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# A participatory assessment of immigrant integration in a low-income suburban neighborhood

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A PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT OF IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION IN A  
LOW-INCOME SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

By

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
School of Public Service in partial fulfillment  
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## **Abstract**

### **A Participatory Assessment of Immigrant Integration in a Low-Income Suburban Neighborhood**

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DePaul University, 2010

While much immigration research has been focused upon urban areas, recent trends in migration patterns show that more and more immigrants are moving to the suburbs, which has resulted in some unique integration challenges. This research focuses on a particular suburban Chicago neighborhood, seeking to determine who is living there, to what extent they are making connections with the larger community and with other groups living within the same neighborhood, and what factors they believe will best assist in their integration. Utilizing a participatory research method that seeks to engage the community in question—the Parkside Apartments in the western suburbs of Chicago—throughout the process of research, the study focuses on African and Mexican immigrants, allowing for comparison using several measures of integration, including legal, socio-cultural, economic, and social capital indicators. The results, which suggest that different groups of immigrants integrate in different ways—with those most economically integrated dragging behind other groups in other respects—lead to several recommendations as to how suburban communities, and state and federal policies, could better facilitate integration on all levels.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

As immigration patterns change the demographics of the United States, once nearly-homogenous suburban areas are now experiencing substantial diverse influxes of newly arriving immigrants. Often, suburban regions lack the infrastructure that has traditionally helped immigrants to urban areas to integrate into the larger society. This research focuses on a particular suburban Chicago neighborhood, seeking to determine who is living there, to what extent they are making connections with the larger community and with other groups living within the same neighborhood, and what factors they believe will best assist and have best assisted in their integration.

The neighborhood under consideration is the Parkside Apartments, a complex of approximately 120 units located within the Village of Glen Ellyn, approximately twenty-five miles west of Chicago. The neighborhood is home to immigrants from about twenty different countries, primarily from Mexico, Burma, Burundi, Somalia, Sudan, and Liberia, as well as to African Americans and Caucasian Americans; this study focuses on the Mexican and African residents of the neighborhood. As a diverse, low-income community nestled within a larger community that is predominately wealthy and Caucasian, Parkside presents a unique case study for examining how a diverse group of immigrants relate to one another, to their neighbors from different cultural and language backgrounds, and to the larger society in the context of a suburbanization of both U.S. migration patterns and of poverty.

Immigration, at least at the scale that is currently being experienced, is a relatively new phenomenon for a once-homogenous village like Glen Ellyn, which makes the question of how new immigrants will integrate all the more important. As of the 2000 U.S. census, about 11% of Glen Ellyn's residents were foreign-born, a marked increase from a time when most migrants to the Chicagoland area stayed in urban areas (U.S. Census Bureau 2008).

The primary groups participating in the research are Mexican immigrants and immigrants from the African countries of Sudan, Liberia, Burundi, Rwanda, Togo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Immigrants from Mexico are more numerous in the United States than any other immigrant group, and more than half of all Mexicans in the United States are present unlawfully (Terrazas 2010). Mexican immigrants tend to have low levels of education—more than half have not completed high school—but have very high labor force participation rates (Ibid). While individuals migrate to the United States from throughout Mexico, the majority come from the southern states of Mexico, particularly Michoacán, Chiapas, and Oaxaca, where income levels tend to be lower than in the northern part of the country (Ibid.).

African immigrants to the United States, though generally coming from countries with lower income levels than Mexico, tend to be highly educated, and much less likely to be present unlawfully (Terrazas 2009). However, a high percentage of African immigrants—more than one in four—is refugees, and their education levels are usually less than other African immigrants (Ibid); almost all of the African immigrants who participated in this study entered the United States as refugees. Africans make up less than 4% of all immigrants living in the United States (Ibid.).



This research is designed to follow a participatory, appreciative research model that involves all stakeholders—most importantly the residents of Parkside themselves—in all stages of the research. The principal researcher resides within the community, and other residents helped both to define the appropriate research questions and to gather the data.

The aim of this research is ultimately to help the residents of Parkside to identify and put into collaborative action those strengths already found within the community that will help them—as individuals and as a community—to integrate into their new home. Integration—differentiated from the more traditional concept of assimilation, which implies a sacrifice of identity, culture, and values—is defined for this purpose as the process of newcomers finding their place and their voice within their larger community, with the end goal of transforming the neighborhood to be stronger, safer, and more equitable. The end result of this research is a summary of what the community has discovered through participatory research with recommendations for implementing what they have learned.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Immigration Integration in the United States: From the Pre-Colonial Era to the Present**

The United States of America has a history as a nation of immigrants, a country in which all but those relative few of entirely Native American ancestry can trace their heritage to another country. Immigration is a central theme in the national lore, and many Americans are proud of their own immigrant history. Indeed, as historian Nancy Foner describes, the common American sentiment toward one's own ancestors' has been embellished and glorified by its depiction in literature, film, and other popular culture: our ancestors, many Americans would say “worked hard; they strove to become assimilated; they pulled themselves up by their own Herculean efforts;... they had strong family values and colorful roots. They were, in short, what made America great” (Foner 2000, 3).

Those romanticized ideas of the U.S.'s immigrant past, however, do not necessarily translate into warm feelings toward contemporary immigrants. Roger Daniels suggests that American attitudes toward immigration—and immigrants themselves—are marked by a dualism, “on the one hand reveling in the nation's immigrant past and on the other rejecting much of its immigrant present” (2004, 6).

In reality, even from the pre-colonial era, immigrants to the United States have always been “simultaneously praised and resented, welcomed and scapegoated” (Soerens and Hwang

2009, 47). Benjamin Franklin expressed concerns about immigrant acculturation to the British colony of Pennsylvania decades before the United States even came into independent existence:

Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion? (Franklin 1987, 374)

Nativist sentiments and concerns about immigrant acculturation are thus older than the union itself. Likewise, willful immigrants continue to migrate to the United States for the same fundamental reasons they have always come—principally, in search of economic betterment, and, secondarily, in pursuit of family reunification, educational opportunities, or freedom from persecution (Berk et al. 2000, 56). At the same time, just as has been the case historically, a portion of the migrants coming to the United States come against their own volition, as victims of what was once called the slave trade and is now generally referred to as human trafficking. Sociologists such as Douglas Massey (1990, 67) and economists such as Klaus Zimmermann (1996, 96-97) agree that migration from one country to another is explained by a combination of "push" factors in the country of emigration—such as un- or under-employment, natural disasters, and persecution—that inspire someone to leave and "pull" factors—such as employment, political freedoms, and economic advancement—that draw an individual into the receiving country.

While the push and pull motivations for migration have been relatively consistent throughout U.S. history, as has the mixed reception immigrants receive upon entry, U.S.

immigration policy has changed drastically over the centuries, generally in response to fluctuations in public opinion.

