of the men I talked to spoke about the different nature of the relationship between the game and women in the United States, namely that many more women play in the U.S. than in Mexico, very few actually knew women who played and if they did it was almost always a relative such as a sister or a niece.

At the games men exchange lots of jokes about their marriages, namely stories of wives angered by excessive drinking, and various comments about women's anatomy. This is not to say that women were not present at these games, but they were certainly treated as subordinate social actors within this realm by many of the men in attendance. There are different roles that men and women occupy in La Liga, roles that are embodied reflections of cultural norms regarding men and women with the result that within the social world of La Liga there are gendered worlds. Women generally come to games as spectators, often as WAGs (a term ubiquitous in fútbol circles to describe wives and girlfriends) of the players. Based on my field experience, when a man brought his wife or girlfriend to the games that meant he was not going to stay after, linger, and/or drink beer. Men who bring their wives or girlfriends to games tend to remain on their best behavior, hence the avoidance of staying after games to drink

and engage in some of the linguistic exchanges mentioned above. Women are also involved as taco and snack vendors, a reflection of the realm of the domestic, but these roles of spectators and vendors confine women within the social world of the league. As mentioned above, women do not play on teams in La Liga and as a consequence they are unable to attain some of the prestige and social capital that comes with being involved in La Liga as a player or even a knowledgeable spectator. This confinement mirrors the way gender roles are constructed in many other Latin American contexts.

Latin American men are often stereotyped as exhibiting machismo or an exaggerated sense of masculinity. "Machismo" is an idea that brings to mind such hyper-masculine characteristics as aggression, power, the ability to be an autonomous social actor, the ability to dominate women, and the ability to provide for one's family and be the head of a Latin American household (Gutmann 1996). Matthew Gutmann's work on masculinity in Mexico City describes what is problematic with this idea of machismo (1996). In some sense, it pigeonholes Latin American men into a very specific idea of what is masculine and how to be masculine that fails to reflect the varied reality of masculinity in a number of Latin American cultural contexts. There are some central tenets to understandings of what it means to masculine in Latin America, but other aspects of masculinity vary from country to country, region to region, city to city, and there are differences in rural versus urban contexts. One aspect of Latin American masculinity remains consistent across a number of cultural contexts: the ability to be a powerful social actor. This ability to be powerful is vitally important to men involved in the social world of La Liga.

Machismo? Maybe not: Theories of Latin American Masculinity

While Matthew Gutmann (1996) found that machismo may be an ideal that structures masculinity and/or guides some masculine behaviors, but that machismo does not quite adequately describe the many realities of what it means to be a man, more specifically what it means to be a man in Mexico City. For example, according to the ideals of machismo in Mexican culture a man should not cry (Gutmann 1996:103-104) or be heavily involved in the care of children (Gutmann 1996:52-57). In his interviews with Mexican men, Gutmann found that men do indeed cry (although with the stipulation that it occur in very private settings) and do enjoy caring for and doting on children. Gutmann argues that while machismo may in some way give Mexican men a guide to how they should behave and carry themselves as men, it does not absolutely dictate all men's behaviors at all times (1996). Men negotiate with machismo and utilize it when it suits the situation but men are also able to circumvent the expectations of machismo to address realities in their lives that machismo might shun. For example, a man feeling pain who is compelled to cry may do so (as mentioned above) because he needs to address this physical and emotional release. While this is done very privately, it is an occurrence in the lives of Mexican men in Guttmann's work. Machismo dictates that they are not to cry and most Mexican men are going to be quite reticent in terms of when and where they might cry but because they are willing to shed tears, machismo does not operate as some sort of entirely rigid concept that shapes the totality of their masculine identity. Machismo does in some sense define how Latin American men should act as men but because Latin American men can act outside of the parameters of

machismo, it can only be seen as an idealized form of masculinity, not the ultimate determination of men's behavior at all times and at all places.

Consistent with what Gutmann found in Mexico City, at La Liga games in Oklahoma City men demonstrate their love of children. Many times during my work in La Liga I was witness to fathers doting on their children by playing with them, explaining the nuances of the game of fútbol to them, and often treating them to the occasional *paleta* (popsicle) or *bocadilla* (snack). Quite often wives and girlfriends of the players bring their children but it is not unusual for a man to bring his children by himself, generally his son(s) but sometimes his daughter(s), to games when he is a spectator and even when playing. I met many of my teammates' kids in this manner and many of their sons grow up going to La Liga games on Sundays. Sometimes sons of players can be seen wearing replica jerseys, not of professional players, but those of the teams of their fathers or brothers and their father's or brother's friends. In this way, fathers and brothers become role models for their children via their participation in La Liga. Through this role modeling kids are left with little excuse to not exercise regularly when dad and older brother are playing fútbol games on Sundays, going to team practices on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and quite often playing indoor soccer during the offseason. This role modeling, however, also helps to demonstrate for these boys what it means to be a Latin American man even if the behavior contradicts this notion of machismo. For example, I have seen fathers back down from physical conflicts when their children were present at games. The father who does not want his kids to see him physically fight another person is signaling that to his children that to physically fight another person is unacceptable behavior.

Yet machismo does have some salience in how Latin American men define themselves as masculine social actors. While machismo partly structures ideas regarding how Latin American men should act or what many Latin American cultures value as masculine behavior, men do have some agency in how they navigate the ideals of machismo. Butler's work on gender and performance is crucial to understanding how Latin American men both deploy and deny machismo in their behavior. For Butler, gender is a performance that reflects societal norms for masculinity and femininity (1990). Gender identities are about appropriating symbols in particular cultural contexts that define behaviors and aspects of culture as masculine or feminine. It is through the appropriation of these symbols as a performance that social actors define themselves and present themselves to others as masculine and feminine (Butler 1990). In this light, machismo offers Latin American men the symbols necessary to perform their masculine identities as masculine men via repeated iteration of behaviors considered ideally macho. It is through the constant performance and negotiation of symbolic aspects of Latin American machismo such as the ability to wield power where Latin American men declare themselves masculine social actors.

Differing geographic contexts will define what it means to deploy machismo, and these contexts in turn alter what it means to be masculine. Gutmann's work on machismo is centered on what it means to be a man in Mexico City (1996). Conversely, Sam Quinones identifies some of the symbolic aspects of the performance of machismo in rural areas of the Mexican state of Michoacán. The Bajio is a geographic region in Mexico comprised of the southern-central states of Jalisco, Guanajuato, Michoacán, and Zacatecas, where ranching culture influences those symbols that represent machismo

and guide male performances of masculinity (Quinones 2001). Based on my research in La Liga, many of the men participating in the league come from this area of Mexico. Quinones focuses on the idea of the *valiente* (the strong man), which describes Bajio/ranchero machismo as hyper-masculine where men are autonomous persons who deploy power over women and other men and they are deemed dangerous persons who are aggressive social actors (2001). The *valiente* is a type of idealized symbolic masculinity that is associated with the ranchero culture of the Bajio, "The valiente emerged because the rancho was a violent, brutal, and lawless place where a man needed to handle a gun, face down threats, and force people to respect him" (Quinones 2001:253). To be a *valiente* is to be independent, dangerous, and unpredictable; in short it is a version of hyper-machismo that arose from the difficulties people faced living a rural life in the Bajio.

To live life in a massive megalopolis such as Mexico City usually means that at some level in a man's life he must subordinate to another person, especially in terms of the context of working life. Most men working in Mexico City are in sectors like service, construction, or sales where they must report to a person in a supervisory position for success. In rural areas like the Bajio Mexican men may work as *rancheros* (ranchers), who have ultimate control over their work on the ranch and are more independent, "He (the valiente) is the man who stands up to the government, the boss, the police, the landowner-the man every Mexican would like to be if he only had the gumption…" (Quinones 2001:254). As such, the masculine ideals in each context reflect the demands of the way of life that characterize being masculine in Mexico City and the Bajio. While these two contexts vary in terms of their definitions of machismo

in Mexican cultural contexts, power remains a central component to each region's definition of masculinity.

Bourdieu's work on masculine domination is useful in explicating this foundational aspect of power in Latin American definitions of masculinity (2001). Bourdieu recognizes that this is because men are often the holders of cultural capital that define what is masculine and that men hold the power to define themselves, which in turn defines the feminine as everything that the true masculine man is not (2001). Bourdieu illustrates that men tend to hold more cultural capital than women which means that men have become the holders of cultural capital that defines gender identities, "Manliness…is an eminently *relational* notion, constructed in front of and for other men and against femininity…" (2001:53; Bourdieu emphasis). This is explicated in the work of Gutmann and Quinones, even though masculine identities mean very different things in Mexico City and the Bajio. In each locale, men are the holders of cultural capital that defines what men do and how men should act and in turn how women should act and what women should do. Thus whether or not they must defer power to other men in some situations still does not change the fact that the ideals of Latin American masculinity as reflected in the power men have to define themselves mean that men retain cultural capital and hold power over women in these contexts.

How men relate to women, as well as to men who are defined as not-masculine, in many Latin American cultural contexts best illustrates how machismo influences how masculinity is defined for Latin American men. Power is absolutely central to masculine identities in Latin American cultures as the ability to deploy it and not be subordinated to the power of others is crucial. Yet power in terms of Latin American

masculinity must be understood as embodied power. Judith Butler argues that in order to understand how gender identities are performed it is critical to understand why "bodies matter," both literally and figuratively, within any cultural context (1993). Gender identities are formed using conscious and unconscious appropriations of symbols that define the masculine and the feminine which guide the performance of gender, according to Butler, but this performance is always an embodied one (1993). Butler is arguing that bodies matter in the performance of gender because it is the body that is the site of the performance of a gendered self. Thus what clothes adorn the body, how the body is comported in space, and how the body relates to other bodies has importance in understating performances of gender identities. Bodies are also important, however, in understanding performances of gender because it is bodies that comprise the matter of the social universe (Butler 1993). Therefore ideas regarding mental deployments of gender symbols mean nothing without understanding how they relate to bodies that exist in, interact with each other, and that comprise the social world.

Latin American masculinities are ultimately built upon notions of how bodies relate to each other in the social world and it is through this relation where the masculine, the non-masculine, and the feminine are defined. It is the relations of bodies in contexts of power where machismo has its salience in defining relations between men, not-men, and women. Roger Lancaster illustrates this relationship between bodies, power, and masculinity in his work on masculine identity in Nicaragua (1992). In Nicaragua, the masculine man is the man who is powerful and imposes his will on others. Lancaster explicates this through an analysis of how roles in sexual acts, a

prime example of bodies relating to each other, define masculinity in Nicaragua. To be the masculine man in Nicaragua means to be the penetrator in the sex act, the ultimate symbolic representation of one's power over another (Lancaster 1992). To be feminine, however, does not necessarily mean to be the woman who is getting penetrated during sex. Rather any person who is penetrated is considered feminine, be they male or female. As Lancaster argues it is this distinction between domination and subordination that defines masculinity in Nicaragua (1992). The truly macho man is the man that has sex with women and/or other men as long as he is the penetrator during the sex act, the person who deploys power. The person who is penetrated and who is subordinate in the sex act is thereby the one who is feminine. These notions are then extended to all other aspects of social life where what it means to be masculine is to hold power over others and to be feminine means to be subordinate to the will of others, whether one occupies a male or female body (Lancaster 1992).

