Migration Tradeoffs: Men's Experiences with Seasonal Lifestyles[1]

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This study examines changes in work, health and family patterns among men who migrate seasonally between Mexico and the United States. A representative sample of 219 Mexican seasonal migrants to California was obtained in Jalisco, Mexico. The data were generated through a household survey and in-depth follow-up interviews. The findings indicate that migrants experience marked changes and tradeoffs in roles and lifestyles which are reflected in the workplace and the family. In contrast, changes in physical health associated with seasonal migration seem far less apparent. Beyond the economic function of providing jobs and income, migration performs a significant social function which is described in the context of seasonal lifestyles.

Border patrol estimates indicate that approximately 10,000 Mexicans pour over the California border from Tijuana every night. 50 percent more than in 1985, 100 times the number in 1966. Those who are caught are usually sent back to Mexico before sunrise. However, in a matter of hours they try again, so that usually 100 percent get through (Brinkley, 1986). Perhaps these figures are inflated, but since the 1982 economic recession in Mexico, there is little doubt about the sharp rise in the migrant stream.

California is the preferred location for Mexican migrants. Most come on a temporary basis, searching for jobs that will allow them to work for several months before returning home (Cornelius, 1982). The stereotype that we have forged of this population is that of "lone, single males" who offer their labor as a commodity in exchange for low wages, high discrimination and an essential payoff, *i.e.*, the opportunity to save and send remittances to their families back home (Bustamante, 1978; Cornelius, Chavez and Castro, 1982). Considerable literature on the economic impact of this workforce on the American labor market is available, yet we know very little about other aspects of their lives. For instance, how are family roles organized in migration? What are the specific health needs of migrants? What social costs

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and benefits are accrued from migration experiences? Are there any tradeoffs? These are timely issues in light of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 which will legalize the status of many shadow workers, thereby increasing the demand for health and social services.

The purpose of this article is to examine changes in work, health and family patterns in a cohort of male migrants who move seasonally between Mexico and the U.S. The focus is on two comparisons: 1) workforce participation in Mexico and the U.S. to determine changes resulting from relocation; and 2) social and health behaviors of men who come to the U.S. with their nuclear families compared with those who sojourn alone, to assess the relationship between family dynamics and migration patterns.

It is our contention that beyond the economic function of providing jobs and income, seasonal lifestyles involved in cyclical migration, perform a significant social function. Although temporary absences from home disrupt men's social ties, trips across the border seem to enhance men's standing in the eyes of family and peer networks. These clusters appreciate the stresses and demands involved in relocation. Courage and a strong motivation to change one's personal and family living conditions are required to prompt the move. From this standpoint, seasonal migration helps to reinstate men's social status and self esteem lost in towns bereft of opportunities. Furthermore, these social gains are periodically reinforced when migrants return home for emotional refueling.

The findings of this study suggest that the overlooked social function tied to seasonal migration may be as important as the economic incentives in shaping migrant lifestyles and promoting health.

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

Men in most societies don't have a choice whether or not to engage in paid work. Their role as providers is firmly entrenched in cultural expectations and norms, hence closely tied to their self esteem, sense of obligations and responsibilities. Yet the lack of opportunities places limitations on this male role. In rural Mexico, underemployment has become the dominant lifestyle in the last two decades. Estimates indicate that 35-45 percent of the rural workforce averages less than 100 working days per year (Bustamante, 1978; Schumacher, 1981). For this population, the recurrent dilemma is how to survive during periods of no income. Since few in Mexico have access to social security which can subsidize income during periods of unemployment, one alternative is to rely on the resources of the social network (Portes, 1981). Moving in with relatives, performing unpaid labor in exchange for goods and services, borrowing money from friends or families are bail out strategies based on mutual assistance and solidarity among networks. Another alternative is to migrate, a strategy which often relies heavily on the social

contacts existing outside the community of origin (Lomnitz, 1977; Dinerman, 1982).

Mexican migration to California has intensified in recent years. In 1965 only about half of the seasonal farmworker force was of Mexican descent, whereas by 1983, three-fourths had been born in Mexico and many were recent immigrants (Mines and Martin, 1986). Despite the increase in the number of families joining the migrant stream, it is still a man led immigration flow. It is largely represented by unaccompanied men of which a big proportion are undocumented (Cornelius, *et al.*, 1982).

