The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies
University of California, San Diego

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Mexican Immigrant Integration in the U.S. Southeast: Institutional Approaches to Immigrant Integration in Owensboro, Kentucky

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Working Paper 153
June 2007

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INTRODUCTION

> You know what they told us is…they like Owensboro and they don't necessarily like every other city in our region. I think that [immigrants] find us to be more friendly toward them, even though I'm sure our community is not perfect. I think a lot of those decisions are made on what they hear. You know, word of mouth, what their family members say. They come. Then, they tell their relatives about it.
>
> - *Lisa Stephens, Community Coordinator, City of Owensboro*

Setting the Scene

Owensboro, Kentucky is at a crossroads. With the arrival of Mexican immigrants in the town, the city of 54,000 is one of many new immigrant receiving communities in the Southeast[1] that is experiencing immigration for the first time in over 100 years. In a place defined largely by its Anglo population, the arrival of a small, but permanent and growing population of Mexican immigrants over the last ten

[1] Here the Southeast is defined as the "traditional" South including Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama and Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana. Texas is excluded because of its unique history as part of Mexican territory and the historical presence of Mexican immigrants in the state. Florida also has a history of Latino immigration inconsistent with more recent trends in the Southeast. Kentucky's inclusion as a Southern state has been debated due to its official position as neutral during the Civil War. However, Kentucky is most often considered part of the South and is culturally and historically consistent with Southern states.

years has made the national immigration debate relevant beyond the traditional gateways. The most pressing issues include immigrant access to healthcare, bilingual education, housing, English-language acquisition and drivers' licenses for immigrants. The undocumented[2] status of many immigrants adds complexity to these issues, even as many in the community recognize that immigrants are a vital part of the workforce and community. Consequently, their arrival has also sparked conversations common to immigrant-receiving communities regarding immigrant incorporation into the existing social, economic, political and cultural structure. The successful integration of this immigrant population is something that could potentially benefit many actors. It could enrich the community both socially and economically, while also adding diversity to a largely homogeneous population. On the other hand, the failure to successfully integrate the growing Mexican immigrant population could lead to tension and divisiveness between old and new community members that would benefit no one.

Academics such as Wayne Cornelius (2002), Mary Waters and Tomás Jiménez (2005) and Rubén Hernández-Leon and Víctor Zúñiga (2005) have called for a move away from urban or big city-based immigration research, focusing instead on non-traditional gateway areas and the transformations of small towns and cities in both rural and suburban areas of the South and Midwest. As Wayne Cornelius (2002) points out, the cultural gap is much wider in these areas and "microcosms" of new

[2] While the U.S. Census cannot directly count an undocumented population, based on data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, estimates suggest that in non-traditional immigrant receiving areas, such as the Southeast, the undocumented population is at least 40% of the total immigrant population.

racial, ethnic and cultural diversity are just waiting to be explored. Owensboro, Kentucky is one such microcosm.

As Waters and Jiménez state (2005), there are reasons to believe that immigrant assimilation in these new areas may fundamentally differ from the experiences of immigrants in more traditional receiving areas. They outline several ways in which old and new destinations may differ from traditional immigrant-receiving regions, emphasizing inter-group relations and the existence (or lack thereof) of established notions regarding the place of immigrants in racial, ethnic and class hierarchies. Waters and Jiménez cite historical differences between the regions where Mexican immigrants settle. They note the historical presence of Mexicans and Mexican immigration in the Southwest, the strong presence of Mexican culture, and the importance and influence of the Chicano Movement on the region. In contrast, the Southeast has historically had a notable absence of Mexican immigration and Latino presence, but has its own influential and tumultuous history that includes plantation agriculture and slavery, Civil War secession from the Union, Jim Crow segregation laws, and the Civil Rights Movement. Such differences shape the immigrant-receiving context.

Waters and Jiménez (2005) suggest that the size of new receiving communities may also affect immigrant assimilation, as many new gateways are small towns or cities in more rural or suburban areas. This may have a variety of effects on immigrant integration, including a decrease in social isolation. In smaller communities, such as Owensboro, new and long-term residents have more opportunities to interact with each other. Less populated communities such as these

often have fewer options for shopping, schooling and recreation and thus public spaces are shared and shaped by both old and new residents. In a smaller town, the presence of any new person or population rarely goes without notice. On the other hand, the higher visibility of newly arriving immigrants in such a social context may be conflictual.

In addition, a significant variation between new and old gateways and the impetus for my research is the availability of and access that immigrants have to institutions. Because of experience with immigrant populations that are both broad and deep, traditional immigrant-receiving communities have institutions and programs with services geared towards assisting new immigrant populations' integration into the community such as health clinics, English language programs, financial and social services and legal aid. These institutions often employ bilingual employees attuned to cultural differences. Older gateway communities also have established ethnic neighborhoods, and immigrant economic enclaves. The role these enclaves play in integration has been explored at length by academics such as Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut (2001) and Leo Chavez (1998), among others. Enclaves provide a space where informal networks of support and information on childcare, employment, healthcare, education and housing can be easily accessed. In addition, enclaves serve as a site for shared information on immigrant experiences and often provide a collective source of immigrant identity, economic resources and opportunity. Traditional gateways may also have social meeting spaces for immigrants such as immigrant churches or businesses, where newcomers feel connected to a larger whole.

Even in locations where Mexican immigration is new, such as New York City, immigrants in such locales benefit from pre-existing services set up to aid preceding waves of immigrants (Waters and Jiménez, 2005, Smith 2006). As Robert Smith (2006) discusses, many institutions in New York City that were created to serve Puerto Rican immigrants now serve largely Mexican immigrant populations. In new immigrant-receiving communities, linguistically and culturally relevant services geared towards immigrants have been virtually non-existent. As a result, both immigrants and service providers must begin "from scratch," working without the benefit of prior experience on the part of local institutions or a pre-existing immigrant community. Thus, immigrant integration in new communities may not follow the established avenues understood to facilitate immigrant integration in traditional receiving communities, as many of those avenues simply do not exist.

Host society characteristics and new immigrant gateways

A theoretical framework

New research on the reception and integration of immigrants now recognizes more explicitly the impact of host society characteristics on the reception of immigrants. This focus is extremely useful in examining immigrant integration in new receiving communities like Owensboro, where the host society characteristics differ in both predictable and unexpected ways from those of traditional gateways. Jeffery Reitz (2003) has identified four principal factors as affecting the reception of immigrants in host societies:

a) pre-existing ethnic and race relations within the host population;

b) differences in labor markets and related institutions;

c) the impact of government policies and programs, including immigration policy, policies for immigrant integration, and policies for the regulation of social institutions; and

d) the changing nature of international boundaries, part of the process of globalization.

The four factors outlined intersect each other in complex ways, with cultural dimensions permeating all aspects of the reception of immigrants in host societies. As Reitz argues, characteristics of host societies can influence immigrant integration as much as, if not more than individual immigrant characteristics.

My research focuses specifically on institutions[3] and examines institutional approaches to immigrant integration in Owensboro, Kentucky, a Southern community experiencing the settlement of Latino immigrants for the first time since the town's settlement by German and Irish settlers in the early 19th century. Focusing on the impacts of government policies and programs -- including immigration policy, policies for immigrant integration, and policies for the regulation of social institutions -- my research looks at how these institutions have shaped the receiving context. More specifically, this study seeks to accomplish the following:

- To analyze the role institutions are playing in immigrant integration in Owensboro and identify the various institutional approaches to integration being used in the community;
- To investigate the restrictions or limitations institutions face in facilitating immigrant integration;

[3] The word institution is commonly applied to customs and practices that are important to a society, such as the institution of marriage, and to important organizations, especially of a public nature. I use the word in reference to the latter.

- To determine whether the lack of pre-existing institutions organized to work with an immigrant population is affecting the immigrant experience in Owensboro, and whether an institution's lack of experience with immigrants means an organization is ill-prepared to respond to a new population's needs;
- To investigate how institutions view, and in turn, provide services for a new population;
- To discuss institutional motivation in working with/for an immigrant population;
- To highlight what institutions are doing that acknowledges immigrant difference.

I employ ethnographic interviews conducted with institutional service providers and immigrants as well as observations made in Owensboro during the summer of 2005. I chose to study Owensboro based on personal interest in the region and the lack of prior case studies on new immigrant-receiving communities in Kentucky. As a native of Owensboro, I had an interest in changes taking place in my hometown. I was also familiar with the institutions working with immigrants and was able to gain access these institutions quickly. Moreover, this study was not a study of all institutions in Owensboro, but rather one that carefully selected institutions based on logistics, timing and personal interest. Many other institutions in the community play an important role in immigrant integration. My primary focus was on the perspectives of the institutions, where I conducted in-depth ethnographic interviews with 13

individuals or small groups. Shorter, survey-style interviews with 25 immigrants in the community also informs my analysis[4].

Institutions

My research focuses on governmental, healthcare and faith-based institutions. Jointly, the three types of institutions examined contain elements that facilitate the integration of individuals and families in a community. While educational institutions constitute a fourth critical component of integration, they were not a focus of my study. I am familiar with the Owensboro school system but I concluded that there were other areas of the community that receive less attention that might benefit more from outside observation.

These institutions can be viewed as three legs of an institutional stool on which immigrant integration stands. My aim is to assess how these institutions facilitate integration, with the larger goal of making policy recommendations for the receiving community. In addition, I hope to contribute to literature on non-traditional immigrant receiving areas and the role of institutions in integration in those areas.

Institutions play a key role in shaping both policies and practices that consequently influence immigrant integration. Sociologist Victor Nee articulates this well with the following:

> The experience of contemporary immigrants and their children is shaped by institutions. Defined as the web of formal and informal rules governing social relationships, institutions provide the context of legitimate social action within which actors pursue interests. Formal rules are the laws and regulations produced and enforced by the state. Monitoring and enforcement of these rules encompass one of the most powerful mechanisms by which any complex society reproduces,

[4] These immigrant interviews were obtained using the snowball (Cornelius, 1982) sampling method.

> organizes, and regulates itself. The role of formal rules in molding the underlying constitution of society is especially pronounced in highly legalized and bureaucratized postindustrial societies. Informal rules include customs, conventions, and social norms produced and enforced within close-knit groups. They uphold the other institutional arrangements of civil society – associations, churches, clubs, social networks, families (2004: 1).

According to Nee, whether an institution is based on laws and regulations enforced by the state or customs and social norms, the social relationships that an institution and its constituents can share differs. Thus the formal or informal manner in which an institution functions, in combination with the legal status of some immigrants, dictates that access to all institutions is not equal. In addition to the institution's formal or informal nature, an institution is also influenced by the *motivations* of its actors. What motivates an organization with employees as opposed to one run strictly by volunteers? How strongly is the institution motivated by a unifying mission or employee beliefs? The individuals affiliated with an institution are motivated by countless factors that in turn, influence and mold the institution's actions and consequently, their ability to help immigrants integrate.

In this study, I examine the institutional properties that facilitate or hinder the institution's role as an agent of integration. Based on my observations and interviews with service providers and immigrants in Owensboro, I find that institutions serve as a "jumping-off point" for immigrants as they settle in new communities. I suggest that while many factors influence the actions and motivations of institutions, their institutional properties, relationship to the state, and level of formality influence institutions' approaches to integration. Most importantly I suggest that *faith-based*

organizations are situated to play an integral role in immigrant integration because of their institutional structure, their distance from the government, and their ability to foster formal and informal assistance for immigrants. I also find that while governmental and healthcare organizations provide vital services, they are not able to play a central role in integration due to legal constraints, institutional structures, and stricter government regulations on the provision of services by these organizations.

Integration and the Importance of Context

Immigrant integration is a process that is dynamic and complex. Integration is no longer understood as something determined solely by immigrant characteristics or the levels of human capital and cultural attributes immigrants bring with them (Borjas 1999). More recently, social scientists have shown that the receiving context may explain the nature of integration more than the "quality" of immigrant attributes (Reitz 1998; Bloemraad: 2006).

Current literature on integration discusses successful immigrant integration as a function of the opportunities and barriers immigrants encounter in the receiving community. In addition to contextual factors like ethnic networks, social capital and labor market conditions, current literature on incorporation stresses how programs, institutional cultures, and national and local policies can have a considerable impact on immigrant integration (Fix and Zimmerman 2000; Waldinger 2001). Integration is a fluid process based on both individual and community level factors and thus, happens differently depending on location. The receiving context influences integration by shaping what Reitz (2003) has called the "warmth of the welcome."

Examining these issues in the context of new immigrant-receiving communities may challenge established theories of Mexican settlement and integration. As many scholars have noted, the way in which new immigrant-receiving communities manage growing diversity and incorporate new populations will no doubt play a role in the sense of community cohesion and quality of life for all residents. While integration processes continue to be studied in traditional receiving communities, examining immigrant integration in a context where immigrants lack access to many of the traditional integration tools may offer insight into the processes that shape integration more generally (Hernandez-Leon and Zuñiga, 2000). Understanding the characteristics differentiating a city like Owensboro, from the characteristics of more traditional immigrant receiving locations helps contextualize the discussion while also building awareness of how regional differences may impact integration. Unlike studies from traditional receiving communities, sociologists, demographers and other academics studying immigration to new gateways can provide important points of comparison that shed light on how the integration process generally takes place (Hernandez-Leon and Zuñiga, 2000). Such an understanding will not only affect policy decisions regarding immigration and integration but will also advance theoretical discussion on the topic.

