

THE EXPRESSION OF LATINIDAD AT SOCCER GAMES IN KANSAS CITY

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Anthropology and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

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2011

Background: In many Latin American countries, soccer is the national entertainment and pastime. Because of the sport's growing importance in the U.S., soccer has the potential to become a powerful instrument for the acculturation of Latino recent immigrants. Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States and are projected to increase to 128 million by 2050, accounting for about 29% of the total U.S. population. Kansas, one of the "new growth states," has experienced a significant increase in its Latino population since 1990.

Objective: This thesis examined the expression of Latinidad at professional soccer games in Kansas City among the recent cohort of Latino immigrants.

Methods: A total of 20 semi-structured interviews along with ethnographic observation were conducted at four local professional soccer games and two Kansas City Wizards soccer practices. An extensive literature review of the history of Kansas City's Latin American immigrant cohorts was also done.

Results: Latinidad is an ever-emergent expression of Latino identity in the U.S., for which soccer can be an important venue. Professional soccer games can be key realms in which Latin American immigrants recognize and reinforce an ethnic affinity with each other in the Kansas City context, resulting in such bicultural and multicultural identities as "Mexican," "Mexican-American," "Latino."

Conclusion: The popularity of soccer among Latinos should continue to be explored as an important strategy to empower Latino immigrants as they become part of the U.S. For example, soccer can be a tool for public health care providers, facilitating complex acculturation processes and improving health behaviors among Latinos in the U.S.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deeply-felt gratitude to Dr. Paula Cupertino for being an outstanding mentor, supervisor, and thesis committee member. Her constant encouragement, support, and invaluable suggestions helped me improve this thesis.

I would also like to thank my other thesis committee members Dr. Brent E. Metz and Dr. Jane W. Gibson, whose helpful suggestions, challenging questions, and excellent comments enriched this thesis.

My sincere thanks go to Susan Garrett, Irazema Mendoza, and Ana Vargas -my colleagues at the Department of Preventive Medicine and Public Health at the University of Kansas Medical Center- for providing me invaluable insights and advice related to my thesis.

Finally, I am forever grateful to my family and friends for their unconditional support, counsel, and valuable advice.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: The Theoretical Concepts of Assimilation, Acculturation, Biculturalism, and Multiculturalism in Relation to Latinos	4
Chapter 3: The Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Latinos in the Kansas City Metro Area	31
Chapter 4: Soccer	41
Chapter 5: Methods	57
Chapter 6: Results: Soccer in the Kansas City Metro Area	63
Chapter 7: Discussion & Final Conclusions	80
Appendix 1	92
Appendix 2	93
Appendix 3	94
Appendix 4	95
Appendix 5	96
Appendix 6	97
Appendix 7	98
References	99

Table of Tables

Table 1: Latino Population in the United States	1
Table 2: Latino Population by Nativity, 2000 and 2008	1
Table 3: Foreign-born Population in the United States	2
Table 4: Mexican Immigrant Population in the United States	2
Table 5: Definitions of Hispanic and Latino	6
Table 6: Definitions of Latinidad.....	7
Table 7: Straight Line/Classical Assimilation Theory.....	10
Table 8: Forms of Assimilation.....	11
Table 9: The Evolution of the Model of Acculturation	16
Table 10: Contextual Factors Influencing the Acculturation Process	18
Table 11: Sample of Acculturation Rating Scales for Mexican-Origin Immigrants	19

Table 12: Definitions of Multiculturalism	26
Table 13: Mexican Population of Kansas, 1900-1940	32
Table 14: Field Work at Soccer Games in Kansas City	58
Table 15: Race and/or Ethnicity of Participants.....	59
Table 16: Interviews with Kansas City Wizards Staff & Players	62
Table 17: Interviews with Kansas City Wizards Players	63
Table 18: "In your opinion, what characteristics define a Latino/Hispanic?"	64
Table 19: "In your opinion, what factors unite Kansas City's Latino community?"	65
Table 20: (If self-identified as Latino) "Do you feel part of Kansas City's Latino community? Why?"	68
Table 21: "Are you socially involved with the local Latino community?"	69
Table 22: "In your opinion, are Major League Soccer teams contracting Latino players because they are a good (business) deal, or because it's an MLS attempt to attract a Latino fan base?"	70
Table 23: Indicators of Biculturalism and/or Multiculturalism at the Super Clásico Nacional	76
Table 24: "Why are you at the game?"	77

Table of Figures

Figure 1: UNICEF Recreational Kit	44
Figure 2: KCK Soccer Association Logo	52
Figure 3: Wizards Sports Complex at Village West	55

Table of Maps

Map 1: Major Latino Barrios in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area	31
Map 2: Predominant Origin of Mexicans Living in Kansas and Missouri	35
Map 3: Distribution of the Latino Population in the Kansas City Area.....	37
Map 4: Wyandotte County Zip Codes with a Major Concentration of Latino Population.	39

Table of Charts

Chart 1: Latino Population in the Kansas City MSA.....	35
Chart 2: Growth of Latino Population within the Kansas City MSA	37

Chapter 1: Introduction

Latinos have accounted for more than half (50.5%) of the overall population growth in the U.S. since 2000. Latinos are the largest minority in the United States- representing approximately 16% of the total population, or 48 million people. This minority group is projected to increase to 128 million by 2050, accounting for about 29% of the total U.S. population (Passel and Cohn 2008; Fry 2008).

Table 1: Latino Population in the United States

	2000	2004	2007	2008	2009	2050
Approximate population	35.3 million	40.4 million	45.3 million	46.8 million	48 million	128 million

Source: Pew Hispanic Center 2009, www.pewhispanic.org

Among the Latino population, the native born fraction increased from 59.8% in 2000 to 61.9% in 2008, whereas the foreign born fraction slightly diminished from 40.2% in 2000 to 38.1% in 2008. Although the influx of foreign born Latinos to the U.S. has decreased in 2008 –possibly due to the uncertain political climate and economic recession- the overall Latino population is steadily increasing (see table 2 below).

Table 2: Latino Population by Nativity, 2000 and 2008

	2000 Population	Percent, 2000	2008 Population	Percent, 2008
Native Born	21,072,230	59.8	28,985,169	61.9
Foreign Born	14,132,250	40.2	17,837,307	38.1
Total	35,204,480	100	46,822,476	100

Source: Pew Hispanic Center 2009, www.pewhispanic.org

By 2050, nearly one in five Americans will be an immigrant, compared with one in eight in 2008 (Suro 2005). Among the entire foreign-born population in the United States, over half (53%) is originally from Latin America and/or the Caribbean; within this subgroup, approximately one third (30.1%) is originally from Mexico (see table 3 below).

Table 3: Foreign-born Population in the United States

	2008 Population	Percent, 2008
Latin America & the Caribbean	20,185,512	53.0
<i>Mexico</i>	11,451,299	30.1
<i>Caribbean</i>	3,429,422	9.0
<i>Central America</i>	2,749,071	7.2
<i>South America</i>	2,555,720	6.7
All Other	17,830,590	47.0
Total	38,16,102	100
Source: Pew Hispanic Center		

Approximately 60% of Latinos living in the United States are of Mexican origin. The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) establishes that about one in ten Mexicans resides in the United States (Suro 2005; Pew Hispanic Center 2009; Terrazas 2010). The Mexican immigrant population in the United States has continued to outsize other immigrant groups; Mexicans account for 32% of all immigrants living in the U.S. Mexico represents by far the largest source of Latino immigrants, sending about 400,000 migrants to the U.S. per year. In 2008 there were approximately 12.7 million Mexican immigrants living in the United States (see table 4 below), among which half (55%) are believed to be unauthorized, i.e., illegal or undocumented (Passel and Cohn 2008; Pew Hispanic Center 2009).

Table 4: Mexican Immigrant Population in the United States

Pew Hispanic Center	12.7 million	55%
Migration Policy Institute	11.4 million	62%

Although still significant in numbers, the flow of immigrants from Mexico to the United States has slightly declined since the mid 2000s due to the current economic recession and is continuing to do so. This economic recession has had a harsh impact on employment of Latino immigrants. There is no evidence suggesting that during this period, Mexican-born migrants are returning to Mexico from the U.S. The recent decrease in immigration from Mexico can be due to several

causes: a fundamental change in U.S.-Mexico immigration patterns, a response to heightened border enforcement along the border, the effects of the U.S. economic recession, or other forces (Passel and Cohn 2009).

In 2000, over two thirds of the United States' immigrant population lived in six major destination states: California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois. With the share of immigrants in these states declining, and with overall immigration increasing, there has been a rapid dispersion of recent immigrants to “new growth” states, which are defined as states other than the six largest immigration states (CA, NY, TX, FL, IL, NJ) where the foreign-born population grew faster between 1990 and 2000 than in the fastest-growing large state, Texas. The “new growth” states are: Southeast-- DE, NC, SC, GA, KY, TN, AL, MS, AR, OK; Midwest— IN, MN, IA, NE, KS; and Mountain/West—ID, CO, AZ, UT, NV, WA, OR (Capps et al. 2002; Passel & Suro 2005). There is a well-documented shift of recent Latino immigrants away from the above-mentioned traditional settlement areas to these “new growth” states. This thesis will focus on the Kansas City metropolitan area, which is partially located in the state of Kansas, a “new growth” state, and partially in the state of Missouri.

Fútbol (soccer) passion in the United States is part of the Latino immigrant experience and can potentially influence the construction of a Latino identity, and possibly lead to bicultural/multicultural immigration experience. This thesis will explore the process of constructing and expressing a Latino identity among Latino immigrants within the realm of soccer in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Chapter 2: The Theoretical Concepts of Assimilation, Acculturation, Biculturalism, and Multiculturalism in Relation to Latinos

Assimilation, acculturation, biculturalism, and multiculturalism are theoretical concepts that are widely used to discuss the immigration processes in the United States. In order to better understand these concepts, this thesis will start by briefly reviewing the term “culture”.

a. Culture

“The word culture has a history of being enmeshed in the debates and politics of the scholarly world. It has not been a neutral term that scholars could define freely so as to advance their investigations; on the contrary, the term has reflected strong differences of ideological opinion” (Max 1993: 100). Tylor’s definition of culture is consistently used by anthropologists. Tylor begins *Primitive Culture* (1871) with an encompassing definition of culture: “Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (as cited in Max 1993: 102). Given the complexity in defining the concept “culture”, other definitions will be subsequently explored.

In the early 20th century, Boas -considered the father of American anthropology- developed the concept of “cultural relativism,” which establishes that all cultures are of equal value and need to be studied from a neutral point of view. In the 1930s, Benedict suggested an aesthetic approach in which each culture possesses a unique form of integration. “Cultures were like organisms, or living works of art, so that if they were healthy they would be aesthetically integrated, whereas if they were aesthetically disintegrated, it would mean that they had been subjected to traumas and shock” (Benedict cited in Max 1993: 105).

In sum, culture can be defined as patterns of knowledge, beliefs, values, morals and symbols, in terms of which human groups interact among themselves, with other groups, and with their natural environment (Bee in Kinlacheeny et al. 2010). Culture is a kind of knowledge that is shared, learned and used by people to generate behavior and interpret experience. Culture also encompasses shared symbols, understandings, routines, traditions, and sentiments. A new culture can be learned through acculturation, for instance. Culture is not behavior; culture gives cues to behavior. In other words, it's not who people are or what they do, but the knowledge – both conscious and unconscious- that orients them in what they do. Given that identity is a process of recognizing with whom one belongs or pertains, in other words, a social phenomenon informed by culture, this thesis will focus on the construction and expression of a cultural identity among Hispanics and/or Latinos living in the United States.

b. Hispanic and/or Latino/a

Defining Hispanic and Latino is a complex task. Latino is a process of becoming when migrating to the United States (Mendieta 2000). Latin American immigrants usually do not have Latino identities in their home countries. Latino culture and identity is constructed in the United States through the process of living in the U.S. triggered by the need to adapt to another society. Becoming Latino is part of the Latin American immigrant's acculturation process, and is specific to the U.S. In other words, an individual is not Latino before migrating to the United States, and hence, does not identify as such. However, migrating to the United States initiates the continuous process of becoming a Latino. Eventually, a Latin American migrant will most likely self-identify as a Latino at some point of his/her lifetime as an immigrant in the United States. This construction could happen faster or slower, depending on the context. Table 5 lists existing

definitions of Hispanic and Latino used in the literature. Some scholars note that the terms can have different connotations for the public.

Table 5: Definitions of Hispanic and Latino

Mendieta (2000: 47)	Hispanic	Latino
	<p>“Hispanic” or “Latino” is an artificial and imposed label. Hispanic identity is a process of becoming: “one arrives a Guatemalan, Salvadoran, Colombian [...], and slowly, after painful experiences of oppression, marginalization, and isolation, starts to learn to become a Latino and Hispanic”.</p>	
Gracia (2000: 7)	<p>Hispanic may be understood in a variety of ways – among others, territorially, politically, linguistically, culturally, racially, genetically, and pertaining to a class – yet none of these ways of understanding the meaning of “Hispanic” is effective in carving out an essence, that is, a property, or set of properties, which can be easily identified as essential to Hispanics.</p>	
Schutte (2000: 66)	<p>The current U.S. Latino “population includes, among others, recently arrived immigrants, older immigrants (now U.S. citizens), U.S.-born children of immigrants, descendants of residents of Hispanic territories occupied by the United States in the Southwest/Pacific area and Puerto Rico, children of unions between Latinos and other Americans of various races and ethnicities, and so on”.</p>	
Molinary (2007: 3-4)	<p>Hispanic was first used by the U.S. Census Bureau in the late 1970s to identify people in the United States who have ancestral ties to Latin American countries, Spanish-speaking Caribbean nations, and Spain. Rather than identify a race, this term identifies a group unified through a commonality in culture and language.</p>	<p>Latino “is a person who is of Latin American Heritage and lives in the United States. Many people of the younger generations prefer “Latino” to “Hispanic” as a label [...] As a reminder, this is a term that technically describes ethnicity and not race” (2007: 3-4).</p>

Geography, identity, culture, and politics are used to define Latinos in the U.S. As illustrated in table 5, it is important to keep in mind that Latinos and/or Hispanics are a heterogeneous social group. As such, labeling individuals of Latin American/Caribbean heritage as Latinos and/or

Hispanics, and using terms such as the “Latino community,” may lead to the assumption that this is a homogenous population, or that people of Latin American or Caribbean descent self-identify as Latino/Hispanic. It is important to keep in mind that Latino is a social construct whose broad definition has infinite possibilities.

c. Latinidad

Shared language, socio-economic conditions, experiences, religion, country of origin, marginalization, and even discrimination have the potential to generate a broad but common “Latino experience.” Latinidad can be interpreted as the conscious expression of this identity, which as a result promotes unity, cohesion, and empowerment among Latinos. While there is not a set definition of Latinidad -like the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic”- table 6 offers four definitions of Latinidad.

Table 6: Definitions of Latinidad

Online <i>Real Academia Española</i> (RAE)	1) <i>Condición o carácter de lo latino</i> (latino condition or characteristic), 2) <i>Tradición cultural latina</i> (latino cultural tradition), 3) <i>Conjunto de los pueblos latinos</i> (grouping of all latino people). RAE’s definition suggests that latinidad is based on unity, culture, and identity.
Gudykunst et al. (1996)	When Latinos form a collectivist culture. Upon arrival to the United States, Latin American immigrants develop a collectivist culture, also known as Latinidad. Members of this collectivistic culture known as Latinidad learn different major values and acquire different preferred ways to perceive themselves. Latinos adapt this new collectivism (Latinidad), which is based on cooperation, solidarity and the sentiment of belongingness.
Price (2007: 81)	Latinidad is a situational coherence of place-specific social relations. In other words, latinidad is a contingent and cultural event.
Molinary (2007: 4)	“Pan-Latino identity for all Latinos that is rooted in a shared language and common immigrant experiences.”

Based on the definitions above, this thesis suggests that Latinidad can be considered a conscious and deliberate expression of Latino identity, like waving the Mexican flag, listening to Mexican *norteña* music, or eating Latin American food, or an unconscious cultural expression, like speaking Spanish. Alike with the concepts of “Latino” and “Hispanic”, Latinidad indicates that the Latino/a identity is a multifaceted construction. Latinidad is a social and political construct as well; it defines who you are in relation to the social context. In this thesis, Latinidad will be defined as an expression of a sense of cultural identity and belonging to an ethnic group.

Adding to the complexity of this matter, this chapter will further explore the notion of becoming Latino (or not) by studying the theoretical concepts of assimilation, acculturation, biculturalism, and multiculturalism within the context of the Latino immigration experience in the United States.

d. Assimilation

The concept of assimilation is politically charged and has been used both to refer to a sociological process of incorporating diverse social groups into national society as well as a politics promoting such incorporation. For much of U.S. history, assimilation was a desired policy goal. Several scholars have explored the assimilation processes experienced among immigrants. The concept of assimilation was developed in the beginning of the 20th century, and can be understood as the process by which immigrants are incorporated into the host society. Park (1928) first developed the theoretical concept of assimilation by arguing that “migration leads to a situation of the “marginal man”, in which immigrants are pulled in the direction of the host society but drawn back by their culture of origin (Park 1928 cited in Zhou 1997: 976). Park perceived migration as a painful bipolar process impacted by impersonal competition and social forces, in which immigrant groups from underprivileged backgrounds are expected to eventually

abandon their old ways of life and completely “melt” into the mainstream through residential integration and occupational achievement in a sequence of succeeding generations (Zhou 1997).

While Park emphasized that assimilation is a natural process ultimately leading to the reduction of social and cultural differences in society, Warner and Srole (1945) argued that institutional factors such as social class, race and ethnicity determine the degree of assimilation as well as the levels of residential and occupational mobility (Zhou 1997). Gordon (1961) was another pioneer of the concept of assimilation. In Gordon’s view, immigrants begin their adaptation to the host country through cultural assimilation, which leads to the eventual loss of all distinctive ethnic traits and characteristics. As a matter of fact, Gordon equated assimilation with becoming more like the WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) middle class of America. Because WASPs were the first ones to establish the ethnic core of American society, immigrants best followed in their wake. Gordon’s assimilation concept assumed that the minority group would change almost completely in order to assimilate, while the WASP majority would remain unaffected.

From the classical assimilation standpoint, distinctive ethnic traits such as customs, native languages, and social enclaves are sources of disadvantages that hinder the process of assimilation, yet are greatly reduced in successive generations (Park 1928; Warner and Srole 1945; Gordon 1961). According to this theoretical framework, assimilation is a linear process of progressive improvement in the immigrants’ adjustment to American life and becoming an “unhyphenated American” (Rumbaut 1997). In other words, classical assimilation scholars portray assimilation as synonymous with Americanization. Overall, two underlying assumptions in the classical assimilation theory are that all immigrants will eventually assimilate, and that the primary factor that determines their level of assimilation is their generational status (Golash-

Boza 2006). As such, assimilation can be interpreted as the minimal expression of Latinidad over time. Table 7 offers several definitions of classical assimilation:

Table 7: Straight Line/Classical Assimilation Theory

Teske, Jr. and Nelson (1974)	<p>Assimilation is a “<i>process</i> of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups; and by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (p.359).</p> <p>Acculturation is a dynamic two-way process. The process of assimilation can lead to biculturalism.</p>
Gans (1979) (cited in Golash-Boza 2006)	<p>“All of these theorists agree that assimilation entails the eventual loss of attachment to one’s country of origin and the disappearance of the ethnic distinctiveness of immigrants. Gans (1979) asserted that by the seventh generation all traces of ethnic distinctiveness disappear” (p. 29-30).</p> <p>“Self-identification has traditionally been considered to be a key component of the assimilation process (Gans 1979). As immigrants and their children progress from self-identifying as Italian, Italian-American, to American, they effectively are assimilating into U.S. society. In fact, dropping the hyphen could be seen as the ultimate act of assimilation” (p.30).</p>
The Chicago School	<p>Envisions a “diverse mainstream society in which people of different ethnic/racial origins and cultural heritages evolve a common culture that enables them to sustain a common national existence” (Alba and Nee 2005: 10). This definition envisages a “melting pot” composed of ingredients from many cultures.</p>

Currently, the concept of assimilation has been seen by scholars as ideologically archaic and “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” (Alba and Nee 2005: 2). Contemporary scholars reject the traditional assimilation theory because we now have a broader understanding of its disadvantages. The main arguments for abandoning the classical assimilation theory have been that it is much too simplistic and ahistorical. The concept of assimilation ignores how racial discrimination causes people to seek the security of their ethnic groups. In addition, this concept no longer applies to America’s new immigration waves.

