

Unpacking Longings to Return: Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Phoenix, Arizona¹

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ABSTRACT

Many migration studies emphasize the settlement process and more recently transnational attachments and identities, but less consideration is given to the idea of return. This article focuses on first-generation Guatemalans and Salvadorans in the United States and examines the varying degrees of migrants' *desires* to return home versus actual return. Specifically, the paper highlights the persistence among these migrants, who live and work in Phoenix, Arizona, of a "diasporic" or "transnational" tendency to think of home. This emphasis is important because we do not assume that migrants have clear-cut options about their migration movements. Additionally, it allows us to consider migrants' social imaginary – the divergent ways in which men and women in our study imagine their return and express their intents to return, which in turn, may influence their responses toward migration. For heuristic reasons, we identify three distinct conceptual categories of longings to return – assertive, ambivalent, and no desire to return. Drawing from narratives of Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants' experiences in Phoenix gathered through in-depth interviews, the paper reveals that all three kinds of expressions outlined demonstrate the significance that the location of the immediate family, particularly children, seems to have in ultimately shaping longings to return back home. These considerations highlight the fundamentally social nature of immigrants' seemingly most individual motivations and desires – to return or to stay.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of Central American migration to the United States is generally associated with North American “gateway cities” such as Los Angeles, Houston, San Francisco, Washington DC, Chicago, and New York.² The Phoenix metropolitan area, however, is experiencing a new migration trend. Despite the fact that this south-western metropolis has a long history of receiving Mexican migrants from various regions it is now becoming more culturally diverse. Recently, a medley of migrant groups such as Africans, Asians, Middle Easterners, and other Latinos have arrived in this desert city. Some of the newest Latino arrivals altering the social and cultural landscape of Phoenix, Arizona include Cubans and Central Americans, particularly, Guatemalans and Salvadorans.

A number of studies emphasize the settlement process.³ And, more recently, research examines transnational attachments and identities, but less consideration is given to the idea of return. This article focuses on first-generation Guatemalans and Salvadorans in the United States and examines the varying degrees of migrants’ *desires* to return home. Rather than addressing the concrete consequences of migration as past work often does, the primary aim here is to explore the subjective ramifications of migration, aspects that remain difficult to measure with conventional yardsticks. The emphasis on longings to return is important because we do not assume that migrants have clear-cut options about their migration movements. In other words, the *desire* to return indicates a commitment to relatives, family, and friends in the home country; it rests at the core of many transnational exchanges, including the remitting of gifts, goods, and money. The desire (and not actual return) keeps links between the sending and receiving communities alive and sustains the flow of goods to families and communities back home. Additionally, such a focus allows us to consider migrants’ social imaginary – the divergent ways in which men and women in our study imagine their return and express their intents to return, which in turn, may influence their responses towards migration.⁴ For heuristic reasons, we identify three distinct conceptual categories of longings to return – assertive, ambivalent, and no desire to return. Although these embody a logical spectrum of possibilities, they nonetheless help capture reasons *why* and *how* migrants’ aspirations to return home unfold in migrants’ destination places. While we recognize that the spectrum of return possibilities outlined here can be applicable to other groups, we also do not intend to generalize about Guatemalan and Salvadoran’s everyday life. However, an examination of migrants’ experiences, attitudes, desires, sentiments, and imaginations brings out how individuals embrace and act out their notions of return.

Instead of viewing migration as a unidirectional flow, many scholars now see it as the bi-directional movement of individuals, ideas, goods, remittances, and

socio-cultural practices (e.g. Rouse, 1991; Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Basch et al., 1994). Today the back and forth movement of people becomes more frequent between communities of origin and arrival. Technology also greatly facilitates and heightens communication between these two (or more) sites. The transnational individual, then, simultaneously embraces a sense of belonging to two distinct localities. Some scholars (e.g. Wyman, 1993; Foner, 1997) contest the originality of the concept of transnationalism and show that similar processes figured a century ago among European immigrants. Portes et al. (1999: 219), for example, articulate that “what constitutes truly original phenomena and, hence, a justifiable new topic of investigation, are the high intensity of exchanges, the new modes of transacting, and the multiplication of activities that require cross-border travel and contacts on a sustained basis”. Current conceptualizations of transnational migration, however, often ignore the subjective dimensions behind immigrant settlement. Thus, examining migrants’ longings to return offers an opportunity to explore the forces in the destination context that may impinge on such moves, moves that become increasingly entrenched within transnational processes. Although we recognize that return migration unfolds within the fluid context of transnational migration (see also Foner, 1997; Espinosa, 1998; Klimt, 2000), return is conceptualized here as the process whereby migrants look to their origin countries with the idea to return and stay. Hence, going “home” for migrants in our study typically embodies the idea of their home country, more specifically, their home community.

Political turmoil and increasing violence propelled many Guatemalans and Salvadorans to flee their respective countries during the 1980s. These turbulent years led to one of the largest population movements from Central America to the United States. Thousands of Guatemalans and Salvadorans went to Mexico and became political refugees (Manz, 1988; O’Dogherty, 1989). People also fled to other neighbouring countries such as Belize, Honduras, and Nicaragua; many arrived in the United States, and others continued onto Canada. Recent research reveals that in almost 40 years of political strife in Guatemala there were an astounding 200,000 killed or disappeared, 150,000 refugees, and 1.5 million internally displaced (Commission for Historical Clarification, 1999). Likewise, El Salvador’s 12 years of civil war resulted in the disappearance or killing of about 75,000 people, the displacement of 400,000, and the emigration of at least one-fifth of its entire population (Naciones Unidas, n.d.).

We locate this paper within the literature on return migration and Central American migration to analyse the importance of return among migrants from war-torn sending countries. Because Guatemalans and Salvadorans are migrants who left highly conflictive environments, this in turn, may influence their particular views and notions about return. The experiences of the Salvadorans and

Guatemalans in this study demonstrate that intentions and attitudes to return are not solely shaped by individual-level social positions such as age, ethnicity, or gender. Even more importantly, these attitudes are socially embedded actions in which the presence of family, friends, and community take centre stage. To situate the urban context where Guatemalans and Salvadorans in this study arrive, a brief background is sketched. We then present a description of the data and methods used. This section is followed by ethnographic cases highlighting how the daily experiences and behaviour of migrants lead to divergent manifestations of return. By examining the varying notions of longings to return, this discussion opens up means to unpack the complexities and intricacies of return migration.