Integration History

The terminology surrounding the concept of immigrant integration has a long history. There are many words that have been used to describe the process of immigrants becoming socially, linguistically, and/or culturally part of communities in the United States. The idea of integration and incorporation originates from the

concept of assimilation. Assimilation can be traced back to sociologists at the University of Chicago and the work of Robert Park, E.W. Burgess and W.I. Thomas. During the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, these sociologists attempted to understand the experiences of immigrants living in Chicago. They defined assimilation as "a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (Park and Burgess, 1921: pg12). However, beginning in the 1960s, the idea of adapting a common cultural life began to be seen as ethnocentric and patronizing (Alba and Nee, 2003:1) as it largely came to be equated with "Anglo-Americanization". As Alba and Nee (2003) explain:

> The assimilation concept of the earlier era is now condemned for the expectation that minority groups would inevitably want to shed their own cultures, as if these were old skins no longer possessing any vital force, and wrap themselves in the mantle of Anglo-American culture. The one-sidedness of this conception overlooked the value and sustainability of minority cultures and, in addition, masked barely hidden ethnocentric assumptions about the superiority of Anglo-American culture. Indeed, it has been viewed as a form of "Eurocentric hegemony," a weapon of the majority for putting minorities at a disadvantage by forcing them to live by cultural standards that are not their own (2003:1-2).

As Ramon Gutierrez (2004) discusses, assimilation critiques gained momentum at the height of the civil rights movement in the United States. This era fought to expand rights for minorities, including immigrants. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, civil rights proponents pointed to immigration policies that contained admission quotas based on race and ethnicity as yet another example of race-based exclusion. In 1965, the Immigration Reform Act ended such quotas.

During this time, the use of the term as well as the idea of assimilation, often understood as "Americanization," became taboo. Although the 1965 amendment to the constitution afforded minorities' rights in theory, in reality, change happened very slowly. Ethnic and racial minorities, tired of continued treatment as second class citizens, began to call for more radical action in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Movements such as the Black Panther Party and the Chicano Movement as well as the teachings of Malcolm X looked not to an assimilation theory fashioned on studies of European-origin groups, but to dependency theory in Latin America as well as theories of race and poverty to explain the status of minorities in the United States.

Many scholars have since critiqued the idea of assimilation, seeing it as assuming a uni-directional move towards Anglo-conformity or the assumption that assimilation is inevitable. Because of this movement, the term has undergone a re-adaptation, reclaimed by many academics as a concept that is still viable and one that can be used to describe a process of immigrant incorporation (Alba and Nee 2003). While an academic crowd may be familiar with the history of the word and its current usage, the term "assimilation" still conjures up an ideology of Americanization. Consequently, I use the word "integration" which has a broader appeal and thus may less normative for my goal of addressing a policy audience.

Integration Defined

There are various types of integration, including racial, structural, and economic. It could be easily argued that some are easier to achieve than others. However, for the purposes of this study, I am interested in the dimensions of integration related to key institutions. This type of integration consists of two main

parts: the immigrants' need for access to services, and the receiving communities' recognition of that need. As Leo Chavez in his study on undocumented immigrants in San Diego posits, "Full incorporation depends not just on their (immigrants) own personal changes, but also on the larger society's willingness to 'imagine' them as members of the community" (1991:259).

Integration is broadly defined as a process by which immigrants and the receiving community form a cohesive whole. For this process to take place, there are many influences and factors in play. In my study I focus on aspects of integration related to key institutions' awareness of the need for, and subsequent provision, services and structures that facilitate immigrant integration. These services should be culturally and linguistically relevant, and come from trustworthy sources, meeting immigrants' basic needs, while also facilitating social mobility and inclusion in the community. This includes aspects of integration such as housing, employment and education, social, cultural, religious, healthcare and linguistic services. My definition of integration posits that access to social services and institutions form the "legs" of the integration stool and thus, the ability for new immigrants to gain stability in a community and function as members of that community (Fix, Papademtrio and Fox 2005:3).

The idea that people living in a shared national space also share certain norms for participation in society is widely accepted in sociology. However, the idea that all people become like one central group is not accurate. Recognizing that American culture is a complex blend of influences and that it continues to evolve "from the unsystematic fusion of various regional and racial customs and traditions" (Alba and

Nee 2003:25) underscores the fact that the United States is a large nation with many regional differences. Integration may thus vary accordingly.

Contextualizing Owensboro, Kentucky

The South has a unique history. This history not only forms the region's collective memory, but also informs regional responses to new immigrant populations through social, cultural and economic dynamics. Furuseth & Smith (2006) describe the South's distinct environment as follows:

> In a region where social status, economic relations, and public consciousness have been framed by the bi-racial constructs of 'White' and 'Black', the arrival of a growing number of culturally different and linguistically alien immigrants has had far reaching effects. Cultural conventions and social institutions have been challenged. Commercial and residential landscapes have been transformed. New Latino migrants are cautiously viewed as 'assets' and/or more boldly as 'problems'. In a region that continues to grapple with long held traditions of privilege, belonging, and 'race', the growing presence of Latinos complicates the traditional mythology of southerness and gives rise to yet another iteration of the so called 'New South' (Furuseth & Smith, 2006:2).

Owensboro, Kentucky shares this Southern history. A religious community located in the heart of the Bible belt, Owensboro is markedly "Southern" - with slavery, the Civil War, segregation, agriculture and rural life playing historical roles in defining characteristics of the city.[5] Owensboro is also representative of transformations taking place throughout the South. Located in an isolated section of Western Kentucky, Owensboro is typical of many new immigrant receiving

[5] As a city in Kentucky, Owensboro remains "on the edge" of southern culture, while also maintaining some openness to northern and western U.S. influences (Rich and Miranda 2005). With regards to immigration however, Owensboro is consistent with transformations taking place across the South.

communities throughout the South that over the last ten to twenty years, have experienced the arrival and settlement of Latino immigrants for the first time.

The arrival of new immigrants has both regional and national origins. The most widely cited influences are the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which granted amnesty to 2.3 million undocumented Mexican immigrants and gave the newly legalized population the freedom to seek employment in other areas of the country, economic restructuring and expansion of rural industries in the South, and the increased militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border. Beginning in 1994, fortification of the border has made unauthorized border crossings increasingly difficult. Immigrants have been pushed to cross in less hospitable and more extreme areas of the border. Such a challenging crossing has resulted in the increased use of people smugglers or *coyotes* to lead groups of migrants to "safety" in the US while charging ever more exorbitant fees. There are no guarantees however and this dangerous journey has resulted in drastic increases in deaths along the border (Cornelius, 2000). Consequently, once successfully in the United States, many immigrants have opted to stay longer or settle permanently (Massey, et al, 2003; Cornelius 2005). In addition, worsening socio-economic conditions in California and the state's passage of Proposition 187[6] in the early 1990s were influential in launching a renewed period of staunch anti-immigrant sentiment throughout the Southwest. This climate of antagonism along with the militarization and growing cost of crossing the border made the Southwest a less attractive option for immigrants seeking work in the

[6] Prop 187 prohibited local and state organizations from providing publicly funded social services, education, welfare and non-emergency healthcare to non-US citizens or legal residents. It was rendered unconstitutional in 1998

United States (Durand, et al 2005:2). Coupled with the expansion of labor intensive industries like meat processing, carpet manufacturing, and forestry and the need for workers in the Southeast, opportunities for immigrants in the region began to bloom.

As Hernández-León and Zúñiga (2000) have shown, the establishment of social networks plays a key role in opening new gateways. Their examination of one new gateway, Dalton, Georgia, studies how legalized post-IRCA secondary migrants to the city began work in the carpet industry, thus establishing the city as a site for family reunification. This contributed to building of networks linking Dalton directly to communities and would-be migrants in Mexico. While little information is available on the arrival of immigrants to Owensboro[7], my interviews with immigrants revealed that the majority of people have been attracted to the area by small networks of friends or family members who arrived in the town for various reasons. Eighty-eight percent (all but 3) of the immigrants interviewed reported moving to Owensboro based in part on the presence of a friend or family member. Immigrants also reported the attraction of seasonal agricultural work as well as the town's appeal as a small, safe community, far from the Mexican border.

Local use of migrant workers dates back to the mid-1980s but was small-scale and not very visible. The region's economy has traditionally centered around agriculture and manufacturing. In Daviess County, where Owensboro is the county

[7] Only recently has scholarly research begun to be published on immigration to the Southeast. Notable contributions include, Zuñiga and Hernandez-Leon (2005) *New Destinations*, UNC Chapel Hill geographers Smith and Furuseth's (2006) edited collection, *Transformation of Place, Latinos in the New South*, and UGA's Murphy, Blanchard, & Hill (2001) edited collection of essays, *Latino Workers in the Contemporary South*. Until recently, research on Mexican immigration to the United States largely focused on three traditional immigrant receiving areas—California, Texas and Illinois.

seat, tobacco[8] production has been a fundamental aspect of the economy, history and culture of the area for over a hundred years. Although seasonal jobs in tobacco continue to be an initial draw for many immigrants, as tobacco has become progressively less profitable over the last fifteen years, the poultry industry has gained a foothold in the state. As Donald Stull (2000) explains:

> As chicken houses in Arkansas, Georgia, Alabama and the Delmarva Peninsula have become increasingly saturated with chicken houses and concerns with social and environmental problems created by the poultry industry, chicken producers have been drawn to western Kentucky by its large quantities of corn and water, great tax incentives, "besieged" tobacco industry, lack of environmental regulations and lack of rural zoning (Stull 2000).

While in 1990 Kentucky's chicken population was 1.5 million, it has now increased nearly *three-hundred* fold to an estimated 297 million birds, or 71 times Kentucky's population. The state now has four large processing plants and 2,000 chicken houses, all located in the western part of the state (Stull, 2000, De Leon 2007). In Owensboro, poultry producers such as Tyson and Purdue contract with local farmers to raise baby chicks. Once grown, the chickens are transferred to one of eight poultry production locations within a 45 mile radius of Owensboro.[9] As my interviews revealed, though some locals still work these jobs, immigrants increasingly fill positions in agriculture and poultry production while natives have moved to similarly low-paying but less grueling manufacturing jobs.

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[8] In 2001, Kentucky had approximately 3,000 H-2A workers in tobacco and vegetables. Importantly, counties with the large tobacco acreages are seen as initially strong pulls in attracting new migrants (Barcus 2006).

[9] Tyson has a hatchery in Calhoun, a poultry complex, chicken processing/further-processing plant and animal protein facility in Robards and a chicken feed mill in Sebree. Perdue has five locations: one in Hartford, two in Livermore, Utica and Beaver Dam. All of these cities are in Kentucky.

Beyond poultry and agriculture immigrants living in Owensboro also reported working for Field Meatpacking Company, in nearby packaging plants, warehouses and for local manufacturers, landscapers and restaurants. The bulk of employers in Owensboro have less than 50 employees and the average wage is $12 or less. Though many immigrants arrive in Owensboro during tobacco season each year, as year-round jobs become available workers have begun to make permanent homes in the area.

Owensboro's Changing Demographics

Owensboro is very racially homogenous. Ninety percent of the population is non-Hispanic white, with an African American community that comprises seven percent of the population. Mexican immigrants to the community are thus the first new non-white group to move in en masse in recent history (U.S. Census, 2000). A largely blue collar community, 82% have no college degree and the median income is $32,000. Consistent with the demographic trends throughout the United States, Owensboro is aging, with 30% of household containing residents 65 or older (U.S. Census, 2000).

While a small (1.25%) percentage of immigrants interviewed reported being from Central America, interviews with immigrants in Owensboro revealed the majority (67%) were from southern Mexico, with half of those respondents from Frontera Comalapa, Chiapas, on the Mexican border with Guatemala. While the 2005 Census estimates the Latino population in Daviess County as 1.2%, service providers estimated that the population was two to three times this figure. Some providers even suggested that Latino population was larger than that. While exact numbers on the undocumented immigrant population are difficult to attain, the growth of the

immigrant population in Owensboro can be evidenced in other ways. The presence of English as a Second Language classes in both city and county school districts, a regional Spanish language newspaper, *La Vereda*, nine local Mexican restaurants, two Mexican grocery stores and *carnicerias* and a place local Mexican immigrants refer to as "the Mexican bar," The Rio Grande, among other examples, serve as palpable indicators that a growing Latino population is present in Owensboro. As the remainder of my study explores, the growth of the immigrant population has challenged local service provider institutions to expand their services to meet the needs of a culturally and linguistically new population.

Study Overview

Chapters I through III explore the approaches of governmental, healthcare and faith-based institutions in facilitating the integration of the immigrant population in Owensboro, including how these institutions shape the receiving context. Chapter I examines governmental institutions and the uncertainty many government institutions exhibit in relation to a small, but growing population of Latino immigrants in the community. The role of governmental organizations may largely be linked to political will. Chapter II examines healthcare institutions and their approaches to providing culturally and linguistically relevant health provision for a population that many in the profession see as similar to low-income U.S.-born populations. Such an understanding of the population influences their approaches to service provision for new immigrants, conveying a narrative of immigrants as an undeserving population that is a "drain" on the healthcare system. Chapter III examines the unique characteristics of faith-based organizations in Owensboro and the approaches these

organizations utilize. As organizations with the most autonomy from the state, their flexibility provides a unique space where shared beliefs and room for personal motivation are key to their role in integration. Finally, I review my findings and provide general policy suggestions and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER I: LOCAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

> You know, their legal status you know, it doesn't…it doesn't matter. They are here and there are things that they need…. to tell you the truth, with the immigration system as it is, if I were in their shoes I would do the same dang thing. So would anybody who was trying to make a better life for themselves….This INS guy told me it could take 12 to 14 years for them to become legal and I couldn't believe it and I thought, well, okay… I think I'd make up a social security number too. It just… I don't know. It's frustrating.
>
> - *Lisa Stephens, Community Coordinator & Assistant to the City Manager, City of Owensboro*

Chapter Overview

The role of local governmental organizations in immigrant integration is both complex and, at times, uncertain. Integration into a community requires a number of services which government agencies are often unequipped, unable or unwilling to handle. Such has been the case in Owensboro, Kentucky. As the following quote reveals, the government's role in the social service sector is generally unclear (even among government officials).