Migration is expensive. It implies an investment which frequently cannot be met by individual households or communities (Roberts, 1981). It also implies risks of income drops, unemployment and deportation. For instance, Bustamante found that despite the attraction of higher wages in the U.S., the income levels of 16 percent of Mexican immigrants dropped after moving to the U.S. (Bustamante, 1984). These factors strongly suggest that self selection elements operate in the process of migration. It takes strong motivation and initiative to move (Portes, 1983), attributes which may be especially strong among family heads who feel displaced in their provider roles. Individuals are sometimes helped by their communities which establish efficient sponsoring networks for funding migration and for channeling migrants into jobs (Arizpe, 1983; Dinerman, 1982). Some communities are particularly successful because they call upon the social network at both ends of the process; *i.e.*, migrants can borrow money from households that are better off and can feel confident of getting dependable work in the U.S. once they arrive. As Mines and Martin found, migrants are far more likely to rely on friends and networks for finding jobs in California agriculture, rather than on labor contractors and growers.

Mexican farmworkers in California have a high labor force participation coupled with high rates of unemployment. Men work on the average 25 weeks/year usually between May and October, thinning fruits from trees and harvesting fruits and vegetables (Mines and Martin, 1986). More recent immigrants do the more arduous jobs, while young men dominate the heavy harvesting tasks. Although the mean hourly wage of $5.10 (1983 base year) is over the minimum, the high periods of unemployment yield low annual earnings of $4,300. A second person working in the household increases earnings by almost $2,700. This income is well below the 1983 poverty level of $10,178, but significantly more than what workers can earn in Mexico (Mines and Martin, 1986). Many workers return to Mexico during periods of unemployment. Those holding documentation are likely to collect unemployment insurance and travel to Mexico for vacation. The undocumented tend to go back home and engage in small odd jobs to supplement their living expenses. California growers perceive this move as advantageous since it defrays public sector costs of supporting unemployed farmworkers

(Runsten and LeVeen, 1981). In fact, growers often prefer to hire workers who return to Mexico from November through March. To ensure their loyalty, employers hire the same core every year, even growing complementary crops to extend the length of employment. Most of the evidence on farmworking conditions has focused on laborforce characteristics that influence employers. Little attention has been given to the impact on workers, other than that they tend to work "scared and hard" for wages that do not appear attractive by U.S. standards, but are superior to those available to them in Mexico (Marshall, 1978).

Other tradeoffs such as the social and health changes that migrants experience with relocation also need further research. Health and social information has predominantly focused on the extent to which migrants abuse services and represent a public burden (Cornelius, Chavez and Castro, 1982; North, 1983; Cortes, 1985) rather than on health needs. Under the current immigration law which provides amnesty to illegals who have resided in the U.S. continuously since 1982 and establishes an agricultural guest-worker program, the use of public health and social services will increase. For instance, undocumented aliens will be entitled to receive medicaid coverage for emergency medical needs. Eligibility for other medicaid funded services will be an option for those legalizing their status. Consequently, communities will have to extend services to meet specific needs of this population. Recent evidence by Mines and Kearney (1982), shows that accidents, skin irritations and alcoholism are the most frequent health problems among seasonal male migrants.

Finally, seasonal migration also implies relocation effects when returning temporarily to Mexico (Wiest, 1979). These are addressed in the present study, thus avoiding the almost exclusive concern about migration effects in the receiving society which predominates in the literature. The return requires adaptation to a community that usually welcomes migrants' economic contributions but may not be responsive to the changing needs and expectations of temporary migrants. For the returnee, coming back often implies confrontation with the values, possessions and social status left behind. In the process of resuming bonds and social obligations, past and present achievements are weighed. Initially the family and peer reunification is suffused with emotional gratification. As the novelty wears off, the realities of poor economic prospects and the social pressures that joblessness entails, set in. When pressures accumulate beyond tolerated limits, men resort again to migration. Hence, seasonal absences become a coping strategy for gaining distance from the stresses of the environment (Perez-Itriago and Guendelman, in press).