Despite the concerns of individuals such as Franklin, federal policy remained entirely open to new immigration to the U.S. throughout the first century of the nascent nation's existence. President Chester A. Arthur signed the first federal restriction on immigration—the Chinese Exclusion Act—into law in 1882 (Daniels 2004, 19). The Chinese Exclusion Act, which forbade further legal migrations of Chinese nationals to the United States until it was repealed in 1943, was the culmination of growing anti-Chinese sentiment, focused in the western United States, amongst U.S. citizens who believed that the Chinese, who had been recruited to the U.S. by promises of economic opportunity when the region needed laborers, were unable to assimilate and lacked “sufficient brain capacity... to furnish motive power for self-government” (quoted in Daniels 2004, 17-18).

Concurrent with growing nativist concerns about Chinese immigrants on the West Coast, public opinion on the East Coast was souring toward the immigrants—mostly Italians, Poles, and Russian Jews—who were entering through New York in unprecedented numbers. Between 1881 and 1920, more than 23 million immigrants entered the U.S., such that the foreign-born percentage of the total population reached 15 percent, significantly higher than it has been at any other time in U.S. history (Daniels 2004, 5, 30).

This new wave of European immigration sparked a nativist backlash that eventually inspired more restrictive federal immigration policies. The Immigration Restriction League, founded by recent Harvard University graduates in 1894, effectively advanced the pseudoscientific theory that these recent immigrants—mostly not from the Protestant, western European countries from which most of earlier generations had come—were “biologically inferior

to, and thus less capable of assimilation than, the races that had populated America in the previous centuries" (Soerens and Hwang 2009, 56-57). Influenced by this rhetoric, a congressional commission published a report in 1911 that found that "certain kinds of criminality are inherent in the Italian race" (Immigration Commission 1911, 209) and that "the high rate of illiteracy among new immigrants was due to inherent racial tendencies" (Young 1999, 189).

Eventually, after a series of incremental restrictions, Congress passed a far-reaching federal immigration policy in 1924 that created strict immigration quotas based upon the national origin of the would-be migrant. The new law capped admission at two percent of the foreign population from a given country that existed in the U.S. in 1890; the 1890 decennial census was used, rather than the recently completed 1920 census, precisely so as to provide a baseline of ethnic origins that would precede the recent influx of Italian, Jewish, and Polish immigrants. The effect was to limit new immigration to the United States to 180,000 people per year, mostly from those northern European countries such as England, France, and Germany that nativists considered capable of assimilation (Daniels 2004, 51-52).

Despite some vocal opposition—President Truman called this national origins system "a slur on the patriotism, the capacity, and the decency of a large part of our citizenry" (quoted in Reimers 1985, 63)—this policy continued essentially unchanged until 1965. In the early 1960s, in the context of the Civil Rights Movement that challenged many Americans' ideas about race and nationality, President John F. Kennedy proposed a new federal immigration system that replaced a nationality-based preference system with a system that limited immigration based primarily on one's family connections and employable skills (Reimers 1985, 65). While immigration would still be tightly limited, the bill, eventually signed into law by President

Lyndon B. Johnson in 1965 after Kennedy's assassination, opened immigration to individuals from Asia and Africa, a shift that would have drastic demographic effects on the country.

At the same time, the 1965 bill capped immigration within the Western Hemisphere, which had been exempt from restrictions under the 1924 national origins system (Soerens and Hwang 2009, 62). Mexican and other Latin American immigrants, who had historically moved freely across the southern border, now faced the same restrictions as the rest of the world. Given their geographic proximity, and the relative ease with which one could physically cross the border without the required legal inspection, illegal immigration increased drastically, such that by 1986 there were an estimated 3.2 million immigrants living in the U.S. unlawfully, the majority of whom were of Mexican origin (Wasem 2009, 2, 4-5).

Though it had not been a priority to him early on in his presidency, by 1986 the immigration issue had risen to the top of the national agenda, and President Reagan signed into law the Immigration Reform and Control Act, which simultaneously provided legal status to an estimated 2.7 million formerly undocumented immigrants while also introducing new requirements for employment authorization for future, under the assumption that limiting the availability of work would minimize further illegal immigration (Maddux 2005, 227). As political interests on both sides of the aisle objected to the idea of a new Social Security or identity card that could be used to effectively enforce the new employment authorization rules, however, they have never been effectively enforced, and the lure of employment has continued to draw immigrants illegally into the United States (Ibid, 229).

By January 2008, there were an estimated 11.6 million immigrants living in the United States without legal status, in addition to millions of lawfully present foreign-born individuals (Hoefer et al. 2009, 3). While the percentage of the entire U.S. population that is foreign-born is

significantly lower than the peak reached in the early 20th century, the total number of immigrants present in the United States is at an all-time high of about 38 million (Ohlemacher 2008, A3).

Like at various other points in U.S. history, the nation is presently split between voices calling for more liberalized immigration policies and those who would prefer further restriction. In 2005, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would have built 700 miles of double-layer fencing along the U.S.-Mexican border in an attempt to keep out would-be migrants while making it a felony to be or to knowingly assist an unauthorized migrant (Soerens and Hwang 2009, 144-145). A few months later, the Senate passed a drastically different bill, which would have legalized millions of undocumented immigrants and provided a new guest worker program for up to 200,000 new migrants annually (Ibid., 147). As the opposing bills could not be reconciled together, neither became law, despite President George W. Bush's efforts to pass an immigration reform bill.

As President Barack Obama took office in 2009, he promised that immigration reform would be a first-year priority. As he began his second year in office, though, immigration reform had not yet been seriously addressed, and many pundits considered the issue "dead" (Ruiz 2010, 37).

At the center of the controversy over immigration reform is the question of whether contemporary immigrants to the United States are properly integrating into the larger society. Like generations of Americans before them, those opposed to further immigration to the United States tend to complain that those currently arriving will not—or cannot—"become Americans" (Sobhani 2002). Patrick Buchanan—whose unsuccessful quest for the Republican Party's presidential nomination relied heavily on populist, nativist rhetoric—claims that Mexican

immigrants, in particular, "prefer to remain outsiders" and "do not wish to assimilate" (2006, 28). Those in favor of more generous immigration policies, however, insist the opposite is true: immigrants are integrating at rates even faster than previous generations of immigrants, they say (Vigdor 2008).

The question of acculturation—how immigrants adapt to the culture of the country that receives them—is thus an important consideration for the United States as it wrestles with the complexities of proposed changes to immigration policy.

### **Immigrant Acculturation Patterns and Measures**

Acculturation describes "what happens to individuals who have developed in one cultural context when they attempt to re-establish their lives in another one" (Berry 1997, 5). The immigrant arriving in a new country—in the context of this study, in the United States and, specifically, in the Parkside Apartments of Glen Ellyn, Illinois—will acculturate in one way or another, based both upon their own attitudes and those of the receiving society.

John Berry, Joseph Trimble, and Esteban Olmedo suggest that there are at least four distinct models of acculturation: assimilation, marginalization, separation, and integration (1986, 306). These models are defined by the four possible combinations of immigrant responses to two fundamental value questions: does the immigrant consider it "to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups?" and does he or she believe that it is valuable "to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?"



