

MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS IN MEATPACKING AREAS OF KANSAS:
TRANSITION AND ACQUISITION OF CULTURAL CAPITAL

by

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B.A., Universidad Externado de Colombia, 1997

M.A, Universiad Nacional de Colombia, 2003

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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Abstract

A number of cities in Kansas have experienced rapid growth in Hispanic population during the last twenty five years, due to immigration related in particular to the development of the meatpacking industry in the region. Garden City, Dodge City, and Liberal in southwest Kansas and Emporia in eastern Kansas have undergone significant transformation due to the influx of immigrants, the large majority of whom are of Mexican background. The present research approaches these immigrants from a sociological perspective, observing their cultural characteristics in order to understand who they are, and the process they face when adapting to the receiving environment, as a process of acquisition of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977). This study focuses on the elements from Midwestern culture that are adopted and adapted, as well as the elements from the immigrants' cultural backgrounds that are softened or modified in order to fit within the receiving environment. The study examines these processes, from the theoretical perspective modeled by Pierre Bourdieu, as an attempt to develop an interpretive and comprehensive approach of immigrant experiences.

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Dedication

To my beautiful wife Karina, whose permanent and unconditional support and encouragement provided the strength to continue the “*long and winding road*” of graduate school. And to my son Simon for being the biggest and most beautiful accomplishment in my life.

Preface

In fall of 2003 I had the chance to come to Kansas State University to pursue a doctoral degree in Sociology. At that time, my idea consisted of working on a topic related to my home country, Colombia. However, my job as a research assistant for Dr. Leonard Bloomquist on a local food systems project put me in contact with the Mexican community in Kansas, which performs important work in agriculture.

That same year, there was political turmoil in the U.S. due to the fierce presidential campaign. Along with the war in Iraq, abortion, and same sex marriage, the issue of undocumented Hispanic immigrants was one of the most common subjects of debate. The campaign ended in the reelection of George W. Bush. Despite the presidential race being over, the war kept going, and nothing changed in terms of abortion and same sex marriages. For undocumented immigrants, though, the whole picture became more strict and demanding. Thousands of people were deported, and thousands of American born Hispanic children are now living in foster homes because their parents were sent back to México.

The growing resentment against Hispanic immigrants in the U.S., and the constant attacks by social conservatives who consider them a threat to the American culture and job security, led me to go farther in trying to understand who they are, why they came to the United States, and above all, what was the process of adaptation like for them in an environment which is not friendly. During the last three years I have spent most of my time focused on trying to understand the experience of Mexican immigrants in Kansas, and the experiences of the subsequent generations who grow up in a dichotomous context of the Mexican household and the Anglo society.

In 2005 Dr. Bloomquist passed away, and after a period of uncertainty I had the fortune of being mentored by Dr. Gerad Middendorf who supported the particular approach that I wanted to take for this study, using the theoretical framework of cultural capital, developed by Pierre

Bourdieu. Dr. Middendorf's support and guidance were vital for this study, in the sense that I decided to employ a theory not often used in the U.S., and not used previously to study the adaptation of immigrants to a receiving environment.

As a foreigner I also went through the process of establishing my relationship of distance and proximity to the dominant Anglo community, though my condition as a PhD student at K-State eased my relationship with both academic and non-academic communities. Nonetheless, Manhattan is different from the communities of Emporia, Dodge City, and Garden City. In Manhattan, almost half of the population is college students, and the constant influx of foreign students makes the local community accustomed to seeing people from other countries and skin colors and diverse cultural backgrounds. However, it does not mean an immediate acceptance of all of them. It is important to point out that, despite the sympathy that I might have for the subjects of the study, being a Hispanic myself, I have tried to keep the potential bias out of the research. In order to do so, I have tried to not draw conclusions or make arguments unless it is supported by the data collected during the study.

The experience of doing this research could not be more interesting, both as a Hispanic and as a graduate student of Sociology. I interviewed members of both Hispanic and Anglo communities from Emporia, Garden City and Dodge City, about their experience of migrating to the heart of United States. I visited Emporia several times to see with my own eyes the city, in order to understand it as social scientist.

The Meatpacking Plant

In fall of 2005, I had the chance to visit the Tyson meatpacking plant in Emporia with a group of graduate students from the department of meat sciences at Kansas State University. The first thing I noticed when arriving to Emporia was the intense smell of “shit” that slapped me in the face. It was a warm day, and the industrial park in which the plant is located was entirely possessed by the stink of thousands of cows in line for the slaughter floor. I was delighted when talking to a worker about the stink, he just smiled and replied “*That's the smell of money, man...the smell of money*”.

Meat sciences students visit the plant on a regular basis, as part of their professional training. Despite being on the slaughter floor, surrounded by Spanish speaking people performing hazardous jobs, the students were executing tasks that clearly showed the privileged nature of their training, perhaps as future administrators and executives of a food corporation. They cordially allowed me to join them on their field visit, as long as I helped them with their job, tagging carcasses at the disassembly line. It gave me the opportunity to witness first hand, like a war reporter in the battlefield, the struggle of immigrant laborers, primarily of Mexican origin, at the meatpacking plant. One of the toughest jobs in the U.S.

Although wearing a white apron, borrowed yellow rubber boots, goggles, mask and a white helmet that identified me as part of the lowest rank in the plant, it was absolutely impossible not to see the scenario from a sociological perspective. Never before in several years of study was the concept of worker alienation, as coined by Karl Marx, clearer to me. The absolute disconnection between the worker and the product of his/her labor. It was the ultimate mechanization of labor, in which every person, as a part of clockwork machine performed a specific function, for which he is remunerated economically. From the very beginning of the line, where the cow is “sacrificed” with a hydraulic hammer, hanged, bled, skinned, and finally disassembled, it is clear that every task involves a risk that ranges from being kicked by an 800 pound dying steer, to mutilating yourself, the constant danger of working with knives on a rapidly moving line, to the common problem with the carpal tunnel syndrome.

There were three supervisors walking all over the slaughter floor, wearing their yellow helmets, and aprons of different color. Fluent in both English and Spanish, they established a link between the employees and their own superiors. Though their attitude was tough, clearly establishing the distance between them and the workers, they were nice to the line workers, sometimes stopping behind one of them, to explain the right way to perform a particular task, according to the standards of the company.

At the end of the partial shift performed with the graduate students of meat sciences, we joined the regular workers at the food court - a space with a size that cannot serve all the employees of one shift at the same time. Lines of tables are located in a place with a couple of

TV sets and vending machines. The smell of ground beef is constant in the air, inviting workers to buy tacos, burritos, and other products imported from Mexico. The restaurant offered a variety of Mexican-like food, cooked by Hispanic women, most of them of Mexican origin. At the end of that day, with the “*smell of money*” imprinted in my nose, we left the plant, while hundreds of men and some women were approaching the gate to begin the night shift.

South of the Tracks

On September 11, 2007 I returned to Emporia to start my research fieldwork. Everyone was commemorating the 6th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of 2001. American flags waved lazily in the air permeated by patriotism.

I first arrived at the Emporia State University campus, and walked straight to Commercial Avenue. I found myself walking in a place I knew through maps and literature, but that for the very first time it was sharing with me its transition from a primarily Anglo based community, to a more diverse one. Though I was prepared and expecting to see spatial division between the Anglo and Mexican immigrant communities, I have to admit that it was shocking to see with my own eyes how clear it was in the town.

Both Hispanics and Anglos were friendly to me. Being Hispanic created a link with the people, although it was noticeable they kept a distance from me. It was obvious that I was not considered one of them, and my role as a university student put me in a different space. Such distance was necessary for the sake of the research, since is difficult to separate yourself from a topic that can affect the research personally. At the same time, being a PhD student, and able to communicate fluently in English helped to ease the interaction with the Anglo interviewees. Also, being a Colombian helped them to feel free to express their thoughts about the Mexican immigrants in a more relaxed way.

Despite my positive experience with both communities, racial tension is clearly present in Emporia. A vocal member of the Anglo community in Emporia, despite showing interest in participating, once he realized my name was Hispanic, immediately refused to collaborate, giving lack of time as his reason. Racism comes out through comments, behaviors and letters to

the editor of the local newspaper. The expressions used by members of the Anglo community reflect the conception they have regarding newcomers in general. The image of immigrants as disease carriers and intellectually challenged, therefore inferior to Anglos, surprised me. I could not believe I was reading such racist comments in the 21st century.

A month after I finished writing my dissertation, Tyson announced the closure of one shift of its meatpacking plant, due to a production which exceeded its capability to bring cattle from other parts of the state for slaughtering. It meant the displacement of 1500 employees. Members of the social conservative sector of Emporia considered the fact that 1500 foreigners would leave the town a blessing. On the other hand, other members of the Anglo community manifested their concerns regarding the consequences for the local economy. Most of the former employees decided to move out of Emporia, looking for jobs in southwest Kansas, where they were told they would be given hiring priority. Hopefully, there will be another study in the future to give account of that specific measure.

CHAPTER 1 - The Study

Statement of the Issue and Justification

Latino and especially Mexican immigration has long been an issue in U.S. history. Currently we are witnessing a growth in anti-immigrant sentiment across the country. Some supporters highlight the benefits obtained by the U.S. through immigrant labor. Critics claim that they are stealing jobs from Americans. Even though Kansas has always had a permanent Mexican population, over the last 25 years the state has experienced a large and rapid growth in Latino population (see figure C.1), primarily linked to work opportunities at the meatpacking plants and other agribusiness related jobs. In the southwestern counties of Finney, Ford and Seward, population data show that about 50% of the population is Hispanic or Latino in areas that 50 years ago were entirely dominated by White Anglo. Emporia, in eastern Kansas, is going through the same process as the southwestern region of the state, showing a rapid growth of Hispanic population, after the opening of the meatpacking plant. The cultural landscape in these areas is now totally different, and about half of the immigrants speak English *less than “very well”* (see Figure C.2)¹.

Many studies have been done in order to understand immigration as a social phenomenon (Rose 1965; Frehill-Rowe 1993; Portes & Rumbaut 1996), related to labor markets (Bonacich 1972; Betancur 1996; Rumbaut 1997; Ben-Zira 1997; Brown 2000; Castles 2000; Krissman 2000), affected by inequality in wages, housing, and education (Kriwo 1986; McCall 2001; Kerckhoff et al. 2001; Bansak 2001) and high levels of concentration (Frissbie and Niedert 1976; Massey 1983; 1993; Tienda and Lii 1987) and the formation of social networks (Lieberson & Waters 1987; Mc Manus 1990; Brown 2003; Massey 2000; 2004). In the case of Kansas, there has been some work done on the process of Mexican immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century, related to railroad construction, and the role of these immigrants during and after World War I (Avila 1997; Oppenheimer 2003). Other very important work has been done on the matter of the labor conditions at the meatpacking plants, and the type of labor performed

¹ Same category used by the U.S. Census Bureau.

by immigrants at the plants (Stull & Broadway 1995; Gouveia & Stull 1995; Stanley 1996; Bensons 1990;1994;1999; Griffith 1999; Stull & Broadway 2004).

Mexican and Central American workers are a very important element in rural production in Kansas, due to their labor at the meatpacking plants and other agribusiness related jobs. That is the reason why it is important and pertinent to understand their origins, and the processes they went through when making the decision to migrate to the United States, and Kansas, specifically. What mechanisms did they use to come? From where? Finally, why did they come to Kansas? And what has been the nature of this process? It is also important to understand the role played by the networks established by previous immigrants², and to what extent those networks and settlements helped the process of immigration, eased the adaptation, while at the same time working potentially as mechanisms of resistance³ or making the process of assimilation more difficult.

As will be shown in this study, most of the previous scholarly work on this matter has considered immigrants from a social capital perspective, what they represent for American society, and their role within a system of production in which they are a disadvantaged class. Some of this work takes a descriptive approach, considering immigrants in a passive way, as actors who were suddenly placed within an objective social and cultural structure of which they are totally unaware. The purpose of this study is to show that migration is a decision consciously made (agency) that involves a previous and basic knowledge (cultural capital) of what is to be found on the other side of the border. Therefore, adaptation and assimilation are processes of acquisition of the cultural capital of the dominant group of the receiving environment. Cultural capital as “forms of knowledge, skills, education, and any advantages a person has which give him a higher status in society, including high expectations” (Bourdieu 1986). It is important, though, to take into account that the imposition of a dominant culture generates, at the same time, elements of resistance as a response to the process of symbolic violence, through which

² Some of the scholarly literature uses the term “ethnic enclave” to refer to ethnic groups concentrated in certain areas. Nonetheless in this study I would rather use the term networks, which is not exclusive from the other, but seems more accurate, considering the heterogeneity of the subject of study.

³ I consider resistance as “oppositional agency” through which members of a subordinate group try to cope with or diminish the impact of the imposition from the dominant group. New symbolic representations are generated in order to establish a relation of distance to the dominant group.

symbolic representations from a specific group exclude members of the subordinate groups. Finally, it is expected that the analysis of the acquisition of cultural capital by Mexicans in the process of adapting to Kansas, will serve to explain who they are, and provide a valuable tool to understand the processes they go through in order to fit within the receiving environment.

Characteristics of the Hispanic Immigrants in the U.S.

Most of the Mexican immigrants come to the U.S. from small or medium size cities (Portes & Rumbaut 1996), where they have access to information regarding the lifestyle and labor opportunities in the U.S. Furthermore, immigrants come from areas where cultural values are strongly incorporated (Garcia-Canclini 1995 [1989]), meaning that they have strong traditional habitus. Bourdieu (1979: VII) defines habitus as “[...] *a system of durable and transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices*”.

In the process of assimilating and accommodating to the new environment, they have to modify certain practices that do not fit within the new cultural context or White Anglo-Saxon doxa⁴, like “machista” behavior (Hirsch 2000; Gonzalez 2004), which sometimes involves domestic violence. It does not necessarily mean that they totally eliminate such behavior, but it is less noticeable or common. Such processes could be understood as the beginning of the assimilation of the new environment’s legitimate doxa. It is not accurate, however, to say that this is a process of incorporation of such legitimated habitus, for even though they are changing traditional practices, they are not changes, but short-term obligatory adjustments. Thus, the analysis of the acquisition of cultural capital by Mexicans in the process of adapting to Kansas will explain who they are, and will be a valuable tool to understand the construction of networks and their actions as agency. In a non-friendly environment this could involve elements of resistance, an infrequent term in the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

Finally, the recruitment system has facilitated the creation of networks and the concentration of Mexican immigrants in certain urban areas, increasing the gap between these

⁴ Doxa is the scheme of thought and perception produced by an objective social structure, considered as self evident and normal.

immigrants and the dominant groups in the social space (Massey 1993). This reduces the possibilities of direct interaction or exchange, even in the plants, where their relationship is mediated by first and second generation Mexican-Americans in the United States, who work as interpreters for the dominant group and supervisors of the subordinate one. Thus it is possible to see the how the social hierarchies are reproduced in the work place.

Terminology

One important consideration is about the terms used to describe the social group to be studied. In most regions, the terms Latino and Hispanic are used indistinctly to label the same social group. Originally, the terms were semantically different. Latino could refer to anyone with Latin ancestors, which would include people from the Iberian Peninsula and parts of France and Italy. The term could also be interpreted to exclude indigenous communities with no Latino ancestry, like Mayans in Guatemala and México, or Quechua and Aymara in Peru and Bolivia. Nonetheless, Latino is commonly used to refer to Latin Americans, which excludes Spaniards and Portuguese. On the other hand, the term Hispanic makes reference to a linguistic group, but excludes people from countries that are considered Latino but not necessarily Hispanic. This is the case of people from Brazil, Belize, and other countries of the Caribbean region.

Latino and Hispanic are terms used to refer to a hugely diverse community (Bach 1993), which is grouped under one arbitrary label in disregard of national identities, and creating a broad and somewhat inaccurate image of Latin American immigrants. It is interesting, though, that according to Bourdieu the form “*par excellence*” of symbolic power is the possibility to create groups (Bourdieu 1996: 23). It means that those who possess legitimate capital are endowed with the knowledge and authority to name things, and create categories or labels to classify society according to their own interests.

It is also difficult to find an accurate term to refer to the dominant group. In a large number of studies, they are defined as Whites, which only makes reference to the color of the skin in disregard of ethnic differences and original backgrounds (a white Celt from Ireland is not the same as a white Saxon from Germany, and so on). The term Anglo-Saxon makes reference, to the primary social group by which the U.S. was founded. Nonetheless, even though most of

the U.S. population is white, not all are of Anglo-Saxon origin. Finally, the term Anglo, which is commonly used in scholarly texts, tends to be as broad as Hispanic. It makes reference to a linguistic group.

Since the U.S. government started to use the term Hispanic in order to differentiate a person's race from his/her ethnic heritage, the term is often used interchangeably with Latino. Thus, since both terms have similar meanings for most people, they will be used synonymously in this study, although Hispanic will be used mostly when the information is linked to official statistics. Latino will be used when talking about culture. Moreover, strong emphasis will be on Mexicans, as this is the background of the large majority of the Latino immigrants in Kansas. The dominant group will be referred to as Anglo, considering them as U.S. citizens of white skin color of upper middle class.

The Hispanic community is divided in three groups, in order to organize the discussion of their experiences and differences. The first is the immigrant group, which is formed by the foreign born Mexican population, including the children they brought with them, who are closer to the original cultural background, and start living the process of adaptation and accommodation. The second is the Chicanos, who are the second generation of an immigrant family and, most important, the first generation born in the U.S., who grow up between a Mexican household and an Anglo environment, and who represent the cultural hybridization and beginning of the assimilation process. Finally, the third group is Mexican-Americans, who are second and subsequent generations born in the U.S., and who are closer to the dominant Anglo culture. They represent the final stages of assimilation.

Related Current and Previous Studies

As noted above, there are several studies regarding the phenomena of immigration, and especially Mexican migration to the United States. There are works on the immigration process in Kansas and the experience of workers at the meatpacking plants. Nonetheless, there has been little work on the cultural processes Latinos have undergone when adapting to the receiving environment. Recently, the Pew Hispanic Center published a substantial study related to Hispanic migration to the U.S. (Passel & Suro 2005). The third part of the *Survey of Mexican*

Migrants: The Economic Transition to America depicts this transition, and supports it with data. Nonetheless, there is still a significant lack of information about the situation and characteristics of Mexican immigrants in rural areas of Kansas.

As early as 1912, there was scholarly production regarding the immigration phenomenon in the U.S. In that year, E.A. Goldenweiser criticized General Walker's theory of immigration, through which he claimed that the decreasing birth rate of the native population in the U.S. was due to increasing immigration, and the lack of interest among native white people to bring children into an environment in which they would have to compete for jobs usurped by people from foreign countries (Goldenweiser 1912).

Douglas Massey's work on Mexican immigrants (2001; 2002; 2004), and the spatial segregation to which they have been subjected (1983; 1993) has been an extremely useful tool for the present study, since he develops a thorough approach to the immigration phenomenon in the U.S. within a context of international migration and labor markets. Massey (2002:14) argues that multinational firms go overseas, entering peripheral countries, where the cost of labor is far cheaper than in the U.S. to establish assembly lines and factories. Nonetheless, in agriculture, and particularly in the case of meatpacking plants, it is not feasible for the corporations to establish the disassembly lines in other countries. Therefore, it is more efficient for food corporations to establish their plants in areas where the decreasing population cannot supply the demand of labor. This perspective allows us to understand the phenomenon of immigration to the U.S., within an international context. According to Massey (2001; 2002) in the case of contemporary immigrants in the U.S., pull factors (higher income, the permanent demand for cheaper labor, and the possibility of satisfying certain material needs) that attract them to come to the U.S. are more relevant at the moment of making the decision, than push factors, such as poverty, underemployment, unemployment, or violence.

In the early 1920s, Dr. Manuel Gamio did research on Mexican immigration to the U.S. (discussed in Redfield 1929), in which he shows the migratory trend of Mexicans, and the possible reasons and consequences of such a phenomenon. The method used by Gamio to identify the areas of México from whence the immigrants came was intriguing. By tracing the

origins and destinations of money orders, he was able to determine the areas of concentration of immigrants. It is important to note that the historic context for current migration to the U.S. and Kansas is very different than that of the early twentieth century (Avila 1997; Griffith 1999; Oppenheimer 2003 [1985]). In the 1920s many of them were escaping the revolution and its aftermath. Furthermore, the characteristics of the current immigrant population are very different (Portes & Rumbaut 1996; Rumbaut 1997). For Bach (1993). Most of the scholarly literature has focused on the problems between immigrant groups and the native community, but little work has been done to show to what extent there are common elements and needs for both communities, and how sometimes they cooperate with each other in order to build a more comfortable environment for both groups. Bach examines the division among the minorities, due to class or nationality, and how these groups are treated by scholars as homogeneous, under the terms Latino or Hispanic.

Frehill-Rowe (1993) takes an interesting approach to the process of migration of blacks and whites to Kansas and Nebraska between 1870 and 1890. Even though this work is not directly related to the Latino community, Frehill-Rowe's work (1993) is an interesting analysis from a split labor market perspective (Bonacich 1972), observing race relations between black and white communities from 1870-1890 in Kansas and Nebraska. According to Frehill-Rowe, these communities were segregated and forced to compete for employment through lower wages. Nonetheless, from the perspective of Massey (2002), it is not necessarily the case. From his point of view, immigrant labor was not forced to compete with other ethnic groups, aiming to create division within the labor force, creating antagonism and conflict, thus lowering wages. According to the bifurcated labor market perspective, the labor force is segmented in two sectors: the primary one requires employers to invest in their human capital. This is the sector of highly trained and professionalized workers, who tend to unionize and become extremely expensive for the employer. On the other hand, the secondary sector is comprised of poorly paid labor that works in non-stable jobs, and do not represent a higher cost for the employer. As mentioned before, meatpacking plants created recruitment systems (Benson 1999; Griffith 1999), to fill the shortage of labor in the local community. Hence, from that perspective, the theory of bifurcated labor market seems to fit more accurately in an attempt to understand Mexican immigration to the meatpacking areas in Kansas.

In “The Racial State Theory”, James (1988) shows the migration of black people to Kansas as an escape from the South's repression towards a free state. Hence, the author's analysis is valuable as a potential model to understand the transition process of Latino immigrants at the meatpacking plants in Kansas, understanding their engagement and role within the local labor market. For his part, Oppenheimer (2003 [1985]) studied processes of acculturation and assimilation by Mexican immigrants in Kansas from the beginning of the twentieth century until World War II. He claims they were attracted to work when there was an insufficient labor force in the state. After the wars, they were despised and treated as disposable labor, making it hard for them to assimilate and be assimilated.

Henry Avila (1997) wrote an historical account of Mexican immigration in Kansas, showing the experiences of people who first came to work at the railroads or in sugar beet production, and then established settlements in southwest Kansas. Importantly in Avila's work, the collected testimonies show that from the beginning of Mexican migration to Kansas, Mexican newcomers were involved in some sort of bifurcated labor market. Their labor is permanently demanded by the corporations, who argue a lack of labor supply from the local community. At the same time the immigrants are discriminated against by some members of the native Anglo community who see them as a threat to their job stability and income. Avila also shows the process through which they became citizens, despite never being completely accepted by the receiving community.

From the cultural aspect of the research, the work of Bourdieu on cultural capital (1974; 1984; 1986), Garcia-Canclini 1995 [1989] and Zhou (1997) on cultural hybridization, and Silverstein and Chen (1999) on understanding the process of accommodation and appropriation of cultural elements from the recipient culture, become very important for understanding the process of adaptation followed by Mexican immigrants. Rumbaut (1997) and Massey (2001; 2002; 2004), with special emphasis on the process of cultural assimilation, established a comparison between the different immigration waves in the U.S. Marris (1980) claimed that the larger the gap between the country of origin and the receiver, the more stressful the change for the immigrant. This explains why immigrants establish their links with people from their own

cultural background, trying often to reproduce elements from their own culture, such as the food, music, dance, and language, among others. This is an interesting argument that strengthens the claim of network creation by Mexican immigrants in the U.S.

An important approach was developed by Chiswick (1988) and Griffith (1999), who depicted the context through which undocumented immigrants came to the U.S. and got involved in the labor market, competing for low wages in the poultry industry. It is important and useful research because it created a base from which to study the processes of recruitment of labor in México to work at the plants.

Janet Benson explored the ethnic relations and the interactions among settlers of the trailer courts in Garden city, where 10 percent of the total population was living, a large number of them were immigrants working at the meatpacking plant (Benson 1990). In a later work, Benson examined the phenomenon of undocumented immigration Kansas, and its relation to the work at the meatpacking plants (Benson 1999). She used an ethnographic approach to study Mexican immigrants in southwestern Kansas, with the aim of understanding why and how they got here, and what their role within the labor market and society was. Benson's work could be the most influential for the present research, for she shows the process of immigration in Kansas, how it attracts undocumented labor, the creation of settlements related to informal processes of recruitment, the ethnic relations established within the receiving environment and the extent to which agribusiness primarily benefits from undocumented labor.

There is a significant body of work on immigration, especially in urban areas, and much less work on the role of immigrant labor in the agribusiness sector, especially at the meatpacking plants. There is no further work showing the characteristics of Mexican immigrants in Kansas. For this reason, the focus of this study will be to understand the process of acquisition of cultural capital and elements of resistance to the imposition of a dominant culture, in order to paint a comprehensive portrait of Mexican immigrants in Kansas and their experience in trying to accommodate to a new environment.

Objectives

Objective 1: To analyze the phenomenon of Mexican immigration from México and other states in the U.S. to meatpacking regions in Kansas, particularly to Emporia, and depict the role of immigrant labor in agricultural production and in society. The aim of this point is to determine the reason why they came to Kansas, and how immigrants experienced this process.

Objective 2: Identify how background cultural elements, adopted elements from the dominant culture and mechanisms of resistance are expressed. Here, it is important to observe the educational background of the workers and how labor conditions are reproduced in their social life, within the new environment. How those elements are expressed by the first and second generation born in the U.S. will also be analyzed.

Objective 3: To examine the relationships within the Latino community, trying to understand the characteristics of what is called the minority. It is important to determine the element of concentration of Hispanics in certain areas of the cities.

Objective 4: To analyze the social dynamics between Mexican immigrants and the local Anglo community, within a context of competition within the local labor market.

The Results

Since the main objective of the research is understanding acquisition of cultural capital and the transition of Mexican immigrants in meatpacking regions of Kansas, and most of the information was gathered through semi-structured interviews, the results were managed according to the qualitative characteristics of the data. Demographic data were used to develop a better understanding of variables such as educational level and place of origin. Thus it was possible to establish the institutionalized cultural capital the sample already had according to Bourdieu's theoretical framework (educational attainment). Demographic data also portrayed the phenomena of concentration, and creation of networks, which are determinant elements to understand these immigrants in both labor and the community (Lieberson & Waters 1987). In order to find an explanation of the presence of Mexican immigrants in Kansas, the perspective of the bifurcated labor market (Massey 2002; 2004) provided a valuable tool. Finally, the data obtained during the interviews and observation were analyzed using the theoretical perspective of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977a; 1977 b; 1984; 1997) and cultural hybrids (Garcia-Canclini 1995 [1989]).

Technical Feasibility

The immigrant Latino community in Emporia, Kansas is largely connected to the meatpacking industry, making the tasks of fieldwork, observation, and interviews all feasible. Moreover, there is ample demographic data available from the the U.S. Census Bureau, which allowed me to examine population trends, and to support the observation and fieldwork. It is important to take into account however, that there is no accurate data regarding the undocumented population. Interviews were conducted in Spanish or English, depending on the preference of the interviewee.

Impacts

It is expected that this study will improve our understanding of Latino immigrants in Kansas, and the forces that motivated and led to the formation of settlements and networks in the state and in the Emporia area in particular. This work will help to depict a more accurate, data-based portrait of the Latino immigrant, challenging the stereotypical view of Latinos as cheap labor, invaders, and job stealers. This research is expected to provide policy makers with a new perspective on who the Mexican immigrants are, what challenges they face, what opportunities they represent, and what their needs are in terms of institutional support.

From the sociological perspective, this study is expected to open a new window of understanding immigrant communities in the U.S., perceiving the processes of adaptation and assimilation as acquisition of cultural capital. The theory of cultural capital a new and important tool for a thorough understanding of immigrants as individuals, and the processes they face in adapting to the receiving environment. The information gathered in the interviews made it possible to examine the acquisition of cultural capital, and the means through which it is acquired, as well as to observe the trajectories followed by the interviewees to achieve their particular positions in the social space, and relationship of proximity or distance to the Anglo dominant group.

CHAPTER 2 - Research Methods

Review of Sources

The first phase of work consisted of the review and analysis of all the available statistical sources, such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Agricultural Statistics Service, and the Kansas Population Center. These sources provided enough information for an initial approach to the subject of study, establishing the areas of concentration, and the relationship between the growth of the Hispanic population in meatpacking regions, and the development of the meatpacking industry in the state. Through this process it was possible to develop a general portrait of the demographic characteristics of the Hispanic population in the state.

The second phase of the research focused on reviewing the available literature regarding the Hispanic population in Kansas, aiming to understand the process of migration, not only in the U.S., but in Kansas. Thus it was possible to establish to what extent the migration of Hispanics, primarily of Mexican origin, is related to labor, and to what type of labor. As noted in chapter one, most studies make interpretations from the perspective of the immigrants' social capital, their role in production, and their relationship to a receiving community who feel vulnerable because of their presence (Smelser & Alexander 1999, Huntington 2002). This study develops a novel approach, using the theoretical framework of Bourdieu on cultural capital (1977; 1977b; 1986) to understand the processes of adaptation and assimilation. The theoretical framework is discussed in detail in chapter five.