RETURN MIGRATION

Migrants' aspirations and attitudes toward return – not the actual act of returning – are typically not viewed as important aspects of the migration process (e.g. Gmelch, 1980; Guarnizo, 1997; Moran-Taylor, 2001), as the emphasis has been on the assimilation of new immigrants and their success in the host society. In addition to this neglect, the US public leans toward the idea that migrants do not seriously consider a return home. Historically oriented studies of migration show that “immigrants have been heading back to Europe from the earliest days of the rush to the New World” (Wyman, 1993: 4). In fact, nearly one-third of all European immigrants to the United States during the period between the 1880s and 1930s permanently returned to their homeland (Wyman, 1993) and many maintained active ties with their families and communities back home (Foner, 1997). In a study of the Barbadian experience of return, Gmelch (1992: 284-5) indicates that return migration “is best understood as the natural completion of the migration cycle”. In contrast, Pessar (1997: 3) and Guarnizo (1997b) observe that return migration should not be viewed as a fixed process, rather as “one episode in an ongoing process of migration”. While return migration received some attention in the literature throughout the 1970s, (e.g. Anwar, 1979; Brettell, 1979), later it was put on the backburner and not revisited until recently. Again, this tendency occurred because scholars were more interested in the assimilation of migrants in their places of arrival. Increasingly, scholars of migration tackle the issue of return migration as well as the deep and radical changes unfolding in sending countries (see e.g. Guarnizo, 1997a; Zetter, 1999; Moran-Taylor, 2003).

Rather than addressing the actual act of returning home, the focus here lies on migrants' attitudes and aspirations toward return. Of concern here too is to distinguish two different kinds of commitments to hail home. One commitment

to go back to the native land embodies a subjective character, that is, a notion that nearly every migrant expresses. By contrast, another commitment to return leans toward the objective side. It becomes more measurable in such things as sending cash remittances to kin in migrants' places of origin. Importantly, when thinking about return migration, the length of time folks remain back in their homeland also needs to be considered (Moran-Taylor, 2001). The question then becomes: is it return migration, for example, if an individual goes back to her/his native land and later migrates again after a brief stay? In her study of Dominicans heading to the United States, Georges (1990) highlights that migrants engage in such patterns a number of times throughout their life, a trend also evident among Guatemalans (Moran-Taylor, 2003). Moreover, concepts such as settlement and return migration need to be analysed carefully and used with caution. How migrants interpret and view their surroundings and prospects and, in turn, endow them with specific meanings must be brought into the picture to fully understand migration processes.

The effects of migration on the home community, which varies with the length of time spent in migrants' destination localities, also has been examined (e.g. González, 1961; Wiest, 1973). An insightful study that recognizes return migration (see Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991) examines the economic, political, and socio-cultural ramifications of migration for Dominican migrants and their families in their communities of origin and for those in the United States. Although the authors address the movements back and forth between these two locales, their study does not specifically embrace a transnational migration approach. In other words, in addition to capturing the bi-directionality of migrants, transnational migration approaches seek to explore how folks cultivate new identities and spaces due to the dynamic nature of the outcomes and effects that this particular movement produces. Recently, for example, scholars documenting Caribbean migration to the United States consider the changes that return migration brings in migrants' communities of origin from a transnational perspective (e.g. Pessar, 1997; Guarnizo, 1997b; Levitt, 2001). By addressing return migration within the transnational perspective, these studies attend to cross-border connections and how migrants create multiple identities rooted in both their community of origin and in their community of destination.

Despite the fact that an intention to return strongly sways attitudes and perceptions, and ultimately shapes migrants' attachment to place and their sense of belonging, little attention is given to this dimension of return migration (Moran-Taylor, 2001).⁵ This issue remains a vital concern in migrants' everyday lives as even permanent settlers often reminisce about an eventual return. Hart (1997: 124), for example, tells the story of Yamileth, a female Nicaraguan undocumented migrant, and brings to light the contradictions and tensions in her

life. She writes that Yamileth “lived with what she called ‘the illusion’ of being able to return to Nicaragua...[L]ike many who leave with the promise to return, life is lived at the moment”. Brettell (1979) also reveals that Portuguese migrants held onto an ideology of return despite living for several years in France. Many Portuguese migrants retained strong notions to return to their native land, sent cash remittances to kin, and invested much of their earnings in constructing new homes in Portugal, yet few of them went back home to settle (Brettell, 1979). Similarly, Klimt (2000), in her study of Portuguese in Germany, observes that these migrants defined their presence in that country as temporary although the first generation had spent their more productive years away from “home”.

In short, here we illustrate the importance of the *longings* and *illusions* that many migrants have and which greatly affect their everyday experiences while living and working in their “adoptive” country. By exploring the aspirations that Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants in Phoenix, Arizona embrace to return home – *not necessarily actual return* – we provide a tentative explanation for the varying and complex expressions that a desire to go home may take. Many of these individuals echo a strong longing to return but, as we later highlight, this thinking often remains fraught with ambivalence and conflict. Yet such yearning becomes embedded in the minds and hearts of migrants and often impinges on the different manifestations of their settlement.

CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRATION STUDIES

As migration of Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants increased during the 1980s, researchers assessed whether these population movements were politically motivated, economically motivated, or a combination of both (e.g. Stanley, 1987; Jones, 1989; Menjívar, 1993). Some scholars examine Guatemalan and Salvadoran adaptation in their new places of arrival (e.g. Burns, 1993; Chinchilla et al., 1993; Hagan, 1994; Mahler, 1995; Fink, 2003). Other studies explore the socio-psychological trauma among these migrants (Aaron et al., 1991; Vlach, 1992), their participation in the labour force (Repak, 1995), religion and church participation (Wellmeier, 1998; Menjívar, 1999b), work and gender (Menjívar, 1999a), social networks (Hagan, 1998; Menjívar, 2000), the meaning of place and journey (Moran-Taylor and Richardson, 1993), and nostalgia (Moran-Taylor, 2001). Other studies also draw comparisons with Mexican migrants (Chavez et al., 1989; Wallace, 1989).

During the past decade, researchers also have focused on Guatemalan and Salvadoran transnational migration. Migration scholarship in this vein examines

ethnic identity (Burns, 1999; Popkin, 1999), transnational migrant organizations (Hamilton and Chinchilla, 1999), gender (Kohpahl, 1998; Mahler, 1999), development of business enterprises (Landolt et al., 1999), diaspora (Loucky and Moors, 2000), impacts in sending communities (Mahler, 1999; Moran-Taylor, 2003), exile (Montejo, 1999) and the complexities of maintaining transnational ties among youth (Menjívar, 2002). An emphasis on Guatemalans' and Salvadorans' longings to return along the parameters of transnational migration processes merits attention for several reasons. First, a focus on these two migrant groups is important because they represent some of the fastest growing Latino groups in the United States. Second, examining their experiences sheds light on the conceptual gamut of return migration, as these migrants originated in highly conflictive contexts and, therefore, may hold different attitudes and perspectives regarding their return. And third, the Guatemalan and Salvadoran cases are particularly conducive to examine in Phoenix, Arizona, as Phoenix represents a new context that lacks a tradition (or a concentration) of Central American migration and one that remains largely neglected in migration studies. As such, this raises the following central question: if there is a context of Mexican (or other Latin Americans) living and working in Phoenix when new arrivals come, how does such a milieu shape longings to return? Again, a focus on longings to return is relevant because it influences migrants' prospective movements, plans, strategizing, and aspirations – to stay or to go.