In Mexico, 70 percent of farm families live in small, rain-fed land plots which are poorly exploited due to limited financial access to credit, modern technology and high yielding seeds (Schumacher, 1981; Alcantara Ferrer and Sanchez Ruiz, 1985). Peasants have been displaced by large-scale, irrigated, mechanized farming and by a land distribution system severely restricted by population growth (Dinerman, 1982). This crisis of small landholdings has released millions of workers to domestic and foreign labor markets (Arizpe, 1978). Recent attempts to incorporate displaced rural populations have directed Mexican investments towards temporary jobs in public work construction. The creation of temporary jobs outnumber permanent jobs by a 10/1 margin (Schumacher, 1981). These trends suggest that underemployment is likely to remain chronic. Current evidence also suggests that it is the lack of options available in Mexico rather than the higher standard of living in the neighboring society, which induces people to migrate. If opportunities were available to earn a living at home, fewer would come to the U.S. (Lichtenberg, 1978; Cornelius, 1981). Yet for many the only alternative is to move back and forth, often leaving the family behind (Baca & Bryan, 1985). The present study examines bi-directional changes in roles, health and social behaviors of migrant farmworkers who must adjust seasonally to the values and expectations of two very different cultures.

METHODS

This study examines selected socio-demographic, migration, workforce, health and family characteristics of 219 Mexican male migrants. They comprise the male sub-sample of a larger household survey of 390 seasonal migrants who came to the U.S., predominantly California, during 1983.

Data were collected in 2 rural towns located in the outskirts of Guadalajara, Mexico which are known to be important sending communities of migrants to California. The economy of these towns relies mainly on agriculture, livestock and milk production. Many farmers live off small plots of eroded, rain fed land. A few are employed by the bigger private farms located in the surrounding vicinity or venture into small business.

The sample was drawn by obtaining a total census of both towns of approximately 4,100 and 1,850 people each and interviewing every household person who reported having members who traveled to the U.S. in 1983, the baseline year, and returned to Mexico by early 1984 (Guendelman, 1985; Guendelman and Perez-Itriago, 1986). Information was collected at a peak time when Mexicans return home for annual festivities that celebrate their own town's patron saints. Two hundred fifty household interviews of 45 minutes duration were conducted over a nine-week period in 1984 by five experienced public health physicians from the University of Guadalajara. The survey took place in people's homes in Mexico to ensure confidentiality and to provide participants an opportunity to share their experiences and opinions in the safety of their homeland, minimizing fear of deportation or misuse of information. The response rate was 98 percent.

Quantitative survey information was supplemented in May-June 1986 with in-depth follow-up interviews of returned migrants residing in Mexico, the town's delegate and physicians and nurses of the two local health centers. In addition, three group sessions of 7-9 men (10% sub-sample) were conducted by the researchers using focused research group methodology (Folch-Lyon and Trost, 1981). Separate sessions were administered for those who had traveled as single men and those who had migrated with their families to assess the influence of family supports. These qualitative techniques allowed for a deeper understanding of the role, functions, expectations and family processes that enter in the migration experience.

RESULTS

Sample characteristics are displayed in Table 1. Most migrants (55%) were of young working age, between 16 and 30. The mean age was 31.3 years. The majority (75%) had no more than primary education and two-thirds of the group were married. Of the married men, 80 percent left their wife and children behind to venture North in 1983.

Migration patterns in Table 2 show that 88 percent of the migrants had been to the U.S. more than once. On the average they had made 7.2 trips suggesting that seasonal migration was a well established lifestyle. Although not reported in the Table, almost 25 percent had participated in the Bracero Program between 1942 and 1964, yet the flow to the U.S. from these towns really took off in the early '70s. There was a fourfold increase in the rate of migration compared to the previous decade. Increasing underemployment in rural Jalisco and decreasing profits in agriculture seem to have influenced this trend.

More than half of the men succeeded in crossing the border on their first trip in 1983. For 11 percent, at least five crossings were made before relocating in the U.S., adding considerably to the expenses of such a trip. Approximately two-thirds came without documentation, relying on a coyote to smuggle them. They usually crossed in groups accompanied by friends. Almost 20 percent crossed as a family unit with spouse and children. The mean length of stay was 8.6 months, ranging between 1 and 36 months. Whereas the reported reasons for migrating to the U.S. were predominantly economic, expressed as the inability to exercise the breadwinner role, the reasons for choosing specific a location were primarily related to family and the presence of already established networks. The Salinas Valley, the San Luis Obispo-Santa Barbara coastline and Chico were the most popular locations. Networks in these areas were particularly resourceful in procuring jobs.

