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EVALUATING THE ROLE OF LATINIDAD AND THE LATINO THREAT IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI

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ABSTRACT—Growing Latino populations in midwestern cities of the United States are leading to the creation of contested ethnic spaces and urban landscapes. In this article we examine the historical, demographic, and social contexts associated with a growing sense of *Latinidad* and the countervailing *Latino threat narrative* in Kansas City and St. Louis, the two largest metropolitan areas in Missouri. *Latinidad*, or a notion of belonging based on ethnic identity in Missouri, is being challenged by nativist discourses that frame the growing Latino population as a threat. We highlight the different historical trajectories and geographical characteristics that have created distinct demographic profiles among the emerging Latino populations of Kansas City and St. Louis. These demographic profiles reflect the historical and geographic specificities of each city, but also highlight the ways that the Latino populations in two geographically proximate urban areas in the Midwest can have different trajectories. Finally, we outline three instances of Latino struggles for social and/or political recognition in Missouri, and suggest that the meaning of Latino population growth for both cities will be contested through the conflicting discourses of *Latinidad* and Latino threat.

Key Words: demographics, *Latinidad*, Latino threat, Midwest, urban

INTRODUCTION

Immigration to emerging gateways and nontraditional destinations has become a significant focus for scholars studying immigration trends in the United States (Massey et al. 2003; Gozdzik and Martin 2005; Okamoto and Ebert 2010). While immigrant populations in these new communities originate from countries around the globe, including Asia, Africa, and Europe, Latinos represent the largest and most geographically diffuse of these new groups (Bean and Stevens 2003). Historically, Latino populations have been concentrated in the U.S.

Southwest as well as large metropolitan areas like New York City and Chicago, but economic and immigration policies adopted by the United States throughout the 20th century have contributed to a diffusion of Latino immigrant populations across the country (Massey et al. 2003; Massey 2008). We examine the characteristics of the Latino population in the midwestern state of Missouri and explore the ways that a growing Latino presence is leading to a burgeoning *Latinidad*, or belonging based on ethnic identification as Latino, at the same time that nativist reactions to the growing Latino population are voiced in terms of the Latino threat narrative.

Latino presence is not a new phenomenon in the Midwest, and Missouri is no exception (Valdes 2000). The pace and scale of Latino population growth in the Midwest, beginning in the 1990s and continuing to the present, however, is qualitatively and quantitatively different from previous decades. In Missouri, Latinos now reside in all parts of the state, and according to the 2000 U.S. Census were present in every county. Latino population growth is rapid compared to other demographic groups in Missouri, but Latinos still comprise only a small portion of the state's population at about 3% of the total (U.S. Census Bureau 2010a). Nonetheless, the demographic growth of an ethnic population in a traditionally homogenous white and African American state is socially significant.

We argue that Latino population growth in Missouri has been accompanied by a growing sense of *Latinidad*, especially in the emerging urban spaces of Missouri's cities. *Latinidad* refers to a sense of belonging that highlights the shared experiences and histories of Latinos from diverse origins. Felix Padilla's (1985) account of a shared Latino experience, or "Latinismo," is often recognized as an early description of *Latinidad*, as he conceptually sought to theorize the political and social interactions between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago. More recently, media studies have sought to use the term *Latinidad* in the context of representations of Latino/a ethnicity in popular culture, highlighting the commodification of Latino identity in the cultural marketplace (Davila 2001; Paredez 2002; Rojas 2004). Pan-Latino notions of *Latinidad* also offer a window on the shared experiences of Latinos from diverse origins living in a common neighborhood or social space. "Pan-Latino" refers to the distinct characteristics, politics, and histories of Latinos from different countries of origin, while exploring the relations between these diverse groups that develop as a result of shared interactions and experiences in the United States (Sandoval and Ruiz 2011). Ricourt and Danta's (2003) study of Queens, New York, offers one such example, as the authors conceptualize their pan-Latino project as taking on experiential, categorical, institutional, and ideological elements. Critics of the notion of *Latinidad* argue that the term hides significant differences in class, race, and nation of origin among Latinos and Latino groups (cf. Aparicio 2003). Despite these valid concerns, however, we find *Latinidad* to be a useful way of expressing the shared experiences of Latinos in the United States. We follow a definition outlined by Baez (2007), which interprets *Latinidad* "as a process of identity-making among Latina/os interacting with one

another in everyday, local spaces" (Baez 2007:110). We argue that in Missouri, Latino population growth is lending itself to a flexing of a collective economic and political participation based on a shared sense of community and belonging.

Latino population growth is not without its challenges, however, and the emerging sense of *Latinidad* across Missouri is also contested in numerous ways. Leo Chavez's (2008) notion of the *Latino threat narrative* (henceforth *Latino threat*) provides a useful framework for conceptualizing the fears that we often see accompanying the emerging experiences associated with the Latino population in Missouri. He argues that the notion of Latinos as a threat is an old concept that has attained new currency in the post-9/11 United States, and seeks to posit the long-standing presence of Latinos in the United States as a new threat. This reconfigured and recycled notion of the Latino threat, according to Chavez, is now reshaped as a threat to the national security and social well-being of the United States in which Mexican immigrants in particular are perceived to be engaged in invasion, reconquest, and ethnic separatism in the United States. These themes have often been associated with geographies of traditional Latino immigrant destinations, including the southwestern states, New York City, and even Chicago. Cities like St. Louis, in contrast, have been spaces of opportunity for small Latino populations, in part because of the lack of a well-defined local discourse about Latino immigration (Rynearson 1979).