US-bound Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants have sought haven in major cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, Washington DC, Chicago, and New York. Many of the urban areas these migrants select as their final destination in the United States are determined by employment opportunities as well as family and friends previously established in specific places (Menjívar, 2000). Further, the Central American case is important because, in addition to unstable economic conditions still reigning in their home countries, the instability in many migrants' lives due to their unstable legal statuses may influence their decisions to remain, relocate, or return (Menjívar, 1997). While legal status highly sways what people do, other factors that add complexity to these decisions closely relate to processes of settlement, including having families with US-born children – what Chavez (1988) calls “binational families” or Guarnizo (1994) dubs “binational society”.

THE CONTEXT OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Ranked as the sixth largest city in the United States, Phoenix, Arizona is home to nearly 1.3 million inhabitants, of which an estimated 449,972 are Latinos (US Census Bureau, 2000). The city is booming, its metropolis sprawling, and its

economy burgeoning. In short, Phoenix looms as one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States.⁶ Even though Phoenix currently has a large Latino population (in terms of diversity and numbers) and despite its proximity to the US-Mexican border, few studies explore Latino migrant flows to this south-western region. Rather, past migration scholarship largely pays attention to population movements to other border states, principally California and Texas, with scant work examining Arizona. Earlier research tends to emphasize that this migration is composed of Mexican migrants, and that this population flow is undocumented (e.g. Harner, 1995). A focus on other Latin-American origin migrants shaping the socio-demographic face of Phoenix's metropolitan area needs to be understood and documented. Even in this *other* Latino category important distinctions must be made as Central Americans, for example, do not constitute a monolithic group. Significant national-origin, socio-demographic, and ethnic differences emerge (among other social distinctions which we later highlight). While we analyse Guatemalan and Salvadoran men and women's experiences in Phoenix, it is crucial to point out that the differences between these two national-origin groups, and within Guatemalans – between non-indigenous (Ladino) and indigenous (Maya) groups – preclude over-generalizations of their experiences.⁷ Such an emphasis also contributes to greater understandings of recent migration trends in Arizona, specifically of Latinos in the south-western metropolis of Phoenix.

Although Mexican nationals continue to predominate Arizona's Latino population, the number of non-Mexicans increased from 1990 to 2000. According to the 2000 US Census, from 1990 to 2000 the average annual rate of increase for the Latino population in Phoenix was 8.3 per cent and the ten-year percentage change was 14 per cent. A prime factor contributing to the increase of Arizona's Latino population relates to the greater militarization of popular crossing points along the US-Mexican border. With Operation Gatekeeper in San Diego, California and the tightening of border areas in Texas with Operation Rio Grande, for many individuals seeking "the promised land" Arizona stands out as the new entry frontier. This newer crossing includes the desert area stretching along the border towns of Douglas and Nogales, where deaths of immigrants increased in recent years (e.g. Eschbach et al., 1999; Andreas, 2001; Cornelius, 2001).

GUATEMALAN AND SALVADORAN NEWCOMERS IN PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants arrive to the south-western metropolis of Phoenix, Arizona due to a combination of factors. For one, as has been observed (e.g. Massey et al., 1987; Alvarez, 1991; Menjívar, 2000), migration is

a social process involving kin and social networks between migrants' places of arrival and departure. Many of these recent arrivals head to Phoenix because they already have kin and/or friends in that city. A number of Guatemalan and Salvadoran newcomers come to Phoenix after residing in Los Angeles⁸ because this desert city seems more attractive for several reasons: Los Angeles is too expensive, too big, and offers fewer jobs. Additionally, as our study participants explained, Phoenix is safer and cleaner, offers a better education for their children, provides more affordable housing, and yields a more favourable environment for entrepreneurship. With all the attractions Phoenix provides, the relative geographic proximity of Los Angeles to Phoenix also contributes to the decision of Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants to shift US residences.⁹ As research shows (e.g. Lopez et al, 1996), Central American migration to Los Angeles is relatively easier today because of the plethora of network organizations, as well as the daily direct flight connections between Los Angeles and both Guatemala City and San Salvador. In our study, nearly half of the Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants indicated that they lived in Los Angeles prior to moving to the Phoenix metropolitan area.

According to the 2000 US Census, in Arizona 207,180 people identified themselves as Latino, a category that does not include those of Mexican, Puerto Rican, or Cuban origin. Guatemalan governmental representatives report that close to 10,000 Salvadorans and 8,000 Guatemalans reside in the city of Phoenix. Although these numbers pale in comparison to those of Los Angeles, they nonetheless constitute significant counts in Phoenix as they impact how communities are created and recreated in this newer context.

Scholars suggest that an indication of settlement entails the establishment of hometown associations (Menjívar, 2000). Popkin (1995), for instance, indicates that Guatemalans in Los Angeles are successful in developing such associations because many migrants have lived in that city for a long time and those who participate usually have legalized their status. In Phoenix, however, no hometown associations currently exist among Central American migrants, except for a few that indigenous Maya groups organized.¹⁰ The absence of such migrant organizations may influence feelings of belonging, a feeling also linked to these migrants' relatively short length of residence in this south-western city. A case highlighting this situation involves Carlota.¹¹ She is an undocumented Salvadoran who successfully secured a job and has two brothers, each with their spouses and children, in Phoenix. Yet Carlota lacks a sense of belonging in Phoenix. In part, she attributes such a feeling to the social and spatial fragmentation she experiences in the city. In general, she does not view herself as being part of a community in Phoenix. And like many other migrants, Carlota works long hours. Others juggle two or even three jobs, and thus have little time – even on week-

ends – for nurturing friendships or for socializing. By contrast, Chavez et al. (1997) observe that undocumented Latina migrants in Orange County, California often perceive themselves as belonging to a community despite their undocumented status. For many Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants in Phoenix, however, this tendency does not ring true.

While to date no official Salvadoran representatives exist in Phoenix, in spring 1999, the shop owners of one of the Central American *tiendas* (small shops) were appointed Honorary Consuls by the Guatemalan Ambassador to represent the Guatemalan population in Phoenix.¹² Such an event speaks to the official recognition that the growing presence of Guatemalans in this city has received from government officials back home and how they seek to maintain and encourage close ties with its nationals living abroad. The Guatemalan Honorary Consuls in Phoenix hope to slowly instill in this desert city a sense of community. By commemorating traditional and symbolic holidays such as Central America's independence day celebrated on 15 September, they seek to begin achieving such a goal. Engaging in festivities of this nature (e.g. celebrating with music bands, a beauty pageant, cook outs, soccer matches, which bring hundreds of folks), the Guatemalan Consuls explained, could help forge a strong and solid Central American community in Phoenix. In contrast to the Guatemalan example, the Salvadoran population lacks such representation despite its growing presence in Phoenix. Instead, among Salvadorans the emphasis and connections fostered at this level between migrants and the nation-state is more evident in other US cities (e.g. San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington DC).