> What is difficult from a government standpoint is we provide basic services, we pave streets, we put out fires and we answer police calls. Not everyone thinks that government needs to be in the social service business…as far as City Hall and County Courthouse goes [the role of the government in providing social services] is something that we struggle with.
>
> --*City of Owensboro Community Coordinator*

With some disagreement exists regarding the provision of social services for all populations, the response to new immigrants has differed throughout both the city

and the county. This reflects the complexities and lack of guidelines local governmental organizations face in serving an undocumented population. Governmental organizations face a number of obstacles in this arena, among them, logistical, legal and political factors that influence their response to new immigrants.

This chapter is informed by discussions with two officials operating in different realms of municipal governance as well as conversations with other community-service providers. These officials represent the various approaches governmental institutions are using to integrate a new immigrant population in Owensboro.

Local Government Institutions' Approaches to Immigrants

Framing Local Government's Response

Local-level discussions of immigration in the United States are often framed within the national immigration debate. The contours of the national debate are multifaceted and complex and include issues like border control, visa issuance policies, guest worker programs and length of stay, access to and use of social services, national identity, language and integration, as well as questions of human rights. Local-level understanding and interpretation of these issues shapes the context of reception for new immigrants in Owensboro.

The role of a municipal government is to meet the basic needs of its residents with appropriate services and structures. These include services such as sanitation, police and fire departments, public safety and emergency services, public transit, social services, and community and economic development programs. While the

population's needs have changed over time, until recently, Owensboro's population had been a cultural and linguistic monolith. With the arrival of new immigrants, many of whom are unauthorized, governmental institutions are struggling to determine what their role should be in the integration of a population a group of people who are de facto members of the local community, but whose legal status puts them at the margins.

The comments of government officials spanned the spectrum of sentiments from pro- to anti- immigrant and reflected general uncertainty over their role with respect to the immigrant population. I interviewed the City of Owensboro's Community Coordinator/Assistant to the City Manager Lisa Stephens, the Daviess County Judge Executive Jack Harper, and John Taylor from Daviess County Department of Community Based Services (DCBS). DCBS is the local branch of the state government responsible for providing family support and child care assistance, child and adult protection, eligibility determinations for Medicaid and food stamps and energy assistance to low income households. While DCBS serves as the local safety net for low income families and others in difficult family or financial situations, as a government entity, they are unable to provide assistance to unauthorized immigrants. This restriction on their reach excludes many immigrants who would benefit from their services. While Taylor reported that his office does see two or three Latino clients per month, it is unfortunate that the existing social safety nets in communities like Owensboro are government sources and are, therefore, available only to legal residents.

Immigrant legal status is an issue for many service providing institutions. However, governmental institutions often face stricter limitations since they are they are seen as a direct extension of the law. In addition, because employees in governmental institutions work for, or are themselves elected officials, the issue of immigrant documentation is especially critical. Immigrant legal status gives those working in government positions the ability to champion or ignore immigrant community members needs based on the views of their constituents. And, as my interviews revealed, this leaves others, committed to service provision for *all* community members, scrambling to validate the need for relevant services for immigrants amongst their fellow civil servants and community members.

While many factors affect how immigrant presence is viewed and understood, in local level debates, the unauthorized status of some immigrants underlies most views. Throughout my research immigrant documentation status was one of the challenges most often cited for individual immigrants and the immigrant community as a whole. This has both ethical and logistical roots. As Chavez (1992) discusses, in traditional immigrant receiving cities such San Diego, undocumented immigrants are not generally regarded as members of the community. Anti-immigrant rhetoric uses the term "illegal alien" to evoke the image of a person that lacks the values and qualities of U.S. citizens. This term's negative and alienating use has been widely discussed in academia but its continued use in the general public further delineates an undeserving "them" from a deserving "us." As Chavez discusses, the term "illegal" suggests immigrant existence outside the legal system that governs moral society. "*Alien*" (1992: 22) is equated with being an "*outsider, foreigner*, and *stranger"*

(author's emphasis) (1992:22). Negative attitudes regarding undocumented immigrants as "different, alien or immoral" may be understood by framing the idea in the context of Antonio Gramsci's definition of hegemony:

> The permeation throughout civil society… of an entire system of values, attitudes, beliefs, morality, etc. that is in one way or another supportive of the established order and the class interests that dominate it…[T]o the extent that this prevailing consciousness is internalized by the broad masses, it becomes part of 'common sense' (Greer, 1982, quoted in Chavez, 1992: 22).

Breaking a law, whether through unauthorized entry or overstaying a visa, to work in the United States, contrasts with the hegemonic definition of American morality and for many in the United States does not constitute "common sense." This is problematic given that a community unable to view immigrants as part of the established society may affect an immigrant's ability to become part of the society or to integrate (Chavez 1992:23). Ethical concerns about undocumented status of immigrant workers are also related to immigrant access to and use of community services. Undocumented status means immigrants are living in a community without full rights or access to community services, protection and aid. This includes access to health care, public support services and immigrant reluctance to use local protection services, such as the police. Such reluctance comes from immigrant fears of deportation or worse. Undocumented immigrants are conscious that their legal status leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Lack of access to channels citizens use alienates immigrants and leaves few alternatives when sick or in need.

Constraint and uncertainties over local government's role

Government institutions face uncertainties regarding the role they should play with new immigrant populations. While immigration policy is set on a national level, individual communities look to their local leaders for guidance in the reception of new immigrants. In the absence of a formal immigrant integration policy, the manner in which elected officials and government institutions respond to a new immigrant population lays the ground work for immigrant integration in the community.

In 2002 the City of Owensboro first became aware of a dramatic increase in the Latino population. As reported by the Community Coordinator, local police contact with Latino immigrants brought attention to their lack of identification/driver's licenses and their need for information and awareness about local laws. In addition, increased reports of residential discrimination and mistreatment in employment situations became common. Citing the complicated nature of issues surrounding immigration and the fact that the "federal government was not a huge help," the Community Coordinator said the city took action locally and organized a series of meetings with Latino residents and city officials to identify and discuss challenges Latino residents faced:

> We didn't really know what we were doing, but we just thought we need to have more of a connection with this community than we do…. It doesn't do any of us any good to just stick our heads in the sand and ignore these folks and let these folks suffer, being taken advantage of in their housing and being treated awful by people they are working for and not knowing where to go to for help. That's not benefiting us at all.
>
> - *Lisa Stephens, City of Owensboro Community Coordinator*

During a series of meetings hosted by the City, the number of Latino immigrant attendees grew from fifteen to close to one hundred, all in attendance to discuss issues of importance to the Latino community. Many of these issues paralleled those of other immigrant communities throughout the United States. Latino residents voiced a desire for legal status, concern over their children's education, and difficulties utilizing the public transportation system in the city. The meetings brought up many issues that the city representatives were unprepared to handle. As the Community Coordinator stated, "It was really interesting and it was also an eye-opener to us to find out they don't have legal status. They were undocumented, and we didn't know that."

While local governmental institutions face constraints regarding immigrant legal status, the fact that city officials in Owensboro were unaware of the legal status of many immigrants living and working in the community may be surprising to those in traditional or larger receiving areas. However, this lack of knowledge may be responsible for the city's willingness to create a space to meet with and listen to immigrants. While no tangible changes resulted from the 2002 meetings (and regardless of what this knowledge has meant for the city's involvement with the immigrant community), the fact that many people were unaware that some immigrants were undocumented points to the extent of differences between old and new immigrant receiving communities. This also may ultimately affect how integration in new receiving areas takes place. While many of the issues discussed at the meetings were beyond the scope of local government, the meetings presented a chance for open discussion between the immigrant community, its advocates and city officials. If

nothing else, the government officials present at the meeting learned about the needs and restraints of the new immigrant community. These interactions may also have created a sense of openness between Latino immigrants and city government, although that remains to be seen.

While the government began to realize that their role in working with undocumented community residents was limited, the realities of what undocumented status means for the immigrants themselves has become clearer over time. In 2003, a large apartment complex located in Owensboro was condemned. The apartments were occupied almost entirely by Latino residents. The residents were given a period of time when they could relocate and receive government assistance but, only if they were legal United States residents. As the Community Coordinator recalled, "[n]one of [the residents] were [documented] and we were like, 'Oh, wow.' I think that was kind of the 'ah ha' moment for city government."

The local government and related organizations' role in immigrant integration is clearly influenced by national policies. While government assistance such as food stamps, housing assistance, supplemental security income and Medicaid are utilized by U.S. citizens who struggle to make ends meet, undocumented immigrants - often in low-paying jobs - do not have access to this social safety net. The passage of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) made undocumented immigrants ineligible for most government benefits (Massey, et al 2002:96). While national policies have local level effects, as seen with PRWORA, the objectives of these policies often fail to meet the goals of the communities who are working to integrate immigrants on a local level. Indeed, local governments are

seldom consulted regarding national level policy (Cornelius and Tsuda 2004:14-15), which is reflected in the absence of state or national-level integration policies.

Lack of funding

The fiscal capabilities of smaller cities and towns in new gateways also limit governmental institutions' ability to work towards immigrant integration. As my interviews revealed, lack of funding is always a chief issue in Owensboro. While grantmakers throughout the U.S. are increasingly funding integration initiatives in an effort to fill the service void a lack of integration policies leave, Stephens reported that Owensboro has been unsuccessful in their quest for funding. According to the Stephens, most grants are geared towards major metropolitan areas the size of Louisville, Kentucky or Indianapolis, Indiana. "That is true with everything," says Stephens.

An example of this was Owensboro's hopes to emulate the community of Shelbyville, Kentucky, which received a federal grant to establish a position to address Latino needs in the community. Stephens felt that a similar position in Owensboro would increase understanding of the issues Latino immigrants face while also improving the lives of Latino residents, ultimately benefiting the entire community. However, despite citing the difficulty of acquiring funding that fits the communities' needs, Stephens admitted few efforts were made to look for grants to fund the position and says, for now, the idea remains "on the back burner." Ironically, while only thirty minutes from Louisville, Shelbyville is not a metropolitan area. However, with a population of only 10,000, Shelbyville has experienced some of the largest increases in the immigrant population in Kentucky. The dramatic growth of their Latino

population, 1,572.2% since 1990, was a key factor in Shelbyville's reception of the grant.

¿Servicios en español? Lack of cultural and linguistic "in-house" knowledge

The creation of a "Latino liaison" would be beneficial in bringing representation and voice to the new immigrant population in governmental institutions. However, beyond the issue of funding for such a position, smaller-scale challenges are also present. The logistical difficulties of integrating an unfamiliar linguistic population may be taken for granted in traditional immigrant receiving communities. However, in Owensboro, the lack of Spanish-speaking employees or even potential employees is another principal barrier cited by organizations.

At Owensboro's City Hall, employees who interact with the public receive some basic training in Spanish. The city also distributes information in Spanish through the Sanitation Department regarding seasonal services such as leaf collection. Yet while some steps have been taken to train workers in Spanish, the City's efforts appear to be more token efforts than effective steps toward integration. For example, "CityACTION" is the city government's customer service phone line that answers questions regarding the City or its services such as trash collection, recycling, community events and attractions, social services, city policies and other government agencies. The phone line could be an invaluable tool for new immigrants if the city had a bilingual operator, but as Stephens remarked, "… I wouldn't say [the operators] are bilingual." While the city might have good intentions by training employees in basic Spanish, without fully bilingual operators, the city's attempts at providing linguistically appropriate services will prove less than effective.

For other government services, bilingual (Spanish-English) emergency service personnel such as 9-1-1 dispatchers, police officers and firefighters were previously non-existent. The Owensboro Police Department now has two bilingual officers and the city's 9-1-1 dispatch connects local dispatchers with a live translation service. Although many would like to hire bilingual employees, the local applicant pool for Spanish-speaking law enforcement is virtually absent (phone interview, 4/28/06). A recent homicide investigation in Owensboro involving four Latino residents from Nashville, Tennessee left the police department struggling with the language barrier. Although some officers are capable of giving basic commands in Spanish using phrase books, and the minimal Spanish language training they've received, an investigation requires processing much more in depth information and using skills beyond the level that most officers posses. Sheriff's Department Captain David Osborne was quoted as saying, "This language thing, it's tough. Speaking Spanish is one thing. Understanding it and interpreting it is another thing" (Covington 2006).

A lack of "in house" staff with the cultural and/or linguistic knowledge relevant for new immigrants creates barriers. While a staff that is linguistically and culturally knowledgeable undoubtedly facilitates service provision, the use of an interpreter is often the best solution for most organizations although it is not always a possibility. Such "in house" knowledge, while previously non-existent, can be cultivated. Still, government organizations must first recognize the importance of such knowledge and then, work to incorporate it into their organization. This requires more than funding and available applicant pools. Changes that take place on the local level require strong political will.

The Need for Political Will

> I think [support for immigrants] depends on the position you're in in the government and what you see as your responsibility and plus, I mean, government is about voters… Because if that [supporting immigrants] will get you votes…then that's what they'll do.
>
> - *Julia Yelton, Owensboro Medical Health System administrator*

As mentioned repeatedly in interviews, political will must be present to make culturally and linguistically appropriate services available for immigrants. While this is undoubtedly a key factor in governmental institutions' facilitation of immigrant integration, in new immigrant receiving communities there is seldom consensus on the role the government should play. Even when local political will does exist, road blocks, such as legal status, hinder immigrant incorporation.

