LATINO IMMIGRANT INCORPORATION: A CASE STUDY FROM GARDEN CITY, KANSAS

By

CHELSEA BRADEN

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For my mother and father who provide endless encouragement and support
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New destinations are areas in the United States that have recently experienced a rapid increase in both foreign- and native-born populations. As the United States’ largest immigrant group, the Latino population, in particular, has responded to these changing immigration patterns in a highly visible manner. Latinos from abroad and within the United States are choosing to settle in areas unaccustomed to foreign-born populations. Immigrant civic and political incorporation in these new destinations faces distinct obstacles, as the support networks extant in traditional destinations are notably absent from these regions. Two types of networks that foster immigrant incorporation are civic and religious institutions.

The objective of this thesis is to examine the capacity of civic and religious institutions to foster Latino immigrant incorporation in new destinations. I look at Garden City, a new destination in western Kansas, to examine the effectiveness of civic and religious institutions in facilitating the inclusion of a growing Latino immigrant population. I find that civic and religious institutions provide distinct advantages (as well as disadvantages) that vary by immigrant group. In the case of Latino immigrants in
Garden City, religious organizations may be better equipped to promote the social
capital necessary for successful incorporation into the community.

Moreover, typical of new destinations is a shift away from the archetypal immigrant
towards immigrants from other regions of the world. Garden City has recently
experienced the arrival of immigrants from Somalia, Burma and Ethiopia. These new
immigrants all have one thing in common: they are non-Christians. I find that for these
newcomers secular organizations are better suited to provide assistance and promote
self-sufficiency as well as incorporation into a community that lacks the religious
networks available to Christian immigrants.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Objective

I recently attended a Gainesville City Commission meeting in support of my friend who runs a dog walking business from his home. A neighbor who wanted the business to be shut down spoke at the meeting to appeal an earlier decision that had allowed my friend to maintain his business. Unfortunately, the commission overturned the earlier ruling and decided that my friend’s business was illegal. At one point during the meeting I realized that my presence, as well as the presence of those around me, was a form of civic participation; but for the handful of people that were attending the meeting, there were many more that were not.

What makes some people choose to participate in civic and political activities? Activities such as voting, volunteering or joining an organization are all simple ways to participate; however, there is a substantial portion of the population that chooses not to. For American citizens, civic engagement is learned at an early age at home and in school. Not everyone chooses to be civically active but, nevertheless, the opportunities to participate are readily available.

Immigration is swiftly changing the demographic landscape of the United States and some immigrants originate from places where these forms of civic and political participation are neither learned nor tolerated. Immigrants are asserting themselves in a number of ways, so the question remains: how do immigrants without prior knowledge of civic engagement incorporate both civically and politically into the United States?

Political socialization is the “developmental processes through which persons acquire political orientations and patterns of behavior” (Easton and Dennis, 1969, 7).
Easton and Dennis argue that the process of socialization occurs over time, which differs from attitude and opinion polls that tend to be cross-sectional in nature. Research regarding political attitudes often overlooks the degree to which political orientations and behavior are shaped by circumstances and past events. Easton and Dennis (1969) use this oversight as their starting point to demonstrate how early childhood is influential for political learning. However, although most scholars agree that some political learning does occur during childhood, others argue that the periods beyond childhood are actually the most crucial in determining political learning (Almond and Verba, 1963).

For immigrants with a childhood devoid of the political socialization available to those raised in the United States, political learning may instead occur within the family. Tseng and Wong (2005) use the traditional model of parental socialization and focus on the role of children in their own parents’ political learning. Children of immigrants living in the United States may have more experience with the political system than their parents, which may enable them to become sources of political information. Children of immigrants are often at an advantage because of their advanced English language skills and the socialization process that occurs in school.

The objective of this thesis is to examine how religious and civic institutions in the United States enable Latino immigrants to incorporate into their surroundings. I will examine religious and secular organizations in a community that exemplifies the future of America’s communities. By discussing the example of Garden City, this thesis aims to provide insight into the various ways Latino immigrants can and do incorporate into communities throughout the United States. I will demonstrate that although religion is a
powerful motivator and source of strength in immigrants’ lives, religious organizations can be unintentionally exclusionary for some immigrants. In contrast, secular organizations may be more effective vehicles of incorporation, especially for newer immigrants.

Immigration to the United States continues to be an appealing option for those from Latin America. Despite recent restrictive changes in immigration policies from both the United States and the countries of origin, the relative proximity and an emphasis on the push and pull factors facilitate the immigration of hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans into the United States every year. Despite the legal implications and abundant dangers associated with migrating, Latin Americans continue to take these tremendous risks in order to seek higher wages and a better way of life.

The importance of immigration in the United States may be declining at the national level as healthcare reform and the fight against drugs and terrorism take the spotlight, but the reality of immigration remains prevalent, as shown by the intense debate on both sides of the issue. My thesis aims to provide unique insight into the patterns of contemporary immigration in hopes of facilitating a more informed discussion on immigration policy.

Methods

A project funded by the Ford Foundation preceded my research in Garden City. The Changing Relations Project (CRP) conducted research in Garden City in 1988-1990 as part of a multi-site study aimed at understanding the relationships in communities “where new immigrants and established residents, as well as people from
many different backgrounds, came together regularly” (Goode and Schneider, 1994). Garden City’s uniqueness has also attracted additional scholars from multiple disciplines throughout the decades (Benson, 1996; Gimpel, 1999, Broadway and Stull, 2006; Quinones, 2007).

I conducted my fieldwork over a four-week period in June of 2010. The journey out to Garden City from where I grew up in Lawrence, Kansas, is a six-hour drive. I arrived in Garden City on the third day of June. For the duration of my stay I was grateful for the hospitality shown to me by my friend, Rachael Gray, with whom I studied at the University of Kansas (KU). Rachael moved to Garden City shortly after graduating from KU and accepted a position with the local newspaper, the Garden City Telegram. Rachael has written extensively on immigration in Garden City, and she put me in contact with several of the individuals I found most helpful during my fieldwork.

Rachael’s neighborhood afforded me a unique view of Garden City’s immigrant population. The neighborhood where I lived is located between the Somali and Burmese communities. The dry heat of the western plains was a welcome relief from the unbearable humidity characteristic of Florida summers so every morning I would go for a walk to enjoy the weather. During these outings I would undoubtedly see dozens of Burmese children playing together outside across the street. The doors of each townhome remained open so that the mothers could watch their children while they were inside cooking or socializing. Behind me resided the majority of the Somali community. Instead of groups of children, I would often see small groups of Somali men sitting outside and conversing in a circle. The Somali community has few children,

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1The CRP also conducted research in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Monterey Park, California, Miami, Florida, Chicago, Illinois, and Houston, Texas (Goode and Schneider, 1994, 3).
even though there are many young married couples. The absence of children, however, can be deceiving as many Somali men in Garden City have wives and children that remain in Somalia.

While in Garden City I used four research methods: review of local literature in the form of newspapers, magazine articles, and books; participant observation at various religious and cultural events; semi-structured interviews with 15 native and non-native residents of Garden City; and informal interviews with dozens of native and non-native residents of Garden City.

I spent many hours at the Garden City Historical Society Museum. I am grateful for the staff that allowed me to visit, even when the museum was closed to the public. The magazine and newspapers articles I discovered at the museum documented the changing race relations in Garden City since the 1800s and are of unmatched significance. As a graduate student at a leading research institution, I am accustomed to the countless data that are made available online, but the documents I had access to at the museum are unique in that they are only available at the Garden City Historical Society Museum.

I conducted participant observation at a number of distinct sites: my neighborhood, Tyson Fresh Meats, a ride along with a police officer, the United Methodist Mexican-American Ministries, East Garden Village, the Garden City Community College, multiple feedlots, several religious congregations, and the Garden City Public Library.

I conducted 15 hour-long semi-structured interviews with various community leaders and residents of Garden City. I interviewed the chaplain of Tyson Fresh
Meats,\textsuperscript{2} the executive director of the United Methodist Mexican-American Ministries (UMMAM), an influential Dominican Sister who is well-known within Garden City’s immigrant community, the director of the Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Association, the director of the Catholic Agency for Migration and Refugee Services, several business owners, and I conducted dozens of informal interviews with Anglo, Latino, and Asian residents.

I returned to Florida in July, but I continue an ongoing dialogue via electronic mail with several key informants. I also speak regularly with Rachael Gray who keeps me informed on migration-related news that occurs in Garden City.

**Limitations**

My research was limited by two major factors. First, I did not assess electoral participation when analyzing immigrant civic engagement. The topics I discussed with informants regarding civic participation were strictly limited to participation in an organization or voluntary activities. Electoral participation is not an option for everyone, so I limited my questions to activities that are equally accessible regardless of citizenship status. Second, I only profiled Catholic congregations in Garden City and did not interview immigrants who attended non-Catholic congregations. The rise of Latino immigrants creating and belonging to Protestant congregations is documented by Millard and Chapa: “Some Latino newcomers to the Midwest have for generations been Protestant, bearing witness to the strong presence of Protestantism in the U.S. Southwest and in Latin America” (2004, 178). Garden City’s extensive selection of

\textsuperscript{2}Tyson Fresh Meats is a subsidiary of Tyson Foods, Inc.
On a lesser note, I believe that my research could have benefited from a longer stay in Garden City. Although I felt that four weeks was sufficient, additional time would have allowed me to explore several underdeveloped themes in my thesis. For instance, more time would have enabled me to profile several additional congregations and explore Latino immigrant participation in Protestant congregations. I also intended to conduct several follow-up interviews with several informants, but my time constraint made this impossible. Fortunately, I was able to conduct several interviews via the telephone and electronic mail after I returned to Florida.

**Organization**

This thesis is organized into four chapters. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the extant literature on new destinations, situating it within the larger body of migration theory. This chapter will also provide a brief overview of the research site, Garden City, Kansas.

Chapter 2 will examine the role of multi-ethnic congregations in new destinations. Multi-ethnic congregations are a relatively recent phenomenon, but many churches are grappling with how to incorporate additional ethnic groups into their congregations without causing conflict with their already established members. I will examine several congregations in Garden City that have accommodated the arrival of immigrants into the community by incorporation through Spanish language services and assistance programs. The religious beliefs and practices of immigrants are instrumental in their attempts to incorporate into their new surroundings. As Peggy Levitt (2007) aptly
demonstrates, religion is a way for individuals to construct new identities and navigate new territories while maintaining old identities and remembering homelands.

Chapter 3 will discuss the factors that promote and sustain immigrant civic engagement and examine the importance of civic organizations. I use an example from Garden City, the Coalition of Ethnic Minority Leaders, to demonstrate the unique ways secular organizations function for immigrant groups. Unlike religious organizations, secular organizations are able to accommodate a more diverse membership. Finally, I discuss the significance of this research in furthering studies of immigrant incorporation in new destinations throughout the United States.

**New Latino Destinations**

Immigration in the United States is a frequently discussed topic characterized by an underdeveloped and problematic corresponding set of policies. This contradictory relationship is not new and has characterized immigration in the United States since the initial wave of immigrants arrived to Ellis Island at the turn of the twentieth century (Ngai, 2004). The United States has maintained a complex and changing relationship to its immigrant populations; sometimes welcoming, as was the case during the labor shortages due to the United States’ participation in World War II, and other times discouraging, as was demonstrated during the period of mass deportations and restrictive immigration policies in the 1920s (Massey, Durand, and Malone, 2002).

Latin America, however, has always had a unique historical and geographic relationship to the United States, which has presented distinct obstacles and challenges to immigration policymaking. Massey, Durand, and Malone (2002) discuss five phases of immigration from Mexico spanning the twentieth century. These phases include alternating periods of labor recruitment, immigrant deportation, and divisions within
United States immigration policy. Although Massey, Durand, and Malone focus predominantly on Mexican immigration to the United States, these various immigration phases have impacted immigrants from all Latin American countries.