The Design

Due to its focus on the appropriation and use of cultural elements, this study required an ethnographic approach focusing on the cultural elements that could depict processes such as adaptation, assimilation, and resistance, for example. This study has to be understood as diversity-oriented research (Ragin 2000) for which such elements were approached through the

use of fuzzy sets. This allows us to understand the degree of appropriation and the use of cultural and symbolic elements⁵ of the dominant culture.

Since this theoretical frame has not been used before for the study of immigrants, it was not possible to follow precisely a previous methodological model. However, it draws on the ethnographic model used by Bourdieu in his extensive work, for instance on the Kabyle community in Algeria (Bourdieu 1962; 1979) that led him to elaborate his theory of cultural capital and habitus (Bourdieu 1977a; 1977 b; 1984; 1986). Given the lack of previous applications of the theoretical framework to approach immigrant communities, the work developed by Benson (1990; 1994; 1999) became important in understanding how to develop an ethnographic approach to the immigrant community and its relationship to the environment. In the U.S. the theory of cultural capital has been used to examine the relationship between class status and educational attainment (DiMaggio 1982; DiMaggio & Mohr 1985; McLeod 1987), but not for understanding the process of adaptation of an immigrant community.

The data allowed me to create a broader picture of the subject of study, in this case Mexican immigrants in the meatpacking areas of Kansas, primarily Emporia. Initial contacts were established in the community in order to get the necessary information to design more accurate and effective interview instruments. These contacts included city leaders and organizations working with the Hispanic community, such as the United Methodist Mexican American Ministries and the meatpacking plants. Some of these contacts were established through the Kansas Hispanic and Latino American Affairs Commission Office of the Governor, under the direction of Elías García.

Definition of the Case Study and Instrument

The next phase of work consisted of a series of visits to Emporia, which was selected as a case study because, along with Garden City, Dodge City and Liberal, Emporia has a history of meat production, and a substantial Mexican community. Moreover, the county in which Emporia is located (Lyon) has the fastest growing Hispanic population in the state during the last five

⁵ Symbolic elements are the collection of elements through which a given group represents itself within the social space.

years. Thus, the development of recruitment systems and the creation of networks in the area (Avila 1997; Oppenheimer 2003 [1985]) is part of a recent and ongoing process. For that purpose, part of this study focuses on the analysis of immigrant networks, through which relationships among actors will have priority and direct effect over their individual attributes (Lazega 1997). This specific method allows for understanding the formation of such networks, as well as the type of interactions within the community (relationships between Mexican and Central American immigrants, for example).

Semi-structured interviews (see appendix A) were conducted with individuals in order to gather information about their experiences. This particular type of interview allows the interviewer to probe questions during the interview, and go in depth on specific topics if the interviewee is willing to do so. After the information was gathered through the interviews, a system of codes was designed, outlining the most important elements pointed out by the interviewees (Lofland 1971; Miles & Huberman 1984; Strauss 1987). This allows for a more accurate and reliable analysis and interpretation. In addition to individual interviews, it was necessary to conduct group interviews. These are important because they reduce interviewer bias (Bloor 1997:47). Group interviews, as well as focus group sessions reduce interviewer subjective interpretations through the constant interaction between interviewees who complement each other's experience⁶. Both individual and group interviews had specific sections on demographic characteristics, which allowed for the collection of data that was quantified to create a more accurate portrait of the Mexican immigrant community in the meatpacking areas of Kansas.

Interviews were held in Spanish or English, depending on the interviewees' preferences. This was considered because most of the recent Mexican immigrants are monolingual, and second because the language and its transformation is a tremendous indicator of the acquisition of cultural capital in the case of the first and second generation born in the U.S. Each interview was planned with a contact person who established the link with potential interviewees, for some immigrants are undocumented and therefore reluctant to give an interview or complete a survey for an unknown researcher, fearing the possibility of being exposed.

⁶ Op Cit

Contacts in Emporia were made through a variety of organizations, including the Hispanic American Leadership Organization (HALO), Hispanics Of Today and Tomorrow (HOTT), the Department of Sociology at Emporia State University, and staff members from the Emporia Gazette. The collaboration of K-State students who are the children or relatives of immigrants was also important. They provided valuable information and contacts. Other organizations such as the Kansas Hispanic and Latino American Affairs Commission and the United Methodist Mexican-American Ministries, who have direct links with community leaders in Garden City, also collaborated by providing contacts. Nonetheless, the study followed the model of snowball sampling, in which respondents referred to acquaintances as potential interviewees (Patton 1990), and so forth. This process allowed access to a medium-large sample that provided the necessary information for this study. The snow ball process was followed until the information provided by respondents started to repeat itself, reaching a point of saturation. In this study, it was determined that saturation was reached at about 30 interviews.

For the Anglos interviewed the process followed was exactly the same as with Hispanics. A contact was made, who helped find more potential interviewees. Then the snowball technique was used again. They were asked questions regarding their perspective on the relationship between the Mexican immigrant community and the local Anglo community.

Processing and Coding the Data

Once the information was gathered through the interviews, I followed a process through which data was organized by categories of analysis. As mentioned above, the instrument was a semi-structured interview, organized in sections, as follows: Demographic Aspects, Immigration Process, Social Relations (within the Mexican community and with the local Anglo community), Expectations and Labor. Through these four topics, I examined the processes of acquisition of cultural capital in their migration to Kansas, keeping in mind the means through which cultural capital is acquired as the categories of analysis: family and class relations, institutional education and consumption of material goods. Language acquisition was added as a subcategory, considering its relevance to the process, and its relationship with the other categories. For instance, after the information was coded, it was possible to see the relevance of language in education, socialization, labor opportunities and performance, and networking among others. It

was possible through the coding to establish connections, and levels of importance of the categories to each topic approached through the semi-structured interview.

Sample and Case Study

A total of 36 interviews were conducted during the length of the fieldwork. Twenty five of them were with Mexican immigrants, 3 with first generation Mexican-Americans, defined here as Chicanos, and 8 with Anglos from Emporia and Dodge City (see figure C.3). Hispanic interviewees provided information on about 21 different families with an average of 5 members per household. According to the U.S. Census Bureau the average size per Hispanic family household in Emporia is 4. Fifty two percent of the respondents were men and 48% women.

Each family involved in the study arrived in Kansas from México with both parents, and just one arrived with an elderly person. Among the respondents, 39.6% were parents, and 43.4% of them were adults when arriving to Kansas, because 6 people migrated along with their parents when they were already adults. The average age of the people interviewed was 34 years, and 57% of the total sample were children when brought by their parents, and their average age at that time was 11 years.

Forty four percent of the women interviewed were children when they arrived in Kansas. Their average age at arrival was 10.7 years. In the case of women who were adults by the time they migrated to the U.S., 23% were housewives back in México and 12% of them worked for family businesses, in managerial duties. Among interviewed women, 29.5% currently work in education-related jobs (see figure C.4). Among interviewees 27% have the equivalent to GED, 23% of them hold a bachelors degree or had some college education, and 15% of them achieved a masters degree (see figure C.5). At some point in their lives in Kansas, 23.5% of these women have worked at the Tyson meatpacking plant.

Sixty one percent of the people interviewed live in Emporia, but only one family came directly to Emporia. The rest of the Mexican immigrants came to Garden City or Dodge City, then moved to Emporia when Tyson bought the IBP plant there. Most of them came first to other states prior to moving to Emporia. El Paso, Texas was the recurrent immigration point. All of the

interviewees concurred in the fact that immigrants from Michoacán, in southern México, are the majority in Emporia, whereas in southwest Kansas, the dominant group is formed by immigrants from Chihuahua, in northern México (see figure C. 6).

Specific Methodologies for Each Objective

Objective 1: To analyze the phenomenon of Mexican immigration from México and other states in the U.S., to Emporia, and depict their role within society and production

Through the individual and group interviews, it was possible to portray the process of migration experienced by the Mexican immigrants.

Objective 2: Identify how background cultural elements, adopted dominant cultural elements and mechanisms of resistance are expressed.

The project required exhaustive historical research in order to understand the characteristics of Mexican immigration in the U.S. This provided a better understanding of the immigrants and their role in agricultural production and society. In this case, individual interviews were used, along with a deep observation process, supported by detailed field notes in which the researcher's observations were collected as supporting documents for the study. The semi-structured character of the interviews made it possible to manage the development of the interviews, according to the interviewees' participation and willingness to share information (Bloor 1997).

Objective 3: To examine the relationships within the Latino community, trying to understand the elements that identify them as members of a social group.

Once the immigrant's background is understood, the next step was to understand the cultural elements that have been imported, those that have been adopted, and those that show cultural / regional variation. For this issue it was important to conduct an in-depth analysis of the interviews and digital material collected, in order to read and code them carefully from the theoretical scope employed for this research.

Objective 4: To analyze the social dynamics between the Mexican immigrants and the local Anglo community.

Through in-depth interviews with both immigrants and members of the Anglo community, the dynamics of relationship between the Mexican immigrants and the local Anglo community was analyzed. It could be understood, as well, as the development of such relationships through the process of immigration, which began in the 1980s.

CHAPTER 3 - On Immigrants, Immigration and Work

Demographic Aspects of Immigrant labor in Kansas

During last the 25 years, the Hispanic population in regions of Kansas has grown quickly, in a process closely related to growth in meat production and processing industries. Nonetheless, as will be shown in this chapter, the demographic aspects and the characteristics of the Hispanic population in Kansas does not match the common stereotype of Mexican immigrants as illiterate, poor people who displace American workers. In spite of this rapid growth, Hispanics account for only 8% of the total population in Kansas⁷. There are regions in Kansas where until 1985 the number of Hispanics was minimal or almost nonexistent. These regions were presenting patterns of population diminution, in which their inhabitants emigrated towards larger urban centers of the state, or towards neighboring states such as Colorado, Oklahoma, Nebraska or Missouri, due to the lack of economic opportunities in southwestern Kansas, for example. The Hispanic population has grown, especially in areas where 30 years ago about 90% of the population was White Anglo. Currently, in such places as Garden City and Dodge City, almost 50% of the population is Hispanic. This trend has generated various reactions within the community, segments of which still regard them with some distrust. Nevertheless, this chapter analyzes the demographic data available and explains this growth within context.

Mexican Immigrants in the United States

From the very beginning of U.S. history, immigrants originating worldwide have been the base of the population. African, Irish, Japanese, Chinese, Polish, British, and Germans, among others, migrated to the United States, either to participate as colonizers or as low wage labor during the modernization of the nation (Lieberson 1987; Rose 1996; Avila 1997; Oppenheimer 2003 [1985]). With time, some of these ethnic groups overcame their disadvantaged situations and were assimilated by the society that at first rejected them. Nevertheless, for African-Americans and Latinos this process has taken much more time than for other communities. This

⁷ Data obtained from the US Census Bureau www.census.gov and the Kansas Population Center (www.k-state.edu/sasw/kpc/).

is in spite of the gains achieved by the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Cesar Chavez and others in the 1960s and 1970s.

The process of Mexican migration to the United States has been closely related to the development of agricultural industry (Massey 1983; 1993; 2002). During the First and Second World Wars, American women and Mexican immigrants became the reserve labor army for the United States, due to the diminution of male manual labor. Women moved in greater numbers into industrial activities, whereas Mexican immigrants were destined mainly to agricultural labor and construction (Liebersohn 1987; Massey 2002). In August 1942, México and the U.S. signed a bilateral temporary contract called the *Bracero Program*, in which the United States allowed the migration of a few thousand people to work as seasonal labor for the harvest in California. Eventually, due to an insufficient labor force, the program was extended to other areas of production. Through the *Bracero* program, thousands of Mexicans went north to the United States (Rose 1996; Avila 1997; Oppenheimer 2003 [1985]). This program represented the possibility of improving their income as temporary workers in rural labor, although the agreement implied the return to México at the conclusion of the war. Nonetheless, a large portion of Mexican immigrants had already established their families in the U.S and were not willing to leave their material achievements behind, thus delaying their return to México. Combining the deportation of Mexican immigrants during the 1930s depression, and again in the 1950s, after WWII was over, a total of 3.8 million Mexicans were deported regardless of their legal status or citizenship (Pachón & Moore 1981), as happened during the 1954 policy known as operation “wet backs.” Interestingly, despite the deportations, the guest worker program continued until 1964.

The common perception regarding Mexican immigrants in the United States is that of the uneducated poor from rural areas, running away from poverty and unemployment in México. Indeed, this was the situation during the early 20th century, when poor peasants were escaping the violence of the revolution and its aftermath (Avila 1997; Oppenheimer 2003 [1985]). Nonetheless, the characteristics of contemporary Mexican immigrants are very different (Rumbaut 1997; Massey 2001; 2002), particularly in the case of Kansas (Stanley 1996; Griffith 1999; Benson 1999; and Oppenheimer 2003 [1985]). A large portion of them came from small

and medium size Mexican cities (Portes 1979; Portes & Rumbaut 1996 p.11; Greenwood & Tienda 1997). It is extremely difficult for poor people to migrate to the U.S., legally or not, due to the high cost.

The lack of well paying jobs in the sending country is the main reason for migration; not necessarily unemployment (Greenwood & Tienda 1997; Portes & Rumbaut 1996; Massey 2000; 2002). The U.S. and other industrialized countries become a strong attraction for both skilled workers and small farmers, for whom migration represents the possibility of stabilizing families and achieving material aspirations (Rumbaut 1997). These images and aspirations have long been promulgated through the mass media and consumed in the countries of origin. For those whose transit to the U.S. was legal, such migration meant the possibility of accessing higher education, thus acquiring the necessary institutional cultural capital through which they expect to achieve more benefits in the future. It is interesting to note that because of the *Dream Act*, Kansas was one of the few states in the United States where the children of undocumented immigrants had the opportunity to access college education by paying in-state tuition. Needless to say, this has met strong opposition in social conservative sectors of Kansas, where the belief is often that Latino immigrants are challenging the basis of American culture (Schlesinger 1988; Huntington 2002). Another perception about immigrants is that they are taking jobs from Americans. To critics, allowing their children to access public education and college is like awarding undocumented immigrants for being illegally in the U.S. at the expenses of American tax payers. This is not entirely true, and has been exaggerated by misrepresenting the magnitude of the phenomenon, thus generating the rejection of immigrants on the part of the receiving community, as will be shown in another chapter.

Mexican Immigrants in Kansas

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, the first Mexican immigrants arrived in Kansas as laborers to construct the railroad that would cross the country from coast to coast. Some took root in Kansas, a state with a small population and a considerable land base apt for raising corn and cattle, thus representing a great opportunity to improve their standard of living. The first establishments of Mexicans were in southwest Kansas, mainly in Finney County near Garden City (Avila 1997; Benson 1999; Griffith 1999; Oppenheimer 2003

[1985]), and in Lyon County, primarily in Emporia, where the Santa Fe Railroad attracted some labor at the beginning of the twentieth century. Considering that at that time the Mexican community was not large, they were not entirely isolated from the Anglo community, who did not consider them a threat, as would be predicted by Gordon (1955), and pointed out again by Frissbie and Niedert (1976) and Tienda and Lii (1987). Despite being considered racially inferior by some members of the the local Anglo community, they were granted equality in legal terms (Rose 1996; Avila 1997). Nonetheless, the first Mexican settlers in Emporia faced strong discrimination on the part of Anglos, which led the immigrant community to establish mechanisms of vindication of their rights, even when it meant complete separation from the dominant Anglo group.

The growth of this population was gradual until the 1980s, when the large meatpackers established their plants in southwest Kansas, where there is a history related to cattle and meat production. More recently, in the 1990s, the meatpacking industry grew rapidly in Emporia (Lyon County) along with the Hispanic population. Since then, these five counties in Kansas have experienced an accelerated pattern of Hispanic population growth. Finney, Grant, Ford and Seward counties in the southwest and Lyon County in east Kansas have the greatest concentration of Hispanics as a percentage of county population (see figure C.7). In 2000, the Hispanic population reached an average 41.1% of the total population in these counties. Until the early 1980s these counties were predominantly Anglo and therefore were part of the dominant (Anglo-Saxon) culture.

Demographic Characteristics of the Hispanic Population in Kansas

Between 1985 and 1990, a total of 295,663 residents of Kansas had migrated towards other states in the U.S. In the same period, 272,213 people originating from other parts of the country migrated to Kansas, and a total of 32,631 people arrived in Kansas from other countries⁸, showing a net in-migration of 9,181 people to the state. Without foreign immigrants, the state would have lost population in the period between 1985 and 1990, resulting in a negative growth rate. In the period between 1995 and 2000, Kansas experienced a net loss of 10,068 people within the white non-Hispanic population, representing a rate of growth of -4.8%. The

⁸ Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

non-Hispanic black population decreased by 5,056, showing a growth rate of -36.3% in Kansas. On the other hand, Hispanic domestic migration shows that in this period, 26,333 Hispanics arrived originating from other states of the U.S., at the same time that 17,404 Hispanics left for other places, for a positive net migration of 8,929 people, showing a rate growth of 67.9%⁹.

The 2000 census estimates the Kansas population at 2,688,418 inhabitants, of whom 7% were Hispanic. Of the Hispanic population, 78.8% was of Mexican origin. By 2006, the Hispanic population in Kansas reached 8.6% of the total population, and 81.8% of them were of Mexican origin (see Table 1).

Table 3.1 Growth of Hispanic population in Kansas¹⁰

Kansas	Estimates (2000)	Estimates (2006)
Total population	2,688,418	2,764,075
Non Hispanic or Latino	2,465,202	2,527,724
Hispanic or Latino	188,252	236,351
Hispanics of Mexican Origin	148,270	193,309

According to the national Census, the percentage of Hispanic in the U.S. is 14%, showing that the percentage Hispanic in Kansas is below the national average, with 8.6% in year 2006. Of Hispanics in Kansas 36.2% were born outside the United States, which defines them as immigrants, whereas the other 63.8% of Hispanics in Kansas were born in the U.S. (figure C. 8) with the rights and privileges that this implies before the law. The large majority of Latinos in Kansas are located in regions near urban areas of the state: Kansas City, Topeka and Wichita (see figure C. 9), where they are occupied in different labor activities. However, the majority of immigrants are engaged in occupations related to construction, custodial jobs or the military, which has focused its recent efforts on recruiting young Hispanics. This is advantageous to non-

⁹ The net migration rate, according to the U.S. Census Bureau is based in an approximate of the population in year, which is the sum of the respective ethnic group or Hispanic origin of the population in year 2000, who reported having lived within the area in both 1995 and 2000 years, and those who reported having lived in the area the first year, but moved out for the second one. The migration rate is the immigration, minus the approximate out-migration by year 1995, multiplying the result by 1000.

¹⁰ Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

citizens who want to migrate officially to the U.S. On the other hand, Latino citizens occupy positions of greater prestige in the services sector. Concentration of Hispanics in Kansan urban centers is much greater than in non-metro areas of the state, in absolute numbers. Hispanic population represents only 8.6% of the total population in Kansas. Statistics show that in spite of a larger Hispanic population, metro counties, with exception of Wyandotte, are below the national average, which is near 14% (see Table 2).

Table 3.2 Hispanics as a % of metro county population (Estimates 2006) ¹¹

	TOTAL POP.	HISPANICS / %	*POP OF MEXICAN ORIGIN / %
Wyandotte	155,509	34,677 (22.%)	31,691 (20.4%)
Johnson	516,731	29,262 (5.7%)	22,021 (4.3%)
Leavenworth	74,177	3,075 (4.1%)	<i>No Info Available</i>
Sedgwick	470,895	48,389 (10.3%)	41,868 (8.9%)
Shawnee	172,693	14,713 (8.5%)	<i>No Info Available</i>
Total	1,390,005	130,116 (9.3%)	<i>N.A</i>

On the other hand, the southwestern counties of Finney, Ford, Grant and Seward, as well as Lyon in eastern Kansas, areas in which there are large meatpacking plants, the number of Hispanics is smaller in absolute numbers, but it represents a greater percentage of the total population of these counties (see figures C.10, C.11, C.12 and C.13), and even much greater, comparatively speaking, than the percentage of Hispanics at the national level (to s table 3).

¹¹ Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 3.3 Hispanics as a % of county population in meatpacking areas (Estimates 2006)¹²

	TOTAL POP (2000)	HISPANICS / %	POP OF MEXICAN ORIGIN / %
Finney	40,523	17,548 (43.3%)	14,129 (34.9%)
Ford	32,458	12,231 (37.7%)	10,475 (32.3%)
Seward	22,510	9,486 (42.1%)	7,993 (35.5%)
Lyon	35,935	6,010 (16.7%)	4,532 (12.6%)
Total	131,426	45,275 (34.4%)	37,129 (28.2%)

On Immigrants and Labor

Food Corporations and Population Trends

At the beginning of the 1980s, much of the research related to the meatpacking plants was on Southeast Asian immigrants, mainly from Vietnam, Laos and the Philippines, who were protected by a law that granted them political asylum and provisional work permits (Benson 1999; Griffith 1999; Brown 2002; Stull & Broadway 2004). Nevertheless, the same meat processing corporations began to develop labor recruitment programs in México, due to the need for workers and the lack of labor supply in the local Anglo population (Benson 1999). In these programs, Americans citizens, most of them of Latino origin, were sent to México in search of potential labor for the plants. As a result, the Hispanic population in southwest Kansas¹³ began to skyrocket in the mid-1980s (see Table 4 and Map of Kansas Districts, p100).

Table 3.4 Population in southwest Kansas by race¹⁴

Southwest Kansas	1990	2000
White Population	84.50%	71.20%
Black Population	1.34%	2.35%
Hispanic Population	12.26%	25.60%
Other Ethnic Groups	1.90%	0.85%

¹² Source: U.S. Census Bureau

¹³ The regions mentioned in this study follow the division by districts established by the Kansas Forestry Service.

¹⁴ Kansas Population Center

As can be appreciated in Table #4, the Hispanic portion of the population of southwest Kansas more than doubled in ten years, in contrast to the gradual diminution of the Anglo portion of the population. In 1990, the Hispanic population in southwest Kansas was 12.26% of the total population of the southwest region. That percentage grew to 25.62% by 2000. In 1990, Hispanics of Finney, Ford and Seward counties represented 65.87% of the total Hispanic population in 27 of the counties that make up southwest Kansas. After 2000, 71.43% of the Hispanic population in southwest Kansas was concentrated in these three counties.

Even though the local white Anglo¹⁵ population remains the majority group, it has diminished since the 1980s, in contrast to the rapid increase of the Hispanic population in the region (see Table 5).

Table 3.5 White versus Hispanic in meatpacking areas (by percentage)¹⁶

<u>% White Population</u>	1990	2000
Finney	67.28%	52.46%
Ford	80.58%	58.31%
Seward	71.66%	50.84%
Lyon	89.37%	78.69%
<u>% Hispanic population</u>	1990	2000
Finney	24.14%	43.27%
Ford	14.86%	37.65%
Seward	19.49%	42.00%
Lyon	6.10%	16.70%

Even though this phenomenon appears in several counties of the state, Finney, Ford and Seward in the southwestern region and Lyon in eastern Kansas, show a greater and faster Hispanic population growth, which is strongly related to the presence of the meatpacking plants and their role as the primary source of employment. This growth is particularly rapid in Lyon County, where the Hispanic population grew more than 150% in the period between 1990 to 2000¹⁷ and the meatpacking presence is more recent. Therefore, these counties are the center of

¹⁵ According to U.S. Census, there is a distinction made: White non-Hispanic, and White of Hispanic origin.

¹⁶ Source: U.S. Census Bureau & Kansas Population Center

¹⁷ Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

Hispanic concentration in the rural areas of Kansas. At the moment, according to the data obtained through the interviews, the vast majority of the Hispanic workers at the meatpacking plants in Emporia and southwest Kansas are either American citizens or immigrants from Central America and México. The recent development of a dairy industry in Southwest Kansas has also become an important source of jobs for Latino immigrants.

Recruitment and Immigrant Labor Networks

Employers have established a recruitment system in which those who have gained their trust are sent home looking for more people willing to work in the U.S. (Stanley 1996; Benson 1999; Griffith 1999). By the 1980s, about 70% of the job growth in southwest Kansas was due to the recruitment systems of meatpacking plants (Stull, Broadway & Griffith 1995 p.25). These recruiters go to their communities of origin, discuss the economic opportunities in the U.S., primarily to attract people they already know, like family, friends, and neighbors, thus creating networks in the receiving country (Lieberson & Waters 1987; Krissman 2000, Brown 2003). Since the recruiters have gone to specific areas in México, this has favored the creation of such networks. Whole groups of people who are familiar to each other are involved in the same process of recruitment and later migration. The result obtained by these people in the United States becomes a catalyst that encourages more workers to pursue the American dream, in many occasions without the corresponding labor permissions (Stoddard 1976; Portes & Rumbaut 1996; Cheswick 1998; Brown 2003).

“There were ads in the local newspapers, and some billboards all over Michoacán, inviting people to apply for jobs in the U.S.” Blanca

It is important for the recruiters to look like “benefactors” in their hometowns, and as examples to be followed, due to their economic power. In most cases, as soon as they get to the U.S. the horizontal relation (*inter-pares*) becomes a vertical one, in which the recruiter has the higher position (Krissman 2000). Those who are not recruited wait for the moment to achieve the “American dream” on their own, even without legal documents (Cheswick 1998) knowing that they are likely to be hired, because their labor is even cheaper. The problem regarding undocumented labor is that agribusinesses have adopted practices to evade government

regulations, therefore inhibiting unionization (Krissman p.294). Furthermore, despite regulations against undocumented workers, the U.S. government turns a blind eye when employers need cheaper labor (Castles 2000).

“They know there are a lot of undocumented people working at the plant. They don't care, they just ask for a document, and never check if the document is real or not.” (Tyson meatpacking worker)

“I would say that probably two thirds of the people under my supervision were undocumented” (Former Tyson Supervisor)

The high concentration of Hispanics in areas of agricultural production and processing in Kansas can be explained through such recruitment systems (Gouveia 1995; Stanley 1996; Benson 1999; Griffith 1999). A large portion of the immigrants in Kansas come mainly from two Mexican states: Michoacán and Chihuahua. The former is in southern México, bordering the Pacific Ocean. The latter is northern México, bordering Texas. Recruitment networks are important in understanding the formation of social networks in Kansas and the repercussions for the maintenance of their own cultural elements, as well as the adoption of new elements, and the adaptation to the new environment.

*“My father had couple of friends and a cousin in Garden City. They told him to come over and helped him get a job at the plant. Like two days after his arrival. Then we moved to Emporia” **María***

Since the receiving environment is not generally friendly to immigrants, especially to non-English speakers, the immigrant looks for a way to establish links with other people who come from a similar background as a protective measure (Lieberson & Waters 1987; Ben-Zira 1997; Winter et al 2001; Brown 2003). Such formation of social networks is clearly reflected in the concentration of immigrants in certain areas of the cities, in which there is no immediate direct coexistence with the local white Anglo community, but an auto-segregation that leads to the formation of colonies (Ben-Zira 1997), or certain neighborhoods dominated by specific

ethnic groups (Lieberson & Waters 1987; Winters et al 2001). This is shown by Betancur (1996) with the case of Mexican immigrant labor in Chicago. Similar processes are found in Garden City, Dodge City, Liberal, Emporia and Ulysses, where the presence of an increasing Hispanic community is evident through its location in determined areas of these cities.

Eighty one percent of the interviewees said there was a relative or friend prior to their migration to Kansas, who eased the process, helping them to get a job at the plant and a place to live. Just two of the interviewees were recruited in México and had a job secured. Most of them arrived to Texas first, found a job and then were sent by the corporation to Kansas.

“I first arrived to Liberal, Kansas, and worked there for about two years. Then I was told about the new plant in Dodge City. So we moved because they were paying better over there” (Tyson meatpacking plant worker)

On the work at the meatpacking plants

The work done by Hispanic immigrants at the meatpacking plants is considered among the most dangerous jobs in the U.S. (Gouveia 1995; Stull & Broadway 1995; Benson 1999; Griffith 1999). This is a possible explanation as to why the demand for these sorts of jobs is low in the local Anglo community. The work is divided in three sections. The first is the feeding of cattle concentrated in feed lots. The second activity is performed at the slaughter house or disassembly line, as it is called in the business, as it is the opposite of the Fordist assembly line. The process begins with the slaughter of the animal, and finishes with the selection of the meat for packing and sale. The risk involved in this operation is related to the use of sharpened knives and the repetitive movements over eight hour shifts. This can cause carpal tunnel in the workers, or amputations in the worst cases (Gouveia 1995; Stull & Broadway 1995 Benson 1999; Griffith 1999). The process finishes with the packing of the selected meat, in which the workers must toil in extremely cold temperatures, necessary for the maintenance of the meat.

“The area of production, where the meat is packed, everything is cold, and sometimes the floor is frozen and slippery. You can cut yourself with the knives, even wearing special gloves. The slaughter floor is very warm, and you can dehydrate” (Worker at the Tyson plant in Garden City)

Even though it is known that the work at the meatpacking plant involves risk for the employees, there are some intervening factors that alter the perception of those risks, on the part of the workers. As said before, most of the immigrants come from small urban or rural areas in México. It is people who were involved in hard labor, and most of them related to agriculture. Most of the interviewees pointed out that their father's occupation was related to agriculture (see figure C. 14).