Penetration is quite literal in this definition of masculinity, but if penetration is extended metaphorically it can be applied conceptually to understand how masculinity operates in contexts such as La Liga. Alan Dundes deftly offers an analysis of American Football where penetration both in terms of the ideals of the game as well as the lexicon used to describe the game denote that hyper-aggressive masculinity is valued; dominance is paramount in American Football, subordination is shameful (1978). Similarly, to be a dominant, aggressive player is an expression of masculine identity in La Liga. To be passive or to get dominated by other players and/or teams does not reflect well on one's sense of masculinity. While this is not taken to the extremes that it could be in La Liga in terms of name calling and denigration, when a

team loses tempers run high and conflicts often erupt on the sidelines. These conflicts are embodied expressions of aggression and power. While they are often dangerous and considered unacceptable in terms of the views of the La Liga administration, because of their displays of aggression and power they occupy an important role in terms of masculine identities in the social world of La Liga.

One incident while I was playing for Deportivo Hidalgo illustrates the tensions inherent in these conflicts. Our team had just lost and one player was talking about where we went wrong in terms of tactical maneuvers and substitutions. This quickly turned into a conflict with another player who had seniority on the team, and ended with the senior player calling the other player a *pendejo* (asshole) and walking away. To have lost in the manner that we did was highly upsetting and indicative of the fútbol matches in La Liga as much more than just games. Instead of chalking this loss up to bad luck or shrugging off a loss with another beer, this conversation about strategy indicated the seriousness of my teammates when approaching our games. Winning games was very important and winning reflected an establishment of dominance, aggression, and power. In this case losing, or not winning, proved important enough to cause conflict amongst ourselves. The men who play in La Liga rarely describe their games as "just for fun" or "good exercise", phrases I have heard countless times after losses in other sport contexts outside of those in La Liga. Rather these games are contests of wills and exhibitions of superiority and power.

Frustrations with losing can result in explosive conflicts such as when teams get into fights which happens occasionally in La Liga. This aspect of La Liga does align with the ideals of machismo that have to do with aggression and power but

unfortunately these physical conflicts have quite negative effects. I have been witness to nasty fights in both La Liga and another league I played in while conducting fieldwork in northern San Diego County, California. Fights can spontaneously erupt and once one is immersed in the social world of these fútbol leagues and the meaning and importance that is ascribed to league games, the intensity of the competition is not surprising. Here you have twenty-two grown men on a field playing a physical game and what is more is that for Mexican immigrant men, playing fútbol lies at the nexus of culture and power in the form of masculinity in a Latin American context.

One of the worst fights I witnessed while conducting research in San Diego County involved a player's father yelling derogatory remarks at the other team which resulted in a large brawl. This father was beaten quite badly and the other team was suspended for the rest of the season. While it is possible that the resulting suspension was his ultimate goal in instigating this conflict this is unlikely because there was a very real risk that our team would be suspended as well. Based on the teasing this father endured from other spectators during the ensuing games most embarrassing for this man was not the beating itself, but the fact that it took place in front of his son, a direct challenge to his masculine identity. For the remainder of the season this father was much quieter when he attended games as was the rest of our team. Any frustrations on the field that escalated into confrontations were reserved for the referees and by the end of the season for teammates as we began to lose every week. Losing began to divide us as teammates as it reflected a sense of submission and loss of power. Fortunately, these frustrations never led to actual physical infighting on the team but there were verbal conflicts here and there which increased in frequency as the season progressed.

The worst conflict I have been a part of as an ethnographer researching Latin American fútbol was a fight that erupted when Deportivo Hidalgo was playing a team from Clinton, Oklahoma in Clinton; the Clinton team was comprised almost entirely of second/third generation Mexican immigrants and gringos (white men from the U.S.). Tensions ran high throughout this game and I could tell that my teammates really despised this team. Lots of choice names were being thrown about, shoving matches erupted several times, and the coach of the other team began slinging derogatory remarks at us. Now I had heard that there was animosity between the teams in La Liga from Oklahoma City versus the teams in La Liga from Enid, Clinton, El Reno, and other locales outside of the Oklahoma City Metro area but this conflict felt as though it came from a deeper place. My teammates resented the overly physical play of this team and they resented English being the preferred language being spoken by this team from Clinton because it gave them an advantage when it came to communication with the referees (both of whom spoke no Spanish).

Eventually the game erupted into a melee in which one of my teammates ended up on the ground, being kicked in the face, resulting in a broken nose. Many of us were trying to break up fights and I realized that perhaps I was not enjoying playing in this league as much as I thought. At any moment I could have been hit with a sucker punch. The game was called (ended) by the referees, the police came to interview my injured teammate, and the other team was suspended for a few games for their actions. Underlying this competition was a conflict between generations and linguistic conflicts between Mexican immigrants who speak Spanish and second/third generation Mexican immigrants and gringos who speak English. While it was saddening and certainly not

exemplary behavior to exhibit for the kids in attendance, this game was quite heated and it was not surprising that the underlying conflicts would erupt in physical violence.

Resorting to physical violence in these instances operates as a reflection of aggression and power taken to its extreme. Physical violence becomes an embodied expression of masculinity, a way of establishing power and dominance when all other avenues that could establish them have been exhausted. Of course, the emotional response of extreme anger or rage that would bring someone to instigate a physical altercation also plays a role. The combination of physical and emotional violence overtook players in these instances and the ideals of power and aggression that are associated with machismo did play a role in how these men reacted to conflict and/or to someone trying to establish dominance over them. While not sexual in this instance, the fights were about metaphorical penetration related to anger that arises when a team was losing, loses, or is "getting their asses kicked". Expressing this anger in this way is not innocuous as there are real dangers to physical expressions of extreme anger, especially for many men involved with La Liga.

The leadership of La Liga realizes the danger of these fights, largely in terms of the image of the league, but if the police get involved then legal charges of assault may arise, with dire consequences, in a league where some of the players are likely undocumented. In order to curtail this violence and keep the league games a family-friendly environment, La Liga leadership has instilled harsh penalties on those teams involved in instigating violence. During the 2011 season conflicts like the one described above would usually result in some sort of suspension for the teams involved, generally for a few games. By the 2012 season quite a few teams and players found

themselves *castigado* for violating these rules. The penalty of being cast out of the league also serves to reinforce the power that the league leadership has over league operations. In Figure 12, La Liga administration has a talk with a team that had previously been suspended for fighting. Not only is the administrator older indicating the power and authority he holds in the world of La Liga due to his age, but he is perceived as physically imposing by the players because he is sitting in a large pick-up truck causing the players to have to look up to him to listen to his speech. In this way he looks like a father figure chastising these players for their conduct. This performance of paternalism, masculinity, and power is crucial in La Liga because performing masculinity in La Liga involves a careful negotiation between what is acceptable aggressive behavior, shattering some stereotypical assumptions about the behaviors categorized as macho, and avoiding situations of subordination. This is quite a tricky navigation indeed.



Figure 12: La Liga administration speaks with a team that had been previously suspended for fighting in 2010. Photo by Kleszynski, 2010.

Jose Limon explicates this negotiation and performance in his work on how Mexican men use jokes while drinking around barbeque pits in South Texas in order to bond and to bolster their senses of masculinity (1989). Limon explains that while barbequing, Mexican men in South Texas will tease each other about being homosexual, about being penetrated, or about being subordinate to others. The barbeque pit, Limon argues, creates an atmosphere of the carnivalesque where Mexican cultural norms are suspended (1989). Because these norms are suspended, the men tease each other about being homosexual with the implied knowledge that none of them really are. Further compounding this is the ability of South Texas Mexicanos to use the

actual meat being cooked as fodder for these jokes, as the teasing becomes a competition to see who can top each other with insults. Through these rounds of insults the men bond as the ability to deride another man's masculinity bolsters all the other men's senses of being masculine men (Limon 1989). It is this carnivalesque atmosphere where knowledge of what it means to be a homosexual man does not imply that one is homosexual and where true knowledge of masculinity is on display. By insulting another man's sexuality a demonstration of the knowledge of what a true man is not displays the knowledge of what a true man is and as such this joking bonds these men together (Limon 1989). This is a performance that helps the South Texas Mexicanos negotiate, perform, and bolster their senses of masculinity.

Teasing banter of this nature exists in La Liga as well. Mexican men in La Liga have a remarkable ability to turn almost any comment into a sexual double entendre, especially comments suggesting homosexuality. I have been witness to this many times, and have even been on the receiving end of these sorts of jokes as well. For example after a game one Sunday our coach, Tomas, saw an old friend. First he yelled at him to say "hi" and then he asked the guy to call him using a hand gesture signaling a telephone. Immediately the team jumped at the opportunity to call out in unison, "Hueso! Hueso!" (Bone! Bone!), implying a homosexual relationship between Tomas and this other man. All Tomas could do was smile and admit that he had been burned. Tomas was also subject to this same joke when telling me to give him my phone number in front of the team, who once again chimed in with, "Hueso! Hueso!". Both of us were left with little recourse but to shake our heads and smile. Neither of us was offended and understood the humor in this context. In some ways, this sort of humor

could be understood as a release from the sorts of norms dictating masculine identity such as being aggressive, dominant, and a powerful social actor. These jokes contest, discipline, and police gender norms which offer these men an opportunity to poke fun at them and to poke fun at each other which provides a linguistic context to develop bonds among teammates.

Fútbol as a Man's Game: Mujeres y Partidos (Women and Games)

Latin American gender roles are often described as maintaining a distinction between the *casa* and the *calle*, the home and the street. Rachel H. Adler, working with Yucatecans in Dallas, defines the *casa* as the realm of the domestic and the *calle* as the realm of the public (2008). The *casa*, or house, is where the family needs are attended to, where the cooking and cleaning take place, and this realm is generally considered the purview of women among Yucatecans in Dallas. The *casa* is the domestic societal realm of women and femininity. The *calle*, or street, is where the political occurs, where drinking and bonding lead to social networking, where the work that provides family incomes take place, and the *calle* is generally considered the realm of men (Adler 2008). The *calle* is the public and political realm of men and masculinity.

While the *casa* and *calle* dichotomy is useful for examining gender roles in Latin American and Mexican immigrant social contexts, it is not an absolute and it does not dictate that men never take on tasks associated with the *casa* and that women never take on tasks associated with the *calle*. Changing political and economic contexts in Latin America have eroded at the rigidity of this concept:

> Whether through the rise of neo-liberal capitalism (as seen in Mexico and Puerto Rico), the decline of international socialism (in Cuba) or both (in Nicaragua), the effects of economic restructuring on households within these societies have demonstrated some noticeable parallels. Although men's formal work opportunities generally contract in times of scarcity, women's work opportunities tend to expand through a heavier reliance upon the informal economy or self-employment (Pertierra 2008:751).