Historically, Latin American immigration settlement patterns have been consistent to specific regions of the United States, but since the 1980s Latino immigrants have increasingly opted to settle in the rural South, Midwest, and the West rather than the metropolitan areas in the Southwest and Northeast (Vásquez, Seales, and Marquardt, 2008, 20). California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois and New Jersey maintain their status as states with the largest immigrant populations, but new trends are occurring in the areas being settled by contemporary immigrants (Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell, 2008). States such as Iowa, Nebraska, Idaho, and Tennessee are experiencing a rapid influx of immigrants. Although some of these states may be familiar with transitory migration, new patterns indicate permanence and settlement of entire families. These nontraditional destinations are both smaller, less populated areas of the United States, such as rural Kansas, and large metropolitan areas, like Atlanta, which until recently had not been settled by a significant number of Latino immigrants (Williams, Steigenga, and Vásquez, 2009).

New destinations are a reversal from past trends where “immigrants live in cities, while old-stock, native-born Americans are more likely to live in rural areas and small towns” (Hirschman, 2005, 597). New immigrant settlement patterns in the form of new destinations are not temporary reflections of recent immigration policy. Instead, they compose a model of permanence that fits into the broader theoretical migration discourse and should be incorporated into contemporary migration scholarship. I will
focus on two fundamental aspects that contributed to new Latino immigrant
destinations: the 1986 Immigration Control and Reform Act (IRCA) and its ensuing
consequences (intended or otherwise), as well as the evolution of the meatpacking
industry in the United States Midwest.

Changing Immigration Policy

The 1980s were an influential period for immigration policy in the United States. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) made it illegal for employers to knowingly hire undocumented immigrants as well as granted amnesty to a qualifying group of immigrants, with the intended result of halting unauthorized immigration to the United States. Although many agree that the volume of unauthorized immigration did decline in the period immediately following the enactment of IRCA, in a few short years the numbers had resumed to pre-IRCA levels (Messina and Lahav, 2006, 442). A study by the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) breaks down IRCA into three periods: pre-IRCA, transition, and post-IRCA. The data from MMP suggest that both “Mexican men and Mexican women were more likely to begin migrating without documents after the border build-up than before (Massey, Durand, and Malone, 2002, 112). Thus, Massey, Durand, and Malone contend that contrary to ebbing immigration flows, IRCA actually generated more immigration. Furthermore, the unrestricted right granted by the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 of United States citizens to sponsor family members to enter the United States then pulled in an additional half a million more immigrants (138).

The amnesty provisions made two groups of immigrants eligible for permanent residency: “Aliens who had been unlawfully residing in the United States since before January 1, 1982” and “Aliens employed in seasonal agricultural work for a minimum of
90 days in the year prior to May, 1986” (Rytina, 2002, 2). The latter group of immigrants was legalized under the Special Agricultural Workers provision (SAW), which allowed legal residency for eligible individuals who had performed agricultural labor within the qualifying period. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) estimates nearly 2.7 million persons were approved for permanent residence (3).

Consequently, the mobility to find better jobs allowed permanence, settlement, and family reunification through additional amnesty provisions to become a reality (Zúñiga and Hernández-León, 2006, 2). The passage of IRCA had several consequences for Latin American immigration to new destinations. First, the relatively simultaneous naturalization of millions of undocumented immigrants had an especially significant impact in California. The influx of a large group of previously unauthorized immigrants into California’s local labor market, which at the time was experiencing an economic recession, created a legitimate push factor for many immigrants competing for jobs (12).

Telling statistics reveal that between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of Mexican immigrants in California and Texas dropped to unprecedented lows (13). Second, reunification with family members made the transition to new locations easier. Whereas immigrants traveling alone previously would bond with members from similar backgrounds, the familial bond helped to ease the settlement into a new destination, even without the presence in the new community of immigrants from a common background.

Finally, in the years following IRCA, the United States-Mexico border became increasingly militarized. One instance is Operation Gatekeeper along the San Diego-Tijuana border. In 1994, Operation Gatekeeper apprehended 447,540 unauthorized
immigrants, which composed more than 40% of the Border Patrol’s total apprehensions (USDOJ/OIG Special Report). The structure of Operation Gatekeeper was a three-tiered approach employing both personnel and equipment:

The first tier was deployed in high visibility…and had prevention, apprehension, and observation responsibilities. A second tier…had more freedom of movement in containing and apprehending illegal aliens. The third tier was charged with apprehending any aliens who made it past the Border Patrol’s first two lines of defense (USDOJ/OIG Special Report).

Ultimately, this project was placed under investigation by the Department of Justice’s Office of the Inspector General after allegations of fraud surfaced, including the falsification of records and alteration of intelligence reports. The ineffectiveness of Operation Gatekeeper and similar border strategies enacted after IRCA altered the cost versus gain analyses of immigrants, and many decided that settling permanently in the United States was safer than the potential economic and social risks of crossing back and forth between the United States and Mexico. While transnational activity in the form of communication, remittances, and participation in homeland politics was made increasingly easier with advances in technology, the impetus to return physically to the home country became increasingly problematic and dangerous in the post-IRCA era.

Furthermore, the 1994 ballot initiative Proposition 187 in California prohibited undocumented immigrants from utilizing state services, including healthcare and education. This created further incentives for those legalized through IRCA living in California to seek alternative regions to settle within the United States (Vásquez, Seales, and Marquardt, 2008, 27). Proposition 187 was eventually found unconstitutional on pre-emption grounds in 1999, but the hostility and racism behind the creation of this initiative created incentives for many immigrants to start looking for new places of settlement (Messina and Lahav, 2006, 456). This contradictory combination
of restrictive policies and freedom to find better jobs in different locales facilitated the dispersion of Latino immigrants into new destinations throughout the United States.

**Evolution of the Meatpacking Industry**

IRCA and subsequent similar policies were the impetus for immigrants to change settlement destinations across the United States, but the evolution of the meatpacking industry in the 1980s was distinct to the settlement of new destinations in the United States Midwest. The changes in migration settlement patterns, which had previously followed agricultural cycles, were temporary in nature, and involved only the single male sojourner, resulted from significant changes in the United States meatpacking industry (Benson, 1996). Among these changes, a combination of technological innovations and new locations changed the very nature of how meat was processed, packed, and distributed. The meatpacking company Iowa Beef Processors (eventually renamed IBP, Inc.) led the way in cost-cutting innovations. By the early 1980s four meatpacking companies dominated the landscape: IBP, ConAgra Red Meats, Cargill’s Excel, and Farmland (Broadway and Stull, 2006, 57). Further consolidation continued throughout the beginning of the twenty-first century until the companies Tyson, Excel, Swift & Company, and Smithfield formed the new oligarchy at the turn of the twentieth century (56).

It was IBP, Inc., however, that initially led the way with innovations that were soon emulated by all successful meatpacking companies throughout the United States. The opening of its plant in Denison, Iowa, a cattle-producing region, allowed IBP to save money by reducing transportation costs. Prior to IBP’s new Iowa location, cattle had to be transported by rail to packinghouses in urban stockyards (Broadway and Stull, 2006, 57). Along with lowering production costs, IBP and other meatpacking giants were also
able to lower wages, which, combined with a high injury rate, made meatpacking jobs unappealing to many Americans (58). IBP had many groundbreaking innovations that transformed the meatpacking industry in the United States, but the aforementioned changes were crucial in creating the pull for immigrants migrating within and to the United States to choose the Midwest as a settlement destination.

However, the actual recruitment of Latinos by the meatpacking industry was also fundamental in the settlement of new destinations. The ability to find large Latino immigrant labor pools was part and parcel of the industry’s strategy to maintain low wages and high profits. While Americans refused to fill these jobs, the meat processing industry in the United States Midwest provided immigrant workers steady employment and, consequently, incentives for once transitory migrants to settle permanently (Millard and Chapa, 2004, 47). The successful implementation of recruitment techniques sustained labor pools with immigrants willing to relocate. Coincidentally, the evolution of the meatpacking industry occurred simultaneously to the changes in United States immigration policy and the passage of IRCA.

**Migration Theory**

Within the broader theoretical context, new immigrant destinations fit into the theoretical scholarship on the initiation of migration, regardless of whether Latino immigrants move from within the United States or relocate to a new destination from their home country. The reasons that prompt people to emigrate from their home countries along with the incentives that attract them to host countries are described as push-pull factors. Scholars tend to view these push-pull factors from an economic standpoint whereby “such movements are basically a function of demand-pull and supply-push factors (Messina and Lahav, 2006, 171).
Although the underlying causes of immigration can be understood from a political or sociological standpoint, the majority of theoretical approaches emphasize migration as an economic outcome. Many scholars agree, however, that these theories are too “narrow” (Messina and Lahav, 2006, 31). While neoclassical economic theory is the most recognized international migration theory, fundamental flaws inherent in this theory have prompted the formation of a “new economics of migration” (Castles, 2002, 272).

From a macro perspective, neoclassical economic theory bases its rationale in the regional differences of labor supply and demand. Countries with a “low equilibrium market wage” are those with an abundance of labor relative to capital, whereas countries with the opposite labor to capital ratio are characterized by a high market wage (Messina and Lahav, 2006, 36). According to the macro perspective, individuals from low wage economies are drawn to high wage economies. This movement in labor prompts a movement in capital, including human capital, which eventually results in equilibrium.

From a micro perspective, neoclassical economic theory suggests that the decision to migrate is made by individual rational actors. These rational actors conduct a cost-benefit analysis that takes into consideration the physical, emotional, and monetary costs of migration. The decision to migrate usually results from expectations of a positive net return, such as the belief that an individual will find employment in a different country (Messina and Lahav, 2006, 37).

One characteristic distinct to immigration in new destinations is that a family member or entire family often accompanies the primary immigrant. The passage of

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3Human capital variables include: “age, experience, schooling, marital status, and skill” (Messina and Lahav, 2006, 51).
IRCA granted permanent residency to immigrants who were then able to bring family members from abroad. Network theory determines that the probability of migration is more likely to occur among immigrants with a relative that has already migrated abroad (Messina and Lahav, 2006, 56). Network theory emphasizes the importance of relationships in decisions to migrate. Friends and family already living in a host country, for example, may reduce the costs associated with migrating by providing resources or assistance navigating bureaucratic processes (Castles, 2002, 272). These well-established immigrants serve as guides for newer arrivals.

Contemporary discussions of migration must also be discussed within a theoretical framework that emphasizes transnationalism. Contrary to some scholars’ expectations, immigrants do not break all ties with their countries of origin. Instead, immigrants often maintain relationships and identities from their home countries, especially those that may facilitate a smoother transition into the host country. In this way, “assimilation and transnational practices are not incompatible” (Levitt, 2001, 5). Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc’s often-cited definition of transnationalism describes it as “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (1994, 6). Crucial to an understanding of transnationalism is recognition of simultaneous embeddedness. Immigrants may demonstrate this by living in one place physically but maintaining their lives, embodied in their daily routines and relationships, in multiple places.

Guarnizo and Smith (1998) distinguish between “transnationalism from above,” which occurs at a very global level encompassing entities such as corporations or states, and “transnationalism from below,” involving individuals. These distinctions are
made despite a lack of agreement over the origins of transnationalism. Evidence exists for and against the newness of this phenomenon. Although technological innovations have intensified the connections between individuals living in different places, evidence shows that earlier immigrants also maintained connections to their home countries. These earlier forms of transnationalism existed despite scholars of immigration’s attempts at concealing these transnational ties in order to preserve the commonly accepted theories of assimilation.

In the context of new destinations, Williams, Steigenga, and Vásquez discuss three types of transnational religious organizations identified by migration scholar Peggy Levitt: “extended transnational religious organizations,” “negotiated transnational religious organizations,” and “recreated transnational religious organizations” (2009, 7). Religious organizations, but also other forms of migrant-transnationalism, are often the impetus for immigrant incorporation. These transnational organizations have the potential to navigate various environments, facilitating not only transnational relations to the home country but incorporation into the host country.

In sum, the two factors that facilitated the settlement of new destinations in the United States Midwest were the passage of IRCA and its subsequent consequences and the evolution of the meatpacking industry in the United States Midwest. These two factors combined and acted together to push immigrants out of traditional regions of immigration and pull immigrants to new locations within the United States. The active recruitment of immigrants into meatpacking regions in the Midwest and blatant discrimination demonstrated in certain aspects of immigration policy further prompted
immigrants to move out of traditional immigration states, like California, and into nontraditional states, like Kansas.