“Yes, it might be dangerous, but we're people from the countryside. Hard workers. We're men, and the jobs at the plants are the kind of jobs we like...men's jobs, you know.” (Worker at the Tyson plant in Emporia)

In some plants the employees are divided in four areas of production, identified by the color of their protective helmets, which denotes their position within the organization. The lowest segment of this hierarchy is represented by workers with white helmet¹⁸, who are in charge of killing and disassembly. The vast majority of the workers in this position are Hispanics, some of them from different states in the U.S., or directly from México or Central America (Gouveia 1995; Stull & Broadway; Griffith 1999). The others are migrants of Southeast Asia (Benson 1999). Correspondingly, communication in the plant is in Spanish, acknowledging that many of these workers do not have a sufficient level of English language ability. At the Tyson plant in Emporia, for example, most of the informational posters in the plant are in both English and Spanish. At the food court, most of the food offered is Mexican-like burritos and tacos. Even some beverages imported from México are offered at the counter to the employees.

“Well, they have to take care of their people, right? That's why they have that Mexican food there. Though it's really bad” (Worker at the Tyson plant in Emporia)

¹⁸ The use of the color may vary by corporation. The referred to here correspond to the ones used by Tyson.

The work at the plant is considered, at first, as a temporary work, for most immigrant workers in Emporia and southwest Kansas. First, because migration is perceived as a temporary process, the work at the plant is perceived as the means through which they can achieve their economic and material goals. With time, as the family and children grow, immigrants are more likely to remain at the plant. In the case of Hispanic teenagers who grew up in meatpacking areas, getting a job at the plant is also perceived as a temporary measure, while they move to a bigger place, or get a better paying job.

“Most of them considered those jobs as temporary. I quit to go to college, but most of my peers from high school are still working there” (Former worker at Tyson in Dodge City)

The process of getting a job at the plant is not very demanding, and at first it is the same for every person, regardless of citizenship or legal status. Most of the people who apply for jobs at the plant know someone who works at the plant, and in many cases, supervisors are the contact person for the new workers. The employers request a document to prove the legal status of the person, accepting driver licenses as such. In many cases, and particularly with Mexican immigrants who came from other states with larger concentration of Hispanics, they had access to fake documents, such as social security numbers, and even green cards. The company rarely checks the validity of the documents presented by the workers. Some of the supervisors are involved in the process of selection of new workers, and their allocation to specific tasks within the plant. This provides them with an immense power over the workers, especially over those who are undocumented.

“Supervisors know who's illegal, and who's not. They help them get the job, and after that, they start asking for favors, and even money. Then, the undocumented are afraid and do whatever they say” (Former worker at Tyson in Dodge City)

“Usually undocumented workers who recently arrived start working in the toughest jobs, like cleaning crew, which nobody else wants to do” (José former Tyson worker)

Although the hiring process is the same for both Anglos and Hispanics, it is common that Anglos apply for jobs as technicians or ascend rapidly within the plant hierarchy. Being bilingual is an advantage for Chicanos and Mexican Americans, primarily, since they can act as interpreters, establishing a link between the English speaking administrative staff and the Spanish speaking workers. Being bilingual provides them upward mobility.

“They gave me a position as supervisor of a small crew, because I could speak both English and Spanish” José

Gender also plays an important role when working at the meatpacking plant. First, because both men and women are hired with the same conditions, although it is higher the rate of men working in tasks that involve extremely hazardous activities, such as killing and bleeding the cows, or manipulating big machines. Within the plant, women are in areas where the work requires more detail, and do not demand much strength, but rather concentration from the worker, such as peeling, and selecting the cuts. In this case, being bilingual also affects the hiring conditions of women, giving them the opportunity to occupy less threatening and better paid positions.

“Once, my cousin and I decided to apply for a job at the plant in Garden City. We went there, filled out the documents, and then they interviewed us separately. When I said I speak English, actually better than Spanish, they offered me a job as secretary in human resources. My cousin, she didn't speak English, and she was sent to the knives line. Of course our wages were very different.” Juana

“I was hired to bring back and forth a little tray with knives between the disassembly line and the place where they're cleaned...that's all I had to do, and it was because I could speak both languages” Sara

As is shown in this chapter, there is a strong relationship between the meatpacking industry, the growth of the Hispanic population and formation of social networks (Oppenheimer 2003 [1985]; Benson 1990; 1999; Griffith 1999; Gimpel 1999). This chapter depicts the role of

immigrant labor within the meatpacking industry, which is the main reason for their presence in specific regions of Kansas. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that this growth depends, not only on migration from other countries, but also on immigration of Hispanics from other states of the U.S. In fact, it is important to note that not all Hispanics migrating from other states are foreign born. They may be U.S. residents or citizens, as will be shown in the following chapter.

The next chapter focuses on Emporia en its Mexican community, which is the primary case study for this dissertation. This is followed by a chapter that presents the theoretical framework for this study, which then allows for a theoretically-grounded analysis of the data in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 4 - From México to Emporia, Kansas

The first Mexican settlers arrived in Lyon County and particularly to Emporia in the early 20th century, escaping from the chaos of the Mexican revolution. Looking for jobs with the Santa Fe Railroad in Kansas, they first arrived in El Paso, Texas, and from there they were sent to Emporia (McDaniel 1976). Mexican employees of the railroad company remained at the same labor status for 50 years, until the introduction of the Equal Opportunity Employment Act. When this situation changed, they were allowed to work in other areas of the company, with higher salaries. According to the Chicano Bicentennial Committee, presided over by Armida Martinez, the average Mexican worker was underpaid, at \$1.35 a day, for about 10 to 12 hours of back-breaking work. With such a salary, it was not possible to support a family or to afford decent housing. Therefore, Mexican workers were forced by the situation to go into debt which impoverished them even more.

The Santa Fe Railroad provided housing for the employees. *“These homes were constructed from railroad ties”* (McDaniel 1976) and built along the rail tracks; often times the box cars were used for housing. More houses were built later on south Araundel Street, and called “La Colonia”. In 1928 the railroad company built brick houses for the employees on West South Avenue (Call 2005). This neighborhood was referred to as “Las Casitas” (the little houses). Despite the lack of sewers, bathrooms and heating, these houses lasted until 1959.

Mexicans were denied the possibility to rent houses in areas other than those stipulated by the Anglo community. They were confined to the southern part of the city, literally on the south side of the tracks. Almost a hundred years later, most Hispanic immigrants remain concentrated in that area (see figure C.15). They were also segregated and denied service in restaurants, barbershops, grocery stores, etc. After World War II, when the second generation born in Emporia returned from the war, they found such discrimination insulting. *“During the war, the Chicano was considered very American by the Anglos. Afterwards he was still a foreigner”* (McDaniel 1976).

In 1947, The Emporia Gazette reported that Mexican Americans who served in the army during the war were upset with the conditions of segregation to which the Mexican community was subjected in Emporia. To their minds, their participation in the war -defending the U.S., fighting for the American ideals of liberty and democracy- would finally grant them the respect and acceptance from Anglo society.

The ultimate offense against the Mexican community, according to the Chicano Bicentennial Committee, came from fellow Catholics who segregated them in church. Mexicans were allowed to sit in the back of the church, and take communion after the Catholic Anglos. This situation drove the Mexican community to build their own church, St. Catherine, in 1923. They raised their own funds, with the collaboration of the Church Extension Society, who partially funded the construction. The Mexican community received support from the assigned pastor for Mexican Catholics, Reverend Father Stephen Lamping, who provided assistance for their religious needs.

In the Catholic elementary school, Mexican children were segregated from Anglo children. There were 60 students and one teacher in a classroom in the basement (Call 2005). Once Mexican children reached seventh grade, they were allowed to attend classes in the same room with Anglos. Offended by such treatment, the Mexican community created its own grade school, St. Catherine's Elementary School, managed by Franciscan Sisters. However, this closed in 1967 for lack of funds and teachers. Interestingly, the few Mexican settlers who were not Catholic received better treatment from the Protestant community, who helped ease their process of adjustment to Emporia. As happened in other regions of the U.S., despite poverty, spatial segregation from the Anglo community, and being denied service in local businesses (Massey 1983; 2001; Massey and Denton 1993), a few Mexican families remained in Emporia, looking to improve their lives.

The new arrivals began in 1969, when Iowa Beef Processors bought the former Armour plant on the west side of Emporia. By 1976, 5.3% of the Emporia population was of Mexican descent. Hispanic immigrants began to come to Emporia, primarily from Texas, to work at the IBP meatpacking plant (Mc Daniel 1976). Finally, the plant grew and was bought by Tyson

Foods. According to Call (2005), between the 1980s and 90s, the cultural boundaries began to fade, with the arrival of Asian and Middle Eastern families. By 2005, only 50% of students in Emporia's schools were Anglos.

Demographic Characteristics of Emporia

Emporia has an estimated population of 26,760 people, of whom 16.21% are Hispanic. Eighty five percent of them are Mexican or Mexican American¹⁹. Forty six percent of the Hispanic population are women, and 54% men. The median age for Hispanics is 22 years old, 6 years younger than the median age for the total population of Emporia. Among children younger than 5 years, 31.2% are Hispanic, and among the children between five and seventeen years old, 59.2% are Hispanic. This creates a higher presence of Latino population in schools, primarily at the elementary levels. Of the Hispanic population older than 25 years, 39.6% have a high school diploma or higher, and 4.6% have a bachelor's degree or higher. On the other hand, 48% of the non-Hispanic population has a bachelor's degree or some college, showing a substantial difference between these groups in terms of educational attainment.

Of the foreign born population in Emporia, 57.8% are Hispanic, and 10.6% of the total population older than 5 years speaks Spanish at home as the primary language. Among the population between 18 and 25 years old 9.8% are Hispanic. Nonetheless, when compared with the total Hispanic population 19.1% are within that age bracket. Only 25.3% of Hispanics are between 5 and 17 years old, and 39% of the Hispanics are older than 25 and younger than 65, supporting the statement that it is a population of the age, willingness, and physical conditions to work (Massey 2002). Only 2.1% of the overall Hispanic population in Emporia is more than 65 years old.

Hispanics represent 13.7% of the labor force more than 16 years old in Emporia. In 1999²⁰, the median Hispanic family income was 18.1% lower than the median family income for the whole population in the city. In the same year, the income per capita for Hispanic workers in

¹⁹ Source U.S. Census Bureau

²⁰ This is the most recent data available for Emporia from the U.S. Census Bureau

Emporia was 40.6% lower than the income per capita of the total population²¹. According to the U.S. Census, 16.8% of the total population in Emporia is living under the poverty line, and 17.8% of that population is Hispanic.

The average household in Emporia has 3 members. By comparison, the average Hispanic family in Emporia has 4 members, which does not support the common perception of Hispanic families as being large, with several children. In Michoacán, the most important state sending immigrants to Emporia, the average family size is 5 members. Despite the difference, the ratio is not high enough to deduce a direct relation between migration and family size reduction. Some intervening factors, though, such as cost of living and both parents working outside of the household offer alternative explanations, as is explained in a later chapter.

Unemployment and poverty are commonly perceived as the main reasons for migration. Nonetheless, in Michoacán, only 1.2% of the economically active population is unemployed, compared to the 4.8% unemployment rate in Emporia. This supports Massey's argument that unemployment in places of origin, as a reason to migrate is a false perception of the phenomenon (Massey 2000; 2002). Indeed, most of the adults interviewed claim that higher income and material opportunities were the main reason to migrate, because salaries in México were comparatively low, for doing similar jobs.

“In México I worked at a butcher shop, doing the same things I do at the [meatpacking] plant, though without all the protection gear they give us here, and the salary was miserable. That's why I came here, where I make in one hour what I used to make in one day back in México...And I'm unskilled labor for Americans” Luis (former worker at Tyson in Emporia)

Despite the higher unemployment rate in Emporia relative to Michoacán²², meatpacking plants are constantly hiring workers for the different shifts and jobs at the plant²³. According to

²¹ Source U.S. Census Bureau

²² Source U.S. Census Bureau and Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática

²³ Two months after finishing the field work, Tyson announced that would close one shift in Emporia, having to fire 1,500 employees. This issue will be treated in dept in a further chapter called post-scriptum.

the interview data, the number of economically active Anglos in the community that apply for jobs at the plant is low, compared to the number of Hispanics. This supports the claim that Hispanics are working jobs of little interest to the local Anglo community.

“Just a few Anglos apply for jobs at the plants, and they usually start with the knives, like everybody, but they don't last much there. They're either promoted very fast or they just quit. Many of them work there during school vacations” Enrique (Former meatpacking worker)

In areas with rapid growth in Hispanic population, it is commonly claimed that the Anglo population is decreasing in response to the growing presence of Hispanics. This can be seen in letters to the editor written by some Anglos to the newspapers in Emporia or Dodge City. Between 1990 and 2005, approximately 5,350 Hispanics moved to Lyon County, showing a growth rate of 305% in that fifteen year period. For their part, the Anglo community decreased by 4,120 from their total population of about 31,040 people, thus decreasing at a rate of 13.3%. Despite the rapid growth of Hispanics, and the significant reduction of the Anglo population, the reduction of its size is congruent with the steady trend shown by the Anglo community in Lyon County before the big wave of Mexican immigrants in the 1990s.

Both Hispanic and Anglo communities have always been separated in Emporia. The Hispanic community is focused on the south side of the city, and more recently in areas near the plant, such as the trailer parks on the west end of the city. Since the mid 1990s, the upper-middle class Anglo community has moved towards the northwestern corner of Emporia, relocating businesses and creating shopping malls, making more evident the spatial division between the groups. Therefore, Emporia's main street, Commercial Street, steadily saw a transition from an Anglo based community to a more diverse one.

“It seems like the town has a division now. You have the Hispanic zone, on one side, and now you have the Caucasians on the other side, and now recently we have an influx of Somalians joining the community, and probably the happiest people with the arrival of Somalians were the Hispanics, because the community is not putting so much pressure on the Hispanics...Though it's not good for me to say so...It sounds bad.” Beverly (Business Owner)

Along that particular street, from its beginning in front of the Emporia State University campus, it is possible to observe the way the cultural landscape is transforming. Near the campus on the north side of the city, most of the businesses are oriented to students of ESU, offering all sorts of fast food, apparel, sporting goods, bookstores, and video stores. Going south, it is possible to see Hispanic oriented businesses, such as restaurants, “tiendas” (groceries stores), furniture, appliances, and stores of miscellaneous products offered to the Mexican population, from calling cards through traditional “ranchero” clothes, including the service of “Quinceañera”²⁴ planning. Among the Hispanic businesses, all of them, except one Salvadorian restaurant, are owned by Mexicans, primarily from Michoacán and Durango.

Finally, the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in Emporia during the last five years depicts its relation to the meatpacking industry, facilitated by social networks that ease the process of moving to a different cultural environment. This chapter shows the social division and segregation of the Mexican immigrant community in Emporia. This is a topic that will be further analyzed in the next chapter, along with the development of the theoretical framework for this study.

²⁴ When young women turn fifteen years old, the families organize a big celebration to mark her transition to womanhood.

CHAPTER 5 - A Theoretical Approach to the Cultural Processes of Mexican Immigrants in Meatpacking Areas in Kansas

On Cultural Capital, Assimilation and Resistance

Immigration to the U.S. as a cultural phenomenon has been approached from two main perspectives, opposed to and exclusive of each other. First, is the most social conservative notion that immigration, particularly of Hispanic origin, challenges American culture and national identity (Huntington 2002). This approach sees multiculturalism as a system that discriminates against the white majority, creating more division than cohesion in society, along the lines of Schlesinger's argument (1998). The second approach claims the need to have a more inclusive system that acknowledges the “other”, instead of social organization for which the sense of *égalité* is a political concept written in the laws, but in its daily practices legitimates the political exclusion of groups different from the white male Christian mainstream.

In order to develop an interpretive approach to the process of adaptation and assimilation of Mexican immigrants to the receiving environment in Kansas, it is necessary to make certain adjustments to Bourdieu's theory. Even though his theoretical framework is broad enough to be applicable to this case, it lacks order and clarity, which some of his critics have taken as a lack of sophistication (Alexander 1995). But most important is the fact that for Bourdieu, even though he criticized the objective structures depicted by structuralism, accusing this school of forgetting both agents and agency, he tended to do the same when referring to habitus as a structuring structure that models and mediates the individual's perception of the social world. Even though he wanted to incorporate actors as agents, in some aspects Bourdieu tended to consider actors in a very passive way, not giving space to real agency (understanding this as the actor's actions), and much less to resistance. Such adjustments will be addressed below.

Bourdieu and Cultural Capital

In a given social organization, whether complex or not, large or small, and in spite of substantial differences or similarities among individuals, one cultural manifestation is considered as the basis over which the social organization was conceived and founded as an ideal, legitimating and providing cultural practices with a veil of rightness -a doxa (Bourdieu 1977a;1985;1986;1997). Such cultural practices are generally (though not always) those of the dominant group, which possesses the power and the means to reproduce its cultural dominance. The rest of the groups within the social space try to accommodate to such parameters, establishing their proximity to or distance from the legitimate culture. In the United States, the expressions of the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) upper middle class male could be considered as the dominant culture.

For Bourdieu, capital acts as a social relation in an exchange system that includes both material and symbolic goods that can be acquired, accumulated and exchanged. Thus, cultural elements, as symbolic goods, become a sort of capital that can be acquired, accumulated, and used to interact in the social space. The relation of proximity to the legitimated culture is established in the social space, through the appropriation and accumulation of elements of that culture, and how they are played out in the different fields²⁵, as representations of the relationship to the core of the social organization. Such appropriation is achieved by three means. The primary one is an affective and cognitive process, through which the family, as a socializing entity, incorporates the mediations that reflect the class habitus, as an imprint in the individual's behavior and perception of the surrounding world. Class habitus is symbolic capital and is expressed through such things as taste, manners, usages and language, for example. Such habitus implies a “*sense of one's place*” and a “*sense of the place of others*” in the social space (Bourdieu 1986: 19).

The second, more instrumental means is achieved through the consumption of certain commodities that denote the individual's status within the social organization (DiMaggio &

²⁵ It is important to understand the Bourdiean concept of *field*, as spheres dominated by certain elites. Such fields are mediated by their conditions of class habitus and cultural capital already acquired by the individual. That is the case, for instance, of graduate students who are acquiring a cultural capital in specific areas of study, interacting, within specific fields.

Useem 1978). The third means is through an institution that will provide and acknowledge the cognitive process of acquisition of cultural capital through, for example, attendance to a school or college. From this theoretical perspective, the status or position of an individual in the social space is conditioned by the individual's possibility to access the necessary elements to acquire such cultural capital. Hence, the process of adaptation can be observed from the perspective of acquisition of cultural capital on the part of Mexican immigrants within the new environment, plus the symbolic capital that represents their habitus as Mexicans of a specific region.

Mexican Immigrants and Cultural Capital

In the case of Mexican immigrants in Kansas, the question consists of how to apply a cultural capital model to explain their experience. Considering that social space is the arena of struggle between the dominant and subordinate symbolic systems, it is possible to conceive the receiving environment as part of the social space in which immigrants enter as actors, and establish their position of proximity or distance to the legitimated dominant culture. This relationship is determined by the reproduction of elements from their original cultural background as habitus, generating at the same time new practices, understanding these practices as the dialectic relationship between agent and structure.

Interactions between the dominant and subordinate groups can be seen as conflict. A portion of the dominant group opposes the newcomer, who does not represent the original ideals upon which the social organization was founded. Latino immigrants try to get closer to the Anglo doxa while struggling not only with those who oppose their presence, but with their own habitus that requires short term transformations and adjustments, even though habitus is not fixed, and is supposed to be transformed with the development of individuals (Bourdieu 1979).

The concept of class when referring to class habitus makes reference to coalitions created by people with similar backgrounds and objectives, who are proximate to each other in the social space (Bourdieu 1985:195-220), and are more likely to establish associations that could be interpreted as class. I make this clear because from a classical Marxist perspective, "Mexican immigrant" is not a class *in itself*. The term Mexican reflects both political and cultural conditions, citizenship and identity respectively, but not a relationship to the means of

production, which is the basis of a class. Nonetheless, according to Bourdieu, associations established by people with similar objectives and backgrounds can be interpreted as classes, which fits perfectly with the situation of Mexican immigrants working in agribusiness related jobs in Kansas. This is a conception of class that I agree with, for it is less deterministic than the Marxian one, and broad enough to allow a different, less objectivist, reading of social structure.

From another perspective, by hiring cheaper Mexican labor to work in the fields or at the meatpacking plants, agribusinesses have created both a profitable agricultural sector, and the most disadvantaged class fraction of America's working poor (Krissman, 2000 p.280). They are concentrated in areas where jobs are available for them (Rose 1964; Chiswick 1988; Portes & Rumbaut 1996; Stanley 1996; Portes 1997; Guerin-Gonzalez & Strikwerda 1998; Griffith 1999; Benson 1999; Aguilar 2006) selling their labor cheaply in the labor market (Bonacich 1972 / 1994; Brown 1998).

During the process of adapting and accommodating to the new environment, immigrants are forced by the circumstances to modify or soften practices that do not fit with those of the local community, and are likely to generate conflict with the receiving environment and its legal system. This does not necessarily mean that they eliminate such practices, but that they are less noticeable to the dominant group. It means that once the individuals are within the new environment, they become aware, with time, of the need to conceal some of the practices that form their habitus, in order to interact with the Anglo community. Thus, we can take the process of assimilation as a more advanced stage of adaptation, which is achieved through the acquisition of an established legitimate symbolic system, plus the habitus already possessed, within in a given social space. Such assimilation can be also understood as the creation of new social practices within the group, and with the receiving community. This can be explained with Bourdieu's formula of social practice (Bourdieu 1984: 101):

$$(HABITUS \times CAPITAL) + FIELD = PRACTICE$$

For instance, practices such as violence against women tend to be less obvious after migration, but do not disappear (Hirsch 2000; Gonzalez 2004). Also, the *machista* conception of

woman as housewife is no longer functional for living in the receiving country, since it is typically necessary for her to enter the labor market in order to help support the household, leading them to develop gender relations based in *Trust*, instead of *Fear-Respect* (Op Cit). Also new practices are incorporated into daily life, such as the use of contraceptive methods that have driven some Latinos to distance themselves from the Catholic Church due to its conservative position regarding these issues (Op Cit). On the other hand, since most of the adults in the households are forced to work as many hours as possible outside the household, they cannot fulfill religious duties in a disciplined way. Therefore, to be a Catholic turns into a tradition, rather than a practice. The practice changes, and as members of a religious community they see themselves forced to develop new ritual performances, more adjustable to their needs and capabilities. It is not accurate, however, to say that such is a process of incorporation of the mainstream class *habitus*, but the required transformation and adaptation of the performance for a transition and adaptation in the long term.

Immigrants enter the system of consumption and their presence is acknowledged by commercial sectors, such as grocery stores that have adapted shelves with products from México. This does not necessarily signify acceptance or assimilation, but the opportunity for profit for the commercial sector that sees more customers for their businesses. Through the consumption of certain material goods, individuals of a given group represent their position within the social field, establishing their proximity to or distance from the dominant culture. Thus, through the possibility of buying in certain stores or following the clothing trends they denote an intention to get closer to the mainstream or dominant group, and the acquisition of a given cultural capital through the recognition of material elements that were created for and are used by the receiving group. Nevertheless, in some cases the intention is to declare distance from the mainstream, as a mode of resistance, through the use of elements that stress their original background. The concept of intentionality is one of the adjustments made to Bourdieu's theory, for even though he considered actors as agents, he did not count intention in their actions. Rather, actions were seen as reactions to one's position within social space. But reaction is a response to an impulse or condition, which is not the same as agency, understanding agency as the actor's actions, from Bourdieu's theoretical framework (Bourdieu 1997).

The consumption of material goods, as part of the construction of the new performative act on the part of immigrants, is a decision that involves risks, due to the possibility of looking artificial. For Bourdieu (1997) such artificiality could represent a loss of cultural capital, which for the purpose of this study represents an extremely deterministic statement. First, because a loss does not take into account the fact that by trying to acquire material goods, there is a cognitive process of acknowledgment that those elements belong to the core group, and that through its acquisition they would get closer to the legitimate culture. Such willingness demonstrates consciousness, and also a gain. In any case, the acquisition of material goods that would look artificial to the eyes of the receiving community can generate or increase conflict between the dominant group and Mexican immigrants who will be stigmatized for their attempt to be unnoticed, trying to mimic the dominant group and its practices, while achieving the opposite outcome.

Though Bourdieu tried to understand the actor as an agent, and the actor's actions as agency, he seemed not to give much importance to resistance, which is important in the case of Mexican immigrants in Kansas. Their actions can be considered as both agency and resistance, to which Bourdieu's conception of loss of cultural capital gives little space. Indeed, the case of the consumption and use of certain material goods can be considered as the expression of mechanisms of resistance towards the dominant culture, using its own materials in an artificial way. Therefore, in order to include the resistance factor it is necessary to make another adjustment to the original theoretical framework.

The symbolic representations the receiving community has regarding the ideal on which the dominant group was founded, which eventually became the doxa, determine the psychological identification with the immigrant. Thus, taking into account that Kansas is in a conservative region of the United States, it is possible to understand that a significant portion of the Anglo population identifies with a social conservative point of view regarding Hispanic immigrants. There are areas in Kansas where the declining population is Anglo and the presence and rapid growth of the Hispanic immigrant population represents a challenge to the primordial elements of identity upon which the dominant group was founded.

It is important to note that none of the groups in Kansas, neither the Anglo community nor Mexican immigrants are homogeneous within themselves. In the former group, though 74.4%²⁶ of the population is white, their ancestors originated from different parts of Europe. The term Anglo Saxon is commonly used as synonym of White or Caucasian -or White Anglo Saxon Protestant-, because of the background of the Euroamericans who colonized the Kansan territory. Nonetheless, not all of them are Protestant; there is a considerable Catholic population in Kansas, nor do they have the same ethnic background. There is German, Swedish, Czech and Russian heritage in the state, among others. Therefore, it is not accurate to say that their perception of Latino immigrants is uniform or homogeneous, because their perceptions are also mediated by different references. Nonetheless, the polarization between social conservative and liberal discourses has affected their perception of Latino immigrants. The discussion regarding the problems and benefits of multiculturalism divides opinions within the Anglo population.

In the case of Hispanic immigrants in Kansas, about 85% are of Mexican background, and the rest of them are from Central America. This situation creates heterogeneity within the Hispanic community itself, for in each nation, and according to the region of each country, the habitus differ from each other. Despite Spanish language as a common element, the symbolic representations may vary according to the regions of origin. In Kansas, as mentioned above, the recruitment system has facilitated the concentration of immigrants from Michoacán and Chihuahua.

According to Jeffrey Alexander's theory on social performance (2006a), as part of the process of assimilation members of the receiving environment or host group expect the members of the out-group to express their civil competence to be part of the civil sphere (Alexander2006c). This means getting closer to the legitimated cultural core. When talking about the experience of Mexican immigrants in Kansas, this competence means their ability to become less Mexican-like and more American-like. Nonetheless, such a requirement is impossible to achieve because their ethnicity exposes their condition as others and establishes a relationship of distance, instead of proximity with the Anglo group. Such a condition is different for other white

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. Data for Kansas 2004

European immigrants, for their skin color makes them closer to the White Anglo community, despite ethnic and cultural differences that are not considered.

It is important to take into account at this point that there is a strong concentration of immigrants in certain areas of the cities (Tienda and Lii 1987; Betancur 1996; Portes 1987; 1996; Massey 1993; Paul 2001), as a consequence of the recruitment system, and as a protective reaction by newcomers who look for a secure environment, surrounded by people from a similar cultural background (Winters et al 2001; Brown 2002). The constant arrival of new members to the Mexican community keeps reproducing, strengthening and rejuvenating their *background representations*. Also, the concentration of Latinos in specific areas not only makes it difficult for newcomers to acquire the language of the receiving environment rapidly, but also limits the interaction between immigrants and the host group to specific performances, such as work which is mediated by the first and second generation Latinos born in the United States who work as interpreters for the dominant group, and supervisors of the subordinate one.

The acquisition of cultural elements is not only experienced by the immigrants, but also on the part of the receiving community who includes new elements in their daily life. Mexican food is increasingly popular, and a growing Anglo community is developing communication skills in Spanish, which shows an exchange of cultural capital to a certain degree.

The concentration of social networks, though, becomes an argument for social conservative sectors that multicultural societies are racialized and exercise discrimination against the Anglo majority. Indeed, in both Emporia and southwest Kansas the meatpacking plants represent a large source of employment, in which almost 90% of the employees are Hispanic (Aguilar 2006). Therefore the Spanish language is almost a requirement for getting a job in these plants, due to the constant contact with primarily Spanish speaking workers. This situation has been used as an argument against immigrants who are considered job stealers, and blamed for lowering the wages in the labor market.