DATA AND METHODS

This article is based on a larger study that focuses on contemporary Latin American migrants living in the Phoenix metropolitan area. The larger group includes Cuban, Honduran, and Mexican nationals. To explore the settlement and incorporation processes of Guatemalans and Salvadorans in Phoenix, we carried out in-depth interviews from summer 1998 through 2001 with 16 Guatemalan and 20 Salvadoran migrants. The in-depth, semi-structured interviews covered a range of topics such as migration and work history, household and family dynamics, ties they maintain with their families and communities back home, and future goals. Each interview lasted between one to three hours. Approximately half of the participants were interviewed at least twice. We conducted the interviews in Spanish and completed these in a location that study participants selected. These interviews allowed us to glean a more personal and descriptive view of the varied ways that Guatemalans and Salvadorans come to understand their migration experiences in Phoenix.

As we learned in the initial stages of fieldwork, Guatemalan and Salvadoran new arrivals remain quite scattered throughout the city and thus locating them becomes a difficult task. Study participants were selected using multiple points of entry. While employing such research sampling methods does not yield generalizable outcomes, it does however, become one of the best strategies to use when seeking to tap into a difficult-to-reach population. Initially we identified what Cornelius (1982) refers as “local notables,” who facilitate gaining access to the desired population. In our study, key notables in the Phoenix metropolitan area included community workers, social service agencies, merchants, churchgoers, and priests. Primary sources employed for contacting Guatemalan and Salvadorans included Salvadoran *pupuserias* (Salvadoran eateries), local churches, and small stores which also serve as courier agencies. We selected potential candidates in our study according to the following criteria: that they have at least one year of residence in Phoenix and that they were at least 18 years old when they left their countries.

Many Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants in Phoenix intended to migrate temporarily, expecting to return when the “situation gets better” back home. As is the case with other migrants, however, such intentions often expand for undetermined periods of time. And like other migrants, many of our study participants reported that the main reason they came to Phoenix was to search for better economic prospects. These migrants originate from distinct regions, cities, towns, and villages in their home countries. These different origin sites may affect the kinds of ties migrants build and the local organizations that they may form (an exception involve the Q’anjob’al and Mam Maya populations who have successfully created migrant organizations in Phoenix). Salvadoran new arrivals in Phoenix originate from urban and rural areas in their home country. In contrast, Guatemalan Ladinos mostly migrate from eastern Guatemala and Maya indigenous groups (primarily Q’anjob’al and Mam) hail from the western highlands.

The socio-economic and demographic profile of Guatemalans and Salvadorans participating in our study is highly varied. More than half, or 57 per cent, are women and their average age is 28.4 years; men’s average age is 32. Nearly all of our study participants (married, in consensual unions, or single) have children. About two-thirds of the women left youngsters (toddlers and school age) in their home countries under the care of a relative (usually a mother or sister) or friend, and one-third presently reside with school age offspring in the United States – generally, US-born children. Only five cases exemplify what Chavez (1988) describes as “binational families”, that is, migrants who have children present in both the United States and in their homeland. The educational background of the study participants is also diverse. Some individuals barely com-

pleted their elementary education; others finished their secondary schooling, and a few have a number of years of higher education. The kinds of employment migrants held in Guatemala and El Salvador include occupations such as electricians, clerks, teachers, plumbers, market vendors, *maquila* (factory) workers, soldiers, students, and *campesinos* (agricultural workers). In Phoenix, in spite of the increase in employment in the city, the types of work our study participants primarily hold involve low-paying jobs in the service and manufacturing industries, regardless of their educational backgrounds or skills. Whereas women work as hotel chambermaids, housekeepers, babysitters, house cleaners, factory and fast-food workers, and nursing home aids, men find jobs as gardeners, agriculturists, factory, maintenance, and repair shop labourers. Further, most of the men and women were either undocumented or in the process of legalizing their status. Most of these migrants had resided in the Phoenix metropolitan area approximately three to five years. Importantly, both groups stay connected in one way or another with close kin and friends in their home countries. Some return home to visit and, with varying degrees, most folks say that they send cash remittances and tangibles back home on a regular basis.

LONGINGS TO RETURN HOME

Both broad and individual forces help influence people's longings to return to their countries of origin. Factors at the macro level may include an assortment of issues in the country of arrival such as immigration policies, xenophobic sentiments among natives, labour-market conditions, and employment opportunities. In the home country, economic and political developments also shape people's aspirations to return. At the local level, the presence or absence of family and/or feelings migrants may hold toward their native land may sway their desire to return. In what follows, we identify three broad patterns of expression – assertive, ambivalent, and no desires – that return migration evokes. In the qualitative tradition, these categories emerged inductively from our observations. Thus, at times such a presentation may sound commonsensical. We believe, however, that the range of notions of return develops because it represents the social reality of our study participants' lives, as they come to understand it or as they come to imagine it. While these manifestations indeed represent a logical gamut of how longings to return home may unfold, in fleshing these out we learn that return migration is a dynamic and fluid process. In fact, the varying notions of return mapped out here help to organize conceptually how such ideas are reflected and acted out among Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants living and working in Phoenix. Crucially, this categorization is based on our observations and may not apply to other situations in the same way; the patterns of longings to return may overlap and may have distinct evo-

cations in other settings. In sum, an examination of migrants' attitudes and aspirations about return migration – as well as how these individuals may imagine their return –allows us to explore their prospective migration acts.

Assertive returns

At one end of the spectrum are included individuals who express most assertive yearnings about a return home. These are Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants who left behind young children in their homeland (and hold no intentions of bringing or sending for their offspring to the United States). Menjívar et al. (1998) point out that the investments migrants make in their home communities largely influence the kinds of orientation migrants develop with their countries of origin. In fact, these authors highlight that when children live in the same household with their parents in the adoptive country, migrants appear less inclined to remit, and when they do remit, the amount sent usually decreases over time.

Jaime, a married Guatemalan Ladino in his thirties and a resident of Phoenix for seven years, for example, is quite assertive about his return. Although he maintains a positive outlook regarding his migratory experiences and feels that he has acquired many valuable skills in the United States, his immediate family remains in Guatemala – his wife and two children, age eight and ten. Therefore, Jaime explained that he yearns to go back and reunite with his family. Recently, his eldest brother returned and reunited with his own family after working for several years in Arizona. Jaime still holds a strong attachment to his home community and despite the value of earning US dollars, he remains confident that one day he will make the trip back to his native land.