Along with several other sociopolitical and economic factors, the recent geographic dispersion of Latino immigrants has changed the composition of traditionally homogeneous areas of the United States. While some changes are minimal, others are as substantial as a complete shift in the racial and ethnic composition of entire communities. The emergent issues and themes demonstrated by the case of Garden City, Kansas, can also be found in other new destinations. These emerging issues may be specific to new immigration destinations or, like the various migration theories, could fit into the broader migration discussion.

**Immigrant Incorporation**

Less understood than the causal factors underlying the emergence of new destinations is the potential for immigrant incorporation. Latino immigrant incorporation into these nontraditional communities has facilitated levels of incorporation not possible in traditional migration sites. Due to the recentness of new destinations, specific empirical studies most effectively reveal limitations and potential for immigrant incorporation. Zúñiga and Hernández-León (2006) present two distinct cases of immigrant incorporation in new destinations in southern Louisian. The differences between both case studies reside in the receiving communities’ initial responses to an influx of Mexican immigrants. In the first case, resistance by native-born residents facilitated the establishment of a stable Mexican immigrant population. In the second case, indifference by a community coupled with employer control over its immigrant employees limited the creation of a strong immigrant population (2006, 77).
The conclusions suggest that immigrant incorporation varies by community-specific factors such as community reception, governmental policies, regional and historical differences. On the other hand, areas with high levels of immigration are generally homogeneous and without the high levels of divergence as those of new destinations. States like California and Texas have been immigrant-receiving states since their formation and have therefore adopted similar attitudes and opinions towards immigrants. As Williams, Steigenga, and Vásquez assert: “the potential transformative power of Latinos is not just about sheer numbers. It is also about emerging patterns of settlement” (2009, 2).

**Civic Incorporation**

To understand the process of immigrant civic incorporation, it is necessary to distinguish it from social incorporation. In their study on local worship communities, Foley and Hoge assert that although it may eventually lead to greater civic incorporation, social incorporation refers to the extent to which immigrants “have contact with those outside their immediate families and ethnic or religious circles” (2007, 27). Social incorporation, therefore, is a much broader assessment than civic incorporation, which specifically concerns the degree to which immigrants and their organizations are active in their surrounding community. Foley and Hoge distinguish three models that may describe how religious participation may facilitate immigrant civic incorporation: the “social capital argument,” the “civil society argument,” and the “civic participation model” (29). These models emphasize the importance of social capital and networks or the role of civil society in promoting a more engaged society.

The importance of civic incorporation is self-evident: civic participation is essential to maintaining a strong and functional democracy. Verba and Nie elaborate by stating if
“democracy is interpreted as rule by the people, then the question of who participates in political decisions becomes the question of the nature of democracy” (1972, 1). Higher levels of participation ensure higher levels of democracy, while lower levels of participation result in the converse. Many scholars tend to agree that civic engagement in the United States has been on the decline for several decades. A reversal of the current trend is necessary for greater civic engagement and subsequent deepening of democracy; however, a mere reversal is not sufficient. Rather, the United States must strive to incorporate more sectors of the population, especially its non-native population. As Lisa García Bedolla aptly asserts: “The development of institutional mechanisms that increase the engagement of citizens and noncitizens can only be beneficial to U.S. democracy as a whole” (Lee and Ramakrishnan, 2006, 66).

**Shortcomings**

Several shortcomings exist in the literature on Latino immigrant incorporation in new destinations. For instance, the recent emergence of new destinations limits considerably the body of work from which to choose. A current body of literature has its clear advantages, but when attempting to make generalizations a body of literature that spans several years often makes for a superficial comparison. While there is extensive literature on incorporation of Latino immigrants, the literature on new destinations represents an abundance of ethnographic case studies, which all seem to have unique and separate conclusive findings, making little effort to bridge the gaps and create the linkages needed to create a workable model of immigrant incorporation in new destinations. The scarcity of political conclusions may also pertain to the focus in new destinations literature on general immigrant incorporation. Political activity of
immigrants in new destinations may not be a primary indicator of incorporation into the community, but rather a secondary step towards incorporation.

Along the same lines, there exists literature on Latino immigrant political incorporation and a small but growing body of literature on new destinations in the United States; however, a comprehensive body of literature including both has yet to be established. The case studies in new destinations discuss immigrant incorporation but from the general field of incorporation, making little to no distinction between social, economic, or political integration. DeWind and Kasinitz agree that most authors “start with the assumption that the economic, social, political and cultural processes of ‘incorporation’ are fundamentally interactive” (1997, 1098). While this may be the case, at some point a distinction must be made to understand the interactive relationship between the distinct components of incorporation.

In addition, the authors of the selected literature tend to make similar, sometimes mistaken, assumptions. Primarily, the literature tends to assume that Latino immigrants wish to incorporate politically into the United States and, furthermore, that the United States wishes to incorporate its immigrant groups. Some Latino immigrants may not have the resources or desire to be politically active, even if both the host and home countries encourage participation. Despite her focus on Dominican transmigrants in the United States, Peggy Levitt makes a valid observation of Miraflorenos’ claims about the difficulty of participation: “They were too busy trying to earn a living and raise their families to take on anything else” (2001, 147). Moreover, the literature also assumes a certain degree of lack of political incorporation, that immigrants have not experienced
incorporation, when levels of political incorporation are perhaps higher than the authors believe, especially if political activity assumes a non-electoral form.

Another assumption among both politicians and scholars is that all Latin American immigrants can be grouped together in the same category. For instance, Geron discusses implications of racialization as “the construction of racially unequal social hierarchies characterized by dominant and subordinate social relations between groups” (2005, 4). On one hand, this general grouping can facilitate cooperation among Latin American immigrants working towards similar goals, and, of course, the belief that there is strength in numbers holds true. However, grouping together different Latin American ethnic groups will not automatically engender cooperation. In fact, the differences in political views or agendas may worsen under such a mistaken assumption.

As for future research venues, more research needs to be done in the area of new destinations. The literature, while expanding, is still not sufficient to make the macro-level linkages necessary to better understand immigrant civic and political incorporation. Despite the focus in this thesis on Latino immigrants, the literature needs a better understanding of how various cultures interact, since many new destinations have several new immigrant groups from separate cultural backgrounds residing in the same community. Vásquez, Seales, and Marquardt state that in order to “rise above the particularities of case studies, contextual analysis needs to engage studies of long-term trends and changes in the demographics and economics of Latino migration (2008, 32).” Macro-level analyses will enable scholars to understand the differences and similarities between traditional and non-traditional destinations. However, despite the shortcomings of micro-level analyses, this does not mean ethnographic case studies
should be eliminated. With each distinct case study, new issues will arise. Case studies are vital, but more are needed to create a common analysis between different new destinations in the United States.

In new destination literature, Latino immigrants face many of the same problems and issues that they face in traditional areas of settlement. One issue of importance is political incorporation. Despite the enormous amount of literature on immigrant incorporation, and the substantial body of work regarding Latino immigrants in the United States, literature focused on new destinations is less prevalent. The available literature tends to focus on the causal factors underlying the emergence of new destinations while looking at several general aspects of the dynamics in these new communities. Perhaps a more careful analysis of the data is needed to filter out specifically political findings. Additionally, without eliminating ethnographic case studies, perhaps the emphasis needs to shift towards making connections within new destinations studies and among migration literature in general.

**Garden City**

A qualifying example of a new destination in the United States Midwest as well as the focus of this thesis is Garden City, Kansas. Garden City is the county seat of Finney County, which was recently classified as majority-minority. Majority-minority identifies a region within the United States where the population is less than 50% non-Hispanic white and, like new destinations, is also a result of changing immigration patterns. Of several counties that recently became majority-minority, Finney County stands apart, as it does not belong to a state that is already classified as majority-minority.
In many ways, Garden City is both a new and old destination for immigrants. Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell (2008) discuss these “re-emerging gateways” as those which attracted immigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century but less so during the middle of the century. Now, however, these areas are once again becoming areas of settlement for immigrants. In the 1900s, Mexican immigrants came to Garden City to “work on the railroad and in the sugar beet fields” (Broadway and Stull, 2006, 55).

Garden City’s immigrant patterns are shaped not only by its local meatpacking facilities, but also by the meatpacking plants in surrounding areas. In 2008, Garden City became home to many of the 1,500 Somali refugees who lost their jobs at Tyson’s meatpacking plant in Emporia, a Kansas community similar in size to Garden City located about five hours away.

Despite a minority of Mexican immigrants, in the 1980s, Garden City, like its surroundings, was dominated in both population and politics by non-Hispanic whites. But with the opening of the world’s largest beef processing plant, IBP, Inc., 10 miles from Garden City, the minority population skyrocketed (Benson, 1996). “Between 1980 and 2000 Garden City’s official population increased by 54 percent, while its foreign-born population soared from 4 to 23 percent” (Broadway and Stull, 2006, 56). Benson uses school district enrollment figures from 1980 as an accurate indicator of the demographic changes in Garden City (1996). According to these figures, between 1980 and 1988, the enrollment of Anglo students enrolled in the school district dropped from 82% to 64%. By contrast, the enrollment of Hispanic students increased from 16% to

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26%. By 1995, the total number of minority students, which included Hispanic, Asian, American Indians and Blacks, reached a majority of 51% (Benson, 1996).

Although Finney County did not officially become a majority-minority county until 2008, these changes mirrored similar changes within the school district as early as the 1980s. These trends continued throughout the end of the twentieth century. Census data from 2000 places the foreign-born population of Garden City at 22.8%. The current ethnic breakdown is as follows: White persons, 68.8%; Black persons, 1.5%; American Indian and Alaska Native persons, 1.1%; Asian persons, 3.5%; Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, 43.9%. In comparison, 2008 statistics for Kansas as a whole found that Latinos account for only 9.1% of the population.

Like any business, the success of the meatpacking company IBP, Inc. depended on its workforce. During the first few years, IBP recruited a majority of the 2,000 workers needed in order to be fully operational from surrounding areas as well as Alabama, New Mexico, and Texas (Broadway and Stull, 2006, 59). Among those initially recruited, Southeast Asians and Latin Americans composed a majority of the workforce. While the case of Garden City does not technically qualify it as a boomtown, Broadway and Stull argue that the similarities make it a new kind of boomtown, where “unlike traditional boomtowns, which attract newcomers with high wages, Garden City has lured new workers and their families with low-wage jobs” (60).

The influx of new workers presented Garden City with new social and economic challenges. Between 1980 and 2000, the average wage per job fell while those living in

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5For a complete breakdown: [http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/20/2025325.html](http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/20/2025325.html).

poverty doubled, and crime levels grew due to an increase of young adult single males (Broadway and Stull, 2006). The population growth resulted in economic growth until a fire destroyed a ConAgra beef plant in 2000 putting thousands out of work overnight and abruptly ending the boomtown years. Far from following the transitory practices of most boomtown populations, the workers in Garden City stayed and continued to thrive as indicated by the recent demographic reclassification.
CHAPTER 2
MULTI-ETHNIC CONGREGATIONS IN NEW DESTINATIONS

During a recent talk given at the University of Florida,\(^1\) political scientist Robert Putnam noted that the decline of the Catholic Church in the United States would be much more substantial were it not for the recent influx of Catholic immigrants. A survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life and the Pew Hispanic Center finds that Hispanics compose an estimated 33% of all Catholics in the United States (2007, 14). Furthermore, over half of Latino Catholics identify Spanish as their primary language, and over two-thirds are foreign born (11). The dominance of Catholicism among Latino immigrants presents the Catholic Church with both challenges and opportunities (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006).\(^2\) Not so long ago it would be unthinkable that such a powerful religion would be declining in prominence, and that immigration may be responsible for staying this decline. These facts reveal that two certainties: immigrants are transforming the religious landscape of the United States, and these patterns indicate no signs of slowing.

Immigration will remain an issue of importance, but the superficial conflict surrounding it will only deepen the misunderstanding about immigration in the United States. Part of the reason immigration in the United States is characterized by such ineffective immigration policies is because even more complicated forces are challenging our notions of citizenship. The phenomenon of globalization, for instance, characterized by an increased interconnectedness, is transforming the relationship of

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\(^1\)On 30 November 2010, Robert Putnam spoke at the University of Florida’s Bob Graham Center for Public Service.