Many respondents mentioned that their sojourns into the U.S. as well as returns to Mexico are spurred by the need to repay economic and social debts. These debts, compounded with underemployment, highlight the loss of status and self esteem that men experience when being displaced from

TABLE 1

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANT MEN WHO TRAVELED TO THE U.S. IN 1983

1.1	Age	n	(%)
	16 - 20	27	(12.3)
	21 -30	95	(43.4)
	31 - 40	48	(21.9)
	41 - 50	30	(13.7)
	51 - over	12	(5.5)
	Missing	7	(3.2)
	Total	219	(100.0)
	Mean = 31.3		
	S.D. = 10.8		
	Range = 16 - 65		
1.2	Education	n	(%)
	Illiterate	4	(1.8)
	Primary	163	(74.4)
	Secondary	29	(13.3)
	College/vocational	17	(7.8)
	Missing	6	92.7)
	Total	219	(100.0)
1.3	Marital Status	n	(%)
	Single	7	(32.4)
	Married	134	(61.2)
	Widowed	2	(.9)
	Common-law	1	(.5)
	Missing	11	(5.0)
	Total	219	(100.0)

their provider roles. In rural Mexico, personal standing in the peer network is highly dependent on bail out strategies which are defined by mutual social obligations. Nonetheless, the ability to come to a peer's rescue is extremely vulnerable to the fluctuations of argicultural production and public jobs. When work opportunities and social bailouts are exhausted, men resort to migration to reinstate their provider role.

In the U.S. almost everyone found employment. As shown in Table 3.1, which compares work patterns in Mexico and the U.S., 64.3 percent of the

sample was actively participating in the labor force in Mexico compared with 97.6 percent in the U.S. Approximately 72 percent of those actively employed were farmworkers in both countries. Nonetheless, a transfer to the American labor force implied an increase in jobs in the service/factory settings and a decrease in self-employment (Table 3.2).

Significant changes in work intensity were found as a result of migrating to the U.S. Workers moved from a situation of underemployment in Mexico to high intensity employment in the U.S. (Table 4). In Mexico, two-thirds of the workers were employed for 6 months or less, most often working only two months/year. Only 17 percent had a job that continued beyond a year. Most (80%) worked up to 8 hours/day, 6 days a week, earning approximately 800 pesos (US$5.33) a day (Alcantara Ferrer and Sanchez Ruiz, 1985). In contrast, the most frequent length at a job in the U.S. was 6 months. Three times more workers found jobs with the same employer, working seasonally for seven or more years. Over two-thirds worked nine hours or more per day, earning $3.43/hr. or approximately $34.00/day. A large proportion (33%) worked in excess of 10 hours in the U.S., compared with only 3 percent in Mexico, and five times as many workers labored the full seven days. In fact, 1 out of 6 workers labored the full week in the U.S. Undocumented workers were significantly more likely than documented migrants to work long shifts. Despite the lower work intensity and wages in Mexico, very few reported having another job on the side (5%) or a second job in the course of the year (10%) suggesting that lack of opportunities were addressed by migrating. Since neither jobs in Mexico or the U.S. typically last the whole year because they depend on the seasonality of planting and harvesting, workers move back and forth between the two markets, adjusting to the conditions of each.

Qualitative data suggest that migrant workers are quick to appreciate the higher predictability of the American working environment. They welcome the sense of certainty that comes with a guaranteed weekly paycheck and the opportunity to work everyday of the year, conditions that are unavailable in rural Mexico. Many also find that employer-worker relationships are not necessarily fairer, but simpler in the U.S. Relations are characterized by formal social relations often overseen by a foreman, predictable time schedules and clear boundaries separating work from their private lives. In Mexico, fluctuations in farming rain fed lands, with little access to technology and credit, lead to erratic schedules, irregular earnings and power conflicts with employers or financial credit lenders for which workers face little legal protection. When employment or investments fail few receive social security or worker's compensation despite being entitled by law.