In Berry, Trimble, and Olmeda's schema, the immigrant who believes that she should adapt the culture of the receiving country while letting go of the cultural identity and characteristics of the country of origin is practicing *assimilation*. The assimilated immigrant will quickly learn English and will make no effort to retain—and so might forget, especially by the second generation—their native language.

The immigrant who avoids contact with her new culture while holding closely to the culture and traditions of the country of origin defines the *separation* model. Nativists such as Buchanan would classify many contemporary immigrants of fitting within this model—uninterested in adapting to American culture and unwilling to relinquish their own traditions.

*Marginalization* describes the immigrant who does not value the cultural identity and characteristics of their homeland but also does not, or is not allowed to, find value in relationships with individuals from the receiving country.

Finally, those immigrants who maintain their native cultural characteristics while also relating actively to those of the receiving country experience *integration*. The well-integrated immigrant is both proudly from their home country and proudly American.

The political debate around immigration in the United States tends to divide amongst those who believe that immigrants should assimilate, abandoning their cultural distinctives so as to become entirely American, and those who believe that integration is the best model. In popular media, as Matt Bowskill et al. (2007) have demonstrated in a study of media attitudes toward Islamic schools in Britain, the terms are very often confused; "integration" has become the politically correct terminology to refer to any sort of acculturation, but many are concerned only with the question of how immigrants relate to the majority culture, ignoring considerations of how well they maintain their native cultures.

Psychological researchers Hanna Zagefka and Rupert Brown (2002) have found in research amongst immigrants to Germany that the integration model of acculturation led to the most positive outcomes both for immigrants and for the receiving society, confirming the results of many other studies (Liebkind 1996; Dovidio et al. 1998; Berry et al. 1992, 357).

Following this research, this study presupposes the integration model—whereby the immigrant values both relationships with her new surroundings as well as maintaining her cultural distinctiveness—to be the most desirable, but that presumption will be tested in this particular context by asking the immigrants participating in the study themselves what they perceive as the value of both relating to the majority culture as well as maintaining their own.

Scholars recognize a number of different categories on integration. Economist Barry Chiswick (1978) and others in his discipline have examined economic integration, finding that increased integration leads to higher earnings. Lynette Rawlings et al. (2009, 42-50) also consider measures of homeownership and access to financial services (such as a credit card or a savings account) as indicators of economic integration.

Many studies have also measured socio-cultural indicators of integration, although, compared to economic integration, socio-cultural integration "is more difficult to define and quantify" (Constant et al. 2009, 4). A plethora of studies have considered English language acquisition amongst immigrants to the United States as a measure of successful integration (Hakimzadeh and Cohn 2007; McManus 1983). Constant et al. (2009, 13-26) also look at marriage and intermarriage rates, birth rates, and age at first marriage and first parenthood amongst Turkish immigrants in Germany as a measure of social integration.

Another important component of immigrant integration is political integration. Naturally, the ability of an immigrant to integrate into the national political process depends in

large part upon the policies that determine who is allowed to vote in elections, but the extent to which naturalized immigrants utilize their right to participate in the electoral process is up to them. John Garcia (1987) has done extensive research into the political integration of Mexican immigrants in the U.S., in particular.

Finally, Pauline Cheong (2007) and Min Zhou and Carl Bankston (1994), among others, have analyzed the idea of "social capital" as a measure of immigrant integration. Social capital, as defined by Robert Putnam, refers to "social organization, such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (1995, 67). The extent to which immigrants are—or become—connected to others (both within their ethnic group and within the larger society) can be helpful measures of integration. Social capital can be difficult to quantify, as Zhou and Bankston note (2002), because it is not a resource held by an individual or a group, but rather exists within the relationships and processes between individuals. Nevertheless, it is worth the considering precisely because "social capital is crucial and, under certain conditions, more important than traditional human capital for the successful adaptation" of younger-generation immigrants in particular (Zhou and Bankston 1994, 842). Efforts to measure social capital have included looking at membership and affiliation with different organizations and associations as well as attitudes toward, confidence in, and familiarity with local institutions, relationships with those outside of one's own family and one's own ethnic group, and where an individual turns in a crisis (Biddle et al. 2009).

Frank van Tubergen takes several of these indicators of immigrant integration and applies a "double comparative" method of looking at immigrant integration across different countries of origin, different receiving country policies, and different immigrant community sizes and characteristics (2006, 2-3). He also provides a helpful review of the basic theories of what

controls immigrant integration: human capital, structural opportunities, prejudice, and social capital (Ibid. 15).

### **Suburbanization of Immigration**

Rather than address the question of immigrant integration generally, as many previous studies have done, this research is interested particularly in understanding the factors which encourage or inhibit integration particularly in a low-income suburban context.

For most of U.S. history, newly arriving immigrant settled primarily in urban areas, particularly into gateway cities such as New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Miami. Only upon having reached a certain degree of financial stability and success in the United States, usually after many years or even decades, did immigrants move to suburban areas. In fact, just a few decades ago, the fact that an immigrant was residing in the suburbs was in itself considered a reasonably good indicator of assimilation within the larger society (Alba et al. 1999, 447). Now, though, while immigrants continue to arrive to the traditional gateway cities, demographers have noticed a marked trend toward initial settlement to newly emerging gateway cities and, particularly, to suburban areas (Singer 2008, 14-15).

The suburbanization of immigration follows a shift in the suburbs more generally; Susan Hardwick observes that

the outer city is no longer “sub” to the “urb” in any traditional sense of the word. In fact, many American suburbs are replete with a wide range of employment opportunities; shopping districts, education, health care, and law enforcement systems; and a local sense

of place that distinguished them from other parts of the larger metropolitan area and makes them self-sufficient economically, culturally, and politically. Concomitant with these expanded services in the suburbs have come demographic changes; suburbs have emerged as rich sites of population diversity. (2008, 31)

Whereas suburbs were once the “bedroom communities” to which the well-off returned to sleep after a day at work in the city (Baldassare 1991, 207), they are now destinations in their own right, and many both live and work within the suburbs and might seldom visit the nearby city. That is true for immigrants as well as for the larger society.

The Chicago metropolitan region serves as an excellent example of this phenomenon. The 2000 census revealed that, for the first time, more immigrants were living in the suburbs of Chicago—788,000, an all-time high—than within the city limits, where 629,000 immigrants resided (Paral and Norkewicz 2003, 8). That shift is a result not only of immigrants moving from the city to the suburbs, but also from a new trend of newly-arrived immigrants settling in the suburbs upon arrival in the United States (Ibid. 14).

As immigration patterns have shifted toward the suburbs, however, the infrastructure on which low-income immigrants rely has not necessarily followed them, which might result in uniquely suburban challenges to immigrant integration. This is particularly an issue for low-income immigrants—and immigrants are significantly more likely to have low income levels than native-born citizens: 20.1% of all immigrants in the U.S. live in poverty, compared to 15.1% of native-born U.S. citizens (Portes and Rumbaut 2006, 89). The rate is much higher for immigrants from certain countries, such as Mexico (28.9%), the Dominican Republic (29.3%), and Honduras (26.9%) (Ibid.).