Women working outside the home, which is extremely common in Mexican immigrant communities in Oklahoma City, challenges the absolutes of a *casa*/*calle* dichotomy and allows some flexibility when it comes to changing gender roles, even though the concept is useful for analysis of gender interactions in La Liga.

The social world of La Liga tends to reflect the gender roles associated with *casa* and *calle* for Mexican immigrants living in Oklahoma City, although there are exceptions. For men, La Liga weekends are about playing and/or watching fútbol, discussing politics and issues that affect the Oklahoma City Latino community, drinking beer, exchanging jokes, and hanging out with friends. Women are also involved in the social life of La Liga in ways that parallel the realm of the *casa*; they are responsible for maintaining what might be considered domestic issues in La Liga Latina such as cooking, serving, and selling food or being involved in cleaning up the league's fields after the games end on Saturday and Sunday nights. While these aspects of La Liga could be considered domestic, the fact that women are often vendors at La Liga games reflects their important role in the informal economy of La Liga, which means that in some ways women in La Liga can and do enter, albeit marginally, into the world of the

calle. This role is an important one, however, and being a vendor offers women more visibility and brings them into direct interaction with men who aren't always their children, husbands, boyfriends, brothers, or some other relative.

When discussing gender roles, rather than mentioning gender roles that predominate in the greater community of Oklahoma City such as those found in Anglo-American cultural contexts, Mexican immigrant women indicate that they maintain the gender roles from their homelands via inter-generational role modeling; parents pass along these expectations to their children, their children in turn reinforce these roles for the next generation as do other family members. Because there are often several generations from any given family that simultaneously participate in La Liga, the gendered distinction between *casa* and *calle* remains salient in this culturally conservative milieu. The Mexican immigrant women I spoke with felt that this is due to the insular nature of Mexican immigrant communities in Oklahoma City as many of these men and women do not interact with Anglo-Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, and American Indians outside of the workplace.

In terms of the roles women usually occupy in La Liga, the ideology of the *casa* and the *calle* is at work as women exist on the sidelines in terms of the social world of La Liga. As mentioned earlier, there is one fútbol context where this is in question and that is within the social world of indoor soccer. At Indoor Soccer Arenas (ISA) in Oklahoma City there are women's teams, women's leagues, and co-ed teams mostly comprised of Mexican immigrants, second/third generation Mexican immigrants, and Chicano/as that have been in Oklahoma City for generations. I have played on co-ed teams against some of these teams and for many reasons this distinction between *casa*

and the *calle* is not a factor. First of all, indoor soccer is a vastly different game with vastly different written and unwritten rules than outdoor fútbol. While I would never argue that outdoor fútbol is an old man's game due to the rigor, levels of intense energy, and aggression that outdoor fútbol demands of its players, indoor fútbol among Latin Americans does draw all ages but the co-ed teams tend to be comprised of younger players. It is not as physical as outdoor fútbol and does not carry the same injury risks as well. Co-ed teams provide these women with an opportunity to participate as players and there are plenty of good Mexican immigrant and second/third generation Mexican immigrant women indoor fútbol players in Oklahoma City.

Outdoor fútbol, however, is a much different game than indoor soccer. For example slide tackling is banned in both indoor soccer facilities in Oklahoma City (ISA and Soccer City) so players must remain on their feet throughout the game. This minimizes the chances for serious injury. Slide tackling is a major component of game play in outdoor fútbol and is usually the reason players get hurt during games. A research participant once remarked that fútbol is so intense that it is better for men to play than women. This is one reason why the men in La Liga feel as though fútbol is a man's game.

Another reason has to do with fútbol and tradition. La Liga begins every season in April with an opening day procession. Games are actually not played on this day but rather all the teams gather for an opening ceremony. Each team shows up in their full uniforms along with their *reina* (queen). A *reina* is a young woman, quite often a daughter/niece/relative of one of the players or coaches who has been selected by the team. The *reina* wears an elegant dress, often quite similar to a quinceañera dress,

many *reinas* wear little crowns/tiaras, and sometimes a sash with the team's name (see Figure 13). A *reina* from each division is chosen as the best, sort of the queen of each division, and it is an honor to have your team's *reina* selected as a winner. While all the teams do get their picture taken for the website by La Liga administrators, the winning teams and their *reinas* have more pictures taken and are celebrated on the La Liga website.



Figure 13: Deportivo Hidalgo and their *reinas* in 2011. Photo by La Liga Latina y Americana, www.lasloi.com, accessed 11/10/2011.

During the procession each team parades around the field complex with their *reina*, sometimes a team banner, and players carrying flags (see Figure 14). Once all the teams have done so they gather en masse to recognize the winning *reinas*. As mentioned above having a winning *reina* represent one's team is an honor and those

teams are often recognized by others involved with La Liga as having more team pride or team spirit. Winning *reinas* are not necessarily the most beautiful, although that is subject to perception, but often are chosen as the best representation of this team pride or spirit. The procession is quite important and on the team I played for, Deportivo Hidalgo, the team captain reminded us about the importance of the procession and the importance of attending the procession several times before the event actually took place.



Figure 14: Chivas OKC procession in 2011. Photo by La Liga Latina y Americana, www.lasloi.com, accessed 11/10/2011.

The *reina* is part of the La Liga tradition of fútbol. The *reina* represents what roles women should have in La Liga; while they are a part of the social world and are

important in the lives of these men, the procession indicates that they are not players and this is clearly stated with this ceremony. The stark difference between the men wearing their uniforms that will eventually become dirty, perhaps torn, but definitely battle tested and the elegant dresses worn by the *reinas* symbolize a division of gender roles within the league. This is not to say that women are expected to show up in dresses and look like they are ready for an elegant party, wedding, or quinceañera every Sunday. Instead women occupy traditional roles in La Liga, roles that are dictated in many ways by the *casa* and *calle* dichotomy. When women are called to join in the very public procession ceremony it is as an objectified symbol of youth and team spirit, not as players, cheerleaders, or even part of a team's *porra* (fan club).

The season opening procession is a very public event and because of this it is important that women are a part of the procession in a way that mirrors the *casa*. Their femininity, and by extension domesticity, is on display and is given high regard and value. Having the mean wear their uniforms separates them from the women and reflects that their masculinity is on display, which is also given high regard and value. This ceremony highlights the importance of the distinction between femininity and masculinity in La Liga and it sets the tone for the relationship between genders for the entire season. While women do have the opportunity to take on more masculine roles when they operate as vendors, for example, they still remain on the sidelines and do not ever play in La Liga games. This stands in contrast to leagues like COASL where the occasional woman can be found playing in the men's league. This would not happen in La Liga. To allow a woman to play would erode the dichotomous nature of gender roles and identities which in turn would erode some aspects of the transnational cultural

identities of La Liga participants. Like many of the older men I interviewed expressed, women can like fútbol, women can come and watch fútbol, but women should not play fútbol.

Women, Desmadre, and Gender Roles

Roger Magazine's work on masculinity among Pumas *porras*(fan clubs) in Mexico City highlights how men and women relate in a specific Latin American sport context (2007). Magazine argues that the Pumas, the professional team of the Mexican National University (UNAM), and their fans represent youth and masculinity within the ranks of professional Mexican fútbol. Central to this idea of Pumas fans as youthful and masculine is the idea of *desmadre* (Magazine 2007). Etymologically, *desmadre* means to go against the wishes of the mother: des(un)-madre(mother). This can be understood as a double entendre as these youthful fans perceive that they are violating the norms and wishes dictated by their actual mothers by drinking, getting violent, and acting out at Pumas games. Yet *desmadre* also implies going against Mexican norms of good behavior by violating the wishes of the societal mother, and in this violation Pumas fans are seen as youthful rebels whose abilities to do whatever they wish at Pumas games gives them an aura of power (Magazine 2007). This portrayal of masculinity highlights the masculine within a Mexican professional sports context as tied to displays of power.

There is also evidence that the idea of *desmadre* plays out in the social world of La Liga as well, even if I never heard the term used in this context. Some of the *porras*

in La Liga behave chaotically while attending games and this behavior mirrors *porras* for professional teams such as the *porras* associated with Pumas as mentioned above. Nearly every team in La Liga has a *porra*; some are larger than others, some are rowdier, and they are one arena in the social world of La Liga where women are accepted. Most women in La Liga *porras* do not generally drink, however. When women drink too much at La Liga events women and men around them glare at them and it is clear that this is frowned upon and considered very un-lady like behavior. Viewing women's drinking in this manner reinforces the *casa*/*calle* distinction. Drinking in public is fine for men but somewhat taboo for women in La Liga. Women who choose to engage in behaviors associated with *desmadre*, especially drinking, exceed social norms and these behaviors erode gender norms of what is acceptable and respectable behavior.

When this project began, I thought I would find that moving to the U.S. causes a change in gender roles among Mexican immigrant men and women. I thought that Mexican women would see that U.S. women have more power and that they would seek more equality in their relationships with Mexican men. Through interviews with Mexican immigrant women, I was told that this was not the case. Anthropologist Deborah Boehm found a similar phenomenon in her research on Mexican transnationals from San Luis Potosí living in several states in the U.S. West, "Once women have come north, they again live under the daily control of a male head-of-household, more so than those women who are living in Mexico…In the United States, men continue to have significant control over women's actions. Such findings complicate notions that migrations inevitably lead to gender egalitarianism" (2012:83). Because Mexican

immigrant communities in Oklahoma City are very insular, men do remain in a head-of-household position and they continue to manage the women in their lives.

One of my research participants, a woman from Aguascalientes named Veronica, had a similar assertion. According to Veronica, because Mexican immigrant communities in Oklahoma are very insular, gender roles are reproduced because these women do not have very much social interaction with U.S. women. Sons see how dads act and replicate these actions. Daughters see how moms act and replicate these actions. Veronica and I discussed this in the context of La Liga and she summed it up as the men remain primary, the women secondary. If the father has a game on Sunday, the whole family may go to support him. Veronica told me that women at league games may not even like fútbol but are committed to their husbands. Thus women occupying the roles they do in La Liga acts as a performance of gender imbalance as women coming to La Liga games as spectators and not players is a sign of the continued dominance of men in this social context.

It is also possible that immigration itself and the development of a transnational cultural identity are also at play in maintaining this traditional gender imbalance. In Latin America, many women do experience increased freedom from the roles associated with the *casa*, especially as more and more of them enter into the workforce because of the need for more than one earner in a household. This often results in a "double burden" for these women as they not only are now contributing to the economics of the household but they are still tasked with most of the domestic household responsibilities, "Economic crises force women to move into waged labour, but it does not free them from their domestic labour for which they are still held responsible as women"

(Pertierra 2008: 751). When women emigrate from Latin America to the United States they may find themselves in an insular community where men hold power and thus have the ability to control interactions between genders. What is more is that as Latin American immigrant men may be trying to reproduce cultural practices and traditions found back in their homeland, they may want to recreate what they envision to be traditional gender roles even if these roles are not what is currently in practice in Latin America. This reproduction results in the distinction of the *casa* and the *calle* and the implementation of a distinction that keeps men on the powerful end of gender imbalance.