If it were to be rescued, this theoretical model should be made more complex and more time-and-place specific and embedded in multidimensional contexts. “Rather than a universally applicable proposition, assimilation theory would thus become one of a number of possible explanatory frameworks in which the immigrants’ adaptation to the host (American) society can be accounted for” (Morawska 1994: 76). The new concept of assimilation recognizes a process that does not result in the disappearance of ethnicity; instead, this new model encourages participation in mainstream institutions while maintaining ethnic socio-cultural practices. Immigrants differ greatly in their social class and national origins, and so do the American society, economy, and polity that receives them, raising questions about their modes of incorporation and challenging conventional accounts of assimilation processes that were framed during previous epochs of mass migration (Alba and Nee 2005; Rumbaut 1997).

The concept of assimilation, although not the traditional one-way theory, is still useful and therefore, scholars are rethinking it within the experiences of contemporary immigrants. Scholars such as Suarez-Orozco (2000) and Williams et al. (2002) offer structural assimilation as a derivative of the classical assimilation theory, while Rumbaut and Portes (2001) and Zhou (1997) introduce the notion of segmented assimilation, and Golash-Boza (2006) identifies racialized assimilation. These scholars’ multiple forms of assimilation are explained in table 8:

Table 8: Forms of Assimilation

Suarez-Orozco (2000)	Structural assimilation: Typically operationalized in terms of social relations and participation in the opportunity structure.
Williams et al. (2002)	Structural assimilation: Refers to integration within institutions. “Most agree that cultural assimilation occurs more readily, primarily because the immigrant initiates the cultural fit [...]. Structural assimilation- such as access to employment and health benefits- is more difficult because there must be greater accommodation from the host community” (p.565).

<p>Rumbaut and Portes (2001) (cited in Golash-Boza 2006)</p>	<p>Segmented assimilation: In this model, “assimilation into mainstream U.S. society is an outcome for some, but not all, immigrants and their children. They argue that processes of assimilation are affected by a number of factors including: the human and financial capital of the immigrant parents, the pace of acculturation, family structure, cultural and economic obstacles, the perceived race of immigrants, and the community and family resources available to the immigrants and their children in the United States” (p.30).</p> <p>This model offers a “comprehensive description of the contemporary processes of assimilation in the United States”.</p>
<p>Zhou (1997) & Rumbaut and Portes (2001) (Cited in Golash-Boza 2006)</p>	<p>Segmented assimilation theorists (Zhou 1997, Rumbaut and Portes 2001) delineate three paths of assimilation into U.S. society:</p> <p>1. Assimilation into the dominant culture. “Those immigrants with high levels of human, social and financial capital are likely to experience a favorable reception in the United States and embark a path towards assimilation and upward mobility”. [...] “Can be interpreted as becoming white because it implies becoming an unhyphenated American” (p.32).</p> <p>Golash-Boza <u>critiques this path</u> towards assimilation by arguing that Hispanics who are categorized as non-white will not be able to assimilate un-noticed into mainstream American culture due to racial/ethnic discrimination.</p> <p>2. Downward assimilation “[...] occurs when immigrants with few resources are unable to find employment with suitable wages and are confined to poor inner-city areas. Consequently, their children identify with the experiences of historical minorities and do not adopt the “immigrant optimism”. “downward assimilation into minority oppositional culture” (p.32).</p> <p>The main problem with this depiction –according to Golash-Boza- is that it fails to distinguish between distinct minority groups. The African-American experience of discrimination is not the same than for Asian-Americans or Latinos. In other words, it doesn’t explain why some people experience more racial/ethnic discrimination than others.</p> <p>3. Selective assimilation “[...] where immigrant parents encourage their children to conform to the norms of success in the United States, while keeping them from assimilating into oppositional adolescent culture, by reinforcing traditional cultural values and ways of life. Rumbaut and Portes (2001) purport that selective acculturation is most beneficial for children of immigrants without risking downward assimilation into the underclass” (p.30).</p> <p>However, Golash-Boza argues that this path of assimilation across generations can only happen in areas with a high concentration of Latinos, such as Cubans in Miami, or Puerto Ricans in New York City. Golash-Boza adds that “without such a community, after a number of generations, the attachment to the</p>

	homeland will be weakened, and the children of immigrants will lack meaningful cultural resources with which to shelter their own children” (p.32).
Golash-Boza (2006)	<p>Racialized Assimilation: Golash-Boza offers the concept of racialized assimilation, which suggests that ethnic and racial discrimination influence the assimilation process. In other words, “experiences of discrimination [ethnic or racial] discourage immigrants from Latin America and their children from self-identifying as American despite the fact that many of these immigrants and their children are U.S. citizens” (p.51). Furthermore, this model elucidates the “diversity of experiences and assimilation patterns for Latinos/as in the United States”.</p>

Currently, traditional assimilationists – who encourage the foreign element to “Americanize” - consider that Latinos have not been sharing in the successful European experience, perhaps due to reluctance to assimilate into American culture. Some scholars argue that Latino immigrants and their offspring are less committed to assimilation than Europeans were. Discrimination, adherence to Spanish, and frequent trips to the homeland due to proximity are reported as reasons explaining limited assimilation (Smith 2003). One scholar in particular who favors traditional assimilation is Samuel Huntington, especially when it comes to Latino immigrants.

Huntington (1994) claims that the persistent inflow of Latino immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages. The Huntingtonean perspective states that unlike past European immigrants, Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream American culture, forming instead their own ethnic, linguistic, and even political enclaves and rejecting the WASP values. In particular, the persistent and continuous immigration from Mexico to the United States reduces the incentive for cultural assimilation, since Mexican immigrants no longer perceive themselves as members of a small minority who must accommodate to the dominant group and culture. This viewpoint alleges that massive Latino immigration affects the United States in two significant ways: on the one hand, large portions of the country become predominantly Latino in language and culture, and on the other, the nation as

a whole becomes bilingual and bicultural, which from his standpoint is a negative outcome for the American society.

Huntington's "Hispanic Challenge" theory has been debated among many scholars (Smith 2003; Waldschmidt-Nelson 2004; Price 2007). The "Hispanic Challenge" fears are unwarranted: 2nd and 3rd-generation Latinos have made great strides in closing their economic gaps with native whites; the older the generation, the higher the social mobility, and thus, the higher the degree of assimilation. Huntington erroneously encompasses Mexicans and all other Latinos in the same category and disregards cultural differences, since not all U.S. Hispanics share the same country of origin, racial or ethnic background, common history, socioeconomic status, and political agenda (Smith 2003; Waldschmidt-Nelson 2004). Also, Hispanic immigrants are not regionally concentrated but in fact are dispersing geographically throughout the U.S. and settling in non-traditional Hispanic areas, also known as "new growth states", defined as states (other than the six largest immigration states in the Southwest) where the foreign-born population grew faster during 1990 and 2000 than in the fastest-growing large state, Texas (Passel & Suro 2005). Furthermore, Huntington's thesis erroneously assumes that the expression of cultural pride necessarily equals a challenge to mainstream American culture (Price 2007).

"Today, assimilationism is often depicted in terms of a demand that the minority individuals abandon their native cultures to accept the majority one, a demand that can be viewed as placing them in a position of inferiority and disadvantage. But the assimilationist position can be, and once was, formulated more positively: as a form of emancipation from the constricting bonds of group loyalty, the ethnic expectation that the individual remain a parochial and behave in a manner consistent with the group identity" (Alba 1997: 9). In summary, the concept of assimilation refers to a unilateral social process in which the dominant culture is absorbed and all

traces of the minority culture are abandoned. Given American society's multicultural population, such a process is inhibited by existing racial and ethnic discrimination. Politically, assimilation, as a policy that seeks to diminish ethnic diversity, is opposed to Latinidad.

e. Acculturation

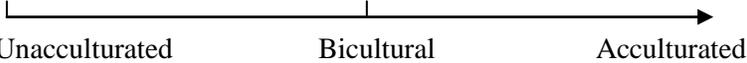
Acculturation Theory

Acculturation is different than assimilation because it refers more to cultural exchange and construction than to social integration. The study of acculturation has been dominant in the sociological field, for the most part, in the field of minority, race, and ethnic studies, although the concept was coined and developed in anthropology. The definition and measurement of acculturation has evolved over time. It is now considered by some scholars as a multidimensional and fluid process, contrary to the earliest models of acculturation depicted as a linear, unidirectional, and unidimensional process that can be conceptualized along a single continuum, ranging from the immersion in a person's culture of origin, to the immersion in the dominant or host culture. The concept of acculturation evolved from the need to recognize and quantify both distinct and shared attributes of people living in multicultural environments (Cabassa 2003; Clark and Hofsess 1998).

“The driving mechanism of acculturation research is basically a search to understand what happens to individuals who have developed in one cultural context when they try to adapt and live in a new cultural environment. How individuals adapt to this environmental change is the principal aim of acculturation theories” (Cabassa 2003: 132). Current definitions of acculturation define it as essentially a continuous, dynamic, two-way process (rather than a static event) that identifies variation or degrees of acculturation at an individual and group level.

Dohrenwend and Smith (1962) defined the classical formulation of acculturation as phenomena that result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous firsthand contact and change. In 1954, the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) defined acculturation as “culture change that is initiated by the conjunction of two or more autonomous cultural systems, evidenced through the selective adaptation of value systems, as well as integration and differentiation of knowledge and behavior among the culture groups” (Clark and Hofsess 1998: 37). Historically, studies on acculturation and social mobility indicated the existence of a positive relationship between acculturation and social mobility. Within this context, Spiro (1955) defined acculturation as an ethnic group’s voluntary and capable acquisition of the culture of the dominant group. The process and outcome of acculturation depend on factors such as social mobility, nativism, religion, family, and personality. Although Spiro’s paper was published in 1955, this scholar was already pushing for a renovation of acculturation studies, by suggesting that 1) acculturation may be a pragmatic and voluntary process, comparable to Gordon’s selective acculturation (see table 9), and 2) that acculturation studies have important implications for understanding the nature and mechanisms of culture, ethnic relations, and personality formation. Table 9 recapitulates the evolution of the acculturation model by means of three core acculturation models.

Table 9: The Evolution of the Model of Acculturation

Traditional/Linear Acculturation	<p>Acculturation is a continuum of acculturative possibilities, from the unacculturated to the fully acculturated, with the bicultural option in between. This linear model suggests a smooth, one-way progression.</p> 
Selective Acculturation (by Gordon 1964)	<p>Selective acculturation has been used to describe the common tendency for immigrants and ethnic minorities to adopt certain strategic traits (socio-economic status, language of host country), while retaining other traditional cultural values and patterns (family</p>

	<p>organization, food, language).</p> <p>Within this model, individuals could have a mix of selectively acquired/preserved new and traditional traits, thus leading to biculturalism.</p>																
<p>The two-culture matrix model (by Keefe and Padilla 1987)</p>	<p>Allows for individual variation within both native and new cultures.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">Native Culture</td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">High</td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Unacculturated</td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Bicultural</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Marginal</td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Acculturated</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Low</td> <td></td> <td style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">High</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td colspan="2" style="padding: 5px; text-align: center;">New Culture</td> </tr> </table>	Native Culture	High	Unacculturated	Bicultural			Marginal	Acculturated		Low		High			New Culture	
Native Culture	High	Unacculturated	Bicultural														
		Marginal	Acculturated														
	Low		High														
		New Culture															

Acculturation can be defined as the cultural changes resulting from group encounters. “Although acculturation is a neutral term in principle (that is, change may take place in either or both groups), in practice acculturation tends to induce more change in one of the groups than in the other” (Berry 1997: 7). As a matter of fact, within multicultural societies, such as the United States, cultural groups and their individual members, in both the dominant (host society) and non-dominant (immigrant) situations, must deal with the issue of *how* to acculturate. Acculturation strategies are usually worked out by groups and individuals in their daily encounters with each other.

Current acculturation theory permits that “individuals and subgroups assemble creative and selective combinations of language, cultural knowledge, values, attitudes, and practices to form mosaics rather than monoliths of culture” (Clark and Hofsess 1998: 41). The acculturation process, as well as the outcome of the acculturation experience, varies from individual to individual, as well as from nation to nation. In fact, the historical context of the country of origin—as shown in table 10- must be also considered when studying how individuals adapt to a

new culture. Over time, theories have become much more comprehensive and complex. What they have in common, though, is a bidimensional model referring to a voluntary, dynamic, two-way process (i.e., host society and immigrant/ethnic groups) in which newcomers and/or immigrants integrate themselves into the host country's society by taking on traits of the dominant culture, while simultaneously maintaining cultural practices from their country of origin. .

Table 10: Contextual Factors Influencing the Acculturation Process

Prior immigration context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political, economic, and social contexts of the country of origin • Reasons for migrating • Prior contact with host society
Immigration context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Type of immigration group (refugee, illegal, etc.) • Route of immigration/ immigration journey • Immigration experience
Settlement context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival process • Social settlement factors (ethnic niche, cultural and geographic distance from country and culture of origin) • Individual settlement factors (age, legal and residency status) • Local immigration policies and society's attitude towards immigration

Group level factors, such as the political, economic, and demographic situation of the society of origin, as well as the ideology and social attitudes (e.g., prejudice and discrimination) of the host society, determine the outcome of the acculturation process. At an individual level, socio-cultural variables (e.g. age, gender, religion, language) prior to acculturation, combined with variables such as length of time in host society, coping strategies, social support, and societal attitudes experienced during acculturation also determine the outcome of the acculturation process (Berry 1997). Berry's acculturation framework highlights the complexity of the acculturation process, thus making its study difficult, allowing several, and even conflicting, interpretations by scholars of the acculturation process of ethnic groups. Different

scholars have isolated different variables to simplify measurements of acculturation, as seen in table 11 below.

Acculturation Measurement

Given the complexity of culture and thus acculturation, scholars have selected particular variables for purposes of measurement. Acculturation scales are based on the premise that the length of one’s exposure to the host culture, including generation of residence in the United States, results in greater acculturation. A person’s relative position in the acculturation process is translated into a score that is used as an indicator of degree of acculturation (Clark and Hofsess 1998). The below mentioned acculturation rating scales (in table 11) basically contain two dimensions of change within the minority culture: 1) Maintenance or loss of traditional culture, and, 2) gain of new cultural traits.

Table 11: Sample of Acculturation Rating Scales for Mexican-Origin Immigrants (Clark and Hofsess 1998: 45-46)

Instrument Title	Factors measured
Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language use and preference 2. Ethnic identity and classification 3. Cultural heritage and ethnic behaviors 4. Ethnic interaction
Revised Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA-II)	Identical to ARSMA
Acculturation for Adolescents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nationality-language 2. Socioeconomic status 3. Semantic factor
Language-based Acculturation Scale (LAS)	Language
Los Angeles Epidemiologic Catchment Area (LAECA)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language use and skills, contact with Mexico 2. Social activities 3. Ethnic background
Short Acculturation Scale for Hispanics (SASH)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language use 2. Media preferences 3. Ethnic social relations

The above-mentioned acculturation scales focus on self-reported behaviors, cultural awareness and ethnic identification, and most importantly, language preference, to measure the degree of acculturation. However, acculturation measurements and research designs fail to keep into consideration that acculturation levels may be different in private and public contexts (Cabassa 2003). For instance, publicly, an individual may express an elevated acculturation level while at the same time embrace more separatist attitudes or behaviors within the private context. For this reason, it is recommended to combine acculturation measurements with ethnographic studies in order to obtain in-depth narratives of how individuals adapt to a new cultural environment. Although this study does not use any acculturation measurements, by means of ethnographic studies, it will contribute to better grasp how a particular group of individuals (recent Latino immigrants, mostly from Mexico) adapt to a new cultural environment (the Kansas City metropolitan area).

Acculturation derivatives

Acculturation scholars have proposed other theoretical models for assimilation and acculturation. Gordon (1964), for example, uses the term “bicultural” to refer to the integration acculturation strategy, which involves the individual simultaneously practicing the two cultures that are in contact. While bipolar models of assimilation and acculturation are useful to conceptualize the process of immigration and adaptation to a new culture, they might simplify the portrayal of immigration process, which is why subsequently this thesis will also explore the concepts of biculturalism and multiculturalism.

f. Biculturalism

As indicted by the traditional/linear acculturation model and the two-culture matrix model by Keefe and Padilla (1987) previously explained, the acculturation process may lead to

biculturalism. “Becoming bicultural is an eclectic process which results in an idiosyncratic mixture of the two cultures with one basic “cultural competence” but with two sets of “socio-cultural performance” (Bratt Paulston 1978). The Handbook of Immigrant Health published in 1998 offers two definitions of biculturalism. While Clark and Hofsess (1998) define a bicultural person as an individual who will have a mix of new and traditional traits, selectively acquired over time, Ramirez and Castaneda (1974, cited in Clark and Hofsess 1998: 43) define a bicultural person as one “with extensive socialization and life experience in two or more cultures and who participates actively in these cultures. Bicultural individuals develop an expanded behavioral repertoire including skills and knowledge from both cultures.”

The term biculturalism is invariably linked with bilingualism, and as such, the bicultural element is reduced to language proficiency. Bratt Paulston (1978), on the other hand, suggests that becoming bicultural differs from becoming bilingual, arguing that it is possible to become bilingual without becoming bicultural, while the reverse is not true. In fact, Bratt Paulston (1978) goes even further and proposes that a third culture is created in the contact between two cultures. Although Bratt Paulston’s model of biculturalism is framed within an educational setting (foreign exchange students in the U.S.), it can be applied in non-educational settings as well. Bratt Paulston adds:

Being bicultural is an individual matter which does not lend itself to stereotyping. Nor can it be taught. Becoming bicultural is an eclectic process, and what a bicultural program should hope to do is to allow the student the right to pick and choose his own individual make-up as a bicultural person from the two cultures and the members of those cultures he is exposed to in the school (Bratt Paulston 1978: 379).

The context in which the concept of biculturalism is currently used has evolved. Particularly in the United States, scholars now examine biculturalism within an immigrant/migrant context,

paying particular attention to Mexico and other Latin American countries given the increasing number of the Latino population. The Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, for example, features several articles about biculturalism in relation to acculturation strategies, integrative complexity and cultural frame switching. In an article by Tadmor and Tetlock (2006), the authors point out that despite the growing number of individuals being exposed to a second culture, the process by which these individuals absorb a new cultural identity, as well as the role played by second-culture exposure in the shaping of an individual's identity, is still open for discussion.