The lack of predictability and authority that men find in the Mexican workplace frequently gets displaced to their private lives. The need to exert power is expressed in the authoritarian role that men display in their households, demanding obedience from wife and children. In the absence of

TABLE 2

MIGRATION PATTERNS

2.1	Total Number of Trips to the U.S.	n	(%)
	1	27	(12.3)
	2 - 4	69	(31.5)
	5 - 7	37	(16.9)
	8 - 10	44	(20.1)
	11 - 16	25	(11.4)
	17 - over	15	(6.9)
	Missing	2	(.9)
	Mean = 7.2		
	S.D. = 6.3		
	Range = 1 - 44		
2.2	Number of Trips in 1983	n	(%)
	1	117	(53.4)
	2 - 4	20	(9.1)
	5 - more	24	(11.0)
	Already there	56	(25.6)
	Mising	2	(.9)
2.3	Documentation	n	(%)
	With some documents	72	(32.8)
	Without documents	144	(65.8)
	Missing	3	(1.4)
2.4	Border Crossing	n	(%)
	Without help	80	(36.5)
	With help:		
	smuggler (coyote)	115	(52.5)
	family	3	(1.4)
	other	4	(1.8)
	Missing	11	(5.0)
2.5	Travel Companion	n	(%)
	Spouse-Children	42	(19.2)
	Other relatives	25	(11.4)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

MIGRATION PATTERNS

2.5	Travel Companion	n	(%)
	Friends	89	(40.6)
	Others, unrelated	5	(2.3)
	Alone	50	(22.8)
	Missing	8	(3.7)
2.6	Length of Stay		
	Mean = 8.6		
	S.D. = 4.2		
	Range = 1 - 36		

2.7	Reasons	For Migrating n	For Migrating (%)	For Choosing Location n	For Choosing Location (%)
	Economic	151	(68.9)	51	(23.3)
	Family & friends	15	(6.8)	76	(34.7)
	Economic & family	22	(10.0)	67	(30.6)
	American child	3	(1.4)	–	–
	Other (i.e. adventure, tourism, longterm settlers)	20	(9.1)	9	(4.1)
	Missing	8	(3.7)	16	(7.3)

a strong provider role, obedience can only be commanded through strictly prescribed gender roles and tight hierarchical family boundaries. Although, as a result of migrating, high workforce participation strengthens the provider role, family ties often get disrupted.

The trip north is expensive and requires a sizeable investment (approximately $1,000). One must pay the coyote and leave money for those family members who stay behind. Money is often raised by turning to family and friends. Few can afford to tug their families along and only 20 percent reunite with their spouse and children in the U.S. Yet for this group, the trip up north may be less stressful than for the married men who leave their nuclear families behind (Table 5). For instance men accompanied by their families tend to be more experienced at seasonal moves suggesting that they started migrating earlier. They also stay longer and travel with documentation, thereby reducing the hardship involved in each relocation. It is unclear from these data whether they in fact report fewer health problems.

TABLE 3

CHANGES IN WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION: MEXICO (1980-83) & THE U.S. (1983)

3.1	Occupation	Mexico n	Mexico (%)	United States n	United States (%)
	In Labor Force:				
	Active:	141	(64.3)	214[a]	(97.6)
	Agriculture	115	(52.5)	181	(82.6)
	Construction	11	(5.0)	4	(1.8)
	Industry	2	(.9)	11	(5.0)
	Services	13	(5.9)	18	(8.2)
	Inactive:	29	(13.3)	0	0
	Sporadic	10	4.6	0	0
	No work	19	8.7	0	0
	Not in Labor Force:	48	(21.9)	5[a]	(2.3)
	Students	6	2.7	2	(.9)
	Visiting	42	19.2	3	(1.4)
	Missing	1	.5	0	.0
	Total	219	(100.0)	219	(99.9)

3.2	Role in Labor Force	Mexico n	Mexico (%)	United States n	United States (%)
	Farmworkers	111	72.5	154	71.6
	Service/industry worker	19	12.4	54	25.1
	Self employed	11	7.2	1	.5
	Employer/foreman	7	4.6	6	2.8
	Other	2	1.3	0	0
	Missing	3	2.0	0	0
	Total	153	100.0	215	100.0

Note: [a] $p < .05$ using McNemar's x^2 test for paired observations.