Other perspectives on gender roles in La Liga came from men I interviewed, many of whom were teammates. One of them, a young man from Tamaulipas named Enrique, remarked that in the U.S. the government has given women power. Enrique expressed that in Mexico the government has not given women power but women have domestic and societal power. This domestic or societal power is perhaps more influential than the public power of men. Women in this context make many of the household decisions and have quite a bit of influence on children in the household. Enrique relayed a very important point: it is not clear if there is greater value placed by men and women on the *casa* or the *calle*. Rather it may be understood that both act in relation to each other to comprise interactions between genders. In La Liga, certainly both are at play and both have a role that dictates how gender roles are to be performed in this social world.

At the end of the 2012 season, I began to hear rumors that a women's fútbol league may start soon in Oklahoma City. In September 2013, I went to visit my old

teammates on Deportivo Hidalgo and the women I saw at La Liga on this Sunday were selling food, watching kids, or watching games. The traditions that surround fútbol in La Liga will likely keep women in these marginalized roles although the development of a women's league in Oklahoma City may offer a catalyst for change. For the time being however, fútbol in La Liga remains a man's world.

Chapter 5: Performance, Belonging, and the Symbolic in La Liga

Fútbol and Belonging

One balmy Sunday afternoon in 2012 while lounging around nursing a Budweiser with some Deportivo Hidalgo teammates, we suddenly heard yelling and loud banging. Even my teammates were surprised when a white Chevy pickup came around the corner with its tailgate full of grown men wearing the same jerseys that were yelling and singing at the top of their lungs. Suddenly we heard an even louder sound, an explosion, then there was a cloud of smoke, and all of the men in this Chevy truck laughing and yelling louder filled the pitch with the cacophony of mayhem and fanaticism. The smoke bomb signaled the arrival of the *porra* (fan club) for Tigres, one of the popular clubs in the A Division of La Liga and an emulation of the professional club from the University of Nuevo Leon in Mexico. It was at this point that my teammates laughed and shook their heads, an admonishment and recognition of the bombastic entrance of this rowdy *porra*. *Porras* are quite common in La Liga and some of them, such as the *porra* for Pumas, a popular team in the A Division of La Liga that mimics the popular professional club from the National University in Mexico City, try to mirror the *porras* that are attached to professional teams in Mexico. The Pumas *porra*, for example, rolls out a public address system most Sundays and plays chants and songs sung by fans that were actually recorded at Pumas games in Mexico City. However, rowdy *porras* are not limited to emulations of professional teams. The *porra* for Honduras, a popular team in the A Division of La Liga that wears the jerseys of the Honduran national team, is also quite rowdy and their barbeques at the La Liga games

produced some of the most wonderful smells I ever encountered during my fieldwork (see Figure 15).

This type of fanaticism indicates belonging in La Liga. Beyond just being a part of the league, playing on a team binds teammates and gives players a bit of prestige within the social world of La Liga as a whole. Belonging is also created through these *porras* such as the Tigres and Honduras *porras* mentioned above. If a person cannot play on a team, he may be able to forge a connection to players and others who are fans of the same team in La Liga via these *porras*. Anthropologist Roger Magazine explains that being a fan of the Pumas is about a performance of youth, masculinity, and power that is exhibited via chaotic behaviors that are generally not acceptable in everyday life (2007). Through the performance of what is called *desmadre*, Pumas fans create a sense of belonging. Much like the mayhem the Tigres *porra* exhibited in the example given above, Pumas fans connect to each other through a shared experience of fanaticism, drinking excessively, causing general social mayhem, and singing songs and chants to support their favorite professional club.



Figure 15: The *porra* for Honduras, a team in La Liga's Division A, waits for a game to start in 2010. Photo by Kleszynski 2010.

Porras also provide a unique arena for performances of transnational identity among Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City. Through this performance of identity participants in these leagues construct senses of community and belonging that transcend geopolitical borders. Similarly anthropologist Amanda Minks discusses how song game performances among Miskitu youth in Nicaragua demonstrate the development of social and cultural belonging. These song game performances, "signal forms of knowledge, affect, and stance that index broader social and cultural relations; thus the acquisition of competence in song game performance is also the acquisition of

social and cultural competence" (2008:38). Similarly *porra* participation signals social and cultural knowledge which in turns binds *porra* members to each other and intertwines them into the social world of La Liga. There is not, however, homogeneity in terms of how belonging and the social world are constructed. What it means to be a part of the social world of La Liga often means different things for different people even though there are some aspects of performance, the deployment of symbols, and how identities are expressed in La Liga that are similar and that work to facilitate belonging for Mexican immigrants living in Oklahoma City.

My previous research in San Diego County described how Mexican immigrant recreational fútbol leagues provide a space for social networking and building community (Kleszynski 2007). Through these leagues a sense of belonging to a greater Mexican immigrant community takes hold and these leagues provide opportunities to develop friendships, work connections, and other forms of social support (Kleszynski 2007). Belonging is constructed based on a shared set of circumstances having to do with immigration histories, places of origin and senses of identity tied to those geographic locales, sharing cultural values regarding aspects of life such as gender roles and power/authority, and affinities for aspects of community life such as recreational fútbol leagues. A striking example of belonging involved players on recreational fútbol teams finding friends who had moved to the San Diego area with whom they had lost touch. Via a local Latino newspaper, *El Semanario*, Mexican men were able to connect with these long lost friends because their friends were part of a team photo printed as part of *El Semanario's* coverage for the league I was working in at the time, Ocean Pacific Soccer Leagues. Their friends saw the photos because they regularly read *El*

Semanario and were able to reconnect and reunite with these long lost friends (see Figure 16).



Figure 16: Friends exchange greetings before a game in the Ocean Pacific Soccer League of Encinitas, CA in 2006. Photo by Kleszynski, 2006.

This also happens in La Liga. Two of my teammates on Deportivo Hidalgo from the same neighborhood near Mexico City found out that they were both living in Oklahoma when they reunited through playing for the same team in La Liga. They shared similar immigration histories and even social networks but it was playing recreational fútbol that reunited them in the United States. Their bond transcends a belonging to the larger Latino community in Oklahoma City because they have a sense of belonging forged by being from the same barrio near Mexico City; they are *chilangos*

(slang for people from Mexico City) from Ecatepec de Morelos who are working and living in Oklahoma City.

This example of reunification may play out in other areas of Mexican immigrant social life in Oklahoma City, but it demonstrates the importance of La Liga in terms of facilitating transnational cultural identities. When one immigrant or a group of immigrants from a specific locale in Mexico comes to Oklahoma City, relatives, friends, and acquaintances back home who are considering emigrating will often likely head to Oklahoma City as well. This was the story of Guillermo who had friends who lived in Oklahoma City and invited him to come when he made the decision to leave Mexico for the United States. He arrived to an existing social network which helped him find work, a place to live, and how to navigate everyday life in the United States, for example. He was able to stay connected to Mexico via these Mexican friends he was interacting with in the United States. Together they share a cultural identity while living in Oklahoma City.

By joining a large fútbol league with over 1200 players and because many of these players are also Mexican immigrants who tend to be from a few specific locales in Mexico, the chances of finding somebody who is from your home state or home town in La Liga is fairly decent (see Figure 17). In this way, a large social entity like La Liga helps to facilitate adjustment to life in the United States via a connection to the cultural practices and traditions that surround the game of fútbol. Maintaining these practices and traditions helps to create and reinforce a transnational identity that is connected to both a hometown in Mexico as well as Oklahoma City in the United States and sharing

this transnational identity helps to forge belonging among people involved in the social world of La Liga.



Figure 17: Friends hanging out, watching a division A La Liga game between Zacatecas (maroon) and Tigres (yellow and blue), 2010. Photo by Kleszynski 2010.

"We Wear Arsenal but we ARE Deportivo Hidalgo": Team Names and Jerseys

One of the more striking aspects of this league is the team names chosen by the players. There is an importance attached to the team names and jerseys chosen by these men as evidenced by the frenetic video on the introductory page of the website for the league which shows players with the captions, "*Amor a la pelota, amor a la camiseta, defendiendo nuestras colores*" ["Love for the ball/game, love for the jersey, defending

our colors"] (www.lasloi.com, accessed November, 2012). The team names and jerseys offer clues about the identity of each team and the geographic origins of its players which parallels what Richard Giulianotti, a prominent European sociologist of sport, explains about the way professional clubs create solidarity among their fan bases: "Virtually all clubs are named emblematically after a particular 'place', and thus have the kind of affective tie to a specific locality that one finds in more traditional and localist societies" (1999:15). Giulianotti is discussing European powerhouses such as AC Milan or Real Madrid, whose names indicate the city each team represents, the Italian city of Milan and the Spanish city of Madrid. This is not unique to Europe as this way of naming teams is quite common throughout professional leagues in numerous sports worldwide. In the Mexican professional fútbol league, for example, team names are often constructed in a similar manner, i.e. Pachuca from the city of Pachuca in the state of Hidalgo and Atlas de Guadalajara from Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco. This way of naming teams is very important in La Liga as it simultaneously signals belonging and recognizes difference. Emphasizing localized identities is very important to many teams in La Liga and this way of naming teams helps to signify the nature of the origins of many of its players.

These declarations of localized identities are especially important in a sporting context where many other players and teams may be from the same country. While many men in La Liga are certainly proud of their national heritage, Mexicans in La Liga, for example, make up the largest percentage of players in terms of national background in the league. Many Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City also originate from similar north-central states in Mexico such as Hidalgo, Sonora, Chihuahua,

Zacatecas, and Jalisco. This is one reason why team names become important signifiers of distinction as well as belonging. Team names symbolize that the players in La Liga are not homogeneous in terms of geographic and cultural origin. Team names in La Liga signify transregional ties to specific places. This is most readily apparent where multiple teams have players from the same regions within Mexico thus demanding creativity in the creation of team names that reflect this internal diversity. For example, team names like Real Hidalgo, Deportivo Hidalgo, Libertad Hidalgo, and AT Hidalgo all reflect a tie to the Mexican state of Hidalgo. Because there are a large number of players from Hidalgo, no one team monopolizes the affective tie to this state in Mexico. Rather there are many teams with this tie so adding something like a "Deportivo" or "Liberdad" to a team name allows for many teams to demonstrate their ties to the same place (see Figure 18). To name one's team Deportivo Hidalgo signifies one's identity as both Mexican and as a resident of the state of Hidalgo, as opposed to Zacatecas and its signification of regional Mexican identity tied to the state of Zacatecas. Both teams are comprised of players largely or entirely from Mexico and the identity of both teams is bound to a shared sense of Mexican identity. However, it is important to those on the team to have a name that signifies this regional identity because players in La Liga are proud of their specific origins and want to show that pride through their team names.