This investigation is an effort to understand the ways that the burgeoning *Latinidad* and the Latino threat narrative are shaping the experiences of Latinos in the urban Midwest. We begin with a short historical account of Latino presence in Missouri, primarily focusing on factors that shaped the contemporary Latino populations in St. Louis and Kansas City. We then turn to a discussion of the burgeoning *Latinidad* in Missouri with an analysis of Latino population growth from the American Community Survey (ACS). We use that data to compare the Latino population of St. Louis and Kansas City with the demographic characteristics of Latinos across Missouri. In the next section we discuss the ways that the demographic shift underway in Missouri is influencing the emergence of "Latino" places in St. Louis and Kansas City. We conclude by suggesting that despite demographic differences between Kansas City and St. Louis, Latino population growth is contributing to similar struggles for recognition and community spaces. Latino population growth in midwestern cities can be understood in the context of history and demographic change, but it should also account

for the emerging spaces of Latinidad and the discourse of Latino threat if we are to fully theorize the ways that new urban landscapes are evolving.

BACKGROUND: LATINOS IN URBAN MISSOURI

Despite a long-established Latino presence in Missouri, the historically small size of the population has generally contributed to a lack of significant research. Much of the historical record that does exist focuses on the growth of communities in St. Louis and Kansas City. Missouri's two largest metropolitan areas each have census records indicating Latinos were present dating to the early 1900s, though Latinos were known to have resided in the state prior to this official recognition (Rynearson 1979; Driever 2004). Latino presence in Kansas City and St. Louis throughout the 19th century did generate occasional recognition in media sources and local newspapers. These sources, in conjunction with a few academic publications, offer an outline of the Latino communities in both metropolitan areas. We use these historical accounts to inform our research, which is the examination and interpretation of the contemporary Latino spaces of belonging.

Although Latino growth rates in Missouri have not matched the four-digit increases seen across parts of the South in the past two decades (Gozdziak and Martin 2005; Smith and Furuseth 2006), they nonetheless represent a significant change in terms of the demographic and social structure of Missouri. Latino populations have emerged in the southwestern portion of the state (e.g., Jasper and Green Counties), the southeast part of the Missouri boot heel (e.g., Dunklin County), and the central region of the state (e.g., Cole and Boone Counties) and in smaller numbers throughout other parts of the state. Missouri is an attractive destination due to its economic opportunities, including demand for entry-level labor and lower costs of living. Despite the increasing diffusion of the Latino population across Missouri, however, Kansas City and St. Louis remain the geographic heartbeat of the Latino population.

Cities in Context: Kansas City and St. Louis

The metropolitan areas of Kansas City and St. Louis, despite being on opposite sides of Missouri, share a number of characteristics that make for useful comparisons. In 2010 the St. Louis metropolitan statistical area had a population of 2.72 million while the Kansas City metropolitan statistical area had approximately 1.84 million

residents. Despite St. Louis's larger metropolitan population, both St. Louis (318,809) and Kansas City (454,876) have a relatively small residential population within the city limits. Each metropolitan area has a significant African American population, comprising 44.1% in St. Louis and 29.9% of city residents in Kansas City. This compares with African Americans comprising only 11.6% of the total statewide population. Kansas City has a larger Latino population due to its location and historical role as a distribution point for Mexican laborers coming to the Midwest. Although the two largest cities in Missouri are separated by only 240 miles, they each have a unique economic and social history that has helped shape the Latino population of each city.

Kansas City: On the Road to Chicago

Latinos have lived and worked in Kansas City for nearly two centuries, including Mexicans who worked as trail drivers and traders as far back as the early 1830s through the 1850s. In 1884 the Mexican Central Railroad and the Atcheson, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad were linked in El Paso, creating a transportation network that played a key role in shaping the Latino population. Sustained Latino population growth began in 1905 when the railroad began to recruit Mexican laborers to work in the area (Driever 2004).

Historian Michael Smith (1989) identifies three separate phases of immigration from Mexico to Kansas City that helped shape the barrios that formed the early Kansas City community between 1900 and 1920. The first group of Mexican migrants, beginning in the early 1900s, were "solos," or single young men, who came for the promise of work but rarely stayed in Kansas City the entire year. This early period saw the establishment of the long-running trend of recruiting Mexican labor from the states of central Mexico, a practice that continues through formal and informal channels across Missouri today. Around 1910, this first group was followed, according to Smith, by a wealthier and more established group of Mexican immigrants who were seeking to escape the upheaval caused by the Mexican Revolution. Finally, a third group of immigrants began to arrive in Kansas City during World War I, meeting the demand for labor created by the war and replacing European immigration, which had virtually ended.

The railroad influenced the emergence of the Latino community in Kansas City in numerous ways during the first decades of the 20th century, with most men working for the railroad at some point during their careers. The

original Mexican *barrios*, or ethnic neighborhoods, were actually boxcar encampments alongside the various railroad lines running through the city. (Kansas City would serve as one of the most important points of distribution for Mexican workers to other midwestern and western states.) Living conditions in these railroad camps were notoriously challenging, and the segregation of Latino residents into ethnic neighborhoods formed the spatial emergence of the Kansas City community. In attempts to address the challenges of life in the Kansas City barrios during this time, Latino residents also established a number of institutions that would provide continuity for the community, including Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and several community newspapers (Smith 1989).