Nonetheless, their documented status and familiarity with the American society tends to increase the likelihood that they seek professional help when ill. Despite these advantages they face other hardships. For instance they tend to work longer hours and more days to be able to support their families and they often complain about their highly routinized, alienated lives in the U.S. Many yearn for the more leisurely atmosphere back home where their

TABLE 4

CHANGES IN WORK INTENSITY: MEXICO (1980-83) & THE U.S. (1983)

Work Intensity		Mexico n	Mexico (%)	United States n	United States (%)
4.1	Time (in months) Working in the Last Job				
	1 - 3	49	(34.5)	29	(13.6)
	4 - 6	45	(31.7)	63	(29.6)
	7 - 9	15	(10.6)	43	(20.2)
	10 - 12	14	(9.9)	37	(17.4)
	13 - 36	12	(8.4)	21	(9.9)
	37 - 72	4	(2.8)	5	(2.3)
	≥73	3	(2.1)	15	(7.0)
				T = 4.18[a]	
	Mode	2 months		6 months	
	Median	5 months		7 months	
	Range	1 month - 10 yrs		1 month - 14 yrs	
4.2	Hours/day				
	1 - 4	8	(5.9)	3	(1.4)
	5 - 8	101	(74.3)	62	(29.0)
	9 - 10	18	(13.2)	75	(35.0)
	10 +	4	(2.9)	70	(32.7)
	"Don't know"	5	(3.7)	4	(1.9)
				T = 15.46[a]	
	Mean	6.8		9.5	
	S.D.	1.2		4.0	
4.3	Days/week				
	2	0		1	(0.5)
	3	6	(4.8)	2	(0.9)
	4	3	(2.4)	2	(0.9)
	5	26	(20.6)	39	(18.3)
	6	87	(69.0)	135	(63.4)
	7	4	(3.2)	34	(16.4)
				T = 10.2[a]	
	Mean	5.6		5.9	
	S.D.	2.8		1.1	

Note: [a] $p < .0001$ using a T test for paired observations.

TABLE 5

MIGRANT BEHAVIORS ACCORDING TO NUCLEAR FAMILY SUPPORTS IN THE U.S.

Migrant Behaviors		Nuclear Family Supports in the U.S. Married With Family n = 39	Married Without Family n = 95		Single Without Family n = 71
5.1	Total Number of Trips:				
	1 - 4	11 (28.2)	28 (29.5)		52 (73.2)
	5 - 10	16 (41.0)	45 (47.4)		15 (21.2)
	11 or +	12 (30.8)	22 (23.1)		4 (5.6)
				$x^2_4 = 38.74$[a]	
5.2	Length of Stay (in months):				
	6	10 (25.6)	39 (41.1)		14 (19.7)
	7 - 9	8 (20.5)	29 (30.5)		22 (31.0)
	10 or +	20 (51.3)	22 (23.2)		35 (49.3)
	Missing	1 (2.6)	5 (5.2)		0
				$x^2_6 = 21.24$[a]	
5.3	Documentation:				
	With	23 (58.9)	22 (23.2)		22 (31.0)
	Without	14 (36.0)	73 (76.8)		49 (69.0)
	Missing	2 (5.1)	0		0
				$x^2_4 = 26.56$[a]	
5.4	Reported Health:				
	No illness episodes	17 (43.6)	42 (44.2)		32 (45.1)
	With illness episodes	15 (38.4)	50 (52.6)		36 (50.7)
	- Sought professional help	11 (73.3)	30 (60.0)		23 (63.9)
	- Did not seek professional help	4 (26.7)	20 (40.0)		13 (36.1)
	Missing	7 (18.0)	3 (3.2)		3 (4.2)
				$x^2_4 = 11.49$	
5.5	Work Intensity:				
	a. Hours/day				
	≤8	9 (23.7)	27 (29.7)		25 (36.8)
	9 or +	29 (76.3)	64 (70.3)		43 (63.2)
				$x^2_2 = 2.08$	
	b. Days/week				
	1 - 5	5 (12.8)	22 (23.7)		19 (26.8)
	6 - 7	34 (87.2)	71 (76.3)		52 (73.2)
				$x^2_2 = 2.89$	

work and family lives are not as rigidly demarcated and there are more opportunities to be with friends.

