Sports Facilities and Trail Systems: The Effect on Latin Americans

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Introduction

Changing demographics in the U.S.


- In 2002, there were 37.4 million Latinos in the U.S. (13.3% of the total population). Two-thirds (66.9%) were of Mexican origin.
The recent Census projections anticipate a net addition of 820,000 immigrants/year until 2050, including 350,000 Latinos.

By 2050, 24% of the US population will be Latino.
In 2000, there were 1,530,262 (12.3% of the total population) Latinos residing in Illinois.

- 1,416,584 of them resided in the Chicago Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (17.1% of the total population) and 753,644 (26% of the total population) in the City of Chicago (U.S. Census, 2000).

After NY and LA, metro Chicago is the 3rd largest city in the U.S. in terms of the Latino population.

The proportion of Latino residents in the suburban communities, such as Elgin or Aurora, is even higher (34% of Elgin’s population and 33% of Aurora’s population is Latino) (U.S. Census, 2000).

Is Latino population in your district growing as well?
Socio-economic characteristics of the Latino population in the US and Illinois

- 40.2% (or 15 million) of the Latino population in the U.S. is foreign born.

- Approximately 215,469 Mexican migrants residing in the metro Chicago area are undocumented.

- The Latinos are on average younger, poorer, less educated, and live in larger households than the non-Hispanic Whites.
  - significantly higher number of Latinos with less than 9th grade education (27% vs. 4% among non-Hispanic Whites).
  - predominantly employed in service occupations (22.1%) and as operators and laborers (20.8%).
  - high poverty rates (21.4% vs. 7.8% among non-Hispanic Whites).
What we know about recreation patterns of Latinos and their use of parks?

- Significant differences between Latinos and non-Hispanic Whites with respect to park visitation patterns and recreation participation styles.
  (Gobster, 2002; Hutchison, 1987; Tinsley et al., 2002)

  - Latinos are more likely to visit parks in large, multigenerational, family-oriented groups. Average party size >4 persons.

  - Less likely to participate in active pastimes; walking is the most popular physical activity.

  - More likely to participate in passive, social activities (socializing, picnicking).

  - Playing soccer or watching weekend soccer matches is popular among Latino men.

Do you observe the same patterns in your Park District?

Do you feel that the needs of the Latino population in your Park District are competing with the needs of other users?
What we wanted to find out through our research?

- We know that Latinos use parks differently than non-Hispanic Whites.

- We know that they are less physically active than non-Hispanic Whites and other ethnic groups. This leads to significant obesity among this population that puts them at a higher risk of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

- We wanted to establish what kind of recreation environments are most conducive for physical activity among Latino men and women.

- Are they more physically active in recreation environments that contain extensive sport facilities, trails, or in “typical” community parks?

- What are the patterns of recreation use of different environments by Latinos?
Our study…

We selected three different recreation environments in the Chicago area:

- 2 community parks in Elgin
- 1 sports complex in Aurora
- North section (Montrose) of the Lincoln Park in Chicago
Elgin community parks – Wing Park

- 121-acres; features ball fields, soccer fields, basketball courts, a golf course, and an ice skating rink used in winter. Moreover, it has a playground, a shelter/gazebo, swimming pools and tennis courts.
Elgin community parks - Lords

- 108-acres; features several lagoons, ball fields, basketball courts, a museum, pavilion, shelter/gazebo, playgrounds, swimming pools, and a zoo.
Stuart Sports Complex - Aurora

Open-field type of facility; features soccer fields, baseball and basketball courts, a playground, and a centrally located pavilion. Utilized during the summer months only, primarily on weekends by soccer and baseball league players and their families.
Lincoln Park (Montrose section) - Chicago

1,208 acres; features a zoo, a half-dozen beaches, a botanical conservatory, two museums, a golf course, tennis courts, lagoons, ponds, meadows, gardens, sporting fields, and tennis courts.
Study Design

- Field observations

- On-site survey of Latino users
  - June - August, 2005
  - 307 properly completed surveys collected in the Elgin parks, 309 in the Stuart Sports Complex, and 301 along the Lincoln Park trails.
  - Both English and Spanish versions of the survey used
  - In Elgin – surveys distributed throughout the week, from morning to sunrise. At the sports complex – from 9AM to 4PM on Sundays only, at the Lincoln Park – throughout the week, but mostly during the weekends.
Study Design

- Survey designed to provide information on Latinos’ (a) park / trail / sports complex visitation patterns and facility use, (b) distance park / trail / sports complex was from their home, (c) physical activity participation, (d) constraints and attitudes toward physical activity, and (e) individual characteristics of the respondents.