No	Equipo	PJ	G	E	P	GF	GC	DIF	Pts
1	LIBERTAD HIDALGO	19	15	2	2	68	19	49	47
2	BUENAVISTA	19	14	2	3	56	17	39	44
3	NEW CASTLE	19	14	2	3	57	28	29	44
4	CLUB OJO DE AGUA	19	13	2	4	41	24	17	41
5	DEP SAN JOSE	19	12	4	3	42	22	20	40
6	SAN FELIPE	19	12	2	5	48	31	17	38
7	AGUILAS DE CLINTON	19	10	6	3	31	19	12	36
8	DEP MARQUENSE	19	8	5	6	33	19	14	29
9	BIG BROTHER-ENID	19	8	2	9	40	33	7	26
10	CLUB CHUICABAL	19	6	7	6	19	18	1	25
11	TOROS	19	6	5	8	26	34	-8	23
12	DEP BRISENO	19	6	4	9	24	29	-5	22
13	CELAYA	19	5	5	9	24	34	-10	20
14	TUZOS DE ELGIN	19	6	2	11	27	45	-18	20
15	DEP JUVENTINO ROSAS	19	5	4	10	26	35	-9	19
16	LA UNION	19	5	3	11	27	53	-26	18
17	AT TAPATIO	19	4	5	10	16	24	-8	17
18	DEP ALTENSE	19	3	3	13	23	59	-36	12
19	STILLWATER SPURS	19	3	0	16	18	50	-32	9
20	DEP HIDALGO	19	1	3	15	20	73	-53	6

Figure 18: La Liga Division B-1 2014 end of season standings. Courtesy of www.lasloi.com, accessed March 11, 2015.

Other examples include the team name of Real Estelí, whose players largely hail from the Nicaraguan department of Estelí or Club Chuicabal, whose players mostly come from the city of Chuicabal in Guatemala. Team names such as Real Estelí, while signifying place of origin, also indicate how teams in La Liga are usually named and perceived by others. This is evidenced by the term *Real*, *i.e.* a Spanish word meaning "royal" that is most famously associated with the immensely popular professional Spanish fútbol club Real Madrid. This team naming practice parallels the way

professional teams are named worldwide and many teams in La Liga emulate the prefixes or suffixes that are used for professional teams worldwide in their team names, for example "Real" after "Real Madrid", or "AC" (*Club Atletico*, or Athletic Club) after AC Milan. These two teams are hugely popular and successful professional European football clubs and the use of these prefixes in team names in La Liga signals prestige by association. The players on a team wearing the jerseys of AC Milan and named Real Estelí are strongly connected to their geographic origins as the combined symbols of jersey and name express a transregional identity, "we are the fútbol club of players who are avid fútbol aficionados and are largely from the Nicaraguan department of Estelí." Similarly, players on the team named Zacatecas gain prestige and signify their sense of place through wearing the jerseys of Italian professional team Roma; together the regional team name and Italian jersey express the idea that this team of Mexican fútbol players are avid fútbol aficionados and are largely from the Mexican state of Zacatecas. As mentioned above, the vast majority of teams in La Liga choose a Spanish or Italian prefix for their team names, *i.e.* there are very few "Uniteds" or "FCs" (Football Club); these prefixes do not carry the prestige in La Liga that designations such as "Atletico" and "AC" (Atletico Club) provide because they are generally used by English or U.S. professional teams, not European or Latin American professional teams.

These transregional affiliations with cities, states, and regions are all important in a transnational context such as La Liga where the vast majority of players come from or have familial ties to Mexico and other Latin American nations. Sociologist Douglas Massey identifies a similar dynamic with the term "*paisanaje*" to describe this feeling of shared community of origin among Mexican immigrants living in the U.S. who share

similar geographic origins (1986:105). *Paisanaje* in La Liga, however, is not only about a shared geographic origin. *Paisanaje* is about a shared sense of identity, a shared sense of social location, and the shared love of a sport that arguably, at the adult level of participation at least, remains primarily perceived as an immigrant's game in the United States. Because professional fútbol in the U.S. is not as popular as American football the players generally do not make as much money or achieve the level of fame that a professional American footballer can. This drives many U.S. children away from the game as they get older leaving a few adults who continue to play as they age. Since fútbol is so popular throughout the rest of the world outside of the U.S., being a fútbol fan in the U.S. often operates as a marker of being foreign. While the popularity of the sport is growing in the U.S., it is still arguably outside of the sporting mainstream. For Mexican immigrants, however, being a fútbol fan and playing fútbol well into adulthood becomes a shared cultural practice and helps to cultivate this sense of *paisanaje*. While those involved in La Liga may share a unifying sense of *paisanaje,* naming a team after the nation of Mexico does not provide the same depth of meaning as naming a team after the Mexican state of Zacatecas or the Nicaraguan department of Estelí. This deeper signification is what creates solidarity among a team's players and it represents to others how the team wants to be seen.

In terms of cultural identity, the teams comprised of mostly Mexican players who choose to name themselves after Chivas (goats) of Guadalajara deftly exemplify how identity is expressed via team names in La Liga. Chivas of Guadalajara is famous in the Mexican professional fútbol ranks and among Mexican professional fútbol aficionados for only fielding players of Mexican descent or Mexican citizenship

(Bensinger 2004; Wahl 2004). Most professional teams worldwide do not have such a policy and in fact are eager to sign quality players no matter their national background. In professional leagues in Mexico, for example, there are teams that have fielded players from the U.S. and there are many teams that field players from Central and South America. Because of this policy, many research participants explained that Chivas is considered the quintessential Mexican team. In fact, "100% Mexicanos", is stitched onto the back of the neckline on an official Chivas jersey. Thus, naming the team Chivas OKC signifies players' cultural affiliations with the nation of Mexico alongside their home in the United States, the city of Oklahoma City. Using the jerseys and the team name of Chivas declares belonging to both the Mexican community as well as the community of recreational fútbol in Oklahoma City. At the time of my fieldwork, many of the players on Chivas OKC were from various parts of Mexico so there was no specific region in Mexico to name the team after. Choosing Chivas OKC demonstrated ties to the nation of Mexico and ties to Oklahoma City, and by extension, ties to the United States. Chivas OKC, then, operates as a team name that expresses a transnational and transregional identity.

Interestingly, during the time of my fieldwork Chivas OKC flew two flags for its games in La Liga, a Chivas flag with the professional team insignia and a state of Oklahoma flag (see Figure 19). While one might expect them to fly a Mexican flag as well, it was conspicuously absent. Their choice to name themselves Chivas OKC and to fly a state of Oklahoma flag as well as a Chivas flag at their games signifies their relationship to the state of Oklahoma as well as to their sense of Mexican identity. Thus, their affiliation with Chivas supersedes the need to fly a Mexican flag; because

they are Chivas OKC, their Mexican identity is not in question and by association it is clear that they are a team from Mexico, more specifically the city of Guadalajara and/or the Mexican state of Jalisco. While the roster in any given year for Chivas OKC may include second generation Mexican-Americans or players who are not from Guadalajara, the name Chivas OKC signifies that a transnational Mexican identity is shared among the majority of the players.



Figure 19: A La Liga Chivas OKC (white and red) game in 2010. The white pickup is flying the Chivas and Oklahoma State flags. Photo by Kleszynski 2010.

Other examples of team names that represent transnational identity include Acatic and one of the league's consistently successful teams, Honduras. Acatic was

founded and is comprised of a number of players from Acatic, a small town approximately 50km to the east of Guadalajara. Acatic wear the jerseys of the professional team of Atlas of Guadalajara (see Figure 20). Thus, the team name of Acatic signifies the town of origin of the team's founders and players while the jersey chosen, Atlas, signifies their sense of Mexicanidad, as well as knowledge of the professional leagues in Mexico.



Figure 20: A division A La Liga game, Acatic (red and black) vs. Tigres (yellow and blue), 2010. Photo by Kleszynski, 2010.

Honduras offers an example of Massey's *paisanje* in perhaps its clearest context. Many research participants described the geographic origins of the team named Honduras, explaining that almost all of the players on the team are from Honduras. The

players of Honduras chose to name themselves after their home nation and even wear the jerseys of the Honduran national team. In seasons past La Liga administration used to fly a Honduran flag over the central building in the complex. Interestingly this was one of only three flags flown over this building before the league began flying dozens of flags from nations in North America, Central America, South America, and Africa at its complex during the late stages of the 2012 season. The original three flags were the Mexican flag, the Oklahoma state flag, and the Honduran flag. The inclusion of more flags in 2012 reflected the growth of the league in terms of the national background of its players and all these flags demonstrate that La Liga is a transnational league that has players from all over the world.

Teams in La Liga also generally choose to wear replica jerseys of professional teams from well-known leagues around the world. For example, during the time of my fieldwork there was a recreational fútbol team playing in La Liga wearing the jerseys of AS Roma, a popular Italian professional team, but with the team name of Zacatecas (a state in Mexico). There was another team wearing the jerseys of AC Milan, another immensely popular Italian professional team, with the team name of Real Estelí. These symbols convey messages about the men who are a part of La Liga and their senses of self and place. These Latin American men engage in a transnational set of cultural practices that are linked to multiple nations at once. Wearing the jersey of a team that plays in what is arguably one of the world's toughest professional leagues, the Italian Serie A, in a country thousands of miles away from their homelands tells others that they are serious fútbol players and fans. The hope is that wearing the jersey of these

professional teams symbolizes one's fútbol proficiency and these jerseys represent symbolic capital in terms of a transnational cultural identity.

Anthropologist Karen Hansen argues that there is a dual quality of dress as it adorns the body but is perceived by others (2004:372). Dress can be a reflection of different levels of identity, "This two-sided quality invites us to explore both the individual and collective identities that the dressed body enables" (Hansen 2004: 372). Because of this duality, dress often reflects deeper social meanings and can offer insights into the greater social contexts that people operate in, "Dress readily becomes a flash point of conflicting values, fueling contest in historical encounters, in interactions between class, between genders and generations, and in recent global cultural and economic exchanges" (Hansen 2004:371).

In the social world of La Liga, these jerseys and team names signify an overall belonging in the culture of fútbol, both as fans of the professional game and as recreational players. Wearing the jerseys of certain teams, however, can confer an aura of prestige to a team, in the eyes of both the other players and the spectators. For example to play for and wear the jersey of teams in the A division, the highest division of La Liga, is often considered prestigious by other players. Games between teams in the A division are by far the best attended by spectators, these teams field the best players, with a few exceptions, of any in the league, and games in the A division always draw the most competent referees. As mentioned earlier the A division final that is generally played in early November draws somewhere in the neighborhood of 500-600 spectators compared to maybe 100-150 for a high profile A division regular season game.

Playing for Real Madrid or Pumas or Deportivo Mexico (all teams in La Liga's division A) is prestigious as it signals that these players are good enough to make it onto a team at the highest level of the league and that these players are good enough to play for the most elite teams within that highest level. Figure 21 depicts Honduras defending its goal from a Pumas attack. In the background is the *porra* for Honduras, one of the league's largest and most boisterous at the time. Generally, in La Liga, the larger *porras* are associated with the teams with more prestige. Many of the fans in these *porras* will wear the same jersey as the team and have followed the team for several seasons. Not everyone in any one *porra* may be from the same region where many of the other players are from, but for many of the *porras* I was aware of in La Liga the tie to a regional identity was binding for the members of a *porra*. In this way the *porra* represents both a transnational cultural identity and a transregional cultural identity, i.e. the affective ties to Mexico remain but there may also be ties to Mexico City in the case of the Pumas *porra*.



