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## Maintaining Intergenerational Solidarity in Mexican Transnational Families

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## Maintaining Intergenerational Solidarity in Mexican Transnational Families

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*This study explored how Mexican transnational families maintain intergenerational relationships, using five of the dimensions of the intergenerational solidarity framework. Interview data from 13 adult migrant children who lived in the U.S. and their parents who lived in Mexico were analyzed. Structural solidarity was challenged by great distance between families. Families maintained associational solidarity by making contact frequently, though visiting was often restricted by lack of documentation. Functional solidarity was expressed through financial support to parents. This involved remittances sent to parents. However, it should be noted that it was often migrants' siblings in Mexico who managed these remittances. Affectual solidarity was expressed through statements of love and concern for one another. Normative solidarity and consensual solidarity reflected the value of familismo through financial support and the desire to live together. Several dimensions of intergenerational solidarity are interconnected. This study provides evidence for the relevance of the intergenerational solidarity framework in transnational families and suggests that geographic context is relevant when studying intergenerational relationships.*

*Keywords:* transnational migrants, transnational families, intergenerational relationships

### Introduction

In the face of financial uncertainty and hardship, many families use migrant work to address their financial needs (Portes, Escobar, & Arana, 2008). This often leads to a transnational family, where one or more members live outside their home country and others remain in their country of origin. Family separations across borders can last for extended periods of time, often years. Though research has addressed the financial support provided by migrant workers to family in the home country, little research has examined nonfinancial, family-based support and relationship changes while migrant family members are away for extended periods of time for work. This literature gap is noted in the call for increased study of the family in the context of

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globalization and transnationalism (Trask, 2013), and particularly for study of migrants' social support and relationships with families who remain in home countries (Portes et al., 2008).

In the United States, immigrants from Mexico account for 32% of all immigrants (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). However, little research has addressed how Mexican migrants and their families maintain relationships that span borders. Research has focused primarily on transnational children and parenting; little has addressed the relationship between adult migrant children and their aging parents (Sun, 2012). Aging parents are frequently recipients of remittances sent home, particularly due to the lack of institutional resources for the elderly in Mexico (Orozco, 2004). Although elderly men are likely to be earning some income, elderly women are likely to depend on their families for support (Gomes, 2007).

Bengtson and Roberts' (1991) intergenerational solidarity framework is particularly appropriate for studying transnational, intergenerational relationships because it focuses on family solidarity across the adult life course and provides a lens to examine transnational families' unique patterns of unity. Therefore, this study used an intergenerational solidarity lens to examine the intergenerational relationships between parents in Mexico and their adult children in the U.S., thus providing evidence of ways that Mexican families maintain solidarity in a transnational context.

## **Literature Review**

Following is a description of the intergenerational solidarity framework and a review of recent empirical studies on intergenerational relationships in transnational families. Although most studies did not explicitly use the intergenerational solidarity framework to frame the research, parallels to the five dimensions of the framework will be drawn. This review draws from research on transnational families, in general, noting relevant connections to Mexican family culture.

### **Theoretical Framework: Intergenerational Solidarity**

The intergenerational solidarity framework, developed by Bengtson and Roberts (1991), explains patterns of solidarity among parents and adult children during the adult family life course. Solidarity is the union of interests, purpose, or sympathies among family members (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991). It describes how families are connected across generations (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991; Durkheim, 1933). Family norms, functional interdependence, and consensus among members are emphasized as important factors of solidarity in broader models of social solidarity (Durkheim, 1933; Roberts, Richards, & Bengtson, 1991). The framework includes six elements of solidarity, specifically between parents and their adult children:

structural, associational, functional, affectual, normative, and consensual (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991).

**Structural solidarity.** Structural solidarity refers to the structures providing or constricting opportunities for interaction between generations, such as physical proximity between generations, number of siblings, and health of family members. The impact of physical proximity is particularly relevant in transnational families, and several studies have documented difficulty in maintaining intergenerational relationships when families are separated by distance. Sands and Roer-Strier (2004) showed that when daughters moved to Israel for religious reasons, their U.S.-based mothers felt ambivalence, loss, and pain. Children who live in other countries experience a similar loss of connection with their parents. A qualitative study of 28 adult children who left Turkey to live in the U.S. indicated they felt ambivalent about how their connections with their parents changed after their relocation, and their level of closeness to their parents decreased (Şenyürekli & Detzner, 2008). Both studies found that geographic distance was associated with less frequent contact and close support among family members (Sands & Roer-Strier, 2004; Şenyürekli & Detzner, 2008), two aspects of associational solidarity.