For example, availability of affordable legal services is essential for immigrants seeking to move through the complicated U.S. immigration legal system on the pathways toward citizenship. U.S. law (8 CFR § 1292.2) dictates that immigration legal advice and services can only be provided through attorneys—who tend to charge fees beyond what many low-income immigrants can afford—or accredited individuals at non-profit or charitable organizations recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). In 2005, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that there were 590,416 foreign-born individuals residing in the City of Chicago; at that time, there were at least seventeen non-profit organizations recognized by the BIA to provide low-cost immigration legal services. In the suburban counties of DuPage, Kane, Kendall, McHenry, Will, and Grundy, by contrast, there were a combined 368,479 foreign-born residents in 2005—and just two BIA-recognized organizations (Hoyt and Paral 2006, 3; Executive Office for Immigration Review 2010, 44-50).

The suburban context also provides unique challenges for transportation, as most suburbs lack the sophisticated public transportation systems of an urban area. Indeed, economists Edward Glaeser, Matthew Kahn, and Jordan Rappaport have argued that the availability of public transportation is the primary reason that the poor—who often cannot afford cars—tend to historically concentrate in cities, rather than in the suburbs, where mobility nearly necessitates access to a vehicle (2008, 2). As many low-income immigrants move to the suburbs, this lack of public transportation presents an additional hurdle.

Given the trend toward a suburbanization of immigration—and the unique factors that the suburbs might apply to immigrant integration—this study is focused on a particular low-income neighborhood in suburban Chicago as a case study, in an attempt to identify which characteristics facilitate and hinder immigrant integration in this context.



### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This research intends to be a participative analysis of a particular neighborhood, with the ultimate goal of determining how immigrant residents believe that they should integrate into their new society, how well or poorly they are doing so, and which factors most contribute toward their integration process. Selected immigrant households of the Parkside Apartments were invited to participate in an interview process that allows them to share their experiences and opinions as immigrants in this particular context. While conventional research aims to apply a strictly objective, impartial review and analysis of the information that a community possesses, participatory research is unapologetically biased toward the well-being and positive transformation of the community that is participating in the research process both as the subjects and the agents of the research. In this context, the principal researcher (himself an established resident of the community), collaborated with translators from within the community, seeking in particular individuals who can speak each of the primary languages spoken in the community (English, Spanish, Kirundi, and Arabic, and others as necessary).

The research also borrows from the Appreciative Inquiry model of research developed by David Cooperrider (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005), relying particularly upon the methodology and case studies of asset-based community development practiced by John Kretzmann and John McKnight (1993) at Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research. The community at the Parkside Apartments includes a number of strengths and resources already present in the



community; the aim of Appreciative Inquiry is to mutually identify these assets and apply them cooperatively toward the improvement of the community, working through processes of identification, envisioning, planning, and implementation (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005, 12, 25-34).

While the Parkside neighborhood's 120 apartment units include immigrants from many different countries and regions, as well as many native-born U.S. citizens of different ethnic backgrounds, this research focused on immigrants from two primary regions: from the country of Mexico and from the continent of Africa—in particular, from Sudan, Liberia, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo, and Burundi.<sup>1</sup> Limiting the focus of the study to these groups simplified the complicated data collection process inherent in working with individuals who speak so many different languages and provided sufficient data within particular groups to allow for comparative analysis amongst immigrants from these distinct regions.

The selection process for interviewees included a modified random selection. As there are many more Mexican immigrants in the complex than African immigrants, the researcher attempted to conduct an interview with at least one adult member of each apartment unit in which an immigrant from one of the six African countries of focus resided, while using a random sample of the Mexican immigrants. Ultimately, African residents of twelve different apartment units agreed to be interviewed. Residents of three African immigrant families declined to participate or could not be located after repeated attempts by the researcher.

To identify a random sample of the community's Mexican immigrants, the researcher compiled a list of the addresses of all 120 apartment units within the Parkside Apartments and

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<sup>1</sup> The Parkside Apartments also includes immigrant residents originally from the African countries of Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. These immigrants were not asked to be interviewed primarily because of a lack of a proficient translator. Additionally, the neighborhood includes immigrants from other regions of the world—particularly from Burma, Iran, and Poland—but these groups were not interviewed both because of a lack of proficient translators within the community and in order to limit the scope of the research.

then employed a computer program to randomly sort the apartment numbers. Apartment units in which the residents were native-born US citizens or immigrants from countries other than Mexico were then removed from the list, and the top fifteen apartment units in which Mexican immigrants lived were selected as a sample. Of those, eleven elected to participate in the interviews, which were conducted by the researcher (who speaks Spanish) and, in some cases, a Tarascan-speaking translator from within the community. Four of the fifteen units selected chose not to participate or could not be located after repeated attempts.

The interviews accomplished two primary purposes: to provide demographic information about the individuals and families who live in the Parkside Apartments, and to determine the connections within the community and to the larger society that have facilitated socio-cultural and economic integration in a new context for those residents who have migrated from Mexico or different parts of Africa.

The interviewer asked a series of demographic questions related to the respondent's household information, income and employment information, political affiliation, religion, and language.<sup>2</sup> He also asked the respondents a series of questions about their experience as an immigrant, their reception in the United States (and, specifically, in Glen Ellyn, Illinois), and their views of immigration and how native-born US citizens view immigrants. The interview guide includes questions designed to elicit both quantifiable data that was then analyzed using statistical analysis software as well as qualified data that can provide more insight and allow the voices of Parkside's immigrant residents to be included in this final research report.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix I for the complete Interview Guide.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

### **Statistical Portrait of Parkside's Immigrant Residents**

The interviews conducted with African and Mexican immigrant members of the Parkside community provide a helpful portrait of the community. Of the Mexican and African immigrants interviewed, 65% of primary respondents are male. 52% of respondents are of African origin, while 48% are Latino. Of the African immigrants, the most common countries of origin are Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, each representing 13% of those interviewed, with smaller number of respondents from Burundi and Rwanda (9% each) and the West African countries of Togo and Liberia (4% each). All Latino respondents are of Mexican origin, hailing from the Mexican states of Guerrero (30% of Mexican respondents), Zacatecas (20%), Michoacán (20%), Guanajuato, the Federal District of Mexico City, and Puebla (10% each).

Respondents reported eleven different primary languages, with Spanish being the most common (39%). All Mexican immigrants reported speaking Spanish, though for some Tarascan, a language indigenous to parts of the Mexican state of Michoacán, was their first language. African immigrants spoke a variety of primary languages, including Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Amha, Darfuri, Mina, Dan, Lingala, and Arabic, though all felt comfortable being interviewed in English, Arabic, Kirundi, or Kinyarwanda.

In about six out of ten households, the respondent was married, generally with the spouse living within the same household. 57% of the households have children living within the apartment unit. Several of those households where parents were interviewed, however, report having children who lived elsewhere—usually in the country of origin. Both the mean and the median number of residents amongst the apartment units surveyed was four—quite high, given that 65% of respondents’ apartments had just one bedroom (and none of the apartments at Parkside have more than two bedrooms).