Married men who leave their families behind represent the largest group. They also seem to be at highest risk for emotional disturbances. For instance, qualitative data revealed that they were more prone to loneliness and depression in the U.S. than men who migrated with their families. Indeed, these men tended to come for shorter periods and expressed strong ambivalence about having their family life and work life split in two different countries. The high incidence of illegal status added to their feelings of discomfort and prevented them from seeking professional help when sick.

In sharp contrast to married men, single male migrants seem less encumbered by seasonal lifestyles (Table 5). They represent a younger group of more recent migrants who tend to seek adventure through temporary moves. They perceive these moves as a means of gaining experience as providers without feeling overburdened by family obligations. Many use it as a preparatory phase for accumulating savings before settling into married life.

The move to California and the changes in working conditions described do not seem to bear much impact on migrants' physical health. Migrants reported a total of 160 illness episodes during their average eight and a half

TABLE 6

HEALTH PROBLEMS IN THE U.S.: REPORTED SYMPTOMS & NUMBER OF EPISODES

Symptoms/Episode	n	(%)
a. Psycho-somatic (nerves)	2	1.3
b. Physical:		
Respiratory (lungs, ear, nose, throat)	43	26.9
Injuries	26	16.2
Dental	19	11.9
Skin	17	10.6
Stomach	14	8.7
Back	10	6.3
Headaches	7	4.4
Vision	5	3.1
Urinary	4	2.5
Fever	3	1.9
Other (i.e. diabetes, hypertension, amputation)	6	3.7
Missing	4	2.5
Total no. of episodes	160	100.0

Note: Episodes/person = 0.73

months stay in the U.S. (Table 6). This translates into .73 episodes/persons of which .20 were respiratory conditions and .12 were injuries. This is approximately 3 times less respiratory and 2 times fewer injuries reported by 17-44 year old Mexican Americans in a similar period (National Center for Health Statistics, 1984). It represents half the rate of respiratory conditions and 1.6 times more injuries than those reported by the local health centers in Mexico (Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, 1984). Overall, migrants appear to constitute a very health workforce and few complaints linked to farm work such as blurred vision, or chronic headaches were reported.

DISCUSSION

Basic Tradeoffs in Seasonal Migration

Seasonal migrant men live complementary lifestyles as they move back and forth across the border juggling essential needs. This complementarity is evidenced by the results of this study showing differential opportunities and limitations experienced in each society. Whereas the American society provides economic benefits, these are obtained at the cost of multiple social stresses and few supports. In contrast, Mexican society offers social supports but scarce economic gains.

Lifestyle tradeoffs are clearly played out in two settings, the workplace and the family. Both are sensitive to migration changes reflected in the following dynamic: Mexicans move from a village culture characterized by a fixed social order in which men have highly prescribed roles, statuses and expectations. Among these, the role of household head and provider stands out foremost. In this tight social arrangement, close ties with the community are forged. Bonds within families and same sex peer networks are particularly strong, providing a firm sense of emotional security. This rigid, very predictable social order breaks down in the workplace due to the lack of competition and opportunities. The workplace is often difficult and arbitrary in Mexican villages. Since it cannot ensure economic security, the strongly entrenched provider roles become largely symbolic and the lack of a regular source of income often leads men to despair. The social displacement that occurs as a result of a weakened provider role is an important inducement for migration.

A sharp reversal occurs when moving to the U.S. Ours is a rather changeable, transient culture characterized by highly mobile roles, statuses and expectations. The ties between individuals and communities are much looser and the emphasis on self reliance makes it more difficult to obtain emotional support from peers. Even ties among migrants reportedly get weakened by a competitive spirit. Despite the society being more loosely knit, the workplace is a tightly organized system which adheres to well-

defined rules and expectations. It is in this competitive environment that migrants seek to fulfill their need for economic security and to reinstate their provider role. The opportunity to receive weekly paychecks strengthens men's work ethic and enhances their self-esteem, making them feel that they are getting ahead rather than letting life pass them by. This increased confidence bolsters their image as competent providers and reinforces strong values placed on self sufficiency.