**Associational solidarity.** Associational solidarity represents the frequency and patterns of contact between generations. While geographic distance makes it challenging for families to maintain strong family ties, transnational families find ways to do so on a regular basis. New communication technologies have increased the frequency of interaction and helped maintain emotional bonds among family members living in different countries (Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011; Baldassar, 2007; Parreñas, 2005; Wilding, 2006).

Visiting in person is another way for families to maintain their relationships. Wilding and Baldassar (2009) explained that migrants from Australia, especially women, often visited their aging parents in Italy and Ireland and were always financially prepared in case they needed to make an emergency visit related to their parents' health problems. However, visiting is not always possible. Menjívar (2002) found that children who were born in Guatemala and raised in the U.S. were often undocumented and experienced barriers to travel to their country of origin to visit family members, even though parents made efforts to keep their children connected to their places of origin.

**Functional solidarity.** Functional solidarity is help and support provided through the exchange of resources among family members. In transnational families, functional solidarity is often realized through remittances, or money sent home to parents and other family members. In a study by Wilding and Baldassar (2009), migrant men often provided financial support to parents in Italy or Ireland as a strategy for maintaining intergenerational relationships. In Kodwo-Nyameazea and Nguyen's (2008) research,

Ghanaian adult children in the U.S cared for aging parents living in Ghana through sending remittances, which could be used to pay medical bills or maintain and build houses in Ghana.

**Affectual solidarity.** Affectual solidarity depicts the type and degree of closeness and positive sentiment among family members. In Kodwo-Nyameazea and Nguyen's (2008) study, the Ghanaian adult children claimed that providing care for their aging parents was their way of showing solidarity in the family; it was a means of expressing respect and appreciation to parents who had provided support in the past. This indicates that remittances have both a functional and an affectual purpose.

**Normative solidarity.** Normative solidarity indicates attitudes about the importance of family and values related to helping and supporting family members. Seelbach (1984) defined this as the expectations of children to provide for their parents. Research on parents with migrated children in rural China suggests that parents' evaluations of children's filial responsibility did not decrease after migration. Parents rated filial piety more highly if children sent financial support and if parents helped take care of grandchildren.

**Consensual solidarity.** Consensual solidarity refers to the degree of agreement on attitudes and values between generations. Many transnational families strive to keep their cultural norms of origin. Nesteruk and Marks (2009) found that Eastern European transnational families also maintained their beliefs and cultural norms that emphasized family connection and interdependence.

## **Cultural Context**

Though recent studies have explored how immigrants across many countries maintain their family ties with family members in their country of origin (Kodwo-Nyameazea & Nguyen, 2008; Parreñas, 2005; Şenyürekli & Detzner, 2008), little research has examined family ties of migrants in the U.S. from Mexico specifically. Because research suggests that there are culturally-specific ways of talking about and conceptualizing caregiving (Wilding & Baldassar, 2009), the following section provides an overview of Latino family culture and its implications for caregiving.

The Latino family is embedded in a collectivist belief system that values interdependence across the extended family network (Falicov, 2001). Familismo refers to the value placed on extended families, including loyalty and a strong desire to maintain family ties (Dillon, De La Rosa, Sastre, & Ibañez, 2013). Even when physically separated, families remain part of a "web of family and intergenerational connectedness" (Falicov, 2001, p. 314). Familismo may be even

more salient during family separations, as a more flexible family system may mitigate parental absences (Dreby & Adkins, 2012).

Giving financial support, living together, and providing emotional advice most often reflect interdependence among family members (Falicov, 2001). Gomes' (2007) study found that parents provided financial help, services, gifts, and childcare to their children. Children also provide financial support to their parents. Among Latino adults 55 and older, parents felt their adult children were only peripherally involved in their lives, though they still demonstrated care in specific ways, such as providing support when a health need arose (Ruiz & Ransford, 2012).

Migration poses challenges to providing care to family members. Elderly parents in Mexico may require physical care that cannot be provided when children are physically absent and may suffer emotional losses due to separation from their children (Antman, 2010). In some cases, Latino parents may not even consider contacting a distant child for support (Ruiz & Ransford, 2012). Even though having a migrant child in the U.S. is associated with poorer health outcomes, it is unknown whether children migrate in response to parent's health concerns or if the concerns arise later (Antman, 2010).