Tadmor and Tetlock (cited in Tadmor et al. 2009: 106-107) developed an acculturation complexity model (ACM) which establishes that "people who cope with cultural conflict by internalizing the values of two groups (by becoming bicultural) will respond in reliably more complex ways than those who adhere to the values of only one group." This ACM model has both negative and positive outcomes: on the one hand, simultaneous exposure to two cultural groups creates strong internal conflict, and on the other, repeated exposure to cultural conflicts will lead to the development of increasingly automatic coping responses. This last outcome is also referred to as cultural frame switching or, the process of shifting between two cultural meaning systems in response to distinctive cultural cues (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez 2000, cited in Tadmor et al. 2009).

Hence, biculturalism can also be studied in relation to cultural frame switching. Individuals can acquire more than one cultural frame even if these cultural frames contain conflicting elements. Depending on the particular group identity that is cognitively activated, individuals will behave and perceive themselves differently. When a group identity is salient, individuals will shift towards whatever values and beliefs the group defines. Hence, group

identification can influence and individual's self-perception and attitudes (Verkuyten and Pouliasi 2006).

The cultivation and nurturing of new hybrid identities and bicultural competencies tends to be beneficial for the individual. Rather than advocating that immigrant children abandon all elements of their culture of origin, a more promising path is to cultivate and nurture the emergence of new hybrid identities and bicultural competencies. These hybrid cultures creatively blend elements of the culture of origin with the new, culture unleashing a new hybrid culture (Suarez-Orozco 2000). Soccer (i.e. playing soccer at a local soccer league or going to professional soccer games) for instance, could encourage young and older Latinos to maintain ties with their cultures of origin, while at the same time adapting to a new culture through a familiar activity.

Bacallao and Smokowski (2009) studied biculturalism among Mexican immigrant adolescents from North Carolina in order to examine how (oppositional) cultural influences shape the acculturation process. The study is grounded on the alternation theory, which states that "there is great value in the individual maintaining her or his culture of origin while acquiring a second culture. [...] Alternation Theory highlights integration of divergent norms, traditions, customs, and languages rather than assimilating from one culture to another (Berry 1998; Feliciano 2001; Gonzales et al. 2002 cited in Bacallao and Smokowski 2009: 422). Within the alternation theory, maintaining participation in both host culture and culture of origin provides the acculturating individual with the least psychological problems and the best adjustment. As such, bicultural individuals develop the ability to navigate within two different cultures. One could assert that the above-mentioned theories of biculturalism incorporate concepts of

psychological well-being. This matter should be further explored within a psychological framework.

Latinos and biculturalism

For immigrant individuals in particular, cultural frame switching generated by environmental demands leads to biculturalism. A study by Bacallao and Smokowski (2009) found that bicultural individuals appear healthier and experience less stress and anxiety if they have cultural frame switching skills. This study found that Mexican parents and adolescents took pride in their nationality and preserved their customs, traditions, values, and language, and practiced family-oriented and communal values. As for the participants' relationship to the U.S. host culture in Bacallao and Smokowski 's study (2009), Mexican parents and adolescents experienced the assimilation pressures of discrimination and monolingualism, which pushed them to learn English and take on American behaviors, customs, and values. However, one could suggest that these pressures could also push immigrants towards isolation by means of the preservation of their culture and language of origin.

In Bacallao and Smokowski 's study (2009), the tension between the Latino influence in the family and the American influence from friends was the root of struggles between family members. Bicultural individuals maintained a positive relationship with both cultures without having to choose one or the other; they participated in the two different cultures by tailoring their behavior to the situation at hand. Becoming bilingual and living between two cultures also provided parents and adolescents with the opportunity to create something new- a mixture of features from both cultures and both languages. Despite acknowledging that living between two cultures and having multiple identities may bring confusion and complexity for individuals,

biculturalism is a cultural asset linked to positive mental health and family dynamics (Bacallao and Smokowski 2009).

A study conducted by the Strategy Research Group found that 59% of Latinos are bicultural (Comenge 2004). Biculturalism for Latinos entails the adoption of certain aspects of American culture while simultaneously preserving their Latin American and/or Caribbean heritage. Latinos are more likely to acculturate and become bicultural, than they are to assimilate and abandon their original culture since they tend to maintain their Latin American and/or Caribbean heritage, language, culture, and identity. Latinos seem to maintain their original culture to a large extent because i) immigration from Latin America to the U.S. (particularly from Mexico) continues to be strong, ii) newcomers find ethnic niches in most American cities, which helps preserve their original language and culture, iii) Latino immigrants are geographically close to their country of origin (especially those from Mexico), and iv) modern Spanish-language media and communication outlets allow a frequent and constant contact with their country of origin (e.g. Univision, Telemundo, Azteca America) (Korzenny 1998).

It is also possible that things are even more complex and we may be even dealing with more than two cultures, such as: Mexican culture, U.S.-based Latino culture, Anglo culture, and Latino cultures from different Latin American and/or Caribbean countries. This leads us to reflect on the coexistence of these multiple cultures.

g. Multiculturalism

As previously determined, biculturalism implies a situation in which an individual can manage dual identities. In this thesis, multiculturalism will refer to the situation in which an individual can manage multiple identities. In order to better understand the concept of multiculturalism, this section will present the origin of this term, as well as briefly review its policy implications.

While assimilation is envisioned as the traditional American response to cultural differences, scholars such as Hartmann and Gerteis (2005), Wax (1993) Turner (1993), and Takaki (1993) suggest the term “multiculturalism” as a new way to address the challenges of diversity in American society. As opposed to assimilation and acculturation, multiculturalism is a political ideology, not theoretical model of what happens when immigrants migrate to a new country.

Scholars such as Hartmann and Gerteis (2005), Wax (1993) Turner (1993), and Takaki (1993) agree on the lack of theoretical clarity about what multiculturalism really means and entails in part given its direct link to “culture”. Scholars assert that the term “multiculturalism” first emerged in relation to demands of ethnic minority groups for separate and equal representation in college curriculums and extra-curricular cultural programs and events on campuses nationwide. Subsequently, as pointed out by these scholars, multiculturalism began to adopt ideological connotations by encouraging the participation of minorities in the national culture and society, and thus giving multiculturalism a continuous changing nature. The table below offers several definitions of multiculturalism.

Table 12: Definitions of Multiculturalism

Hartmann and Gerteis (2005: 219)	“The most common conception of multiculturalism in both scholarly circles and popular discourse is a negative one, having to do with what multiculturalism is not or what it stands in opposition to. Multiculturalism in this usage represents heterogeneity as opposed to homogeneity, diversity as a counterpart to unity.”
Lambert E. et al (1990: 388)	“[...] multiculturalism [is] the view that these groups [cultural minorities] should maintain their heritage cultures as much as possible while establishing themselves in North America.”
Turner (1993: 412)	“Multiculturalism tends to become a form of identity politics, in which the concept of culture becomes merged with that of ethnic identity.”
Shohat and Stam (n.d. cited in Turner	“Multiculturalism and the critique of Eurocentrism are

1993: 418)	inseparable concepts. [...] Multiculturalism without anti-Eurocentrism runs the risk of being merely accretive- a shopping mall [...] of the world's cultures- without any interrogation of Euro-American hegemony.”
Gates (1991: 37 cited in Turner 1993: 419)	“Multiculturalism sees cultures as porous, dynamic, and interactive, rather than the fixed property of particular ethnic groups. Thus the idea of a monolithic, homogeneous ‘West’ itself comes into question.”
Ravitch (1990, cited in Takaki 1993: 114)	“Ravitch promotes the development of multiculturalism based on strategy of adding on: to keep mainstream Anglo-American history and expand it by simply including information on racism as well as minority contributions to America’s music, art, literature, food, clothing, sports, and holidays.”

Multiculturalism is primarily a movement for change. It challenges the cultural hegemony of the dominant ethnic group by calling for equal recognition of the cultural expressions of non-hegemonic groups (i.e. minorities) within the American education system and society overall. As such, the term “culture” for multiculturalists refers “primarily to collective social identities engaged in struggles for social equality. For multiculturalism, culture is thus not an end in itself [...] but a means to an end, and not all aspects of culture as conceived by anthropologists are relevant to the achievement of that end” (Turner 1993: 412). From an anthropological perspective, this means that the multiculturalists’ concept of culture is misguided.

Given the lack of theoretical clarity about the meaning of multiculturalism, scholars such as Turner (1993), Hartmann and Gerteis (2005) and Wax (1993) have constructed different dimensions/models of multiculturalism in order to better grasp this concept. Turner (1993) suggests two types of multiculturalism: critical multiculturalism and difference multiculturalism. The first “seeks to use cultural diversity as a basis for challenging, revising, and relativizing basic notions and principles common to dominant and minority cultures alike, so as to construct a more vital, open, and democratic common culture” (Tyler 1993: 413). In sum, critical

multiculturalism seeks raise consciousness about cultural divisions. In contrast, in difference multiculturalism, culture is reduced to “a tag for ethnic identity and a license for political and intellectual separatism” (Tyler 1993: 414).

Hartmann and Gerteis (2005) suggest three types of multiculturalism: cosmopolitanism, fragmented pluralism, and interactive pluralism. These models are two-dimensional given that they address the cultural dimension (i.e., the basis for social cohesion) and the relational dimension (i.e., the basis for social association), which are necessary for social order. The first type of multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, “recognizes the social value of diversity, but is skeptical about the obligations and constraints that group membership and societal cohesion can place on individuals. As a result, this vision defends diversity only insofar as it allows and expands individual rights and freedoms” (Hartmann and Gerteis 2005: 228). The emphasis on this approach is on tolerance and individualism rather than on group cohesion. With cosmopolitanism, group membership becomes a personal choice as well as a source of individual identity.

The second approach, fragmented pluralism, focuses on the existence of a variety of distinctive and relatively self-contained communities. Structurally, this approach is the closest to being the opposite of assimilation. It places heavy emphasis on the role of social groups and group membership, and is perhaps closest to the standard definition of multiculturalism. Finally, the third approach, interactive pluralism, realizes the existence of distinct groups and cultures. But in contrast to its fragmented pluralism, it encourages the need to cultivate common understanding across these differences through their mutual recognition and ongoing interaction (Hartmann and Gerteis 2005). This approach lays emphasis on the constant cultivation of cross-cultural dialogue and exchange, as well as on group interaction. The above-mentioned

multicultural approaches “are distinguished not so much by the degree of difference they celebrate or allow but rather by the ways in which they believe difference can be incorporated” (Hartmann and Gerteis 2005: 233).

Anti-Anti-Multiculturalism

“The campaign against multiculturalism reflects a larger social nervousness, a perplexity over the changing racial composition of American society. [...] Demographic studies project that whites will become a minority of the total U.S. population some time during the twenty-first century. Already in major cities across the country, whites no longer predominate numerically. This expanding multicultural reality is challenging the traditional notion of America as white. What will it mean for American society to have a nonwhite majority? (Takaki 1993: 119).

The escalating war against multiculturalism is being fueled by a fear of change. Eller (1997: 250) claims that “anti-multiculturalists fear that the claims and proposals of multiculturalism threaten a “disuniting of America”. They worry that the emphasis on differences over commonalities accentuates or even creates and undermines shared knowledge and values.” In other words, anti-multiculturalists argue that there should only be one common American identity and culture. They fear that the culture they believe in and value will be permanently changed or lost as a result of multiculturalism. Eller (1997) even goes further and suggests that anti-multiculturalists are ethnocentric: “Culture is constructed, negotiated, and contested. Anti-multiculturalists are distressed at having to negotiate something that seemed fairly secure and self-evident until recently, and perhaps at finding themselves on the weak side of the negotiating table. [...] The dangers “of multiculturalism expressed by anti-multiculturalists are slightly exaggerated and that in fact, (anti-anti-) multiculturalists are simply exercising their “natural power to interpret and

transform their culture” (Eller 1997: 255). Also in response to anti-multiculturalist reactions, Shohat and Stame (n.d.) develop a similar argument:

Multiculturalists are accused of pulling people apart, of Balkanizing the nation, of emphasizing what divides people rather than what brings them together. Multiculturalism is seen by conservative writers, educators, and politicians as a threat because it seems to summon “ethnic” communities to form hermetically sealed enclaves. [...] That the current system of power relations within and outside the United States itself generates divisiveness goes unacknowledged; that multiculturalism offers a more egalitarian vision of representation is ignored (Shohat and Stam n.d.: 14-15 cited in Turner 1993: 418).

The United States has become a society composed of multiple racial and ethnic groups. Along with increased immigration –in particular from Latin American countries, such as Mexico– comes the rise in the rates of racial and ethnic intermarriage, which in turn have changed the composition of American society, now characterized by a multiracial population. Currently 1 in 40 persons self-identify as multiracial, and this figure could soar to 1 in 5 by the year 2050 (Lee and Bean 2004). Thus, this increased racial and ethnic diversity brought about by immigration, intermarriage, and multiracial self-identification is shifting the core of American culture and society.

h. Conclusion

So which concept – assimilation, acculturation, biculturalism, or multiculturalism – is most useful for understanding how Latin American immigrants become “Latino” in the United States? Which best describes how Latinidad develops, emerges, and changes overtime? These concepts have evolved in relationship to each other. In this thesis, biculturalism and multiculturalism are considered the most relevant for understanding Latino identity formation at professional soccer games.

Chapter 3: The Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Latinos in the Kansas City Metro Area

The first large influx of Mexicans to Kansas was in early 1900 when the railroads needed laborers to build and maintain railroad tracks. The largest employer of these immigrants in Kansas was the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway. In addition, immigrants worked in the sugar beet industry in Finney County and the meatpacking industry in Kansas City. These immigrants tended to be rural, uneducated and unskilled male workers who could perform hard manual labor. A second influx was triggered by the political instability in Mexico from 1910 to 1920, coupled with the labor shortage created by World War I and the restriction quotas on European immigration. In this second influx, workers' families were beginning to join them and the first Mexican communities in Kansas were created.

According to the Kansas State Historical Society (1996), in 1920 a large group of young Mexican men in Topeka formed a support group called El Diamante Club, which sponsored a baseball and soccer team, held dances, and offered classes in English, Spanish, and arithmetic. By 1930, the number of Mexican immigrants in Kansas was second only to the Germans. Mexican *colonias* formed in rail yards and the nearby main commercial centers, shops and roundhouses. The largest Mexican *colonias* formed in Kansas City (in particular in Argentine), Topeka, Emporia, Wichita and Garden City. However, in response to the Great Depression, the Kansas government encouraged the railroad companies to fire Mexican workers and deport them. Despite efforts on behalf of the Santa Fe Railroad to keep its workers, during the 1930s the Latino population shrank in Kansas City. The following map shows Kansas City's three main Latino barrios.

Map 1: Major Latino Barrios in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area

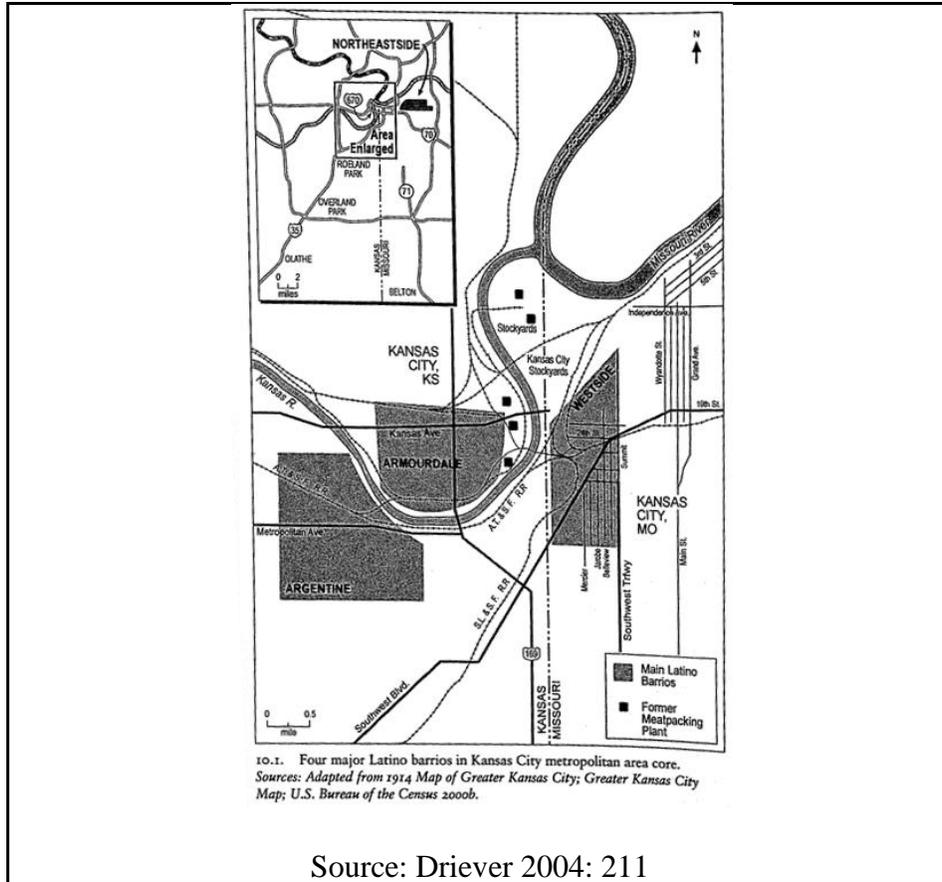


Table 13: Mexican Population of Kansas, 1900-1940

Year	Mexican Population	Mexican and Mexican-American Population
1900	71	-
1910	8,429	8,597
1920	13,770	16,170
1930	11,183	19,150
1940	5,122	13,060

Source: based on Oppenheimer 1985: 434

Most Mexican immigrants in Kansas came from northern and central Mexico, specifically the states of Guanajuato and Michoacán. A survey of 112 Mexicans employed by the Santa Fe Rail Road (SFRR) in Kansas City from 1905 to 1940 estimated that 57% of workers were from Michoacán and Guanajuato. People from the same village or region often settled together in

small barrios. For example, the Argentine barrio of Kansas City, KS included many individuals from Tanganciarco, Michoacán (Oppenheimer 1985). Settling in barrios with people coming from the same country, state, town or even village helped create a sense of community identity, and encouraged mutual support and culture pride in a foreign country.

Mexican communities gradually became stronger and better organized. A steady desire existed to acculturate to American life, but at the same time, a new pride in Mexican heritage and culture was created. These immigrants wanted to be acculturated into some aspects of Kansas society but also wished to maintain their own sense of cultural identity in a society that demanded acculturation. For instance, a weekly Spanish language newspaper, *El Cosmopolita*, began publication on August 22, 1914 in Kansas City and continued until November 15, 1919. According to Oppenheimer, its stated objectives were “to unite elements of the Mexican communities of Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri, to represent the ideals and needs of Mexicans, to create harmony with the Anglo community, and to gain political respect for Mexicans based on United States’ ideals”. The newspaper covered international events, such as the Mexican Revolution and World War I, and national news with an emphasis on stories relating to Mexican immigrants. *El Cosmopolita* is an example of early attempts to organize the Mexican population of Kansas City as well as provide them information on the community’s needs, problems and people (Oppenheimer 1985).