The predominantly Mexican barrios on the Missouri side of Kansas City developed in the area known as the Westside, a community that remains an important place for many Latinos in Kansas City today. Steven Driever (2004) notes that much of the early growth of the Westside barrio can be traced to flooding in the Argentine area of Kansas City during 1951, which led to the resettlement of a significant number of families. The Westside community, however, declined through much of the 1960s and 1970s as a result of the construction of interstate highway 670, which cut through the Westside neighborhood. By the late 1970s the Westside community had fallen from roughly 13,000 residents to just over 7,000, and since that time the predominantly Mexican residents have established a number of efforts to revitalize the area.

Today, the Kansas City metropolitan statistical area (MSA) ranks 27th in the United States. It remains the second-largest railway hub in the United States today. Kansas City is home to the International Freight Gateway, which serves as an inland trade corridor that facilitates international trade, particularly trade associated with the North American Free Trade Agreement, and which led to trade agreements with Mexican port cities of Manzanillo and Lazaro Cardenas (Barnes 2006). Kansas City is also home to a number of major corporate headquarters, such as H&R Block, Garmin International, Sprint, and AMC Entertainment, which serve as the economic backbone for a relatively dynamic economy. The Kansas City metropolitan area ranks below the national average in cost of living and is reported to be one of the most affordable large U.S. cities (Think KC 2012). The median sales price of an existing single-family home in Kansas City is \$139,500, which makes the area more attractive than similar-sized cities that are traditional immigrant destinations.

The Kansas City metropolitan area continues to have a vibrant and, in recent years, rapidly growing Latino

population. Contemporary patterns of settlement among recent immigrant arrivals are much more diffuse than in previous decades, with Latinos establishing a presence throughout the metropolitan area. Nonprofit organizations including the Westside Housing Organization and the Westside Community Action Network exist to meet the needs of community redevelopment and social services (Driever 2004). The older, more established and multigenerational composition of the Latino community in Kansas City provides a useful comparison for the smaller and slower-developing St. Louis population.

St. Louis: Connections to the West

The St. Louis metropolitan area's first official records of Latinos residing in the city also date to near the beginning of the 20th century. The first documented instance of a Mexican immigrant arriving in St. Louis was around 1910, shortly after the opening of the Santa Fe Railroad line that linked St. Louis and the U.S.-Mexico border (Rynearson 1979). Mexican immigration to St. Louis increased, in similar fashion to Kansas City, as a result of the Mexican Revolution. Population growth occurred during the first decades of the century and continued until the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s. As the depression deepened, Latino residents in many parts of the heartland were treated as scapegoats and in some cases faced de facto forced deportation to central Mexico. The Mexican population is estimated to have decreased by as much as 30% across the Midwest during this period, and it is likely that Latinos residing in St. Louis were under similar pressures (Rynearson 1979).

The 1940s and 1950s, however, brought a demand for labor in the U.S. wartime and post-wartime economy, and once again the region saw an increase in the number of Latino migrants arriving. This slow, steady growth in the Latino population in St. Louis would continue until the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Mexican peso crisis, and a sustained economic boom in the U.S. economy led to increases in Mexican immigration across the heartland.

Currently, the St. Louis metropolitan region is the 18th-largest metropolitan statistical area in the United States and economically offers a mix of Fortune 1000 companies, technology companies, and health/medical industries. Historically anchored by blue-chip corporations like beer-brewing giant Anheuser Busch, chemical giant Monsanto Corporation, Brown Shoe Company, and Ralston Purina (now Ralcorp), the region now also has newer powerhouses like Charter Communications

and mail-order drug distributor Express Scripts. While these large corporations form the backbone of St. Louis's economy, there are other factors that served to draw Latinos to the city. St. Louis was named one of the Forbes "Best Metropolitan Areas" in American in 2005 due to "its business environment, cost of living, healthcare services, and quality of transportation" (St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association 2011:3). Low housing costs are also a factor in St. Louis, as it was named the second-most affordable large metropolitan area in the country by the National Association of Homebuilders in 2005. The median sales price for an existing single family home in St. Louis is \$121,400. A plentiful stock available for rehabilitation within St. Louis city limits, combined with rapid housing construction in the exurban areas of St. Charles, also made the St. Louis metropolitan area attractive to both migrants working in construction as well as Latinos moving from traditional gateways like California or Texas.

Contemporary Latino immigration to St. Louis, particularly from the central states of Mexico, grew at a rapid pace throughout much of the 1990s and early first decade of the 21st century, creating demands for medical, linguistic/translation, and social services. Faith-based organizations have played a key role in providing many basic services, including La Clinica and Acción Social Comunitaria, both of which were launched and supported for more than a decade by the United Methodist Church. Catholic Charities, associated with the St. Louis Archdiocese, have also provided crucial social services, including educational programming for children and mental health resources.

AMBIVALENT WELCOME: BURGEONING LATINIDAD AND THE LATINO THREAT

Historical differences between the Latino population of St. Louis and Kansas City are also clearly reflected in contemporary demographic trends. We examine these factors in this section through a quantitative "snapshot" of the emerging Latino populations of both cities. We draw on data from the U.S. Census, particularly the 2006–2010 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, to provide a sense of the contemporary Latino populations (U.S. Census Bureau 2010b). General demographic data are available for eight metropolitan statistical areas: Columbia MO MSA; Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers AR-MO MSA; Jefferson City MO MSA; Joplin MO MSA; Kansas City MO-KS MSA; St. Joseph MO-KS MSA; St. Louis MO-IL MSA; and Springfield MO MSA.