The majority of respondents—52%—identify themselves as Roman Catholic, while 30% belong to a Protestant Christian tradition, 13% are Muslims, and 4% are Jehovah’s Witnesses. Notably, not a single respondent considered themselves non-religious. Indeed, the community as a whole is rather religious: 83% reported attending a religious service at least once per month, and nearly half—48%—say they attend a religious service “almost every week” or more frequently.

The immigrants surveyed span a range of levels of educational achievement—9% of respondents reporting having a Master’s degree or higher—but in general those surveyed had a low level of formal education: most (51%) had no formal education beyond a primary school level.

Most of those surveyed (52%) were living below the Federal Poverty Guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for their household size, and almost all households (83%) were beneath 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines. 61% of households reported receiving some sort of means-tested public benefit. Others had very low income levels, but were ineligible for public benefits because of their legal status: a plurality of respondents (35%) reported having no current legal status in the United States; most others were

either in refugee status (26%) or were Lawful Permanent Residents (30%). Mexican residents were significantly more likely to be undocumented (73%) than African residents, all of whom reported some sort of legal status.<sup>3</sup> Most of the African immigrants interviewed (75%) had entered the United States with refugee status and had been resettled by a voluntary agency under contract with the Department of State; in most cases, this voluntary agency was World Relief, the only resettlement agency that currently resettles refugees into DuPage County.

Another significant difference between African and Mexican immigrants—tied to their mode of entry—is whether they were met by a North American volunteer who could assist them with the cultural adjustment process upon arrival.<sup>4</sup> Resettlement agencies such as World Relief generally aim to match incoming refugees with a volunteer, in addition to providing short-term case management, and 88% of those who reported having been assigned a volunteer said that it was helpful (none described the relationship as unhelpful). Further, those volunteers often turned into long-term friends: 75% of those assigned a volunteer said they had interacted with that person within the last month, which included some who had been living in the U.S. for several years.

75% of the African immigrants, including 77% of those who entered as refugees, reported having a North American volunteer. Amongst Mexican immigrants, however, none was assigned a volunteer in a formal capacity, though some reported that family members helped them with their initial adjustment.

African immigrants interviewed tend to have been living in the United States, and living at Parkside, for significantly less time than Mexican immigrants.<sup>5</sup> The mean date of arrival in the United States for African immigrants was November 24, 2006; no African resident had been

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<sup>3</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 16.13 , significant at  $p < 0.01$

<sup>4</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 11.2 , significant at  $p < 0.01$

<sup>5</sup> Independent sample  $t$ -test with equal variances assumed = 3.2, significant at  $p < 0.01$

in the United States for more than eight years. Amongst the Mexican immigrants, by contrast, the mean date of first arrival in the United States was February 22, 1994, with more than half reporting that they had lived in the United States for more than a decade. Likewise, African immigrants reported living within the Parkside community for significantly less time than Mexican immigrants: the average African interviewed moved into Parkside about two and half years ago, whereas the average Mexican in the community has lived there for about eight years.<sup>6</sup>

### **Asking the Right Question: Is Integration the Right Model for Acculturation?**

A basic understanding of who the immigrant residents of Parkside are demographically allows the researcher to begin analyzing how well these immigrants are integrating. As mentioned earlier, though, integration is just one model of acculturation; while most research suggest it is the preferred model of acculturation, the aim of this participatory research is to involve the immigrants within Parkside to help to define the appropriate questions. Berry et al. (1986, 306) suggest that integration—in contrast to other models such as assimilation, separation, or marginalization—is defined as an acculturation strategy that both values both maintaining one’s cultural identify as well as building relationships with those of other groups. To determine whether the immigrants at Parkside agree with researchers that integration is the ideal model of immigrant acculturation, the researcher asked each of the individual interviewed if they believed that “it is important to maintain your cultural identify and characteristics” as well if they believed that “there is a value to building relationships with people from other ethnic groups.”

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<sup>6</sup> Independent sample *t*-test with equal variances assumed = 2.8, significant at  $p < 0.05$

Respondents roundly agreed with both statements, indicating that, for most, integration is their preferred model of acculturation. 96% of those interviewed believed that it was important to maintain their cultural identity and characteristics—in effect, rejecting the idea of assimilation, whereby immigrants fully embrace the culture of their new country while rejecting the culture and identity of their country of origin, with no statistically significant difference between African and Mexican immigrants<sup>7</sup> nor between documented and undocumented immigrants.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, 91% of respondents recognized value in building relationships with those of other ethnic groups, rejecting the separation model.

Likewise, 96% of those interviewed agreed with the statement that “immigrants should adopt some parts of the American culture, but it is also important to maintain their own culture.” 91% affirmed that immigrants should do everything possible to learn English and to adopt the culture of their new country. “I live in America; I have to learn American culture” said one Congolese man, while also stating that he would not be willing to lose his African identity (Interview 21).

With integration thus defined as the ideal by the immigrants of Parkside themselves, the researcher used their responses to a variety of questions to examine their progress in several areas of integration: political, socio-cultural, economic, and social capital, comparing their degree of integration to the larger society (using census data as a baseline).

This demographic information also allows for comparison between different groups of immigrants at Parkside, such as between African and Mexican immigrants and between those with and without legal status. In many ways, African immigrants in this neighborhood—who are much more likely than their Mexican counterparts to have legal status, to be eligible for public

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<sup>7</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 0.56 , not significant at  $p < 0.05$

<sup>8</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 0.96 , not significant at  $p < 0.05$

benefits, and to have the support and assistance of the staff and volunteers of refugee resettlement agencies such as World Relief—might be expected to integrate more readily than Mexican immigrants. On the other hand, the Mexican immigrants at Parkside are likely to have been living in the United States for a longer length of time, which might suggest that, all other things being equal, they would have advanced further in the integration process. Likewise, while it is certainly possible that some of the Mexican immigrants in this neighborhood have suffered some sort of trauma, the majority of African immigrants entered the U.S. as refugees and thus, by definition, have suffered persecution; it might be hypothesized that this past trauma might cause the refugees to suffer the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder or other psychological issues that could inhibit their ability to thrive in a new context.

### **Political and Legal Integration**

The best measure of political integration is legal status, a factor which is often completely out of the immigrant's control. For those without a close relative with legal status, an advanced degree of education, or a reasonable fear of persecution that might qualify the person for a claim to refugee status, there is generally no option to become a Lawful Permanent Resident of the United States, which is the prerequisite to citizenship and full civic integration (Soerens and Hwang 2009, 61). Overall, 65% of the immigrants at Parkside report having legal status of one sort or another, which is very consistent with the national estimated figure of 65.6% reported by the Department of Homeland Security (Hoefer, Rytina, and Baker 2010, 3).