Daviess County Judge Executive Jack Harper voiced his ambiguity about the presence of a Latino immigrant population in Daviess County as well as concerns that the population in Owensboro is not large enough to merit "special" services or attention:

> The significance of the population has not reached the point yet, it is still a very small portion of our population and so the impact…we've not seen…. *I've* not seen the impact. Farmers have seen it, some manufacturers, others like landscapers have seen it, but we've not seen the population change significantly to warrant a heightened level of increased services to that [immigrant] segment of the population.
>
> -*Daviess County Judge Executive Jack Harper*

Judge Harper's sentiments embody the often contradictory and ambiguous nature of immigrant reception in new immigrant-receiving communities. By definition, an elected official seeks to represent the interests of their constituents in the community. In Daviess County, these constituents include the farmers, manufacturers and other

businesses Harper mentions that employ Latino immigrants and - that have seen the impact the Latino presence has had in the community. Although the population is small and thus, according to Harper, does not merit special services, Harper later contradicted himself by saying, "You can do it [provide services to immigrants] at some level but at some level you have to say wait a minute, you've (immigrants) got to contribute, it may only be 10 cents on the dollar, but you have to give some in, in order to get some back."

Harper's concept of the Latino community in Daviess County vacillated throughout my conversation with him between migrant workers as non-taxpaying, non-permanent residents, and immigrants who have permanently settled in the community. Although the 2005 US Census estimations place the number of Latinos in Daviess County at 1.2%, when asked how many Latino residents there were in Daviess County Harper responded, "I'm not really sure how I could know that."

Harper's ambivalence toward the Latino population became clearer as he spoke of the need to be cautious as a politician:

> We have to be cautious, in some instances, to the level of support we give the organizations and the only reason being is the fact that for the most part, the individuals are migrants, and those that are here … I want to say this in such a way that it doesn't give the wrong impression, but the services we offer are as a result of taxes we collect from property owners and only recently from occupational taxes, but for the most part property owners and that's for fire insurance premium tax and that's from people who own property here. So if you have individuals that are migrant and don't own property, there is no financial contribution made to the government. So we have to be careful. Judicious...Let me use the word judicious, in taking the funds from people who contribute and providing services to… people that don't contribute financially. And that's not to say that we shouldn't…assist them in some way. But at some point in time we need to be receiving some revenue from that segment of the population in order to return services.

While Harper saw very little role for the county government in service provision for Latino immigrants (or anyone else that is not a property owner), he did detail the county's donations towards healthcare programs and the McAuley Clinic, a clinic that serves local uninsured and indigent populations. Harper also spoke of the "fantastic job" non-profit organizations do providing services to Latino immigrants and the fact that the county relies on them to continue doing so.

On the other hand, as the following excerpt from my interview with Lisa Stephens and The City of Owensboro demonstrates, even when present, political will is often not enough.

> We organized a meeting with our representative from Congressman Lewis's office and Senator Ford… and….we had a meeting with representatives from Senator [Mitch] McConnell's office to say this is a big concern for us and we don't know what to do and we need some help. And [say] we thought it would be nice if our residents could have some hope of gaining legal status. You know, have a social security number, a driver's license, be able to set up a bank account….
>
> You know, [tell the representatives that] we had meetings [with the immigrants] and the issues the immigrants wanted us to address were these….But, there wasn't anything we could do. They (immigrants) wanted a driver's license, social security number and that wasn't anything we could address on a local level.
>
> The immigration thing is so complicated, you know. I felt like the federal officials, it was just horrible timing because we are having this huge influx of Hispanic residents who are here becoming more and more involved in communities all over the United States…it's a massive movement all over the US, but at the same time, the Federal Government is focused on anti-terror, which is often anti-immigrant.
>
> So, when we would talk with them about changes or things that could happen to give them legal status, they were all counter to anti- terror. You know we have this huge issue and the Federal officials are focused on [terror], not that it's not important. Everything we talked to them about was all counter to anti-terror….even though you know, they don't

> have anything to do with each other. It just felt hopeless. You know, we couldn't even get 'em to look over here....

While political will for integration may be present locally, state representatives that don't share local concerns or that follow party lines[10] on immigration can hinder local efforts. Federal legislators are caught in the middle of two very different sets of priorities regarding immigration. On a national level representatives are focused on issues such as border enforcement or guestworker programs. These interests seem to be more vested in a larger political scheme than in representing the realities of communities in the state. While national level policies are important, connections are needed between the national and local. In addition, delineation is needed between national *immigration* policy and local level *integration* policy. Although Kentucky state legislators may be just as uncertain as local level governmental institutions regarding how best to work towards immigrant integration, state legislators could play an increased role in working with local governments and constituencies to understand the issues these communities face.

Ambivalence Defines Governmental Institutions in a New Immigrant Receiving Community

Local level understanding of the immigrants issues as well as experiences with incorporating new groups of community members all contribute to the context of reception for new immigrants. Surprisingly, when immigrants became a more permanent presence in Owensboro, many government officials believed the immigrant

[10] Kentucky is represented by two Republican Senators and four of six Republican representatives in the Federal Government. In the state legislature there are 21 Republicans, 16 Democrats and 1 Independent in the Senate and 61 Democrats and 39 Republicans in the House of Representatives.

population was authorized to be in the United States. During that time, some efforts were made to dialogue with the group about their needs in the community. While still keen on an increasingly diverse population, the government's realization of the population's largely undocumented status has made them less willing to work directly with or for the population. While some in the government feel like new immigrants are part of the community and thus, it is their responsibility to support them, others see the population as something they can ignore for now. Both sides point to the goodwill of faith-based organizations and healthcare organization's ethical standards that meet immigrant's needs for now.

The role of governmental institutions in immigrant integration is not clearly defined. Governmental institutions in new immigrant receiving communities lack experience with immigrant populations and are often uncertain of the role they should play in the integration of new immigrants. In addition, they lack support from state and federal government in understanding and defining their role. Governmental institutions are also hindered by the undocumented status of many immigrants and laws restricting government service provision to those immigrants. While a state or national level integration policy would add clarity to the role of governmental organizations, currently there is a disconnect between the local level of government and state and federal government.

The way in which governmental organizations respond to the new immigrant presence will influence the future of immigrants in the community. However, until new immigrant communities have an immigrant population that composes a voter constituency or grows large enough to represent an important business niche in the

community, the stance elected officials and government organizations take on integration of immigrants into the community will likely remain "hands off." The irony of the situation is that as the government waits for the population to grow, the Latino community has begun to integrate into a receiving context that is ambivalent towards their presence. This environment does not benefit the impending "future" population or the community as a whole. The formation of explicit national, state or local-level integration policies could provide guidelines for the integration of the population based not the size of a population, but on meeting basic needs and indeed, basic rights as humans[11], for all community members.

[11] Please see the UN's (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights, found on the UN website, http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html.

CHAPTER II: HEALTHCARE INSTITUTIONS

Familiar Narratives in New Gateways: Healthcare's Approach to Immigrant Integration

> They [the ER] see the burden on the system. [Immigrants] have no where else to go…. don't have doctors. They don't have insurance and our policy is we don't turn anyone away. That's a huge burden, a social burden… The ER's dealt with that forever for all populations… that it's not any different to them.
>
> - *Julia Yelton, Healthcare Administrator*

Chapter Overview

Public healthcare institutions in the United States serve thousands of uninsured people each year. While healthcare institutions in Owensboro are new to providing care for a linguistically and culturally unique immigrant population, interviews with healthcare providers and administrators revealed that these institutions have largely lumped immigrants in the same category as low-income, uninsured native-born Americans. Although the immigrant population has unique linguistic and cultural needs of which healthcare institutions are aware, beyond minimal efforts to provide interpreters and recommended cultural sensitivity training, most organizations are not working to meet these needs in any serious way. This lack of concern for immigrant welfare will not lead to the integration of the population, but to an immigrant population without equal access to healthcare, possible life-threatening situations, and

the projection by these institutions that some community members' lives are more valuable than others.

Expanding a Familiar Narrative: Immigrants as Undeserving Patients

The narrative of immigrants as undeserving members of society is commonly reflected in anti-immigrant rhetoric. Although undertones of this narrative were voiced throughout my interviews, it was most common when speaking with healthcare providers. This is not surprising since many of the most common elements of anti-immigrant rhetoric refer to immigrant use of health care or government-provided social services. Thus it is a narrative with which healthcare providers are familiar. Tied to notions of race and class, the narrative of immigrants as undeserving patients combines anti-immigrant and anti-poor rhetoric. While more directly anti-poor, the rhetoric often thinly disguises uncertainty and at times, even contempt for changes that the presence of new immigrants may entail for community members – such as learning a new language or changing the cultural and demographic landscape of "home." As one hospital nurse expressed:

> I know eventually we'll probably all have to learn to speak Spanish but….I mean, this is not just directed towards Latinos, but anyone, you know… if I was going to go live in Russia, I would learn Russia, and if I was going to go live in America, I would learn to speak English.

These narratives also include concerns that immigrants utilize public healthcare, but don't pay into local tax bases, creating a drain on health and social service systems. Although research has shown that immigrants make significant

contributions to the U.S. economy (Borjas, 1990; Martin, 2004) the notion of immigrants as a burden to tax-paying citizens remains pervasive. A 2005 report by UCLA and the Mexican government found that Mexican immigrants, both documented and undocumented, with less than ten years in the United States are half as likely to use the emergency room as the native population (UCLA/CONAPO). Consistently, my interviews with immigrants in Owensboro found the same to be true, as fewer than half of the immigrants I interviewed reported having used any health care services at all. However, when immigrants do use healthcare, as one healthcare provider noted, they may be *more* likely to pay for services than U.S.-born residents.

> Even if they (immigrants) do not have a primary means of steady employment, most of them will try to pay something, where the citizens in our community, a lot of them, don't pay anything. So, they (immigrants) honestly would be more likely to try to pay off their accounts. They'll bring cash to pay. It's a sliding fee and if they have no income, some slide down to zero and others, we ask for them to pay, and they pay in parts.
>
> - *Patty Clark, Green River District Health Department*

Despite these facts, which are consistent with other local-level studies of immigrant healthcare utilization and payment for care (see, for example, Cornelius, Chávez and Jones 1983), during my interviews with health care providers in Owensboro the narrative of immigrants as undeserving patients reverberated. I was repeatedly told of the difficulties healthcare organizations face due to the "drain placed on the system" by uninsured immigrants. While most service providers were concerned with the need for more consistent care for the Latino immigrant population, the narrative of undeserving provides the

framework in which the service providers view and treat immigrant patients in Owensboro.

The Context of Healthcare in Owensboro

Owensboro is a hub for Western Kentucky and Southern Indiana regional healthcare. This means that healthcare institutions in Owensboro not only receive patients from the Owensboro-Daviess County area, but also the twelve surrounding counties. According to the U.S. Census, the Latino population in the Daviess County and the surrounding counties totals 4,681[12] (US Census 2005 (b)). Despite these data, Patty Clark, Director of the Green River District Health Department said that based on the Health Department's estimates of care provided, the number is closer to 10,000. While the surrounding communities may have some resources for the Latino population however, the services are exponentially smaller than Owensboro-Daviess County and thus most Latinos come to Owensboro for care.

To examine the approaches local healthcare institutions are using to integrate new immigrants in the community, I interviewed service providers at four institutions commonly used by immigrants. This included two interviews at Owensboro Medical Health System (OMHS), one interview with a hospital administrator and one with the emergency room's head nurse, an interview with two nurses at the McAuley Clinic – the hospital's free clinic, an interview with the director of the Daviess County Health Department and an interview at the managing and educational entity for public health

[12] Including Daviess, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Hancock, Hopkins, Webster, Muhlenberg, Butler, Union and Breckinridge in Kentucky, Spencer and Perry in Indiana (Census 2000)

in the region, the Green River District Health Department's director of nursing. During my interviews with these institutions, language was cited as the primary barrier to healthcare provision for immigrants. Lack of insurance, access to transportation, lack of qualified interpreters, cultural barriers, illiteracy among immigrants and lack of funding were also identified as barriers to healthcare for immigrants in Owensboro.

When new immigrants use healthcare services in Owensboro it is largely for emergencies, acute or chronic care, or reproductive/birthing services. Moreover, healthcare providers agree that women are the majority of non-emergency healthcare recipients. However, one healthcare provider reported that the women who receive care are those that have contact with an advocate from one of the local immigrant centers. Other women may not be receiving care except to give birth. According to Patty Clark, Director of Nursing for the regional health department, when men seek non-emergency care, it is most often related to tuberculosis or a sexually transmitted disease. Lack of information and limited access to medical care mean a lack of health education, such as prevention and early detection of disease. This lack of care may lead to a larger and more chronically ill and unhealthy population with more advanced disease.

Lack of health insurance

The scope of healthcare resources available to immigrants in Owensboro is limited largely by the lack of health insurance. Undocumented status, prevalence of low-wage work, and employment in small businesses all contribute to immigrants' lack of access to health insurance. Immigrants most often use public or nonprofit

healthcare facilities that are open to all such as the emergency room at OMHS, the Health Department, the McAuley Clinic or the Health Department's REACH clinic, open one night a week for working Medicaid, Medicare and uninsured patients. Some immigrants also report using local convenient care centers. The lack of primary care providers for immigrants is due to the fact that private providers do not accept uninsured patients. This leaves facilities affiliated with non-profit organizations or public agencies to care for this population.