Figure 21: A division A La Liga game between Pumas (white) and Honduras (white and blue), 2010. Photo by Kleszynski, 2010.

There are many aspects of a transnational cultural identity reflected through a team of immigrants playing recreational fútbol in La Liga wearing the jerseys of the professional Italian team Roma, as mentioned above. Some teams, however, choose to wear jerseys of teams from the English Premier League, which goes against the social norm of La Liga where teams generally choose Italian, Spanish, and Mexican professional team jerseys such as Barcelona, Pumas, or Chivas. The team I played for in 2012, Deportivo Hidalgo, chose to wear the blue jerseys of the English side Chelsea, a professional team from London. When I asked why that was the jersey that was chosen the tie to England was not considered important. What was important was that it

was an elite club level team's replica jersey and my teammates liked the look of them and the color. Thus one can find in Mexican recreational fútbol leagues teams wearing jerseys from the British side Chelsea with a team name of Deportivo Hidalgo or Celaya (Celaya is a city in the state of Guanajuato in Mexico), or teams wearing the jerseys of the Mexican national team who identify as *Jalisciense* (people who come from the state of Jalisco in Mexico), marking a national or regional geographic and cultural affiliation. In this way jerseys and team names represent an embodied performance of cultural identity that helps to create a sense of belonging that may be national or regional among Mexican immigrants living in Oklahoma City.

As mentioned above, jerseys symbolize fútbol knowledge, especially the jerseys that are worn by European professional fútbol clubs. During an interview with Vicente, a goal keeper for a team in La Liga that wore the professional jerseys of Sevilla during the 2010 season, when asked why they chose the jersey they did he answered that it was because it was Spanish. He told me that they had considered a team from Mexico or even Major League Soccer (MLS, the professional league in the United States), but chose Sevilla because it was a Spanish professional team. The association with Spain was important to this team and that association drove this choice of jersey over ones from Mexico and the U.S. Sevilla is a small club, especially in comparison to giant Spanish professional clubs such as Real Madrid or Barcelona. It was a somewhat obscure choice in the context of La Liga and this choice signaled a depth of fútbol knowledge for Vicente and his teammates.

Vicente's favorite team, however, was Manchester United which was not uncommon among the players in La Liga during the time I was doing fieldwork. This

coincided with a rise to international stardom for one of Manchester United's (one of the most popular and successful professional teams from the United Kingdom) strikers from Mexico, Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez. In the context of La Liga, the rise in popularity of teams wearing Manchester United jerseys was directly tied to the rise in stardom of this Mexican striker. In many ways, Mexican men who have emigrated to the U.S. to work can relate to a fellow countryman who had migrated to the United Kingdom to play professional fútbol. While their immigration experiences have marked differences in terms of visas/citizenship, wages, and resources to adjust to life in a foreign country, the similarities in terms of learning English and adjusting to a new social, cultural, and physical environment are binding. What is more is that Manchester United plays in the English Premier League, a league often considered one of the world's best by both players and fans alike. For Chicharito to succeed in the English Premier League symbolizes Mexican success in a European/Anglo social context. Roberto Abramowitz, one of the lead fútbol analysts and broadcasters for ESPN Deportes, was asked during a personal interview to comment on this phenomenon. Abramowitz explained, "Well these guys want to follow the stars. There's a pride when one of your own is doing so well and with Chicharito it's so important because he plays for one of the 4 best clubs in the world. Well, you could argue 3 best in the world, and it's a matter of pride. Everybody follows him because it's about pride. If he leaves Man U or switches teams, you bet those guys will lose those jerseys like a bad habit" (Personal Interview, 2011). Chicharito's status as a Mexican citizen drives the popularity of his team's jersey among teams and players in La Liga. They are not

necessarily fans of Manchester United but are instead fans of a fellow countryman who not only is also a transnational immigrant but a hugely successful one at that.

Bodies are what comprise sport and this example of clothing that adorns bodies in a sporting context demonstrates the importance of embodiment to transnational cultural identities. Anthropologist Thomas Csordas argues, "[T]he body is not an *object* to be studied in relation to culture, but is to be considered as the *subject* of culture (author's emphasis, 1990:5). Men in La Liga want to wear Chicharito's jersey because as an item of clothing it is worn on the body and turns the body into a text that is to be read. In this case the body is not an object that culture acts upon but rather the body in this case is a subject used to act upon culture. The jerseys the men in La Liga choose to wear signal their belonging to a culture of fútbol and the social world of La Liga. While one can see people wearing fútbol jerseys on a daily basis more and more in the United States as I saw a couple of teammates wear their jerseys outside of La Liga games on Sundays, to wear a jersey daily or once a week or so when not playing, or when hanging out with friends, or even when working reflects a cultural belonging to the social world of fútbol.

This is also quite purposeful because, "our bodies are not objects to us. Quite the contrary, they are an integral part of the perceiving subject" (Csordas 1990:36). Bodies are essential in sport as the games could not take place without them and sporting contests are often competitions between bodies. Because of this centrality adorning the body in specific ways is an important, purposeful act that is meant to manipulate the perceptions and understanding of representation of one's body. Wearing a jersey is a conscious act of this manipulation and representation on multiple

levels. Jerseys can be read as a symbol of fútbol knowledge indicating that this person follows professional international fútbol leagues and the players on various professional teams. Jerseys such as Chicharito's can be read as a symbol indicating fanaticism for a Mexican transnational that has become an international star. Chicharito's jersey can also reflect a psychological association with a fellow Mexican who is living a transnational existence while playing professional fútbol abroad. Mexican immigrant men in Oklahoma City have cultural identities that are tied to more than one nation simultaneously and as a sporting celebrity Chicharito represents this transnational identity for these men. The embodiment of transnational cultural identity is crucial in La Liga and it extends well beyond the jerseys men wear. The way teams are formed and the way the game is actually played in La Liga are also representative of an embodied transnational identity that helps maintain cultural and traditional ties to Mexico and Latin America more generally.

Playing in Division "A": Team Formation and Style of Play

Mexican cultural identity and a sense of solidarity are important in La Liga, but there is also an aspect of performance that is important to the league and that is how teams are comprised and the style of play teams utilize while playing fútbol. Playing the game of fútbol correctly and with purity in La Liga is of paramount importance. FIFA (*Federation Internationale de Fútbol Association*, the world governing body of soccer) rules are strictly enforced; the most striking example of this is that each team fields eleven players who start and once a player substitutes out they are done for the

day. Every La Liga team starts 11 players, quite often the same players each week. They are expected to be able to play for the entire 90 minutes, but FIFA rules dictate that at the professional level, when a player exist the game in exchange for another player they cannot re-enter the game; they are done playing for that day. This stands in contrast with other adult recreational leagues in Oklahoma City such as Central Oklahoma Adult Soccer League (COASL), where players may substitute in and out of games at will throughout the contest. Because of this rule, many teams run one or two miles at the start of each practice to maintain the type of physical conditioning among their starting players that is required to potentially play 90 minutes of fútbol. This rule also tends to favor younger players whose bodies have not yet aged to the point where maintaining this level of physical fitness is difficult.

As mentioned above, many teams are comprised of people from the same geographic regions in Latin America and this holds true for all the lower divisions. In Division A, which is essentially a semi-professional league within La Liga, team composition operates differently from the rest of the teams in La Liga at a practical and symbolic level. Unlike in the lower divisions where the costs of playing on a team can be fairly high and all players pay to play (generally somewhere around $50 per season flat rate, then $5 per player per game for referee fees), some players in Division A are rumored to be paid to be on certain teams and some of these players are former semi-professional players for minor league clubs or national teams. A team like Real Madrid, a consistently good team in La Liga's Division A, is comprised of Mexicans, Kenyans, Eastern Europeans, and North Americans, among others. Figure 22 depicts this racial, ethnic, and national diversity. In this way, Real Madrid emulates the composition of the

vast majority of professional teams worldwide who seek to field the best players no matter their nationality. If a team seeks to win this strategy is, of course, quite logical. It is much easier to field a team that has the best players no matter where they are from than to field a team whose best players are immigrants from one specific part of the world. That is why this sort of team composition is generally found in the highest division. Since La Liga is by far the largest adult recreational fútbol league in Oklahoma City they do not recruit from smaller leagues. In fact, many of the smaller leagues in Oklahoma City have been formed by players who left La Liga for one reason or another, often because they did not get enough playing time likely because their skill level may have been at a lower level than some of their teammates.



Figure 22: Real Madrid (white), awaits the start of a La Liga playoff game, 2010. Photo by Kleszynski, 2010.

Prior research in San Diego County indicated that fútbol plays a large part in the performance of Mexican identity and creating community cohesion in the U.S. (Kleszynski 2007). I found a similar relationship between Mexican identity and community connection in La Liga in Oklahoma City. How one plays fútbol, where one plays fútbol, who plays, what language one speaks while playing, and even which teams one is a fan of are part of a performance of identity. In the context of La Liga there are norms regarding how the game should be played, "techniques of the body" that influence how players approach the game (Mauss 1973). Anthropologist Marcel Mauss focused on specific types of bodily comportment in different cultures in his description of what he called techniques of the body, "The constant adaptation to a physical, mechanical or chemical aim…is pursued in a series of assembled actions, and assembled for the individual not by himself alone but by all his education, by the whole society to which he belongs, in the place he occupies in it" (1973:76). With the idea of techniques of the body, Mauss is arguing that how people comport their bodies is not inherent but rather is learned over time and is a part of the social and cultural mores of all people. In the social and cultural world of La Liga, techniques of the body are best exemplified by the style of play teams utilize during games.

There is a distinct way of playing fútbol within the context of Oklahoma City that is unique to La Liga. A key participant in my work on recreational fútbol leagues in San Diego County, Vicente Campos (who was also president of the Ocean Pacific Soccer League, a Mexican recreational fútbol league in San Diego County), once remarked that there is a "Mexican way of playing and an American way of playing" (Kleszynski 2007). Similarly, research participants in Oklahoma City also echoed this

contrast in national styles of play. What this means is that to play the Mexican way is to play a style that is really better described as a Latin American style. This style of play originates in Argentina and Brazil and involves triangular passing patterns designed to keep possession of the ball as long as possible while methodically working the ball up the field to set up a decent shot, preferably as close to the goal as possible. This stands in contrast to what is often deemed an English or German style of play that relies on long passes up the field with the goal of getting the ball to a large, physical goal scorer who can then take a shot on goal.