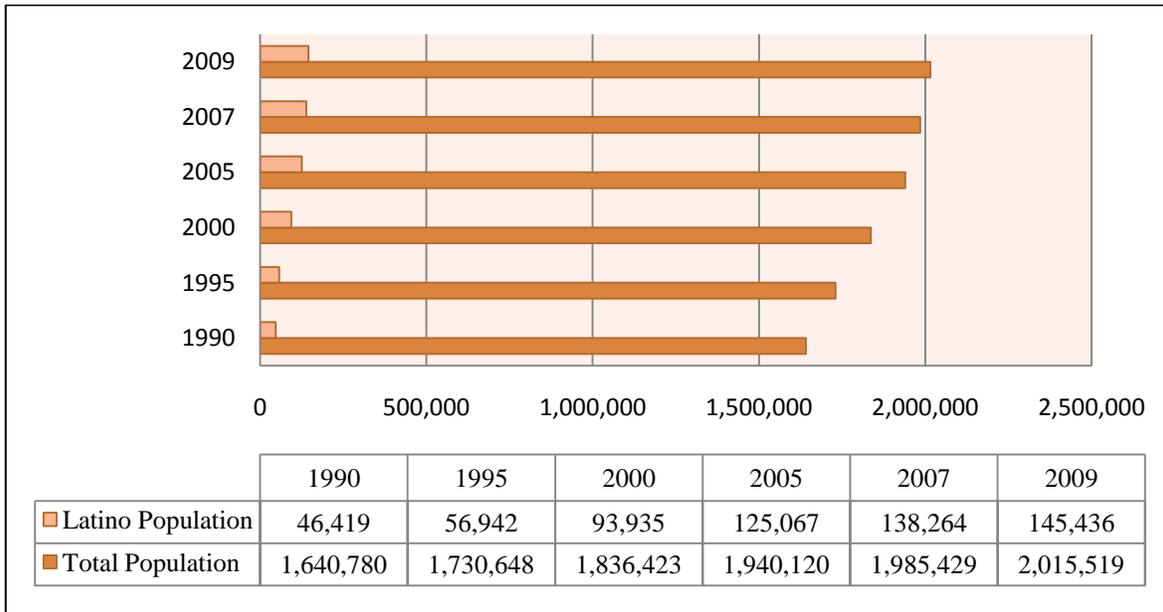
A third immigration influx started in 1941, given that war had once again created a labor shortage. Moreover, an increasing number of Mexican immigrants applied for U.S. citizenship and even enlisted to fight in World War II (Kansas State Historical Society online; Oppenheimer 1985: 434). A fourth influx started in the 1970s as a response to the fall of the Mexican peso in 1981 and the collapse of the Mexican economy. Between 1980 and 1990, the Kansas Latino

population grew by 48% (Kansas State Historical Society's Traveling resource Trunk, "The Mexican American Experience in Kansas" 1996: 46). The Latino population, largely of Mexican ancestry, has become the fastest-growing ethnic group in Kansas since the 1970s (Oppenheimer 1985) and this trend continues to this day.

A fifth immigration influx started in the 1990s due to Mexico's struggling economy exacerbated by NAFTA and also due to recruitment for cheap labor by American companies. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, Hispanic immigration hit its peak between 1999 and 2007. In fact, according to recent data by the American Immigration Council (February 22, 2010), the Latino share of Kansas' population grew from 3.8% in 1990 to 7.0% in 2000, to 8.7% in 2007. As previously mentioned Kansas is one of the "new growth states" and thus, has seen an increase in the foreign-born population. Driever (2004) reports that the Kansas City area has from 1980 to 2008 emerged as the main center of Latino population and activity between Chicago and Dallas. The two charts below show the increase of the Latino population in the Kansas City Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) area from 1980 to 2007, according to Suro and Singer (2002) and the Mid-American Regional Council (MARC). It is important to note how different sources present different data. The Kansas City MSA is a fifteen county metropolitan area between the states of Missouri and Kansas.

The Kansas City's Latino population increased from 46,419 in 1990 to 145,435 in 2009, representing a 213.3% increase (see chart 1). The Kansas City MSA is ranked 58th in the nation in terms of Latino population and, 7.2% of its total population is Latino (Brookings Institution 2008).

Chart 1: Latino Population in the Kansas City MSA



The majority (over 80%) of the Latino population in the Kansas City MSA area is of Mexican origin (2008 American Community Survey; MARC 2007). As a result of this increase in Mexican population, in 2002, the Mexican Consulate in St. Louis relocated to Kansas City, Missouri, so that it could better serve it (Driever 2004). The Consulate of Mexico in Kansas City has jurisdiction over the states of Kansas, Missouri and the western part of Oklahoma. In 2007, most of the *matriculas consulares* (consular ID's) provided by the Mexican Consulate in Kansas City to Mexicans living in the state of Kansas had migrated primarily from the northern states of Chihuahua, Zacatecas, and Durango, as well as the central gulf state of Veracruz. As for the Mexicans living in the state of Missouri, most come from the central states of Michoacán, *el Distrito Federal* (Mexico City), Guanajuato, and the northern state of Chihuahua (see map 2) (www.ime.gob.mx).

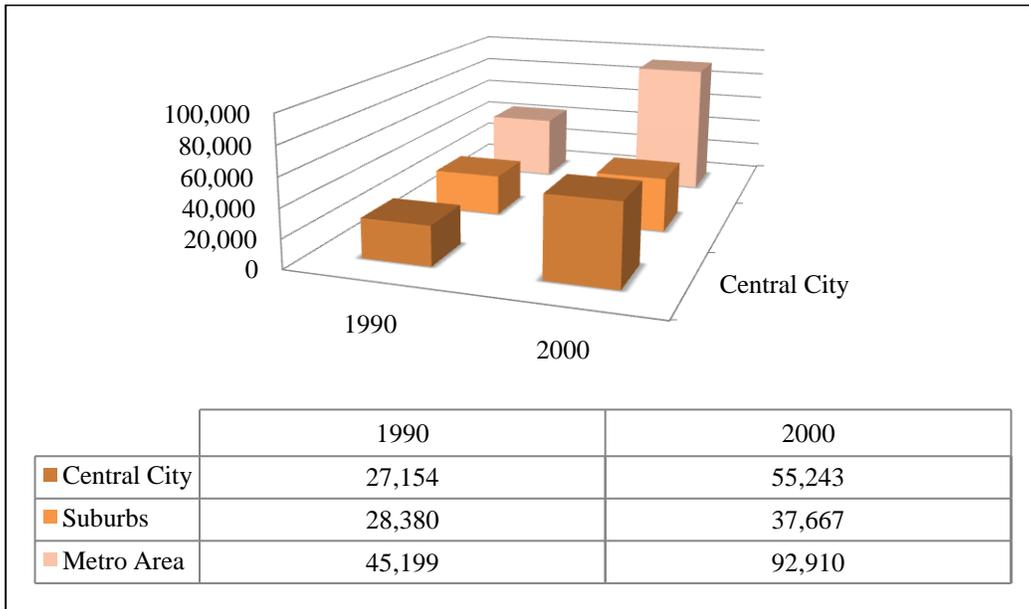
Map 2: Predominant Origin of Mexicans Living in Kansas and Missouri



In addition from being mostly from Mexico, this new cohort of Latino immigrants are by and large married females, under 50 years old (median age of 37.5 in Missouri and 36.6 in Kansas), lives in households with an average of 4.46 members, speak Spanish at home, and have limited English skills. Furthermore, this cohort is mostly employed part-time jobs as low-wage and low-skill workers, has a high school education or less, has an estimated annual household income of \$20,000 or less, and does not have health insurance but relies instead on community health clinics. This cohort has lived in the U.S. for an average of 10 years, and an average of 7 years in the Kansas City area (Celebrating Healthy Families 2008; Garrett et al. 2008; Paulette et al. 2009; Cupertino et al. 2010; Cupertino et al. 2010b; Ellerbeck et al. 2010; Terrazas 2010b).

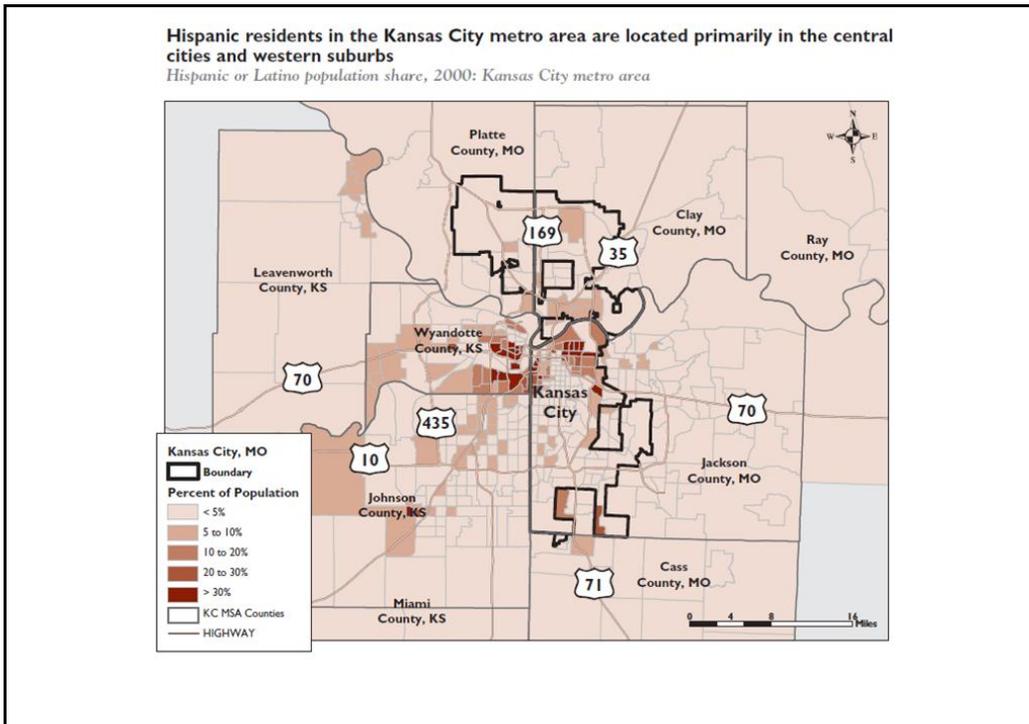
The Latino population growth in the Kansas City MSA is mostly taking place in the central city areas (see chart 2). Nonetheless, Kansas City is also experiencing a slight increase of Latinos in the suburbs with about 47.5% of Kansas City’s Latinos living there by 2000 (Brookings Institution 2003; Suro and Singer 2002).

Chart 2: Growth of Latino Population within the Kansas City MSA



The majority of Kansas City’s Latinos live in the following counties: Jackson County, MO, Wyandotte County, KS, Johnson County, KS, and Clay County, MO. (see map 3; Fry 2008; MARC 2007).

Map 3: Distribution of the Latino Population in the Kansas City Area



Source: The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy (2003: 23).

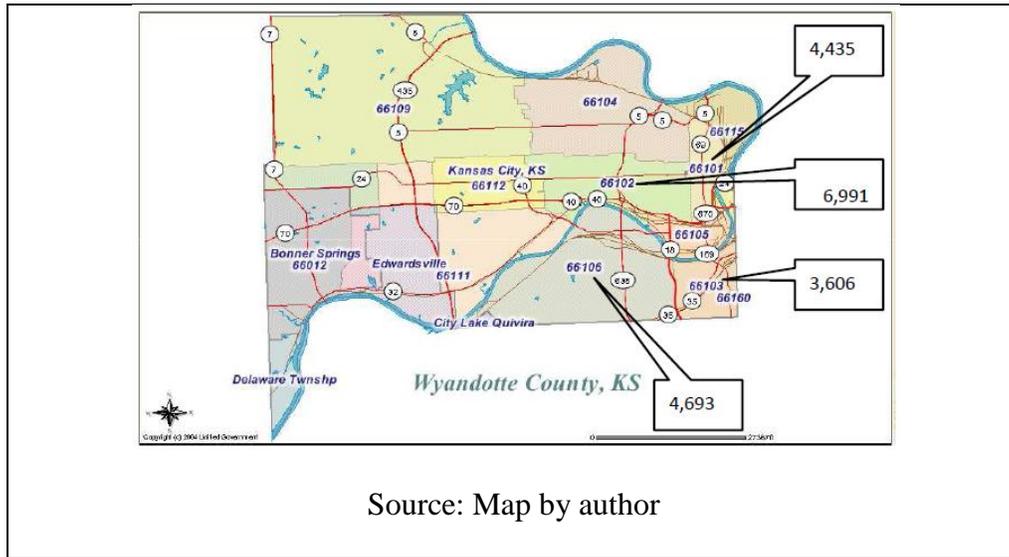
The Latino population of the Kansas City area has tended to cluster in certain neighborhoods. Historically, it settled near the railroad tracks and meatpacking plants, as shown in map 1. Currently, it is establishing new niches in Jackson County, MO and in Wyandotte County, KS. As shown in map 3, in certain geographical areas of Wyandotte County, KS and Jackson County, KS, over 30% of the population is Latino. In Jackson County, MO, Driever (2004) describes how this area is increasingly becoming Latino:

One need only to drive along Independence Avenue, the Northeast Side's main thoroughfare, to observe the evolving retail structure. There are numerous Latino shops, most providing convenience goods to local residents [...]. Along Independence Avenue one can purchase tickets to catch a daily bus to El Paso and Chihuahua; shop for Mexican foods, herbs, and party supplies; enter a Latino sports bar; consult an Asian American dentist with a Spanish-speaking staff; sign up for cable TV in Spanish; send money to Mexico; dance in a Latino nightclub; eat in more than a few Mexican restaurants; and attend church services in Spanish (Driever 2004: 218-219).

Wyandotte County, with an estimated 154,000 inhabitants, is the poorest in the state of Kansas and has a 'majority minority' population (27% African American and 23% Latino) with high rates of poverty, unemployment, poor access to healthcare and excessive morbidity and mortality. Latinos are concentrated in the zip code areas 66102, 66105, 66101, and 66103, as shown in map 4 below. Ironically, Wyandotte County is adjacent to Johnson County, Kansas, the

19th richest county in the United States and the most well off county in Kansas (Greiner et al. 2009).

Map 4: Wyandotte County Zip Codes with a Major Concentration of Latino Population



Kansas City has a thriving Latino population from which to build a consumer base for businesses. Kansas City's Latinos have an increasing purchasing power. In 1997, there were a total of 1,995 Latino-owned firms (*tienditas*, bakeries, clothing stores, restaurants) in the Kansas City MSA. By 2002, this number jumped to 2,252, representing an increase of 11.4%. Among these Latino-owned businesses, the majority are in the fields of retail, construction, services, and health care and social assistance (MARC 2002). The average Latino entrepreneur is originally from Mexico and has received a 12th grade education but no high school diploma. More than half of Latino entrepreneurs have low incomes and limited English skills, and about one third are not U.S. citizens (MERIC 2005).

Among the Latino-owned businesses in the Kansas City area, the majority are located in Johnson County, KS (40%) and Jackson County, MO (36%), while smaller percentages are located in Wyandotte County (15%) and Clay County (9%) (data by MARC, 2002). Drier

(2004) predicts that the Latino population of the Kansas City area will become more decentralized as they progressively spread out from the several core Latino barrios towards suburban areas where Latinos already make up a significant part of the population. In fact, data reveals that about half of new business licenses issued each year in Wyandotte County, KS go to Latinos (Driever in Arreola 2004).

Although not a Latino owned-business, Sun Fresh in Prescott Plaza, in Wyandotte County, KS is one of many examples of businesses targeting Latino consumers. This particular Sun Fresh has shaped the store to appeal to Latino recent immigrants, especially from Mexico. The store has Mexican *norteña* music playing in the background and is organized and displayed similar to a Mexican *mercado*: you will find a fresh produce section, a spices section, a *pan mexicano* (bakery) section, piñatas hanging from the ceilings, and even a fresh *tortilla* stand, similar to a Mexican *tortilleria*. In addition, all signs are in both English and in Spanish (see appendix 1).

The socio-demographic characteristics of Kansas City's Latino population are relevant because they point towards the existence of favorable conditions for local recent Latino immigrants to cope through the complex acculturation process and become bicultural, or even multicultural. These favorable conditions that encourage acculturation while simultaneously preserving cultural ties with Mexico are: i) persistent immigration from Mexico, ii) the establishment of Latino ethnic niches in Jackson County, MO and in Wyandotte County, KS, and iii) the common Mexico sending states.

Chapter 4: Soccer

As explained in the previous chapter, “acculturation” in this thesis is defined as a voluntary, dynamic, two-way process in which recent take in traits from the host country’s culture, while simultaneously maintaining cultural practices from their country of origin. This process can lead to the creation of a hybrid culture, thus leading to bicultural and even multicultural identities. This thesis will explore the process of constructing and expressing a Latino identity among Latino immigrants within the realm of soccer in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

Soccer, *fútbol*, *futebol*, or football, is without doubt, the single most popular sport in the world given its numbers of participants and spectators. Simple in its rules and essential in equipment, soccer can be played almost anywhere, from official football playing fields to gymnasiums, streets, school playgrounds, parks, or beaches. Soccer is a very accessible sport which only requires a ball, an empty field, and at least two people. For all these reasons, soccer tends to gain even more popularity among poor communities. This chapter will briefly review the origins of soccer, its role in current affairs, and subsequently proceed to examine the state of soccer in Latin America and the United States.

Soccer originated in Britain in the 19th century. By the early 20th century, soccer had spread across Europe. As a result, football’s governing body, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) was founded in 1904 by Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. By the 21st century, more than 200 nations were registered FIFA members, which is more than the numbers of countries that belong to the United Nations. Soccer, is important to so many people and nations, and thus has global implications. As such, FIFA’s World Cup is one of the world’s premier tournaments. Soccer’s global importance is even reflected in United Nations documents: In the July 2006 United Nations

Regional Information Centre for Western Europe monthly newsletter, former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, expressed the following regarding the World Cup:

[...] the World Cup makes us in the UN green with envy. As the pinnacle of the only truly global game, played in every country by every race and religion, it is one of the few phenomena as universal as the United Nations. You could even say it's more universal. FIFA has 207 members; we have only 191. [...] The World Cup is an event which takes place on a level playing field, where every country has a chance to participate on equal terms. [...] the World Cup is an event which illustrates the benefits of cross-pollination between peoples and countries. More and more national teams now welcome coaches from other countries, who bring new ways of thinking and playing. The same goes for the increasing number of players who, between World Cups, represent clubs away from home. They inject new qualities into their new team, grow from the experience, and are able to contribute even more to their home side when they return. In the process, they often become heroes in their adopted countries- helping to open hearts and broaden minds. I wish it were equally plain for all to see that human migration in general can create triple wins- for migrants, for their countries of origin, and for the societies that receive them. That migrants not only build better lives for themselves and their families, but are also agents of development- economic, social, and cultural- in the countries they go and work in, and in the homelands they inspire through new-won ideas and know-how when they return (Kofi Annan, Brussels, July 2006).

The above mentioned monthly U.N. newsletter also included an article entitled “A Festival of Migrants”, which emphasized how half of the players at the World Cup are “migrant workers” who earn a living outside their country of birth (Snaevarr 2006: 7).

Soccer is a representational sport: it can represent geographic places such as villages, towns, cities, and nations, as well as race, ethnicity, religion, and gender (Bandyopadhyay 2009). Soccer can be a complex representative of minorities’ statuses, especially in countries where minorities –such as Latinos in the United States- play a crucial role in political, social, cultural or economic life. Soccer, when appropriated by an ethnic group, has provided a means for groups to construct a unique cultural identity while becoming a part of an emerging multicultural nation, such as the United States. As a final point, American soccer has provided an open terrain for new ethnicities to play and compete for cultural space in an emerging nation (Bandyopadhyay 2009).

Soccer has also been shown to generate solidarity and appease stress in times of desolation and tragedy. On January 12, 2010, a 7.0 earthquake shook Port-Au-Prince Haiti, devastating the city, killing as many as 230,000 people, and leaving millions homeless. Haitians directly affected by the earthquake used soccer as a means to temporarily escape from misfortune. What’s more, Haiti’s national soccer stadium was turned into an improvised refugee camp. Joshua Robinson (03/03/2010) reported on Sports Illustrated.com:

“Makeshift tents now overrun the artificial turf under the heavy stench of death and garbage. People bathe on the sidelines, they cook in the dugouts. Every square is precious. Yet, no one dared set up in the penalty area at the southwest end of the field. By some tacit understanding, it isn’t allowed. From sunrise to sundown, that’s where young men and boys play pickup soccer. With spectators for goalsposts, they sprint and sweat and yell and forget their homes lie in ruins. Those

without shoes find one sock to slip on their kicking foot. Those without socks play barefoot. Because when Haiti lost everything, soccer remained.”