As is being done across the country, hospitals interested in lowering their costs from non-emergency visits have begun to open clinics away from their hospitals and are encouraging low-income and uninsured patients to use these facilities instead of visiting the emergency room (Bailey 2005). This is also a strategy being used in Owensboro. OMHS is the busiest emergency room in the state although only 10 percent of those visits can be labeled true emergencies (Berry 2006). In 1990 the hospital opened the McAuley Clinic in an attempt to move some of the non-emergent visits away from the hospital. Despite these efforts, the local clinics have limited hours and resources. While the McAuley Clinic reports that they have four staff members including a lead physician, two nurses and a case manager, during the summer of 2005, the lead physician left and the clinic left with staffed only by the two nurses who are not able to write prescriptions. In addition, the clinic offers no pediatric care and is located inside a local homeless shelter, creating a stigma many immigrants try to avoid. While places such as these are valuable resources, their limited budgets and lack of availability inevitably leads people to the emergency room, which is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Cultural and Linguistic Barriers

> The interpreters we contract with have been excellent. They do bring these women to us who otherwise might not have come. And they are passionate about what they do. They are very committed to their (immigrant) issues. Personally, I wish we could afford to hire more interpreters because [the language barriers] affects so much.
>
> - *Patty Clark, Green River District Health*

Medicine has long been a contested site for new immigrant populations. New immigrants bring with them differing notions of health as well as unique practices and beliefs. While most Latino immigrants are familiar with Western medicine, the systems and practices used in the United States may be unfamiliar. Linguistic and cultural practices as well as relationships with the healthcare system are often very different. For many immigrants, this is compounded by limited access to services due to lack of insurance and legal status.

Although some organizations interviewed said they offered optional cultural sensitivity training, no organization has required such training. My interviews indicated that many immigrants are from rural areas in southern Mexico and Central America where cultural differences are even starker. Communicating with such a broad scope of different nationalities and cultures can prove quite difficult without specific cultural training. While all immigrants I interviewed spoke Spanish as a first language, a number of people interviewed said that they were children or grandchildren of indigenous heritage. Indeed, nurses at the hospital reported having clients that did not speak "normal Spanish." Indigenous languages and cultural backgrounds, particularly in relation to healthcare, make communicating much more complex

as some concepts that exist in Spanish or English do not exist in indigenous languages. While healthcare institutions voiced concern over laws for informed consent, healthcare institutions seem unaware of just how different cultural and linguistic distinctions between indigenous language and culture and Spanish and Mexican culture are – most understanding the differences as dialectic rather than individual languages and cultures.

> Right now, the minimum is being met. [To get organizations to hire bilingual staff] will take more incidents or feeling powerless. Just knowing your not providing what we need to …it will take more issues or risk issues related to law suits…it will be some situation were we feel like the need wasn't met. I think it will bottom up. I think the ER would say something's gotta be done; we can't communicate with these people.
>
> - *Julia Yelton, OMHS Administrator*

During my interviews with healthcare institutions, language was cited as the principal barrier to health care provision for immigrants. However, with the exception of the Daviess County Health Department (part of Green River District Health), which has two bilingual staff members, none of the healthcare institutions in Owensboro have or even attempt to hire Spanish-speaking staff. Most organizations rely heavily on local faith-based organizations for interpreters or hope that immigrants bring their own -- often a friend or family member. As a nurse at the McAuley Clinic told me, "I took some Spanish classes….we muddle through. We use the free translation software through the Internet, a lot." With only a handful of interpreters for the region however, there is an urgent need for more.

> I think right now people think the population isn't large enough. People think the language line is working and that [Centro Latino's] interpreters are doing an okay job…but I'm hearing pockets, like [a

> person] in behavioral health or the person we can't provide instruction to…all these little things where people are starting to talk.
>
> *- Julia Yelton, Healthcare Administrator*

While OMHS has had a medical interpretation phone line for the last fifteen years, according to healthcare staff in Owensboro, it has been in the last four or five years that the number of Latino patients has significantly increased. With no bilingual staff, this is highly problematic since medical interpretation via phone is less than ideal, particularly in emergency situations. Face-to-face interpretation relies on expressions and gestures to assure understanding, something that phone interpretation cannot provide. Talking to Julia Yelton, OMHS Administrative Director of Mission Services and Organizational Development, she discussed that although the hospital would like to have an interpreter on staff at all times, right now, there are a few staff members that have some Spanish knowledge who can be "tracked down" during an emergency. Without a clinically trained interpreter, Yelton says the hospital is not meeting their goal of giving the best level of care to all patients. However, while she openly admitted this, Yelton says there is no urgency to provide "special" programs for a population that is a drain on the system. Others, such as Patty Clark of Green River District Health acknowledge the need for interpreters, but lack the funding to do something about it. Immigrants are thus in a very vulnerable position.

In discussing when the hospital plans to hire Spanish speaking staff Yelton responded that unfortunately until there is an incident that results in improper care due to lack of interpretation services or the population grows larger, the lack of face-to-face interpretation will most likely continue. As Ms. Yelton put it, "It's on the list of

things to think about as we project out, but it's not burning." Thus, despite the fact that all healthcare institutions said language was the main barrier they faced in providing care to new immigrants, many seem content to just "muddle through."

The cultural and linguistic barriers between Latino immigrants and health care staff create very real limits on the care immigrants receive. In addition, as community members who exist outside the realm of their work as healthcare providers, healthcare employees' personal feelings towards immigrants in the community may also affect the level of care immigrants receive. As one emergency room provider said, "I'm not sure how comfortable they feel with us and… I'm not sure how comfortable we feel with them." Another healthcare provider summarized her perspective with the following:

> A lot of times you are forced to provide the services, but then you're not given [credit]…. you can't count somebody that's undocumented… that's the whole issue in the way our services work.
>
> - *Julia Yelton, Healthcare Administrator*

Because many immigrants are undocumented, continuity in care is a challenge. Patty Clark, Director of Nursing at Green River District Health explained how lack of continuity affects immigrants working in poultry plants in the area. Clark reports that tuberculosis (TB) is very common the Latino community. Immigrants working in jobs at poultry plants are required to get TB tests. However, many undocumented immigrants use one name for work and a different name for other services, which means the health department often has more than one file for a patient under various names. This leads to lack of continuity in care for these individuals and also creates larger health issues, since TB is contagious. Gilmore suggested stronger penalties for

employers that hire undocumented workers would perhaps encourage employers to take more responsibility for their employees.

> …. I just wish, from a community health perspective, that these employers that are hiring illegals would take more responsibility….fiscal responsibility and I don' t think that will happen; unless, if and when something legally happens you know, to encourage them to do so. It's a major drain on dollars. And it's very frustrating because they know they are hiring illegals and they aren't willing to do anything about it.
>
> - *Patty Clark, Green River District Health*

Cultural and linguistic barriers are without a doubt the most pressing issues healthcare organizations face in providing services to new immigrants. Overall, the healthcare organizations in Owensboro lack a sense of urgency in providing equal care to new immigrants. Healthcare institutions report that a lack of funding, an absence of available bilingual applicants and the relatively small percentages of immigrants, among other things, are to blame. However, narratives regarding the deservedness of immigrants also help to keep culturally and linguistically appropriate services for immigrants at the bottom of healthcare organizations priorities.

Creating Narratives: Fulfilling expectations

As in the national immigration debate, narratives of immigrants as a hardworking but undeserving (or "system draining") population were common among service providers in Owensboro. However, with the exception of Patty Clark and the limited funding the Health Department receives for TB, interviewees were not able to provide numbers or figures for the costs related to serving immigrants. Nevertheless, they continued to claim that immigrants are a "drain." Similarly, depictions of

immigrants as a non-taxing paying and non-property owning group were not substantiated with statistical evidence[13]. In a place without a previous history of immigration, where do these narratives come from? How and why are they adopted? Who do they serve? How does this ideology influence the response to Latino immigrants?

The perpetuation of these narratives may be largely influenced by the media. As immigration has increased to Owensboro, the local population has not only begun to pay attention to the national debate, they have also adopted the national rhetoric. National news media sources have undoubtedly influenced the narrative. In places like Owensboro, there is no shortage of people who follow radio and television personalities such as Lou Dobbs or Rush Limbaugh, espousing anti-immigrant rhetoric. In addition, the mere presence of a population that most in the community have little knowledge of beyond movies or national media sources may lead to adoption of stereotypes of Latinos immigrants not only as undeserving, but as dangerous or untrustworthy. Healthcare administrator Julia Yelton explained how such stereotypes are formed:

> …we are seeing more and more Hispanic population in the ER and for [crime, stabbing, gunshot wounds, alcohol related accidents, car wrecks injuries, fights], which creates, I think, the perception that there is a class issue or a stigma….when in reality those same things are happening among whites and African Americans… I think there is a stigma in terms

[13] While some studies have shown that undocumented immigrants have at times had a negative financial impact at a local or state level, on the national level immigrants actually pay more in taxes, than they receive in services (Mohanty 2006). It is true that some undocumented immigrants are paid in cash or "under the table" and thus may not have taxes taken out of their paychecks. However, a large proportion of undocumented immigrants pay into government coffers with no hope of ever receiving any of the benefits.

> of social class that is associated with the Latino population and I think that creates a lot of barriers.

A discussion of the notions of rights for immigrant community members may be instructive in understanding how and to what extent institutions seek to incorporate new immigrants into the community or simply decide to lump them into the group of other non-deserving, poor, indigent citizens. As Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson (2000) discuss, modern nation states have rhetoric of inclusion for all members of their population, but for certain ethnic and racial minorities, they are not complete. To understand this, Castles and Davidson define the notion of citizenship as "a societal situation allowing full participation in political, economic, social and cultural relations." Although equal access and rights are allotted to all citizens, Castles discusses various groups such as indigenous peoples or immigrants that are excluded from full citizenship. If we understand this to be the treatment given to racial and ethnic minorities that are citizens, what can be expected for the treatment of non-citizen immigrants? My conversations with healthcare providers reveal that as such, largely non-citizens, immigrants' linguistic and cultural needs are given short shrift in setting institutional priorities.

Julia Yelton, OMHS administrator, discussed the community impact of undocumented immigrant use the emergency room and required care. As she explained, the hospital spends resources on immigrants, but does not collect income tax which equals "a lot of burdens to the social system that we are not able to handle, because we don't have it documented so we don't know what the burden actually is."

Statements such as these from all organizations reflect how national rhetoric on

immigration permeates into all levels of institutions and often forms "the company line" or the "company rhetoric," seemingly without justification or ability to substantiate the claims with local statistics. While many community members in Owensboro do not have direct contact with new immigrants, professionals in the community who do work with the immigrant population, have the ability to set the tone for how Latino immigrants' presence in the community is perceived.

Until healthcare organizations have the resources or need to view the immigrant population as a culturally and linguistically unique population, healthcare institutions are perpetuating the treatment of immigrants as undeserving. Rather than striving to provide the same levels of care to all community members these actions serve to construct barriers to immigrant integration. While some in healthcare institutions are concerned with the of lack comprehensive care for immigrants, the attention of those in charge is usually focused elsewhere. While the financial woes of any organization understandably affect decisions that institutions make, healthcare institutions necessarily play a vital role in immigrant integration. Leaders of these organizations must recognize this and work to provide cultural sensitivity training for staff and interpreters for immigrant populations using their institutions. This most likely means adjusting budgetary priorities accordingly.

Health institutions' approaches to integration

While health care organizations face challenges in serving the Spanish speaking population, in general the attitudes of their employees and leadership towards new immigrants are antithetical to immigrant integration. Lack of culturally

and linguistically relevant services and lack of information in the community regarding available health care services will have serious consequences for the health of the Latino community in Owensboro. Health care organization leaders' lack of recognition of the urgent nature of providing competent interpreters not only means there is growing sector of the community receiving mediocre care, but the possibility for disaster is imminent. Until something happens, as one service provider told me, "an injustice" or the population grows substantially, some healthcare organizations see content to just "get by." The implications of lack of care for the long term health of the immigrant population must be recognized. The fact that many immigrants avoid going to the doctor unless an urgent problem arises means that a large portion of the community will not see a doctor until problems are severe. Due to lack of funding and lack of qualified interpreters, organizations are piecing together services for immigrants.

While public healthcare organizations can turn no one away, such institutions are staffed by individuals who often hold negative views of new immigrants in the community. My interviews revealed that some employees in healthcare organizations feel they are "forced" to serve immigrants regardless of personal views on immigration. Their views are built on narratives of serving the undeserving conflated by anti-poor and anti-immigrant rhetoric. This atmosphere of being "forced" to serve is in fact counter to immigrant integration and perhaps explains in part why the narrative of immigrants as undeserving is most often voiced here. Despite these facts, as the largest employers in the community, healthcare institutions have the opportunity to greatly influence immigrant integration in the community as a whole via their

employees. The policies and procedures healthcare organizations adopt regarding the care new immigrants receive and cultural training for employees should not be overlooked as a key tool for immigrant integration.

Chapter III: FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS

Faith-Based Institutions: Agents for Immigrant integration

Chapter Overview

Faith has always played a central role in the lives of people in Owensboro - not only spiritually, but as a space for community building and networking. Within this context, faith-based institutions function to link immigrants to social services, often acting as a liaison between service providers and immigrants and facilitating relationships between old and new community members. Additionally, faith-based institutions provide a space for immigrants to build community and leadership roles.

This chapter uses information from ethnographic interviews with three faith-based institutions in Owensboro to examine the approaches being used to facilitate immigrant integration. My interviews suggest that faith-based institutions could play an important and perhaps even a *defining* role in immigrant integration in the Southeast. I argue that these institutions are uniquely positioned as agents of integration based on their autonomy from the government and an institutional flexibility that provides a unique space where personal motivations and the presence of shared values and beliefs form the basis for integration. Although program directors in faith-based institutions face barriers to service provision such as lack of funding and understaffing, their independence from the government and the more

informal rules that govern their activities mean they are less constrained by the legal status of an immigrant population.