As noted above, though, the African immigrants at Parkside are much further along than Mexican immigrants in the process of full political and legal integration: all report having some



sort of legal status, with 75% of them reporting a permanent status that will eventually make them eligible for naturalization in most cases, although none had already become U.S. citizens (whereas, statewide, 43.4% of immigrants are naturalized U.S. citizens, suggesting that Parkside's immigrants as a whole are well behind the curve on this level of integration) (Hoyt and Paral 2006,1). Amongst Mexican immigrants, 73% lacked legal status of any kind. Those Mexican households composed of families with children were more likely to have legal status (33%) than households without children (20%).<sup>9</sup> Without drastic changes to U.S. immigration laws—such as some sort of a legalization of undocumented immigrants for which they might be eligible—these undocumented immigrants will never be able to legally integrate into U.S. society or to engage fully in American civic life.

Even though none of the respondents interviewed were currently U.S. citizens, and thus eligible to vote, many had opinions about the U.S. political process. Of those with an opinion, 94% said they would have voted for Barack Obama over his Republican opponent, John McCain, had they been able to vote in the 2008 U.S. presidential elections. While all Mexicans interviewed had an opinion, however, a full 42% of the African immigrants interviewed said that they had no opinion, suggesting a lesser degree of familiarity with the U.S. political process. This is very likely a function of the amount of time that they have spent in the U.S. because, as noted above, most of the Mexicans interviewed have spent several years living in the U.S., while many of the Africans had been in the U.S. only a matter of months at the time that they were interviewed. Another factor, though, could be access to information in their own language—US-based Spanish-language television is widely available on channels such as Univision and Telemundo, even to those without cable or satellite service, but most African immigrants do not have access to television news in their native language. And, of course, there were exceptions:

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<sup>9</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 13.596, significant at  $p < 0.05$

one Congolese man expressed his admiration for the American political system: “I’m so impressed the way they did elections in America. It’s not like in Africa,” he said (Interview 21).

Another aspect of legal and political integration is paying taxes, which is both a legal responsibility and an activity that tends to make the taxpayer more interested in how their taxes are utilized. Of those who reported earning income in the United States in the previous year, 82% reported that they had filed a tax return. That included all of those surveyed with legal status, but also 63% of those who do not have legal status or work authorization.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, all those immigrants with legal status reported that taxes were deducted from their payroll check, but so did the majority of undocumented immigrants, though 43% said they were paid in cash and taxes were not deducted from their salary.<sup>11</sup> Nationally, the Social Security Administration has estimated that 75% of undocumented immigrants are paying payroll taxes (generally with a fraudulent Social Security number), which suggests that Parkside’s undocumented immigrants are slightly less likely than the national norm to be as integrated as their legal status allows into the tax system (Porter 2006, 1).

### **Socio-Cultural Integration**

One of the primary measures of socio-cultural integration is language acquisition; most of the immigrants at Parkside (91%) agree that learning English is an important step toward full integration. As of the time of the interviews, though, only 39% of respondents said that they spoke English “pretty well” or “very well.” The level of English comprehension reported was

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<sup>10</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 4.098 , significant at  $p < 0.1$

<sup>11</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 5.204, *not* significant at  $p < 0.1$

also significantly higher for Africans<sup>12</sup>—58% of whom reported speaking English well—than for Mexicans, only 18% of whom claimed to speak English pretty well, with none feeling that they spoke English very well.<sup>13</sup> Nationally, a study by the Pew Hispanic Center (Hakimzadeh and Cohn 2007, 4) found that 35% of Hispanic immigrants report speaking Spanish pretty well or very well, suggesting that Parkside’s Mexican immigrants are less proficient than average.

The gap in English proficiency amongst Africans and Mexicans might seem particularly surprising given that average Mexican immigrant in the sample had been in the U.S. for significantly more time than the average African immigrant, and English proficiency tends to correlate closely with amount of time spent in the United States (Riley 2008, 145). There are several factors, though, that might contribute to the higher levels of English amongst Africans: first of all, Africans were significantly more likely<sup>14</sup> to report speaking English pretty well or very well before arriving in the U.S., for example, which is logical given that several of the African immigrants came from or spent significant time in countries where English is the colonial language, such as Liberia, Nigeria, and Tanzania.

Another factor, though, that might explain African immigrants’ relative proficiency in English is that African immigrants have disproportionately benefited from English as a Second Language instruction. While the results were not statistically significant at  $p = 0.05$ , African immigrants were more than twice as likely (58%) to report that they had participated in ESL classes than Mexican immigrants (27%). Several Mexican immigrants expressed that they did not realize that classes were available, whereas those Africans who entered as refugees were

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<sup>12</sup> Independent sample  $t$ -test with equal variances assumed = 2.24, significant at  $p < 0.05$ , when reported English level, an ordinal value, is treated as an interval variable.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that these differences could reflect a difference in cultural styles of self-assessment, since English language ability was based on the respondent’s own analysis of his or her English language competency, not on an objective examination.

<sup>14</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 9.2 , significant at  $p < 0.05$

generally encouraged by their resettlement agency to attend classes that the agency provided, and for which the agency (in most cases, World Relief) also provided transportation and childcare. Other Mexicans were aware of classes only in other communities, which they could not attend for lack of transportation, but were not aware of classes available closer to their home; a Mexican woman, for example, traveled more than ten miles to attend a class in the village of Bensenville, but did not realize that classes were offered just a few blocks away at a local church (and she eventually dropped out of classes because she did not have consistent transportation options) (Interview 16). A Mexican man, who spoke English “pretty well” after having been in the U.S. for more than two decades, said that not enrolling in ESL classes when he first arrived “was my first mistake... if I’d have gone to classes, I’d have learned better,” he said (Interview 23).

Beyond differences in English competency by country of origin, household composition also seems to have a significant effect: the most likely group to speak English well were African adults without children, followed by African families, then Mexican families, then Mexican households composed of single individuals or those whose families are still living in Mexico.<sup>15</sup> It seems likely that the presence of children in a Mexican household, who like almost all second generation immigrants, tend to speak English fluently (Hakimzadeh and Cohn 2007, 4), are positively affecting their parents language acquisition. Another factor could be that single adults, without children, are more singularly focused on working: “We can’t [sign up for ESL classes],” one childless Mexican woman said, “we work” (Interview 24).

A final characteristic that might affect language learning could be the relative size of the Spanish-speaking community. Whereas all of the Mexicans surveyed speak a common language, the twelve Africans surveyed reported nine different primary languages; given the linguistic

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<sup>15</sup> One-way ANOVA = 4.408, significant at  $p < .05$

diversity of the African continent, and even within many individual African nations, the African immigrant who does not learn a second (or third, or fourth) language might find him or herself unable to communicate with anyone outside of his or her household. While many Mexican immigrants can get by reasonably well both in social situations and in their workplace speaking Spanish, the Lingala-speaking Congolese immigrant, the Darfuri-speaking Sudanese, or the Mina-speaking Togolese would have a great deal of difficulty communicating with anyone if they did not learn to speak English.

Another measure of socio-cultural integration is access to resources such as the public library. 55% of respondents reported having a Glen Ellyn Public Library card within the household, a rate which was not significantly different between African and Mexican immigrants. However, it lags behind the 68% of the entire American population that possesses a library card (American Library Association 2008).