\(^2\)According to Portes and Rumbaut, the Catholic Church, if able to effectively provide for its immigrant affiliates, may be able to retain its dominant position (2006, 318).
the citizen and the nation state (Held et al., 1999). Moreover, transnationalism, which is characterized by simultaneity within social relations across international borders, is also changing the way we understand interactions between individuals and the nation state (Glick Schiller, 1999). How relevant are immigration policies that do not account for these highly visible and contested global forces? How can we better understand immigration in an age where the movement of information, ideas, and people across borders is seemingly unrestricted?

A deeper understanding of the role that religion plays in the lives of immigrants is necessary for a better understanding of immigration. Foley and Hoge (2007) find that regardless of faith traditions, religious institutions are important to newer immigrants. Thus, religious congregations may play a vital role in the incorporation of immigrants in the United States. Foley and Hoge observed “some 200 local worship communities – Catholic and Protestant churches, Buddhist and Hindu temples, Muslim prayer centers and mosques, and Sikh congregations” in the Washington D.C., area (2007, 4). Although no single pattern can describe the importance of religion on immigrant incorporation, Foley and Hoge find that the importance of worship communities to newer immigrants enables religion to promote incorporation in a variety of ways.

Furthermore, Peggy Levitt (2007) demonstrates that religion is a way for individuals to construct new lives and navigate new lands while maintaining old identities and remembering home countries. Levitt focuses on the role of religion in transnational migration; however, I believe we need to narrow the focus to immigrant religion within the United States in order to understand the ways in which religious congregations act as vehicles for immigrant incorporation. Specifically, I will look at the
transformative power of multi-ethnic congregations, sites that I believe are most indicative of immigrants’ religious practices and beliefs. The rise of multi-ethnic congregations is relatively recent, but many churches are struggling with how to incorporate additional ethnic groups into their congregations without causing conflict with their already established members. Religion plays an especially unique role in smaller communities with growing or new immigrant populations. In these communities, it is common for the church to function as the main role model for how the community perceives these newcomers.

The purpose of this chapter will be to examine the role of multi-ethnic congregations in new immigrant destinations. I find that multi-ethnic congregations generate social capital, which I define as the networks that enable individuals to gain access to resources. However, the discussion of multi-ethnic congregations rests on the assumption that all immigrants are inclined to join or create congregations. This congregationalism approach mistakenly assumes that all immigrants have the same organizational capacity and the same resources, but for some immigrants belonging to or creating a congregation is not feasible.

First, I will begin by discussing the limitations of a congregationalism approach; second, I will discuss and define multi-ethnic congregations, which I will examine by using examples from the small (but growing) body of literature on new immigrant destinations (Zúñiga and Hernández-León, 2005; Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell, 2008; Williams, Steigenga, and Vásquez, 2009). Specifically, I will draw from my field research in Garden City, Kansas. Finally, I will end the chapter with a discussion on how religious organizations might fail to meet the needs of certain groups of immigrants.
In these cases, a secular organization may be better suited to bridge cultural differences and generate social capital; a topic which I will give further consideration in the following chapter.

**The Congregationalism Approach**

The Pluralism Project at Harvard University seeks to illuminate the religious diversity present in the United States. Started in the 1990s, the project has documented religious communities throughout the country. This is a valuable project as instances of religious pluralism are evident in all corners of the United States. One of the central aims of the Pluralism Project is to study the religious communities themselves, which are embodied in temples, mosques, and other institutions. The focus on these religious institutions is not new (Warner and Wittner, 1998; Yang and Ebaugh, 2001). The assumption held by these scholars is that immigrants will immediately strive to construct religious institutions upon arrival in the United States (Ebaugh and Chavetz, 2000). The congregational model places an emphasis on lay leadership, voluntary membership, provision of social services, and financial contributions from members (Warner and Wittner, 1998, 22). Warner and Wittner also contend that the very salience of religion in the lives of immigrants implies that it will evolve in response to changing environments and circumstances (20). Thus, a tendency towards congregationalism is indicative of this religious change.

Although it does seem that religion in the United States takes on a distinctly congregational form, Wendy Cadge (2008) demonstrates that this congregationalism approach tends to assume a homogeneity that simply does not exist between and among immigrant communities. Cadge explains that the de facto congregationalism proposes "religions from around the world come eventually to resemble institutionally
the kind of Protestant church congregation that has its roots in seventeenth century
Puritanism” (2008, 347). However, not all immigrant groups have the capacity to form
congregations. For instance, Garden City has a growing Muslim community but no
mosques. Worship occurs regularly in different homes, but the newness of these
immigrants and the long hours worked by many at Tyson Fresh Meats make it difficult
for this group to find the time and resources to organize an official religious institution
(interview, June 10, 2010). Moreover, a much larger Muslim population would be
necessary for such an endeavor to be financially possible.

Nevertheless, absence of congregational activity does not imply that
congregations do not play important roles in the lives of immigrants. At a recent talk
given at the University of Florida,³ Alex Stepick discussed his recent study on immigrant
civic engagement in Miami. The study focused on twenty immigrant religious
congregations in Miami’s predominantly immigrant areas in determining the role of
congregations in generating social capital (2009, 20). Stepick argued that a
congregational approach is useful because it enables a more comparative perspective,
especially when looking at the institutional responses to immigration demonstrated by
certain denominations (e.g. the Catholic Church).

The importance of congregations should not be overlooked in adopting a more
expansive view of religion. Instead, scholars must choose a different analytic lens to
study the religious lives of immigrants. Scholars must go beyond the focus on
congregations as the key spaces where immigrant identity is constructed. Immigrants
practice their religious beliefs outside of congregations as part of daily routines. Robert

³On 1 March 2011, Alex Stepick spoke at the University of Florida’s Latin American Studies guest lecture
“Making Citizens Out of Migrants.”
Orsi discusses this lived religion as “what people do with religious practice, what they make with it of themselves and their worlds” (1997, 7). However, that being said, instances of immigrants joining or constructing their own congregations are evident across the United States.

In their study of Latino immigrants in the Midwest, Ann Millard and Jorge Chapa express surprise at the establishment of religious congregations by Latinos (2004). These Latino churches not only recruit pastors that meet their specific needs, they also provide valuable services to newcomers and are capable of bridging the congregation with the wider community (12). Belonging to a congregation is a way for immigrants to assert themselves; in essence, congregations enable immigrants to gain a seat at the table.

**Multi-Ethnic Congregations**

Despite a tendency toward homogeneity, increasingly more congregations across the United States are shifting towards a multicultural model. Undoubtedly, multiculturalism is a hot topic, but it is not without its critics. These critics contend that multiculturalism requests a “public ethnic identity,” which necessitates the organization of individuals into homogeneous groups and legitimizes victimization rhetoric (Kurien, 2004, 365). However, others overlook these criticisms by establishing the importance of religion in the process of ethnic formation among immigrants (365). These multi-ethnic congregations are being discussed as social institutions developed in response to an increasingly ethnically diverse society (Garces-Foley, 2007). Multi-ethnic congregations generally do not start as such, however. Many congregations start with one predominant ethnic membership base before they begin working towards a multi-ethnic model. Some actively work towards a multi-ethnic label while others merely accept the
increasing ethnic diversity making little or no changes to their existing framework. Even for those congregations that take a more passive stance towards an increasingly diverse membership base, dilemmas are still likely to arise if the needs of certain members are neglected.

Pawan Dhingra (2004) addresses the dilemma of Korean American churches in Dallas, Texas. The churches in Dhingra’s study wish to expand beyond their Korean American membership base but find it hard to negotiate between their Korean American members and the new racial groups they wish to attract. In order to accommodate both groups, the Korean American churches relegate specific cultural expressions, such as language classes, to the backstage (375). Ultimately, this model proves inadequate and divisive, for by concealing certain practices, these churches risk alienating new members that may feel deceived or uncomfortable upon discovering the extent to which certain cultural expressions are occurring behind the scenes. Likewise, Marie Marquardt and Patricia Fortuny found that the conflict within one multi-ethnic Catholic parish they studied was best resolved by “moving toward a model that promotes difference, rather than attempting to erase or ‘melt’ it” (2009, 26). Dhingra acknowledges that a multicultural approach that favors no single group’s culture may be the most effective in eliminating racial differences (2004, 376)

Another issue faced by multi-ethnic congregations is that of language. Language represents a central aspect to the maintenance and reproduction of one’s culture. The religious pluralism Levitt (2007) documents in her study demonstrates that religion is highly mobile. Religion is a way to create a distinct identity in unfamiliar territory, and it

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4 Haitians, for example, emphasize their adherence to Catholicism in order to set themselves apart from African Americans (McAlister, 1998).
also serves to comfort dislocated people by reinforcing certain practices and beliefs that originated in the home country. Therefore, the ability to understand the language that is spoken in a religious service or by fellow church members is absolutely vital for immigrants who participate in a religious organization. In this way, language becomes a vehicle for religion.

Thus, the loss of the native language in second and subsequent generations poses problems for congregations that are unsure how to proceed in an environment where several languages serve as primary languages. Helen Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz (2000) describe one congregation’s decision to use only English in official services for everyone but Spanish-speaking members despite the 59 different languages spoken among its diverse congregation. In this instance, the retention of English served to promote unity by “focusing their attention on their common religion rather than their cultural differences” (443).

The use of English only in worship is one stage addressed by Yang and Ebaugh (2001) in their study of immigrant religious communities. The first and second stages consist of a monolingual congregation that eventually evolves into a bilingual congregation, which then becomes a monolingual English congregation in the third stage (277). Second and subsequent generations often push for the use of English only despite objections from the immigrant generation. Often these conflicts lead to the establishment of new churches by second-generation immigrants, like the Korean American churches studied by Dhingra (2004).

Other instances, however, demonstrate that a failure to take into consideration different language preferences reinforces alienation and feelings of exclusion by certain
members. Several individuals I spoke with during my field research in Garden City indicated that they had changed congregations due to a language conflict. A female informant belonged to a congregation that kept promising to offer services in Spanish, but after a year she was “tired of waiting” and changed congregations (interview, June 12, 2010). She now attends a Catholic church that offers Spanish mass several times a week. Other individuals I spoke with expressed disappointment with the lack of multilingual congregations in Garden City.

A male informant said he was surprised that more churches did not offer services in different languages since many businesses in Garden City have signs in multiple languages and bilingual employees, and his children have access to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at school (interview, June 10, 2010). He told me: “It would make sense if we lived in a place where religion wasn’t as important, but we live in Kansas” (interview, June 12, 2010). By this statement he meant that Kansas is in a region of the United States that has high levels of religiosity. These levels are even higher in rural communities.

Aside from language, Penny Becker (1998) addresses another issue facing multi-ethnic congregations: race. Although Becker’s study does not focus on immigrant religion specifically, the rapid changes in racial composition of Oak Park, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, mirrors the racial transformations that many areas of the United States are undergoing due to changes in immigration settlement patterns. Becker examines two congregations’ successful responses to the racial integration of African Americans into their community, noting that other congregations reacted in much different ways. Similar to congregations faced with making a decision to become multi-
ethnic in response to growing numbers of immigrants, several congregations in Oak Park chose to either ignore the changes or develop a regional and homogeneous focus (1998, 451).

In response to a growth in African Americans into Oak Park, both of the congregations in Becker’s study implemented community-oriented policies. By becoming racially inclusive, Becker explains, the congregations became successful “inclusive public spaces” (1998, 464). Both congregations were able to put their members on the same page by emphasizing the importance of a multiracial community. By asserting “community” as a common goal, the strategies and objectives became relevant to everyone (465). Moreover, this approach could be beneficial to congregations reaching out to immigrants in new destinations.

**Immigrant Religion in New Destinations**

In terms of religiosity, Garden City, with more churches than bars, is representative of the Midwest and rural America in general. However, the recent influx of non-Christian immigrants has posed problems for Garden City, as these newcomers are unable to participate in religious organizations. Garden City has a growing Muslim population represented by the recently established Burmese, Somali and Ethiopian communities. Although I witnessed informal religious gatherings of Muslim immigrants, there are no non-Christian religious organizations available for these communities. In this respect, Latinos in Garden City are at an advantage. Although incorporation into a

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5A pastor I spoke with told me that Garden City has over forty Christian churches (interview, June 15, 2010).