The three faith-based institutions I interviewed for this project address specific needs of the immigrant community and are examples of centers or programs started in response to the growing Latino population in Owensboro. I conducted one interview with Sister Cecilia Morgan, the founder and director of Centro Latino, a project of the Owensboro Catholic Diocese created in 1993 to respond to migrant workers housing needs. My second interview was with Dorothy Nash, the coordinator of Bellevue Baptist Church's English as a Second Language Program begun in 2000. My final interview was with Sister Mary Howard, the founder and director of La Plaza Immigrant Community Center, opened in 2004 as a job skills and employment resource for immigrants. These institutions were repeatedly cited by secular institutions and immigrants alike as vital centers of support for the immigrant community. My interviews provided insight into the issues faith-based institutions face in new receiving communities as well as insight into the ways in which these institutions differ from government or healthcare institutions.

The Context for Faith-based Institutions in Owensboro

In the Southeast, religion has been a central aspect that defines the cultural uniqueness of the region. As Southern scholar Charles Reagan Wilson states:

> Religion continues to define the U.S. South as a distinctive part of the United States. It contributes to defining debates on public policy issues and provides on-going organizational bases for political campaigns across the ideological spectrum. It supports a needed infrastructure of social services and educational institutions in southern regions where

> public agencies are underfunded. It offers a still compelling worldview to the majority of the South's Christians, giving meaning in troubled times and empowering the poor and marginalized (Wilson, 2004).

In an area of the South often referred to as the "buckle" of the Bible Belt and in a town where locals joke that there is a church or gas station on every corner, the fact that faith-based organizations in Owensboro are playing an integral part in immigrant integration may not come as a surprise. Throughout the United States, faith-based institutions have a history of welcoming immigrants. Religions that emphasize tolerance and acceptance such as the Quakers or Judaism or others with social-service-oriented doctrines, such as the Lutherans and Catholics, fit this mold. This connection between organized religion and immigrant services is logical, as scripture commands believers to champion aliens, refugees, the needy and the afflicted (Bailey 2005:78).

As might be expected, Catholic[14] institutions are playing a central role in service provision for immigrants in Owensboro. What may seem surprising is that in Owensboro, many congregations that are less "outreach oriented" like the Southern Baptists or the more fundamentalist Seventh-Day Adventists are creating ministries and providing worship spaces and services specifically for Latino immigrants. While these findings may in part be related to shifts in religiosity in Latin America[15] or changes in the denominations in general, my research did not examine these factors. What is apparent, however, is that in a region where religion influences the lives and

[14] Owensboro's largest denominations are Baptist, Catholic and Methodist.
[15] Though Catholicism remains the dominant faith in Latin America, 10 to 30 percent of many Latin American countries' populations consider themselves evangelical Protestants (Cleary 2004).

perspectives of the majority, a wide variety of denominations are active in immigrant integration.

A Space for Community-Building

With a lack of an established Latino community in Owensboro, faith-based organizations are a source of support and structure for many immigrants. The role these institutions are playing in the community provides a unique contrast to organizations in more traditional receiving communities where pre-existing Spanish speaking or immigrant churches and organizations exist.[16] In traditional receiving communities churches and faith-based organizations often exist in ethnic enclaves that cater solely to new immigrants. Faith-based organizations and churches in new receiving communities are unique in that non-immigrant community members are seeking out immigrants for their church homes or are starting organizations for immigrant populations based on the recognition of immigrant need. Thus, instead of leaving immigrants to create their own communities and churches, the established faith-based community is inviting them to join their local congregations. This phenomenon is not limited to the institutions I studied. For example, many Catholic Churches in Owensboro have incorporated Spanish music and other religious traditions from Mexico into their traditional mass and a handful of churches offer mass entirely in Spanish. Some protestant churches have offered the use of their church as a

[16] The role faith-based institutions and specifically, immigrant congregations have played in traditional immigrant receiving communities has been studied at length. Immigrant congregations play a pivotal role in providing a social space for co-ethnics to meet and form networks of support (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2001; Miller, Miller and Dyrness, 2001; Foley and Hoge, 2007). In addition, immigrant congregations have been cited as sources of social capital for new immigrants (Portes et. al 1999; Chafetz and Ebaugh, 2001: 374).

space for events for the Latino community and others have extended their outreach missions to the Latino population.

Providing Resources

In traditional gateways, integration has often been facilitated through pre-existing services for immigrants as well as the existence of established immigrant networks. However, Sister Cecilia's work as director of Centro Latino shows that in absence of established programs or networks understood to facilitate integration, others can and do step in to fill this service void.

In Owensboro, Centro Latino fulfills a traditional role as a Catholic charity organization. Centro Latino was mentioned over and over by informants as *the* place, and Sister Cecilia is known throughout the community as *the* person, to call for assistance. Centro Latino provides translation and interpretation services, financial assistance (including loans), help filling out job or apartment applications and making phone calls for medical appointments and job interviews. As the center's assistant, Monica, put it, "We pretty much do it all."

While other organizations fill some of these roles, Centro Latino exists to assist immigrants with any need they might have. Transportation to and from medical or employment appointments is a large portion of the work Centro Latino does. As Sister Cecilia and many others remarked, the public transportation system in Owensboro is so meager that using it is extremely time consuming and its hours are very restrictive. By providing transportation, Centro Latino helps new immigrants adapt to their surroundings and acquire basic services.

During the years that Centro Latino has been providing services, Sister Cecilia and those involved with the center have organized numerous events to incorporate Latino immigrants into the Owensboro community and to provide a space to share popular aspects of their culture. One example of this is Centro Latino's Mexican B*aile Folklorico* dance group comprised of Latino community members that perform each year at the local Cinco de Mayo and Multi-Cultural Owensboro Festivals. Sister Cecilia also teaches domestic violence rehabilitation seminars and houses the only Spanish-language Alcoholics Anonymous group in the community. She even runs the only local day-laborer hiring site. Her organization has been a catch-all resource center, run largely by one woman for immigrants navigating the cultural and social spaces of the U.S. for the first time.

Developing Community

The weekly ESL classes launched by Bellevue Baptist Church volunteers in 2000 quickly became a permanent and successful fixture for many immigrants in Owensboro. Since then, the church's "Hispanic Ministry" has taken on a life of its own. In 2004, Bellevue's Hispanic Ministry organized the Tri-State[17] area's first Latino soccer festival. The event has grown each year since, with 800 people attending in the summer of 2005 and over a thousand in 2006.

In July of 2005, Bellevue hired it's first permanent Latino pastor, Jorge Amaro, from Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Pastor Amaro now oversees the popular "Family Night" once a month at the local YMCA, as well as the Spanish choir and Bible study.

[17] Owensboro is located on the Ohio River bordering with Indiana directly North and Illinois to the West.

Additionally, the Hispanic Ministry's Sunday worship service, led by Pastor Amaro, has flourished with worship in Spanish, including a full praise band, Bibles in Spanish, a meal after church, and transportation to and from the service. These programs provide a space where Latino community members share information or assistance regarding many basic needs. This builds a base of structural support for those that participate in Bellevue's programs and, as exemplified by the soccer tournament and Latino ministry's programs, the events also aid the formation of immigrant community development and leadership (Bailey 2005, pp 78-80). Events such as those supported by Bellevue Baptist Church may in part be responsible for the 50% of my immigrant interviewees who said they felt there was a sense of community among Latinos in Owensboro[18].

Advocating for Immigrants Rights

> If you are against immigration, then stop eating chicken. Don't buy chicken. Don't buy strawberries…fresh produce. I respect your right to have principles, but if you are going to stand on your principles, stand on your principles. Stop going to KFC.
>
> Just looking back we have a much higher standard of living…Broader acquisition of disposable things, variety of food, more meat. In the consumer sense we have a much higher standard of living and that's because of cheap [immigrant] labor.
>
> - *Sister Mary, La Plaza Immigrant Center*

As someone who knew little about immigration or immigrants rights when she began working with the population in 2000, Ursuline nun Sister Mary Howard, the

[18] Twenty-nine percent of immigrants interviewed said they did not feel like there was a sense of community among Latinos in Owensboro. The other 21% were uncertain. Of 24 immigrants interviewed 38% were interviewed during a Bellevue ESL class. Of those participants, exactly one-third responded positively to the question.

director of La Plaza Immigrant Community Center, has quickly become one of the most pro-active advocates in the community for protecting immigrants and working to meet their needs. La Plaza, as it is commonly referred to, acts as an advocate and educator in the community. This includes helping immigrants gain access to housing, negotiating rent and working to build home ownership among immigrants. Additional services include mediating disputes regarding fair compensation settlements and connecting immigrants to legal services when an issue moves beyond mediation.

As part of building home ownership among immigrants in Owensboro, Sister Mary secured a grant through the Federal Home Loan Bank. Despite this Federal support, only one local bank actually agreed to partner with the center on the grant. Sister Mary says that while many banks espouse services for Latino clients based on their programs in larger cities, most local banks will not accept the only identification many immigrants have: a *Matrícula Consular* issued by the Mexican Government. Sister Mary says banks in Owensboro claim that accepting this identification is against the law -- something she takes as their lawyers' interpretation of the Patriot Act.

Throughout our interview, Sister Mary stressed the need to educate and integrate new immigrants into the community, not only on the basis of equal access, but based on the declining birthrates among the native population, the rise in the median age of Americans, and the decline in labor supply. Sister Mary's motto thus seems to be education, intervention, integration. As she put it:

> [That] is basically what we are trying to do here. Maximize integration. Some of that will happen on an individual, micro-level, some of that will start on a bigger level, community level. [We've got to] get the capacity in the community. You can teach English over and over and

> those people will move on. We have to build some capacity at the other end.

Sister Mary blamed lack of community support for immigrants by businesses (such as banks and rental companies) and government agencies on a fear of legal or political ramifications. Sister Mary says that despite this discrimination, she has encountered a few people in Owensboro who feel that the immigrants are a part of the community and support the work of La Plaza. However, Sister Mary is already thinking about the future:

> I've had some success with politicians but, I've actually had people very high up in leadership say, why should I be concerned about these people, they don't vote, so they're not my constituents. You'd be surprised how high. And I said well, you know, in ten years some of their kids will be voting and I'm going to be sure they are registered.

Faith-based institutions like La Plaza are working to provide resources, build community, and advocate for immigrants rights in Owensboro. While they have encountered difficulties, faith-based institutions contribute to filling an important aspect of immigrant integration that other institutions are unable or unwilling to fill.

Challenges faced by faith-based institutions in Owensboro, Kentucky

Whose constituents are new immigrants?

Although program directors in faith-based institutions face barriers to service provision, such as lack of funding and understaffing, their independence from the government and the more informal rules that govern their activities means they are less restricted by the legal status of an immigrant population. However, as faith-based

institutions in a new gateway, they face a different set of challenges. For example, when a need for services for immigrants arose, some in the community were conflicted over which denomination immigrants belonged to. The role of various denominations with immigrant populations may seem apparent in established gateways or from examining national denominational and faith-based organizations websites. However, in new immigrant receiving communities, faith-based organizations are less certain about the role they should play. While Christian institutions have missions to serve the poor and needy, there is certainly an existing "needy" community of non-immigrant, un-churched individuals in Owensboro. Why seek out the immigrant population? La Plaza's Sister Mary recounted the initial confusion and concern over "whose" constituents Latino immigrants were.

> I started to see a lot of perceived hostility between Catholics, Baptists and everybody else. "Those" people are trying to raid our constituents, our people. People have the perception that all Hispanics[19] are Catholic and that they are all churched…. I was hearing [about the hostility] from both sides and I thought, what we need here is a cooperative effort. It's a little harder when you've agreed you are going to work together to then be hostile.

Troubled by this increasing atmosphere of hostility, Sister Mary established La Plaza as an ecumenical organization intended to bridge denominational differences and work toward common goals related to immigrant needs. As one immigrant interviewee said, when questioned whether the native Owensboroans accepted him as part of the community, "*Si, la gente de la iglesia si*." ("Yes, the people from the church do.")

[19] As is common in much of the Southeast, the term "Hispanic" is used to refer to Latinos by both Latinos themselves and locals.

This response is a clear example of the influence of religious institutions and faith-based organizations in the local immigrant community.

Motivations

Faith based organizations are reaching out to immigrants for both entrepreneurial and altruistic reasons. As the native population ages, membership decreases and denominations must reach out to new populations not only for growth, but also, for institutional survival. The organizations' own vitality and continued existence require an ever-renewing membership of believers. By drawing new immigrants, the organizations are able to tap into new sources of potential members. Moreover, faith-based organizations' mission is to share their faith with others and proselytizing is a part of this mission.

For faith-based institutions, the immigrant population is a particularly willing and receptive group. Immigrants have both spiritual and practical needs that a faith-based organization can fill. Non-immigrants may have similar needs, but as citizens they have more options for meeting them. For immigrants, the church not only provides a spiritual and religious space, but also a network of support with basic necessities such as food, clothing and household supplies, as well as assistance with services such as medical referrals, calling to make doctor's appointments, transportation and finding a job or child care. In essence, many faith-based organizations fill the role of "social services provider" for immigrants that have trouble accessing care or navigating social services available to U.S. citizens. While government and healthcare organizations are restricted in the services they can provide

to undocumented immigrants, faith-based institutions are more flexible in their ability to provide service to immigrants.