Some migrants who maintain assertive notions of return actually do go back home. The case of Maria, a Guatemalan, nicely illustrates this point. Maria is a lively Ladina woman in her late thirties who emigrated from Guatemala's eastern region to Phoenix. She has lived for nearly five years in Phoenix working long hours as a chambermaid in a small hotel. When Maria initially emigrated from Guatemala, she intended to head further north to Boston, where a couple of siblings settled. Later, however, she opted to stay in Phoenix, namely because of logistics. She crossed the US-Mexican border at Nogales (Arizona) and the *coyote* bringing her to Phoenix offered further assistance in helping her set up (i.e. to find employment and living quarters). Two years after Maria's arrival in Phoenix, her eldest daughter journeyed from Guatemala and joined Maria.

Back home Maria was separated from her husband. Now she is involved in a consensual relationship with a Mexican newcomer. Both Maria and her new

mate reside with her eldest daughter, Chicano son-in-law, and the young couple's two-month-old infant. Like many other recent arrivals in Phoenix, all five members of Maria's family live in a small, dilapidated two-bedroom apartment along one of the city's marginal areas.

When our conversation turned to Maria's aspirations to return home, smiling, she quickly replied: "mire, yo de cualquier momento para otro me voy" (look I'll probably leave any time soon). Because Maria left six children under the care of her mother in Guatemala, she considered going back home. Moreover, during Maria's absence, her 18-year-old son passed away (apparently from a heart attack, but details about his death were unclear to Maria). Though heartbroken after this incident and unable to attend her son's funeral, Maria remained in Phoenix. Mostly, she felt compelled to stay in Phoenix a little while longer as this would allow her to continue sending part of her earnings (usually about US\$200 per month) to help her other children in Guatemala. With the money Maria remits home it permits her young daughters to enrol in school (e.g. to purchase school books, uniforms, and any other needed scholastic items throughout the academic year). Three of Maria's five children back home were seven, eight, and twelve years old and attended a local primary school. Despite Maria's commitment toward her children's education, she yearns to return home due to the instability that envelops her life as a result of being in the United States without legal documents. For Maria, "being able to freely come and go would be the best arrangement as she could enjoy the best of two worlds". That is, having work and a weekly pay check in the United States and having the warmth of home and her children in Guatemala would be her optimal situation. A few months later, when we attempted to contact Maria once again, her daughter informed us that she had finally decided to make the trip back home. "Ya se había desesperado" (she grew desperate), her daughter, in a nostalgic voice, commented during one of our visits. In the two examples sketched out here, both Maria (who had a binational family) and Jaime (who had all his kin abroad) felt that the fundamental glue bonding them to their home country were their children, and it was their children who helped maintain the strong and solid connections back home. As these cases reveal, often what shapes migrants' decisions to return is the presence of family in the country of origin.

Additionally promoting a firm desire to head back to the homeland include the experiences migrants have in finding employment or with discrimination in the work place – even when working for their *paisanos* (fellow country people) in the United States. Julita is a Salvadoran woman in her mid-thirties who left behind her toddler and 19-year-old son with her mother. Like other participants in our study, she arrived in Phoenix in search of better economic prospects. But barely a year in Phoenix, she already had shifted jobs three times. Initially, a

Salvadoran couple that she knew, and who had returned home on a brief sojourn, enticed Julita to migrate to Phoenix. While in El Salvador, the couple encouraged her to make the clandestine trip to work as their domestic worker and caretaker for their two-year-old toddler. Not only did Julita endure several mishaps along the dangerous and arduous journey across Mexico, but working for her *paisanos* also became a very unpleasant experience. Despondently, she recounted her negative employment experiences with the couple: “They accused me of stealing baby clothes to send back to my child in El Salvador and of stealing money.” After merely three months on the job, Julita left. She then found employment with an American couple, but abandoned that job too after a brief stay. Julita incurred an injury while working and her employers refused to provide any financial assistance. When we spoke with Julita she had managed to secure sporadic work cleaning houses. Now, she lives with an expecting Guatemalan woman (whom she met at an evangelical church) who is married to an Iranian migrant. Sitting in the living room decorated with elegant picture frames of the Ayatollah Khomeini’s photos, and with the television tuned to an evangelical channel, Julita recounted her migratory journey and departure from El Salvador. Because she still needed to repay much of the monies borrowed from family, friends, and neighbours to make the trip North with the aid of a *coyote*, she still owed about US\$3,000 for the trip. Thus, momentarily, her return back home would have to wait. It was, however, a trip she planned on making once she fully repaid her debts. In short, while both Julita and Maria viewed their “adoptive” country as a place to toil, their native land loomed as a place where they could eventually rejoice in the fruits of their hardships, in addition to the warmth and happiness that home evoked.

Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants living and working in Phoenix, irrespective of the length of time they have resided in the United States, may also buttress a desire to return home because many do not experience a strong sense of belonging in the city. As a whole, many participants in this study are not spatially concentrated in the Phoenix metropolitan area and seldom reside in particular ethnic immigrant enclaves as migrants usually do in other US cities with large migrant populations (e.g. Portes and Bach, 1985). Few distinct neighbourhoods house recent arrivals from Guatemala and El Salvador. Typically, these individuals reside with other migrants and working class and/or poor natives in Phoenix’s peripheral localities. Many of these migrants find housing in sagging and dilapidated apartment complexes with cracked windows, graffiti spray-painted walls, and wire webs clumsily overhanging. Others, who reside in run-down trailer parks, also occupy a marginalized position. Generally, migrants reside in such areas throughout Phoenix where rents are cheaper. These sectors are not defined along cultural or national origins, but rather, along class lines. While these neighbourhoods bring together migrants and native folks who are in

dire need of affordable housing, in so doing, its residents also must contend with problems such as crime, violence, prostitution, and drugs. Such dismaying conditions further contribute to the marginalization that migrants face in Phoenix, which is exacerbated by their undocumented status and the discrimination they experience mostly from those native-born. Therefore, it is difficult for recent arrivals to feel that they “belong” in an environment that they often perceive as hostile.

Ambivalent returns

Like individuals who express an assertive notion of return, Guatemalans and Salvadorans who embrace ambivalent ideas of return are often plagued with yearnings to return, illusions, and nostalgia that permeate their everyday lives. In the case of the “ambivalents”, however, for the most part profound ambiguity and tensions shroud such desires. In our study, two-thirds of the participants indicated that they would like to return to their countries of origin. Similarly, in Klimt’s (2000: 263) research, for Portuguese migrants in Germany aspirations to remain for “a few more little years” is often “cast as a postponement...never as a change of heart”. This ambivalent idea emerges in particular among Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants who reside in Phoenix with their children and/or extended family, those who have been unable to regularize their immigration status after numerous years of living and working in the United States, and others who aspire one day to “spend their *vejez* back home” – retire in their homeland. These migrants can best be characterized, as Constable (1999) puts it when referring to Filipina women employed as domestic workers in Hong Kong, “they are at home, but not at home”.