The narration above reflects how soccer helped some victims momentarily uphold an optimistic state of mind despite the gloomy circumstances. Moreover, the earthquake drove the United Nations (UN) to help Haiti by means of soccer. As part of reconstruction and relief efforts on behalf of the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) Match Against Poverty -an annual all-star charity soccer game- was held in Lisbon, Portugal on January 25 to raise funds for the victims of the earthquake and focus attention on reducing world poverty by half by 2015 (CNN.com/2010/SPORT/football).

UNICEF believes that sport is an effective trauma therapy for children displaced by war and natural disasters, which is why they distribute UNICEF Recreational Kits to children at relief camps (see figure 1). Since the early 1990’s, the idea of emergency educational and recreational kits has been promoted as a key method by which organizations such as UNICEF can be more effective in meeting children’s rights to education and recreation following an emergency (Abrioux 2006).



Figure 1: UNICEF Recreational Kit

The UNICEF Recreational Kit was developed in recognition of the importance of sports and play in addressing trauma among children affected by war or natural disasters and contains both

indoor and outdoor sports equipment (UNICEF publication (Abrioux 2006). The Recreation Kit is designed to provide that therapy, based on experience gained during several emergencies. The kit is suitable for up to 90 children, who can participate in team sports and games under the guidance of a teacher. It includes balls for several types of games (soccer, volleyball), colored jerseys for different teams and a measuring tape for marking play areas and a whistle and scoring slate, among many other supplies (UNICEF Supply Division 2010). The Recreational Kits have been promptly deployed, allowing for a rapid resumption of structured recreational activities (Abrioux 2006). The examples of Haitians' use of soccer as well as UNICEF's Recreational Kit (which contain soccer balls) demonstrate how sports, soccer in particular, can be therapeutic in stressful circumstances, and instrumental in dealing with the social context.

An ethnography of Garden City High School's 2003-2004 soccer season by Quinones (2007) narrates this last point, that is, how Garden City High School's soccer team became something for immigrant youth to be proud of, especially among Latino students and families, and as a result, a source of pride for the entire town. Soccer opened a door to a better future for Garden City's immigrants. This thesis will attempt to explore whether soccer can have the same positive impact for Kansas City's Latino immigrant population.

a. Soccer in Latin America

In many Latin American countries, soccer, as the national entertainment and pastime, has had major social, cultural, political and economical implications. Soccer first came to South America in the 19th century when European sailors played the game in the port of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Brazil is believed to be the second South American country where soccer was established. British influence in mining and railroads encouraged the founding of soccer clubs in Mexico in the late 19th century. Mexico's national league (known today as *la Primera División*)

was established in 1903 and is the most commercially successful soccer league in North America, attracting players from all over the Western Hemisphere (Encyclopedia Britannica Online). “By the late 1930s, football [soccer] had become a crucial aspect of popular culture in many South American nations; ethnic and national identities were constructed and played out on an increasingly international stage” (Encyclopedia Britannica Online).

Soccer in Latin America has been traditionally and historically more important than it is in the United States. It is a source of nationalism and the only sport in which Latin Americans believe they are better than the U.S. Not until 1994 (the year the World Cup took place in the United States) did this sport gain significant attention in the U.S. Because of the sport’s growing importance here, it has the potential to become a powerful instrument for the acculturation of Latino recent immigrants. Similar to what one would see in even the most isolated communities in Latin American countries, small Latino communities in the United States also organize themselves in soccer teams to maintain social bonds (Quinones 2007).

b. Soccer, the Sport of Immigrants in the United States

Soccer was brought to North America in the 1860s, and by the 20th century, it became a popular sport in American elite universities and schools. It was especially popular in cities with large immigrant populations, such as Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, and St. Louis, and later New York City and Los Angeles with the onset of large Latino migrations. Professional soccer first began in the United States in 1967 with the National Professional Soccer League, which merged with the National American Soccer League (NASL) in 1968. By 1975, the signing of Brazilian (and thus Latino) soccer star Pelé by the New York Cosmos accelerated both the rise and fall of the league. The league’s overexpansion and overspending ultimately led to its failure. The rebirth of U.S. professional soccer began when FIFA awarded the 1994 World Cup to the U.S. As a

result, in 1993, the U.S. Soccer Federation announced the creation of Major League Soccer (MLS). However, due to various organizational problems, MLS did not begin play until 1996 (Jewell & Molina 2005: 162).

“For nearly 100 years soccer has united a divided world- apart from the world’s hyper power, the United States. You can buy a McDonald’s Big Mac on the Champs-Elysées and anything from anywhere in the world on Fifth Avenue, but American sporting culture and the world soccer culture do not mix. [...] The Soccer World Cup draws an audience larger than the Olympics, but rarely registers with American viewers” (Szymanski and Zimbalist 2005: 1).

Despite the financial success of the 1994 World Cup and the abrupt popularity of the national USA team, Americans’ indifferent attitude towards soccer has not significantly changed, as has been expressed by several sports analysts in media outlets such as the Kansas City Star, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, Yahoo! and CNN.com (Rogers 2010; Martin 2010;). Sports analysts seem to agree that American society seems reluctant to import soccer as it is considered a symbol of foreign culture. Despite its undisputed popularity as the world’s number one sport and despite recent successes by the USA national team, soccer in the United States has not yet reached the popularity of other major league sports (Tomlinson and Sugden 1994). Perhaps the failure of soccer to capture the attention of mainstream America lies also in the fact that it is a diverse sport, in terms of both players and the fan base (Collins 2006). Nonetheless, it is important to point out that soccer is slowly growing among younger non-Latino generations but still remains a “foreign professional sport” because it competes with sports having greater traditions here. Most recently, some sports analysts are starting to note that the 2010 World Cup has perhaps made a positive impact on soccer’s stance in the United States. This positive change has been reflected through an increase in World Cup games TV ratings and

the overall support of the national USA team (Schechner 2010; Collins 2010; Goff 2010; Mellinger 2010).

As the world's most popular sport, the game of fútbol, or soccer, enables Latinos to maintain strong social and cultural ties to Latin America. *Fútbol* foments Latino/a pride in communities, preserves cultural tradition and popular folklore, and most importantly, creates a social connection to distant homelands (Shinn 2002: 240). In other words, soccer can create a temporary “home away from home” for Latino immigrants. Stadiums are places where these socio-cultural ties are maintained, and where a particular language and regional or local culture are shared and created (Lefebvrian cited in Gaffney and Mascarenhas 2005).

Soccer has been shown as an agent of social acculturation and integration. In the United States, it has provided a conduit for the construction of an ethnic subculture and cultural identity for minority ethnic communities while they become part of a multicultural nation (Van Rheenen 2009). The construction of this ethnic subculture can be launched at professional soccer games. The formation of a leisure culture can be an important component of an ethnic subculture. Scholars such as Pescador (2004) assert that Mexican immigrants in the United States have envisioned soccer as an invented tradition, a social space where the dominant culture can be contested, transnational ethnic loyalties can be constructed and displayed, and a notion of “Mexicanness” based on the Mexican immigrant experience in the U.S. can be celebrated. In other words, soccer can bring forth the “Latino experience”, or *Latinidad*, among immigrants. Thus, soccer has the potential to become a powerful force in the acculturation process of recent Latino immigrants. The receptiveness of host communities to diversify, however, is a major factor as well.

The creation of the Mexican-owned *Club Deportivo Chivas USA* in Major League Soccer (MLS) in 2004 seems to validate Americans' linkages of soccer to foreignness, as well as the potential of soccer to become an agent of development of a cultural identity. The entry of a Mexican-owned team into MLS was bound to create controversy. Chivas USA is an offshoot of Mexico's Club Deportivo Guadalajara. This MLS club, based in the L.A. suburb of Carson, CA, was originally meant to appeal exclusively to Mexican Americans, Mexicans, and other Latinos living in the U.S., and Spanish was intended to be the club's primary language of business (Wilson 2007: 393). Chivas USA created even more controversy when the club wanted to make the team a "Latin Chivas" and planned to hire only Mexican national and U.S. Latino players (Wilson 2007: 393). The goal was to bring a Mexican style of soccer to the MLS. Ultimately, Chivas USA became racially, nationally, and ethnically diverse, but the very concept of founding and marketing Chivas USA based on nationality and ethnicity was highly controversial. Chivas USA exemplifies MLS' recognition that soccer has a big market among U.S. Latinos, and the connection between soccer and the shaping of a Latino identity in the United States. Chivas USA has since become a cultural landmark in U.S. soccer (Faflik 2006).

The growth of soccer in the United States is generating a sense of "border blurring" among Americans. "Football, in other words, not only has arrived on these shores; it has redrawn America's boundaries and so reconfigured the regional meaning of border (Faflik 2006). "Soccer borderzones" are mechanisms by which immigrants from Latin America adapt to life in their new communities (Wallace 2009). In other words, soccer could have the potential to ease the process of integration into American society. Soccer, thus, become a "contact zone" among Latinos and non-Latino Americans, both on the field (i.e. multi-ethnic rosters) and on the sidelines (i.e. multi-ethnic audience/fan base).

c. Soccer culture and Latinos in the U.S.

Researchers and the public in general might suggest that the support of a national sports team could be used as a variable to determine whether a certain racial/ethnic group has assimilated into mainstream culture. In other words, a Latino immigrant's support of the national USA team could signify a complete assimilation into American culture, and thus, represent a shift in nationalistic loyalty away from their country of origin towards the United States. In contrast, the tendency for Latinos to support Mexican or other non-American national teams is thus taken as a sign that Latinos are not assimilating into mainstream American society. The question of cultural assimilation is critical to the ongoing debate regarding immigration and the influx of Latinos to the United States. Scholars such as Valerio (2010) challenge the case that the choice of a person's favored national team can measure cultural assimilation and loyalty to the United States given that this belief is overly simplistic.

According to them, Latinos (especially first generation ones) will tend to follow non-American national teams and clubs (such as *las Chivas* from Mexico) because support of these teams has been entrenched in their formative years while living in their native countries. Yet, when migrating to the United States, recent immigrants have little incentive to follow the American national team, or even MLS clubs because their rosters may not necessarily reflect these new immigrants demographic characteristics. Why would a Latino support the U.S. national team if no one on the roster looks like them? Why support a team where Latinos cannot identify with the player?

This thesis suggests that support of (non-American) national soccer teams should not be used as a reliable indicator for acculturation. Instead, soccer could provide an entry point towards acculturation. Latino soccer fans are not disloyal Americans when supporting non-American

national teams, but rather, the United States has not provided the opportunities for Latinos and soccer to be incorporated into society (Valerio 2010). The acceptance of soccer by American society could perhaps ease the process of acculturation for Latino recent immigrants, whereas the rejection of soccer due to it being a “foreign sport” might make this process more difficult, and possibly even create social tension. It could also be that the U.S. accepts soccer but not Latino immigrants. This possibility needs to be acknowledged, because it could mean that discrimination reinforces Latinos to seek and fortify their own communities through soccer.

d. Examining soccer in Wyandotte County, KS

Wyandotte County, KS is home to the Kansas City, Kansas Soccer Association (KCKSA, also known as KCK Soccer Association), and the future Kansas City Wizards Stadium Complex at West Village. The KCK Soccer Association targets the Wyandotte County youth and aims to promote youth soccer among the community. In particular, this soccer association targets local Latino youth aged 5 to 19 years and has both a recreational division and premier divisions. The Kansas City, KS Soccer Association, established in 2000, is a not-for-profit recreational youth soccer league sanctioned by the Kansas State Youth Soccer Association, the governing body for youth soccer in the state of Kansas. The KCK Soccer Association website contains information both in English and Spanish for the convenience of recent Spanish-speaking Latino immigrants. The KCK Soccer Association states its missions as such: “This Association shall promote, foster, and perpetuate the game of soccer in Wyandotte County, Kansas City, KS for the benefit of the youth in our youth soccer program. Our goal each season is to provide each player with an enjoyable soccer experience with participation, skill development and team camaraderie” (www.kcksoccer.org).

The KCK Soccer Association's logo is featured in figure 2 below. In the forefront, one immediately notices the American flag posted in the center of a soccer ball, thus highlighting the nationality of the association. Nevertheless, the soccer ball also includes flags from countries where soccer is a popular sport: Sweden, Brazil, Germany, the Netherlands, and most importantly, Mexico, thus giving a nod to the local immigrant population. The logo also features a ring with the official name of the association in both English and Spanish, thus again, indicating the association's multicultural target audience.

Figure 2: KCK Soccer Association Logo



Source: www.kcksoccer.org

The KCK Soccer Association is co-sponsored by a local Spanish-language radio station La Super X 1250 AM and Midwest Sales, a custom screen-printing and embroidery company. The KCK Soccer Association also partners with the KC Wizards and Univision Kansas City for special youth soccer-related events. The KCK Soccer Association formed a partnership with the Wyandotte County, KCK Unified Government Parks and Recreation so that KCK Association soccer practices and league games can be played at the Leo Alvey Park, in Wyandotte County. Jose Zarate, president of the Kansas City Kansas Soccer Association, spoke in its online newsletter about the importance of the soccer academy:

A lot of these kids have soccer in their blood. We don't have to pay a lot for coaches, it is already familiar to them. A lot of these kids play soccer, they love it already. We just need to expose them to it in an organized fashion – in a developed and structured atmosphere and expose them to better clubs such as the

Wizards Academy Juniors so that they can be exposed to some organizations where they hopefully can make a career of it. [...] We are trying to develop kids and make soccer one of the more dominant sports here in Kansas City, Kansas [...]. We are in a very diverse community. We have a lot of cultures here. We need to reach out to those individuals and let them know that there is an opportunity for soccer here. You don't have to pay a lot of money to get involved and have fun (www.kcksoccer.org/KCKSOCCERNEWSLETTER.htm).

In this same KCK Soccer Association newsletter, Santiago Hirsig, a midfielder on the Wizards team and originally from Argentina, was one of the players who spoke with children about their soccer skills: "The kids become more interested in the game as fans. They identify with individual players. They start to have idols. [...] They also get a great example of what it takes to succeed in the game" (www.kcksoccer.org/KCKSOCCERNEWSLETTER.htm). The KCK Soccer Association has also partnered with the Latino Health For All Coalition (LHFA) in order to introduce youth soccer in the urban core of Wyandotte County. The LHFA aims to reduce health disparities by promoting healthy nutrition, physical activity, and access to health care among the local Latino community. The Latino Health for All Coalition began in 2008 to engage community partners in reducing disparities in health outcomes related to diabetes and other chronic diseases among Latinos in Kansas City/Wyandotte community. The University of Kansas Work Group for Community Health and Development (KU Work Group), the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC), and El Centro, Inc. are working with local partners to address these important health issues in the Latino community by promoting healthy nutrition, physical activity, and access to health services (www.myctb.org/wst/latinohealth/default.aspx).

In partnership with the LHFA, the KCK Soccer Association implemented an 8-week soccer camp in the summer of 2010 with the purpose of promoting physical activity among

Wyandotte County's Latino population. The 8-week program registered 81 youth ranging in age from 6 - 15 years old. Featured in the KCK Soccer Association 2010 newsletter was a statement by Santiago Hirsig, Kansas City Wizards midfielder (originally from Argentina), regarding Latino youth involvement in soccer through KCK Soccer Association's soccer camps: "You can see the parents here on the sidelines supporting the kids and this gives them the sense that they can come here in a safe and secure environment and enjoy themselves and learn new skills" (<http://www.kcksoccer.org/KCKSOCCERNEWSLETTER.htm>). The KCK Soccer Association 2010 newsletter also included a June 2010 story from the local newspaper *Hispanic News* of a Mexican immigrant mother whose children found pride in the national soccer teams and players of both Mexico and the USA as a result of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

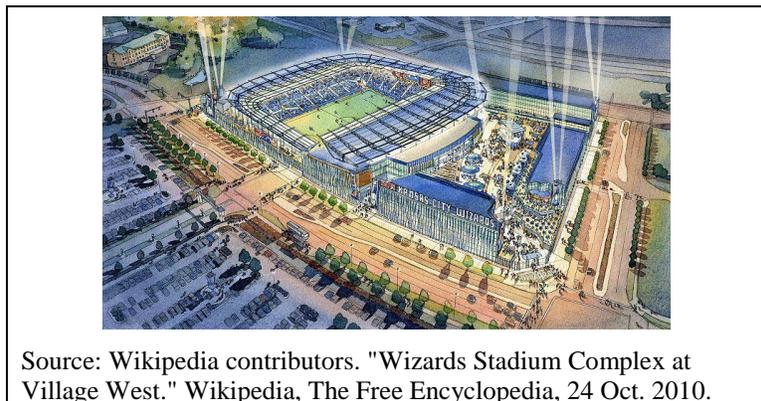
"Thanks to the Cup and this program the kids are enthused to practice a sport which is good to exercise the body and where they can improve their skills". Alcantara believes the television exposure of the World Cup has focused attention on the most popular organized sport in the world. "The kids are enthused to get out here and practice after they watch the games. Before it was not like this. It was hard to get them interested. They have followed the teams of their home country and they want to mimic their heroes." She told *Hispanic News* that her children were supporting the USA at the beginning and added the Mexican team when they saw their parents and friends rooting for Mexico. "Now that the two teams, Mexico and USA are out, we are supporting the Latino teams that are left. Like you say, this only comes around every four years." (<http://www.kcksoccer.org/KCKSOCCERNEWSLETTER.htm>).

The KCK Soccer Association's youth soccer camps seek to empower Wyandotte County's Latino community. The KCK Soccer Association, in partnership with the Latino Health For All Coalition (LHFA), are working to introduce youth soccer in the urban core of Wyandotte County

with aims to reduce health disparities and engage the local Latino immigrant community in a fun, low-cost, family-friendly activity. KCK Soccer Association's soccer camps have shown to be an agent of social integration because they aim to engage Wyandotte County's Latino youth and parents in a popular Latin American leisure activity, while simultaneously encouraging families to maintain healthy lifestyles, and so, alleviate the complex acculturation process.

In Wyandotte County, KS, the Kansas City Wizards will open the first authentic soccer stadium in Kansas City in the summer of 2011 with a capacity of 18,500 seats (see image). "What does that mean? Our venue will be the first soccer stadium in North America to combine the best attributes of European and South American soccer stadia with the modern fan amenities American sports fans desire" (www.kcwizards.com/new-stadium).

Figure 3: Wizards Sports Complex at Village West



Wyandotte County, KS is currently -and will likely maintain itself that way in the future- the Kansas City metropolitan area's most dynamic Latino zone. Wyandotte County is shifting from a marginal ethnic niche to becoming a well-established community and engine of socio-economic development.

e. Conclusion

While some argue that “loyalty to soccer” in general can be a way for Latino immigrants to resist assimilation and full incorporation into American culture, others believe that sports –soccer in particular- function as “vehicles of identity” which provides individuals with a sense of self-identification as well as the classification of others. Soccer in the United States is a “testing ground for Americans across the hemispheric West to engender a sense of culture.” Under the right circumstances, soccer could bring Latinos and non-Latinos together, rather than keep soccer supporters apart (Faflik 2006).