Solidarity in intergenerational relationships is clearly relevant within Mexican families, but research is still needed on transnational families. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explicitly apply the lens of the intergenerational solidarity framework (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991) to (a) identify examples of intergenerational solidarity between adult migrant children in the U.S. and their parents in Mexico and (b) to identify challenges to maintaining intergenerational solidarity in the Mexico-U.S. transnational family context.

## **Method**

### **Dataset**

This study used an existing data set of interview transcripts from a 2007-2009 research project titled "Mexican Agricultural Workers in Minnesota: A Study of Transnational Work and Family Issues," funded by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture International Science Education Program. Included below is a brief description of the original study's data collection procedures and sample description and of the current study's data analysis processes. [For a more complete description of the original study, see Solheim, Rojas-García, Olson, and Zuiker (2012).]

Minnesota-based participants were recruited by University of Minnesota Extension educators who had strong relationships within the Latino community. Eligible participants were Mexican

immigrants who were employed in agricultural jobs, had worked in Minnesota for under eleven years, were supporting family in Mexico, and had a family member in Mexico potentially willing to participate in the study. Extension educators contacted potential participants personally to establish their eligibility and to provide assurance that their participation would be kept confidential. After the Minnesota interview, immigrants contacted a family member in Mexico to request participation. After receiving notification of willingness to participate, Mexico-based researchers contacted the family member in Mexico and obtained consent. Native Spanish speakers in Minnesota and Mexico conducted the 60- to 90-minute semi-structured interviews. Interviews were transcribed verbatim in Spanish and then translated into English. Bilingual research team members verified the accuracy of transcripts and their translations.

### **Sample Description**

The sample for this study was 13 adult children-parent pairs from the larger study. The adult children from Mexico were working in agricultural enterprises in Minnesota and were sending remittances to support their parents in Mexico. Parents who received remittances in Mexico from their adult children in Minnesota were interviewed. In four cases of parent's ill health or reluctance to speak, a sister or sister-in-law was interviewed. In three cases, a parent was interviewed concurrently with a sibling. Since these siblings discussed the adult child and parent's relationship and were the conduit between generations, their interviews were included for analysis.

Adult children in this study were born in Mexico and currently reside in rural areas in southeastern Minnesota. Parents in Mexico lived in six different states and eleven different towns, seven in urban areas and six in rural areas. Parents' average age in Mexico was 74 years, ranging from 48 to 88. Siblings included five sisters and one sister-in-law, whose ages ranged from 38 to 48 years, with an average of 43.67.

The Minnesota-based sample included five females and eight males. Their average age was 40 years, ranging from 27 to 50. One adult child held a university degree, three had graduated from high school, four graduated from middle school, two finished elementary, and three had less than elementary or an unknown level of education. Ten of the adult children were married, and three were single, divorced, or widowed.

### **Data Analysis**

This study employed a deductive qualitative data analysis process, using an existing conceptual model to arrive at a better delineation of concepts and hypotheses by testing, refining, and refuting it (Gilgun, 2005). In this study, the intergenerational solidarity

framework was used to examine intergenerational family relationships in a transnational context.

First, using Bengtson and Roberts' (1991) definitions, interviews were read several times to identify text that related to the six dimensions of intergenerational solidarity: structural solidarity, associational solidarity, functional solidarity, affectual solidarity, normative solidarity, and consensual solidarity. Selected text included not only general examples of each dimension but also unique examples or challenges represented in Mexican transnational families' experiences. NVivo 8 software (QSR International, 2008) was used to organize the data.

Second, excerpts for each dimension were checked by two other members of the research team to assure that they accurately reflected the respective theoretical dimensions. In very few instances when differences among researchers emerged, they were discussed until consensus was reached. For example, one researcher initially thought that consensual solidarity was not represented in the text, but the researchers then discussed their identification of shared values present in several family interviews.

Third, once there was agreement that the interview text was accurately coded for each solidarity dimension, the selected excerpts from interviews were labeled and categorized to find dominant themes that captured the common characteristics of each dimension. Twelve themes were identified, including the six dimensions and six additional subthemes. All themes were discussed with the research team to reach consensus.

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the standards used to protect the quality and accuracy of the data (Morrow, 2005). Trustworthiness is evaluated through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (paralleling quantitative criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is achieved through sound methods. In this study, peer debriefing was the method used to ensure credibility. Team members discussed each dimension, confirming that the data reflected the identified theoretical dimensions and confirming the dominant themes. Transferability was achieved in this study by providing a detailed description of the sample and the context in which the data were collected. We demonstrate dependability and confirmability by providing quotations to illustrate the themes and reflect participants' voices, not those of the researcher.