We limit our analysis to the two key MSAs: St. Louis and Kansas City. This decision was based on three factors: (1) data availability for the Latino population; (2) size of the Latino population in the MSAs; and (3) reliability of data for the MSAs. We feel it is important to present the numbers for Kansas City and St. Louis in a larger context; therefore, in our analysis we use the figures on the Latino population from the entire state of Missouri as a baseline for comparison. Our analysis compares the statewide statistics with the MSAs for Kansas City and St. Louis. It should be noted that these two areas are not solely contained (i.e., they are not mutually inclusive) within the state of Missouri. Part of the St. Louis MSA extends into Illinois and part of the Kansas City MSA extends into Kansas. We frame our analysis around four themes: (1) population growth, (2) foreign-born status, (3) citizenship status, and (4) bilingual adaptation.

Population Growth

Contemporary Latino population trends provide some interesting insights into how Latinos are shaping the demographic profile of Missouri. In 2000 there were 118,592 Latinos in the state of Missouri (see Table 1). By 2010 this number had increased to 198,670. Overall, Latinos represented 3% of the state population in 2010. However, the Latino population increased by 68%. This compares to a 5% increase in the state population for the same time period. The increase in the statewide Latino population is coming from two groups: Mexicans (+62,577) and Central Americans (+11,036). At the state level, Mexicans made up 66% of the Latino population in 2000 compared to 71% in 2010.

The Latino population increased in Kansas City by 65%, while the St. Louis Latino population increased by 70% from 2000 to 2010. In absolute terms, the Latino population in Kansas City is more than twice as large as the population in St. Louis. For both cities, Latinos of Mexican descent make up the majority of the Latino population. Central Americans make up the second-largest Latino group in Kansas City, and Puerto Ricans make up the second-largest group in St. Louis. However, although intra-diversity of Latinos has remained stable at the state level, Latino diversity has decreased in both cities.

Foreign-Born Status

Of the 198,670 Latinos in Missouri in 2010, 68% (134,559 out of 198,670) were native-born and 32% (64,111 out of 198,670) were foreign-born. In Kansas

TABLE 1
HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN BY SPECIFIC ORIGIN (2000–2010)

	Missouri				Kansas City MO-KS metro area				St. Louis MO-IL metro area			
	2000		2010		2000		2010		2000		2010	
	No.	Percentage (%)	No.	Percentage (%)	No.	Percentage (%)	No.	Percentage (%)	No.	Percentage (%)	No.	Percentage (%)
Not Hispanic or Latino	5,476,619	98	5,723,644	97	1,683,152	95	1,846,015	92	2,563,930	98	2,724,923	98
Hispanic or Latino	118,592	2	198,670	3	92,910	5	153,703	8	39,677	2	67,386	2
Total	5,595,211	100	5,922,314	100	1,776,062	100	1,999,718	100	2,603,607	100	2,792,309	100
Hispanic or Latino												
Mexican	77,887	66	140,464	71	70,966	76	121,946	79	22,324	56	44,050	65
Puerto Rican	6,677	6	11,659	6	2,891	3	4,295	3	3,360	8	5,682	8
Cuban	3,022	3	4,586	2	1,837	2	3,078	2	1,294	3	1,796	3
Central American	5,086	4	16,122	8	2,959	3	11,736	8	1,537	4	3,699	5
South American	3,569	3	8,576	4	2,058	2	4,821	3	1,973	5	5,085	8
Other Hispanic or Latino	22,351	19	17,263	9	12,199	13	7,827	5	9,189	23	7,074	10
Total	118,592	100	198,670	100	92,910	100	153,703	100	39,677	100	67,386	100
Latino diversity*	0.606	N/A	0.586	N/A	0.476	N/A	0.457	N/A	0.702	N/A	0.655	N/A
Percentage increase (%) in population from 2000 to 2010												
	Missouri	Kansas City MO-KS metro area		St. Louis MO-IL metro area								
Not Hispanic or Latino	5	10		6								
Hispanic or Latino	68	65		70								
Mexican	80	72		97								
Puerto Rican	75	49		69								
Cuban	52	68		39								
Central American	217	297		141								
South American	140	134		158								
Other Hispanic or Latino	-23	-36		-23								
Total	68	65		70								

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2010 American Community Survey and U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

*The Latino score range is from 0 (no diversity) to 1 (complete diversity) based on the Theil Entropy Score for the six Latino subgroups.

City, 62% (94,951 out of 153,703) were native-born and 38% (58,752 out of 153,703) were foreign-born. This compares to St. Louis, where 70% (46,971 out of 67,386) were native-born and 30% (20,415 out of 67,386) were foreign-born. Among Latino males in Missouri under 18 years of age, 89% were native-born compared to 50% who were 18 or older. A similar pattern was found for Latina females under 18 in Missouri, where 91% were native-born compared to 59% who were 18 or older (see Table 2). Among the foreign-born Latinos in Missouri, nearly 9 out of 10 (56,540 out of 64,111 or 88%) were 18 years of age or older. This pattern was consistent for Kansas City and St. Louis, where 88% (51,651 out of 58,752) and 89% (18,072 out of 20,415) of foreign-born Latinos were 18 or older. The pattern for native-born Latinos is strikingly different when compared to foreign-born Latinos. Slightly more than one out of two native-born Latinos (66,899 out of 134,599 or 50%) is 18 years or older at the state level. This compares to