This thesis will be based on the approach that Latinidad, as an expression Latino identity, is ever-emergent and that soccer -as a venue or recreational activity- can facilitate cultural exchange in the U.S. This thesis will examine whether soccer in Kansas City can trigger this expression of Latinidad, and consequently, spark unity among Latinos in the United States. It will also see how non-Latino individuals perceive Latinidad within the context of soccer. In particular, this thesis will describe how the expression of Latinidad happens at certain events, under certain circumstances, and, can potentially inspire unity and empowerment among Latinos. This thesis will: 1) describe demographic and social characteristics of Latinos living in the Kansas City metro area, 2) study soccer’s status in the Kansas City area, 3) explore through semi-structured interviews socio-cultural factors that influence Latino identity, and 4) determine through ethnography if there are factors that promote situational Latinidad at soccer games in the Kansas City area.

This thesis will be using an external categorization of Hispanic/Latino, and does not necessarily reflect how people self-identify. In other words, instead of using specific ethnic labels such as “Mexican”, “Salvadorian”, or “Cuban”, this thesis will use “Latino”. Furthermore, Latinidad will be used as a cultural expression of this Hispanic /Latino ethnic identity.

Chapter 5: Methods

Besides the socio-demographic data elaborated above, this study used participant observation at professional soccer games in Kansas City. Participant observation is a qualitative method that aims to gain close access and familiarity with a group of individuals or a community for the production of an ethnography (Tedlock 1991; Atkinson and Hammersley 1994). Participant observation completed for this thesis occurred at two Kansas City Wizards practices, three home Kansas City Wizards games and a *División Mexicana* (Mexican Division) soccer game, which also took place in Kansas City. This study relies heavily on ethnography and literature reviews.

Fieldwork consisted of observing two KC Wizards practices and four local games between September 13th, 2008 and September 16, 2009. While the Wizards practices were used as a starting point to become acquainted with the Kansas City Wizards' mission and commitment to the local Latino community, local games were chosen as the main fieldwork site because they are known to attract large crowds of Latino immigrants keen on enjoying live soccer games. The *División Mexicana* game was included because a large Latino crowd was expected.

Along with observation at soccer games and Wizards practices, semi-structured interviews, photographs taken during fieldwork, and the collection of Spanish and English-language written materials such as newspaper articles were added to the study. At Wizards practices, in addition to interviewing staff members and players, I observed team group dynamics, (in particular the interaction between the Latino and non Latino players), and language use among them. During these practices, I would stand on the sidelines of the practice field and take notes. I also was given the opportunity to assist in two weekly press conferences in which selected Wizards players and the head coach gave the media and press team updates and discussed upcoming games and other events related to MLS and the Wizards.

Fieldwork at both local Wizards soccer games and the *División Mexicana* game started with tailgating and subsequently consisted of sitting through the entire game, wandering around the stadium at halftime, taking field notes of everything seen and heard, taking photographs of noteworthy events, and paying special attention to the social dynamics among the audience at the stadium, including the manner of cheering (standing up vs. sitting down, for example), goal celebrations, snack and beverage consumption, language spoken, the use of banners and flags, and clothing. Attempts were made to approach randomly selected individuals at the stadium and have casual and informal conversations about the game. In sum, data was collected through interviews with the audience, Kansas City Wizards staff members and players, and also through observation, photographs, and written materials. Table 13 below illustrates the exact location of the approximately 12 hours of fieldwork done for this study.

Table 14: Field Work at Soccer Games in Kansas City

	Ethnography 1: Wizards vs. LA Galaxy	Ethnography 2: Wizards vs. Chicago Fire	Ethnography 3: Wizards vs. D.C. United	Ethnography 4: Chivas vs. América
Location	Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, MO.	Community America Ballpark, Kansas City, MO.	Community America Ballpark, Kansas City, MO.	Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, MO.
Date	September 13, 2008	October 5 th , 2008	October 24, 2008	September 16, 2009
Duration	Aprox. 130mins : 30 mins for tailgate 90 mins of the game 10 mins after the game	130mins	130mins	130mins
Highlight(s)	David Beckham on the LA Galaxy roster	Cuauhtémoc Blanco on the Chicago Fire roster	None	<i>División Mexicana</i> game

Interview Sampling

This study's small convenience sample incorporated a total of 20 participants: 14 randomly selected fans and six members of the Kansas City Wizards organization (two Kansas City Wizards staff members, and four Wizards players). The latter six were pre-selected by a main informant who -at the time fieldwork was taking place- was the former Wizards' Director of Corporate Partnerships.

Regarding the selection of the 14 participants, individuals were approached at soccer games and asked if they were willing to provide feedback on topics related to soccer and Latinos. No individual who was approached refused to participate in this study. All 20 participants gave oral consent to participate in this study. Participants varied in age, gender, and interview language, ranging from primarily Spanish speakers, bilinguals, users of *Spanglish* (code switching between English and Spanish, to English only).

To understand the complexity of Latinidad, 16 Latinos and four non-Latino respondents were incorporated to include different perspectives regarding the relation between soccer, Latinos, and the expression of a Latino ethnic identity at soccer games. Having several perspectives may help to put study's findings in a broader context. Despite this study relying on a small and not necessarily representative sample, this sample helped obtain information that complemented findings obtained through observation during fieldwork and literature reviews.

Table 15: Race and/or Ethnicity of Participants

20 Participants	Ethnicity	N=20	%
	Latino	16	80
	Non-Latino	4	20
	Country of Birth	N=20	%
	US-born	12	60

		Mexico	5	25
		Colombia	1	5
		Nigeria	1	5
		Latin America	1	5
14 Audience members				
		Ethnicity	N=14	%
		Latino	11	78.57
		Non-Latino	3	21.43
		Country of Birth	N=14	%
		US-born	7	50
		Mexico	5	35.71
		Colombia	1	7.14
		Nigeria	1	7.14
2 Kansas City Wizards Staff				
		Ethnicity	N=2	%
		Latino	1	50
		Non-Latino	1	50
		Country of Birth	N=2	%
		US-born	2	100
4 Kansas City Wizards Players				
		Ethnicity	N=4	%
		Latino	3	75
		Non-Latino	1	25
		Country of Birth	N=4	%
		US-born	3	75
		Latin-American born	1	25

Procedures

Out of fourteen fans interviewed, thirteen participated in face-to-face interviews during tailgating, halftime, and after the game, and three interviews were done electronically, using the social network site Facebook. I started by briefly explaining the purpose of my project, and then proceeded to ask for oral consent to participate in the study and take notes of the interviews. The interviews with audience members ranged from 10 to 30 minutes; the shorter interviews (20

minutes or less) took place during tailgating, half time, or right after the games, while the longer interviews (ranging from 20 minutes to 30 minutes) took place while seated, during the game. All interviews took place in an informal setting.

Participants were asked open-ended questions in their language of preference (Spanish or English), such as “Why are you at this game?”, “Do you like soccer?”, and “Are you a Kansas City Wizards fan?” Respondents that were selected at soccer games were asked questions about the Kansas City Wizards’ promotion of Latinidad in Kansas City, Latino identity and soccer, and reasons why they attended the game. Respondents that were interviewed electronically were referred to this study through word of mouth. They were asked the same questions, and were also asked if they attended any local soccer games. Given that these particular questions were open-ended, key words were detected among all responses and then were categorized into sub-topics in order to distinguish recurring patterns and trends.

Measures

Before beginning the interview, I briefly explained the purpose of the interview and subsequently asked for permission to audio record the interviews. In cases in which a participant stated unease with the interview being audio recorded, I put the device away and only took notes. Overall, I found that taking notes was more efficient than audio recording the interviews, and most importantly, made the respondents more comfortable. All participants were guaranteed anonymity. To protect their privacy, no names will be used. However, given that my research involves the opinions of subjects from an identifiable organization such as the Kansas City Wizards, and ethnicity and position within the Wizards organization can be ascertained, the issue of recognizability remains delicate. While no individual is definitively recognizable, some readers familiar with the Wizards organization may have strong hunches. I sought to balance

confidentiality without compromising the quality of the ethnographies. Table 15 below provides more detailed information about the interviews with Wizards staff and players.

Table 16: Interviews with Kansas City Wizards Staff & Players

Participant	Former Wizards Director of Corporate Partnerships	Wizards Fan Relations	Wizards Players (4 total)
Location	Swope Park Training Facilities	Telephone interview	Swope Park Training Facilities
Interview Format	Semi-structured	Informal conversation	Semi-structured
Aprox. Duration	50 minutes	10 minutes	10-15 minutes
Language	<i>Spanglish</i>	English	English, Spanish, and <i>Spanglish</i>
Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who's the Wizards' target audience? • How do the Wizards reach the Latino public? • How do you advertise for the Latino public? • Are Latino players considered as cultural icons in the local Latino community? • Do you think the Wizards promote/encourage "Latinidad" among local Latinos? • How are the team dynamics among Latinos and non-Latinos? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who's the Wizards' target audience? • How do the Wizards reach the Latino public? • Diversity among the Wizards roster and the audience? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What country are you from? • Do you self-identify as Hispanic/Latino? Why? • Which of the following traits characterize you as Latino/Hispanic? (nationality, language, customs & traditions, religion, family heritage, other) • Do you feel part of Kansas City's Latino community? Why? • Do you perceive yourself as a local Latino cultural icon? • Are you socially involved with the Latino community? If yes, how so? • In your opinion, which of the following aspects unite Kansas City's Latino community? (church, sports, bars & clubs, social events, media, schools, community organizations, other).

Chapter 6: Results: Soccer in the Kansas City Metro Area

a. Results: Semi-structured interviews

This section will present data obtained by means of semi-structured interviews with the participants interviewed for this study, including the Wizards staff, Wizards players, and randomly selected audience members. The four KC Wizards players that agreed to participate in this study completed semi-structured questions featured in table 17.

Table 17: Interviews with Kansas City Wizards Players

	Participant #1 Anglo	Participant #2 Latin-American- born	Participant #3 Latin-American- born	Participant #4 U.S.-born Latino
Self-identified Latino?	“Even though I am not Latino, I identify with the Latino community”.	Yes.	Yes.	Yes.
What characteristics define a Latino/Hispanic?	Nationality, language, customs and traditions, family heritage.	Nationality, language, customs and traditions, religion, family heritage, culture and music.	Nationality, language, customs and traditions, family heritage.	Nationality, language, customs and traditions, family heritage, and food.
(If self-identified as Latino) Do you feel part of Kansas City’s Latino community? Why?	Yes.	Yes.	<i>Mas o menos</i> (more or less)	Yes.
Are you socially involved with the Latino community? If so, how?	Yes.	Yes.	No.	Yes.
In your opinion, do Latinos see you as a cultural icon/role model?	Yes.	No.	No.	Yes but no.
In your opinion, what factors unite Kansas City’s Latino community?	Church, sports, radio, newspapers, television, and community organizations.	Sports, social events, radio, newspapers, television, public schools, community organizations, and Mexican restaurants.	Sports, social events, radio, newspapers, television, community organizations, and soccer events (Wizards-related barbeques and other things for kids and	Church (<i>más o menos</i>), sports, bars and clubs, social events, radio, newspapers, television, schools, and community organizations.

			adults).	
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As previously explained in the theoretical concepts chapter, defining Hispanic and Latino is a complex task. As suggested in a previous chapter, geography, identity, culture, and politics are used to identify Latinos/Hispanics in the United States, who are a heterogeneous social group. The category Hispanic/Latino is a broad social construct reflected in the interviewed Wizards’ characterizations (see table 2). Even though the interviews with the KC Wizards players are secondary to this study, their responses provide some background information on whether they felt that local Latinos were treating them as cultural icons or not. The KC Wizards’ definition of “Latino” can be linked to their sense of belonging to the Latino community, as well as their self-perception as local Latino cultural icons (see tables below).

Table 18: "In your opinion, what characteristics define a Latino/Hispanic?"

<u>Participant #1 (Anglo)</u> Nationality, language, customs and traditions, family heritage. “These are just general guidelines but there can be exceptions.”
<u>Participant #2 (Latin-American-born)</u> Nationality, language, customs and traditions, religion, family heritage, culture and music.
<u>Participant #3 (Latin-American- born)</u> Nationality, language, customs and traditions, family heritage.
<u>Participant #4 (U.S.-born Latino)</u> Nationality, language, customs and traditions, family heritage, and food. “You are not a full Latino if you don’t speak Spanish.”

All four participating Wizards asserted that nationality, language, customs and traditions, and family heritage are key characteristics that identify a Latino. However, while one player’s definition seemed to be more flexible and encompassing, another’s appeared more rigid and

focused on Spanish-language. The Wizards players’ varying characteristics of Latinos point out how a heterogeneous group of individuals from different nationalities and language preferences (English or Spanish) can jointly identify as Latino. With this said, this thesis will proceed to expose the factors that according to the interviewed players unite Kansas City’s Latino community (see table 19).

Table 19: “In your opinion, what factors unite Kansas City’s Latino community?”

<p><u>Participant #1 (Anglo)</u></p> <p>Church, sports, radio, newspapers, television, and community organizations.</p>
<p><u>Participant #2 (Latin-American-born)</u></p> <p>Sports, social events, radio, newspapers, television, public schools, community organizations, and Mexican restaurants.</p> <p>However, the participant did comment on the serious lack of communication between the local Latino media, which in turn directly affects the promotion of Wizards’ games: <i>“La radio no trabaja bien, hay una falta de promoción, de comunicación, y de un lugar Hispano”</i> (The radio doesn’t work well, there is a lack of endorsement, of communication, and of a Hispanic place).</p>
<p><u>Participant #3 (Latin-American- born)</u></p> <p>Sports, social events, radio, newspapers, television, community organizations, and soccer events “[Soccer events] like Wizards-organized barbeques and other things for kids and adults.”</p>
<p><u>Participant #4 (U.S.-born Latino)</u></p> <p>Church (“<i>más o menos</i>” -more or less-), sports, bars and clubs, social events, radio, newspapers, television, schools, and community organizations.</p>

When the participating Wizards players were asked what factors unite Kansas City’s Latino community, some gave specific examples of venues, organizations, and media outlets. To start with, all four Wizards players identified *Cinco de Mayo* fiestas and the celebration of Independence Days of Latin American countries as specific social events that can potentially unite Kansas City’s Latino community. Two thirds mentioned the radio stations *La Playa, La*

Grande and *La Ke Buena*, as well as the television channels *Univision*, *Telemundo* and *Metro Sports*. Moreover, two Wizards players mentioned the *Guadalupe Center* (see below) as an example of an institution that brings together the Kansas City Latino community. Lastly, one Wizards player assertively mentioned the Catholic Church as a central piece, while another hesitantly said: “*La iglesia? Hmm, más o menos*” (The church? Hmm, sort of). The KC Wizards’ responses highlight institutions that foster Latinidad in Kansas City, which in turn could encourage the development of bicultural identities among recent Latino immigrants. Subsequently, this thesis will further examine these above-mentioned establishments. Although the establishments that the interviewed KC Wizards players think foster Latinidad are not directly relevant to the issue whether soccer enhances a Latino identity, the players surmise that they complement the role played by soccer. The Kansas City Wizards organization does partner with local Latino media outlets, community organizations, and youth soccer associations to reach out to Kansas City’s Latino immigrant adults and youth.

b. Latino Media Outlets and Community Organizations

Large mainstream media outlets tend to only report major Latino events such as *Cinco de Mayo* celebrations and *Fiesta Hispana* (Hispanic heritage month) in September, which tend to reinforce traditional stereotypes about Latinos (Driever 2004). On the other hand, the local Latino media focuses on issues and events that concern the entire Latino population, such as racial profiling and discrimination, immigration, local Latino entertainment events, news from Latin America and the Caribbean, and ethnic pride. The Kansas City area has two bilingual newspapers (*Dos Mundos* and *KC Hispanic News*), five Spanish-language radio stations (*La Playa*, *La Gran D*, *Ke Buena*, *La Super X* and *La Doble Z*), and one Spanish-language television channel (*Univisión 48*). It is worth mentioning that the Kansas City Wizards host a weekly

Spanish-language radio show called “Zona Wizards” on La Gran D 1340, airing Wednesdays at 8:00pm during MLS season. Univision has been at the forefront of the creation of a national "Hispanic Market," capitalizing on the fact that Latinos are an attractive, commercially viable market segment (Rodriguez 2010).

Network research conducted by Univision shows that most of its audience consists of Latin American immigrants, yet Univision also has a significant audience made up of Latinos who have lived in the United States for years but prefer to view television in Spanish. Most of the immigrant audience members are from Mexico, though an increasing proportion is Central American. A smaller portion of the Univision audience is composed of more acculturated, bilingual Latinos. The most watched Univision programs are *telenovelas* and *Noticiero Univisión*, a nightly national newscast that includes Latino-related news from the United States and Latin American countries (Rodriguez 2010). In a show of at least passive affinity if not conscious support for Univision among Kansas City’s Latinos, they can sometimes be seen wearing Univision shirts, including at soccer games, as seen in Appendix 6.

All Kansas City Wizards players highlighted the importance of community organizations such as El Centro and the Guadalupe Center. These “offer a full range of services to Latinos and many low-income non-Latinos as well. They essentially provide the same services and activities to either side of the state line” (Driever 2004: 221). El Centro, Inc. was established in 1976 by a grant from the Archdioceses of Kansas City, KS and has locations in Kansas City, Argentine, and Olathe. Its mission is to address the socio-economic needs of Kansas City’s Latino residents by means of family support services, senior programs, domestic violence intervention, pre-K education, policy advocacy, home buyer education, and an academy for children (www.elcentroinc.com), among other services. Likewise, the mission of Guadalupe Center, Inc.

is to “create and sustain educational, social and economic opportunities for families” through community affairs programs, health services, education, a culinary school, and youth and recreation activities (www.guadalupecenters.org).

The administrators of community organizations such as Guadalupe Center or El Centro are community leaders. The Guadalupe Center and El Centro not only serve as intermediaries between the Latino community and local institutions (like the government and hospitals), but like local Spanish-language media, may also serve as agents of acculturation and sources of empowerment for recent Latino immigrants.

Soccer

As a final point, all four KC Wizards players expressed that sports is a key element that potentially can unite Kansas City’s Latinos, and two players emphasized that the Wizards could play an important part in this. One player in particular mentioned that aside from Wizards games themselves, soccer-related events such as “Wizards-organized barbeques and other things for kids and adults” can also strengthen the engagement between the KC Wizards and the local Latino community. The four participating Wizards were also asked whether they felt part of the Kansas City’s Latino community and if they were socially involved with the latter. Tables 20 and 21 below feature players’ responses.

Table 20: (If self-identified as Latino) “Do you feel part of Kansas City’s Latino community? Why?”

<p><u>Participant #1 (Anglo)</u></p> <p>“Yes. [...] Because I do interviews [with Latino/Spanish-language media outlets], promote the Latino community, and help.”</p>
<p><u>Participant #2 (Latin-American-born)</u></p> <p>“Yes”. Participant did not elaborate further.</p>
<p><u>Participant #3 (Latin-American- born)</u></p>

<p>“<i>Mas o menos</i> (more or less) because I’m new in Kansas City.”</p>
<p><u>Participant #4 (U.S.-born Latino)</u></p> <p>“Yes. [...] As a Latino and a Wizard I have a strong commitment with the Latino community.”</p>

Table 21: “Are you socially involved with the local Latino community?”

<p><u>Participant #1 (Anglo)</u></p> <p>“Yes, because of soccer in the city. The Wizards include the community and target the Latino audience.”</p>
<p><u>Participant #2 (Latin-American-born)</u></p> <p>“Yes”. Participant did not elaborate further.</p>
<p><u>Participant #3 (Latin-American- born)</u></p> <p>“No. I don’t know what to do. [...] I would like to do summer after-school activities with Hispanics.”</p>
<p><u>Participant #4 (U.S.-born Latino)</u></p> <p>“Yes, through the Wizards, [...] as speakers with kids.”</p>

The Wizards players’ responses seem to show a correlation between feeling part of Kansas City’s Latino community and being socially involved with the latter. These findings highlight a correlation between the interviewed players’ feelings of belonging to the local Latino community and their social involvement as Kansas City Wizards players.