In summary, this research uses the theory of cultural capital as a model for understanding the transition and adaptation of Mexican immigrants in meatpacking areas of Kansas. Due to

Bourdieu's rigidity in his theoretical perspective, and the criticisms of it regarding its lack of sophistication, the model as used in this study was adjusted in order to make it flexible and broad enough to allow a more accurate reading of the Mexican immigrants' experience. Perhaps one of the most important adjustments made to the cultural capital model is the inclusion of resistance as an element of analysis. It means that the acquisition of cultural capital from the dominant culture could be used either to integrate to the dominant group or to reformulate those elements as a mode of resistance. According to this, the misrepresentations or artificiality will be considered as failed performance or a mechanism of resistance, instead of a loss of cultural capital.

Bourdieu's theoretical framework allows us to see the process of adaptation of Mexican immigrants in Kansas, as a process of acquisition of cultural capital, with outcomes that may vary according to the economic status, class habitus, education attained, and expectations of the individuals. Nonetheless it is possible through this model to make a comprehensive analysis of the immigrant's experience, and their trajectories during the process of acquiring cultural capital. The concept of trajectories is an interesting tool that makes it possible to understand individuals positions in the social space, and how they arrived to those positions (Bourdieu 1997: 20) (see figure C. 16)²⁷.

This modified theoretical model, will be useful for further analysis on migrant populations, emphasizing the cultural experience, not as shock, but as a process of accumulation of cultural capital. Acquisition represents the process of adaptation faced by the newcomers, and the assimilation and acculturation experienced by the following generations. The generation of people who grow up between households ruled by their parents' background representations and the Anglo environment, is reinforced by the school system and the law.

²⁷ Charts 16, 19 and 20 follow a scheme similar to that used by Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1984) and in *Capital cultural, escuela y espacio social* (1997) to portray the trajectories followed by people, in the social space. In the charts created for this study, every dot represents a particular case, and are relative to each other. The acquisition of cultural capital is shown in the X axis of the chart, whereas the approximation to the dominant Anglo culture is represented in the Y axis.

Attachment to the cultural background as a means of resistance

As shown the Mexican community in Kansas, particularly in Emporia had to face situations of direct discrimination or symbolic violence, which made it clear they were not welcomed within the community. The response given by the early Mexican immigrants to the discrimination to which they were subjected, came in the form of agency. Actions such as the construction of their own church and their own elementary school are excellent examples of resistance. Nonetheless, the resistance generated by the immigrants did not intend to generate conflict or confrontation, but rather separation in order to find harmony in the environment.

In the 1940s and 1950s, it was common among the Mexican immigrants that they discouraged their kids from speaking Spanish, so they would not face discrimination and humiliation. That is the reason why many first generation Mexican American forty or fifty years old are not Spanish speakers. Nonetheless, the situation has changed for current immigrants and their families. Despite the efforts in some states to apply “English Only” laws, nowadays the Hispanic community is very conscious of the importance of bilingualism for their children. Indeed, it is more frequent that Mexican Americans of second and subsequent generations are trying to learn Spanish, as a way to connect themselves with their ancestors' cultural and ethnic background. The attempt to reconnect or to establish an attachment with that part of their family history, acquiring cultural elements from the ancestors' background represents a means of resistance, through the acquisition of that particular cultural capital.

It is important to point out that through the history of the Mexican community in Kansas, from the early immigrants about a hundred years ago, to the current immigrant laborers working at the meatpacking plants in Emporia and southwest Kansas, resistance has been constantly present, and has developed from the maintenance of elements from their cultural background, to the recognition and acceptance of elements such as food. Nowadays, Mexican food, which represents a vital part of their cultural background is one of the more popular foods in the entire United States., which at the same time has developed its own Americanized versions of the Mexican food.

CHAPTER 6 - Acquisition of Cultural Capital as Adaptation

This chapter describes how Mexican immigrants in Kansas and their descendants establish a relation of proximity or distance to the mainstream Anglo society. In this analysis the acquisition of cultural capital is understood as a determinant part of adaptation and assimilation processes. In order to understand the process of acquisition of cultural capital, it is important to bring back the definition of habitus as developed by Bourdieu (1979: VII), understanding it as “[...] *a system of durable and transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices*”. Such practices are the main elements that determine one's position and self perception in a given social space. Thus, habitus mediates individuals' practices within a given socioeconomic context. It is necessary to broaden the concept of habitus to include ethnicity, as a determinant factor in a system of durable and transposable dispositions, thus affecting and determining one's self perception and practices within a social space.

In the case of Mexican immigrants in Kansas, such “ethnic habitus” would determine the elements that define them as Mexicans, from a specific region, and how such elements are expressed through their social practices and symbolic systems, and how they are reproduced for the following generations of Mexican-Americans. In an attempt to identify the elements that define a person as Mexican, there were two recurrent themes that, despite having relatively the same importance for most of the Hispanic community in the U.S., are the key elements through which cultural differences are expressed between the local Anglo community and the Mexican immigrants in Kansas: family and language.

La Familia

For Hispanics in general, the concept of family is perhaps one of the main differences with the local Anglo community. The family unit is not only nuclear, but also includes the extended family, thus increasing the number of relatives and tightening the link among different branches of the family.

“Back home [in México], we used to get together at my mother's house every weekend for a barbecue. Our uncles, aunts, our cousins, and everybody's children...you know, the family.” Silvia

All of the interviewees, regardless of their place of origin, manifested how the family was directly affected by migration, either because they migrated alone or with their nuclear family, leaving the extended family behind. Separation, division and solitude became constants in their lives. Despite the strong Mexican networks in the meatpacking areas of Kansas, immigrants do not recognize such networks as a replacement for the social lives which they were accustomed to in México.

“I want my daughter to know what a grandmother is; I want my child to know what it is to have cousins. She has friends, but is not the same.” Silvia

“We don't have too many friends here...we're from a different region, so we don't have too much in common with them.” Elizabeth

In Emporia, Kansas where most of the Mexican immigrants are from Michoacán, the average size of a Hispanic family, according to the U.S. Census, is 4 members per household. Indeed, that number is smaller than the average size of the family household in Michoacán, where the average is 4.5 members per family household²⁸. Interestingly, this contradicts the image of Hispanics as having families with several children, which might be true in some cases, but is not the rule for most immigrant families. The usual perception of large Hispanic families may stem from the fact that nuclear families are closer to the extended family, thus increasing the number of the members of the social group.

One of the elements that explain the image of Hispanic families with several children is the fact that most of the immigrants from México are Catholic practitioners. According to this, Rome, as the epicenter of the Catholic faith forbids the use of birth control methods, for they are considered as sin *“contra natura.”* The claim is that God is the only one to decide the number of

²⁸ Source Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática from México (INEGI)

children families will have -“*As many as God wants us to.*” Thus, it is true that Catholic families, not only in México but in general, have tended to have a greater number of children, though population trends show this is no longer the case. Times have changed, and despite the prohibition declared by the Pope, birth control methods are used among Catholics. Despite their strong religious beliefs, most immigrant families realize the need to have control over pregnancy because of the living expenses in the United States, where the cost of medical care is almost impossible for newcomers to afford. Nonetheless, most of the newcomers end up having children eventually.

Another factor that intervenes on whether the family decides to have more children or not, is that in most cases, immigrant women have to work outside of the household in order to support the family. In their Mexican hometowns, it is common for women to stay at home with the children. It is therefore understandable that such a situation creates a more conducive environment to child-rearing.

In the early twentieth century, as a response to discrimination at the hands of the Anglo-Catholic community in Emporia, Mexican settlers gathered the funds to build Saint Catherine's church. This showed a strong commitment on the part of Mexican settlers to their religion. Nonetheless, despite the strong religiosity of most of the Mexican immigrants, many of them cannot fulfill their religious duties in the same way they were accustomed to back in their birthplaces. Extended working hours, as well as second part time jobs help to make ends meet, make it difficult for immigrants to go to church or attend mass on a regular basis.

According to a member of the Hispanic Catholic community in Emporia, most of the Mexican immigrants are Catholic practitioners, although a small percentage of them have found spiritual shelter under other religious denominations, such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the United Methodist. These two offer less rigid schedules, and the former offers bible study groups, according to the schedule and availability of the individuals. This catches the attention of some newcomers. In southwest Kansas, the latter has created the United Methodist Mexican American Ministries in order to provide assistance to the Hispanic community, regardless of their religious denomination and legal status. As expected, it has created much sympathy that is expressed in

increasing Hispanic attendance. On the one hand, Jehovah's Witnesses and the United Methodist church have learned to establish contact with the Hispanic community, addressing the spiritual and material needs of newcomers, such as free English classes. On the other hand, the Catholic Church addresses traditional values, especially prevalent among those who come from rural backgrounds, as well as offering services in Spanish. It is of prime importance that the services provided by the churches give immigrants a sense of recognition and security, thus easing the process of adaptation.

Like religious practices, other cultural practices of the family suffer the consequences of migration when the family size is reduced. In the case of those who made the decision to migrate, it is even more difficult when they realize that such practices do not fit within the new environment (Ben-Zira 1997), increasing the gap between them and the local Anglo community.

“The neighborhood I grew up in was mostly Hispanic, and I'd go along with everybody, pretty much, but there was times when differences in culture, you know like they have parties in days when most white people, most Americans, don't. Their Mariachi music was pretty wild throughout the neighborhood, in a high volume it's kinda of annoying.”
Chris (Anglo resident of Dodge City)

“They say we are loud...that we like to hear our music loud, you know...And yes, we do. I guess that's how we like it.” **Ricardo (Chicano from Garden City)**

Despite little interaction between Anglos and Mexican immigrants in the neighborhoods, the latter are conscious of their situation as foreigners, especially when undocumented. This contributes to a softening of certain practices in order to make them less noticeable.

In meatpacking towns in Kansas, such as Emporia, Dodge City, Garden City or Liberal, there is a clear spatial division between groups of different ethnic backgrounds, as the spatial segregation depicted by Massey (1993; 2001) based on class and ethnicity. There are both Mexican and Anglo neighborhoods, as well as areas for people of different ethnic backgrounds, such as Somalians in Emporia. As portrayed in the case of trailer parks in Garden City (Benson

1990), even though there are areas dominated by one or the other, some working class Anglo families reside in the so-called Mexican neighborhoods, whereas in the upper middle class Anglo neighborhoods, the Hispanic families are members of the established Mexican American community in Emporia, who are upper middle class.

The concept of family unity, as a key element that defines Mexicans and Mexican Americans, varies with the generations. Recently arrived Mexicans find it extremely important to keep the unity of their nuclear family to which they are accustomed, and to maintain their traditions. As a defense mechanism against a non-friendly and unknown environment, newcomers try to apply their traditions and family life as it was in their hometowns, where family implies a large number of relatives, and children live with their parents until they get married or make enough money to move out. It is important to point out that gender differences apply for children of Mexicans. On the one hand, men are expected to become independent more rapidly and leave their house to form their own families. On the other hand, women are expected to be their parent's dependent, until marriage, when they become someone else's dependent (Gonzalez-Lopez 2004).

“My husband didn't let them do anything after school. He wanted us to be together as much time as was possible. And when the older daughter graduated from high school, we didn't let her go to another city. That's the crazy American way we don't like.” Elizabeth

“When I moved out of my parents' house it was hard...But I don't see myself living with them anymore [...] you end up getting used to it.” Pablo

For Chicanos, even though the concept of family unity is still important, they are more willing to move out of their parents' house after graduating from high school. Third or fourth generation Mexican Americans are more likely to leave their parental house after high school, some of them going on to college, as will be shown later. Hence, the conception of family for later generations is closer to that of the more individualistic Anglo style. A good example of differences between the Anglo and Mexican immigrant communities is the image each group has of family ties and family unity, and the way they perceive each other from that perspective

(Portes et al 1980). For Anglos it is usually the perception that Hispanic family size is far larger than the average Anglo family size. This might be true not because Hispanic families have more children, but because the relationship with the extender family is tighter, thus increasing the number of relatives with whom there is a direct relationship. For Hispanics, the American family is completely unattached, and the concept of individualism goes against family unity.

“Children here don't know what it is to have grandparents, and that's important....they're very important in one's formation.” Ana

“It seems like they're waiting for the kids to graduate from high school and get out of house, <bah bye, Mom, see you at thanksgiving>²⁹...they're just children. No wonder why they send their parents to retirement houses when they are old.” Silvia

It is important to bear in mind that most of the Mexican immigrants in the U.S. are originally from rural or small urban areas (Portes & Rumbaut 1996; Rumbaut 1997; Massey 2002; 2004), where tradition is almost as strong as law (Hirsh 2000). For example, regarding the incorporation of patriarchal traditions, it is understood that men work outside of the household and provide the money to feed and support the family. Women stay at home, work on domestic duties such as food processing, housekeeping and reproduction of values and family without earning any economic compensation.

“Dad was the boss of the house. Everybody had to do as he said or else... Mom, she only stayed at home with us.” María

Immigrants' family life changes radically in several ways upon arrival to Kansas. Despite its importance for the Hispanic community in general, for immigrants, the family's economic support becomes the main reason to migrate, thus sacrificing family unity itself. Family, as the element vital to reproducing the values of the cultural background, is affected by the separation of its members when only one of the parents migrates.

²⁹ <Originally in English>

Pedro

I didn't come here with a visa. As a matter of fact, most of the people I know did it the same way. The U.S. Embassy was too far from our home, and the process was very expensive and uncertain. I remember family and friends telling us stories of people, entire families, traveling from the farthest point in México, and the consul would tell them their visas were denied, because they lack a small and ridiculous document. That's why my family decided to cross the border and come over to the U.S. illegally.

I crossed the border in Texas, and didn't try it once, or twice, but three times, 'til we finally made it through. It was all my family. My cousins, uncles, aunts, everyone. Every time we tried some of us made it. The rest kept trying, until the entire family was in the U.S. My first try was with my mom and my grandfather who was sick at that time. He could barely walk. We crossed the Rio Grande, and since I was a little kid, they put me on tire-tube, so the coyote and my grandpa were pushing me through the river, in the middle of the night. Unfortunately, at the other side "la migra" was waiting for us, and they sent me and my Mom back immediately. Grandpa was arrested, and tortured for information, thinking he was the coyote. We remained in Chihuahua, like most deportees do, and tried again a couple of years later with my other siblings.

My mother crossed the desert before us. People can't imagine how hard and dangerous it is. Especially now, when besides "la migra" there are other armed people like the minutemen, gangs waiting for illegals to take their money and belongings, or even other coyotes charging you for the right to cross the border through the area controlled by them.

We met my Dad in Kansas, where he was working. Finally most of my family made it. But in the mean time the process was terrible, because we were separated from our extended family. We were scared to death in a place with another language, and people who looked at us like we were from another

planet...actually that's the way I felt. We all went to school, and learning English took a long time. So we didn't have any friends at the very beginning, because we were the only Mexican kids in my school. And nobody spoke Spanish to us. My mother was devastated, because grandpa was still in México, trying to come over, and her siblings were spread out in different states.

Finally, like five or six years later there was an amnesty, and we applied for it, obtaining the permanent residence. I went to college, got a Masters with excellent grades. I got a job with the government that required me to become citizen, so I did. After 10 or 12 years living here in the U.S. I became a sworn citizen.

Women and Labor

When the entire nuclear family migrates with their children, women often offer their productive force outside of the household in the labor market in order to afford the living expenses of the new environment. In this case the role of women as caregivers and reproducers of family varies, since they are not present in the household all of the time. Therefore, the role of mothers as caregivers is also fulfilled by elder daughters, or some other female figure related or close enough to the family.

*“When we got to Dodge, my mother started working at the plant, like my father. That was new for us, because we were used to having Mom at home.” **Sara***

*“I needed to find a part time job at the plant, because we needed the money to support our three kids.” **Elisa***

Family is a key element in the reproduction of class habitus, and when living in a foreign land, it is determinant for the reproduction of the cultural background, such as traditions, values and practices. Due to migration it is affected by the absence of parents when both work outside of the household in order to provide the material goods to cover the needs of the family. Thus family as a reproducer of values and traditions is no longer efficient. School becomes a more

important space for socialization, symbolic production and social reproduction. Therefore, the children of immigrants are exposed to a different set of cultural elements, designed by and for the Anglo community, through which the Anglo doxa is reproduced, solidifying its domination within the social space.

I hung out with the Mexicans who have always been there [...] It seemed like the new people weren't there as much, because they would literally be at home taking care of their little brothers and sisters, because their parents were out working or trying to find a job”
Kelly (Former EHS Student)

Despite the strong impact of Anglo schooling on children of Mexican background, the reproduction of the symbolic representations from the dominant group is mediated by the original cultural background that is maintained at home by their parents practices, language, food, and other traditions. From this perspective, the parents' habitus as Mexicans from either rural or small urban backgrounds works as a counterweight to the impact of the acquisition of elements from the receiving environment.

Returning to the case of the mothers working outside of the household, it is liberation for Mexican women who become conscious of themselves as a productive force. This represents a turning point, considering that, for machista communities, household work is not considered as “productive” work. Acquired consciousness about their potential to survive independently empowers and liberates women from traditional male domination to which they were subjected.

Despite the hardships of migrating and leaving their parents behind, following their husbands to the U.S. with their little children, and struggling with a new language and culture, a group of five women interviewed in Emporia, who are members of a support group for battered women, outlined the security they found in the U.S. compared to the domination and abuses to which they were subjected back in the rural areas they migrated from. For these women, as for many others, the sacrifice was well worth it for the sake of their children.

“My husband would come home after work and beat me if I didn't have dinner ready. He tried to do that here, but after I went to the police everything changed.” Dolores

“There are lots of immigrants from small rural backgrounds in Michoacán. It's difficult for them to change certain machista practices, because it is strongly incorporated in their lives.” Yvette (coordinator of the abused women support group)

When women become conscious of their power and productive capacity, they feel free to express their thoughts about machismo, and the physical and psychological abuses to which they were subjected. The system in which men are the dominant actor, allowed by tradition to exercise their power through physical, psychological and symbolic violence was extremely incorporated in these women and considered normal. It was the doxa of their cultural background. An interesting insight is offered regarding the role of women in the reproduction of such a system of domination. Simple language expressions and mannerisms taught to their children create the perfect environment for the reproduction of such values.

“It's like when you see a mother telling their little son ‘don't cry...you look like a little girl’! There is always someone telling you the way you're supposed to act, according to your sex.” Juana

Machismo gives men power over women, but at the same time demands heavy responsibilities from men since they are not the main but supposedly the only provider for the family's needs. In rural areas, according to the women interviewed, men are traditionally required to provide the house, the food, and to make the right decisions in order to guarantee the family's safety. When the context changes and the wife has to work outside of the household, women claim men feel vulnerable, not necessarily due to the reduction of his power over the wife, but because of the feeling of not being able to provide for his family. From the perspective of a rural immigrant's cultural background, it ends up questioning his manhood. According to the interviewees, in some cases this situation generates conflict, when men try to maintain control over the woman through physical force. This becomes a major problem, since this practice is not acceptable within the new environment.

In Michoacán, which is the largest Mexican sender state of immigrants to Emporia, 75% of the population considers a man to be the head of the household³⁰. In Chihuahua, which is the largest sender state for southwest Kansas, 77% of the population holds the same view. Eighty five percent of the interviewees in this study identified their mother's occupation back in México as housewife (see figure C.17). The other 15% worked in activities such as education or sales. Nevertheless, the perception of who is the head of the household does not change with migration, since all of the interviewees identified their father as the head figure in the household. Interviewees also claimed that their mother's role turned economically active after migration, when working out of the household gave them the chance to support the family, and modified the wife-husband relationship.

The radical change shown by Hirsh (2000) in which man – woman relationships based on fear turn into respect and collaboration after moving to a new environment also applies to the relation of power between parents and children. The set of rules and norms established and enforced in the U.S. to protect women and children from abuse are perceived, at the same time, as an obstacle for immigrant's conception of children's education. The backgrounds where immigrants came from also accept violence, when necessary, as an enforcing mechanism for the process of children's upbringing. Nonetheless, such practices are not allowed in the receiving environment, and so became less noticeable, recurrent or severe.

“In my time, my parents would beat the hell out of me, but I learned to be a respectful man [...] now parents fear their children, because if you touch them, they'll call 911 and that's it...”

One father

For immigrant mothers, the whole concept of the American individualistic society is not only abstract, but spoils children, making them believe they are self sufficient and granting them privileges for which “they are not prepared”. This is reflected through the parent-child relationships, that for immigrant women seems to be unattached, in which the former fear their children, and the latter show no respect for their parents.

³⁰ Source Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática from México (INEGI).

“From grade school kids are taught to be self-sufficient, cold and manipulative. They are taught that nobody can beat them. [...] Then, the problem is that parents cannot apply corrective measures, like our parents did with us. Then they grow up having no respect for their parents. Back home, parents correct their children, and when do you hear that they are calling 911? [...] and they respect their parents there. Not because they beat them but because they knew Dad was the chief of the house. Here, parents seem to fear their kids and that's not good.” Elizabeth

Reina

I was in college. I wanted to be a doctor. When I got married, my husband told me to quit school, because my place was the house, with the children...And I did what he said, because he was my husband, and I considered it was the right thing.

We had three children. Two girls and the little boy was the last one. After 12 years of marriage things weren't working, and I left him. I moved with my kids to my Mom's house. He came to the U.S., looking for a job at the meatpacking plant, because he had two butcheries back home, so he knew that job very well. After six months in Texas, he went back to México, and convinced my children to come with him, that life was better in the U.S. He told them about the schools with gigantic playgrounds, and that they would learn English, and have nice stuff. Of course they wanted to go after him. I wasn't sure about letting my children go with him, so I decided to come along, and give my marriage another chance.

We made it through Texas, with tourist visas. My husband saved some money , and I sold my record store. We spent all of our money on a brand new van, so the five of us could travel comfortably. Once in El Paso he learned that there were no jobs available. They told him about Kansas, and the plants in Dodge City and Garden City. We drove all the way from Texas to Dodge City, and then they told

him to go to Emporia. When we first arrived, we didn't like it at first, so we kept driving to Iowa, looking for a town with a meatpacking plant. We ran out of money so we decided to return to Emporia, where there were positions available at the plant.

The real problem was that we didn't know anybody in Emporia, but in Dodge City. My husband's cousin gave us the address of some acquaintance of hers, so we went to his house. They hosted the five of us for three weeks, in their little trailer house, and helped my husband to get the job at the plant. With his first paycheck we went out looking for an apartment or a house.

It's been twelve years since we got to Emporia. I haven't seen my mother ever since, because our visas expired and we stayed illegally. My three older children had visited her, because they are residents already. But my husband never applied for my residence. He did it, because he knew I was conscious that if I decided to leave him again, I would have to do it by myself, and If I go back they won't let me return to my children...That's what I thought. It's been twelve years since I left my mother, and I am her only child. I haven't been able to be there for her when she was sick.

When our children started going to school we were scared. We didn't let them stay for any after school activities. They had to come back home right after classes. We didn't want them to hang out with other kids, because we noticed families here were different, and children are spoiled and disrespectful to their parents. We wanted to keep our unity as though we were still in México. If there was a party, and they wanted our two girls to go they had to invite all of us. And the boys were scared to dance with my two girls, because of the 'ogre' of their Dad...

We had two more girls here, and my husband saved some money to buy two cars and sell them in México, making profit from it. He left the plant and started

buying and selling used cars. We separated again, and he went back to México. I was reluctant to come over here, and I'm the one who ended up staying.

My three older children graduated from college, and one has a Masters. They are all very successful, and their lives are here...So is mine, next to my children. The two little girls are in elementary school and they're having problems with Spanish, because they are in school all the time, and the little time we spend together after my work is not enough to improve their mother language. I speak in Spanish to them and they answer back in English...That's why I had to learn English, after 12 years here.

School and Cultural Capital

From a Bourdiean perspective, school is the institutionalized form of acquisition of cultural capital (Bourdieu1977; 1986), and a key reproducer of the dominant culture (Bourdieu1977b; 1996; 1997), since the system is designed and supervised by the dominant group. For Mexican immigrants and their children, the experience and impact of American schooling and the acquisition of cultural capital varies depending on the generation and the exposure to the Anglo environment. Such differences are shown by the degree of integration and assimilation with the Anglo community, and the degree of acquisition of English language that are reflected in their academic and social performances.

In order to do a comparative analysis of the educational experiences, three groups were identified. The first is of Mexican-Americans. Second, third or subsequent generations of children of Mexican origin, who have been exposed most of their lives to the Anglo American doxa. In Emporia High School (EHS), where 49% of the students are of Hispanic origin, most of the children of the already established Mexican American community are closer to the mainstream Anglo group, according to one of the three Hispanic teachers. Their interaction with more Anglo kids their age is completely fluent. Their families settled in Emporia more than two or three generations ago (McDaniel 1976; Call 2005), and in some cases belong to the upper middle class. Most of these Mexican-American teenagers are not fluent in Spanish. Social status, as well as language, affects their interaction with Mexican newcomers, as shown by Zhou

(1997). They are in different social spaces (Bourdieu 1985), and such a distance is not easy to overcome, despite their common origin.

“These kids, from the very beginning are being prepared for college and to meet academic goals. Whereas the other kids have to learn the language, with ESL...so they lose 2 years while they get the language.” EHS counselor

For a Mexican-American teenager, going to college is definitely an option after graduating from high school. They are more likely to access higher education, and a portion of them will be the second or third generation going to college, thus increasing their probability of future economic success. Being born in the U.S. is also an encouraging advantage, since they have access to federal credits that provide an alternative to overcome the economic obstacles in accessing college.

The second group is kids who were brought by their immigrant parents when they were little children. They were exposed to the English language from a very early stage of their lives, and the process was considerably fast for them. They grew up as Mexicans, although English is the language they used on a regular basis. Most of them are bilingual, although their Spanish is precarious in most cases, to the point that most of them take classes of Spanish grammar in order to learn how to write it. As in language, they are in permanent interaction with members of the Anglo community and their cultural expression, thus incorporating elements from it in their daily life. Some of these children are not even conscious of their legal status, not knowing whether they are documented or not.

“I really wanted to go to college, but then I realized I was undocumented...just then. I was devastated.” Andrea

Their interaction with peers from other ethnic groups is more common than other Hispanics who are not fluent in English. Both the academic performance and academic expectations of these children are not as high as their Mexican American peers. It is important to bear in mind the social and economic background of the Mexican immigrant population.

According to the MMP³¹ 78.6% of the Mexican immigrants in the U.S. completed nine years of basic education in México. These factors have an inevitable effect on the likelihood of these children going to college, since parents with only a basic education are not likely to encourage their kids to pursue higher education.

“Most of the families have a very basic level of education, so they don't encourage kids to go higher...to go to college.” EHS Teacher

The third group is formed by those who came to the U.S. with their families as teenagers, for whom the process of learning the language takes more time and effort as compared to those who were brought while little children. For these teenagers, the process of acquiring the language might take years, and this has a direct effect upon their academic performance, delaying their graduation from high school, and affecting their self esteem and expectations of going to college.

“I was thinking that after graduating from high school, I wasn't going to be somebody important, or anything [...] When I finally graduated I was thinking about my life, and I just wanted to get a job. That's when someone told me about the plant I [applied] for a temporary job, hoping that if I was lucky I would remain there forever.” María

Discouragement is a common feeling and, in many cases, these kids are more likely to drop out of school compared to the other two groups, once they turn eighteen years old. Then they get a job at the meatpacking plant. As expected, the likelihood of going to college after high school is lower for these kids, since they lack the economic resources to access it, and also lack the information regarding alternative opportunities, such as the Dream Act, through which children of undocumented immigrants were able to apply to Kansas State University or the University of Kansas, paying in-state tuition. Nonetheless, this is coming to an end due to the strong opposition from social conservative sectors of the state who consider such a measure as an award to undocumented immigrants and an expense for the tax payers. Critics don't take into account, however that the bill only gave the opportunity to a extremely small portion of college-

³¹ Source: Mexican Migration Project. <http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu>

age immigrants. At Kansas State University, less than 0.02% of the student body benefited from this bill.

“There is a language barrier...they have to learn the language in order to fit. It is the biggest obstacle [nevertheless] educational expectations have increased tremendously among immigrant kids” Sally (EHS Counselor)

“Because of the language thing [young people] think they are not clever enough to go to college. They don't have the economic resources either, or lack the information. And if they have it, their parents don't have the education or knowledge to encourage kids to pursue higher education.” Janice (ESU academic talent recruiter).

Having the opportunity to interview Hispanic teachers and members of the high school staff, as well as former students of EHS provided interesting insights, and different perspectives, regarding the elements that affect the academic performance of immigrant teenagers in high school. One consideration addressed was that, even though the language represents an obstacle for teenagers who arrived recently to Emporia, it is overcome at some point, since the school system demands the acquisition of the language. Nonetheless it was also pointed out that some traditional values, fueled by the lack of information and misconceptions about the value of education in the long term, also affect the academic performance for the immigrant teenagers.

In the case of families where the parents come from a rural background, with just a few years of institutionalized basic education, and their children are going to be the first generation finishing high school, going to college is not only considered expensive, and somehow pretentious, but also unnecessary, since the lack of it did not stop the parents from achieving certain material goals.

“Some kids fail intentionally, because a good performance would be perceived as a desperate effort to become 'one of them' [...] to be a whitey.” EHS Hispanic Teacher

This partly explains why, among Hispanic teenagers in meatpacking areas of Kansas, the most common option after high school is to get a job at the plant itself. Thus, acquisition of the institutionally offered cultural capital becomes an expensive deterrent, for which they consider themselves unprepared. Or they lack the economic resources. Once they turn eighteen years old, they can work and start earning the economic capital that will allow them to access the material goods that represent economic success.