45% (43,034 out of 94,951) and 54% (23,304 out of 46,971) for Kansas City and St. Louis, respectively. When we parsed these numbers by gender and age, we found some interesting results. For example, among Latina females 18 and older in Kansas City, 50% were foreign-born, but only 37% of the 18 and older Latinas were foreign-born in St. Louis. Among Latino males 18 and older in Kansas City, 58% were foreign-born, but only 46% of Latinos who were over the age of 18 in St. Louis were foreign-born. Thus, the profile of Latino foreign-born residents was markedly different for Kansas City and St. Louis, and these differences may explain in part why the Kansas City Latino population has seen a larger absolute increase in Mexicans and Central American immigrant residents. These findings suggest that across Missouri, foreign-born Latinos are overwhelmingly adults. This demographic trend most likely translates into dual-citizenship families, in which the parents are foreign-born and some or all of the children are native-born.

TABLE 2
AGE BY CITIZENSHIP STATUS FOR THE HISPANIC OR LATINO

	Missouri		Kansas City MO-KS metro area		St. Louis MO-IL metro area	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Males under 18 years						
Native	34,545	89	26,123	86	10,735	89
Foreign-born	4,132	11	4,218	14	1,300	11
<i>Total</i>	<i>38,677</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>30,341</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>12,035</i>	<i>100</i>
Males 18 years and over						
Native	32,499	50	20,872	42	12,482	54
Foreign-born	32,462	50	29,233	58	10,568	46
<i>Total</i>	<i>64,961</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>50,105</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>23,050</i>	<i>100</i>
Total Males	103,638		80,446		35,085	
Females under 18 years						
Native	33,115	91	25,794	90	10,932	91
Foreign-born	3,439	9	2,883	10	1,043	9
<i>Total</i>	<i>36,554</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>28,677</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>11,975</i>	<i>100</i>
Females 18 years and over						
Native	34,400	59	22,162	50	12,822	63
Foreign-born	24,078	41	22,418	50	7,504	37
<i>Total</i>	<i>58,478</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>44,580</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>20,326</i>	<i>100</i>
Total Females	95,032		73,257		32,301	

Citizenship Status

Of the 64,111 foreign-born Latinos in the state, 77% (49,072 out of 64,111) were not U.S. citizens. Moreover, 87% (42,737 out of 49,032) of the foreign-born Latinos who were not U.S. citizens were 18 years old or older. This trend was even stronger for foreign-born Latinos in the state who were U.S. citizens, where 92% (13,803 out of 15,039) were 18 years old or older. In Kansas City and St. Louis, 82% (48,157 out of 58,732) and 70% (14,273 out of 20,415) of the foreign-born Latinos were not U.S. citizens, respectively. Kansas City and St. Louis had a similar percentage of foreign-born Latinos who were not citizens and were 18 years old or older, 82% (41,590 out of 48,157) and 89% (12,695 out of 14,273), respectively.

At the state level, 23% (15,039 out of 64,111) of the Latino foreign-born residents were U.S. citizens. This compares to 24% and 27% for males and females over 18 years of age, respectively (see Table 3). However, there is a significant difference when comparing Kansas City and St. Louis. For example, 7% of the foreign-born males under 18 were U.S. citizens, but 28% were U.S. citizens in St. Louis. Likewise, 18% of the foreign-born males 18 and older were U.S. citizens in Kansas City, but 28% were U.S. citizens in St. Louis. Similar patterns were observed

for foreign-born Latinas. One out of ten (10%) foreign-born females under 18 in Kansas City were U.S. citizens compared to 27% in St. Louis, and one out of four (25%) foreign-born females 18 years old and older in Kansas City were U.S. citizens compared to 34% for St. Louis.

Bilingual Adaptation

At the state level, slightly more than one-third (35%) of native-born Latinos speak another language other than English (see Table 4). Only 6% of foreign-born Latinos speak only English. Overall, we found that 43% of the Latinos, at the state level, speak only English. In Kansas City, 41% of the native-born Latinos speak another language compared to 32% in St. Louis. The foreign-born Latino population in St. Louis was twice as likely to speak only English (8%) compared to Latinos in Kansas City (4%). About one out of two (48%) of Latinos in St. Louis speak only English compared to 35% in Kansas City.

The four themes from our statistical analysis show that Latinos represent an important and increasing demographic force in Missouri. A key theme that emerges from these data is that the Latino population in Missouri is actually two different Latino populations. The first population is fairly large, less diverse, and tends to be

TABLE 3
CITIZENSHIP STATUS OF FOREIGN-BORN HISPANICS OR LATINOS IN MISSOURI

	Missouri		Kansas City MO-KS metro area		St. Louis MO-IL metro area	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Male children (under 18 years):						
Naturalized U.S. citizen	574	14	277	7	362	28
Not a U.S. citizen	3,558	86	3,941	93	938	72
Total	4,132	100	4,218	100	1,300	100
Male adults (18 years and over):						
Naturalized U.S. citizen	7,648	24	5,255	18	2,992	28
Not a U.S. citizen	24,814	76	23,978	82	7,576	72
Total	32,462	100	29,233	100	10,568	100
Female children (under 18 years):						
Naturalized U.S. citizen	662	15	257	10	403	27
Not a U.S. citizen	2,777	85	2,626	90	640	73
Total	3,439	100	2,883	100	1,043	100
Female adults (18 years and over):						
Naturalized U.S. citizen	6,155	27	4,806	25	2,385	34
Not a U.S. citizen	17,923	73	17,612	75	5,119	66
Total	24,078	100	22,418	100	7,504	100

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2010 American Community Survey.