MLS welcomes a fan base of an estimated 40% Latinos and openly courts Latinos fans, capitalizing on the game’s popularity across Latin America while promoting the growth of soccer in the United States (Shinn 2002). MLS’s Latino marketing strategies include the implementation of Hispanic Heritage Nights, recognition of local Latino celebrities and icons,

and donations of a portion of ticket revenues to local Latino scholarship funds and/or non-profits. As part of their marketing strategy, MLS also astutely acquires renowned Latin American and as U.S.-born Latino players to attract Latino audiences. Practically all MLS teams have Latinos on their rosters, either U.S. born or internationals (Shinn 2002). Participants interviewed at soccer games were asked their opinion regarding MLS’s acquisition of Latino players (see table 22). The opinion of two Latinos and one African-American are featured because despite their different racial and ethnic background, their responses highlight how a Latino player on MLS rosters could appeal to the Latino community.

Table 22: “In your opinion, are Major League Soccer teams contracting Latino players because they are a good (business) deal, or because it’s an MLS attempt to attract a Latino fan base?”

<p><u>Latino participant</u></p> <p>“I think it's a sweet <i>trifecta</i>. First, I think you get a high quality player because in the US the best athletes go to basketball, football and baseball first. And many Latin players wouldn't mind living in the US. Second, possibly you could also acquire a player from Latin America for a cheaper initial price then an equal American player in skill. Not sure if this is true. You saw in baseball that happening with players from Dominican Republic. Maybe not as much now but at the beginning yes. Third, it appeals to the Latino community fan base. It is the fastest growing demographic in the US and it's also the youngest at an average of 4 years younger I think. And culturally soccer is more popular. This is who I would appeal to in terms of dollars.”</p>
<p><u>African-American participant</u></p> <p>“MLS teams are trying to attract Latino players because they want to attract a Latino fan base. The problem is that Latino players are superstars in their country of origin and are paid very well. If the players were to come to the US and play, they would be virtually unknown in a sport that is not really mainstream in the US. Not only would the players lose their popularity, but they would also not be able to receive the same type of compensation and opportunities to be spokesmen for large companies.”</p>
<p><u>Former Director of Corporate Partnerships</u></p> <p>“<i>Necesitamos un jugador Mexicano!</i> [...] Pero traer a un jugador de Mexico cuesta mucho dinero” (We need a Mexican player! [...] But bringing a player from Mexico costs a lot of money.”</p>

According to the former Director of Corporate Partnerships for the Kansas City Wizards, despite the fact that the racial/ethnic composition of the audience varies depending on the game, the Wizards fan base is Latino in its majority, among which one third consists of Latino males between the ages of 18 and 34. He expressed how important it is for the Wizards, as a business enterprise that centers on athletics and recreation, to cater to the Latino market.

“Es importante entender nuestra audiencia e integrarnos al mercado Latino. MLS, los Hechizeros, y el fútbol en los Estados Unidos se dirigen al mercado Latino, la Raza! Cada partido [de los Wizards] debe de ser enfocado a los Latinos. Es importante invitar a la gente a que adopten a los Wizards como su propio equipo. Por eso los boletos son accesibles y se adaptan al estilo de vida de los Latinos.” (It is important to understand our audience and become part of the Latino market. MLS, the Wizards and football in the United States focus on the Latino market, on la Raza! Each [Wizards] game should focus on Latinos. It is important to invite people to adopt the Wizards as their own team. For this reason, tickets are accessible and compatible with Latinos’ lifestyle).

Among Latin American and U.S.-born Latino players, Cuauhtémoc Blanco is the most popular and highest paid Latino soccer player in MLS, giving him star status among Latino fans. Blanco has played for the *Selección Nacional* (Mexican national soccer team) in two World Cups, and has found economic success with the MLS’ Chicago Fire, which is why he is now perceived both in Mexico and in the U.S. as an icon and role model by soccer enthusiasts.

KC Wizards players, one KC Wizards staff member, and one participant gave noteworthy opinions when asked whether the KC Wizards players were perceived as role models among the Latino community in Kansas City (table 23). The responses of the KC Wizards staff member and participants were similar in that the lack of a Mexican player on the Wizards roster translates in a lack of a local Latino role model. In contrast, the responses among the Wizards players were

varied: while two players did express being perceived as a local role model, one player denied this. In fact, one of the KC Wizards players who did express perceiving himself as a role model is actually an Anglo individual who pointed out that despite not having any Latin American or Latino heritage, he did identify with the Latino community.

Table 23: “Do you perceive yourself as cultural icon or role model in the local Latino community? Why?” (KC Wizards players)

<p><u>Anglo Wizards player</u> “Soccer is a huge part of the community. If you are successful on the field, then you will earn the community’s respect. [...] As soccer players, we are a face within the community. Being recognizable is just a bonus”.</p>
<p><u>U.S.-born Latino Wizards player</u> “As soccer players, [they] are a face within the community” and are “somebody who people look up to, especially kids. [They] give hope to lower income Latinos”.</p>
<p><u>Latin-American-born Wizards player</u> “They see me as just Latino.”</p>
<p><u>Former Director of Corporate Partnerships</u> “<i>Los jugadores son muy accesibles a la comunidad. Pero también se necesita a un jugador mexicano para capturar a la audiencia Latina</i>” (Players are very accesible to the community. But a Mexican player is also needed to capture the Latino audience.</p>
<p><u>Participant from Colombia</u> “<i>La Pulga López es el único que sobresale porque fue a un mundial. Ya era famoso antes de venir aquí con los Wizards. No espera, le dicen “el Piojo”. El hecho que ni yo se como le dicen indica que tan poco famoso es, y que tan poco populares son los Wizards entre los Latinos</i>” (“The Flea” López is the only one that stands out because he went to a World Cup. He was already famous before coming here with the Wizards. No wait, they call him “The Louse”. The fact that not even I know how they call him indicates how little famous he is, and how little popular the Wizards are among Latinos”.</p>

The ethnographies subsequently presented will serve to explore the expressions of Latinidad at soccer games, and help determine whether they indicate acculturation, biculturalism, and/or multiculturalism.

c. Ethnographies

This section will narrate the ethnographies and observations done at four professional soccer games in the Kansas City area to explore the expressions of Latinidad at soccer games and

determine whether they indicate acculturation, biculturalism, and/or multiculturalism. On Sunday October 5th 2008 at 7:00 pm, at the Community America Ballpark, the Kansas City Wizards played a game against the Chicago Fire. This particular game attracted many Latino spectators because Chicago's roster included Mexican *barrio* idol Cuauhtémoc "Cuau" Blanco (see appendix 2). In addition, Sunday evening is an ideal day (and time) to schedule a soccer game given that a) it is likely that people are not working and b) it is tradition in many Latin American countries to watch soccer on Sundays. The atmosphere outside the Ballpark that evening was outstandingly Latino: big *trokas* blasting loud Spanish-language music crammed the parking lots; fans were proudly waving giant Mexican flags, while others were listening to Mexican *Ranchera* music. Stepping into the Ballpark felt like stepping into another country: fans were waving Mexican flags and wearing giant *sombreros* and Cuau jerseys from all the teams he has played with, including Fire, América (as shown in appendix 2), Necaxa, and la *Selección Mexicana*. The presence of a couple of Argentinean flags can be associated with the presence of Argentinean Wizards player, Claudio "El Piojo" López. The broadcasters announced that this game was sold out, with 10,385 *aficionados* present. The broadcasting of the game was bilingual: *first* in Spanish, *then* in English. Team jerseys from *la Liga Mexicana de Fútbol*, Mexican flags, *sombreros*, and the abundant use of Spanish (with a strong Mexican accent) seen and heard suggesting that the greater part of the Latino audience was of Mexican origin. Insults directed at the rival team and the referees were reminiscent of the way people watch soccer games in Latin America.

On September 13, 2008, the Wizards played a game against L.A. Galaxy at Arrowhead Stadium. This game was of particular importance given that at that time, David Beckham was on the Galaxy roster. David Beckham is an internationally renowned soccer player and sex symbol,

so anticipating massive attendance, the game was held in a large football stadium instead of at the Community America Ballpark. Based on an overall impression, unlike the audience at other games I attended, this game's audience was roughly half male and half female, ranging from little children to older adults, and mostly non-Latino. The majority of the audience was wearing Beckham and Wizards jerseys. Nonetheless, I did notice a significant amount of Latino male adults, who appeared to have attended the game in small groups. These Latinos were mostly wearing professional Mexican soccer team jerseys, as opposed to Beckham or Wizards jerseys (see appendix 3). At this game, Latinos displayed ethnic pride through their Mexican soccer team jerseys. It is worth mentioning that Latinos' way of cheering at this game was very different compared to the other observed games: while at other observed games Latinos cheered in a very enthusiastic and loud manner, the Latino audience came across as quiet and almost prudent.

On October 24, 2009, the Wizards played a game against D.C. United at the Community America Ballpark. Based on an overall impression, the audience was roughly half Latino and half non-Latino, and composed mainly of male groups, ages 16 to 35 (estimated). One U.S.-born Latino participant expressed the following regarding the presence of mostly males: "There are no Latinas because it's [soccer] a man's sport." A particular part of the audience that stood out at this game was The Cauldron, which is the Wizards' official fan club that has a designated seating area at the Ballpark. Similar to that game's overall audience, The Cauldron's audience was approximately half Latino and half non-Latino. The majority of this fan club's members were wearing Wizards jerseys and many had their faces painted white and blue, the colors of the Wizards. This part of the audience was very loud, constantly yelling, chanting and insulting the opposing team, similar to a soccer audience in Latin America. The Cauldron's reserved section was decked with oversized banners saying "Wilkommen zu ihrer Blauenhölle" (welcome to your

blue hell) and “Forza Wiz” (Wiz Force). Unlike other Wizards games, the broadcasting at this particular game was only done in English. A Latin American-born participant expressed the following regarding The Cauldron: “*Esa porra tiene bastante disciplina dentro de su relajado. ¿Pero cuál es el punto de venir [a un juego] si no puedes echar porras como en América Latina?*” (That fan club is much disciplined within their chaos. But what’s the point of coming [to a game] if you can’t cheer like in Latin America?).”

On Mexico’s Independence Day (Wednesday, September 16, 2009) at 8:30 pm, two famed Mexican clubs – Club Deportivo de Guadalajara (Chivas) and Club América - played an *amistoso* (non-conference) soccer game, better known in Mexico as the “*Super Clásico Nacional*” at Arrowhead stadium (see appendix 4). A reported 26,119 fans attended. Groups of Latinos tailgating at the stadium’s parking lot sported *Selección Mexicana* (the national team), Chivas, and América team jerseys and waved large team flags. There was a predominance of Mexican pop culture and patriotic symbols such as a live appearance by a Mariachi band and a Mexican folklore dance group during halftime, Mexican flags, sombreros, *División Mexicana* jerseys, *Chapulín Colorado* t-shirts, and *luchador* masks (see appendix 5). *Lucha Libre* is a Mexican form of professional wrestling; its masked performers are known as *luchadores* and are a central part of Mexican popular culture.¹

At this particular game there was more excitement and enthusiasm compared to the other three observed games. This game was narrated in Spanish only, in the same way games are narrated in Latin America, more than ever when the narrators yelled “*Goooooooool!!!!*” Despite being on American soil, Spanish was the dominant language and Mexican popular culture was the main culture of reference, which explains why several participants expressed: “*se siente*

¹ *El Chapulín Colorado* is a 1970s Mexican television series about a parodied superhero, *Chespirito*, whose costume consisted of a red t-shirt with a yellow heart with the letters “CH”.

como en México” (it feels like Mexico). The *Super Clásico Nacional* saw an overwhelming amount of Latinos, a small number of Anglos, and a scarcity of audience members wearing Wizards jerseys. As a final point, this ethnography highlights the noteworthy presence of Latino fans from Garden City, Kansas. I was informed by one Latino participant (from Garden City) that a group of approximately 18 Latinos from Garden City, KS (including adults and children) drove from Garden City to Kansas City for approximately 7 hours (or about 400 miles) just to see the *Chivas vs. América* game (see appendix 6). The recurrent display of Latin American (Mexican in particular) signs of patriotism, combined with the sporadic display of American culture indicators (see table 8), suggest that the Latino audience at the *Super Clásico Nacional* game was possibly expressing a bicultural identity (e.g. Mexican and American) or even multicultural (e.g. Mexican, American, and Latino) (see appendix 7).

Table 23: Indicators of Biculturalism and/or Multiculturalism at the Super Clásico Nacional

Flags	Apparel	Language Use	Drink & Food	Festivities
Latin American flags (Argentina and Mexico)	Mexican sombreros	Use of Spanish, English, and Spanglish	Drinking Bud Light beer	Mariachis and Mexican folkloric dance troupes
Sporadic display of American flag	Team jerseys from <i>la Liga Mexicana de Fútbol</i>	Banners making reference to Univision	Eating nachos, hot dogs, and drinking soda	Blowing <i>trompetas</i> (long horns)
	Mexican <i>luchador</i> masks	Banners making reference to Garden City, KS	Tailgating on stadium parking lots	Celebration of Mexico’s Independence Day (September 16)
	<i>Chapulín Colorado</i> t-shirts			
	Wearing patriotic “Mexico” t-shirts			
	Jerseys of Latin American soccer players (Cuau Blanco and “El Piojo” Lopez)			

To gauge whether a positive sense of Latinidad was at least one reason why fans attended some or all of the games, participants in this study were asked the open-ended question of why they were in attendance. Table 25 below includes some of the most informative responses.

Table 24: "Why are you at the game?"

<p><u>Wizards vs. LA Galaxy</u></p> <p>“I’m here to watch Beckham play. But there’s no passion here [at Arrowhead stadium] like in Latin American games! [...] I mean, just the names of MLS teams: Dynamo? Wizards? Those are crappy names! It’s not like in Latin America with <i>Cruz Azul</i> or <i>Boca Juniors</i>!!”</p> <p>Soon after a participant expressed the comment above, another participant added: “This is the loudest it’s been, when they throw free t-shirts. There’s just no passion like in Latin America!”</p>
<p><u>Wizards vs. Chicago Fire</u></p> <p>“<i>Nosotros venimos a ver jugar al Cuau!</i>” (We came to see Cuau play!)”</p>
<p><u>Wizards vs. D.C. United</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “[<i>Los Latinos</i>] vienen por dos razones: Primero, por entretenimiento y distracción. Segundo, para ver futbol. Pero los Latinos no vienen a ver a los Wizards. No se identifican con ellos [<i>los Wizards</i>]. En cuanto a este juego, vienen [<i>los Latinos</i>] por el Piojo López. La Pulga –así le dicen- es el único [<i>jugador</i>] que sobresale porque fue a un mundial. Ya era famoso antes de venir aquí [<i>a Kansas City</i>]. [<i>Latinos</i>] They come for two reasons: First of all, for entertainment and distraction. And second of all, to watch soccer. But, Latinos don’t come to see the Wizards. They [<i>Latinos</i>] don’t really identify with them [<i>Wizards</i>]. As to this game, they [<i>Latinos</i>] come because of el Piojo López. La Pulga –that’s what they call him- is the only one that stands out because he went to a World Cup. He was already famous before coming here [<i>to Kansas City</i>].” - “They [<i>the Latino audience</i>] are very quiet right now. So what’s the point of coming if you can’t cheer like back home?!” - “They [<i>Latinos</i>] come for entertainment. Day and time are a factor. Most Latinos in Kansas City are immigrants and work late. They [<i>Latinos</i>] go more to games on weekends. Besides, this game is just a regular game, there is nothing outstanding at this game, or no popular Latino players in the other team.”
<p><u>Super Clásico Nacional</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “<i>Yo solo vine a ver fútbol!</i>” (I just came here to watch soccer!) - “The main reason I’m here [at the game] is because I’m with my boyfriend [a Latino from Garden City, KS, whom was also interviewed] and to just check it [the game] out.”

- *“Vine con la familia -con mi marido, los niños y algunos parientes- aunque no le vaya a nadie. Nos enteramos del juego por la radio. A pesar de que no le vayamos a ningún equipo, venimos por el fútbol. Es un buen momento para estar con la familia.”* (I came with my family- with my husband, the kids and some relatives- even though I am not cheering for anybody. We found out about the game through the radio. Despite the fact that we are not cheering for any team, we came because of soccer. This is a good time to get together with the family.)
- *Manejamos como 6 o 7 horas desde Garden [City] para venir a ver el juego. Yo vine a apoyar a los equipos de México. Hay que promover el fútbol de México aquí [in Kansas City]. Aquí hay un ambiente festivo!* (I came here to support teams from Mexico. We must promote soccer from Mexico here. There’s a festive atmosphere here!)
- “I came here to watch real soccer even though I’m not a fan of any of the teams playing. In my opinion, MLS [Major League Soccer] is not real soccer. In fact, it’s kind of boring. Even though I am not Hispanic –I’m actually from Nigeria- I can somehow relate to Hispanics’ passion and patriotism with soccer because the same thing happens in Nigeria. The environment is amazing and exciting!”
- *“Las gringas vienen al juego acompañadas de Latinos, pero no ves a gringos acompañando a Latinas. De hecho, los pocos gringos que vinieron al juego están en grupos. Además, the only people wearing Wizards jerseys son blancos. Y son muy muy pocos.”* (Anglo women come to the game accompanied by Latinos, but you don’t see Anglo males accompanied by Latinas. In fact, the few Anglos who came to the game are in groups. Besides, the only people wearing Wizards jerseys are whites. And they are very very few.)

Table 9 highlights how participants attended soccer games to watch “real soccer”, as well as support Mexican soccer teams and popular Latino players. Another recurring comment is that games are “family-friendly entertainment” and therefore attended games with family members and friends with the purpose of spending quality time in a convivial setting. Finally, participants’ comments emphasized the contrast between Anglos’ and Latinos’ soccer passion and ways of watching live soccer games.

The findings presented indicate that in addition to the favorable conditions that encourage the maintenance of cultures of origin –such as the establishment of Latino ethnic niches in Jackson County, MO and in Wyandotte County, KS, the availability of local Spanish-language

media outlets, and community organizations serving Latinos- soccer, as demonstrated by the KC Wizards and the KCK Soccer Association, could help recent Latino immigrants acculturate while simultaneously preserving their cultural ties with their country of origin, and as such, develop bicultural and/or multicultural identities. This will be explored in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 7: Discussion & Final Conclusions

This thesis explored the premise that Latinidad is an ever-emergent expression of Latino culture in the United States. In other words, Latinidad is an expression of a sense of identity and belonging to an ethnic group. Furthermore, soccer can be a venue facilitating the merging of cultures as it can bring together Latino immigrants from different countries. This thesis examined soccer's ability to trigger the expression of Latinidad among Latinos in the U.S. Using literature review, ethnographic observation, and semi-structured interviews, this thesis explored the relation between soccer and the expression of Latinidad among Latino immigrants. First, it traced Latinos' presence in the Kansas City MSA in the past century. Second, it described how the expression of Latinidad happens at certain events, under certain circumstances, and, can potentially reflect unity and empowerment among Latinos. Soccer games in Kansas City were perceived as a realm in which expressions of Latinidad might be triggered.

1. Summary of the study

This thesis 1) described the demographic and social characteristics of Latinos living in the Kansas City metro area, 2) studied soccer's status in the U.S. and the Kansas City area, 3) explored through semi-structured interviews local institutions that influence Latino identity, and 4) explored through ethnographies factors that motivate situational Latinidad at soccer games in the Kansas City area.