Arguably, these different styles reflect the class difference that are to be found between the average player in La Liga and the average player in other recreational fútbol leagues in Oklahoma City such as COASL. Playing using a Latin American style involves a synergetic embodied relationship with teammates where working together efficiently is more important than using sheer physical size and force in the quest to score goals. Playing a more English or German style doesn't mean that this isn't also often the case or vice versa in terms of a Latin American style, but a reliance on a long pass to set up a shot on goal focuses more on two individuals then the coordinated movements of several players. Therefore it is possible that a Latin American style being utilized in La Liga is somewhat compatible with working class culture, an ethos that praises teamwork and coordination over individual success.

Playing using this Latin American style involves techniques of the body that are also part of a performance of identity signifying belonging in the distinct cultural community of La Liga in Oklahoma City. For the men who grew up in Mexico, this is how they learned to play the game and thus they bring this style of play with them upon

immigrating to the U.S. For their sons or nephews, this is also the style they learned when learning how to play fútbol. Thus these techniques of the body within the context of fútbol are passed from generation to generation via an education of how the body is to be comported in a fútbol context, which means this style of play is not innate or fixed. Rather to continue to use this style of play becomes a configuration between what was learned back home and that which has been transmitted to life in the U.S. To play this way is a presentation of the body as transnational, as a part of a social and cultural life that transcends geopolitical borders. This configuration is contingent on this past knowledge of how to comport the body in a new cultural context therefore illuminating that how people present their bodies, even in a context that may seem unconscious or "natural" in terms of their cultural background, is subject to potential fluctuation.

Anthropologist Janelle Taylor argues that this fluctuation is primary in how bodies are understood and how they are presented to others as she uses the term "surfacing" to describe this phenomenon, "It is precisely this vigorous and productive instability that can make surfacing the body interior a useful concept. It encourages us to consider the body neither as an object nor as a text, nor only as a locus of subjectivity, but rather as a contingent configuration, a surface that is made but never in a static or permanent form" (2005:747). Playing the "Mexican way" uses the body to allow a transnational performance of identity to "surface" in respect to others in La Liga and to others outside of La Liga, for example when teams of Mexican immigrants and/or their children play non-Latino teams in indoor soccer contexts such as ISA or Soccer City. In this sense, it is an expression of pride in one's cultural identity and to

continue to teach children to play this way and to continue to play this way while living in Oklahoma City becomes an important part of the practice of transnational cultural identity for the men who play in La Liga. As Guillermo, a research participant and longtime La Liga player once remarked, "Good play is an expression, much like writing a good sentence".

There is also a discourse in fútbol circles that fans who really love fútbol feel this is the best way to play the game and it is surely the style most emulated by teams in La Liga. Playing the game this way is often considered the purest form of football because it takes great coordination, skill, and speed to play using this style. In essence, teammates must have what is often described as "good chemistry" to pull off this style. Teams that utilize this style have generally played together for quite some time and are aware of where teammates are on the field which facilitates this style of play.

There are teams in La Liga that play a more English or German style of football, however, which is tactically efficient and often involves long passes and deep crossing passes into the goal box from the midfield (see Figure 23). This style suits players who are physically larger and have great speed. La Liga teams such as Real Madrid, which has players that are physically larger than *porra* most Mexican teams in La Liga, will occasionally utilize this strategy. The teams that are mainly comprised of Mexican players tend to have players that are shorter in stature but who are really fast. I can attest as a defender that when I was playing for Deportivo Hidalgo in La Liga I often found myself out of breath chasing these types of players around the backfield, and Deportivo Hidalgo was a team in the lowest division. I was not always in prime shape during my time playing for Deportivo Hidalgo and being in my mid-30s at the time, I

was one of the older men on the team, but I was not the only defender on my team who had a hard time keeping up with players on defense. Even the younger defenders on Deportivo Hidalgo would find themselves winded from time to time, especially when having to defend players who were 18-22 years old.

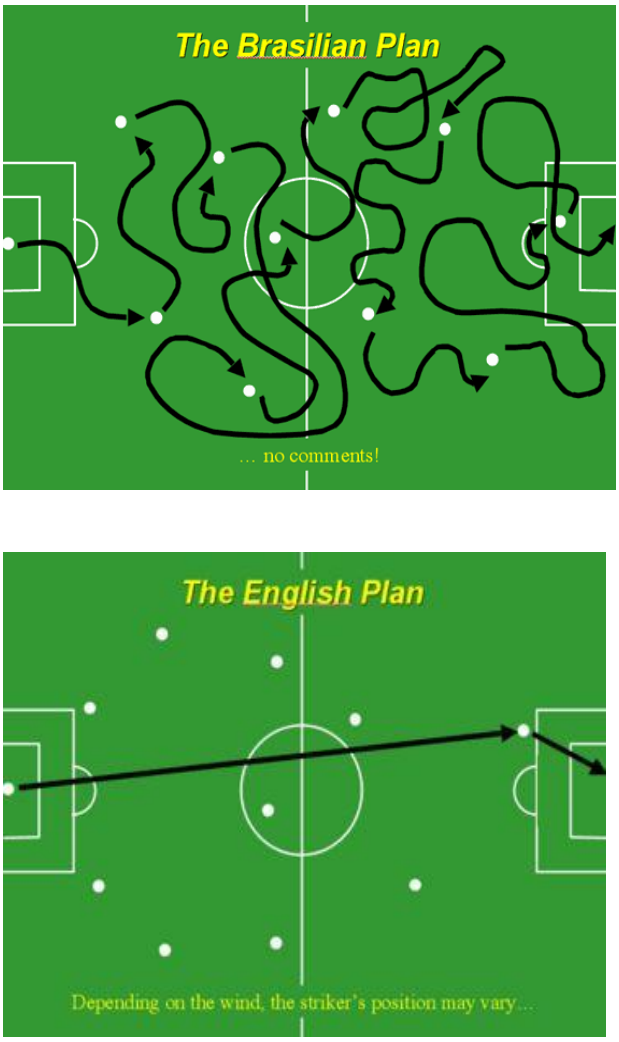


Figure 23: A humorous illustration of different playing styles, Images byhttp://imention.org/funny-soccer-tactics/, accessed 11/10/11.

Spectators in La Liga like a well-played game no matter the style. Playing using a Latin American style is much more in line with expectations of performance and identity for spectators, i.e. it is the presentation of the body that they expect to see on Sundays. During the 2012 season, Deportivo Hidalgo had two Mexican players who were much taller than players on most of the teams we faced. Yet while both of these players were very good using their height during games, strangely they very rarely found themselves on the end of a crossing pass into the goal box for a header goal, for example. Taller players are often strategically played in front of the goal on a set piece such as a free kick or corner kick with the idea that their height will increase the chances of them getting to strike the ball with their heads. For these two players, this strategy was not part of their repertoire of performance within a game. The Latin American style of play that we generally adhered to outlined how the body is to be comported during games. While these two players had scored header goals in past games, they rarely positioned themselves to score in this manner. The surfaced, techniques of the body that are dictated by this style of play demanded goals that were scored using one's feet. This use of the body is an unconscious one as Latin American styles of play subversively dictate that players should usually score goals using their feet instead of their heads, for example. Nobody on Deportivo Hidalgo would have been disappointed had these players scored using their heads, but the norms of how to play the game that are dictated by using a Latin American strategy during game play undercut scoring in this manner.

What was fascinating for me was that while I am admittedly not a very good player and certainly not a goal scoring player, many players on Deportivo Hidalgo

would urge me to get into the goal box on corner kicks for offensive opportunities. I felt that it was assumed that as a "gringo" using my head to score was the style I was most accustomed to. In fact it seemed like any rare praise I received from my teammates on the sidelines usually involved heading the ball in some manner. For my teammates, they understood that the techniques of the body I had learned while learning the game of fútbol relied on the use of my head as often as possible. This is understandable as many taller players, especially defenders and players from the U.S., in professional leagues worldwide use their head to play the ball often during games. To my teammates, my body represented this style of play and it was an expectation that I be proficient with using my head in this manner.

In terms of playing defense, using my size was part of my game plan as I was one of the taller and heavier players on the team, but I wanted to fit into the scheme of short crisp passes and lesser reliance on the long ball. I wanted to be a good teammate and utilize the strategy of the team; I wanted to play the Latin American way, not the European way. As mentioned above, my own cultural background and history playing soccer in mostly non-Latino contexts had accustomed me to adhering to a technique of playing that utilizes all body parts, except the arms and hands of course, which are against the rules in all forms of fútbol/soccer. My strategy was the use of my size and strength relative to some of the other players and not necessarily speed or superior ball handling skill. Playing fútbol for me on Deportivo Hidalgo was a give and take between trying to play using a Latin American style while comporting my body in ways that sometimes defied this strategy. Since I was a defender, if I was successful in stifling the offense of other players or not allowing goals to be scored by the player I

was marking, my teammates were okay with whatever style I used. When I was unsuccessful I would often get advice from other defenders, the goalie, and/or our team's coach. Most often that advice would involve insights into the strategy of opposing players. While he was sometimes frustrated by my play, our best central defender Rodrigo would always be willing to advise me as to how he'd like me to approach my play and how he'd like me to guard other players.

While teams may originate from different locales, they are unified by a sense of belonging, a sense of *paisanaje* centered on the world of recreational fútbol. The Mexican immigrants involved in La Liga understand the world and themselves on multiple levels and express this understanding through the deployment of very specific symbols: they incorporate the colors and insignias of elite professional teams, but they put a deeper transnational or transregional spin on this with a team name that indicates their sense of local geographic origin. Through styles of play these men present a performing body that adheres to notions of how fútbol is played back in Mexico or other Latin American locales. To play fútbol in this way is transnational and involves replicating the style most used back home while sometimes playing with teammates who are used to a very different style. The techniques of the body that structure these performances demonstrate the deep cultural ties these men have to their homelands. Jerseys, team names, and how bodies move on the field demonstrate that La Liga is the league that represents Mexican transnational identity and solidarity in the recreational fútbol scene in Oklahoma City.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In August of 2012 after a Deportivo Hidalgo game on a fairly hot Sunday, I sat with my teammates drinking Budweiser talking about fútbol. One of my teammates, Domingo, asked me why Americans call the game soccer. I remember coming up with some explanation that I felt was fairly sophisticated at the time outlining how it had been called association football and how this had morphed into the term "soccer", but I had been drinking and was trying to do so in Spanish. After I was done, in so many words told me the Spanish equivalent of, "yeah, yeah, it's stupid." This led to a discussion of why Americans generally do not like fútbol. It is arguable that this discussion was focused on an aspect of American cultural life that may or may not be true as there are plenty of people in the U.S. who like fútbol but there is a difference between fútbol and soccer.

Fútbol is more than the Spanish term for the game of soccer. When used in the context of sport in the U.S. fútbol is a transnational term that reflects a cultural tradition that is more than just playing the game; fútbol reflects a litany of transnational cultural practices and traditions that Mexican immigrants bring to the U.S. when they leave their homeland. The opening day procession, *reinas*, and *porras* are all aspects of fútbol culture and are not generally found in recreational contexts where the term soccer is used to describe the game. For Mexican immigrants, fútbol is largely the world of men but in cultural contexts surrounding soccer, especially in the United States, women play a large role. As outlined in Chapter 4, this is the opposite in La Liga where men are primary social actors and the women are secondary social actors.