TABLE 4
NATIVITY BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME AND ABILITY TO SPEAK ENGLISH
FOR THE HISPANIC POPULATION FIVE YEARS AND OVER

	Missouri		Kansas City MO-KS metro area		St. Louis MO-IL metro area	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Total	172,857		133,769		59,483	
Native-born:	109,356		75,292		39,434	
Speak only English	70,884	65	44,503	59	26,745	68
Speak another language	38,472	35	30,789	41	12,689	32
Foreign-born:	63,501		58,477		20,049	
Speak only English	4,048	6	2,287	4	1,692	8
Speak another language	59,453	94	56,190	96	18,357	92
Total population of speak only English	74,932	43	46,790	35	28,437	48
Total population of speak another language	97,925	57	86,979	65	31,046	52

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006–2010, American Community Survey.

more bilingual. The second Latino population has more internal diversity and tends to speak only English. The first is the Latino population located in the Kansas City MSA, while the second is located in the St. Louis MSA.

Our findings presented in Tables 1–4 highlight the burgeoning Latino presence in St. Louis and Kansas City and suggest the *demographic* impetus for the

emerging *Latinidad* in Missouri. On the basis of these figures, we hypothesize that this demographic shift will lead to increasingly visible spaces of *Latinidad* in each city. Kansas City and St. Louis, for example, host annual Hispanic festivals that celebrate the cultures, traditions, and foods from many different Latin American countries. In both cities, the festivals draw thousands of visitors

who enjoy musical performances, dance numbers, and ceremonies that recognize the contributions of Latino leaders to their respective communities. Hispanic festivals represent just one example of Latinidad as identity construction through interactions in everyday activities. In the following sections, we examine three other spaces of Latinidad, including the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in St. Louis, Hispanic Day in Jefferson City, and the English-language television show *¿Que Pasa, KC?* in Kansas City. In each of these emergent spaces of Latinidad, however, we also see an accompanying backlash against the Latinos claiming new cultural spaces, backlash that is often framed in terms of the discourse of Latino threat. Despite the ethnic and cultural contributions that Latinos are making to the state, many Missourians do not embrace this burgeoning Latinidad, but rather view the new residents as a threat to the state. The creation of these contested spaces is reshaping the urban cultural landscapes of midwestern cities like St. Louis and Kansas City.

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Burgeoning Latinidad as Opportunity

The St. Louis Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's establishment of a business training center for Latino entrepreneurs, made possible by a \$500,000 federal earmark (Bond 2009), offers one example of the oppositional discourses of Latinidad and Latino threat. The earmark was championed by Republican Senator Kit Bond, a long-time conservative presence in Missouri. At the grand opening celebration for the new training center, Bond referenced the Latino population's strong work ethic, which is responsible for the creation of many jobs in the state:

You work the 18-hour days, you put your life savings on the line, and until recently, you have been the economic engine that creates jobs. We need to get that engine going again. . . . The long-term outlook for Hispanic-owned businesses is still very strong.

The Hispanic Chamber of Commerce represents a particularly important example of the burgeoning Latinidad in St. Louis because of the unifying role it plays for the Latino business community. The chamber of commerce has at various times been chaired by individuals of U.S., Mexican, and Puerto Rican descent from a wide range of professional backgrounds. Membership in the chamber is likewise diverse, including a wide range of

businesses from small *tienda*-style shops to large firms that undertake international import-export business. The visibility of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in St. Louis has increased with the growth of the Latino population, but also has developed in conjunction with the higher visibility of the Latino business community and greater awareness of the "Latino market."

The procurement of the federal earmark for the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, furthermore, represents a pivotal event for Hispanic-owned businesses. For the first time, there was public space to train entrepreneurs, to have workshops, or to use the chamber facilities to promote Hispanic-owned businesses and products. The fact that the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's biggest supporter was a Republican U.S. senator suggests that Latino spaces can be economically profitable. It should also be noted that the chamber's stated mission is "To promote the economic development of Hispanic firms and improve business opportunities for *all* in the St. Louis Region" (Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan St. Louis 2012, emphasis added), a statement that clearly advances both the good of the Latino community in St. Louis *and* in the wider community of St. Louis.

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Latino Threat

Despite the benefits that federal funds provided both Latino businesses and the wider St. Louis community, some in the St. Louis community used the opportunity to advance a discourse that framed the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Latinos in general as a threat to the broader community. When the funding of the federal earmark was announced in the local newspaper, the discourse in the public-comment section of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* immediately transformed from a discussion about the training center to a dialogue about "illegal aliens" getting help from the federal government. The conflation of Latino identity and "illegal aliens" is a discourse that arises regularly when Latino-related news is covered in either Kansas City or St. Louis. It can be found in almost every article related to Latino immigration. Two examples highlight the way that the Latino threat is being constructed in the public discourse. The first example is a response to a letter to the editor that pointed out that there were inconsistencies with immigration policies and labor laws. The writer states:

The Republican corporate Chamber of Commerce will do everything possible to keep il-

legals working in our undocumented national economy. You want to put an end to illegal immigration? Fine every employer \$100,000 for each illegal hired. Instead, Republicans insist that the employer must “knowingly” hire an illegal. Democrats have fought this issue for decades. . . . Republicans want to protect corporate profits even at the expense of our jobs! When Armour Meat Packing Company hired 600 illegals they claimed it was a surprise to learn the Spanish speaking immigrants were here illegally. . . . They got a pass from the Bush [Department of Labor]. (Stritzl 2009:1)

It is also common to find pejorative responses to these pieces, like this one:

I will never understand how people and politicians can feel compassionate for millions of criminals who illegally enter this country and then go on committing crimes on a daily basis (i.e., working by using false or stolen identification, collecting welfare when not entitled or by way of anchor baby), don't pay taxes, drive without licenses or insurance, just to name a few. . . . Illegals who cannot abide by this country's laws deserve nothing but to be charged and sentenced for their crimes and then deported back to where they came from, along with all family members. But millions of illegals get away with a multitude of crimes and still receive all the perks of a legal citizen, with no worry of consequences (Editorial Board 2009:1).

The procurement of funding for the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the subsequent tension and public outcry suggests two possibilities. First, people who dislike Latinos will make no effort to distinguish between native-born or foreign-born or between legal or illegal residents. Second, people who oppose change will see any growth of the Latino population and Latino spaces as a threat to their culture and identity.

Hispanic Day in Jefferson City and Latinidad

Hispanic Day in Jefferson City (henceforth Hispanic Day) represents a second instance where the Latino population in Missouri, with particularly strong support from Latino leadership in Kansas City and St. Louis, is

demonstrating an increased sense of Latinidad. Hispanic Day is a gathering of Latinos from across Missouri at the state capitol in Jefferson City, and is primarily intended to raise the profile of the Latino population with Missouri legislators. Hispanic Day generally includes a reception with the sitting governor, meetings with state legislative leaders, and an opportunity for members to lobby their own representatives on timely issues that impact the Latino population.

Leaders associated with Hispanic Day are quick to note that the event is nonpartisan and is solely intended to address issues that affect the Latino population of Missouri in broad terms. Participants who have gone to the capitol represent the spectrum of the Latino population, including individuals born in the United States, Mexico, and Central and South America. Attendees are generally middle class and well educated, but they attend as representatives of the Latino population more broadly. Participants are also often divided in terms of political party, with some participants strongly aligned with either the Democrats or Republicans and others who are merely happy to mingle with elected officials and represent the growing power of the Latino population in the state. Hispanic Day is a display of Latinidad based on political participation that highlights both the nascent and growing power of the pan-ethnic Latino population in Missouri.

Hispanic Day in Jefferson City and Latino Threat

One of the key efforts of Hispanic Day is to raise awareness of the growing political power of Latinos in Missouri. Part of that effort is intended to serve as a deterrent against bills that would negatively affect the Latino population. In recent years participants attending Hispanic Day have lobbied against a ballot initiative that ultimately made English the official language of Missouri business, as well as a more recent initiative that required all truck-driving licenses to be taken strictly in English (Mannies 2010). The executive director of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in 2010, Jorge Riopedre, points out that such laws “send a disquieting message to all immigrant communities . . . ‘Missouri is not welcoming’” (Mannies 2010:3). Each of these initiatives affected immigrants outside the Latino population but were perceived to be developed by legislators intent on using Latino immigration as a political wedge issue.

The influence of Hispanic Day on legislation in Missouri is difficult to gauge, but Latino leaders, including elected officials, suggest that the opportunity may help to take the edge off some of the anti-immigrant (which is

often conflated to mean Latino) rhetoric used by conservative legislators from both the Republican and Democratic parties. The Missouri House Democratic minority leader, Mike Talbot, for example, noted that “You’ve seen some of the rhetoric change . . . some of the language has toned down . . . [which may reflect the realization of some legislators that] Hispanics are the fastest-growing population nationwide” (Mannies 2010:4).

Hispanic Day represents an example where a space of Latinidad has emerged *in reaction to* the Latino threat narrative deployed by some Missouri legislators. A key facet of Hispanic Day is the reality that white and African American legislators are increasingly recognizing that Latinos are not only present in Missouri but are becoming organized and seeking to demonstrate their growing demographic strength.

¿Que Pasa, KC? and Latinidad in English

The third example we use to suggest the power of demographic trends and burgeoning Latinidad is from Kansas City. In February 2010, KCTV announced that Sandra Olivas and Iris Herмосillo would host a new TV show that would be targeted to the Kansas City Hispanic community (KCTV5 2010). According to their website, “¿Que Pasa, KC? wants to shine the spotlight on Kansas City’s Hispanic community and bring all cultures together.” ¿Que Pasa, KC? is an English-language television show, and while the cohosts acknowledged that there was a discussion to have a bilingual show, they decided they wanted to bring the community together and felt that they could reach more people by creating an English-only show. Furthermore, the show has been recognized as a success; ¿Que Pasa, KC? was recently given a first-place award for special programs by the Kansas Association of Broadcasters (Que Pasa KC 2010). The success of the show has demonstrated that the creation of a Latino public space on TV can be supported by the growing Latino population in the metro area, and highlights the growing social and political power of Latinos in Missouri (Que Pasa KC 2010). It also affirms that there is a market for the creation of public spaces targeted to the English-speaking Hispanic community. Capitalism is a powerful indicator of success, and the fact that ¿Que Pasa, KC? continues to be well received by the community and to win awards indicates that Latino spaces can be profitable. ¿Que Pasa, KC? is also a reminder that there are many Latinos who were born in the United States who still want to celebrate their Hispanic heritage. This burgeoning Latinidad is a reality in

Missouri, and it will only continue to get stronger as the native-born Latino population grows.