This flexibility derives from a variety of factors. In the cases presented here, faith-based institutions are composed of employees or volunteers whose main job is to work with the immigrant population. However, a key difference between faith and non-faith-based organizations is that faith-based institutions' services have more autonomy from government laws and regulations. This means individuals in faith-based organizations can work on behalf of the church or themselves to foster service provision for immigrants. These individuals may not be knowledgeable about immigrant rights, but based on religious or personal beliefs or motivations, they have an affinity for immigrants. As U.S. citizens they use their status to provide services. In many cases their titles create open spaces for immigrants as a nun or a Baptist, or simply a person who knows a doctor who treats uninsured patients

As well-established and highly visible institutions in the community, faith-based institutions are able to use informal personal connections with other church members and people in the community to organize for and assist the immigrant community in negotiating the boundaries of a new cultural and linguistic space. Whatever the motivations are, organizations and individuals in those organizations realize that there is an immigrant population with unmet needs. Some may see the population as an opportunity to gain new members, or to convert immigrants to Christianity or their particular denomination. Others may simply see an opportunity "to serve."

Legal Status: A Moral Dilemma?

The legal status of immigrants may be an issue for individuals in certain faith-based organizations. However, as entities that are separate from the state, these organizations do not deny services or membership based on an immigrant's legal status. This is in sharp contrast with government and healthcare institutions where immigrant documentation status dictates the role those institutions play in integration. Nevertheless, faith-based institutions in Owensboro revealed that many of their members did not realize that some immigrant workers were undocumented. As Dorothy Nash, Bellevue ESL coordinator recalled, finding out that many immigrants were undocumented "was a shock."

While people in traditional receiving communities have long been aware of the issue of undocumented workers, these discussions have had little relevance in places like Owensboro until recently. In Owensboro's faith-based community, people were surprised not only that some immigrants are working "illegally," but that local employers and *people they know* (employers) would knowingly break the law to hire them. Sister Mary, the director of La Plaza, recounted how their non-profit board membership changed as members discovered that many of the immigrants the organization would serve were undocumented.

> We're at this board Christmas party and it's been about a year, and people are munching away and suddenly, there was this major division, because people have gone on-line and looked and read far right-wing websites about undocumented, illegal aliens, anti-immigrant websites….And all of a sudden I have board members saying, 'We will loose our homes! The IRS will come and take away our homes and our children will be on the street.' Literally, that's a quote!

Faith-based interviewees also recalled how some in their organizations questioned why immigrants did not "want" to be documented. In an attempt to educate their members and boards on the realities of immigration to the United States, these organizations brought in lawyers and even an INS officer, among others, to present legal perspectives on providing services to undocumented immigrants. Despite the information they were given, ultimately some in the community remained unsatisfied. Although eager to assist legal immigrants, once aware that many immigrants in Owensboro were not authorized to be in the country, some people were not willing to be associated with an organization that was "breaking the law." According to organization directors, these individuals cited fears of being arrested as well as moral disagreement with aiding undocumented workers.

Such responses suggest that some people are not necessarily opposed to newcomers in their community as often appears to be the case, but rather that they are more concerned with the legality and morality of "breaking the law." While legal and moral doubts may exist on an individual[20] level, these concerns have not affected the ability of faith-based institutions in Owensboro to continue their work with immigrants. As Sister Mary explained, the challenges of organizing around such a controversial subject matter forced La Plaza to develop its mission, philosophy, and policies with a clearly articulated awareness of both the documented and undocumented immigrants they serve. As faith-based institutions in Owensboro have begun to mediate the spaces that connect new immigrants and the native population,

[20] These concerns may also be expressed on an institutional level, though the institutions presented here did not do so.

they have faced many challenges. Nonetheless, they continue to work to grow their organizations and gain community support for providing their services to new immigrants.

Institutional Structure of Faith-Based Institutions

While all faiths have published doctrines they follow, there is no legal recourse for not following the doctrine. Faith-based organizations have flexibility in how they view undocumented immigrants. Whereas some institutions believe that immigrants break the law when they enter the United States without documents or work without authorization, others choose to focus on different tenets of Christianity, showing compassion and understanding toward the situation of those in need, teaching others about the faith, regardless of their documentation status. In fact, many denominations on both local and national levels throughout the United States have published statements[21] regarding the acceptance of immigrants based on Biblical precepts of "caring for strangers," church teachings on social justice, or humanitarian principles.

One example of this is the Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK), an organization that speaks for the Catholic Church in Kentucky on matters of public policy. As part of the national Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform the CCK has published a series of articles on immigration in Kentucky, where they outline the message of the pope, present Biblical passages that support the fair treatment of immigrants, dispel common myths about immigrants and immigration and highlight the

[21] For a listing of denominational statements on immigration visit the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's website http://www.emoregon.org/action1.php under "Religious Statements and Resources on Immigration Reform."

work Kentucky dioceses are doing with immigrants. With this campaign, they seek "to unite and mobilize a growing network of Catholic institutions, individuals, and other persons of good will in support of a broad legalization program and comprehensive immigration reform." They say their "support for the general well-being of those who must leave their country of origin stems from the Old Testament of the Bible, 'So you too must befriend the alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt' (Deuteronomy 10:19)" (CCK 2006). While the Southern Baptist Church Convention has not expressed the same depth of support, the president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, Richard Land, has been quoted as saying the U.S. has "a biblical mandate to act compassionately" toward "hard-working and otherwise law-abiding immigrants" (*USA Today* April 2, 2007).

Thus some religious leaders are not only willing to look beyond the legal status of an immigrant population, but based on their distance from the government are afforded the freedom to do so. In fact, faith-based organizations seem to have a "free pass" when dealing with undocumented immigrants: Their ability to work with and for undocumented immigrants is restricted only by institutional interpretation of religious doctrine, personal motivations, and morality.

At the rank-and-file level, faith-based organization's employees are most often "believers" as well as members of the institution. In many cases these include volunteers, nuns, priests and other people whose lives revolve around their faith. As a result many people working in or with these organizations are motivated by more that

a paycheck or membership benefits; they are motivated by faith, beliefs, and their future place in eternity. While some positions are paid, the majority of people involved with these organizations are either volunteers, nuns whose work is part of their "mission," or people who actively seek out jobs in faith-based organizations, because their mission is aligned with personal beliefs or goals. Thus, employees in faith-based institutions contrast greatly with those in governmental or healthcare organizations where personal motivations fluctuate enormously and may or may not be tied to core personal beliefs.

Answering to a Higher Power

In general, faith-based institutions are guided by interpretations of religious doctrines. While faith-based organizations are led by a board of directors and have a denominational doctrine that guides their activity, with regard to service provision for immigrants these institutions are not accountable to any civil or governmental organization. This is a key factor in their ability to work with the populations they have historically served. While denominational differences exist, a unique characteristic of faith-based organizations is the space for individual interpretation of church laws. Individual faith and reasoning plays a large role in many situations and decisions, such as dealing with immigrants. This provides for flexibility both within a denomination or a specific institution. While one faith-based organization or member may believe firmly that immigrants are breaking the law by working in the United States without documentation, another organization or member of the same denomination (or even organization) may choose to focus on a different aspect of religious doctrine and, thus, interpret their role differently. Consequently, there is an

individual and/or institutional moral hierarchy that allows for religious flexibility. For example, a doctor who would not accept a patient without insurance if they walked in off the street may be willing to serve an immigrant from their church or a local faith-based organization as part of their role as a Christian or follower of God. Since these organizations have large membership bases, this provides significant informal networks of assistance for immigrants.

Sister Mary gave her interpretation of serving an undocumented population and at the same time summed up this flexibility of faith-based institutions:

> If you are upfront about the reality, 95% [of immigrants in Owensboro] are undocumented. So we are giving services to undocumented people. You aren't necessarily giving them knowingly, because as I always say, '*it's not our business to know'* (author's emphasis)…Some people would say it's a legal violation, because reasonably speaking you would know…and there are people who were uncomfortable with that.

Thus, whether helping immigrants circumvent barriers to service provision or assisting immigrants in understanding their rights regarding jobs, housing or legal issues, the flexibility and the informal nature of faith-based institutions facilitates their role in integration and service provision for immigrants.

Challenging the economic and racial status quo?

Traditionally, churches in the United States and in particular the South, have been racially and, to some extent, economically segregated (Emerson and Smith, 2000). As such, the fact that traditionally middle-class Anglo churches are opening their doors to new Latino immigrants is somewhat remarkable. Although most churches hold clothing and food drives or provide outreach ministry for local low-

income populations, they are seldom successful at incorporating these populations into their church membership. The success of Owensboro's Bellevue Baptist Church in doing this is impressive. However, the fact that an organization works to provide services or programs for immigrants should not be equated with the idea that immigrants will be allowed to become full members of these institution, or even, to suggest that is something they want (Martikainen 2005:2). In short, integration does not assure equality.

Moreover, there is an important distinction between providing services and working to build community in a mutual, cohesive manner and pushing "integration" in a uni-directional move towards Anglo-Americanization. Discussion with Dorothy Nash revealed her personal sense of responsibility to inform immigrants on how "things are done here." This included sending children to children's time or nursery care during English classes and starting preschool at the earliest possible age. While shared Christian values are, in part, what facilitates faith-based institutions' work in immigrant integration and the acceptance of immigrants into the institution, immigrants remain ethnically and economically alien. The existence of a space where new immigrants can access resources for integration and build relationships in the community is vital to integration. However, not all may share the same understanding of mutual, two-way integration process.

Faith-Based Institutions as Agents of Integration

While a connection between faith-based institutions and service provision for the needy is certainly not new, faith-based organizations' work in new immigrant

receiving communities raises some important questions about why these institutions may currently be the best-positioned agents of integration. As I have argued, because of faith-based institutions' independence from government laws and regulations their motivations in facilitating immigrant integration are more nuanced. There motivations reflect a combination of personal beliefs, altruism, entrepreneurial needs and a receptive population. The unique flexibility of faith-based organizations allows these motivations to flourish. Underlying these motivations is a level of trust between immigrants and faith-based institutions that is not present with government or healthcare organizations. This trust is built, in part, on the presence of shared values or faith between immigrants and members of these institutions, something that is uniquely accessible in faith-based institutions.

In essence, faith based organizations are able to fill many spaces for immigrants who have trouble accessing care or navigating U.S. systems through channels afforded to citizens. While government organizations are not able to provide services to undocumented immigrants due to legal constraints, the church can and often does. As established and central institutions in the community, faith-based organizations are able to play a role in immigrant integration where other organizations cannot.

Future Research on Faith-Based Institutions and Immigrants

Religion is playing and will continue to play a central role in immigrant integration in the Southeast. However, there is a lack of scholarly research on the topic. A notable exception is a 2001 study by the Center for Religion and Civic

Culture at the University of Southern California which sought to document the role religion is playing for new immigrants in Los Angeles. Traditionally, U.S. religious organizations have helped to integrate immigrants. However, as the authors point out, the racial diversity of post-1965 immigrants and for some (although few Latino) a non Judeo-Christian religious background has altered the role religion plays in settling new immigrants. Thus, faith based and religious institutions have become spaces where immigrants maintain their national or ethnic identity and receive assistance navigating the social and cultural waters of the United States.

The USC study finds that religious institutions are working to accommodate growing groups of immigrants by altering worship styles, creating multiple congregations within one organization and looking for ways to show solidarity with immigrants. More importantly, these institutions are creating new ways to meet the social service needs of new immigrants (Miller, et. al, 2001). While the congregations studied in the past were located in traditional receiving areas, studies' such as these are nonetheless insightful and will be useful as a point of comparison in understanding the role of faith-based institutions in new immigrant receiving communities. Future research should examine more deeply motivations of the church and the extent to which members and church leaders feel their actions are altruistic rather than entrepreneurial.

The role of faith based institutions in new immigrant receiving communities and in congregations not composed of co-ethnics has only begun to be documented. It appears that faith-based institutions offer many of the same benefits as those in traditional immigrant-receiving communities and immigrant congregations. As central

institutions in the community, faith-based organizations in Owensboro are building not only American citizens but also good Southerners - with god, country and family in order. As I have shown, these organizations are also providing a space for immigrants to form their own community. How this will ultimately influence immigrant integration remains to be seen. However, religion influences not only church members but politics and politicians as well. As one interviewee expressed it, "If Sister Mary could harness the Catholics it would be great for them…for acceptance." Politics and religion in the South still go hand and hand.

CONCLUSION

Final Thoughts: *"Un pueblo calmado"*

This chapter reviews the findings from my research on immigrant integration in Owensboro, Kentucky. It discusses the ways in which institutions in Owensboro are working to meet the challenges of building a cohesive community where equal access to basic needs is commonplace. Finally, I offer specific policy recommendations for the Owensboro based on my findings and observations in the community.

Institutions in new destinations such as Owensboro, Kentucky are largely unfamiliar with the needs of an immigrant population. As such, these organizations face difficult transitions if they are to facilitate the formation of a cohesive community. As new receiving destinations in the United States continue to expand, the role that institutions occupy is vital to the integration process. As communities across the United States increasingly work to integrate new populations, the influences of the receiving context will result in varying local integration practices. The input and the viewpoints of immigrant populations in new destinations are also crucial as communities work towards integration.

While the voices of Latino immigrant interviewed for my study are reflected at points, this study focused largely on the viewpoints of host community institutions. However, the Latino immigrants surveyed for my study often had positive things to say about Owensboro. Nonetheless, most could also cite an instance of a time they

felt they or a friend had been discriminated against, although some felt discrimination in general was "*menos marcado que en lugares como Los Ángeles*," ("less noticeable than in places like Los Angeles.") Immigrants interviewed gave their opinions on why they think people immigrate to Owensboro instead of traditional gateways such as California. Beyond having a friend or family member in Owensboro, other reasons mentioned included:

"En California hay una guerra contra el inmigrante y pues, se huellan"

> "There is a war against the immigrant in California and well, they (immigrants) flee."

"Se puede vivir mas tranquilo aquí"

> "You can live more tranquilly here."

"Sabia que en California, por allá, se ve que hay mucho vicio"

> "I knew that over there in California, you see that [many people have] a lot of vices."