This thesis underscored the complexity in defining what it means to be Latino in the United States. As reflected in the semi-structured interviews, the category "Hispanic/Latino" is a broad construct which includes components such as nationality, language, customs and traditions, family heritage, among others. This study is based on the premise that Latin American and/or Caribbean immigrants do not have a Latino identity in their home countries. Latino

identities are constructed as a result of their immigrant experience in the United States. Before migrating to the United States, Latino identity is vague, and initially individuals tend to identify themselves with their countries of origin.

As reflected in the semi-structured interviews with Wizards players and executives, the category “Hispanic/Latino” in Kansas City is a broad construct which includes components such as nationality, language, customs and traditions, and family heritage, among others. Even though the majority of the United States’ and Kansas City’s Latino population is of Mexican descent, it is important to keep in mind that despite this commonality, the Latino population, including those of Mexican descent, remains culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse, and as such, Latinos may self-identify in different ways (e.g. Latino, Mexican, Mexican American). Being Latino is more than being Mexican, or Dominican, or Colombian; Latinos in the U.S. unite all Latin American and Caribbean countries. This thesis found that soccer is one way to convene the expression of a Latino cultural identity, e.g. *Latinidad*. Future studies should explore the construction of a Latino identity and expression thereof by way of soccer.

This thesis examined the utility of the theoretical concepts of assimilation, acculturation, biculturalism, and multiculturalism for explaining the process of becoming Latino in the U.S. This thesis found that biculturalism and multiculturalism, in which an individual can manage multiple identities in the acculturation process, were the most compelling. Findings indicate that the acculturation process, among recent immigrants at least, involves the construction of a Latino identity that is neither of the national origin country nor “American,” as opposed to the assimilation model, which posits a full absorption of a homogenous American identity. Assimilation tends to be defined as a unilateral, one-way process in which a cultural group fully internalizes the dominant culture and abandons all traces from the culture of origin. In contrast,

acculturation was defined as a voluntary, dynamic, two-way process in which a cultural group adopts elements of the dominant culture while features of the culture of origin may be preserved. This thesis found support for the more complex concepts of biculturalism and multiculturalism, in which individuals created and practiced new identities using the soccer cultures of both their origin and host societies. The expression of this newly acquired Latino identity was referred to as *Latinidad*, a result of interaction between Latinos of different countries and adapting to the U.S. setting.

This study explored the acculturation process leading to the construction of bicultural or even multicultural identities within the realm of soccer. This study found that individuals practice and identify with two (biculturalism) or multiple (multiculturalism) cultures depending on the context. As established by this study's ethnographies, Latinos attending soccer games showed indicators of biculturalism or even multiculturalism by means of flags from Latin America and the U.S., apparel (Mexico's national soccer team jerseys), language use (Spanish, English, and Spanglish), drink and food consumption (tailgating and drinking Bud Light), and festivities such as celebrating Mexico's independence day. In addition, ethnographic observations done at the Chivas vs. América game at Arrowhead stadium highlighted the display of Mexican pop culture and patriotic symbols (e.g. Mexican flags, sombreros, *Chapulín Colorado* t-shirts, and *luchador* masks) combined with the sporadic display of American culture indicators (e.g. display of the American flag, drinking Bud Light beer), suggesting an expression of a bicultural (e.g. Mexican and American) or even multicultural (e.g. Mexican, American, and Latino) identity.

As stated in the theoretical concepts chapter, shared language, socio-economic conditions, religion, country of origin, marginalization, and even discrimination have the

potential to generate a broad but common “Latino immigrant experience.” Latinidad can thus be interpreted as the conscious recognition and expression of this commonality, which may be result in unity, cohesion, and empowerment among Latinos.

This thesis found that soccer, as the world’s most popular sport, can provide a common experience and set of meanings from which to contribute to the construction of Latinidad in the U.S. As identified in this study, soccer foments Latino pride within their new communities and creates a social connection to distant homelands. As demonstrated by the KCK Soccer Association and the Kansas City Wizards, soccer has shown to tool for identity formation, as will be further explained subsequently.

2. Kansas City’s Latino population

The Latino population in the Kansas City MSA has been increasing steadily between 1980 and 2009. The majority of the Latino population in the Kansas City MSA is of Mexican origin and has tended to cluster in certain geographical areas of Wyandotte County, KS and Jackson County, KS. The Kansas City metro area –Wyandotte County in particular- has shown to offer favorable conditions for recent Latino immigrants to cope with the complex acculturation process. These include: i) persistent immigration from Mexico to the Kansas City area over more than a century, ii) the establishment of Latino ethnic niches in Jackson County, MO and in Wyandotte County, KS, iii) the commonality of Kansas City’s Latino immigrants migrating from northern Mexico (predominantly Chihuahua), and iv) the availability of local Spanish-language media outlets, community organizations serving Latino immigrants, and soccer (as demonstrated by the KC Wizards and the KCK Soccer Association). These enable recent Latino immigrants to acculturate to American culture while simultaneously preserving cultural ties with their country

of origin, and as such, construct a Latino identity. As demonstrated in previous chapters, Wyandotte County, KS in particular is progressively becoming a Latino ethnic niche.

3. The role of soccer among Latinos in Kansas City

Using the theoretical constructs of assimilation, acculturation, biculturalism, and multiculturalism to explain how the burgeoning Latino population in the Kansas City MSA is adapting to their host country, this thesis explored how Latino ethnic identity can be expressed through soccer. Soccer is one venue that can bring forth a “Latino experience” or *Latinidad* among Latino immigrants in Kansas City. Combined with the favorable geographic conditions previously mentioned, soccer has shown to be a space that could facilitate the complex acculturation process as well as a conduit for the construction of a Latino identity among immigrants in the Kansas City area. Latino immigrants’ “loyalty to soccer” should not be perceived as resisting assimilation. Instead, it is possible that soccer in the U.S. serves as a vehicle of identity formation that provides Latino immigrants a sense of commonality, resulting in new identities.

At a commercial level, the Kansas City Wizards are working to empower Kansas City’s Latino community. Complementing community organizations, media outlets, and businesses targeting Latino immigrants, the KC Wizards are becoming an agent of unification and a source of empowerment for local Latinos. As expressed by the former Director of Corporate Partnerships for the Kansas City Wizards: *“Es importante entender nuestra audiencia e integrarnos al mercado Latino. MLS, los Hechizeros, y el fútbol en los Estados Unidos se dirigen al mercado Latino, la Raza! Cada partido [de los Wizards] debe de ser enfocado a los Latinos. Es importante invitar a la gente a que adopten a los Wizards como su propio equipo. Por eso los boletos son accesibles y se adaptan al estilo de vida de los Latinos.”* (It is important to

understand our audience and become part of the Latino market. MLS, the Wizards and football in the United States focus on the Latino market, on la Raza! Each [Wizards] game should focus on Latinos. It is important to invite people to adopt the Wizards as their own team. For this reason, tickets are accessible and compatible with Latinos' lifestyle).

Moreover, the KC Wizards are working on becoming a source of pride and affiliation for Kansas City's Latinos. Interviewed KC Wizards players expressed the importance of being strongly committed to Kansas City's Latino community as professional soccer players: "Soccer is a huge part of the community. If you are successful on the field, then you will earn the community's respect. [...] As soccer players, we are a face within the community. Being recognizable is just a bonus" (as expressed by an Anglo KC Wizards player). Despite these interviewed soccer players stating that they would like to be perceived as positive Latino role models, this thesis found that the lack of a Mexican player on the roster hinders the possibility of the KC Wizards having an even greater impact on the local Latino culture. Considering that the greater part of Kansas City's Latino population is of Mexican origin, a Mexican soccer player on the KC Wizards roster could not only become a key marketing tool for the organization, but most importantly, serve as a key liaison between the KC Wizards and the local Latino community. This study's findings indicate that the absence of a Mexican player on the Wizards roster influences the Kansas City's Latinos attendance at Wizards games.

Professional soccer games featuring famous Latino players on rosters –such as Cuauhtémoc Blanco- capture large Latino audiences. Thus, famous Latino players have the potential to spark the expression of Latinidad. Bringing on big icon names can also attract the interest of non-Latinos. By doing so, soccer could create a common bond among Latinos and non-Latinos. As expressed by one Nigerian participant at the *Super Clásico Nacional* (Chivas

vs. América) game: “I came here to watch real soccer even though I’m not a fan of any of the teams playing. In my opinion, MLS [Major League Soccer] is not real soccer. In fact, it’s kind of boring. Even though I am not Hispanic –I’m actually from Nigeria- I can somehow relate to Hispanics’ passion and patriotism with soccer because the same thing happens in Nigeria. The environment is amazing and exciting!”

On August 13, 2010, the bilingual newspaper *Dos Mundos* announced on their website that the Kansas City Wizards had signed Mexican international and *Club Deportivo Guadalajara* player Omar Bravo. Bravo is scheduled to join the Wizards for the 2011 pre-season (Morales 2010). Even though the Wizards may not appear to act as a unifying force among the Kansas City Latino community, the recent acquisition of Omar Bravo could possibly serve as a starting point in establishing a positive and profitable alliance between the KC Wizards and Kansas City’s Latino community. It is possible that featuring Omar Bravo on the KC Wizards roster could potentially boost ticket sales given that Latinos will most likely support this Mexican player, as has been demonstrated with Cuauhtémoc Blanco with the Chicago Fire.

4. Soccer and Latinidad

Soccer is a source of pride and nationalism for many Latin Americans. It is probably the only sport in which Latinos and/or Latin Americans believe they are better than Americans, based on international soccer championships such as the FIFA World Cup. Soccer games are spaces where Latinos can come together to enjoy *fútbol*, express their ethnic identity, reminisce about their homeland, and create a temporary “home away from home”. Ethnographic observation found a joint display of Mexican and Latin America patriotism at soccer games on behalf of Latinos by means of: Mexican and other Latin American flags, Mexico’s official soccer jersey, Mexican soccer club jerseys (in particular several Cuauhtémoc Blanco jerseys), Mexican sombreros, and

luchador masks. Ethnographic observation also found indicators of acculturation and American patriotism by means of tailgating, parking lot barbeques and grilling, drinking Bud Light beer, and waving the American flag. In sum, ethnographic observation found a collective display of Mexican, Latin American, and American pride and patriotism by Latinos attending the observed soccer games. As a result, this thesis found that soccer- through the use of nostalgia, flags, anthems, and ceremonies- contributes to the expression of Latinidad. In view of that, soccer is a conduit for identity formation among Mexican and other Latin American immigrants in the U.S. Scholars should further research the impact soccer may have in American society.

The presence of a large number of Garden City Latinos at the Chivas vs. America game bears particular mention. They had travelled with family and friends for approximately seven hours from Garden City to Kansas City just to see the game. Garden City is located in Finney County in Southwest Kansas. Approximately 45% of Finney County's population is Latino, and about 65% of Garden City's population is also Latino (Pew Hispanic Center 2008; U.S. Census Bureau 2008). Quinones' (2007) ethnography of Garden City High School's 2003-2004 soccer team narrates how soccer in Garden City's High School soccer team became a source of pride for Latino youth, their families, and the entire town. Soccer opened a door to a better future for Garden City's immigrants, and encouraged a sense of ethnic pride. Thus, the attendance of the Garden City residents at a Mexican national game in Kansas City may reflect how soccer can inspire a sense of ethno-national unity.

Quinones' (2007) ethnography correlates with this study's findings in that soccer in Kansas City has the potential to: 1) unite immigrants from Latin American and/or the Caribbean despite cultural, ethnic and racial differences, 2) serve as an agent of support throughout the complex acculturation process, and 3) allow Latino immigrants to construct a multifaceted

Latino ethnic identity while simultaneously respecting their cultural heritage. This thesis found that within the realm of soccer, a Latin American and/or Caribbean immigrant's process of becoming Latino, characterized by the expression of distinct cultural identities (e.g. Mexican, Mexican-American, Latino) may result in bicultural and/or multicultural identities.

5. Limitations

This study was exploratory and relied on a small, biased, non-random sample. The disadvantage of a small convenience sample is that it may not necessarily be representative of the studied population (i.e. the individuals attending Wizards games). The non-random selection of participants also does not guarantee that the sample was free of bias. Moreover, due to the diversity of the Latino population, these findings should not be compared to other Latino communities in other American cities. Nonetheless, despite the data's limitations, this study does reflect general trends identified by other scholars.

6. Future Studies

The complex process of acculturation presents numerous challenges and can benefit or adversely affect the health of immigrants and subsequent U.S.-born generations. High levels of acculturation among Latinos are associated with several negative health-related behaviors and outcomes, such as: illicit drug use, alcohol consumption, smoking, unhealthy nutrition and dietary patterns, and worse birth outcomes. Conversely, acculturation is also associated with improved access to health care and use of preventive health services among Latinos (Abrido-Lanza et al. 2006; Allen 2007; Floyd 2008; Garcia et al. 2007; Lara et al. 2005; Ornelas et al. 2010).

Latinos are also less likely to have health insurance and as such, have lower access and use of health care compared to non-Latino whites. Possible reasons explaining this disparity are

socio-economic and linguistic barriers, racial/ethnic background, legal status, time and transportation limitations, and distrust towards health care establishments. Consequently, the Latino immigrant population bears a disproportionate risk of experiencing chronic diseases, such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases (Floyd 2008; Rodriguez et al. 2009; Rodriguez and Vega 2009; Vega et al. 2009).

The Mexican government's commitment to assist Mexicans who live and work abroad led to the creation of the *Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior* (IME), or, the Institute for Mexicans Abroad, in the 1990s. The IME is a decentralized agency of Mexico's Foreign Ministry whose overall purpose is to support the development of Mexican communities abroad by delivering an array of civic, health, education, recreational, cultural, and financial services (www.ime.gob.mx; Cantellano et al. 2008; Laglagaron 2010).

The IME considers that physical activity encourages social cohesion and strengthens the organizational capacity of Mexican communities abroad. By means of partnerships with Mexican Consulates in the U.S., community organizations, schools, and sports organizations, the IME implements *Ferias de Deporte* (sports health fairs) for the Mexican migrant community throughout the United States and include activities such as soccer and baseball. Between 2007 and 2008, more than 30 *Ferias de Deporte* were implemented in the U.S. (Cantellano et al. 2008; www.ime.gob.mx).

Community outreach programs could improve the health status among Latino migrant communities by helping them cope with the challenges of the acculturation process (Ornelas et al. 2010; Rhodes et al. 2007). Existing community structures such as Latino soccer leagues are a potentially effective way to reach Latino immigrants of all ages (Allen 2007). In the Kansas City area, the LHFA Coalition has shown to be a successful example of Latino health key

stakeholders uniting to address health disparities among the local Latino community. The LHFA Coalition works together to reduce diabetes and cardiovascular disease among Latinos in the Kansas City urban area by promoting healthy nutrition, physical activity, and access to health services.

One of the LHFA Coalition's efforts to promote physical activity and a healthy lifestyle is the KCK Soccer Association's 2010 summer soccer camps targeting Latino youth (ages 3-12) in Wyandotte County, KS. The implementation of these summer soccer camps aims to making Wyandotte County Latino youth more physically active by means playing informal soccer and enhancing knowledge of the game (Schober and Zarate 2010). This thesis recommends that public health care providers partner with community organizations and binational institutions (such as the IME) to further study how soccer, as a culturally relevant activity, can facilitate Latinos' complex acculturation process and positively modify their health behaviors.

Both local organizations (e.g., KCK Soccer Association and the LHFA Coalition) and the Mexican government (by means of the IME) realize the importance of soccer for promoting health among the Latino immigrant population. Considering that soccer is an arena where multiple identities and loyalties come into play, and that these can go in more than one direction (i.e. bicultural or multicultural), soccer in the U.S. is an arena where bicultural and/or multicultural identities and loyalties can emerge.

Few scholars have focused on the social significance of organized sports among Latino communities in the United States. Instead of focusing on the assumptions that organized sports, especially soccer, is a way to maintain Latin American traditions and identities in the U.S., further research should study if and how organized sports among Latino communities are

influencing the creation of new traditions and identities. The popularity of soccer among Latinos should be further researched in order to develop strategies to empower the Latino community.

7. Final conclusions

In summary, this thesis described the socio-demographic characteristics of Latinos living in the Kansas City MSA, who are mostly of Mexican origin and have tended to cluster in certain geographical areas of Wyandotte County, KS and Jackson County, KS over the past century. Subsequently, this thesis explored soccer's status in Kansas City and found that soccer has shown to be an agent that can facilitate the complex acculturation process as well as become a conduit for the expression of a Latino identity among Latin American and/or Caribbean immigrants to Kansas City. To end, this thesis found that within the realm of soccer, a Latin American and/or Caribbean immigrant's process of becoming Latino, characterized by the construction and expression of distinct cultural identities (e.g. Mexican, Mexican-American, Latino) may in fact result in bicultural and/or multicultural identities.

Appendix 1



Sun Fresh in Wyandotte County, KS (photo by author).

Appendix 2

Wizards vs. Chicago Fire
Community America Ballpark, Kansas City, MO.
October 5th, 2008



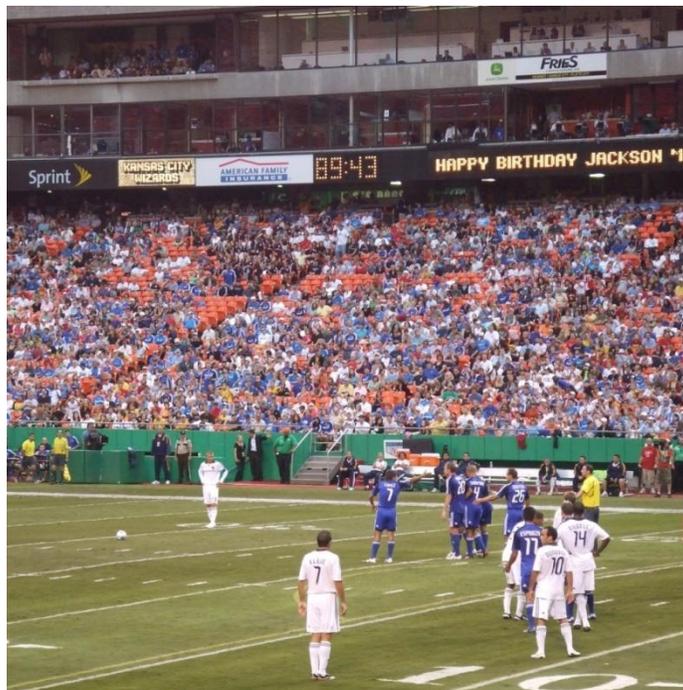
Latino man wearing a Cuauhtémoc Blanco Club América soccer jersey (photo by author).

Appendix 3

Wizards vs. LA Galaxy
Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, MO.
September 13, 2008



Latino men and children wearing División Mexicana (Mexican premiere soccer league) jerseys (photo by author).



David Beckham playing for the L.A. Galaxy (photo by author).

Appendix 4

Chivas vs. América
Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, MO.
September 16, 2009



Chivas Fans (photo by author).



América Fans (photo by author).

Appendix 5

Chivas vs. América
Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, MO.
September 16, 2009



Latino children wearing luchadores masks (photo by author).



Latinos wearing Club América jerseys, team Mexico apparel, Chapulín Colorado tshirts (red with CH in heart), and a luchador mask (photo by author).

Appendix 6

Chivas vs. América
Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, MO.
September 16, 2009



Chivas Fans from Garden City, KS (photo by author).

Appendix 7

Chivas vs. América
Arrowhead Stadium, Kansas City, MO.
September 16, 2009



Bicultural Identities (photo by author).

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