6The majority of those belonging to the Burmese and Somali communities live in the same housing complexes. I witnessed informal outdoor and indoor religious gatherings during the time I spent in Garden City.
predominantly Anglo congregation may be difficult, especially for highly mobile immigrants such as migrant farm workers, many Latinos in Garden City are Catholic and are able to successfully join Catholic churches. I found that the point of insertion into the community both politically and socially for Latinos is through faith-based organizations.

Although Latinos compose 45% of Garden City’s population,\(^7\) they are less politically involved with lower levels of civic engagement than other ethnic groups. At first, I attributed an absence of political incorporation to a political environment relatively free of hostility or threat. Although hostile circumstances may motivate immigrants to act, as in the case of the 2006 immigration reform protests (Barreto et al., 2009), a hostile political environment may also serve as a barrier to political mobilization in the same way that language proficiency may impact an immigrant’s decision to naturalize. However, Garden City was one of over 200 cities in the United States to take part in the 2006 immigrants’ rights protests. Thus, it seems that under the right circumstance, which in 2006 was due to feelings of solidarity among the Garden City Latino community with the rest of the country, Latinos are willing to mobilize.

Rather, I believe that the prevailing absence of political incorporation is related to the ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods in Garden City. For instance, the neighborhood where I lived while I was in Garden City was situated in between the housing complexes of the Somali and the Burmese communities. A few minutes away from my residence was the East Garden Village, a mobile home park where many Vietnamese and Mexican immigrants live. Gimpel charges the “ethnic balkanization” of

\(^7\)According to the United States Census Bureau 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Latinos and Hispanics compose 44.8% of Garden City’s total population.
Garden City with creating a “stronger sense of regional and class disparity” (1999, 128). Not only do immigrants in Garden City work the same low-wage jobs, they also live in the same lower-class neighborhoods. Studies show that the larger the minority population, the more isolated it tends to be (Tienda and Lii, 1987).

A Latino male informant I spoke with told me that when he first arrived in Garden City, he lived with his wife in East Garden Village. After working several low wage jobs for a number of years he found a position with the Garden City Police Department. Shortly after he became a police officer, he moved with his family to a “nicer neighborhood” (interview, June 11, 2010). Indeed, one indicator of economic mobility in Garden City tends to be relocation to a non-ethnically diverse neighborhood.

Although I found that Latinos demonstrated lower levels of political engagement, I found several instances of religious engagement. Latino informants I spoke with regularly attended worship services as well as participated in volunteer activities associated with their congregations. Scholars, like Putnam, cite the resilience of faith-based organizations in the United States and the importance they play in civic engagement. Putnam asserts: “faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America” (2000:66). Churches, Putnam continues, act as an “incubator for civic skills, civic norms, community interests, and civic recruitment (66). One role I found that religious organizations play in new destinations is the generation of social capital. Social capital takes several different forms, both within and between networks. Bonding social capital, for instance, brings together people with shared ethnicity or socioeconomic status, while bridging social capital transcends those differences (Gittell and Vidal, 1998, 15). Social
capital has the potential to improve individuals and communities; and for Latinos in Garden City, religious organizations are the spaces where this social capital is formed.

Marie Marquardt and Patricia Fortuny (2009) also find that multi-ethnic congregations play important roles for immigrants in new destinations. Marquardt and Fortuny’s study, which examines two Catholic parishes in Cobb County, a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia, highlights the significance of churches in promoting inter-ethnic engagement and finds that sources of tension within congregations may actually facilitate new approaches to cooperation. Similar to Marquardt and Fortuny’s assertion that religious organizations have unique relevance, particularly in the United States South (32), I also found that geography plays a role in the importance of religion in Garden City. Both the United States South and the Midwest tend to be more religious than other areas of the country. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life provides insight into the religious makeup of the United States. The percentages of individuals who believe in “God or a universal spirit” are high in both Georgia and Kansas. Both Garden City and Cobb County are faced with the historical importance of religion and recent changes in immigration settlement patterns.

Moreover, Marquardt and Fortuny demonstrate how multi-ethnic congregations may serve as a model for the broader community (2009, 29). For instance, one parish in their study has developed two programs, one that addresses “logistical problems” within the church and another that focuses on immigrant advocacy and issues of prejudice (26-27). Although these programs are religious in nature, Marquardt and

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8 The actual question posed to participants is: “Do you believe in God or a universal spirit? How certain are you about this belief? Are you absolutely certain, fairly certain, not too certain, or not at all certain?” See: http://religions.pewforum.org/maps.
Fortuny suggest that these programs offer “innovative strategies for dealing with structural and logistical issues that could serve as effective models for the broader community” (29). I also found that the community perceived the way in which multi-ethnic congregations in Garden City addressed the needs of its immigrant population. Programs that emerge from religious institutions and cater specifically to immigrants, like English language programs, or the wider community, such as the childcare center at one Catholic congregation, demonstrate effective ways to serve these newcomers.

Instances of multi-ethnic churches are also present in Apple Pie & Enchiladas: Latino Newcomers in the Rural Midwest (Millard and Chapa, 2004). Latinos serve as founders of churches and they also comprise large portions of the membership base in predominately Anglo churches in the Midwest. In addition to providing social spaces for Latino families to interact, churches also serve as spaces of cultural integration for youth (193). Despite an inclination to become religiously involved, Latino immigrants celebrate their faith in distinct ways that reflect the differences within each community (194). Furthermore, Latinos are challenging the stereotype that Catholicism is the only religion practiced by Hispanics. Millard and Chapa point to the growing number of Protestant churches in the Midwest that offer services in Spanish (178). One commonality shared by the congregations in their study is the tendency for Latino churches or churches with Latino membership to be extremely welcoming, especially to newcomers. I found this to also be the case in Garden City. Many secular organizations demonstrate reluctance to engage the immigrant communities in Garden City because of cultural or language differences. Religious organizations, on the other hand, are always the first to step forward and offer their assistance to these newcomers.
Religion and Contemporary Immigration

Although in some instances secular organizations may be more effective spaces for immigrants, I argue these instances serve as the exception rather than the rule. For certain areas of the United States, the presence of multiple religious organizations is more likely than an abundance of secular organizations. I found this to be true of Garden City, and Marquardt and Fortuny also discuss the historical religious influence in the South (2009). Moreover, religion is more likely to be carried across international borders than are the civic and political skills associated with secular organizations. Of course, secular organizations that promote cooperation and social justice do exist outside of the United States; however, immigrants may not see the need for membership in such an organization while in their home country. Rather, they may join their first secular organization once in the United States in response to the difficulties resulting from living in a new country.

Religious organizations are also designated as safe spaces. The tensions or conflicts that arise in communities or congregations from increasing racial diversity are best mediated in a common space such as the church. The success by which churches navigate these tensions may also be facilitated by a shared set of distinctly religious principles and beliefs. The more commonalities that exist from the onset may indicate that a group has a better chance of solving problems and overcoming difficulties. Religion has always played a prevalent role in civil society. The influx of immigrants with easily adaptable religious practices and beliefs guarantees that American congregations will continue to expand with foreign-born and non-native English speaking members.
I find that multi-ethnic churches in new destinations are sites where social capital is formed and models for how the native-born population receives immigrants into the broader community. The former is not distinct to new immigrant destinations. Religious organizations have many followers that believe faith-based organizations are highly successful generators of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Wood, 2002). Indeed, this social capital is particularly effective as bridging social capital. Churches in Garden City, however, tend to generate bonding social capital, while secular organizations generate both bridging and bonding social capital. Richard Wood asserts that an abundance of social capital in faith-based organizing enables civil society to be effectively linked to the state (2002, 261). Millard and Chapa also agree that religious organizations promote engagement and activism by linking Latino newcomers in the Midwest to broader community issues (2004).

My second finding is more unique to new immigrant destinations. Congregations are often the first sites with a highly visible immigrant presence. Initially, native-born residents may not recognize the subtle changes occurring in their communities until they attend a church service. Religion is a role model for individuals and communities. It influences individuals’ actions and thoughts. A multi-ethnic congregation that takes a pro-active role in welcoming immigrant newcomers is a good indicator of how the broader community will respond.

Multi-ethnic congregations in non-traditional areas of settlement will continue to demonstrate effectiveness in incorporating immigrants into the community. Although secular organizations are also significant, especially in instances where immigrants are
unable to participate congregationally, the salience of religion in the lives of immigrants indicates that congregations will remain spaces of trust and mobilization.
CHAPTER 3
IMMIGRANT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE ROLE OF SECULAR ORGANIZATIONS

In the United States, a society that places a significant emphasis on the process of voting, non-electoral activities that promote and sustain strong democratic civil societies tend to be overlooked. Non-electoral civic engagement activities such as participating in a protest or signing a petition are essential components of democracy. Civic engagement is essential for all members of society, but for immigrants with varying degrees of citizenship statuses non-electoral participation proves to be particularly salient (Barreto and Muñoz, 2003). Immigrants have been changing the demographic landscape of the United States with unmatched rapidity for many years (Ramakrishnan, 2005; Lee and Ramakrishnan, 2006). While some immigrants are able to and choose to exercise their right to vote, 1 others are unable or have no desire to participate in electoral politics. This does not mean that voting, “the most common act of democratic citizenship,” is of little importance (Putnam, 2000, 31). In fact, the ability to hold fair and regular elections seems to be one tried-and-true indicator that democracy does exist (Dahl, 1971).2

However, a lack of voting should not preclude immigrants from political importance. Some immigrants choose to participate by non-electoral means. Of course, some choose not to, but that immigrants comprise such an uncontested vital element of American society, and that they have the potential to enact major political

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1Only citizens of the United States are able to vote; however, permanent residents are able to vote in some local elections that do not require United States citizenship (USCIS Home Page).

2The criteria provided by Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan for a democracy to exist “means the freedom to create political parties and to conduct free and honest elections at regular intervals without excluding any effective political office from direct or indirect electoral accountability” (1978, 5).
changes, highlights the necessity of more studies that examine civic and political participation among immigrants in the United States.

The main purpose of this chapter will be to determine what factors contribute to higher and lower levels of civic participation among distinct ethnic groups and the role civic organizations play in fostering civic participation. First, I will define civic engagement, identifying the importance of and the activities that constitute civic engagement; second, I will determine the importance of immigrant civic engagement, focusing primarily on Latino immigrants, the largest minority population in the United States; third, I will draw on my fieldwork from Garden City where I discovered that Latino immigrants were, on average, less civically engaged when compared with immigrants from places other than Latin America. Nevertheless, I argue that civic engagement does exist in Garden City, although by varying degrees within the Latino immigrant population. Fourth, I provide a case study of the Coalition of Ethnic Minority Leaders, a relatively new civic organization in Garden City that promotes civic participation among different immigrant groups and the wider community. Finally, I will discuss my findings and give suggestions as to the types of civic engagement that should be fostered among immigrants in the United States.

Civic Engagement

In *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert D. Putnam asserts that “American society, like the continent on which we live, is massive and polymorphous, and our civic engagement historically has come in many sizes and shapes” (2000, 27). Putnam examines civic engagement in the United States by assessing Americans’ participation in a variety of formal and informal institutions. For Putnam, almost nothing is off limits when it comes to participatory forms of civic
engagement; belonging to a religious organization, membership in a labor union, or even playing on a sports team are just a few of the ways individuals can participate (Putnam, 2000). Clearly, the opportunities for civic engagement are endless, and participation in these multiple networks is unique to the United States’ history of civic engagement.

Similarly, *The 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation* study conducted by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) examined civic engagement among young Americans. The study identifies three ways in which individuals can participate in public life: civic activities, electoral activities, and political voice activities (CIRCLE, 2006, 6). These three categories are further divided into 19 separate activities, which serve as a composite definition of civic engagement. Civic activities like volunteering focus on the improvement of an individual’s community; electoral activities like voting emphasize the political process; political voice activities, like contacting an elected official, enable individuals to express their political opinions (6).

In comparison, Sidney Verba and Norman H. Nie’s study *Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality* analyzes participation using four general categories: “voting, campaign activity, citizen-initiated contacts, and cooperative participation” (1972, 47). Verba and Nie’s study still holds much relevance for those looking at political participation in the United States today, but their definition of participation, defined as mainly political process activities, tends to be too narrow when discussing immigrant participation. Although Verba and Nie do discuss the importance

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3 “Young Americans” is defined as a resident between the ages of 15-25.
of political participation to “deprived groups,” they limit their focus to African Americans, which only represents a small fraction of the total disempowered sectors of society (149).