Migrants who manifest ambivalent notions to return home mentioned several issues that they would like to resolve before heading back. In earlier waves of immigration from Europe to the United States, many people returned home with savings put aside to purchase land or businesses (e.g. Wyman, 1993). This trend also rings true among Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants in Phoenix. Thus, for some individuals, purchasing a house or a plot of land in their home community, being financially solvent, and being able to afford the trip back home stand as crucial factors shaping their decision to return. Such notions were also often expressed and acted out among Guatemalan returnees in their sending communities and individuals with extended family in the United States (Moran-Taylor, 2003). Similarly, Menjívar (1999a) observed in her study of Salvadorans and Guatemalans that even though many migrants were not planning to return home, several men and women were paying off mortgages for homes or plots they had purchased in their home countries.

Selena, a single Maya woman in her late twenties from the western highlands of Guatemala, echoed a strong desire to return home. Despite the fact that she had spent nine productive years of her life in the United States, she held little hope in current US immigration laws to acquire permanent legal status. Only if US immigration laws shifted in her favour would she consider staying in Phoenix. Selena liked her job working in one of Phoenix's largest tortilla-making factories and recently befriended a Mexican newcomer at her workplace. Both she and her new boyfriend were eager to improve their language skills and attended ESL (English as a Second Language) classes at one of Phoenix's primary public schools two evenings per week. By contrast, Pablo, a Maya in his early thirties also from western Guatemala, has lived in Arizona for 12 years and recently became a permanent resident. During his time in Phoenix, Pablo met and married a Maya woman from the same region he came from in Guatemala, but at the moment has no children. Today he manages a marimba band, which plays at special Latino events throughout Phoenix. Importantly, his permanent legal status allows him to journey to Guatemala and visit family and friends with greater ease. Yet Pablo remarks that Guatemala's past political upheavals still dissuade him from permanently settling in his community of origin.

For migrants with children in the United States, ensuring that their offspring are established and financially stable stand as priorities before an impending return. Thus, migrants in this situation tend to maintain an ambivalent desire to return. Clarita, a married Salvadoran woman in her early forties with four children (the youngest child is in sixth grade, while the others are older than 18), moved five years ago to Phoenix from Los Angeles (where she resided for nearly 11 years). She comes from a family of seven siblings, and three of her brothers live in California. And although she has lived in this country for more than 16 years, she still keeps strong links with her family in El Salvador. Every month she remits part of her earnings to her parents, brothers, sisters, and in-laws; communicates over the telephone twice a month; frequently visits her home country; and has relatives who often come on brief sojourns to visit her and the family in Phoenix. Despite these strong ties, Clarita's attitude and feelings about returning home, typical of the ambivalents, were as follows:

I would like to return when my children are grown up and have their own lives. They're going to get married here and then they'll stay here. I have spoken with my husband about this and when we're older and are in a better financial situation we'll go live over there [El Salvador] and then come and visit our children.

For now, it is clear from such remarks that Clarita still feels a great affinity toward her homeland. But as her children grow up, marry, bear children, and other kin back home pass away, perhaps then she will speak more assertively

about staying in the United States, or alternatively, imagine her settlement as a permanent move. Importantly, for many of these ambivalents, the sole idea of one day returning to their home country seems to keep them going. Some individuals mentioned that they would not like to retire in the United States and seemed concerned with the possibilities of ending in a nursing home – views that also concerned informants in Menjívar's (2000) study in San Francisco. Of importance here are particular points in the life course for ambivalent notions. Mostly, it is middle-aged and older adults who tend to express a greater desire to go home. Ultimately, for many Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants in our study the goal is to have the flexibility to shift residences freely from time to time – from their destination to their origin countries and vice versa. For many of these migrants in Phoenix, *this* is how they define their return home.

No desires to return

Some Guatemalans and Salvadorans in our study expressed no desires to return home. Scholars focusing on Mexican migration to the United States point out that the settlement process begins when families bring children or decide to form a family (see Browning and Rodriguez, 1985; Chavez, 1988). While this is also the case for Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants in Phoenix who articulate no desire to return to their homeland and prefer to extend their stay in the United States, other factors also come into play with this decision. These include, for example, marriage with individuals from different national backgrounds, successful entrepreneurship, economic instability in their home country, and apprehensiveness due to their country of origin's political climate. As we noted earlier, many Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants left their native land as a result of the havoc and political violence wreaking their countries during the late 1980s – a flow that increased in the 1990s.

To illustrate, take the case of Carlos. Carlos is a Salvadoran in his late twenties. He is currently separated from his wife (a Salvadoran national raised in the United States) and has two US-born children (one age seven and the other age nine). Other family contacts he has in Phoenix include his brother and sister-in-law. Prior to coming to Phoenix four years ago, Carlos lived in Los Angeles for nearly nine years. Despite several years having elapsed since the war ended in El Salvador, Carlos refuses to return to his home country because he fears the army might take reprisals against him – in 1986 he deserted in the midst of the Salvadoran civil war. Additionally, he feels apprehensive about returning home because of the crime wave and sanguine gangs that roam throughout El Salvador. Gangs or *maras* such as the “Mara Salvatrucha” and the “18th Street” initially formed in south-central Los Angeles. Such gangs have increasingly made their presence felt in most Salvadoran towns (as well as in many

localities in Guatemala and Honduras) contributing to high crime rates and becoming an acute dilemma for Central American countries.

In the case of Guatemalans, indigenous Maya migrants were largely targeted during the years of political conflicts of the late 1970s and 1980s. Hence, paralleling Salvadorans, a feeling of apprehension (and/or resentment) also configures their decision to return. Since Guatemala's signing of the Peace Treaty in 1996 (a peace process that sought to end the 36 years of civil strife, but also to transform Guatemalan society), the possibilities for a return to the homeland seem more promising today. Montejo thus writes:

More and more Mayas are migrating and returning to their communities to buy land and to build better houses. For example, the Q'anjob'al Maya have used the power of the dollar to buy houses in more Ladinoized communities. But since these intruders are used to life in the United States, they find people to rent their houses or they simply close them up and return to their jobs in the United States (1999: 195-196).

Other migrants provided different reasons for not expressing a desire to return. For some, like Manuel, a single Salvadoran who arrived in Phoenix five years ago, going back to his homeland remains out of the question. Manuel easily launches into a discussion on how he does not aspire to go home. He is in his mid-twenties, not married, and undocumented. He initially came to Phoenix because his father previously lived in this city. While in El Salvador Manuel worked as a welder, but in Phoenix he mainly labours at a brick factory during the week and sells ice cream from his van on weekends. Still, despite his low earnings, Manuel is extremely optimistic and has found adapting to the city of Phoenix fairly easy. For now, he lacks a desire to visit his home country because he says: "si voy con el dinero de aquí...voy con el dinero para que me secuestren, me lo quiten, o me maten" (if I go with money from here...I go so that they will kidnap me, take it away from me, or kill me). And, going back to El Salvador to settle presents even less of an option for Manuel because all his hard earnings, he feels, would not go very far –"life is just too expensive over there", he says. "But in Phoenix", he blurted, "one never lacks a day without work, whereas in my country you never know how you're going to get your next pay check". In part, Manuel's financial positive outlook in the United States is related to a bifocal lens through which he interprets his US life. His point of comparison is not others in the United States, but friends and family back home, who are still suffering the devastations of a post-war economy. When our conversation shifted to Manuel's future goals, without hesitating he responded: "En Phoenix, aquí me gusta, me encanta, con el calor y todo, pero me encanta! (In-Phoenix, I like it, I love it, with the heat and all, but I love it!)." Then Manuel added, "to come here to this country is to come to paradise!"