“Many kids are waiting to finish high school or their eighteenth birthday, to drop out and get a job so they can buy a car or something like that” José

Due to the increasing Hispanic population in meatpacking areas of Kansas, school districts have developed mechanisms to establish links with the immigrant community. Despite the efforts by school districts, Hispanic parents, primarily newcomers, are still reluctant to participate in parent-teacher conferences, about their children's academic performance. Immigrants from small urban or rural areas are more reluctant to get involved.

As expected, the main obstacle observed regarding the integration of immigrant parents with the academic community is the language. Even if the school provides an interpreter, parents feel intimidated and feel that as some sort of mechanism of control. Keeping in mind that a good portion of these parents are undocumented, the suspicion and fear of being exposed by evidence of their legal status, not lack of interest in their children's education, offers an explanation for the low participation.

“Again, due to the language barrier they don't get involved, and there are only a few members of the staff who can speak Spanish to help them.” EHS Hispanic Staff

“Some parents don't go to school meetings. Some of them think they might be denounced to the police or 'la migra' and simply don't come to the school.” EHS Hispanic teacher

Also, traditional notions of how to educate a child can create conflict with the system used by schools in the U.S. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, tradition justifies the

use of corporal punishment, when necessary, in the formation of their children. They were educated that way, and it is part of their class habitus that reproduces itself through generations. As is well known, despite the levels of domestic violence against children in the U.S., mechanisms of law enforcement are more efficient than the Mexican counterpart.

“Schools want us parents to help our children, but they don't let us spank them when it's necessary [...] what are we supposed to do then?” A mother of five children

María

María arrived to Emporia in 2004 at age 17 from a small rural village in Guanajuato, México. Due to the small number of people in the village she had to attend a rural school, one hour walking distance from her house. Despite the interruption of one year, she graduated from high school and then moved to Kansas, where her father got a job at the Tyson meatpacking plant.

Back in México, María's life consisted in helping her mother after school with the household duties, taking care of her two siblings, helping in the kitchen, and learning to cook with her mother, because “that's a necessity when you get married.” María's father worked in agriculture. He provided the money and the food for the household, and set the rules.

When her father was recruited by the plant and made the decision to migrate, he brought the entire family of six to maintain unity and to give the children more opportunities, growing up in the U.S. For María, arriving in the U.S. turned into a liberating moment in which her father was not allowed to beat her, her siblings, or mother anymore, nor force them to do his will. For María, this freedom, as she calls it, is the one thing that makes her feel comfortable and secure in Emporia despite the lack of friendliness in the environment, and not knowing the language.

Even though she finished high school in México, she enrolled in Emporia High School in order to get the institutional recognition in an American high school,

because her Mexican diploma was not valid in Kansas. She feared school, because she did not understand anything in English and due to this, she was enrolled in ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, thus delaying her graduation from Emporia High School for about two years. During this time, she interacted only with other Hispanic teenagers, whose language was Spanish and who were in a situation similar to María's. Thus, her interaction with the Anglo community was reduced to very limited spaces and times, such as the school's food court during lunch period.

In María's discourse, relations of power are clearly defined by gender, through the image of the authoritarian father and the submissive mother. This reflects the extent to which class habitus, which is strongly incorporated, is also reproduced through generations. María's case portrays the strength of "machismo", deeply rooted in rural and small urban backgrounds in México. During the interview, she was shy, and to some extent submissive, looking for approval after every answer provided by her. She addressed the fact that she considers herself a free woman, but still very respectful of her parents. Her story depicts the strong father's domination to which the entire family was subjected, resulting in a twenty year old woman who is just now building her self esteem, looking forward to having a higher education in college.

Learning the Language

From the perspective of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986), the way language is used by members of a community is an indicator of their social and cultural background, and makes clear the relation of distance or proximity to the dominant group. In every society there are different usages of the same language, although what is proper and polite and what is not is clearly established. The use of idioms and slang, among other linguistic expressions, as symbolic constructions becomes a reflection of class habitus. In the case of Mexican immigrants in Kansas, learning English is part of the process of acquisition of cultural capital that will determine the relationship of distance or proximity to the dominant Anglo group in the social space. Despite the fact that every immigrant acknowledges that knowing English is an important

factor for their adaptation and performance in the new environment, it is not an exclusive one. The ability to communicate in English is seen and recognized as an advantage, although the lack of it does not stop them from migrating.

As shown previously, most of the immigrants come from rural backgrounds or small urban areas in México³². In the case of Emporia and southwest Kansas, according to the interviewees, most immigrants came from Michoacán and Chihuahua, respectively. Hence, it is important to consider that when the population in rural areas is very small, unified school districts provide education to children from neighboring villages. It represents a problem for some of the children whose schools are far from their homes, and they have no access to school transportation, and thus have to walk long distances.

*“I quit school in México for one year because I had to walk for more than an hour, and sometimes it was impossible to get there due to the weather conditions [...] it was hard to catch up with my peers who lived closer to the school.” **María***

*“I came to Emporia at age 18 [...] the little English I knew I learned in school, but it wasn't enough [...] I wish I would have learned English since I was a child, like my daughters” **Esmeralda***

Considering this problem, which is recurrent not only in rural areas of México but in most rural areas in Latin America, it is understandable and expected that the education provided in these schools does not amount to an intensive education in foreign languages, other than the basic elements to introduce themselves in English. This is the same in American schools, where students learn the basics of Spanish or other foreign languages, but students do not become fluent unless they decide to continue studies in college or abroad.

As said before, the age range of 75% of Mexican immigrants in the U.S is 15 to 30 years (see figure C.18)³³. From this perspective, and keeping in mind their economic and cultural

³² Source INEGI.

³³ Same source.

background, unless they have been exposed to an intensive foreign language education prior to the migration, the process of learning the language takes longer for adults than for a younger population, who get into schools once they arrive.

“It was more difficult for my elder child. She was 13 years old and never spoke English before. For the second one it was easier. She was speaking English after two or three months in school. And the youngest...she speaks mostly English. Now I'm learning, but it's difficult [...] for I work all the time.” **Rosa**

“Language is a barrier...like a wall. And it's not that I don't want to learn English...I want to, but it is hard.” **María**

For children who were brought by their families, the process of learning the language was faster, easing the process of adaptation to the new environment. These children develop an active interaction within the Anglo environment, and rapidly absorb the language and other cultural and social practices that involve elements from the dominant Anglo culture. Hence, as will be explained below, these children grow up divided between a household with Mexican traditions, while interacting most of their time within an Anglo environment. These children are, finally, more exposed to English than to Spanish, thus developing better skills in the former, learning to speak without any accent that would betray their condition as foreigners.

“I learned English real fast. There were lots of Mexican guys, but they couldn't get rid of the accent. Since I was so young I learned it well, without the foreign accent, and that helped me a lot to be accepted.” **Tomas**

“I remember I didn't know any English at all, and the first day of school I cried my eyes out, because I couldn't understand anything. I didn't realize when I started speaking English, but it was soon after that.” **Juana**

“I was four or five years old and learned English very fast [...] and now I can barely speak Spanish correctly.” **Concha**

It took longer for the children who arrived as teenagers to learn the language. Their academic and social life suffered the consequences of such a delay. First, because not understanding the subjects seen in the classroom put them behind their peers' academic performance. Second, those who had access to ESL classes (English as a Second Language) saw their interaction limited to other teenagers in a similar situation. The interaction with native or fluent English speakers was limited to specific times and specific areas, such as the school's food court. Due to that limited interaction, there was a growing sense of suspicion among Anglo students toward young immigrants, strengthening the otherness that creates the gap between the groups.

“I remember it was difficult for me, and somewhat frustrating, because I didn't understand anything in school. I couldn't interact with my classmates, because we didn't understand each other. When I finally learned English, everything was much easier.”
Pablo

“It was hard to be in a school and not understand a word the teacher is saying. I felt like I wasn't learning, and felt depressed. It took me like three years to learn English and be able to express myself and interact with other people.” **José**

“For me it was very hard because I'm shy, and only made friends with two other girls and we were always speaking in Spanish, and only practiced English in the ESL classroom, since we didn't have other English speaking friends.” **Ruby**

For their part, the experience of the adult migrant is completely different to that of young children who were brought by their parents. First, these migrants do not access the educational system, and therefore they are not exposed to the language in an intensive academic environment. Despite alternative solutions offered for immigrants by different organizations, such as the Adult Learning Center in Emporia, most immigrants lack the information or time to

attend English classes, and the intensity of the classes is not sufficient to make them fluent in the long term.

The children of the migrants addressed the language barrier as the primary difficulty for their parents, who after several years living in the U.S. do not speak English well, or not at all. This particular issue affects the self esteem of the migrants, particularly of women, thus stressing the feeling of solitude and isolation.

“My mother was very independent in México, whereas here [in Liberal], if she wants to go to a store, she has to find someone who speaks for her [...] it is extremely frustrating for her.” José

“My father, he has never wanted to speak in English...He can speak a little. He knows enough to survive, but feels insecure and uncomfortable. My mother, on the other side, she always wanted us to speak in English to her.” Concha (Emporia resident)

“The language issue is still hard for me. It is as though someone puts a wall in front of you that stops you from doing lots of stuff. You cannot go to the store [in Emporia], unless you find someone who speaks both English and Spanish to translate for you. With time you start learning, so you can go shopping and when you have the parent - teacher conferences.” Rosa (Mother of 3)

“[Emporia] is a totally different world for me. I'm waiting a little bit, 'til my children grow up more, and then I'll start studying English, because it is necessary” Ana (Mother of two children)

As hard as it is for newcomers to learn English it is also difficult for them to maintain the Spanish language spoken at home by their children. The more exposed to the English language, the more it becomes natural for both Chicanos and further Mexican-American generations. Thus, the Spanish language is forgotten in many cases, strengthening the relationship of proximity to the dominant Anglo culture, and establishing distance to the Mexican background of their

parents. It is observable in the established Mexican community in Emporia, whose members in most cases are not fluent or do not speak any Spanish at all, other than the use of certain words to define familiar links, such as “*abuelos*” instead of the English word “grandparents.”

“Some of them understand Spanish, and try to speak it, but they are forgetting their parents' language and their pronunciation is really bad. They're losing it slowly, generation after generation.” Yvette

“Dad used to take me down to México to visit the family, and taught me to speak Spanish in a proper way, because lots of Chicanos do not speak the language.” Ricardo

As said before, most immigrants are linked to networks created by decades of constant migration from the same regions, like the network from Michoacán in Emporia, or the one from Chihuahua in southwest Kansas. These networks strengthen the maintenance of certain elements from the cultural background, such as music, food, social practices, and rituals, among others. These cultural elements are renewed with every newcomer who brings new things produced in the hometowns, and keeps alive the traditional ones. The fact that most members from the networks are only Spanish speakers means that the language is maintained for the interaction among members. There are Mexican neighborhoods in Emporia where most of the population speaks Spanish, thus diminishing for immigrants the need to learn English, since most of their interaction is limited to a Spanish speaking network in the neighborhood and the workplace. In Emporia, 10.6% of the population speaks Spanish at home, which represents 65.7% of the total Hispanic population in the city³⁴.

Strong networks created by previous settlers, as well as the spatial concentration of immigrants in certain areas of the city make it difficult for the migrant to learn the language (Tienda and Lii 1987; McManus 1990), due to lack of contact with the Anglo community. In both neighborhood and workplace, most people speak Spanish. In the latter, supervisors are bilingual. Therefore, Hispanic immigrant laborers are not required to learn the English language.

³⁴ Source U.S. Census Bureau.

In Dodge City and Emporia, where the Hispanic population has reached almost 50% of the overall population, businesses began to acknowledge the presence of the Hispanic community and its primarily Mexican origin. There are shelves of Mexican food in supermarkets, as well as Hispanic workers able to give assistance in Spanish if needed. This is nothing but the acknowledgment of a growing population to target. Nevertheless, in other areas where the Hispanic population is large enough to be noticed, such services are not offered to Spanish speaking customers. In Emporia, though, supermarkets recently started to hire Hispanic attendants in order to serve Spanish speaking customers.

Thus, a utilitarian relationship is established between the large corporate market which offers cheaper products from México, thereby ensuring target customers, and the immigrants who can access and afford those products. It is important to address here the presence of Mexican stores in Emporia that provide all sorts of imported or locally grown products, and are offered in a fashion similar to a regular mini-market from their hometowns.

“I don't think Wal-Mart is selling products from México because they're nice to us. It is because we're a lot of potential costumers, and they know we'll buy their stuff...because it's cheaper.” Tomás

Another example of the recognition of the Hispanic community is the public library, which has a large collection of book and movies in Spanish. *The Emporia Gazette*, the local newspaper, prints a Spanish edition of the local news called “*La Voz Latina*” for the non-English speakers in town. That particular section is distributed weekly with the regular paper, and was created by the already established Mexican community in Emporia aiming to incorporate the increasing Mexican community and to promote Mexican businesses and activities. As expected, this generated an immediate conflict with members of the local Anglo community who considered it a threat to their American values and culture.

“We had people who stopped their subscription because we stuffed the Hispanic paper into the gazette for delivery...And they were like, 'why are you putting that in there? I don't speak Spanish!!!...If you're gonna cater to them I'm not going to take your paper'!”
Staff member of The Emporia Gazette

Getting that dream car...

Along with class habitus and education, cultural capital is also expressed through the consumption of material goods. In *Distinction* (1984), Pierre Bourdieu portrays how consumption of certain goods reflects people's location in the social space, and the relationship of proximity or distance to the dominant group. Groups from different social backgrounds or economic brackets are inclined to the consumption of certain elements that somehow become representative of that specific group. In cases where members of a lower class have accumulated enough economic capital to move up in the social hierarchy, the trend is to establish distance from the original background through the consumption of those goods, identifying themselves as members of an upper class, thus establishing their distance from the original class, and proximity to the upper-dominant-one (Bourdieu 1985; 1986).

“When I bought my first car it was the best feeling ever, because I knew that back in México I wouldn't be able to afford it [...] or would've worked forever to pay for it.”

Pedro

When arriving to a new environment where the presence of Hispanic population is relatively small, Mexican immigrants are in the midst of a mainly Anglo society, for whom material goods are produced. In meatpacking areas, due in part to the higher the percentage of Hispanic peoples compared to the total population, businesses are starting to diversify the products offered, specifically food, as well as the way they are offered to customers in the shelves. Immigrants buy clothes, and other products produced for the Anglo lower class, in large corporate stores, since the newcomers have neither the interest nor the economic capital to purchase products in stores oriented to Anglo upper class customers.

“You see most of them at Wal-Mart, and just a few at the mall.” Anglo Resident of Liberal

“You'll find the Mexican immigrants, late at night, buying their stuff at Wal-Mart.” Anglo Resident of Emporia

From this perspective, the consumption of products oriented to an Anglo target is not a decision made in order to be recognized as closer to the Anglo community necessarily; in this case, there are not too many options from which to choose. In Emporia, as said before, there are several Hispanic oriented businesses, owned by Mexican settlers who have been living in town for some time, and whose legal status allows them to develop businesses in the area. They offer services and products specifically for the Hispanic population in town. In these stores it is possible to find everything from Mexican clothes to remittance services, to party planning and long distance phone cards. Through the products and services offered, these businesses help the immigrant community maintain an active link with their birthplace. Thus, the consumption of these products helps immigrants to show pride for their cultural heritage. Nonetheless, at these Mexican stores and restaurants, prices are not as affordable for newcomers.

It is true that in the U.S. the system of credit, as well as higher salaries make it easier for immigrants to access material goods which, back in their communities of origin, would never have been affordable on the salaries they were earning. Nonetheless, newcomers seem to be more focused on saving money to send back home than buying expensive cars or clothes. Hence, several people living in the same household or collectively buying a used vehicle become efficient economic measures, reducing the cost of living.

Among the interviews, it was recurrent that parents want to go back to México, but their children have their lives built in the American context, and have goals to achieve in the U.S., whereas in México they have no connections or networks. They don't have a life back there. Thus they are not interested in moving back with their parents. This directly affects the original conception of migration as a temporary measure. Thus all of the interviewees mentioned that mothers are more inclined to stay, since they have no interest in leaving their children in the U.S.

For their part, fathers are more likely to express their constant desire to go back. Thus, most immigrants do not develop a strong feeling of belonging or appropriation of the receiving environment. Emporia is no exception.

“We wanted to go back, but now my three older children are professionals, are married with children, and they are not interested in moving back to México. So I decided to stay here, because here's where my family is. I left my parents once, but I'll never leave my children” Elizabeth

Nonetheless, since the idea of return is constant, and migration is considered a temporary measure (Rumbaut 1996; Portes & Rumbaut 1997; Massey 2001; 2002; 2004; Portes 2004), immigrants are not likely to take large amounts of debt. In the case of documented immigrants, their condition as temporary residents makes them ineligible for credit cards, or their credit line is extremely limited, thus reducing their purchasing capacity. In the case of the undocumented, they lack the credit history that is necessary to access expensive material goods, such as vehicles, and most of them do not even have bank accounts, thus reducing their transactions to cash only.

“At the bank, I've seen people who've been working for several years bring the money they've saved and guarded under the mattress or buried in plastic bags...for years, until someone persuades them that opening an account does not represent a risk of being detected and deported by the police.” Cruz (Hispanic bank worker)

For their part, Chicanos and Mexican Americans of third or later generation are better oriented to acquire and accumulate economic capital as a sign of success in life. Through the consumption of certain material goods, cars and clothes from mall stores, their proximity to the dominant upper middle class Anglo group is made clear. Buying products at the Mexican stores is basically an activity for the newcomers, or for the maintenance of certain traditional practices kept by families through generations, such as the “Quinceañera.” Cultural products, such as music and typical foods are also consumed through generations of Mexican Americans, and have a traditional value, because they serve to establish a link with their heritage.

“I remember my mom playing Rancheras in the house when I was growing up, and making “tortillas con chili’...That was awesome, and that's why I'm picky with Mexican food, because I eat the real stuff at home with my mom and she's the best cook. Even my Anglo friends love her food.” **Maggie (Chicano woman)**

“There was always Mexican food in my house, because that's what my mother cooked”
Ricardo (Chicano)

Despite the suspicion against Mexican immigrants, and the claim made by some members of the community that their presence and the use of Spanish represents a threat to the English language and culture, it is interesting to note that Mexican restaurants are very popular among the Anglo community, to the point that they become one of the few intersections for members of different groups in the social space, regardless of social class or cultural background.

“The best food in Kansas is a Mexican restaurant in Dodge City...Man, you'll never eat again in Taco-Bell or some crap like that after you eat that food. And nobody complains there about the immigrant problem, because everybody's busy eating.” **Ryan (Dodge City Anglo Resident)**

Loss of Cultural Capital, Failures...Hybridization

Selection and consumption of material goods produced for a specific target represents a risky decision for someone from a different group, since its use can create rejection instead of acceptance. For Bourdieu (1996), such a situation represents the loss of cultural capital, since the relationship of proximity to the core group would be broken, thus diminishing the goals achieved by other previous efforts to get closer to the dominant group. Nonetheless, such a conception appears extremely deterministic. It seems to claim that acceptance from the dominant group is the ultimate goal, and not the acquisition of cultural capital itself. Cultural capital acquired is not something that can be lost or taken away, as economic or social capital. For his part, Jeffrey Alexander (2006 b), one of the strongest critics of Bourdieu's work, conceives these type of situations as failed performances, in which an individual, as an actor, makes the wrong decision in selecting the symbolic elements and script for the social performance. Instead of support, such

a decision backfires producing, the opposite effect on the interlocutor, who perceives such a failure as an artifice, breaking the link between both of them. Bourdieu gives actors little chance or recognition as agents and Alexander's revised and augmented version of symbolic interactions considers the decision a mistake, thus giving little room to introduce agency or resistance, since it is unconscious.

“A large white pick-up truck with tinted windows, and wide bright wheels; driven by a short Hispanic man, wearing a cowboy hat, and an American football shirt, slowly cruises along commercial avenue in downtown Emporia. Loud ranchera music comes out of the car, making the windows vibrate. In the truck’s tail gate, a large and colorful painting of the Virgen de Guadalupe floating in the sky upon a rural landscape, with a legend making reference to Michoacán, is accentuated by both Mexican and American flags waving. As expected, the truck is noticed, though nobody seems to be surprised by its presence” **Excerpt from the field notes**

Scenarios like the one depicted above are common, and not surprising for members of both Hispanic and Anglo communities. The mixture of elements of both cultures is more recurrent among Chicanos, immigrants who were brought by their parents as young children, and by working class Mexican Americans coming from areas with larger Hispanic concentration, such as Texas, California or Illinois. As said before, newcomers are more likely to save their money due to their economic restrictions in the U.S. At the same time, they would rather not be noticed if they are undocumented. Mexican Americans of the upper middle class are more likely to evoke their Hispanic heritage at home, or during specific holidays or celebrations.

Nestor Garcia-Canclini (1995 [1989]) gives broader space for actors and agency in such situations, allowing mixture to be considered as the reinvention or hybridization of cultural elements, in which members exposed to two different backgrounds would incorporate elements of both, thus recreating their own discourse, using their own symbolic elements, in a process of acculturation. From a Bourdiean perspective, it would be considered a loss of cultural capital, since it does not represent an aim for getting closer to the dominant group, and from the perspective of Alexander, it would be a failed performance.

Returning to the consumption of material goods: it is important for an individual to make noticeable his/her position within the social space, although it does not mean, necessarily, that such consumption is tied to the protocols established by the dominant doxa, but can be reinvented and adapted to meet the needs of Mexican immigrants without becoming an obstacle to keeping and being proud of their cultural heritage. Hence, mixture would be considered a reinterpretation of those material goods, through which their habitus, both ethnic and class, is expressed. From the perspective of cultural hybrids, it is possible to understand the existence of Chicano and Mexican American aesthetics, which are expressed through their clothes, the things they consume, manners and, perhaps the most noticeable, their language, through which they show the dual condition of their cultural nature. In the case of Kansas, Chicanos and Mexican Americans coming from other states with larger Hispanic populations somehow follow those aesthetic principles, importing and reproducing them in the new environment.

CHAPTER 7 - On Cultural Assimilation and Hybrids

About Cultural Hybrids

Even though this study focus on the process of acquisition of cultural capital by Mexican immigrants, it also deals with how the process of assimilation goes beyond the immigrants, and is lived by their U.S. born descendants as hybrids (Chicanos) and Mexican-Americans (generations born in the U.S. respectively) who grow up divided in a dual environment of the Hispanic household and an Anglo-dominant culture. This process will be approached in this chapter from the theoretical perspective of Cultural Hybrids (Garcia-Canclini 1995 [1989]), as a complement to Bourdieu's acquisition of cultural capital.

According to Garcia-Canclini, three key processes can explain hybridization. The first process deals with the break up and mixing of the collections from each cultural system (Op Cit: 207). By collections, Garcia-Canclini means the type of symbolic elements that are acquired and collected by people. This is similar to the concept of symbolic capital coined by Bourdieu which, like habitus, determines one's position in social space. The second process is that of the de-territorialization of cultural processes, or acculturation, through which the individual's practices are detached from his original cultural background. Finally, the third is the process of impure genres, in which elements from both cultural background and receiving environment are combined, generating eclectic expressions that do not belong entirely to either side. From these perspectives, we can see the three processes are applied, in the long term, to the process of adaptation and assimilation of Mexican immigrants within the dominant Anglo culture in Kansas. During the process of adapting to their receiving environment, immigrants have to modify certain practices, breaking with those symbolic elements collected throughout their lives, and acquire elements from the dominant group, mixing those new symbolic elements with the ones they brought from their original background.

The case of the Chicanos, or first generation born in the United States is different. They lacks the spatial connection with the cultural background of their parents, caught in the middle of

a social space divided between the Mexican household and the Anglo doxa. Thus, even though the symbolic elements were brought by their parents during the migration process, these elements are de-territorialized for them. Such a dichotomous environment for the first generation born in the U.S. produces a mixture of both cultural backgrounds, producing what Garcia-Canclini (1995 [1989]) refers to as “impure genres”. Examples are the Spanglish dialect, or practices from a cultural context translated according to another context’s parameters, like the success of “Mexican” food from American fast food corporations.

“My father in law didn't like me. He told my then-girlfriend, that I wasn't either Mexican nor American... 'Chicanos are nothing, m'hija'” Ricardo (Chicano from Garden City)

The first generation of Mexicans born in the United States is considered the hybrid generation in this study. They represent the mixture between the symbolic elements of both cultural backgrounds, the original background imported by their parents and modified in order to fit within the new environment. The second generation born in the United States is even closer to the dominant culture. They are separated from their cultural ancestry, becoming the last stage of assimilation of the Mexican within the dominant Anglo culture to which they belong more inclusively than their immigrant ancestors.

Chicanos (first Mexican American generation)

Mexican immigrants come from strong traditional cultural backgrounds, and have to make many cultural adjustments in order to fit in the receiving culture. They rarely lose their own cultural identity. Most of the immigrants were adults when arriving, having strongly incorporated class habitus. Their children grow up within a dichotomous environment. The household is ruled by Mexican tradition, expressed through the food, music, ritual and religious practices, and the use of Spanish language at home (elements through which the Mexican immigrant class habitus is expressed). On the other hand, the children attend schools in which they are educated under the parameters of the dominant Anglo culture.

These people have grown up in the middle of a divided society for which they are still too Latino, considered part of the Hispanic minority, but their social practices are also mediated by

the dominant Anglo environment. In this generation the process of cultural hybridization is observable. Both cultures meld into one hybrid practice. Though they incorporate both Mexican and American cultures (Mexican and Midwestern), for tradition and life experience respectively, their hybrid condition does not allow total acceptance by the Anglo environment. Bilingualism gives them the upward mobility their parents lacked. This generation has a greater possibility of acquiring and accumulating the cultural capital required by the Anglo community in the U.S.

“Compared to my parents, I know I have better chances for being bilingual. After college, I would be able to apply for whichever job I like. I have power to decide that, whereas they don't. They don't and they have to remain there, working at the plant.” José

The melding of elements from both cultural backgrounds can be perfectly observed in the formation of a new language, in which both Spanish and English mix together in a colloquial way, giving birth to Spanglish³⁵. This phenomenon can be understood within the process of social construction of symbolic elements, which generates identity within the group, establishes the limits of “otherness”, and demonstrates the dual cultural condition of these persons. It is not only the process of adaptation to an environment (which could be understood a process of *Translation* (Garcia-Canclini 1995 [1989])), but the incorporation of a habitus in the social field (Bourdieu 1977) and the *Adoption* of dual cultural elements (Zhou 1997) in the construction of a cultural hybrid.

The incorporation of elements of Anglo cultural practices, acquired through the educational system, and the constant interaction in the social space determines the type of interaction of Chicanos with Mexicans and Anglo communities. Despite the interest of Chicanos in retaining Mexican customs from their family's cultural background, they are not considered Mexican enough by Mexicans, who even consider Chicanos as a bastardization of the original Mexican culture. At the same time, Chicanos suffer the consequences of discrimination from the Anglo community for whom they are not close enough to the dominant Anglo upper middle class. As a matter of fact, this kind of relationship has generated reactions of resistance on the

³⁵ Spanglish follows certain grammar rules, and is not an arbitrary juxtaposition of words from both languages (Stavans 2003).

part of Chicanos, who stress their hybrid condition, sometime through actions and manners that bother both Mexican and Anglo groups.

“It is tricky, because at some point you feel like you don't belong to none of those cultures. For Whites I'll always be Mexican, and for Mexicans, I'm not Mexican enough.”

Ricardo

“They're not Mexican. That Chicano is more like a subculture [...] and the Spanglish thing is abhorrent” **Silvia**

The young people within this generational bracket, due to their hybrid condition, have to deal with the differences between the traditional Mexican household environment and the mainstream Anglo upper middle class American society. Women, for example, have to deal with bigger differences. Mexican society, especially in small cities and rural areas, tends to be strongly patriarchal and machista (Hirsh 2000; Gonzalez 2004), whereas American society is more “open” to working women, offering more opportunities to develop themselves independently from men. Thus, college-age women have to deal with parents reluctant to the idea of their daughters attending college in another city, and living by themselves without constant parental supervision (Gonzalez 2004). Such beliefs often discourage young Latina women from pursuing higher education. Furthermore, the high cost of post secondary education is often another deterrent, due to a lack of willingness to go into debt.

“When it was time for college, I wanted to go to K-State, but my parents didn't let me...They had this traditional idea that women can't leave their house unless they're married.” **Perla**

“The most difficult part was to convince my parents to let me go to another college in another town. My father was terrified of the idea.” **Bianca**

Nonetheless, an increasing number of children of Latino immigrants, primarily Mexican and Central American, are pursuing college degrees in U.S. universities (see Table 6). Two

reasons for this increase are: according to the National Census, 85.71% of the Kansas Hispanic population was born in the U.S. and most of those college-age people are citizens who can apply for programs that enable them to get a college education. The second is the Dream Act, which allows children of undocumented immigrants in Kansas to pay in-state tuition at public universities.