However, Verba broaches the topic of civic participation once more in his study *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* where he promotes a broader approach to the definition of participation as well as those included in his study (Verba, Lehman Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). Verba, Lehman Schlozman, and Brady acknowledge that participating in non-political activities “can develop organizational and communications skills that are transferable to politics” (40). Even attending a church service or participating in an organizational activity, they argue, can expose individuals to political messages that may influence future political activities or propensities. Moreover, they extend their study to include Latinos, which they recognize as sharing aspects of exclusion and disempowerment similar to that of African Americans (229). Their study also recognizes the unique language and citizenship barriers to the Latino community (230).

Both Putnam and *The 2006 Civic and Political Health of the Nation* study provide unique insights into the nature of civic engagement in the United States. Putnam finds that a decrease in civic engagement in the United States since the 1980s is responsible for the decline of social capital in the United States. The term ‘social capital’ has a variety of connotations, but Putnam describes social capital as the “connections among individuals-social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (2000, 19). Given the bright outlook of civic life heading into the 1980s,
Putnam’s findings are especially ironic,¹ indicating that since the 1960s each successive generation tends to be less organizationally active (2000, 62). Moreover, since this decline in organizational activity, levels of educational attainment have actually increased (Putnam, 2000, 62). In other words, the decline in civic participation is the greatest among those with the highest levels of education, since those with lower levels of education were less civically engaged in the first place.

The Civic and Political Health of the Nation study finds that civic engagement among young Americans has also declined in recent years. The study finds that more than half of young Americans are “disengaged,” that is, they do not perform more than two activities classified under civic activities or political activities (CIRCLE, 2006, 8). From both extremes, the study found that 7% of young Americans are “hyper-engaged,” or they participate in ten or more activities, and 17% reported no participation in any of the 19 civic engagement activities (8). Despite instances of young Americans participating in several forms of community engagement, the study’s findings, like those of Putnam’s, ultimately offer a discouraging portrait of civic engagement in the United States. The study is even more discouraging if one considers the general consensus that youth are the key indicators of a society’s future.

Immigrant Civic Engagement

Despite the importance of studies like those of Putnam and Verba, these scholars tend to neglect an important dimension to civic engagement in the United States. Not all individuals residing in the United States are able to participate in equal ways. Recent scholarship has focused exclusively on the role of immigrants’ patterns of civic

¹Putnam considers the prediction that the baby boomers would contribute to influxes in organizational membership in the 1980s. This did not prove true, however (2006, 18).
engagement. The aforementioned CIRCLE study (2006), for instance, looks at racial and ethnic disparities in engagement. The study finds that African American youth are the most politically engaged. That is, they are the racial group most likely to be involved with politics on a regular basis.\(^5\) Asian-American youth are also heavily engaged, but Latino youth have the highest rates of disengaged young people,\(^6\) which the study posits may be the result of language or citizenship barriers (20). Interestingly, scholars attribute similar barriers to civic engagement among Latinos of all ages. Various studies that examine Latino political incorporation attribute lower levels of incorporation to the same barriers: citizenship status, English proficiency, length of time in the United States, etc. (Barreto and Woods, 2005, 152).

Michael Stoll and Janelle Wong (2007) specifically address the need for a better understanding of the different factors that contribute to racial and ethnic differences in civic participation. Taking the traditional model of civic participation, which focuses on socioeconomic, religious, and political orientation factors, as their point of departure, they argue that increasing immigration from Asia and Latin America demands a more “comprehensive model of civic participation” (2007, 881). The traditional model, Stoll and Wong find, fails to account for differences in participation among distinct immigrant groups.

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\(^5\)According to the study, African American youth are more likely to vote on a regular basis, donate time and money to political parties, or communicate with the media (CIRCLE 2006, 20).

\(^6\)The study finds that 67% of Latino youth are disengaged, which the study defines as a respondent being unable to “cite two forms of civic or two forms of political engagement” they have done (CIRCLE 2006, 9).
Using data from the 1992-1994 Los Angeles Survey of Urban Inequality (LASUI), Stoll and Wong determine that although the traditional model proves useful for determining participation differences between Whites and Latinos, it is less successful in accounting for differences between Whites and Asians (2007, 896). However, when residential characteristics, racial integration, and migration factors are included, the picture becomes much clearer. Stoll and Wong’s findings are immensely telling; an expanded model of participation demonstrates that both Latinos and Blacks have higher levels of participation than previously thought. Additionally, length of residence in the United States and language proficiency go a long way in explaining the differences in participation between Asians and Whites (Stoll and Wong 2007, 900). Stoll and Wong’s study illuminates previously overlooked factors of participation, which necessitates a more inclusive model; but more importantly, they dispel prior notions of low levels of immigrant civic participation.

Despite their historical presence in the United States, only recently have immigrants started to mobilize around political and social issues. Specifically, anti-immigrant legislation has facilitated immigrant mobilization throughout the country among both documented and undocumented immigrants. The most recent example is the Arizona Senate Bill 1070 introduced in Arizona earlier this year. In short, SB 1070 would make the “failure to carry immigration documents a crime,” and its provision

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7 Despite seemingly outdated data, Stoll and Wong argue that this survey is one of the only sources of data that allows for an “examination of civic participation among multiple ethnic groups within a comparative racial framework” (2007, 886).

8 Specifically, these factors explain more of the gap between Koreans and Whites than Whites and Chinese and Japanese (Stoll & Wong, 2007, 900).

9 SB 1070 is also called the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act.
enabling law enforcement to detain anyone suspected of being an undocumented immigrant would undoubtedly encourage discrimination and harassment (Archibold, 2010). This highly controversial bill is creating fear and tension within the immigrant community, but it represents only one in a string of recent anti-immigrant legislative initiatives. In 2005, the United States House of Representatives passed H.R. 4437, a bill that would have increased penalties on undocumented immigrants and those who employed or assisted them (Barreto et al., 2009, 737). In response to H.R. 4437, during April and May of 2006 millions of Latinos took to the streets protesting in cities all over the United States. The sheer number of those who participated in marches and school and work walkouts demonstrates the capacity of immigrants working within a non-electoral framework. Moreover, immigrants are also demonstrating higher levels of naturalization and electoral participation in recent years, challenging previous notions of Latino immigrants as being slower to naturalize than other immigrant groups. In California, for example, the passage of Proposition 187 encouraged “a large number of Latino non-citizens, perhaps out of fear of losing certain services or status” to “begin the naturalization process” (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura, 2001, 731).

However, not all instances of immigrant civic engagement are occurring in traditional immigrant gateways. Philip Williams and Patricia Fortuny (2007) examine Mexican immigrants’ participation in religious and civic institutions in Immokalee, Florida, a state that is attracting increasingly higher numbers of Mexican immigrants. Unlike Stoll and Wong (2007), who focus on factors that inhibit or encourage civic engagement, Williams and Fortuny examine outcomes from different forms of civic engagement.

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10H.R. 4437 is also known as the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005. It passed in the House but did not pass in the Senate.
engagement, finding that not all forms of civic engagement are equal. Williams and Fortuny measure civic engagement by the ability of organizations to generate social capital; they find that “while religious organizations are an important source of social capital, they may be ill-equipped to deal with the heterogeneity and mobility of immigrant populations” (2007, 234). In Immokalee, the presence of both established\textsuperscript{11} Mexican immigrants, many from traditional sending communities in western Mexico, and newer Mexican immigrants from nontraditional regions of Mexico\textsuperscript{12} has created tensions between the two groups both vying for employment and resources.

Williams and Fortuny find that established immigrants rather than migrant farmworkers are more likely to be involved in religious organizations, and that these religious organizations “tend to reinforce the disparities in social capital” between the two groups (2007, 243). Out of necessity rather than choice, many migrant farmworkers are unable to participate in religious organizations. While they may still retain their religious beliefs,\textsuperscript{13} their long work hours and limited free time may not allow for participation in a congregation (Williams, Steigenga, and Vásquez, 2009, 15). Williams, Steigenga, and Vásquez also state that “demands to be mobile, and the fear to be visible in an increasingly anti-immigrant climate” may discourage congregational participation among Latino immigrants (17). While religious involvement does foster civic engagement, not all immigrants have the same means to participate. On the other

\textsuperscript{11} Williams and Fortuny define “established” immigrants as those who have “been in the United States on a fairly permanent basis for the last 10 or 20 years” (2007, 237).

\textsuperscript{12} New arrivals in Immokalee are from regions or states in southern Mexico, a region that is viewed as being less developed or backwards by established immigrants (Williams et al. 2009, 81).

\textsuperscript{13} Williams, Steigenga, and Vásquez examine the importance of lived religion, which is the study of how men and women “practice their religion in everyday life and the sociopolitical implications of these practices,” among immigrants (2009, 14).
hand, secular organizations, like the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW),\footnote{The CIW is a community-based organization. Its members are mainly Latino, Mayan Indian, and Haitian immigrants. The CIW is committed to fostering leadership, community education and organization skills. See: http://www.ciw-online.org/} seem to be doing a better job in “bridging ethnic and regional differences” and “transforming social capital into political capital” (Williams and Fortuny, 2007, 247). Political capital, which develops from the successful generation of social capital, specifically “seeks to affect political and social change” (235). The social (and political) capital immigrants gain through the CIW enable them to better understand notions of social justice and political transformation.

Immigrant civic engagement is an important aspect of contemporary United States society. Increasing numbers of immigrants are naturalizing and even more are taking to the streets to challenge what they perceive to be unjust and exclusionary policies. The 2006 immigrants’ rights protests signify a highly visible indicator that immigrants have the power to organize and act. As Stoll and Wong demonstrate, however, not all immigrants are predisposed to engage in equal forms and levels of civic engagement (2007). Moreover, as Williams and Fortuny show, not all forms of immigrant civic engagement are equally accessible to all nor produce equal outcomes (2007).

\textbf{Coalition of Ethnic Minority Leaders of Garden City}

During my field research in Garden City, I interviewed dozens of immigrants and native-born residents as well as attended both cultural and religious festivals. What I discovered was a receptive and culturally diverse community that, contrary to its surroundings, acknowledged that the success of their community was due to their
thriving immigrant community. Although many immigrants in Garden City typify the “birds of passage” image of the temporary, single, male migrant (Bailey, 1912), many also have families and children. Additionally, high levels of religiosity, which are characteristic of the Midwest and rural America in general, create an opportunity for Latino immigrants to attend church services and participate in religious activities. For lack of hostility and reasons relating to family and religion, I expected to encounter high corresponding levels of civic engagement. While Garden City does have an active civil society, with numerous cultural activities and organizations, the levels of Latinos engaging in organizational activities seems to be no higher than its native-born residents.

In terms of political mobilization, Latinos in Garden City did mobilize during the 2006 immigrants’ rights protests. In April, several thousand people rallied at a community park and several Latino-owned businesses closed for the day (Bershof, 2006). Additionally, Tyson Fresh Meats, the primary employer of immigrants in Garden City, closed for the day and the school district reported twice as many student absences (2006). In recent years, however, Latinos have been generally inactive politically compared to other groups of immigrants in Garden City. I argue this is due to the perceived absence of hostility or threat towards the Latino community. One woman I spoke with had taken part in the 2006 immigrants’ rights protests along with her husband and two children, but she explicitly stated that she had not felt the need to be politically active since the marches (interview, June 10, 2010). She also indicated that

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15 Wealthy feedlot owners in Garden City rely on immigrant labor in their feedlots and fields. Although many feedlot owners live outside of town, they are considered community leaders in Garden City. I posit that their positive feelings serve as an example for how the rest of the community perceives the immigrant community.
while it felt good to be in solidarity with so many Latinos throughout the United States, she also felt far removed from the threat posed by H.R. 4437 because she did not feel that she lived in a politically threatening environment (interview, June 10, 2010).