- 3 pairs of interviewers – college students of Latino descent hired to collect data

- Attempt made to contact all Latinos present in the park on a given day

- Surveys read to respondents

- $50 gift certificates used as incentives

- Very high response rate (>90%) at all 3 locations
Findings - Observations

Elgin community parks

Visited throughout the week. Composition of visiting parties and activities engaged in differ throughout the day (on weekdays - elderly people in the morning, mothers with children during mid-day, teenagers around 3PM, and families in the evening). Average time at the location 30-45 min.

Weekend use different from weekday use – large, multigenerational families, BBQing, family parties. Average time at the location 5-8 hours.
**Sports Complex**

Used on Sundays between 9-4PM only. Activities clearly gender segregated - Men and boys engaging in soccer (all part of a league) while women sitting at the sidelines as spectators and performing supporting roles (handing out water, washing players).

Clear ethnic divisions in the use of the sports complex. Centrally located playground used by people from different ethnic groups, but no interactions observed.
Findings - Observations

Lincoln Park Trails

Primarily utilized during the weekend by large, multigenerational, family groups. BBQing and socializing as the main activities. Some men engaging in soccer.

Exercise walking among Latinos was not performed on the trails in any organized way or with clear health benefits in mind, but rather involved following children or transporting equipment between the car and the recreation site.
Findings - Observations
Patterns common to all environments

- Family orientation of the Latino users.

- Regardless of the type of the facility, physical activity, with the exception of walking, was reserved primarily for Latino men.

Women’s role was supportive and restricted to taking care of children, meal preparation, cheering, and assisting male family members while they participated in sports.
## Findings - Survey
### Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elgin Parks</th>
<th>Sports Complex</th>
<th>LP Trails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (% females)</td>
<td>53.7</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status (% married)</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average household income ($)</td>
<td>26,787</td>
<td>21,827</td>
<td>33,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low educational background* (%)</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants (%)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>77.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average length of residence (years)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* some high school or some vocational school less
## Findings – Survey

**Park / SC / trails visitation patterns**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Elgin Parks</th>
<th>Sports Complex</th>
<th>LP Trails</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of visitation per month</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average length of visit (min.)</strong></td>
<td>140</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mode of transportation ( % came by car )</strong></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>97.4</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of travel (minutes by car)</strong></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical activities</td>
<td>Elgin Parks (%)</td>
<td>Sports Complex (%)</td>
<td>LP Trails (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogging/running</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing games</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycling</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog walking</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rollerblading/skateboarding</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boating canoeing</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passive activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing with children</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking/socializing</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting/resting-relaxing</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>59.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird watching</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching or feeding animals</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching sports</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBQing/picnicking</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying/reading</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
People spent the longest amount of time along the Lincoln Park trails (4.7 hours), where they engaged mostly in sitting/relaxing/resting, talking/socializing, walking, and BBQing/picnicking.

Visits to Elgin community parks were more frequent, but shorter in duration (approximately 2.3 hours) and involved mostly playing with children, talking/socializing, and walking.

Visits to the sports complex were regular (almost always on Sundays), they took the shortest amount of time (approximately 2.1 hours) and involved primarily playing or watching soccer, sitting/relaxing/resting, and talking/socializing.
The bottom line…

- **Uses of different recreation environments vary**
  - More frequent and regular use of community parks (predominantly by families with children).
  - Sports Complex used on Sundays only (some unauthorized use on Saturdays), clear gender divisions in the type of use.
  - Lincoln Park trails used predominantly on weekends. Family oriented use (BBQing, talking/socializing, sitting/resting/relaxing).
  - Sports Complexes helpful in fostering physical activity among Latino men (soccer), but not women. Community parks and trails helpful in promoting walking among both Latino men and women.

- **Certain similarities in the use of different recreation environments among Latinos**
  - Family orientation; gender divisions in involvement in physical activities.
Issues for Professional Practice

- Is the growth of the Latino population posing a challenge to the operations of your Park District?

- Do you feel you and your staff have an adequate understanding of the needs of the Latino population?

- Is your Park District prepared to serve the needs of the Latino population?

- What changes/adjustments will have to be made in the operations of your Park District to better prepare it to serve the needs of the Latino population?
  
  - Are there any issues related to new personnel hires (bilingual), training, marketing, or facility management that you will have to address?
Thank you!

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