Table 7.1 Percentage Hispanic among all students enrolled in college or university in the U.S.³⁶

1980	2000
4%	11%

Programs such as ESL (English as a Second Language) in the last 10 years have helped to improve the linguistic skills of young people so they can adapt to the English speaking environment and hence increase their possibilities of accessing higher level education. Nonetheless, at the high school level the amount of school absenteeism is growing rapidly. In the U.S. as a whole, 31% of all Hispanic students dropped out of high school in 2000, four times the rate of non-Hispanic whites³⁷. In Garden City, Dodge City, and Liberal, where Hispanics make up 50% of the population, Hispanics outnumber Anglos at the elementary levels. In junior high and high school though, the ratio is otherwise, showing higher rates of Latino absenteeism, which is congruent with the national trend (see table 7).

Table 7.2 Hispanics who dropped out of high school in year 2000³⁸

Born in the U.S.	Foreign born Foreign
15%	44%

Some of the reasons for the elevated drop-out rate in southwest Kansas are young men entering the labor market, unplanned early pregnancies, traditional beliefs in which young

³⁶ National Center of Education Statistics www.nces.ed.gov

³⁷ Clinton Foundation. www.clintonfoundation.com

³⁸ National Center of Education Statistics

women only leave the household if married (Gonzalez 2004), and some educators' pre-conceived ideas of Latinos as intellectually challenged and at a lower intellectual level than Anglos.

“Lots of my peers in high school, they just wanted to graduate and get a job to buy their stuff. Many of them had their girlfriends pregnant, so they had to get a job, anyways.”

Tomas.

“Many Hispanic kids have both parents working outside of the household, so they have a lot of unsupervised time with their friends, and get into drugs, and after summer, there is always a couple of girls pregnant in school.” (Hispanic EHS Teacher)

Mexican-Americans (second and later generations born in the U.S)

This generation is the final product of the hybridization process experienced through the immigration of Latinos to the U.S. In the case of Kansas, most of this generation is in its early teens and grew up within a mixed cultural environment, but not necessarily dichotomous. They are seen as Latino, because of their Hispanic surnames, their outward appearance, skin color, strong family ties, and food practices. To be a Latino is something inherited, but not necessarily incorporated or assumed. They are closer to the legitimated Anglo upper middle class culture than their parents or their Mexican grandparents were, because they were always surrounded by such cultural elements that define a person as American rather than Mexican. Of course, their upward mobility is greater than their ancestors' because they are shaped by American society (Zhou 1997). Despite the fact that the first U.S. born generation, known as Chicanos, is considered as a hybrid, it does not exclude the second generation born in the U.S. As a matter of fact, the Mexican-Americans exhibit the final stage of the process in which elements of both cultures are totally incorporated, in which differences become blurred and more mainstream.

“[Newcomers] are lot less regimented, like dinner is not at 6:00 o'clock, but they would end up getting together, you know, whenever everybody is there. The house is, possibly less kept, but it seems to be a more free environment...More free and open minded” Kelly (Anglo resident of Emporia)

Both Mexican and Anglo interviewees addressed that Mexican Americans who have been living for several generations in Emporia tend to be more concerned about the material things they have obtained. It seems like the possession of a house with a beautiful front yard, and cars, become indicators of success. Those values are reproduced and incorporated by further generations, thus making them closer to the mainstream Anglo perception of individual success. Anglo interviewees also pointed out that the local Anglo community in Emporia seems to be more receptive to them, because they have been living in town as long as they have, and look less Mexican than the immigrants.

*“It has to do with how much money do you have, which means how much technology do you have in the house, and that represents exposure to all that information that is telling the kids ‘Hey you have to do this or get this, if you want to be cool’, and at the same time, they start to lose that kind of balance between the American culture and what their parents brought here” **Kelly***

In Emporia there has been a Mexican community for the last hundred years, when the first settlers arrived with the Santa Fe Railroad Company. Such a community has reached higher status in local society. The ancestors of current Mexican Americans in Emporia climbed positions throughout decades, reaching a higher social status and recognition in town. Most of them live now in upper middle class Anglo neighborhoods in Emporia. Many of them do not speak Spanish at all, although they keep certain traditions at home to keep alive the Mexican heritage, particularly on specific dates of the year.

For some Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants do not belong nor fit entirely in the receiving environment. They establish a clear distance from that community, and define themselves as closer to the dominant group. Considering that after the third generation, Mexican Americans are more likely to get into relationships with members of the Anglo community, it is very common to find that one of the parents of Mexican Americans is Anglo. Being interracial also makes them closer to the dominant group. It is interesting to note that this situation is not new, and that the concept of race indeed has an important role in the type of relationship between Hispanic and Anglo communities. Anastasio Valdez's family was the first Mexican Family in

Emporia. They arrived in 1905 from Michoacán. By 1941 life seemed good for Mexican-Americans, although the grandparents could only talk about being in México. Despite more than 40 years living in the U.S., in order to apply for citizenship, in the early 20th century, Mexicans had to prove they had direct Spaniard ancestors, being of white color, or Mexican of Spanish race (European)

Minorities within the Minority

Four of the Mexican businesses on Commercial Street offer the service of remittances. Following the example of Dr. Manuel Gamio in the 1920's to identify the areas of México from where the immigrants came, the owners and managers of these businesses in Emporia were asked about the destination of most remittances. They confirmed the statement made by interviewees, regarding immigrants from Michoacán as the largest Mexican network in Emporia, followed by people from Durango and Guanajuato. Yet the Mexican community in Emporia is heterogeneous in terms of place of origin and social status. Social status makes a substantial difference in the relationship with other members of the network. Considering the size in population of México and its cultural diversity, it is very important to keep in mind that cultural differences among Mexican regions remain after migration, generating gaps among Mexican immigrants. All of the interviewees in Emporia confirmed that Michoacán is the most important network resource. Nonetheless, the importance of such a community is not only numerical, but in terms of power. Every person claimed that there is a relationship of power, marked by the dominant behavior of members of these networks. The first Mexican settlers in Emporia arrived at the beginning of the twentieth century from Michoacán to work at the Santa Fe Railroad Company. As expected, when the company needed more employees, those who were working would contact their extended family and neighbors, thus moving almost entire families from México by the 1930s and 1940's (Mc Daniels 1976).

Meatpacking plants were opened in Emporia in late 1960s, but twenty years later when Tyson bought the plants and increased production, they demanded more labor. Mexican and Mexican American employees developed informal mechanisms of recruitment, contacting their friends and family members back in the hometowns of Michoacán, about the availability of jobs

in the plant. For its part, the plant organized recruitment plans, sending people to México looking for potential workers to bring to the plant, using local means of advertisement.

“I remember big billboards in the roads, in Chihuahua, inviting people to apply for jobs in the States. I think that's how my father was recruited” Sara

“My father saw the ad in the newspaper and applied for the job. Sold everything, and a few months later we were all here” Perla

Chihuahua is located in northern México, bordering Texas, where the image of the *ranchero* becomes the image of an entire region. People from Chihuahua are known for their strong and dominant character, somewhat violent, which is strengthened in southwest Kansas by their numeric predominance. Their power is felt by fellow Mexicans from different regions, who expressed they feel somehow subjugated by them. The network created in Dodge City is extremely strong, to the point of becoming exclusive.

“I have friends who won't date a guy who's not from Chihuahua. Their families won't accept it either.” Luz

*“A girlfriend broke up with me, because I didn't want to dress up like a Chero³⁹”
Enrique*

Michoacán is in southern México near the Pacific Ocean. Mexicans from Michoacán are also known for having a strong character, although never as dominant as immigrants from Chihuahua. In Emporia, the network from Michoacán shows its dominance by strong links and unity among its members. Considering that most of them come from small urban or rural areas of the state, that many of them came from the same places, and that they have known each other for a longer time, the strength of the community is understandable.

³⁹ Chero is a shortcut to Ranchero, which is a male costume in Chihuahua, similar to the American cowboy.

*“If there's a Quinceañera girl from Michoacán you'll see lots of people partying out loud, and few people from other areas of México. If the girl of the party is not from Michoacán, not that many people would show up” **Ruby***

The Mexican states of Durango, Guanajuato and Zacatecas are the next highest contributing sender states in both Emporia and southwest Kansas. People from the former are also well known for their strong and dominant characters, sometimes violent⁴⁰, which has created some confrontations with members of other networks. Immigrants from the latter - Guanajuato and Zacatecas- are depicted as more cordial and friendly.

*“I never get along with people from Chihuahua. I feel more comfortable with people from Zacatecas, were my wife's from [...] they're kind and nice to others. Chihuahuans are like the bullies in school” **Ricardo***

The strength of the largest network is felt in different environments, such as restaurants or the workplace. In the former case, despite the food is offered as Mexican in general, it will vary according to the origin of the owners and the cooks. It affects other members of the Mexican community, for whom food has an equal cultural value, but is cooked in a different way or with other ingredients. At the meatpacking plant in Emporia the core of the food offered is Mexican, in disregard to the presence of employees of other countries, such as El Salvador and Ecuador.

*“The cooks were all Mexican, so everybody ate Mexican food at the plant. Salvadorians always complained about that” **María***

Interviewees pointed toward the harsh treatment of Hispanics from other countries, primarily from El Salvador and Guatemala. These non-Mexican Hispanics suffer the discrimination from the dominant immigrant group, in addition to the discrimination from some members of the local Anglo community who see no differences among members of the

⁴⁰ The image of Pancho Villa is strongly incorporated in the Duranguense culture, as an example of bravery and manhood.

immigrant community. To them every Hispanic is a Mexican. The relationship between Mexicans and Salvadorians in Emporia tends to be tense, always on the verge of conflict, especially among younger people.

Mexican networks are larger, stronger, and more powerful than any other networks within the Hispanic community. Due to this situation, some confrontations have escalated into actual physical violence among young people, fueled by regionalism and nationalistic feelings.

“Unfortunately some of my fellow Mexicans treat people from Guatemala the same as they were treated by the Anglos [...] that's not fair, because they know perfectly how it feels to be treated like that” Tomas (Dodge City)

“Every time there was a Quinceañera, if there was someone from El Salvador, it would end up in a fight inevitably” Ruby (Emporia)

The relationship with Ecuadorians is different in Emporia. First, because they are even fewer compared to the Mexican and Salvadorian groups, and do not represent a threat to the labor market. There is no real tension between Ecuadorians and other groups that could be reproduced at the workplace or the neighborhood.

Ecuadorian immigrants come from a different socio-economic background than Mexicans or Salvadorians. They are more likely to migrate by plane, with a visa. Considering that there are nine countries between Ecuador and the U.S, such travel requires certain capital that could only be accumulated and afforded by people from middle and upper classes, who are also more likely to have higher levels of education, compared to the average Mexican or Salvadorian immigrant. Thus, it is possible to understand that, even though they are in similar circumstances in Emporia, immigrants from Ecuador have different social and cultural capital that establishes a distance from the other Hispanic immigrants. From a Bourdiean perspective, it could be interpreted as self exclusion (Bourdieu 1986; 1997), in which members of a given community decide to separate themselves from the others, due to the cultural differences. This is then reflected through the use of symbolic elements and habitus, which create a gap and limit

and the interaction between them and the others. A similar case is that of Mexican immigrants who came from upper classes and found themselves in the midst of the immigrant working class in the U.S.

The case of discrimination against Guatemalans of Mayan origin by some of the Mexican immigrant community in southwest Kansas is worsened by the fact that some of the indigenous Guatemalans barely speak Spanish, much less English, so they depend absolutely on others to establish an interaction with the environment. Furthermore, these indigenous immigrants are few compared to the large majority of Mexicans, and not strong enough to stand up against discrimination. Finally, the same way the U.S. has an increasing immigrant Mexican population; in México they have a similar situation with immigrants from El Salvador and Guatemala. This situation creates resentment and increases the gap between members of the Hispanic community, according to their country of origin.

“There is this perception of Guatemalans as weak people. Especially those who can't speak Spanish; then some people think they are stupid [...] but that's foolish, since it's the same thing some Americans think of us, when we don't speak English” Sara

In Emporia, there is also no harmony in the relationship between newcomers and the established Mexican American community. The spatial division between these communities increases that gap. The former is located on the traditional south side, or in the trailer park near the plant on the west end of town. The latter is located in the upper middle class neighborhoods of northwestern Emporia. On top of cultural differences, the concept of class helps to increase the gap between both Mexican immigrants and Mexican American communities, placing each one in different social spaces with little interaction.

The celebration of Cinco de Mayo is an interesting reflection of the gap between both communities. For Mexican Americans, it is the day to celebrate their heritage and pride, even though most of them do not know the real historical meaning of that date. It commemorates the day when Mexican troops, led by General Zaragoza, defeated French troops of Maximilian I in the Battle of Puebla, during the period with the French occupied México. Nonetheless, the

conflict between Mexicans and invading French emperor did not end until five years after the Battle of Puebla, in 1867. Mexican immigrants are more given to celebrate on September the 16th, which marks their independence from Spain. This is the most important date to show their national pride.

The same way Mexican Americans are not conceived as Mexican enough by newcomers, because their habitus is closer and mediated by the Anglo habitus, some of the Mexican Americans do not perceive immigrants as a good fit within the receiving environment either. It is typical, among the social conservative sectors of Mexican Americans, to point out the same arguments used by members of the Anglo community with strong anti-Hispanic immigrant positions. This makes the interaction of members of both communities even harder, since immigrants consider Mexican Americans closer to the mainstream Anglo community. They are part of “the others”.

“They think they're better than us. They are Mexican for Cinco de Mayo celebration [...] the rest of the time they're just brown skinned Americans” Silvia (Mexican immigrant in Emporia)

“I've heard a lot of Mexican Americans complaining about the Mexican immigrants, and oppose them, supporting hard rules against immigrants” Elizabeth (Mexican American from Emporia)

In 2005, a group of Somalian refugees arrived in Emporia, and started working at the plant. The reactions generated by their arrival came quickly. Opponents of Hispanic immigrants immediately reacted against their presence, trying to show them as a risk for the population of Emporia. Because they were coming from a country with scarce medical resources, opponents presented the Somalian refugees as disease carriers. Another element is that most of them are Muslim, being portrayed as enemies of American ideals by some members of the Anglo community.

*“I put the blame on Tyson for bringing them here.... I'm afraid to buy meat with the Tyson name on it cause of the fact that it may have bacteria from them not having proper hygiene. I will go to the meat lockers if need to or to other farmers who raise them cause of Tyson. It's a shame that they brought these people here and the stories we hear around town and then thinking what happened in Nebraska with the plant shutting down could very well happen here too... And then where will Emporia be?” **Letter to the Editor, Emporia Gazette, Dec 6 / 2007**)⁴¹*

*“When the weather is nice, I sometimes feel I am in a foreign country because of the Somalians on the sidewalk. I do not ever stop my car to use any of the businesses located there. Last week when my car needed washing I drove on the other side of town to use a car wash on West Sixth. I do not eat in any of the fast food places along East 12th and do not even want to use the Senior Center. Needless to say, I am not in favor of bringing any more of these folks into Emporia” (**Letter to the editor of Emporia Gazette. Dec 6 / 2007**)*

*“I believe the whole problem against Somalians is because they're black and Muslims. Very, very black, if you know what I mean.” **Sydney (Anglo resident of Emporia)***

As with the Mexican community, Somalians are located in a specific area of the town, concentrated in the northeastern part of Emporia. They started working at the plant, since it was the reason they came to the city. It was not well received by the Hispanic workers of the plant, who became suspicious of Somalian refugees. Since they were brought by the plant, there is the perception that the plant is going to bring and hire more Somalians, instead of Mexicans. Thus, the latter group start reproducing the same system under which they have suffered discrimination..

“Unfortunately, Hispanics act with Somalians the same way Americans did against us.”
Elizabeth

⁴¹ Quoted verbatim from the On-line edition of the Emporia Gazette.

Emporia for the Anglo Community

Regardless of their view about immigrants, Anglo Emporians agree that the city has been transformed, particularly in the last ten or fifteen years, since Tyson brought in a wave of immigrants. Most of the newcomers were relocated from other states by the company. Many of them came from Texas, as well as as from Dodge City and Garden City, supplying the labor needed by the company.

“Twenty years ago [Emporia] was a predominantly White community. Now it is towards a more predominantly Hispanic. When [my husband and I] moved back six years ago there was a Hispanic community, but it has grown a lot in the last 6 years.” Beverly (Anglo resident of Emporia, and business owner)

Considering that Emporia, birthplace of the Veterans Day celebration, was a predominantly white Anglo community until recently, it is possible to imagine that some of the social conservative sectors of the Anglo community are resentful of the rapid growth of the Hispanic community, which they consider a threat to the American culture and language.

“People who have lived here for 30, 40, 50 or 60 years, they don't like change. They're offended by different languages; they are offended by loud music. It's very stereotyping, but they are not embracing the new community at all” Hannah (Anglo resident of Emporia, ESU Employee)

One vocal member of the community refused to be interviewed, once he knew that I was a foreign born Hispanic myself. Even though it was not possible to interview him, his reaction showed the harsh environment and tension created by extremist positions such as his. On the other hand, the position of Anglo members of the community who participated in the interviews was more favorable to immigrants, who they consider as agents of change, and key elements of the society, since they acknowledge the need for their labor and consumption within the community.

“I think that the Hispanic community is only going to bring a lot of positive things to our community. That's how we learn from each other. I don't see any negative things as far as crime rates or anything like that” Beverly (Resident of Emporia)

Nonetheless, bigotry and misconceptions are constant in the Anglo perception of Mexican immigrants. First of all, regardless of their legal status, Hispanics are commonly perceived as undocumented by default. Second, social conservative sectors in society who have access to mass media, constantly address the issue of Mexican immigrants, arguing that they bring problems to the receiving environment, such as lower wages through unfair competition with local labor by selling their labor cheaper. This type of discourse generates the ethnic opposition Bonacich (1972) refers to in her theory of split labor market. Nevertheless, from a broader perspective, it could be understood as an effect of the bifurcated labor market immigrants are part of when responding to the constant demand of their labor (Massey 2002: 14). Remittances are also a big argument by the anti-Hispanic immigrant sector, considering remittances as capital loss that does not help local economy. Hence, the gap between Anglo and Hispanic communities' problem grows when these perceptions are repeated constantly basis in the media, creating suspicion and fear of immigrants.

“[...] some people just assume that they're all illegal, and that they're here just to make money and drive down the prices, and speak their own language and they don't care about America and they just wave Mexican flags outside of their homes...I haven't seen this, but people tell me, so I kinda think it's a cultural myth.” Sydney (Anglo resident of Emporia)

“Honestly, I'm pretty sure the whole problem with Hispanic immigrants is because they're not white. It seems like they only want highly educated Caucasians to come to America”

Mr. Jones (EHS Anglo teacher)

In December 16, 2005 the House of Representatives passed HR 4437, through which undocumented immigrants would be handled as criminals, prosecuted as such, and deported. The same bill attempted to give local police departments the authority to act as immigration

enforcers, arresting undocumented immigrants under charges of federal offense, within the context of National Security. At the same time, any citizen, organization, or church that attempted to help undocumented immigrants would be fined, charged or arrested, under the same bill. In the summer of 2006, Hispanic organizations coordinated rallies all over the United States, protesting HR 4437, considering it an unfair measure. Tyson workers in Emporia were not an exception, and joined the nation-wide rally. The protest was considered a direct confrontation by members of the Anglo community, who strengthened their voice of opposition to Hispanic immigrants. The situation worsened when immigrants waved both American and Mexican flags. Nonetheless, the episode never resulted in a riot or a physical confrontation among members of either group.

In opposition to the segment of the population who shows an anti- Hispanic immigrant position, some other members of the Anglo community are conscious of what immigrant labor represents for the community's economy. If Hispanic immigrants leave town, as anti-immigrant supporters want, the local Anglo community would not be able to supply enough labor for the meatpacking plant which is, perhaps, one of the largest employers in the area, employing about 31.7% of the economically active population in Emporia. Without them, the plant would lose about half of its labor force and not have a reason to remain in the area. The local economy would also suffer the consequences of losing thousands of potential costumers⁴².

"[...] People who complain don't realize that if wasn't for Hispanics working at the plant, this town would go to shit. They're doing the jobs nobody else wants to do, and you see that in the lines of people applying for jobs at the plant. Just a few are Caucasians."

Mr. Jones

Massey (2002) shows that members of society who oppose the presence of Hispanic immigrants are those who see their labor source endangered by immigrants, whose productive force is cheaper in the labor market. Thus, among the working class there is also a constant

⁴² In January 2008, one month after I finished interviews in Emporia, Tyson declared the closure of one shift, claiming that the plant was exceeding its productive capacity, killing more animals than they could bring from nearby feedlots. Thus they claim that one shift was not required. 1800 workers are to be fired from their positions. Some of them started to move to Garden City, and Liberal, in southwest Kansas.

suspicion of Hispanic immigrants. Such a conflict between these groups creates constant tension, since the poor Anglo working class is sharing the same spaces in the city, because they are more affordable. Despite residing in the same areas, such as trailer parks or the south side neighborhoods, and despite the tension between the working class groups, there is no friction or physical confrontation between them.

Members of the Anglo community are conscious that there is little interaction with Hispanic immigrants, claiming it is because the established Mexican American community works as a network, establishing a link with newcomers, thus reducing their contact with the local Anglo community. Indeed, there are some organizations in the community that have been trying recently to build a bridge between the two communities. They were created by the established Mexican American community in order to involve newcomers in the social life of Emporia. Also, some members of the Anglo community, primarily related to churches, help organize events to promote interaction between the Anglo and Hispanic communities. Interestingly, both Mexican immigrants and members of the the established Mexican American communities in Emporia address the lack of social contact between the communities. Due to the differences in terms of social status, each group is in a different social space, making it difficult for them to establish a bridge or a real connection, despite common origins.

“We organize events, and just a few will show up. It's more like they don't want to mingle with other people” **Member of HOTT (Hispanics of Today and Tomorrow in Emporia)**

CONCLUSIONS

Through this study, a new approach to the phenomenon of immigrant adaptation to a new environment was developed. It uses the theoretical framework of Pierre Bourdieu to Understand immigrant adaptation as a process of acquisition of cultural capital. This model allows a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural transition, and the elements that intervene in the process of adapting to a new environment. It is important to bear in mind that outcomes are heterogeneous and vary depending on an individual's socio-economic status, education attainment, legal status and physical features, among other factors. The theory of cultural capital provides an important tool for a thorough understanding of immigrants as individuals, and the processes they face in adapting to the receiving environment. The interview data made it possible to analyze the acquisition of cultural capital, and the means through which it is acquired, as well as observing the trajectories followed by the interviewees to achieve their particular positions in the social space, and their relation of proximity or distance to the dominant Anglo group. Interestingly, even though the trajectories were different, depending on whether the interviewees were immigrants, Chicanos or Mexican-Americans of second or subsequent generations, all of them followed a similar pattern, establishing stages of proximity to the Anglo doxa (see figures C.19 and C.20).

As mentioned above, most of the previous scholarly work on this topic has approached immigrants from a social capital perspective, what they represent for American society, and their role within the productive system. Most of this work takes a descriptive approach, considering immigrants in a passive way, as actors who were suddenly placed within an objective social and cultural structure of which they are totally unaware. This study shows that migration reflects agency, in the sense that it is a decision consciously made, that involves a previous cultural capital (knowledge) and the willingness to adopt new forms of cultural capital from the receiving environment. Hence, the process of acquisition of the cultural capital of the dominant group, is a

determinant part of the adaptation to the receiving environment, having assimilation as the most developed stage.

Nonetheless, the imposition of a dominant culture over another group generates elements of resistance as a response to the process of symbolic violence, and Mexican immigrants are no exemption. They have developed a new system of symbolic representations that involve elements from their cultural background, and the receiving environment. Chicanos, for instance, stress their condition as cultural hybrids, through particular aesthetic forms, and sometimes through actions and manners that bother both Mexican and Anglo groups.

This ethnographic study demonstrates that cultural assimilation is a slow process that takes generations in order to achieve sufficient proximity to the dominant group such that a person or minority group is granted total membership to the mainstream. Hence, adaptation of Mexican immigrants to the United States, and specifically to Kansas, is a slow and steady process. Often times it means both the incorporation of cultural elements from the receiving environment and softening or leaving behind some of their own cultural practices strongly incorporated in their class habitus (Bourdieu 1974; 1977a; 1977b; 1997). Such adaptation represents an acquisition of cultural capital legitimated by the mainstream of the receiving country. The process of assimilation is not totally achieved on the part of the immigrants, but is transferred to their descendants through whom it is possible to observe the steady way in which the Latino is mixing with and blending into American culture. Nevertheless, there are latent elements of the original immigrant's background existing as family traditions, but not necessarily as incorporated cultural practices. The outcomes may vary according to the educational level, economic and social status of individuals. The degree of assimilation of an individual varies depending on features that remain through generations. According to Massey and Denton (1993, chapter 4) non-Anglo migrants and immigrants face more obstacles to be assimilated by a predominantly White environment.

In the case of the Chicanos, the process of cultural hybridization shows their position within the social space, in the midst of two cultural backgrounds, building their own cultural identity and symbolic representations, which involve elements from both cultures. The dual

nature of Chicanos represents both proximity to the mainstream and an attachment to the parents' cultural background. For their part, Mexican Americans, are moving away from their ancestors' traditional background and getting closer to the legitimated cultural mainstream. Through their experience it is possible to observe the upward social mobility of Latino community members within U.S. society. Then, it is possible to understand the long process followed by the this community to be accepted and incorporated within a social system that legitimates the cultural practices (Bourdieu 1977) or social performances (Alexander & Mast 2006) of the male Anglo upper middle class. Mexican Americans represent a more developed stage of assimilation.

This is an interesting point, in light of the strong criticisms made against Hispanic immigrants, primarily Mexican and Central Americans, regarding the lack of assimilation to the receiving environment. This study points out that assimilation, as such, is a long process that takes generations of a particular ethnic group. In the U.S., other ethnic groups, such as Italians, Irish and Jewish immigrants went through several decades before been accepted by the dominant Anglo group, thus becoming part of the white majority in the United States. Unfortunately for Hispanic immigrants, assimilation and incorporation of cultural elements from the dominant group within the habitus seems to be insufficient to be embraced and assimilated by the dominant group. Socioeconomic background and color of skin seem to play major roles in that process.

Even though Mexican immigrants have an education that allows them to read and write in Spanish, it does not mean they have received a bilingual education. According to Portes and Rumbaut (1996), a large portion of immigrants come from small and medium sized cities, therefore it is very likely that they had access to a public education in which the teaching of the English language was not sufficiently functional. Most of them have worked in some sort of agriculture-related work their whole lives. Of those interviewed, 62% supported that affirmation, when pointing out that their father's job back in México was related to agriculture. However, despite having long work experience, because they lack a diploma or the institutional recognition of that knowledge, they are considered unskilled labor, thus denying their previously acquired cultural and human capital. Moreover, a majority of immigrants are people in their prime

working age. For them the process of learning a foreign language, unless it was acquired previously, is likely to be slower hindering the adaptation process (Ben Zira 1997).

High residential concentration of immigrants and formation of strong social networks are other factors that prolong the process of learning the language. Immigrants tend to surround themselves with people of similar background (Brown 2003). Another important aspect is that the cultural elements or performative backgrounds (Alexander & Mast 2006) are not totally lost, due to the constant influx of new immigrants that is maintained and rejuvenated with every newcomer. Hence, the process of adaptation is reproduced constantly, generating a natural flow in the formation of networks. Some traditional practices are kept through generations, although they are softened, modified, and even mixed with elements from the Anglo cultural context, thus creating the cultural hybrids through which the process of assimilation can be observed.

With the process of adapting to the new environment, women are empowered when they become more active in the labor market, thus becoming conscious of their productive force, and the possibility of independence. It strengthens the modification or softening of certain cultural practices. The role of housewife might not change completely, but is complemented with the role as a worker and an economically active person. Even though machista traditions are maintained, the way it is expressed changes, since men cannot exercise their power over women through the use of violence, at least not with impunity. The existence of support groups for battered women, and victims of domestic violence encourages and empowers women to become more independent of men. Nonetheless, patriarchy is still present, since men are considered to be the head of the household, the primary decision maker, and the main provider for the household. Patriarchal representations are reproduced within the household, also by women, who are constantly stressing and pointing out gender differences, such as manners and expected behavior of children, as an important factor to determine the degree of femininity or masculinity of individuals. For example, “boys don't cry” or “a girl does not sit with her legs wide open”.

Continuing with the family, the parent-child relationship is modified, due to the stronger enforcement of laws protecting children from domestic violence, compared to their original backgrounds. Interviewed parents pointed out that the traditional relationship to which they were

accustomed is not the same in the U.S., claiming that it explains why American families are “unattached” and children are disrespectful to their parents. Indeed, the concept of family itself suffers the consequences of immigration, since separation and division become the norm. It fuels the common perception among immigrants that it is a temporary process performed for the sake of the family's welfare. Nonetheless, with time they end up creating links, and acquiring responsibilities that make them stay longer than expected. With this in mind, it is possible to understand why one of the most important difficulties for immigrants is the sense of solitude and isolation. Back in their original communities they were accustomed to being surrounded by the extended family, and once they migrated to the U.S., in the best case scenario they made it with the nuclear family, thus reducing the number of people in their immediate support network. Migration itself is a process that generates fear, even more so considering that it includes a different language and culture. Therefore it is common that immigrants tend to establish links with the local network, but at the same time to isolate themselves until they feel comfortable enough within the environment.