## Results

Evidence of all six dimensions of intergenerational solidarity was found during data analysis. Examples that illustrate each dimension are presented below. Examples are also presented that describe challenges to achieving solidarity in the transnational context.

### Structural Solidarity

Structural solidarity is described by Bengtson and Roberts (1991) as structures that constrict or provide opportunities for interactions between generations. The geographic distance of family members due to migration of one or more family members represents a structure that limited intergenerational interaction. However, families overcame this challenge in a variety of ways. Migrants' siblings played a critical role in enacting structural solidarity across two countries and two generations.

**Transnational family separation.** It was apparent that transnational families experienced challenges in their ability to interact with one another due to large geographic distances separating migrants in Minnesota from their families in Mexico. But parents understood how economic challenges in Mexico propelled their migrant son or daughter to cross the border. They expressed their desire to be physically with each other but tolerated the separation in light of potential economic benefits. A migrant son whose parents lived in Mexico expressed his hope to stay in the U.S.:

Yes, but if I have the chance of living here, legally, being able to visit my relatives in Mexico, well, that would be fine, maybe I can see that dream of having my own business become real here, living here... We live with more comfort, we are better off, without the tension that means not knowing if you can make ends meet.

**Parents' health problems.** Interaction between migrants in Minnesota and their family members in Mexico increased when older parents experienced health problems. Remittances became crucial to the family's ability to obtain medical supplies. One migrant's sister stated: "And when my brother sends me some money, I also buy [our parents] the medicines they need, mainly for my father, who was very ill. In fact, Félix [sic] was supporting my father with us, for a long time."

**Role of siblings in Mexico.** Siblings in Mexico acted as migrants' 'agents,' using money remittances to take care of parents' needs. A sibling in Mexico said:

He asks me to try and manage the situation and the problems as much as I can, because sometimes he has a hard time, as he has his own financial problems. And he has his

family to take care of, and sometimes he asks me: “Help me, support me, so that our parents can solve their problems, lend me a hand”...He asks me to always take care of them and he promises he will support me, so that my parents (my mother now) don't lack anything that is necessary.

### **Associational Solidarity**

Associational solidarity is represented by the frequency and patterns of contact between generations (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991) through face-to-face and technology-assisted interactions. All of the families in this study were in frequent contact via telephone and Internet. Some families were able to visit one another, though several were unable to travel between countries due to lack of documentation.

**Technology-assisted communication.** Associational solidarity was maintained by all families in this study by talking with each other regularly. One sister-in-law in Mexico said: “...there is a distance between us because she left, but she keeps in touch with us, constantly.” Land phones were most frequently used because “on the line telephone at home that is the least expensive way.” Parents in Mexico considered phones a necessity to maintain contact with their adult children in the U.S.

Cell phones and the Internet allowed for photo exchange as a means to maintain intergenerational solidarity. However, elder parents' lack of familiarity with the Internet was a barrier to its use. One migrant said:

My daughter uses Internet, which is much cheaper, but my parents don't know how to use it. My mom doesn't like the Internet. We used to write to her on the Messenger but she didn't feel at ease talking to a machine. She wanted to hear my voice.

Parent-child conversations were mostly about their daily lives in Mexico and the U.S.: “...how they are doing, the weather, the house, if they need anything. About my brothers and sisters, about my dad, almost the whole week we get through.” Families also talked about remittance use. They discussed why and how much money was needed and whether, when, and how the migrants would send the money. A migrant son in the U.S. described these conversations:

[We talk] about how my dad is doing, if they have enough food, how my sisters and brother are doing, what problems they have had, if the house is all right, if they need money...Sometimes we talk about it (the purpose of sending money) on the phone, but then we usually send the money to one person only.

**Visiting.** Visiting was used to maintain associational solidarity but only if they could financially afford to travel. Five parents visited their adult children in the U.S. However, migrants rarely traveled to Mexico, and only when there were emergencies. One woman remembered that her migrant sister-in-law “came once, when her mother was seriously ill; she came to see her and to help her.”

The primary barrier to travel was that they lacked documentation that would allow them to re-enter the U.S. One sister in Mexico described how her brother “has never returned...simply fearing not to be able to go back [to the U.S.].” Four migrants in the study never visited Mexico after leaving; three visited Mexico only once during the 10 to 15 years they had lived in the U.S. A mother in Mexico shared: “She is sorry because she can’t come, as she doesn’t have papers. She would like to see us, and [her husband] would like to see her.”