¿Que Pasa, KC? and Latino Threat in English

Despite the success of ¿Que Pasa, KC? and its warm reception by its Kansas City audience, we have found significant anecdotal evidence on blogs and in the comments section of web pages of people voicing their opposition to the creation of this social space. For example, a person named “Dave” writes on the local news blog: “They are Illegal Immigrants and should be deported they are law breakers. Secure the border and deport these Criminals. NO AMNESTY!!!!” (Kendall 2010). As new public Latino spaces are created, it is likely that more people who share “Dave’s” perspective of Latinos as an “illegal threat” will continue to frame the Latino demographic growth as “illegal aliens” invading our country and changing our culture. The reality of the situation, however, is that the majority of Latino demographic growth in the United States is driven by natural increase among native-born Latinos who are thereby U.S. citizens. As the growing Latino population creates new spaces, we can expect some Missourians to publically display their dissatisfaction, and this expression is often couched in terms of Latinos as a threat to existing U.S. culture and creed (Huntington 2005). The troubling reaction toward ¿Que Pasa, KC? provides yet another reminder of the continual conflation between Latino population growth and immigration. Immigration growth and natural increase are related to each other in the demographic context, but they must also be viewed as distinct. Many of the anti-Latino critics seem to want to purposefully conflate immigration with Latinos. It is often assumed that the creation of Latino spaces can only be Spanish-language Latino spaces.

CONCLUSIONS

This research suggests a number of realities for Latinos in Missouri during the coming years. First, the Latino population continues to grow rapidly relative to the general population, but the growth between the two cities is not uniform, despite their geographic proximity. Second, the historical trajectories of St. Louis and Kansas City continue to shape the contemporary characteristics of the population, with Kansas City having a younger population that is more likely to be foreign-born and to be of Mexican descent than the Latino population in St. Louis. Third, despite differences in the demographic profiles of the two cities, the cultural landscape of each is being

contested, and even shaped, through the discourses of Latino presence and membership associated with Latinidad and the countervailing notion of Latino threat.

Ann Rynearson (1979) argued convincingly in her doctoral dissertation that Latinos in St. Louis experienced an attenuated form of ethnicity that was shaped in large part by the location-specific characteristics of St. Louis. The diffusion of the Latino population across the metropolitan area has meant that there were no barrio politics in St. Louis, while slow population growth in the second half of the twentieth century ensured that Latinos maintained low levels of public visibility. Higher levels of education and income among Latino residents also contributed to greater integration across the urban area. The Latino population in Kansas City, in contrast, has long had geographically concentrated neighborhoods that contributed significantly to the shape and profile of the community. The city's location on the railroad lines on the route between the U.S.-Mexico border and Chicago meant that immigration was more of a factor in shaping the population during much of the 20th century. The contemporary Latino demographic profile continues to reflect these realities, as the population tends to be less diverse and more likely to be foreign-born.

Despite these historical differences, we have argued that the demographic transitions in both Kansas City and St. Louis are being interpreted through two competing discourses. The growing Latino presence and increased sense of ownership, whether in the context of programming by the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in St. Louis, political participation in Jefferson City, or English-language programming for Latinos in Kansas City, all highlight the increasing social and economic power of Latinos in urban landscapes that have often been conceived along a "black-white" dichotomy. The expanding Latino presence, visibility, and power, however, also seems to be inspiring other individuals in Missouri's cities to publicly advance the Latino threat narrative as a rational discourse for conceptualizing the growing presence of Latinos in the urban landscape in Missouri's largest cities.

The narrative of Latino threat, which frames Latinos as a threat to mainstream U.S. culture, language, and social cohesion (Huntington 2005; Chavez 2008), seems to originate from the national media and politics, and seems increasingly less likely to reflect the demographic and geographic specificities of a given city.

Thus, while cities like St. Louis that may have experienced warmer relations due to the lack of a deeply rooted racism against Latinos that was often prevalent

in the Southwest states, we argue that the prevalence of the national discourse media is flattening out the cultural landscape and bringing the discourses shaping Latino urban landscapes into balance.

Historical factors, immigration, and natural increase have all contributed to formation of emerging Latino spaces, but we have argued that these new social geographies may also be interpreted through the competing narratives of Latinidad and Latino threat.

Finally, the emergence of Latino spaces is a reality in urban areas around the Midwest and throughout the heartland. Latinos are changing the social geography of many cities and rural towns across the region. These emerging populations are in turn creating new opportunities for creative renegotiation of the urban landscape. The advocacy group Missouri Immigrant and Refugee Advocates, for example, has undertaken a "Welcoming Initiative" to highlight the contributions that immigrants make within the state. Similar welcoming initiatives have been undertaken in other heartland states, including Nebraska and Tennessee. This type of positive advocacy offers an important counterbalance to the irrational, fear-based claims associated with the Latino threat narrative. In a similar vein, local diversity boards or councils can work to ensure that Latino voices are heard in policy decisions and can facilitate and smooth the path for emerging spaces of Latino engagement. The demographic trends highlighted in this research reinforce the reality that the Latino population will continue to grow as a result of natural increase and immigration. Communities throughout the Midwest will continue to negotiate the tension between emerging spaces of Latinidad and the ever-present whispers of the Latino threat well into the foreseeable future.

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