Marriages that take place between individuals from distinct national origins also greatly influence migrants' attitudes and perceptions of a return to their home country. Often couples bargain collectively for their future goals (Hirsch, 1999) and when a Salvadoran, for example, marries a Guatemalan or a Mexican national, returning to either spouse's place of origin becomes more difficult. Matters become more complex when children are born in the United States and parents must then decide to whose home country they may eventually return. Generally, in such circumstances migrants tend to remain in the United States or extend their stay for several years. To reiterate, length of time becomes central because the longer migrants stay, the less inclined they are to return to their homeland. In this regard, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1995) states that time in the host society largely impacts how people settle in their communities. Another situation that heavily influences a desire to remain in the United States concerns socio-economic mobility through successful entrepreneurship. From our interviews and observations, it is apparent that when migrants maintain residency for a number of years in Phoenix and establish lucrative enterprises they usually extend their stay indefinitely, if they even consider a return.

Key cases highlighting such circumstances among Guatemalan and Salvadorans include emergent entrepreneurs, particularly ethnic businesses (e.g. restaurant and small store proprietors). For these ethnic businesses, their specific national origin does not preclude them from catering to all migrants of Latin-American origin. Similarly, Guarnizo et al. (1999) observe that the lack of an immigrant enclave among Colombians stands as a crucial feature that influences Colombian-owned businesses to appeal to a pan-ethnic clientele. One of the *tiendas* (small shops) in our study, owned by a middle-aged Guatemalan couple who have lived for more than 15 years in the United States, exemplifies this point. Most of their immediate extended family resides in Phoenix (one of the owner's mother and a brother). And no one in their family has returned, even for a visit, to their home country. As a whole, these prosperous business owners expressed no desire to go back to Guatemala. However, despite the long years of separation from their homeland and a firm desire not to return, they have not severed ties with relatives back home – several times a year they take great pride and care in forwarding an assortment of US goods to their extended kin in Guatemala. The couple aspires that both their teenage sons will one day help make a difference in the Latino community in Phoenix. Further illustrative of the stroke of prosperity among these Guatemalan and Salvadoran entrepreneurs concerns their financial ability to afford housing in better and safer neighbourhoods than their compatriots who toil in low-paid jobs and who live in less optimal conditions in Phoenix's marginalized areas.

CONCLUSION

We have sought to explore the longings to return many Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants experience in Phoenix as a case to examine varying attitudes and aspirations of return migration. Migration studies point out that everyone who leaves does so with the intention to return. For the most part, however, past research does not address the experiences of migrants themselves or their social imaginary, and simply assumes that migrants do not actually return to stay. By considering the *desire* to return that often governs the everyday lives of Guatemalans and Salvadorans living and working in Phoenix, this study provides a glimpse into the kinds and degrees of orientations that they may hold or imagine. A focus on individuals' sentiments and desires allows us to make sense of these migrants' experiences, but also significant, to the manifold conditions that may influence their aspirations: to settle or to go back home.

Our findings demonstrate that at the crux of an assertive notion of return looms the presence of close-knit ties, primarily children, in migrants' homeland. Those who speak about a tentative return often express the need to complete or resolve certain issues prior to a return home. These concerns largely revolve around their immediate families, which, for the ambivalents, are mostly located in the United States. Additionally, as prior transnational migration studies demonstrate (e.g. Levitt, 2001; Hirsch, 2003), for those who maintain such ambivalent notions, stages in the life course loom as critical in determining whether people are more or less likely to return home. Individuals who manifest no desire to return to their home countries fear that they will personally experience the repercussions of past political strife and face high unemployment, and thus, downward mobility. When intermarriages take place between migrants of distinct nationalities, an attitude not to return prevails as couples often opt to stay in the United States, especially if children are involved. Economic stability (and upward mobility) through successful entrepreneurship also plays a key role in influencing the orientation migrants may maintain toward their homeland. Importantly, all three kinds of expressions outlined demonstrate the significance that the location of the immediate family, particularly children, seems to have in ultimately shaping longings to return back home. These considerations highlight the fundamentally social nature of immigrants' seemingly most individual motivations and desires – to return or to stay.

Equally central is the impact that a sense of community has for these migrants. Many Guatemalan and Salvadoran women and men in Phoenix did not indicate that they felt part of a community. Some scholars (e.g. Chavez et al., 1997) argue that undocumented migrants in Los Angeles, for example, experience a sense of community in the United States because several factors help evoke

such a sentiment (e.g. family and friends in the area, large portions of Latinos in the city, and social and economic opportunities). Hence, such conditions encourage in migrants a greater desire to settle in the United States. For Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants in Phoenix, however, this does not always hold true. Because Phoenix is still a new destination for these individuals, migrants lack the community formations found in other US cities with larger Central American populations. Additionally, the absence of Guatemalan and Salvadoran mono-ethnic enclaves (e.g. see Portes and Bach, 1985) throughout the city of Phoenix may also affect how folks experience their sense of belonging.

Although we recognize the theoretical dangers of compartmentalizing migrants' behaviour into categories, we nonetheless argue that through the cases highlighted here we can better grasp the underlying dynamics and divergent articulations of migrants' desires to return to the home country. Further, the features we identified in the varying notions of return seem to cut across different ethnic and nationality groups. An important avenue for research would be to further flesh out the multiple ways in which attitudes and ideas of return may be manifested from both the perspective of sending and arrival communities. In so doing, our study contributes to theorizing on this still understudied area of migration research. Thus, when analyzing how migrants actually perceive their desires to return home, it is important to consider individual-level concerns such as the presence or absence of close kin. Of concern here, too, are broader issues such as the politico-economic framework that govern migrants' lives – both in the home and destination countries.

Earlier Brettell (1979) made a call to the importance of analytically distinguishing between actual return and ideology of return. Heeding her advice, it is important to differentiate between what is feasible and what is desired. Here we emphasized what is desired. We highlighted how return is viewed as a significant aspect of migrants' lives as it may affect how they act upon their desires and intentions of going back home and on their incorporation in the localities that they arrive. Put differently, unpacking notions of return helps tease out the extent to which return and transnational migration may be articulated, enacted, and practiced. Importantly, return must not be perceived and construed in a homogenous fashion. Many complex dimensions impinge on how migrants feel and think about returning home, and thus, addressing the longings to return helps determine whether individuals may choose to return to their homeland, to settle in their destination places, or to engage in a lifestyle in both places. Exploring the various articulations of return may also help us to better understand prospective settlement patterns and the maintenance of linkages with the origin community. Indeed, if we are to fully tackle the many facets of migration, it is also important to consider the subjective side – people's

aspirations, attitudes, and imaginations. By doing so, we can fully grasp migrants' lived-in-worlds and agency – their social realities and how these may be played out.