In the labor aspect, the process of Mexican labor migration to Kansas is strongly linked to the development of the meatpacking industry. These industries established plants in regions where the local population was decreasing, with no possibility of supplying the required labor force locally, thus creating a scenario in which recruiting immigrants became necessary (Gouveia 1995; Stull and Broadway 1995; Stanley 1996; Benson 1999; Griffith 1999) and convenient for the processing corporations.

Due to the recruitment system, a large portion of the Mexican workers came from the same region, creating networks in the receiving environments. Nonetheless, there are also immigrants from other places in México and Central America. There are also Mexican immigrants who came from other states of the U.S. (Stanley 1996; Benson, 1999; Griffith 1999). Due to the internal flow of immigrants within the U.S. (Portes & Rumbaut 1996), three generations are in the meatpacking plants at the same time. Newcomers are at the basic entry levels, and second and third generations are in higher positions within the plants. This type of interaction creates some opposition among different groups of Latinos, between those who are citizens and those who are immigrants. This could be interpreted from the perspective of split

labor market (Bonacich 1972; Brown 1998), as a situation in which social groups are opposed to each other, leading the one in the most vulnerable position to reduce the cost of its labor, which benefits the employer who keeps the price of labor low by increasing the labor reserve. Nonetheless, the perspective of bifurcated labor market (Massey 2002; 14) allows a broader approach, in which immigrants are filling the shortage of labor supply in lower level jobs, responding to the constant demand for their labor, whereas first and second generations Mexican-Americans occupy higher levels within the plant's hierarchy, as a result of their status as citizens, and their upward mobility.

It is commonly argued by social conservative sectors of the population, that the presence of immigrant labor threatens labor opportunities for American citizens, since they are offering their labor at a lower cost. Nonetheless, in the meatpacking areas in Kansas, the plants are hiring workers on a regular basis. The hiring days are established and known by the population. Despite the constant demand for labor, the number of members of the Anglo community who apply for those jobs is extremely low. This shows that there is no real competition for these types of jobs, and in that particular case, immigrant labor is performing the type of tasks no one else wants to do. It is also claimed by critics, that undocumented Hispanic immigrants do not pay taxes, thus becoming a burden on the tax payers. This might be true in larger urban cases, where immigrants work as “*jornaleros*”, hired by a determined number of hours, and paid in cash. Nonetheless, in the meatpacking areas, plants require documentation from workers, but do not verify them. These workers are paid with checks from which taxes are extracted. It means that in this particular case, undocumented workers at the plants are paying taxes, though it is unlikely they will receive any benefits. It is known that a large portion of the immigrant workers at the plants are undocumented, as pointed by Benson (1999). Nonetheless, it is extremely difficult to know exactly the accurate number of undocumented workers, or even to make a reliable estimate.

Finally, despite the existence of an established Mexican American community, the social distance between them and recent Mexican immigrants is enough to declare that there is little interaction between the communities. The first Latino generation born in the meatpacking areas of Kansas, whose parents' arrival is related to the meatpacking plants, is in its early twenties. This means that the new Mexican-Americans born Kansans are still very young. The process of

adaptation of Mexican immigrants is an ongoing process of acquisition of cultural capital that will be transmitted to their children. Nonetheless, the cultural hybridization and acculturation of their descendants is only at an initial stage.

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Appendix A - Model of Interview Questionnaire

Demographics:

Age?

Gender?

What is your educational level?

What is your birth place?

How many members are there in your family have?

Where did you live immediately prior to coming to Kansas?

On Immigration:

What was your occupation back home?

What were your reasons for coming to Kansas?

How did you come to Kansas?

In what ways do you feel that you had to change, in order to fit into society?

Please explain what and why?

Society:

How do you think Latinos from different countries relate to each other?

Are there divisions or discrimination among Latinos?

How do you feel the relationship is between Latinos and the local Anglo community?

How do you feel the relationship is between Latinos and the established Mexican American community?

Have you felt any type of discrimination from the local community?

(if yes) How so?

Expectations:

As an immigrant in Kansas, do you intend to stay in this state and in this community?

(if yes) Why?

(If no) Do you expect to move to another state or return to your home country, and why?

What are your expectations in this state as a Latino immigrant?

Do you think you will be able to meet those expectations, or have you already?

What are some obstacles for achieving your expectations have you faced?

Do you think other Latinos have faced similar obstacles?

On Labor and immigration:

Were you recruited to work here?

(If yes) who recruited you, and how?

Was your job at the meat packing plant a temporary job, or a permanent one?

(If temporary), what do the Latino workers do after that?

If someone works at the meatpacking plants for a while, what are the most common jobs afterward?

Do you think that the Spanish language is an advantage or disadvantage to find a job at a meat packing plants in Kansas?

Would you say the job at the meat packing plant was somehow dangerous?

What are the most common risks in that labor?

Do you think risks at the workplace have something to do with hiring more immigrants than Anglos?

Compared with other jobs in the same area, do they pay well at the meat packing plant?

In your opinion, does an immigrant worker earn the same wage that an local Anglo for doing the same job?

Do you think the hiring conditions are the same for local people as for immigrants?

(If yes) Can you tell me more on why you think that?

Do the Latinos and Asians receive the same salary at the meat packing plants for doing the same job?

(If no) Can you tell me more on why you think that?

Did you feel any type of discrimination in the hiring process?

Have you ever feel any type of discrimination at the work place?

Appendix C - Population Charts

Figure C.1 Growth of Hispanic Population in Kansas

(Thousands)

Data source: Kansas Population Center

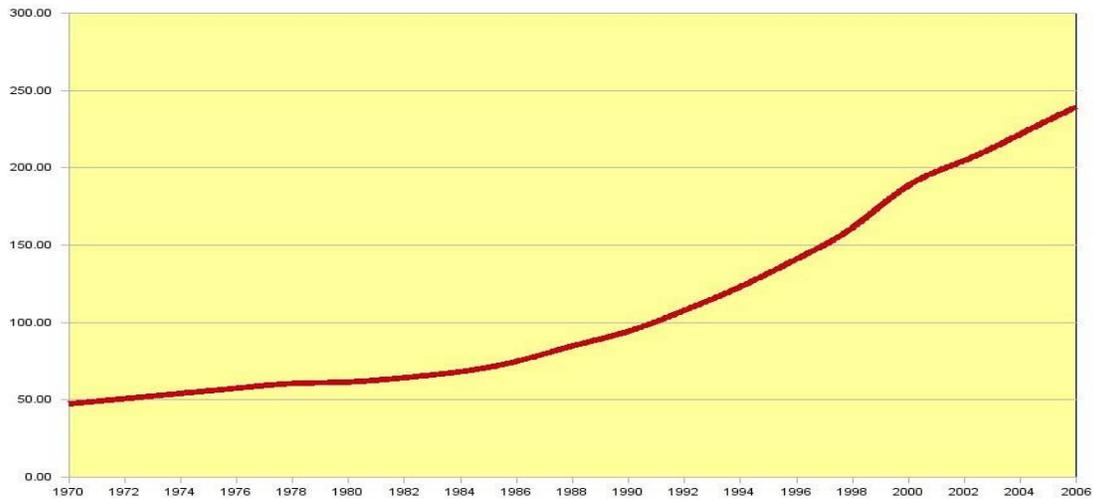
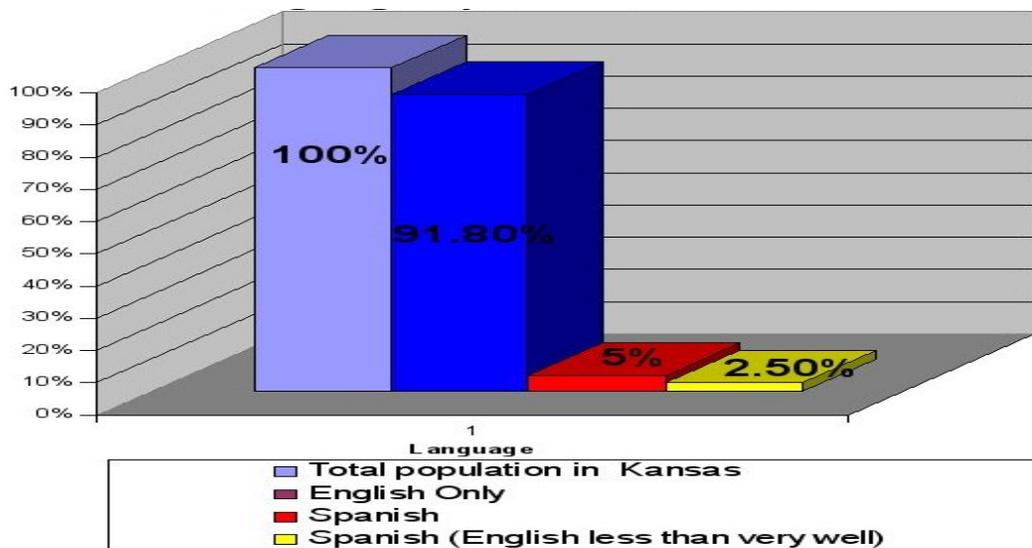


Figure C.2 Language spoken at home 2000



Data Source: U.S. Census bureau

Figure C.3 Place of residence of interviewees

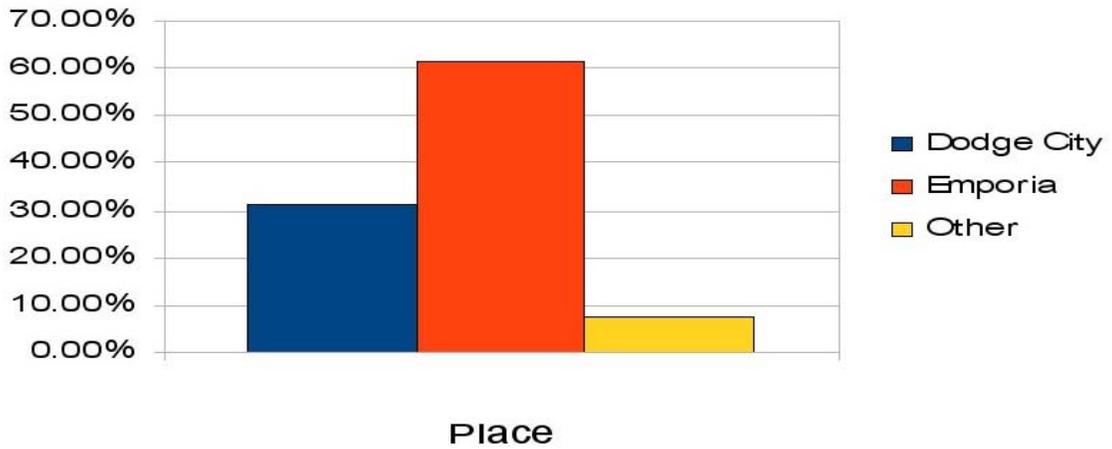


Figure C.4 Current occupations of interviewees

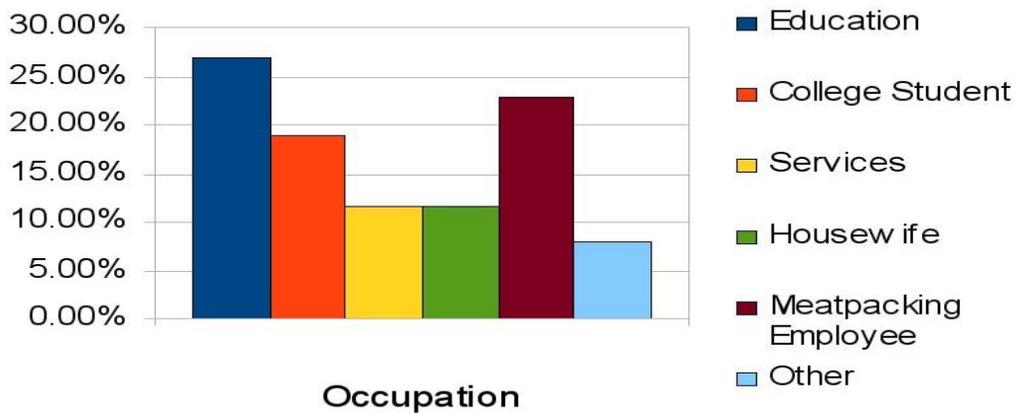


Figure C.5 Educational Level of interviewees

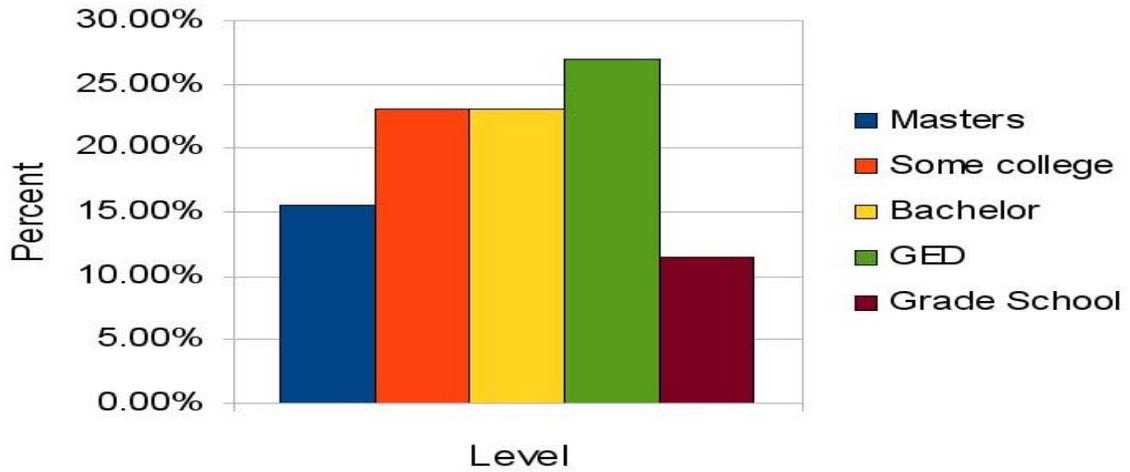


Figure C.6 Birthplace of interviewees

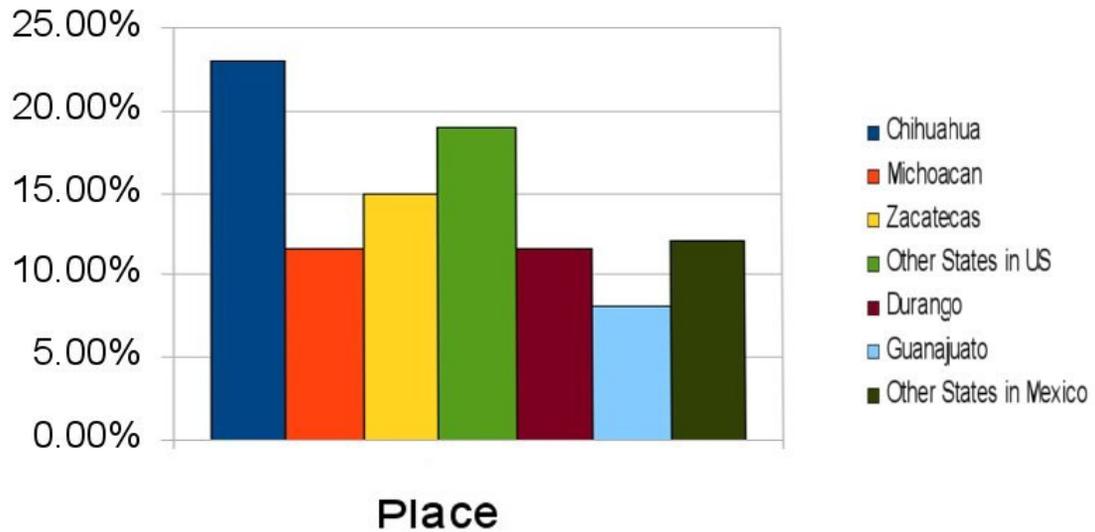
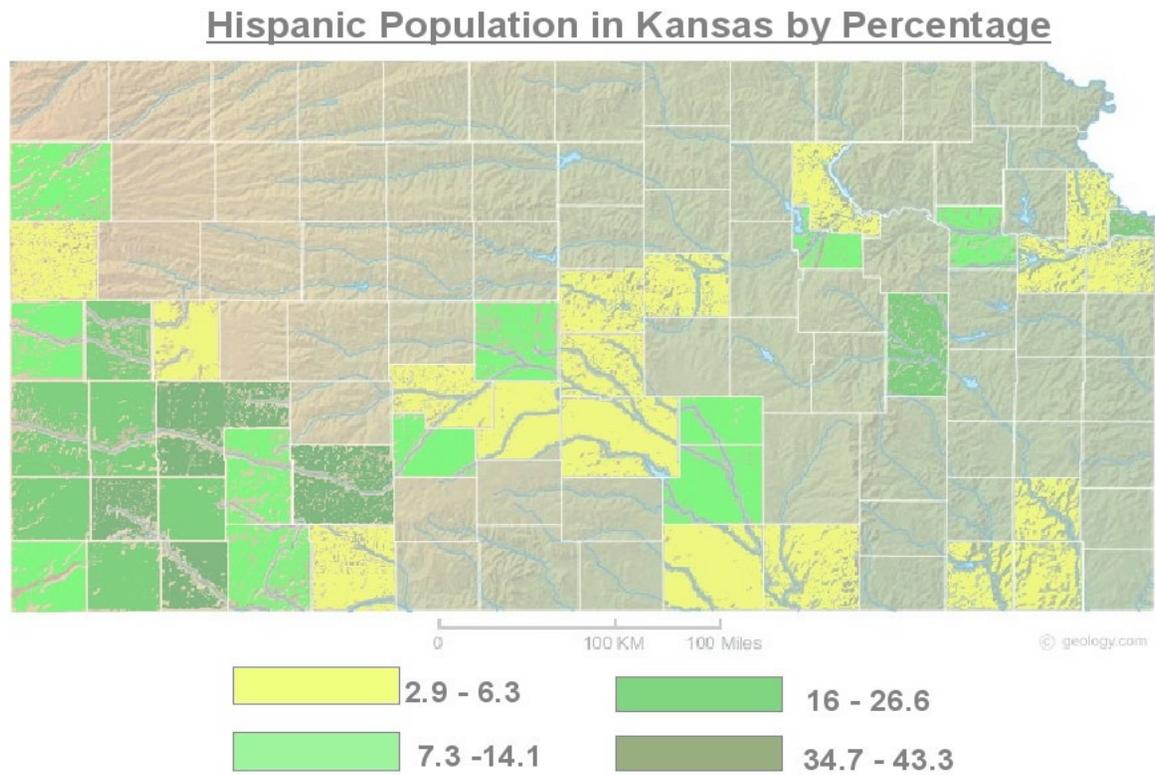
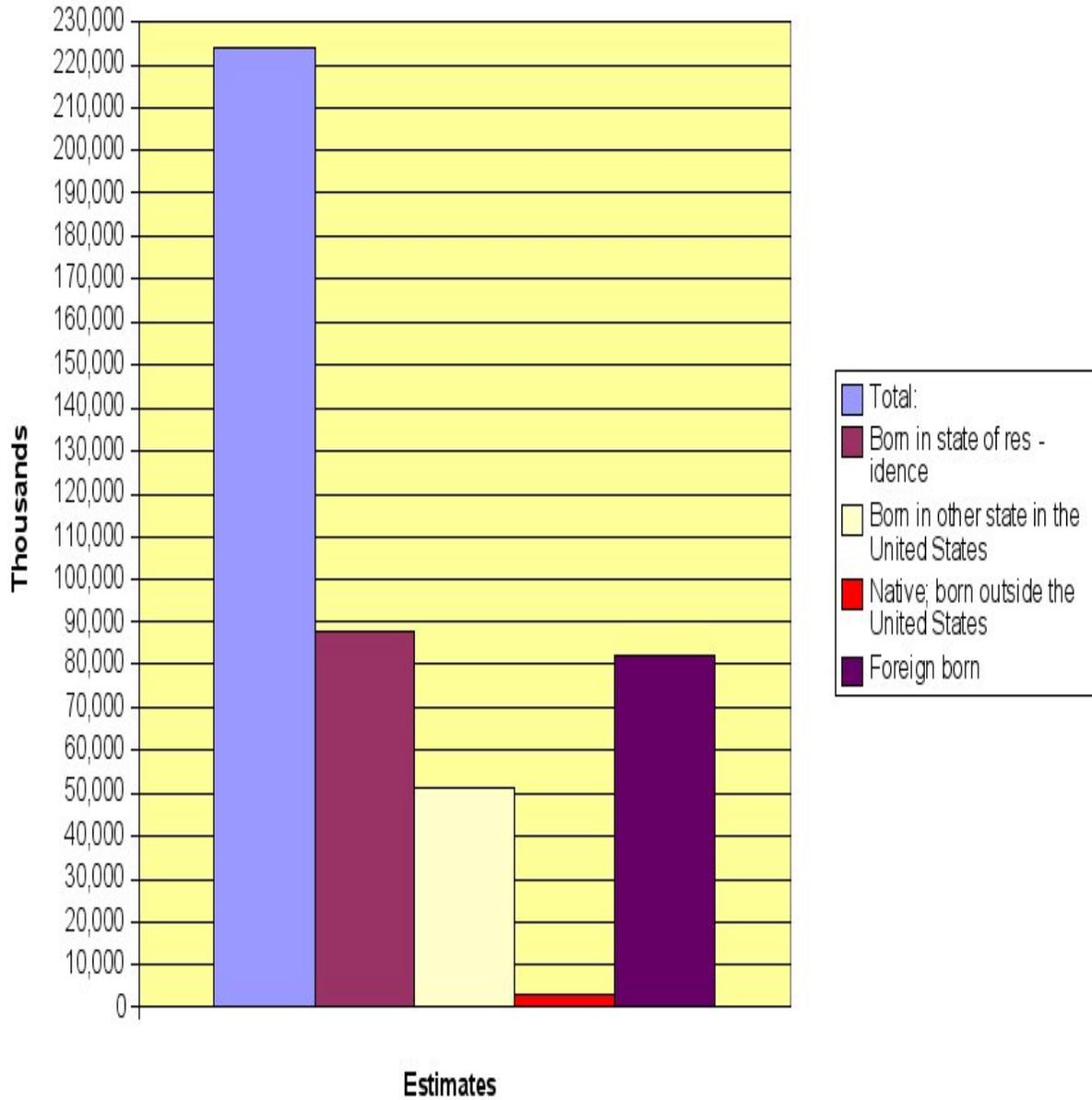


Figure C.7 Hispanic population in Kansas by percentage



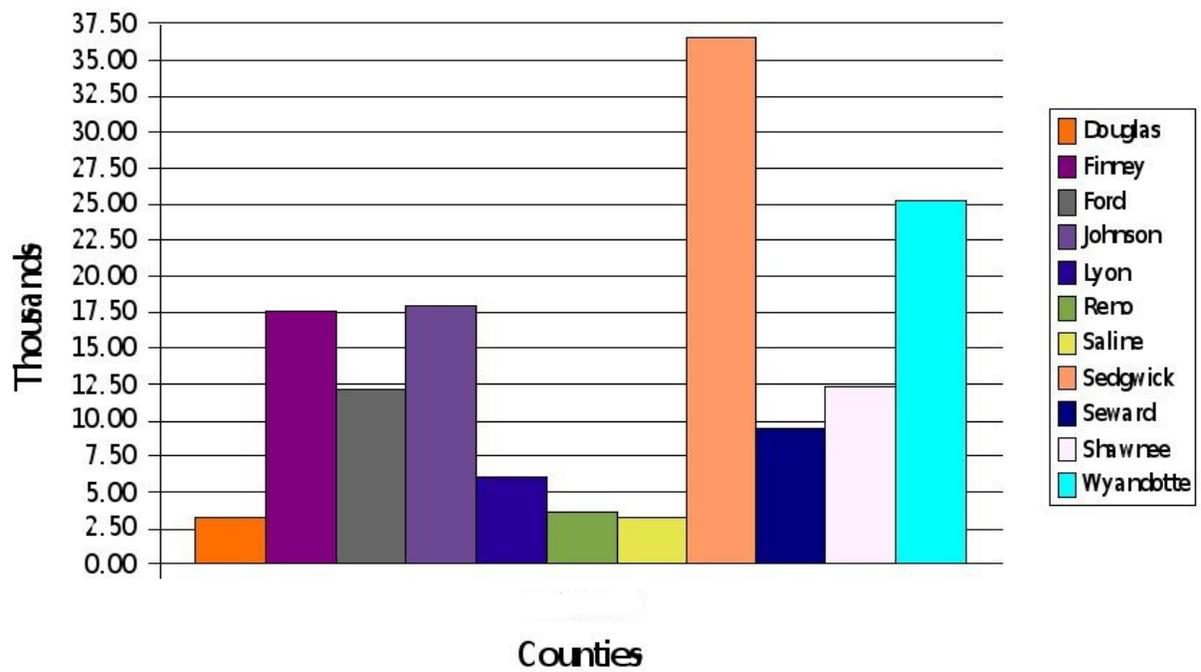
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure C.8 Place of birth by race (Hispanics in Kansas)



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure C.9 Concentration of Hispanic population in Kansas by absolute numbers



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure C.10 Lyon

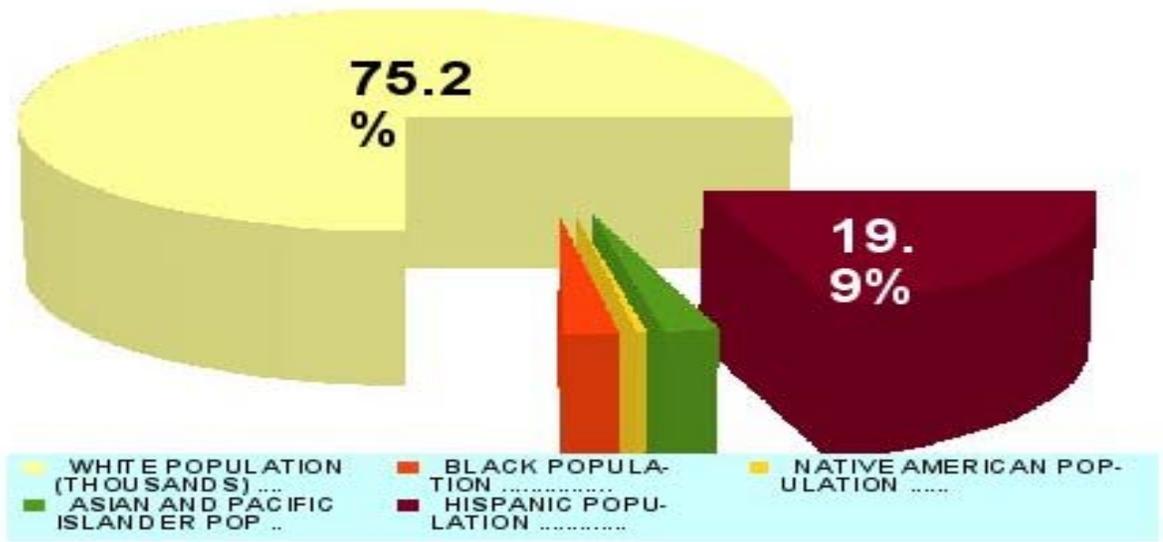
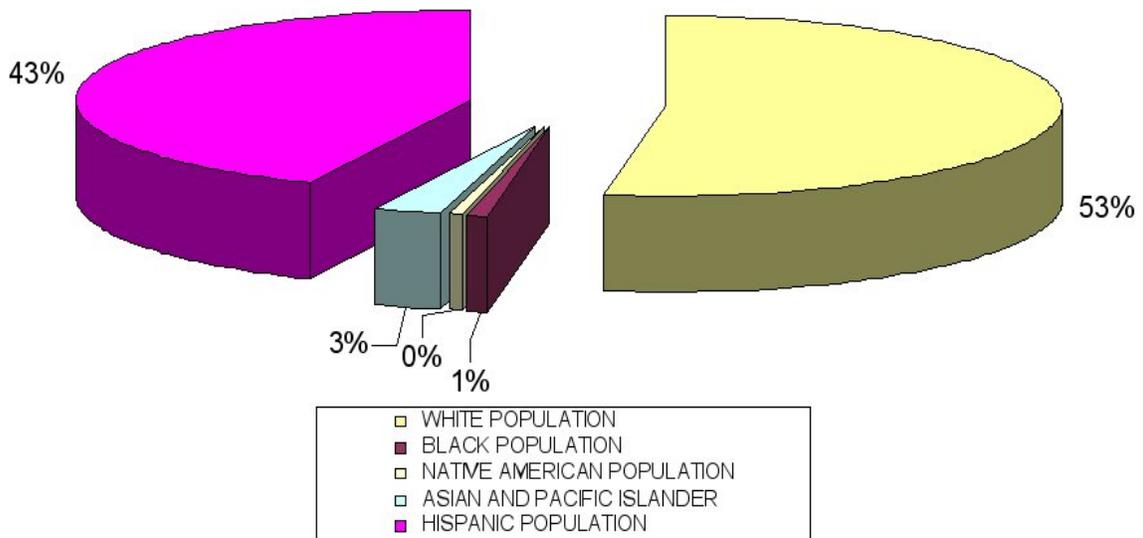