For immigrants from other parts of the world, however, there is a stronger need for mobilization. For instance, Garden City has a substantial Muslim population.\(^6\) Shortly before I arrived, several leaders from the local Muslim community had requested that a section of the municipal cemetery be dedicated to the Muslim residents of Garden City (Ahmad, 2010). Their request was denied on the grounds that a community cemetery should not “discriminate along racial, ethnic or religious lines” (2010). However, several people I spoke with believe that this lack of accommodation was due to a historical absence of Muslim presence in Garden City, which has resulted in Garden City residents being uncomfortable with these newcomers (interview, June 9, 2010). Indeed, despite Garden City’s long history of immigration, there have been few non-Christian immigrants.\(^7\)

A clear misunderstanding about these newcomers is evident in one individual’s online commentary to a newspaper article discussing the tribal divisions within the Somali community:

Nine to ten different tribes, and some with “tribal divides”? Does this sound familiar? They might not carry names such as Vatos Locos, etc., but how much longer before we have “turf” wars going on? It seems the gang problem in GC is under control. I do not want to be worrying about other types of “wars” or skirmishes. I don’t think the police department has

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\(^6\) A leader of the Somali community I spoke with estimates that there are about 500 Muslims in Garden City (interview, June 9, 2010). I received similar estimates from other members of the community. This is a substantial number considering the absence of Muslims in Garden City prior to 2000.

\(^7\) The documentary \textit{Welcome to Shelbyville} (2009) portrays a situation similar to that which exists in Garden City. Also set in America’s bible belt, \textit{Welcome to Shelbyville} examines the complex relations between the African American, Latinos, white, and Somali residents in one small Tennessee community.
enough cops should these tribes begin fighting amongst themselves. Heck, there are times when I can drive all over Garden City and not see ONE cop car (but that's for another time). I hope the "powers that be" are preparing for what could happen (Commentary on article by Gray, 2011).

Thus, because newer arrivals to Garden City lack the resources of established immigrants, they have reasons to be more politically mobilized than Latinos. Their distinct cultural and religious beliefs are unfamiliar to both native and non-native residents in Garden City. One individual, witnessing the various issues faced by the non-native population, has stepped forward to offer his assistance. Jonathan Galia is a Baptist minister and a chaplain at Tyson Fresh Meats. The Tyson Foods’ chaplaincy program has been in place since 2000 and employs about 120 chaplains to serve their growing work force (Shellenbarger, 2010). Tyson Foods, Inc. believes the services of chaplain in the workplace reduces turnover, and other companies employ chaplains to handle disputes (Shellenbarger, 2010). The chaplains provide a wide array of services including performing at weddings or funerals, visiting factories, meeting with employees, and providing encouragement and support free of charge (Shellenbarger, 2010).

I interviewed Galia over lunch one afternoon (interview, June 15, 2010). Having left the Philippines 17 years ago, Galia is himself an immigrant. As a chaplain, Galia has experienced firsthand the shift in the immigrant profile coming to Garden City. While the majority of Tyson employees go to Galia for spiritual guidance, a growing number of non-Christian immigrants are left out. Although Galia may not be able to provide spiritual guidance, he can provide other types of counsel. Many non-Christian immigrants go to him seeking everyday advice (interview, June 15, 2010).

However, Galia realized that he was unable to conquer all of the language and cultural barriers present in such a diverse population. It was this encounter that enabled
Galina to recognize the need for a common group that could serve the needs of all types of individuals. After much consideration, the Coalition of Ethnic Minority Leaders met for the first time in June of 2010. Its vision: to “create and maintain an environment of mutual respect, understanding and cooperation among minority groups and empower them to responsibly participate in building a healthier Garden City” (see Appendix A).

The leadership of the Coalition is comprised of selected individuals from the various ethnic minority groups residing in Garden City. As of November of 2010, the following communities are represented by the Coalition: Vietnamese, Filipino, Burmese, Somali, Oromo, and Salvadoran (Appendix). Despite the fact that Mexicans comprise the largest minority population in Garden City, no other Latin American immigrant group other than the Salvadoran is represented on the Coalition.

An advisory board, whose members are community leaders handpicked by the Coalition, within the Coalition also exists. The advisory board is composed of community leaders representing various community interests. Currently, the advisory board consists of a former city mayor, a representative from the Garden City Police Department, a representative from Tyson Foods, a representative from Garden City Unified School District (USD 457), a representative from Kansas State University Extension Office, a representative from the Chamber of Commerce, a representative from the Refugee Task Force, a representative for Garden City economic development, a representative from Garden City cultural relations, a representative from the Kansas Board of Regents, and a representative from the United Methodist Mexican American Ministries. The advisory board provides organizational guidance, facilitates “healthy dialogue with the coalition leaders,” helps with bridging communications between
different ethnic groups, and promotes “cultural enhancement programs” (Coalition Advisory Board document).

The Coalition meets monthly. Leaders of the various ethnic groups identify several individuals who attend the monthly meetings along with representatives of civic groups and local government leaders. Here ethnic minorities are able to communicate the different challenges they are facing and brainstorm how to effectively overcome these challenges. Likewise, the city is able to relay important information to the different immigrant populations. For instance, a representative of the Garden City Police Department met with the coalition in June 2010 to discuss a new neighborhood watch program. The representative encouraged members to partake in “community-oriented policing” and alert the police when they see or hear suspicious activity in their neighborhoods” (Gray, 2010). One of the biggest problems facing communities with large numbers of immigrants is a reluctance to communicate with the law enforcement because of language barriers or fear of reprisal. This is why legislation like Arizona’s SB 1070 can be so detrimental to communities with large undocumented immigrant populations. No one is willing to step forward for fear of being persecuted. Additionally, some immigrants originate from a country where police are untrustworthy or corrupt; therefore, contacting the police is not culturally familiar. Efforts at communication like those initiated by the coalition in Garden City are a step in the right direction to aiding both local law enforcement and immigrants. Although spearheaded by Galia, the coalition’s success is due to the civic engagement of both immigrants and native-born residents. In my interview, Galia emphasized that the coalition is a way of changing the
blueprint of helplessness, which is so often imposed on immigrants, to one of self-reliance (interview, June 15, 2010).

Although members from many different immigrant communities\(^{18}\) are taking part in the coalition, one group is notably absent: Latinos. Other than Salvadorians, the coalition has few Latino participants. During my stay in Garden City I spoke several times with Rachael Gray, a reporter at the *Garden City Telegram*, the local newspaper. Gray has written extensively on immigration issues in Garden City and is currently working on a story that addresses the issue of the lack of Latino participation in the coalition. When I asked her why she thought there was little Latino presence in something as groundbreaking and beneficial as the coalition she responded: “Because they’re not a new population and there are enough people willing to help newcomers in their own communities. This is the same with the Vietnamese and Laotian populations who have been here for some time” (interview, June 20, 2010).

In other words, Latino immigrants in Garden City have their own networks for helping newcomers navigate the trials and tribulations of a new home. They address issues or problems through personal or kinship networks. For instance, a Mexican male informant told me that he encouraged his brother to move to Garden City from California (interview, June 9, 2010). His brother immigrated to California, where many of the informant’s family members live, in 1999 but was unable to find work. Upon encouragement from his brother, the informant’s brother relocated to Garden City within two years of arriving in California. The informant’s brother did not speak any English when he arrived in Garden City, but he was able to navigate this unfamiliar community

\(^{18}\)At the first meeting of the coalition, leaders from Oromo, Burmese, Vietnamese, Salvadoran, Somali and Filipino communities were present.
with the help of his brother (the informant) and his brother's family and friends. The informant’s brother was able to find work through a friend of the informant, and even though Garden City is much smaller than the city in California where his brother lived, the informant told me “he was surprised at the many friendships he was able to form so quickly here” (interview, June 9, 2010).

In a recent correspondence with Galia, I asked him whether he thought there is less of a need for Mexicans to utilize support networks, such as the Coalition. He responded:

I believe that even if the Mexicans compose more than half of the population in a given community, there is still a need for them to organize … there is always strength in being united … this remains, however, a challenge to their leaders, if they find the wisdom and all the intrinsic values that go with it, to come together or not. Their non-participation in the Coalition is not of our own choosing … the door is wide open for them to unite with us, yes … even lead us. On another note, if they have found self-sufficiency from the various networks that supported them … this is one thing they can share to other ethnic minority groups in a given community. It is noteworthy to see a particular community share empowerment to others (Jonathan Galia, personal communication, February 14, 2011).

Discussions

Stoll and Wong (2007) determined several factors that are not included in traditional models of civic participation that explain differences in immigrant participation. The two factors that I found to be particularly relevant for my research on immigrant civic participation in Garden City were language proficiency and length of residence in the United States. When I asked about participation, low levels of English proficiency and short periods of residency negatively influenced whether an individual had participated or would be likely to participate. However, I also found that even established Latino immigrants with advanced English proficiency and many years of residency in Garden City are also less likely to participate in civic organizations. For
instance, the Latino immigrants who had participated in a protest or a march had not done so in the past three years. Presumably, this means that the last time they protested was during the 2006 immigrants' rights protests. Perhaps protest participation was not sustained because of lack of the need for such action. Furthermore, similar to Williams and Fortuny (2007), I found that religious organizational activity tended to foster rather than fix the disparities in social capital. Many Latino immigrants participate in religious activities or attend church services regularly, but similar to Immokalee there is a substantial presence of Latino migrant farm workers in Garden City, especially from El Salvador. Although Mexicans do not participate in the Coalition, the Salvadorians do. These migrant farm workers hold religious beliefs but are less likely to participate congregationally. Moreover, unlike in Immokalee, there are a growing number of immigrants who are not Christian and have no congregation available to them in Garden City. For these immigrants, secular organizations like the Coalition of Ethnic Minority Leaders are their only options.

Putnam asserts that “not all networks have exactly the same effects: friends may improve health, whereas civic groups strengthen democracy” (2007, 138). Different forms of civic engagement produce different forms of social capital. Latinos in Garden City tend to participate in different forms of civic engagement than do non-Latino immigrants. Specifically, many established\(^\text{19}\) Latinos participate in religious organizational activity; and like the congregations in Immokalee, congregations in Garden City tend to reinforce differences along social and regional lines. Secular organizations, on the other hand, tend to be more effective in encouraging immigrant

\(^{19}\) I define “established” immigrants as those who have been in Garden City for at least 10 years.
civic participation and producing “political capital” (Williams and Fortuny, 2007, 251). This assertion contradicts several scholars who argue that religious organizations are more effective in generating social capital (Wood, 2002; Verba et al., 1995), but in Garden City religious organizations are not even an option for several groups of immigrants.

Latinos in the United States are becoming more visible every day. While their levels of participation in civic engagement activities may not surpass that of other groups, successful outcomes like the 2006 immigrants’ rights protests demonstrate the potential of this “sleeping giant” (Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura, 2001). These successes and failures do not go unnoticed; rather, people learn from them. Linz and Stepan (1996) discuss this concept of political learning. Their discussion revolves around regime transitions and democratic consolidation, but Tseng and Wong (2005) aptly apply this notion of political learning to immigrant families.

Regardless of whether parents influence their children’s political tendencies or vice versa, sharing and learning is an inevitable outcome of civic participation, which will no doubt facilitate higher levels of civic engagement among immigrants in the future. Thus, to understand civic engagement in the United States, more work needs to be done in the area of immigrant civic engagement. More studies need to take into consideration the different backgrounds and environments that shape immigrants’ understanding and propensity towards civic engagement.
CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION

Findings

Definitions of immigrant civic engagement vary significantly. From a very broad interpretation, incorporation can encompass countless civic and political activities. Furthermore, at the lowest level a group has no representation, while at the highest level “racial minorities have an equal or leading role in a dominant coalition that is strongly committed to minority group interests” (Geron, 2005, 12-13). Indeed, the literature on immigrant civic and political incorporation tends to agree that incorporation is a sliding process rather than a fixed set of events.

My research indicates that distinct networks provide for an easier or more difficult process of incorporation for immigrants in Garden City. Moreover, not all networks that can facilitate incorporation do. Latino immigrants in Garden City may participate in religious organizations for the sole reason of worship and fellowship. Although participation in voluntary activities organized by the church may be a byproduct of this relationship, established Latino immigrants generally do not view the church as a vehicle for political or social empowerment. I attribute this to the substantial number of Latino immigrants present in Garden City, which enables them to rely on their co-ethnics instead of outside help. However, I do not think this inward looking approach as manifested in the ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods and extensive co-ethnic networks is detrimental to the overall incorporation of immigrants in Garden City.