Tradeoffs in lifestyle also occur within the family realm. The decision whether or not to migrate as a family unit is perhaps the most important determinant of lifestyle. This decision hinges largely on household resources available to invest in the move, legal status in the U.S., and obligations with family and network. Due to the large costs involved in relocation, particularly for those lacking documentation, men traditionally have left their spouse and children behind while sending home remittances. Yet this decision is becoming less popular as more women are joining the American labor force, helping to defray migration costs (Guendelman and Perez-Itriago, 1986). Family migration lessens feelings of isolation and depression, improves worker morale and increases earnings in dual paycheck couples. However, paid female work also means adjustments in marital roles. Roles become less stereotyped along gender lines as men perceive their spouses on a more even level. Men are expected to engage in household and child care activities, which are tasks they do not share in Mexico.

Although in this study both sexes expressed that sharing responsibilities brought them closer together, men experienced frequent role overload. These feelings were not exclusive of men with working spouses. They generalized to heads of household migrating with families compared to unaccompanied men who experienced more personal free time. Single men used most of their free time in social drinking and sports, activities which were often precluded to family men. The survey data show that men traveling with family had to work longer hours and more days per week to support their dependents. They also had to help with chores requiring transportation, such as grocery shopping or laundry, and help their wife and children transact with health, school and other social institutions. For them, the presence of the family meant increased emotional support at the expense of high routinized, overburdened schedules. Many longed for the more leisurely days back home.

Having to adjust to such different expectations in each society lies at the core of men's seasonal lifestyles. Most interviewed migrants, but particularly the unaccompanied married men; expressed dissatisfaction with these changing lifestyles and wished they could concentrate their social and economic resources in one place. This need is best exemplified by the desire to reunite home and family under one roof and have the workplace nearby. Often the family may be residing in the U.S. while the "house", to which

savings have been allocated, is built in Mexico. Other times the family and the house are in Mexico, whereas the provider is across the border. A few migrants resolve this conflict by opting to settle permanently in the U.S. Others wish that Mexico could provide better economic opportunities and that the border would be closed "to avoid temptation". In the meantime, since neither alternative is viable for most, Mexican workers continue to migrate back and forth.

Changes in physical health associated with seasonal migration seem far less apparent than changes in roles and life styles. Perhaps this is so because self-selection acts to encourage those healthy workers to migrate abroad. Another possibility is that migration does not directly impact on health status, but rather, changes in occupation and lifestyle that occur with relocation influence health status. For instance, the findings of this study show that as a result of moving from traditional, low technology to equipment intensive work environments, workers experienced one and a half times as many injuries in the U.S. A third explanation for the low incidence of health problems reported by migrants is that men possibly ignore their health problems while living in the U.S. The intent focus on maximizing gains through hard work may lead men to underplay health concerns and postpone decisions about health care until they return to Mexico. Indeed, many migrants reported a preference for medical services obtained in Mexico because they are cheaper and do not impose language barriers. Clearly, further research is needed to test these hypotheses on the relationship between migration and health status.

In conclusion, seasonal migration involves distinct changes in roles, work patterns and family dynamics. These changes occur because men move back and forth between two countries searching to complement essential needs. The search for economic security and social support are needs which presently cannot be met in one society and demand continuous relocations. Herein lies the significant social function performed by seasonal migration.

For men, migration has become a strategy for coping with a role and status displacement which occurs because in the depressed Mexican rural economic structure, their primary roles and expectations as family providers are thwarted. To reinstate the breadwinner role and enhance their status in the family and peer network, men, particularly married ones, cross north and take temporary jobs, any jobs. No burden seems high enough to satisfy this need. In this back and forth process of continuous relocation certain tradeoffs occur in order to adjust to the expectations and obligations of each society. Men gain in self worth through economic security when joining the American labor force at the cost of discrimination, legal, language and adjustment problems in the host society. Furthermore, their social support networks and family ties get disrupted. These social losses are compensated for by returning to Mexico for emotional refueling when employment terminates

or homesickness hits hard. Such social enhancement can only last as far as their income will stretch. The findings of this study show that the ongoing search for economic well being to strengthen the provider role in one country, and of social ties and emotional support in the other, lies at the core of men's seasonal lifestyles. It is an act of balancing two essential needs.

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