### **Economic Integration**

Some of the most interesting findings about Parkside's immigrant residents relate to questions of economic integration. The mean household income amongst the residents at Parkside is \$27,714; that number is skewed by a few outlying households with higher incomes: the median household income is \$18,850, which does not include the value of public benefits. When the cash value of public benefits (cash, rental assistance, and food stamp benefits) are included, the mean household income is \$28,060, though the median is unchanged. These figures are significantly lower than the median household incomes reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for the nation as a whole (\$52,175), the county in which Parkside is located (\$77,441), or

the Village of Glen Ellyn (89,685) (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). Particularly for its affluent western suburban context, the residents of Parkside are decidedly low-income, earning a small fraction of that of the average household in the surrounding community.

One might expect that Mexican immigrants—who are much less likely to have legal status (and thus be lawfully authorized to work) than African immigrants, and thus also ineligible for most public benefits and less likely to receive job placement assistance from a refugee resettlement agency like World Relief—would have lower income levels, but that does not seem to be the case. Though Africans are much more likely to receive public benefits—66% reported receiving food stamp benefits for at least one member of the household, compared to 27% of Mexican households<sup>16</sup>—even with the cash value of public benefits included, Mexican households reported household incomes that were dramatically higher than African households: \$38,203 for Mexicans compared to \$18,763 for African households.<sup>17</sup>

Those figures, however, are not significant at the  $p = 0.05$  level. The most important variable that correlates with a higher income level does not seem to be ethnicity or legal status, but rather household composition. Immigrant households without children—including those who support children living abroad—reported income levels that were much higher than those with children: the mean amount of household income (including the value of public benefits) for those without children was \$44,464, whereas those households with children had a mean household income of \$14,391.<sup>18</sup> This is because many households without children consist of many adults—often as many as six or seven—each of whom is working. Though their hourly wages are not particularly high—on average, \$9.51 per hour—the combined weekly number of hours worked by these households averaged 74.8 hours, with one household reporting a

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<sup>16</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 3.57, significant at  $p < 0.1$

<sup>17</sup> Independent sample  $t$ -test with equal variances assumed = -1.45, *not* significant at  $p < 0.05$

<sup>18</sup> Independent sample  $t$ -test with equal variances assumed = -2.30, significant at  $p < 0.05$

combined 240 hours of weekly work. In contrast, those households with children averaged just 33.4 combined hours of work per week for all working members of the household.<sup>19</sup>

When sorted into four groups—Mexican nuclear families (spouses and children), Mexican adults living without spouses or children (though many report a spouse and children back in Mexico), African nuclear families, and African adults living without spouses or children—the results are even more clear and significant.<sup>20</sup> African families had the lowest household annual income, \$8,561, followed by Mexican families with \$17,992. African adults reported a household income of \$34,009, while Mexican households of adults living apart from immediate families are earning \$66,014 per year. Notably, the average household of Mexican adults had 4.6 residents, while the average African household of adults had half as many people—2.3—and there was no statistically significant difference between the *per capita* annual incomes of these two groups.<sup>21</sup>

There is also a significant difference in the sorts of work that immigrants at Parkside are doing. Of those Mexican immigrants who were working, every single one was employed in the restaurant industry, whereas African immigrants were more likely to be working in factories or warehouse jobs, with just 13% working in the restaurant industry.<sup>22</sup> This may be a function of the sort of industries which are willing to hire immigrants without valid work authorization. Additionally, most refugees were assisted in finding their jobs by a resettlement agency such as World Relief, which may have reasons for preferring to place them in certain industries, such as more consistency in schedules, access to benefits, or higher wages.

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<sup>19</sup> Independent sample *t*-test with equal variances assumed = -1.54, *not* significant at  $p < 0.05$

<sup>20</sup> One-way ANOVA = 5.03, significant at  $p < .05$

<sup>21</sup> Independent sample *t*-test with equal variances assumed = 0.234, *not* significant at  $p < 0.05$

<sup>22</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 13.38, significant at  $p < 0.01$

African immigrants were also much more likely to report that no one in the household was employed than Mexican households, though the results were not statistically significant at  $p = 0.05$ : a full one-third of African immigrants reported that all adults within the household were unemployed, compared to 18% of Mexican households.<sup>23</sup> There are several reasonable explanations for this difference: most notably, several of the African immigrants had arrived in the United States very shortly before they were surveyed; having been present for as little as one or two months in some cases, it is not surprising that they had not yet found work. Secondly, because refugees are eligible for cash public assistance (Temporary Aid for Needy Families) and food stamps, those African immigrants who entered as refugees are often able to sustain themselves, albeit just barely scraping by, without working, while undocumented Mexican immigrants are ineligible for these means-tested public benefits. An undocumented immigrant simply cannot survive without working; if they face unemployment for too long, they are likely to leave, either to a different part of the United States where work is more readily available or back to their country of origin, where the cost of living is likely less than in the U.S. The availability of public benefits may also provide a disincentive to work, since gainful employment decreases the amount of one's benefit (Corbett and Fikkert 2009, 92). The family situations of some of the African households, also, make holding a job a challenge: several were composed of families with single mothers, whose ability to work was limited by needs for childcare. Additionally, the Mexican immigrants, who must have possessed a certain degree of resolve and ingenuity to have chosen to leave their homeland in search of work in the United States, may have more of a self-selecting orientation toward hard work than the African immigrants, most of which are refugees and were forced out of their homelands by persecution. Finally, it is also

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<sup>23</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 0.683, not significant at  $p < 0.1$



possible that other structural factors may be at play, such as discrimination for ethnic or religious reasons that disproportionately affects those of African or Muslim origin.

Economic integration is more than simply income, however: to be a fully integrated member of the American economy also requires access to different elements of the American economic system. In an era of Internet-based commerce, for example, a credit card or debit card opens opportunities to a wider range of commercial opportunities than the person limited to cash transactions. 43.5% of those surveyed reported that someone in their household had either a credit card or a debit card. There was no statistically significant relationship, however, between credit or debit card access and legal status,<sup>24</sup> ethnicity,<sup>25</sup> family composition,<sup>26</sup> or even income level.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, owning a car can be an important measure of integration, particularly in the suburban context, where public transportation options are severely limited compared to most cities. 61% of the households interviewed at Parkside have at least one vehicle, but that leaves nearly four in ten who do not, and are dependent upon public transportation, shared rides, walking, or bicycles for transportation. There were no statistically significant differences amongst car ownership between different groups, though Africans (66.7%) were far more likely than Mexicans (27.3%) to possess a valid driver's license,<sup>28</sup> which is logical given the comparatively low percentage of Mexican immigrants who have legal status, which is now a prerequisite for obtaining a driver's license in Illinois.