### **Functional Solidarity**

Functional solidarity (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991) was evident through remittances, not surprising because sending and receiving remittances was required for participation in the study. [For a complete description of the frequency and amount of remittances between generations in these Mexican transnational families, see Solheim et al. (2012).] For five Minnesota migrants, remittances were the only source of financial resources for their parents in Mexico. For others, remittances were sent for special purposes or to provide parents with an improved quality of life. Considering remittance behavior as an expression of functional solidarity revealed that for these transnational families, this exchange of money held deeper and symbolic meanings beyond an instrumental economic survival function.

It was difficult for migrants to be a long distance from aging parents; they could not provide any physical assistance when parents needed it. One migrant shared: “My parents are elderly people, they could pass away, they could get a serious illness, they could have a serious accident, and there is no way to come and go very quickly.” So adult children substituted financial support for physical support. One migrant commented: “When she tells me that she is ill...I keep thinking about her. So far away and I can’t help her, I can help her financially, but not comfort her morally or help her physically.” Another shared: “I am not there to see how they are doing and sometimes, sending a little money makes you feel better because you feel you are helping them.”

Remittances were sent to parents because they symbolically expressed care and concern by migrants for their parents, over and above providing for them financially. A sister in Mexico saw that receiving remittances made her parents and the migrant son in Minnesota feel better:

I don't think they would have problems, because [father's] retirement added to what he gets from farming...is enough for them to survive...Maybe, but if he sends money to them it is more to make them feel better, and not so much because they are in need. They won't stop having food if he doesn't send the money. But he feels better that way, because he is so far away.

One parent in Mexico was appreciative of her son's financial support:

I have had financial benefits thanks to them, because they are concerned about everything: they give me for food, they gave me to build a bedroom, everything, they have gathered money for me (for the operation), they have bought all the furniture, they have made improvements in my little house."

### **Affectual Solidarity**

Examples of affectual solidarity, the type and degree of closeness and positive sentiment between family members (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991), were found in families in this study. Even from a distance, migrants relied on emotional support from their families in Mexico. A migrant daughter shared: "I think I would first ask my family to help me, mainly my family here, who are the ones who support me. And then, as regards the emotional aspect, I would ask support from my family in Mexico."

Parents in Mexico also worried about their adult children in the U.S. A mother with a 42-year old migrant son in the U.S. worried "that something bad happened to him over there without us knowing about it. An accident at his work, it is not unusual." This concern persisted and was reciprocated through migrants' worry about their parents, even though they tried to shield each other:

Sometimes, even the tone in our voice, we know each other well, I know when my son has a problem, because of the tone in his voice, and he knows me and he knows his grandma. So he knows when we have problems: "Listen, you have some kind of problem." "No. Well, yes. You see, this and that happened." And he worries.

**Longing and enduring.** Though Mexican transnational families in this study worked to maintain intergenerational affectual solidarity, these efforts were not always satisfying. Because affectual solidarity is symbolic, emotional, and about relational love, families were not satisfied with their attempts to enact affectual solidarity at a distance; a deep sense of longing was evident in participants' narratives:

I feel sad because I need him, as we have always been together all the time. Even when we talk each other on the phone, it is not the same as being with him. The truth is that it is quite hard to have your family so far away. It is emotionally difficult.

These families endured the situation because they understood the economic necessity or the opportunities for a better life in the U.S. One parent said:

Their absence is an empty space that they leave and you can't fill it. But with the idea that they are going to be better off, for example, that he could work and be better off over there, you become satisfied about their leaving.

### **Normative Solidarity**

A cultural norm of familismo emerged in the dimension of normative solidarity, which indicates joint values about supporting family (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991). Across narratives, parents and migrants expressed the importance of family. A migrant stated: "Our goal must be our family's welfare, as much for my family here as for my family back there." Universally, migrants would live with and care for their parents if their situations allowed it. A migrant son in the U.S. shared his hope: "I would have my own little house and I would take care of my folks as long as they live." A migrant's sister in Mexico stated: "His greatest wish was to try and take our parents with him, and, well...he has been struggling to manage that, but unfortunately our parents were too elderly. It was always his wish, but he couldn't achieve that."

### **Consensual Solidarity**

Finally, consensual solidarity indicates the degree of agreement on values between generations. The value of education was particularly salient and consistent across generations. When one mother was asked if her son's migration was worthwhile, she stated: "Yes, because he came to learn something." Her son similarly described his primary goals as educational, stating "I want to obtain a college degree...I want to graduate from university and then have a family."