Fútbol is also an embodied experience of moving one's body in concert with others through time and space. The cultural practices described in this research are part of this embodiment. Team names, jerseys, playing the game using a specific style, and speaking Spanish while playing are all examples of embodied transnational cultural practices that are a part of the social world of recreational fútbol in Oklahoma City. These bodies may be seen as texts to be read both by a social self and others around them. One good example of this is the jerseys teams choose to wear in La Liga that signify professional fútbol knowledge. Another example is the team names that are chosen to signify a geographic origin of many players on a team. How the game is played by moving one's body certain ways during game play is another aspect of this embodiment that is read by others who participate in the social world of La Liga.

As mentioned throughout this account of La Liga, many of the men in the league are immigrants from Mexico. The cultural practices and traditions that are a part of the world of fútbol are brought with them when they come to the United States. While they have traversed a geo-political border between the United States and Mexico, their daily lives entail encounters with many other social and cultural borders such as borders of race, ethnicity, and class. While shifting through these multiple border zones, the cultural practices and traditions that are kept alive while living in the United States help these men to maintain cultural identities tied to Mexico. This is vitally important to these men and their sense of self. Many research participants remarked how they miss their homes in Mexico, how some of them miss their families and their lives in Mexico, and others miss aspects of their cultural identity such as being able to eat traditional foods or attend cultural events that take place back home in Mexico. La Liga, however,

helps these men to mitigate these feelings of homesickness by providing a social space where Mexican social and cultural practices and traditions are paramount. Exemplary of these practices are the opening day procession, the *porras*, the style of play, the team names and jerseys chosen, and the ability to purchase paletas, tacos, and other Mexican foods while watching games. The camaraderie that develops around La Liga from the importance of speaking Spanish to the discourses surrounding the game of fútbol that men share on Sundays all help to make Oklahoma feel more like home for Mexican immigrant men in Oklahoma City.

For many of these men, however, they also have ties to the United States and the state of Oklahoma. Their identities are not tied to solely one geographic locale. Ernesto, a research participant from Oaxaca, told me about how he missed the food in Oaxaca and the festivities, especially the large Guelaguetza festival that takes place across the state in the month of July. Ernesto, however, also remarked that he had been in Oklahoma for six years and that he liked it, explaining how he appreciated having a good job, and how he doubted he could find similar work in Mexico. Ernesto also told me about the importance of maintaining one's culture while living so far away from their home country. For Ernesto, fútbol was one of these important aspects of a cultural identity tied to Mexico that needed to be maintained.

In terms of a transnational identity that is linked to Mexico as well as the state of Oklahoma, Chivas OKC is emblematic of this tie. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Chivas OKC flies a Chivas flag and a state of Oklahoma flag during their games in La Liga. These men, or at least the coaches and leaders of the team, have affective ties to the professional team Chivas de Guadalajara, a cultural icon that is quintessentially

Mexican. However, they also have affective ties to Oklahoma, a place they currently call home, even if they do not anticipate staying for their entire lifetimes. This is why La Liga is such an important cultural space as it allows for the expression of an identity that is simultaneously linked to two nations at once and it remains psychologically important for Mexican immigrants to remain culturally tied to Mexico while also expressing current ties to the state of Oklahoma. In this way, La Liga is similar to Restaurant 51 as outlined in Linger's account of Japanese-Brazilians (2002). Much as Restaurant 51 acts as a social space where Japanese Brazilians can maintain ties to their Brazilian national identity while living in Japan, La Liga acts as a social space where Mexicans can maintain ties to their Mexican national identity while living in Oklahoma City.

Most of the men I met while doing fieldwork in La Liga had children, many of them born in the United States. For their children, the United States was their cultural and geographic home, but by maintaining cultural practices and traditions from Mexico, many of these through the social world of La Liga, these men could also help their children build cultural ties to Mexico. By helping their children cultivate and express a part of themselves as Mexican while also being from Oklahoma, these men could help bolster their own transnational cultural identities and stay tied to Mexico without having to manage the very real dangers and risks associated with physically crossing back and forth across international borders.

Something that always struck me while doing fieldwork in La Liga was how the men liked to drink Budweiser or Bud Light along with Modelo Especial (a popular Mexican beer), listen to *cumbia* or *banda* along with country music, how they

appropriated Southwestern fashion that originated in Mexico but is popular in Oklahoma (big belt buckles, cowboy boots, and cowboy hats), Chevy pick-up trucks, and how many of them had Dallas Cowboys stickers on their Chevy trucks. I often felt like these men had more of an affective cultural tie to the state of Oklahoma than I did. Part of this is linked to where many Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City come from, the Bajio region of Mexico (a region known for its ranchero culture), and part of this is emblematic of these men taking on aspects of a cultural identity that is also linked to the state of Oklahoma (or in the case of the Dallas Cowboys, Texas). For example, many of the men also wore University of Oklahoma sweatshirts before our games during cold weather in March and late October. Their presentation of their selves in this way offers a demonstration of their transnational identity that is tied to cultural practices and traditions from Mexico and Oklahoma.

Through this participation in local culture, these men are also contributing to local culture. La Liga is exemplary of this type of contribution. The explosion in the population of Mexican immigrants and the concomitant growth of La Liga in Oklahoma City over the past 20 years or so has forever altered the cultural landscape of the game of recreational fútbol/soccer in the city. Before the enormous popularity of La Liga, COASL was the main league for adults interested in recreational fútbol/soccer in Oklahoma City. As of the end of my fieldwork in 2012, COASL was continuing to contract, fielding fewer teams each season. Some of these players were joining teams in La Liga; some were joining teams in other leagues in locales such as Moore and Norman, Oklahoma.

Perhaps the largest contribution from those who are associated with La Liga as players is their contribution to the culture of indoor soccer in Oklahoma City. Each year while doing fieldwork, ISA OKC, one of the two indoor soccer facilities in Oklahoma City, experienced continued strong growth in the number of players and teams wanting to use the facility. The original indoor soccer facility in Oklahoma City, Soccer City (formerly known as Hat Trick), is located in the far northern reaches of the metro area, several miles away from the predominantly Latino neighborhoods of the southern metro area. ISA, on the other hand, is located quite close to these Latino neighborhoods and the growth ISA has experienced has been largely driven by the growth in both the Mexican immigrant community in Oklahoma City as well as the growth of players and teams in La Liga who are looking for a way to continue to play fútbol during the cold winter months in Oklahoma.

The growth in ISA has caused Latinos and non-Latinos to come into contact in ways they did not before. The majority of teams that play in ISA are fielding players of Latin American, primarily Mexican, descent but there are teams that still play at ISA that have no Mexicans or Latinos on their roster. For some of these men and women, this is the only contact they have with the Latino community. This often causes ethnic/racial tensions at times and I have heard players lament about playing at ISA, especially white players who openly express their preference to play at Soccer City. I have heard white players say, “I don’t like playing with the Mexicans”, or “There’s too many Mexicans at ISA”, indicating their discriminatory perspective on playing indoor soccer at this locale. On the other hand, I have played with many non-Latino players who enjoy playing Mexican teams as the general consensus is that these Mexican men,

and sometimes women, are better players and through competition with them everyone's skills improve.

This interaction is part of the contribution players in La Liga are making to the greater cultural world surrounding fútbol in Oklahoma City. Another example of this contribution is that of the referees as mentioned in Chapter 3. To referee in La Liga is seen as prestigious and as the highest level of amateur refereeing in the state of Oklahoma. For the men who are not Latino and who do not speak Spanish, it is an opportunity for them to be exposed to a different cultural world, a cultural world they may never have encountered otherwise. Many of these referees greatly enjoy this interaction and even prefer it to refereeing in games where English is the predominant language, for example. These referees told me that the players in La Liga understand the game better, complain less, and they enjoy the style of play much more as it is more entertaining for them. La Liga is contributing to the cultural exposure these men experience through fútbol by giving them something different, something better than what otherwise might have existed even as few as twenty years ago in Oklahoma City. A great example of this from a conversation I overheard one afternoon in 2011 following a Real Madrid game where one of their Anglo-American players was talking about how he enjoyed playing in La Liga and appreciated the exposure to a different cultural world. In this way, La Liga is helping some non-Latinos in Oklahoma City sympathize with the Latino community and through interactions in La Liga these non-Latinos have gained a better understanding of what life is like for Latinos in Oklahoma City.

While there are a myriad of cultural practices and traditions that are important for the facilitation of a transnational cultural identity for Mexican immigrants in Oklahoma City, through this research I show how recreational fútbol helps to better understand what it means to be transnational via embodied performances, recreating and maintaining cultural practices and traditions that bolster connections to homelands hundreds or thousands of miles away, and that these transnational cultural practices and traditions contribute to those already existing in immigrant receiving destinations. The recent waning of migration from Latin America raises questions as to what the future holds for Mexican immigrant communities in the United States and locales such as Oklahoma City. No matter what changes take place, fútbol is an integral part of life in these communities, a tradition that spans generations, unites community members, and offers a connection to place and home to members of Latin American communities across the United States.

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Appendix A: OU IRB Approval Letter

The University of Oklahoma

OFFICE FOR HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT PROTECTION

IRB Number: 12554
Approval Date: May 04, 2009

May 04, 2009

Keith Kleszynski
Anthropology
455 W Lindsey Street, DAH 201
Norman, OK 73019

RE: Mexicano Migrants and Recreational Futbol: Maintaining Cultural Identity in the United States

Dear Mr. Kleszynski:

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed and granted expedited approval of the above referenced research study. This study meets the criteria for expedited approval category 6 & 7. It is my judgment as Chairperson of the IRB that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected; that the proposed research, including the process of obtaining informed consent, will be conducted in a manner consistent with the requirements of 45 CFR 46 as amended; and that the research involves no more than minimal risk to participants.

This letter documents approval to conduct the research as described:

Consent form - Other Dated: May 03, 2009 Information Sheet - Revised
Survey Instrument Dated: April 23, 2009 Interview Questions
IRB Application Dated: April 23, 2009 Revised
Protocol Dated: April 04, 2009

As principal investigator of this protocol, it is your responsibility to make sure that this study is conducted as approved. Any modifications to the protocol or consent form, initiated by you or by the sponsor, will require prior approval, which you may request by completing a protocol modification form. All study records, including copies of signed consent forms, must be retained for three (3) years after termination of the study.

The approval granted expires on May 03, 2010. Should you wish to maintain this protocol in an active status beyond that date, you will need to provide the IRB with an IRB Application for Continuing Review (Progress Report) summarizing study results to date. The IRB will request an IRB Application for Continuing Review from you approximately two months before the anniversary date of your current approval.

If you have questions about these procedures, or need any additional assistance from the IRB, please call the IRB office at (405) 325-8110 or send an email to irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

Donald Baker, Ph.D.
Vice Chair, Institutional Review Board

660 Parrington Oval, Suite 316, Norman, Oklahoma 73019-3075 PHONE: (405) 325-8110 FAX: (405) 325-2373

cc: Prof. Jasper Cox