"No es porque el trabajo sea mejor pagado….pero hay mas trabajo"

> "It's not because the work pays better….but, there is more work."

"Muchos saben que en las grandes ciudades hay muchos hispanos y muchos quieren alojarse de ellos. También donde no hay muchos hispanos, hay más trabajo."

> "Many people know that there are lots of Hispanics in the big cities and many people want to get away from them. Also, there is more work where there aren't many Hispanics. "

"No hay tanta competencia [para el trabajo]."

> "There's not as much competition [for jobs]."

"No esta tanto el peligro"

"The danger isn't as great."

"La frontera - [la gente no quiere] ser deportados."

"The border – [people don't want] to be deported."

"Es (Owensboro) un pueblo calmado."

"It's (Owensboro) a calm town."

In general, my interviews with Latino immigrants in Owensboro revealed that they find it to be a calm, safe town that is good for raising children - perhaps in some ways similar to the rural areas from which many immigrants in Owensboro come.

As immigrant destinations have expanded from traditional receiving areas to new gateways in regions throughout the United States, communities in the Southeast, like Owensboro, Kentucky are changing. New immigrant populations are stimulating social, cultural and economic changes that in turn necessitate policies to incorporate new residents with different needs than long time residents. This study has focused on the role institutions in Owensboro play in shaping the "warmth of the welcome" for new immigrants. Institutions form an important element of the receiving context as they facilitate access to basic needs such as housing, language, education and healthcare. New receiving communities often lack pre-existing institutions that are familiar with or prepared to handle the needs of an immigrant population. This means adapting and/or adding new services to meet the basic needs of immigrant populations.

Through an examination of governmental, healthcare and faith-based institutions in Owensboro, I assert that these institutions jointly form the "institutional

stool" on which integration stands. Employing ethnographic interviews with leaders of these institutions, survey interviews with local immigrants regarding their use of services in Owensboro, and participant observation, I gained insight into immigrant access to services and institutional approaches to service provision. My research has shown that, while all institutions are aware of the need for basic human services for immigrants, they face legal, financial and political limitations that constrain the approaches they use in providing such services.

Equally as important, personal motivations and beliefs influence the role that institutions play. I found that institutional approaches to integration in Owensboro have been most successful in the realm of faith-based institutions where personal motivations and beliefs can flourish and, indeed, form the foundation of these institutions' work. While this "leg" of the institutional stool appears strongest, faith-based institutions do face barriers to service provision, such as lack of funding and understaffing, as well as challenges that are unique to new immigrant-receiving communities. These challenges include a lack of awareness regarding immigrant populations in general and questions over what denomination new immigrants belong to. However, faith-based institutions' independence from the government and the more informal rules that govern their activities mean they are less restricted by the legal status of an immigrant population.

Although faith-based institutions must abide by U.S. laws as organizations, they are guided by religious doctrines and personal motivations. This leaves room for institutional and/or individual interpretation in working with immigrants. It also provides flexibility in the approaches faith-based institutions take with respect to

integration. This flexibility allows faith-based institutions to act as brokers between immigrants and the local community in efforts for immigrant access to things such as healthcare, translation services, English-language acquisition and housing. The role of these institutions also includes educating local agencies regarding immigrant rights.

The success of faith-based institutions may also be due to a space where the shared beliefs of immigrants and non-immigrants allow for informal network building and the basis for trust. This unique space is principally found in faith-based organizations and assists in fostering immigrant access to both formal and informal resources. Whereas in traditional receiving communities the paths to integration are largely based on pre-exiting services and immigrant networks, in lieu of pre-established paths in new immigrant receiving communities, faith-based institutions are providing a space for networking, community building, and assisting immigrants in meeting their basic needs and accessing services. As an influential presence in the community, the position and actions faith-based institutions take towards immigrant integration have the possibility to influence many.

While attempts have been made by some in governmental institutions to facilitate immigrant integration, they are restricted by funding, legal matters and largely, political will. As my conversations with governmental institutions revealed, they face various restrictions in their approaches to integration. These restrictions are based on factors including the legal status of some immigrants, a lack of funding for services in Spanish, and a concern of political ramifications of decisions about integration. Even when political will is present on the local level, there is a disconnect between the state and local level. Government organizations are strictly bound by the

formal rules of federal, state and local laws and have minimal space for flexibility within that space. Governmental organizations are in need of clear guidelines and leaders that understand the importance of managing growing diversity with key social policies and inclusive social, economic and political environments (Ray, 2003). I suggest state legislators could play a larger role in understanding and meeting the needs of immigrants on the local level and bridging the gap between the local and the state.

Healthcare organizations approaches to immigrant integration have also been limited. These institutions largely understand new immigrants through the paradigm of uninsured, poor Americans. While they are aware that immigrants have special linguistic and cultural needs, they are largely content to "muddle through" their interactions with immigrants, relying on a small number of interpreters, language lines or internet translation programs for communication with Spanish-speaking clients. The lack of urgency to provide relevant services for the immigrant population is partly due to narratives of immigrants "undeserving patients" who, according to some, tax the healthcare system without paying in.

While healthcare organizations partner with faith-based organizations' for interpreters, faith-base organizations are understaffed, overworked and thus, not always available. Healthcare institutions should make it a priority to hire more culturally and linguistically competent staff. As the largest employer in Owensboro, these organizations have the power to greatly influence the way immigrants are viewed through placing importance on immigrant needs and requiring staff cultural education. However, since many immigrants do not regularly use the healthcare

system, as Mohanty (2006) suggests, methods to reduce cultural and language barriers should also focus on community-based changes. Health care providers serving immigrant communities should work closely with faith-based institutions and other community organizations, as well as with public health, social service, and school systems to combine resources and facilitate the education of immigrants on preventive health education and cultural information on healthcare in the United States.

One immigrant interviewee suggested a Latino Health Clinic was needed. In lieu of funding to open such a clinic, a Latino health collaborative could be formed. While an alliance of local teachers, healthcare workers and church organizations related to the Latino community exists, Hispanic Alliance of Greater Owensboro (HAGO) and in fact, supports a Latino Health Fair each year, this organization has not garnered the attention or support of the community stakeholders and institutional leaders and decision makers. The absence of these key figures hinders the Alliance's efforts to effect change on a community-wide level.

Prospects for an Integration Policy through the Model of Informal Citizenship

Over the last twenty years, the rise in global market competition and the increasingly open recognition that the United States' competitiveness in a global economy depends on the presence of a low-skill workforce, academic discourse has moved towards a discussion of rights and citizenship in a global framework. As such, the discourse surrounding citizenship and nationality has shifted from one of loyalty and allegiance to a single nation-state towards what Saskia Sassen (2002) calls "informal or extra-statal forms" of citizenship (p.13). In reference to an

undocumented immigrant population Sassen terms such membership as "effective nationality," that is, "an informal social contract that binds undocumented immigrants to the host communities they live in" (p.12). In this dialogue, immigrants are viewed as global or transnational citizens with informal rights as workers and tax payers based on practices of daily community life such as raising a family, schooling children and holding a job versus a traditional state view of rights as legal citizens of a specific nation-state. As Sassen discusses, quotidian contributions by immigrants demonstrate civic involvement, social deservedness and even national allegiance that assume some aspects of citizenship practices and identities (p. 12-13). Such an understanding would be useful in designing a national-level integration policy. However, while some policy leaders and think tanks such as the Migration Policy Institute[22] are working to bring together stakeholders on integration, it is unlikely that the United States will adopt such a policy any time soon. Thus, an understanding of immigrants as residents with informal rights based on contributions to the community could, at the least, be instructive for local governments as they frame their understanding of the role they might play in immigrant integration.

Policy Recommendations

Faith-based Institutions

Faith-based institutions are well-positioned to work as resource centers for immigrants. Government institutions that are leery or unable to extend direct

[22] MPI recently produced a report "Securing the Future: US Immigrant Integration Policy" which outlines a possible national integration policy.

government services to immigrants could support faith-based organizations through meaningful financial contributions. This would allow organizations that rely on a small number of volunteers to offer paid positions for interpreters and program managers. While the government has made small contributions in the past, such as a monthly $300 to La Plaza from the city government, when the government faces budgetary restrictions, these monies are the first to be cut. Government institutions need to be held accountable for their financial promises. In addition to government institutional support, growing philanthropic community support for immigrant integration activities may be a place to secure funding. Examples of grants that are already making a difference are:

- The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation is investing $13.5 million over five years to help integrate immigrants into American communities, focusing on efforts to increase rates of naturalization, improve English-language education, and strengthen the local and national network of immigrant-serving organizations across the country.
- The Annie E. Casey Foundation invests about $7 million a year in immigrant-related matters, including English acquisition programs and programs that increase vulnerable immigrant families' access to high-quality, low-cost social and financial services.
- Carnegie Corporation of New York, in its Strengthening U.S. Democracy program, has an Immigrant Civic Integration focus that invests $6 million a year to strengthen the "path to citizenship" for immigrants.

- The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund in San Francisco invests about $3 million a year in litigation, public education, policy analysis, and organizing to create a strong movement for broad immigration reform, including reducing long waiting periods and immigration backlogs in order to reunify families.
- The Colorado Trust is investing $18 million between 2000 and 2010 to support immigrant and refugee integration. Grants have supported mental health and cultural adjustment services and community-wide planning efforts that bring together immigrants and established residents.
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation created a special grantmaking program that promotes social adjustment and mental health, builds the capacity of immigrant-led organizations to address health issues, and fosters exchange between newcomers and the receiving community (National Immigration Forum, 2007).

Government Organizations

As my interviews with leaders of government institutions show, such institutions face various restrictions on the approaches they can use to facilitate immigrant integration. These constraints derive from a number of factors including lack of funding for supportive programs, the illegal status of many new immigrants, and a lack of political will. As government organizations, they are bound by the formal rules of federal, state and local laws and have minimal latitude for flexibility within that space. However, progressive states have begun to successfully integrate immigrants by working with them directly. Many have established state or city-run immigrant positions or offices that assist newcomers in various activities, from

accessing services to English language acquisition. Thanks to the work of cities such as Houston and Nashville, models already exist for how these positions can function. Governmental organizations in places like Owensboro should look to these cities as models and then set their own clear guidelines on best practices for integration.

Importantly, Owensboro needs leaders who understand the challenge of managing growing diversity, with social policies that produce inclusive social, economic and political environments (Ray, 2003). As interviews with faith-based organizations revealed, a more accessible and expanded public transportation system would allow better use of time by service providers who currently spend a majority of their time transporting people to and from appointments. Additionally, Owensboro should also make hiring bilingual and/or bicultural employees a priority for all government institutions and specifically, for law enforcement

However, government institutions in small communities like Owensboro are often resistant to change. These institutions need to be encouraged to understand why immigrant integration is important for the community, and how they, as institutions, can play a constructive role. While many in the community have met with government officials to discuss the needs of immigrants in Owensboro, a lack of political will has led to minimal support, financial or other. In lieu of a local organization with political clout taking up the issue, the next hope would be that as a state, Kentucky adopts policies that foster a connection between state and local integration efforts. Policymakers from all levels of government must engage with the issues of immigrant integration, as they will influence the short- and long-term social, economic and demographic health of communities (Ray, 2004).

Healthcare Institutions

Healthcare providers in Owensboro should partner with faith-based institutions to provide preventative health information for immigrants. As institutions that immigrants trust and access more regularly, faith-based organizations could be a vital source for healthcare information for immigrants. Partnering to provide educational and preventive health services to new immigrants will benefit the receiving communities as a whole, as well as their economies, by creating healthier, more productive residents. Additionally, the policies and procedures that healthcare organizations adopt regarding the care new immigrants receive and cultural training for employees should not be overlooked as a key tool to immigrant integration. Unfortunately, as Owensboro healthcare administrator Julia Yelton warns, healthcare institutions may not act to provide cultural and linguistic services for immigrants until a tragedy forces them to do so.

While the integration of immigrants in Owensboro will occur over time, the manner and speed at in which these processes take place will be shaped by policies and responses of institutions towards the presence of newcomers. In the short term however, the consequences of a community without competent linguistic services for Spanish-speaking immigrants has already resulted in tragedy. On May 28, 2007, Mexican immigrant Jeremias Robleros died after being stabbed in a trailer park in rural Daviess County. Unable to communicate the rural location where the incident occurred to the 911 dispatcher, Robleros died as his friends drove him to the hospital. This loss of human life illustrates the urgent need for integration policies in new

immigrant receiving communities. More broadly, this reflects the need for comprehensive immigration reform that balances the enforcement with immigrant legislation.

The condition of working without documentation means that many immigrants live in fear. Immigrants without equal rights or access to basic services in the US reflect the highly politicized national policy debate on immigration control. The United States is increasingly labor-short. Growing competition in a globalized economy, coupled with US residents' increasing education and unwillingness to do manual labor suggests that this demand will continue. Thus, the United States' must adopt both immigration and integration policies that reflect the needs and rights of the immigrants that live, work, and contribute to American communities.

As other studies[23] on integration have found, integration policies in the United States that foster meaningful interactions, social mobility and inclusion cannot take a "one size fits all" approach. While a national integration program could set guidelines and provide funding for integration, understanding the micro-level factors involved in shaping the receiving context will always matter. Consequently, studying new receiving communities and comparing the processes of integration in their both new and traditional immigrant destinations will lead to a broader understanding of integration as well as better sharing of best practices and lessons learned.

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[23] *The Building a New American Community Project*, a study funded by the US Office of Refugee Resettlement and conducted by the Migration Policy Institute, examined government and civil society organizational cooperation surrounding integration in three new immigrant gateways in the US. For full report, "Newcomer Integration and Inclusions Experience in Non-Traditional Gateway Cities" see http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/BNAC_REPT_SUM.pdf.
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