Figure C.11 Finney



Data source: Kansas Population Center

Figure C.12 Ford

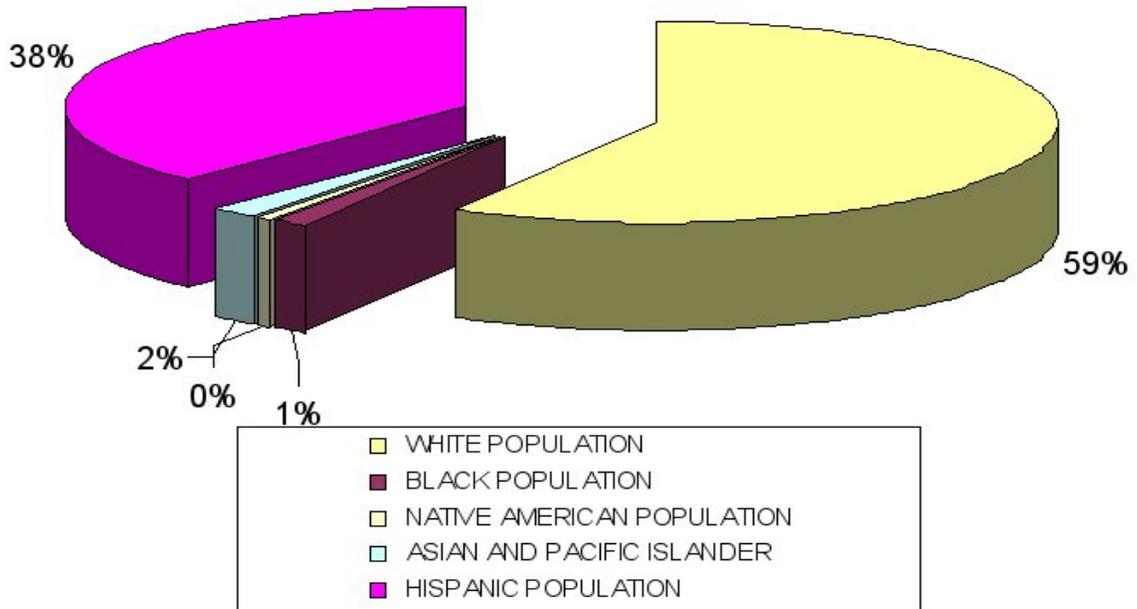
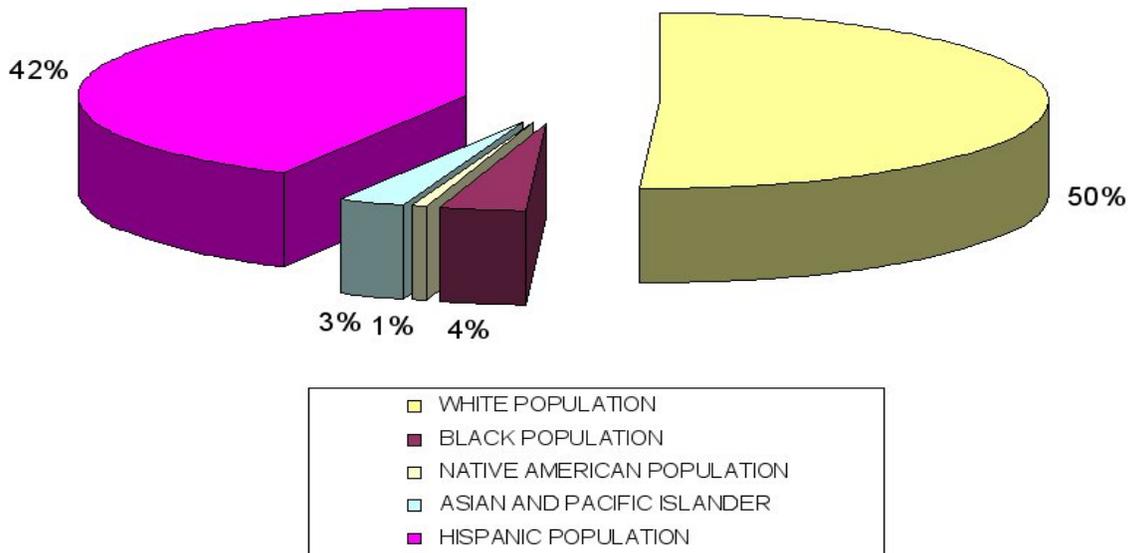
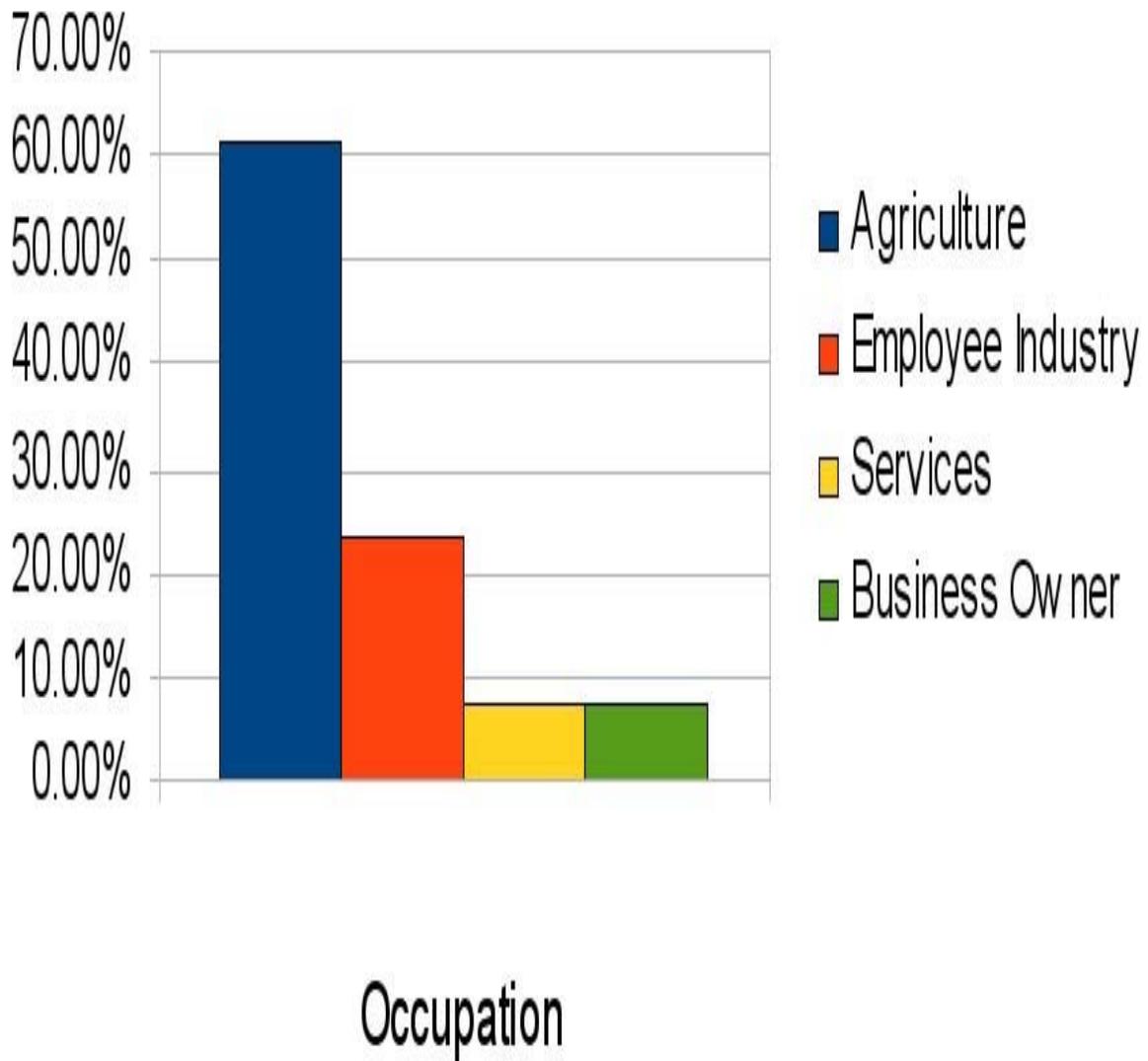


Figure C.13 Seward



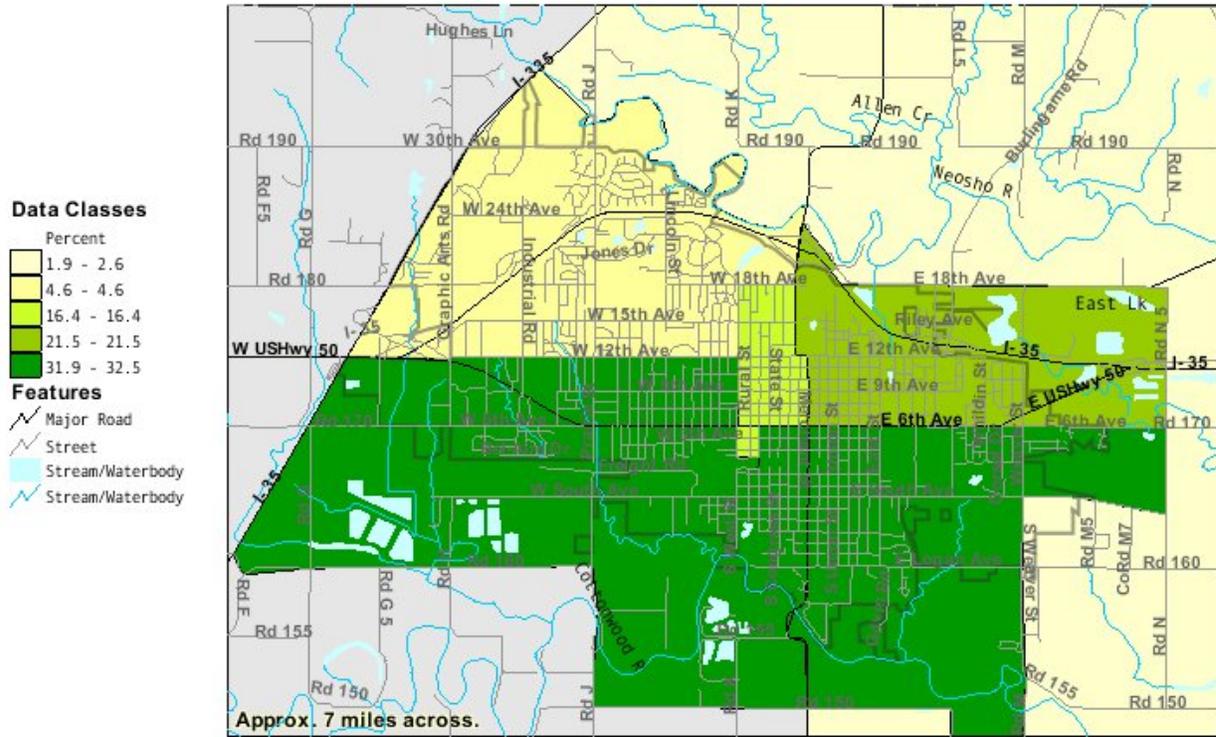
Data source: Kansas Population Center

Figure C.14 Father's occupation in Mexico



Data source: interviews

Figure C.15 Spatial concentration of Hispanic population in Emporia by percentage



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau

Figure C.16 Trajectories of interviewees Mexican immigrants

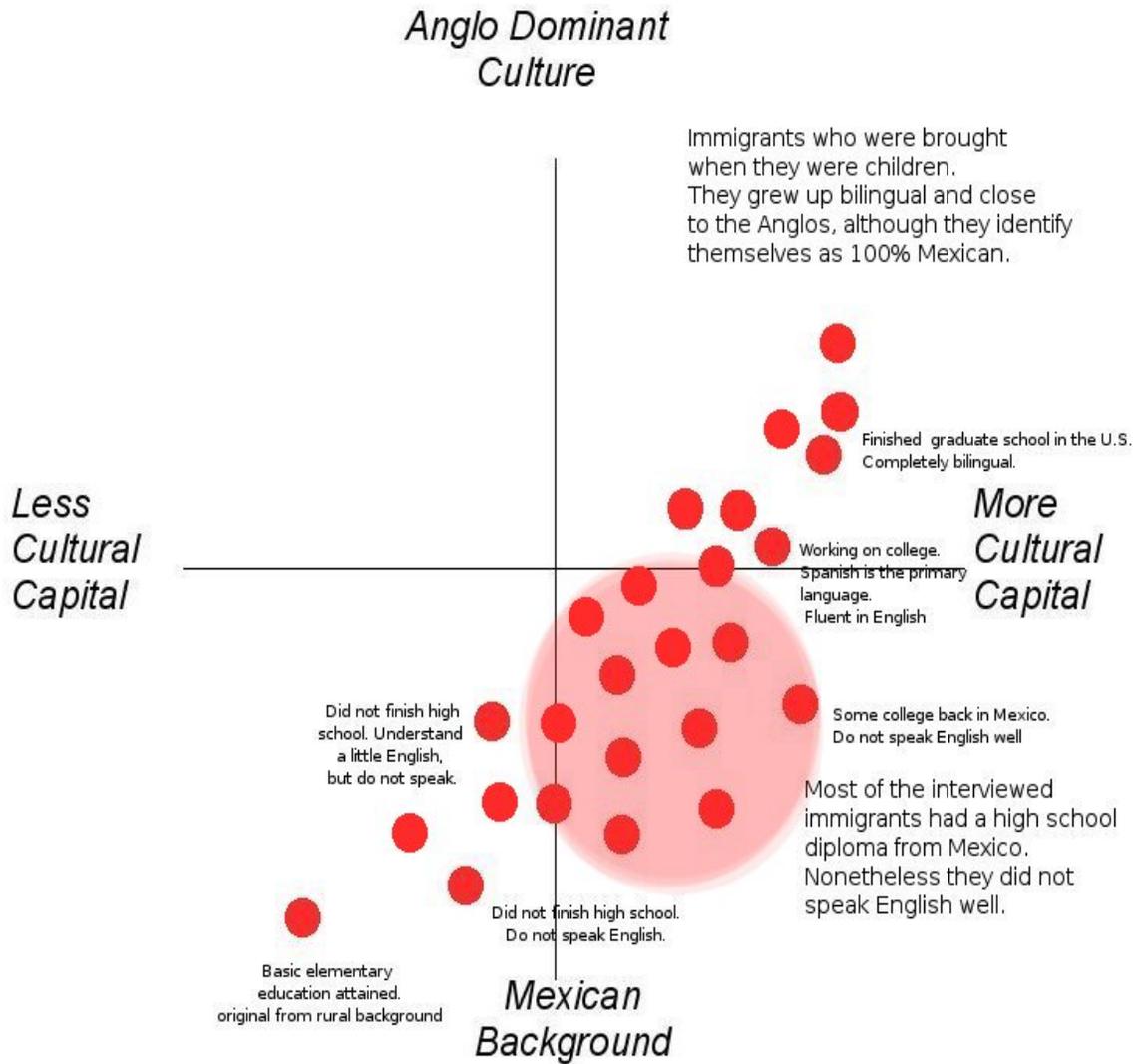
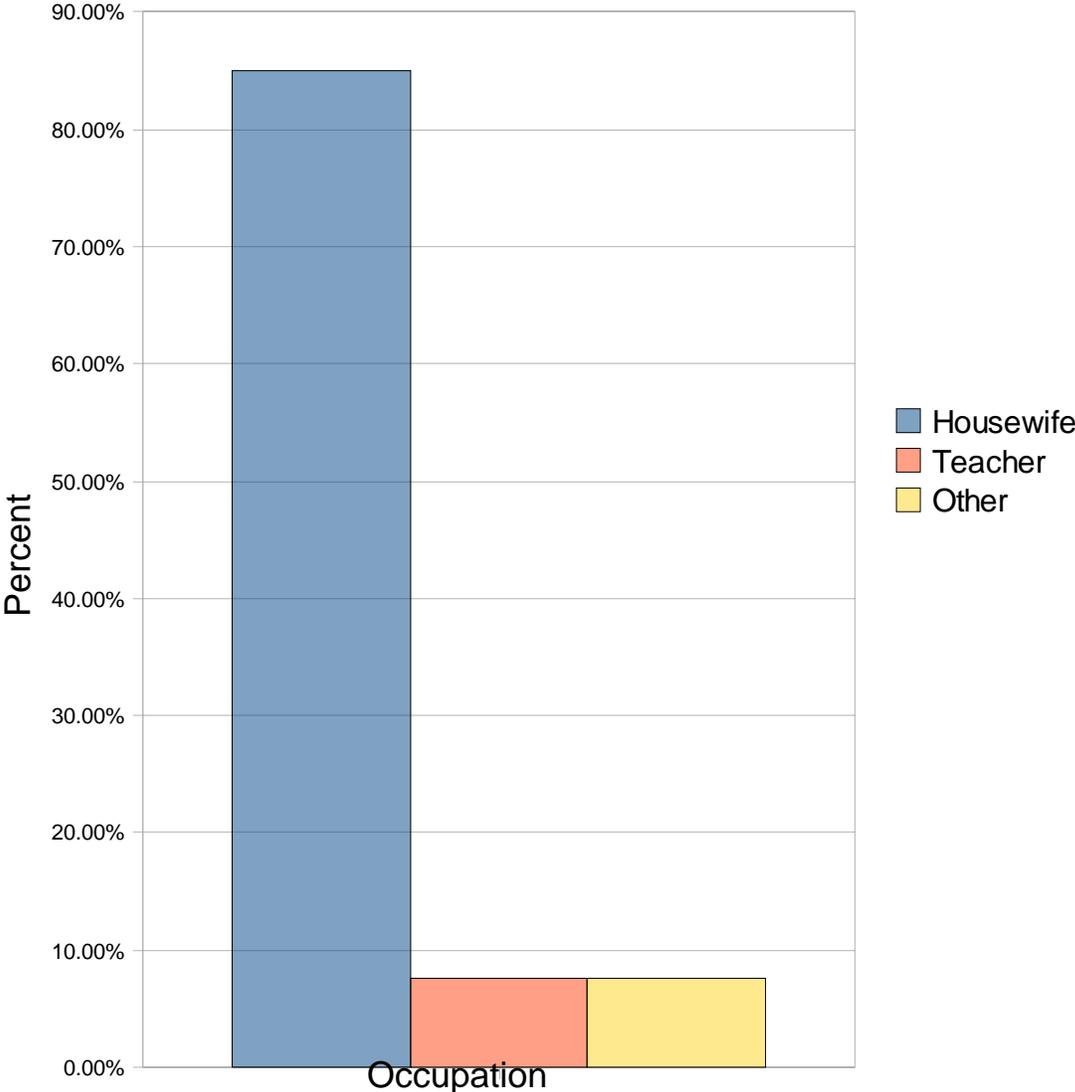
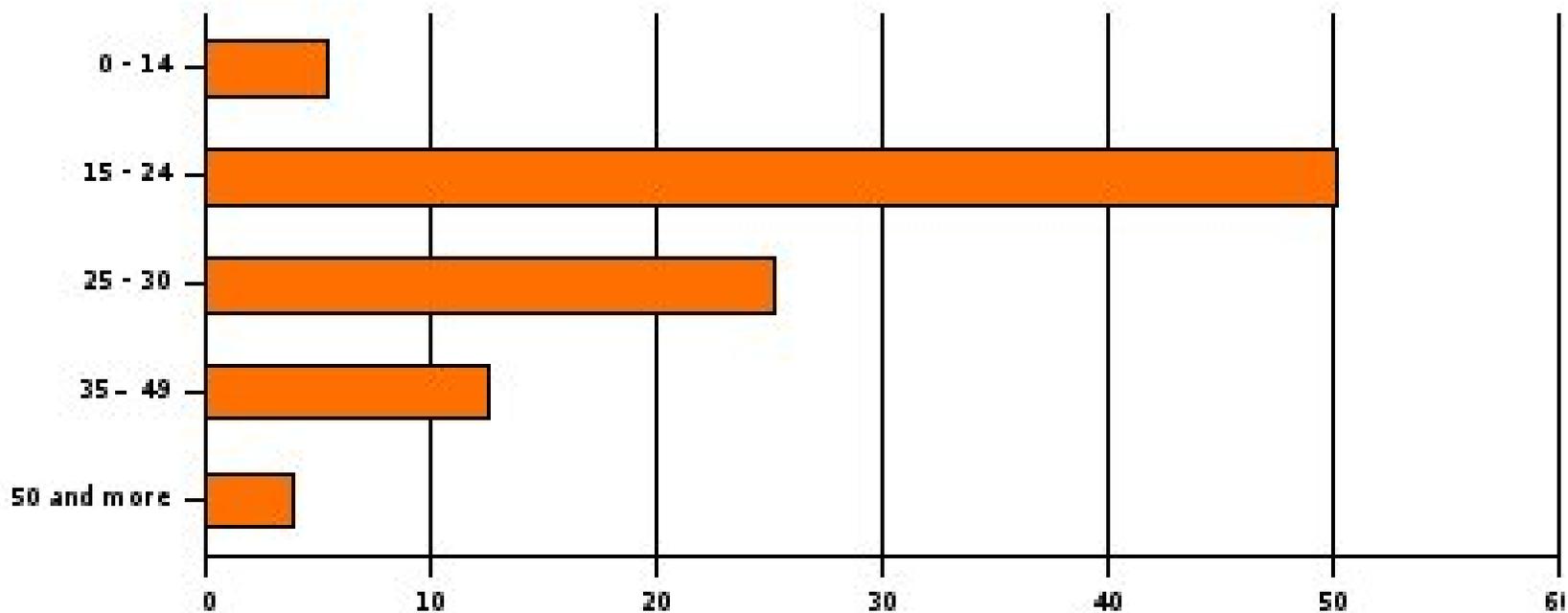


Figure C.17 Mother's occupation in Mexico



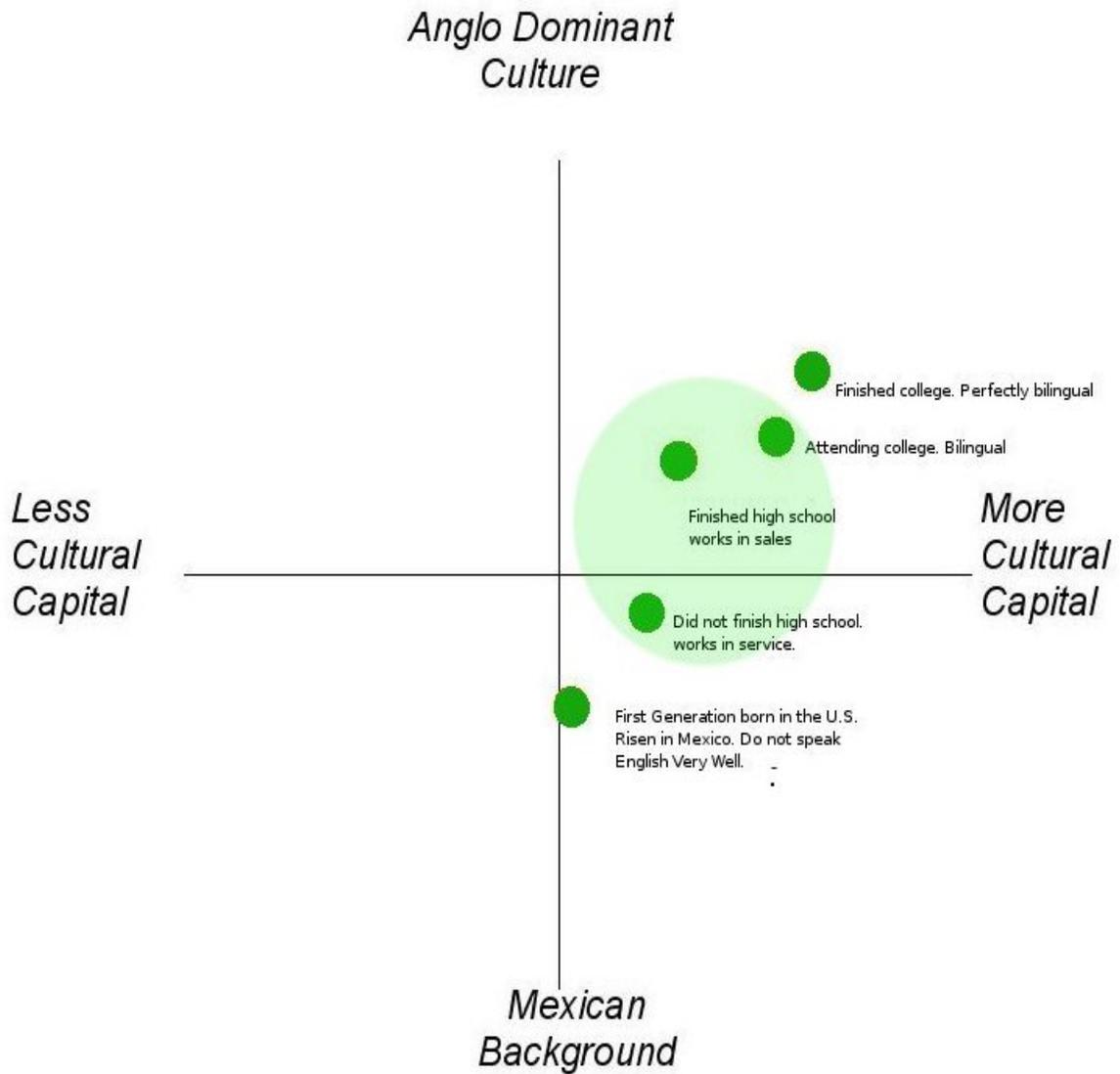
Data source: interviews

Figure C.18 Distribution of International Migrants from México by Age



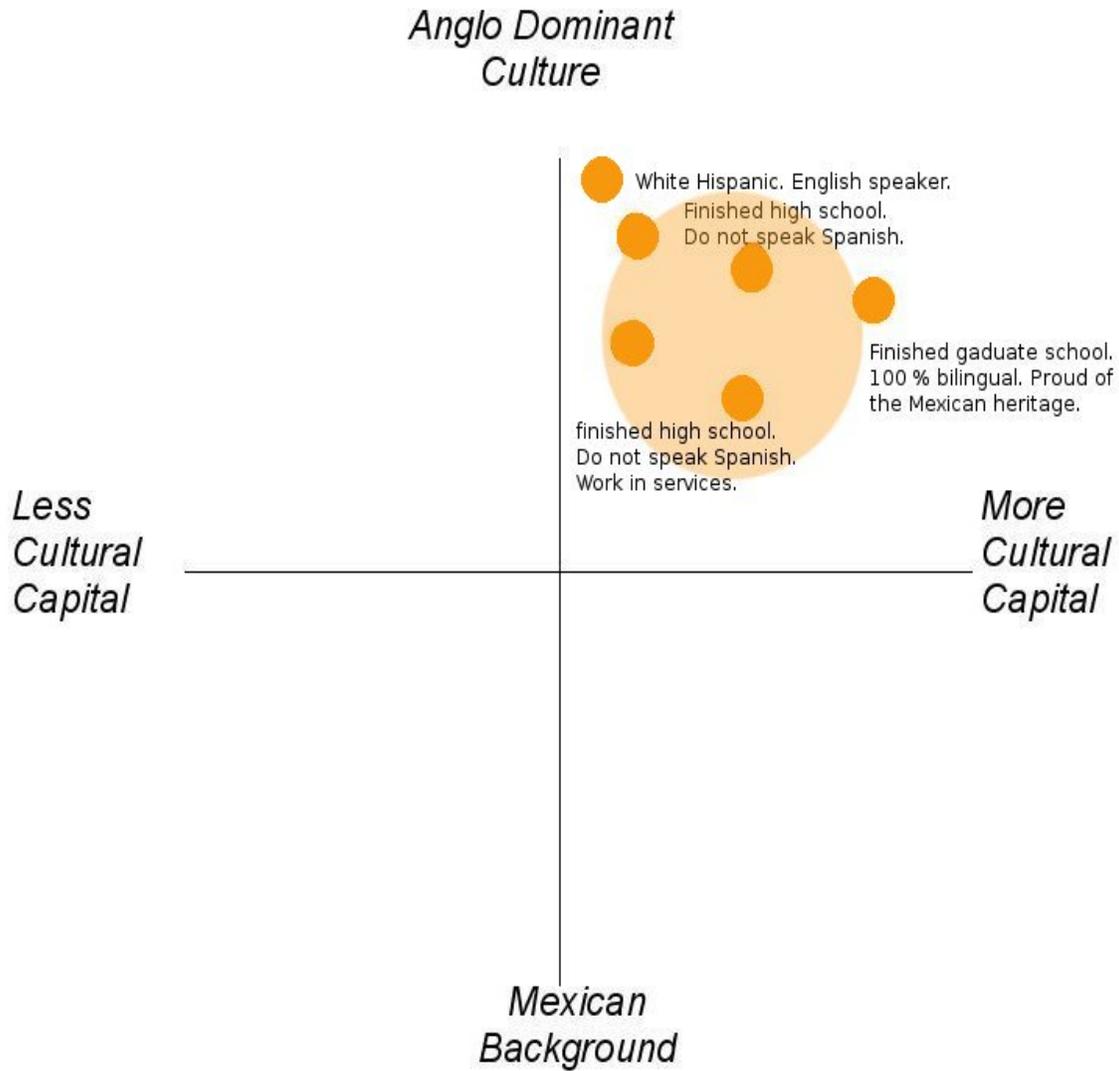
Data source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI)

Figure C.19 Trajectories of Chicanos



Data source: interviews

Figure C.20 Trajectories of Second and subsequent generation Mexican-American



Data source: interviews