Examining longings to return may have policy applications as well. The question becomes: what are some of the advantages of this nuanced understanding of notions of return among the Guatemalan and Salvadoran community in Phoenix? For one, it shows the importance of a greater focus on community-building activities. Additionally, we know that the cash remittances that migrants send back home enormously help sustain their national economies. And in the case of Guatemala and El Salvador, remittances that these folks send constitute the bastion of the economy. And because many middle-aged and older adults do return home, attention on these migrant orientations provide fertile ground to further explore the implications for development back in the home communities.

NOTES

1. An award from the Anthropology Department at Arizona State University (ASU) to the first author and a Center for Urban Inquiry Grant and Dean's Incentive Grant from ASU to the second author supported this research. Thanks go to the team of research assistants (of which the first author was part) Eugene Arene, Cindy Bejerano, Edward Portillos, and Emily Skop. We would also like to thank our reviewers for their thoughtful comments and suggestions.
2. Here we employ the concept of migrant versus immigrant as the latter tends to convey only one aspect of the migration process and may embody a hegemonic quality.
3. See, for example, Browning et al. (1985); Chavez (1988).
4. See Pessar and Mahler (2003) for a call to include the dimension of the social imaginary in transnational migration approaches.
5. This feeling of nostalgia is often mirrored in Latino popular culture. There is a well-known Mexican song, for instance, in which the person asks to be buried in Mexico if he happens to die in a foreign land.
6. US Census (2000) estimates show that nationwide the Latino population increased from 2.4 million in 1990 to 35.3 million in 2000, a gain of 57.9 per cent or 12.9 million people. At 10.9 million, California's Latino population ranked the largest of any state in 2000. Other states with large Latino population increases over this ten-year period include: Texas (2.3 million), Florida (1.1 million), New York (653,000), Illinois (625,000), and Arizona (607,000). According to these data, then, Arizona now ranks in the top six states with the largest Latino population.
7. The term *Ladino/a* is complex and used primarily in Guatemala to refer to anyone who is not culturally indigenous.

8. Los Angeles is considered the largest destination place for both Guatemalan and Salvadoran migrants to the United States (see, for example, Lopéz et al., 1996; Hamilton and Chinchilla, 1999).
9. The drive between Los Angeles and Phoenix takes approximately six to seven hours –the same distance as from Los Angeles to San Francisco.
10. In Guadalupe, a satellite city of Phoenix, support groups have been involved in migrant issues for decades. Their assistance, however, is mostly geared toward Mexican groups – who make up a large proportion of the population there – not Guatemalans and Salvadorans living and working in the larger metropolitan area.
11. To maintain confidentiality we use pseudonyms instead of the actual names of specific places and that of our informants.
12. Like the Salvadoran case, despite the fact that a sizeable number of Guatemalans reside in Phoenix, no formal government entities exist (or for that matter, in the state of Arizona). The nearest diplomatic representation is the Consulate in Los Angeles, California and Denver, Colorado.

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L'ENVIE DE RENTRER AU PAYS : GUATÉMALTÈQUES ET SALVADORIENS INSTALLÉS À PHOENIX, EN ARIZONA

De nombreuses études sur la migration ont insisté sur le processus d'installation et, plus récemment, sur les identités et attachements transnationaux, mais les chercheurs se sont moins penchés sur l'idée du retour au pays. Cet article porte sur les Guatémaltèques et les Salvadoriens de première génération installés aux États-Unis ; il examine l'envie de rentrer au pays, les différents degrés de cette envie, par opposition aux retours qui ont effectivement lieu. L'article souligne la persistance, chez ces migrants qui vivent et travaillent à Phoenix (Arizona), d'une tendance « diasporique » ou « transnationale » à penser au pays d'origine. Cette persistance est importante car nous supposons que les migrants n'ont pas d'options claires en ce qui concerne leurs mouvements migratoires. Elle nous permet en outre de prendre en compte l'imaginaire social des migrants – les façons divergentes dont les hommes et les femmes de notre étude imaginent leur retour au pays et expriment leur intention de rentrer, ce qui, par voie de conséquence, peut influencer leur décision en la matière. À des fins heuristiques, nous déterminons trois catégories conceptuelles d'attitudes à l'égard du retour au pays : ferme, ambivalente, aucun désir de rentrer. À partir des récits de l'expérience des migrants guatémaltèques et salvadoriens établis à Phoenix, recueillis grâce à des entretiens en profondeur, l'article montre que les trois formes d'expression exposées montrent l'importance que semble avoir le lieu de résidence de la famille immédiate, notamment les enfants, dans le désir de rentrer au pays. Ces considérations mettent en évidence le caractère fondamentalement social des motivations et de l'envie apparemment les plus individuelles des immigrants, celles de rentrer ou de rester.

REVELANDO EL DESEO DE RETORNAR: LOS GUATEMALTECOS Y SALVADOREÑOS EN PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Muchos estudios sobre la migración ponen de relieve el proceso de reasentamiento y, recientemente, los lazos transnacionales y las identidades, pero no tienen debidamente en cuenta la idea del retorno. Este artículo se centra en la primera generación de guatemaltecos y salvadoreños en los Estados Unidos y examina los distintos grados de deseo de los migrantes de retornar a sus hogares con relación al retorno real. Concretamente, este artículo pone de relieve la persistencia entre estos migrantes que viven y trabajan en Phoenix, Arizona de una tendencia “de diáspora” o “transnacional” de añoranza de la patria. Esto es sumamente importante dado que no se asume que los migrantes tienen opciones definidas en cuanto a sus movimientos migratorios. Adicionalmente, permite que podamos considerar la imaginación social de los migrantes, las maneras divergentes en que los hombres y mujeres que participaron en este estudio conciben su retorno y expresan su deseo de retornar, lo que a su vez, puede incidir en sus respuestas de cara a la migración. Por razones heurísticas se identifican tres categorías conceptuales distintas en el deseo de retornar: afirmado, ambivalente e inexistente. A partir de las narraciones de las experiencias de los migrantes guatemaltecos y salvadoreños en Phoenix, acopiadas en entrevistas exhaustivas, este artículo revela que las tres expresiones esbozadas demuestran la importancia de la localización de la familia inmediata, particularmente de los hijos, que determinan el deseo y aspiración de retornar al país. Estas consideraciones ponen de relieve principalmente el carácter social de las motivaciones y el deseo, aparentemente individual, de retornar o permanecer en los Estados Unidos.