In his article, “E Pluribus Unum,” Putnam finds that individuals living in an ethnically diverse community are more likely to “hunker” down (2007, 149). This hunkering down effect, Putnam argues, is characterized by distrust of others and less
participation and activism, which results in lower levels of social capital. Putnam counters this by asserting that over time ethnically diverse communities will overcome “the negative effects of diversity” by creating broad, more encompassing identities (139). However, Garden City has an exceedingly high level of ethnic diversity and has already demonstrated a resistance to hunkering down and subsequent low levels of social capital. Moreover, Garden City and other new destinations have only recently experienced an influx in immigrants and thus do not have available the lengthy time frame Putnam claims is necessary to overcoming such barriers.

Moderate or even high levels of social capital in Garden City do not indicate perfect inclusion of all members of the community, however. New immigrants are arriving in Garden City without the resources of the established Latino population. In this way, my research agrees with Williams and Fortuny who find that secular organizations are sometimes better at promoting social capital and incorporation (2007). Civic organizations, like the Coalition of Ethnic Minority Leaders, helps empower the significantly disempowered, which is demonstrated by the participation of Salvadorans and the absence of Mexicans. Although both are Latin American immigrant groups, Salvadorans are more disadvantaged than Mexicans in Garden City because of their shorter lengths of residency and lower levels of English proficiency.

Immigrants may reject any encouragement towards incorporation for any number of reasons: “they see themselves as sojourners, they want to keep their children and culture unchanged, they feel deep hostility to the host country, or they fear harm from the police or immigration agency” (Hochschild and Mollenkopf, 2009, 26). Ironically, however, immigrants may actually be at an advantage when it comes to overcoming
disempowering situations. Levine find that immigrants possess two assets: “the power of group identity in overcoming collective-action problems” and immigrants are both bilingual and bicultural” (2008, 103). Thus, immigrants may actually be at an advantage when it comes to overcoming disempowering situations, but the push towards becoming disengaged and becoming isolated is also strong. Immigrants need encouragement; hence the importance of studying civic and religious organizations. These networks are influential in enabling participation. Although my case study of Garden City is one specific example, my findings can be applicable to many cases.

In the case of Garden City, I conclude that secular civic organizations are a better resource for the disempowered sectors of society. This could be different for communities without a diverse immigrant population or an abundance of civic organizations. I recognize, however, that my findings may not be applicable to all cases of new destinations because Garden City is unique in two aspects: there is an established immigrant group and Garden City is part of a majority-minority county. Although Kansas is relatively new destinations for immigrants, Latino immigrants have lived in Garden City since the 1900s. The recent arrival of even more Latino immigrants has created an established Latino population in Garden City. Thus, while other new destinations are often unfamiliar with Latino immigrants, Garden City is not. However, for non-Latino immigrants, Garden City becomes more of a typical new destination.

Despite Garden City’s uniqueness, however, one distinct example of a new destination provides a relevant comparison: Dalton, Georgia. Hernández-León and Zúñiga (2003) find that along with people, social capital also has the potential to relocate to new destinations. Mexican newcomers in Dalton, Georgia redeploy social
capital, which has accumulated among Mexican populations in traditional immigrant destinations. Similar to Dalton, Garden City also has a significant Latino population that has migrated to Garden City from within the United States. Many of these immigrants come from traditional immigrant states, such as California and Texas.

**Recommendations**

As for recommendations, Peter Levine discusses the importance of civic engagement in terms of young Americans, specifically immigrant youth (2008). Young people, Levine argues, “have a fresh outlook and relatively light investment in the status quo; hence they often lead social change, as in the civil rights movement, the women’s movement—but also European fascism” (102). Moreover, being an immigrant may encourage both standard and less customary forms of civic engagement. Less standard forms of civic engagement, such as translating for family members, are common in Garden City. Although I was able to conduct interviews in Spanish, I sometimes encountered difficulties with specific words or phrases. In more than one case I was fortunate for the help from the informant’s child. A similar article by Stepick, Stepick, and Labissiere discuss immigrant youth and the future of United States civil society (2008). They argue that how immigrant youth incorporate into society will influence the future of civil society in the United States.

I emphasize the importance of youth because Garden City has a growing population of immigrant youth. These immigrant youth are part of the larger pattern of families that have settled in new destinations. Instead of circular migration, these children will be raised permanently in the United States. One informant I spoke with told me that although they miss their family in Mexico, it is harder to visit because the trip is expensive, but also because his children are not familiar with Mexico (interview, June
16, 2010). Although his children speak Spanish and English fluently, this individual meant that the culture was different and unfamiliar to his children. Therefore, if fewer immigrants in Garden City are returning home and more children are remaining their entire lives in the United States, the importance of immigrant youth will conform to scholars like Levine (2008) and Stepick, Stepick, and Labissiere (2008).

**Immigration: Public Policy**

Although only a brief snapshot of a case study of immigrant incorporation in a new destination, my research informs the ongoing public policy debate on immigration. In his overview of policy-making models, Hayes asserts that “rational decision-making is possible only where two certain very restrictive preconditions are met: agreement on objectives and a clear understanding of how to achieve them” (1992, 142). Unfortunately, neither of these conditions is currently met, which is why immigration policy in the United States is inadequate at best, failed at worst.

Agreement and understanding of immigration in the United States is missing from the larger immigration debate. The aim of my study is to add to the larger body of migration literature on new destinations while also providing information regarding the realities of immigration in order to overcome general misunderstandings that hinder immigration policy progress.

**Future Avenues for Research**

Several aforementioned limitations to my study may provide fruitful avenues for future research. A deeper understanding of the process of political incorporation would benefit from an analysis of the electoral habits of Garden City’s immigrant population. Furthermore, an in-depth examination of the religious landscape of Garden City would
provide a more informed conclusion regarding the practice and importance of religion in the everyday lives of immigrants.
APPENDIX: DRAFT OF COALITION OF ETHNIC MINORITY LEADERS

(Garden City, KS)

CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I

NAME and PURPOSE

The name of this organization is Coalition of Ethnic Minority Leaders (Garden City, KS), henceforth known as Coalition. The purpose of this Coalition is to foster friendship among various ethnic communities in Garden City to promote better cultural understanding, civic cooperation and promote unity towards building a progressive community.

ARTICLE II

LOCATION

The base of operation of the Coalition is in Garden City, KS 67846.

ARTICLE III

OFFICERS and GOVERNING BODY

Section 1. The leadership of the Coalition is known as the Council of Leaders. It is composed of representative leaders coming from various ethnic minority groups with officers whose duties will be the same as those enumerated in the Constitution and By-Laws of the Coalition.

a. Officers of the Council of Leaders – are given the task to implement the programs of the Coalition as decided by the Council. The officers of the Council of Leaders are:

President - will chair all meetings of the Council of Leaders. The President will implement the programs of the association and has the power to appoint and delegate leaders of working committees.

Vice-President - will assist the President on all Coalition’s functions. Will help develop, plan, and supervise the association’s organized activities specifically within the main base.

Secretary – will record the minutes of the monthly meetings and is responsible in sending invitations to resource speakers for ongoing dialogues.
Treasurer - will be responsible for the accounting of all funds entering or leaving the Coalition and submits a financial report that will be presented during the general membership’s regular quarterly meetings.

Public Relations Officer - is given the task to promote the programs of the Coalition in various areas of operation. Will be responsible in advancing concerns for community relations and takes the lead in releasing information pertaining to the activities of the association.

Advisory Board – are leaders in the community duly appointed by the Council for any given year. As much as seven (7) members will be considered for the Board. A letter of invitation will be sent by the Council to prospective leaders and an official appointment will be made upon the leader's acceptance to sit in the Advisory Board. The existence of the Advisory Board is solely to give guidance and direction to the programs of the Coalition. Its members have no voting privileges.

**ARTICLE IV**

**MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1. Council Member - are active members selected to sit on the Coalition’s governing body who take responsibility, together with the other members of the Council, in the management of the Coalition. Members of the Council are officially chosen by their respective communities and formally endorsed to represent their organization. The Council Member’s tenure of service will be for one year. Perpetual membership to the Council can be considered for as long as annual endorsement of a respective community is given.

Section 3. If an elected position should become vacant for any reason whatsoever, the Council shall fill the position by appointment upon the recommendation of a particular community. Unanimous approval of the Council is required for appointment.

**ARTICLE V**

**FINANCES**

Section 1. Income will be derived primarily to offset operational expenses and will be used to fulfill the purpose of the Council. Income will be derived primarily from fund-raising activities and membership donations.

Section 2. Income will not accrue to an individual Council member except through the remuneration for services rendered as deemed appropriate by the Council.

Section 3. Annual audits may be required and the services of an outside party will be sought. If required, audits will be paid for by the Council.
Section 4. No part of the net earnings of the Council shall unduly benefit or be inappropriately distributed to its members, officers, or private persons. The Council shall be authorized to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make distributions in furtherance of the proposed purpose.

Section 5. At no time shall account balance exceed $5,000.00. Distribution of excess funds will be made to local charities chosen by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Council, that are authorized voting rights, present at the applicable Council meeting.

ARTICLE VI

ACTIVITIES

These activities could consist of the following, but are not limited to; donations, car washes, bake sales, etc. No part of the activities of the Council shall be involved in political activities to include the supporting of a person, a union movement, legislation, or any type of political campaign. All activities of the Council will conform and be in strict adherence to the laws of the local government and of the United States of America.

ARTICLE VII

MEETINGS

Section 1. Monthly meetings are scheduled every last Saturday of the month. The Council may change this day if it conflicts with other events or for any special reasons. Advisory Board members are invited to be present in any Council meetings.

Section 2. The Council of Leaders sets the agenda of the meetings and may call special meetings at any time deemed necessary.

ARTICLE VIII

ELECTION OF COUNCIL OFFICERS

The election of officers for the Council will be held every twelfth month of the year or otherwise moved to another date by a majority vote of the members of the Council. Voting members should be present during the election and if in case of any foreseen absence by a voting member, other forms of casting the ballot will be recommended by the Council of Leaders.

ARTICLE IX

ADOPTION and AMENDMENTS
This constitution will become effective upon adoption by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Council membership that are authorized voting rights who are present at the applicable Council meeting.

Adoption of this constitution will abolish any and all prior constitutions and rules of the Council.

Section 1. This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the voting membership that who are present at the applicable general membership meeting.

Section 2. Proposed amendments will be introduced/reviewed one month prior to proposed implementation to be considered.

Section 3. The Council of Leaders must approve all amendments before they may be presented to the voting members for adoption.

Section 4. This constitution cannot be amended to omit a statement of the nature and purpose of the Council or the provision for the disposal of residual assets and fulfillment of liabilities if the Council is dissolved.

ARTICLE X

DISSOLUTION

Section 1. Dissolution of the Coalition may be made by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Council members that have authorized voting rights who are present at the applicable Council meeting.

Section 2. Upon dissolution of the Coalition all funds and property, real and personal, will be used to satisfy any of its outstanding debts, liabilities, or obligations. The balance of these assets will be disposed of as determined by the Council.

Signed:  November 20, 2010

Vietnamese Community of Garden City

______________________________            ______________________________
Fil-Am Association of Southwest Kansas

______________________________            ______________________________
Burmese Association of Southwest Kansas

______________________________            ______________________________
Somali Community of Southwest Kansas
Oromo Community of Southwest Kansas

Salvadorian Community of Southwest Kansas
LIST OF REFERENCES


Welcome to Shelbyville. 2009. Dir. Kim Snyder. BeCause Foundation. DVD.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Chelsea Marie Braden was born in 1986 in Seoul, South Korea, and adopted as an infant by her parents, Victor and Marla Braden. She grew up in Lawrence, Kansas, with her parents and younger sister. In 2008, Chelsea graduated from the University of Kansas with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish and international studies. She then relocated to Gainesville, Florida, and worked at the University of Florida English Language Institute before entering the Master of Arts in Latin American studies program at the University of Florida. She received her Master of Arts in Latin American studies in 2011, where she specialized in political science. Her research interests include Latin American migration and new immigrant destinations. During her time at the University of Florida, Chelsea served as a graduate assistant for Dr. Philip Williams and Dr. Manuel Vásquez.