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to understand how Mexican transnational families maintain intergenerational solidarity despite the challenges of a transnational context. The geographic distance that separated family members made structural solidarity very difficult. However, families found ways to stay connected and maintain a sense of family through other dimensions of solidarity.

Culturally, Mexican families are grounded in a strong sense of familismo which emphasizes the importance of family and interdependence among members (Falicov, 2007). This shared value, evidence of normative solidarity, provided strong motivation on both sides of the border to maintain family connections. Nesteruk and Marks (2009) found a similar motivation in their study of Eastern European transnational families.

Based on this motivation, family members in this study made significant efforts to stay in touch with one another (associational solidarity). Similar to other transnational families, migrants in the U.S. and their parents in Mexico kept in touch primarily through phone calls and via the Internet (Baldassar, 2007; Wilding, 2006). It was evident that families maintained their closeness (affectual solidarity) by expressing love, emotional support, and concern for each other over the phone and online. Family members longed for each other but endured their situations because children had better opportunities in the U.S.

Because adult children in Minnesota were unable to freely travel to Mexico, they tended to substitute financial support for physical support. Remittances from adult children to their parents were conduits for expressing love and concern for parents and reflected a cultural norm of interdependence in Mexican families. Structurally, siblings in Mexico became a significant bridge between parents who were experiencing health problems and the Minnesota-based migrants who were unable to provide physical support.

Results of this study indicate that some dimensions of intergenerational solidarity were interconnected. In Mexican transnational families, making contact and sending remittances were important methods to express love, support, and concern. Remittances also reflected the norm of interdependence in Mexican transnational families. Thus, results suggest that associational solidarity and functional solidarity are connected to affectual solidarity, and functional solidarity is connected to normative solidarity in this transnational context.

### **Limitations**

One limitation of this study arises because the data were collected for other purposes; specific questions relating to intergenerational solidarity were not asked. For example, consensual solidarity could not be thoroughly explored as the original study did not ask questions to ascertain agreement on values, attitudes, and beliefs between generations. Future research could formulate specific questions that more deeply explore the constructs of Bengtson and Roberts' (1991) framework. Additionally, this study included only migrant workers who sent remittances to their families. Thus, it is impossible to identify other forms of support and solidarity in this dataset.

Finally, the interviews were conducted in Spanish and translated into English. As a result, participants' thoughts expressed in their native Spanish language might have been less precise after translation into English. However, great care was taken to minimize those inaccuracies through a thorough review by bilingual researchers on the team.

### **Implications**

Findings from this study have implications for employers, policymakers, family educators, and clinicians. Findings can help sensitize employers of transnational migrant workers about the stress that arises from being far away from aging parents. Providing flexibility in vacation time and emergency family leave would give migrants the ability to travel home to attend to ailing parents.

Current policy deliberations would benefit from a better understanding of transnational families. The families in this study were all employed in the agricultural industry that depends on migrant labor to fill jobs. Migrant workers with aging parents in Mexico would benefit from policies that would reduce travel barriers and allow them to travel to their home country without concern for being unable to return. There have been some recent immigration policy shifts to allow for such visits. For example, *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals* allows immigrants who came to the U.S. illegally as children to receive an exemption from deportation, and they may apply to travel to visit ailing relatives or to attend funerals (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015). Such policies allow immigrants to fulfill important family roles and then return to their jobs in the U.S.

Family educators can expand their conceptualizations of support to include the many types and methods of intergenerational solidarity and can help their clients recognize and strengthen their available methods of connection. Family educators might also help parents think about ways to increase closeness with children who remain in the home country. Sharing rituals of connection via technology communication may be adapted for a transnational context (Bacigalupe & Lambe, 2011). Results of this study demonstrate many meaningful and creative strategies that transnational families employ to maintain intergenerational solidarity.

Family educators who work with migrant families on financial management would benefit from understanding how remittances represent more than financial support; they also symbolize love, care, and an important means to maintain intergenerational solidarity. It is important to note that family, including aging parents, plays a considerable role in immigrants' money management choices. Financial education could involve the broader family in planning and budgeting choices. Educators can respect the need for remittances and/or travel to be included in budgeting and saving plans.

Finally, these results also suggest that family clinicians should carefully assess how a client defines family and how this might include members in another country. Such an approach will minimize the risk of diagnosing depression without recognizing the underlying stress of separation (Falicov, 2007).

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