A final variable which speaks to the level of economic integration is access to healthcare. Less than half of the immigrants interviewed had health insurance; while a small percentage

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<sup>24</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 1.704, not significant at  $p < 0.1$

<sup>25</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 2.253, not significant at  $p < 0.1$

<sup>26</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 1.885, not significant at  $p < 0.1$

<sup>27</sup> Independent sample  $t$ -test with equal variances assumed = -0.749, not significant at  $p < 0.1$

<sup>28</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 3.569, significant at  $p < 0.11$

(8.7%) had the option of receive health insurance through their employer, most of the uninsured did not have this option. Of those with insurance, most received a governmental program such as Medicaid or Medicare; only 13% had insurance provided by their employer. African immigrants were far more likely to have health insurance access (75%) than Mexican immigrants (18%),<sup>29</sup> which is most likely explained by the fact that most of the Africans entered as refugees and are eligible for Medicaid, whereas those Mexican adults who lack legal status are not, regardless of how low their income may be. However, as Illinois' All Kids programs for uninsured children provides health insurance to low-income children regardless of legal status, legal status does not seem to be a barrier for children within undocumented families: 92% of all households with children surveyed reported that their children had health insurance coverage.

### **Social Capital Integration**

A final measure of immigrant integration is social capital: to what extent is the immigrant connected to others—both within and outside of her or his ethnic community—in ways that are mutually beneficial? One measure of these relationships is the degree to which immigrants at Parkside know their neighbors. On average, those interviewed at Parkside can give at least the first name of only 9.7% of the other residents of their particular fourteen- or sixteen-unit building. They consider a slightly smaller percentage—7.2% of their same-building neighbors—to be their friends. Others said they knew more neighbors, but not their names; one Mexican mother knew only “Jessica’s mother,” “Natalya’s mother,” and others by their children’s names,

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<sup>29</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 7.525, significant at  $p < 0.13$

though she still considered them her friends, she did not actually know the parents' names (Interview 16).

Interestingly, while there were no statistically significant differences in the numbers of neighbors known within one's building based upon ethnicity or household composition (with or without children), there was a significant difference between those with and without legal status: undocumented respondents, on average, know 16.3% of their neighbors within the same building, compared to 6.2% for those with legal status.<sup>30</sup> However, this difference may have less to do with legal status specifically than with the fact that, at Parkside, undocumented immigrants are likely to have been living in the United States and at Parkside for longer than those with legal status (and, thus, to have had more time to get to know their neighbors).

Beyond reporting how many of their neighbors they know and with whom they consider themselves friends, respondents also reported the percentage of their known neighbors who are of the same or of a different ethnic background. Mexican immigrants are less likely than African immigrants to report to report friendships with those from other ethnic groups: Mexican immigrants said that, on average, 8.9% of their friends within their building were of another ethnicity, whereas Africans reported that 32.75% of their friends were of a distinct ethnic background.<sup>31</sup>

There is also a significant difference amongst the percentage of friends outside of one's ethnic group reported by Africans as compared to Mexicans.<sup>32</sup> When asked to name the five individuals outside of her family with whom the respondent speaks most often, the average African respondent named 2.2 individuals of another ethnicity and 2.8 within their same ethnic group, suggesting a nearly equal mix between of friends within and outside of their ethnic group.

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<sup>30</sup> Independent sample *t*-test with equal variances assumed = -2.307, significant at  $p < 0.05$

<sup>31</sup> Independent sample *t*-test with equal variances assumed = -1.680, significant at  $p < 0.11$

<sup>32</sup> Independent sample *t*-test with equal variances assumed = -2.114, significant at  $p < 0.05$

Mexicans, on the contrary, reported on average that their top five friends would include 0.7 non-Mexican individuals and 4.3 of the same ethnicity.

Africans at Parkside, then, seem significantly more likely to have relationships with those outside of their ethnic community. This could simply be because there are more Mexican immigrants at Parkside overall than African immigrants, and thus fewer neighbors within their same ethnic group for the average African to know. The size of the Mexican community, though, may also contribute to a greater cohesiveness within the community and less of a felt need to build relationships with those outside the ethnic group. Legal status, which is a major issue in the Mexican community but does not affect many of Parkside's African immigrants, could also be a factor: those without legal status may tend to be more guarded toward those outside of their ethnic group, uncertain of whether such individuals can be trusted.

One Mexican respondent expressed that the demands of his work schedule limited his ability to interact with others, especially those from outside of his own ethnic group. "Because I work so frequently, I don't have time to spend time with [my neighbors]... We greet one another," he says, but they are not really friends, and he could name only one person living in his building (Interview 23). A Mexican woman, who reported knowing the names of individuals in two of the fourteen units in her building, expressed a similar sentiment: "They greet me," she says, "but I don't know their names" (Interview 13). One Congolese man says that there socialization tends to be limited to within a given ethnic group: "Africans are with Africans. Mexicans are with Mexicans. There are no deep relationships between countries or continents," he says, adding that he thinks there should be (Interview 21).

Another measure of social capital is to consider the respondents' degree of familiarity with and membership in local organizations and associations. When described various

community-based organizations active within Glen Ellyn, the average respondent said he or she was familiar with 1.87 organizations, with World Relief and the Glen Ellyn Children’s Resource Center the most commonly mentioned organizations. While African families, African households composed of childless African adults, and Mexican families with children reported similar levels of familiarity with organizations—they reported recognizing, on average, 2.0, 2.7, and 2.6 organizations, respectively—childless households composed of adult Mexicans were significantly different: not one respondent in such a household recognized the name of a single community-based organizations.<sup>33</sup> For those working closely with community organizations, though, they had proven very helpful; a man from Rwanda, for example, said he considered the strong involvement of community organizations to among the neighborhood’s greatest strengths (Interview 2).

Another sort of organization to which many individuals at Parkside belong is a church, mosque, or other religious organization. African and Mexican immigrants reported similar level of religious service attendance—both, on average, say they attend a religious service about two or three times per month. While households with children report slightly more regular attendance than households composed entirely of adults, this difference was not statistically significant.<sup>34</sup> Some expressed regret that they could not attend church more often. “The truth [is], I haven’t gone,” said one Mexican Catholic, saying his work schedule made it difficult to attend mass (Interview 18). A Sudanese Protestant expressed a similar sentiment: “I work overtime, and then I don’t have time” for church (Interview 17). Others, though, attend church very faithfully; a Liberian man said he and his wife were at church events several times per

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<sup>33</sup> One-way ANOVA = 7.192, significant at  $p < .05$

<sup>34</sup> Independent sample  $t$ -test with equal variances assumed = -8.04, not significant at  $p < 0.1$

week, and mentioned the strong religious beliefs of many within the Parkside neighborhood as among the community's greatest strength (Interview 7).

Volunteerism can also serve as a measure of social capital, as it suggests an engagement in civil society. Only 26% of those interviewed said they have served as a volunteer in any capacity since moving to Parkside; those who do report volunteering were evenly split between those who said they volunteer rarely (less than three times per year) and those who volunteer regularly (three times per month or more) (none report volunteering between three times a year and three times per month). Those who did not volunteer often expressed a desire to do so, but many felt too busy: "I would love to work [as a volunteer], but there just isn't enough time," said one Mexican man (Interview 23).

Finally, the interviewer asked respondents where they would turn when faced with an urgent need for money, presuming that those with greater social capital would have friends, family, or a community to which to turn, whereas those without such resources would turn to a bank or a "pay day loan" store for a loan at interest. The most common responses were to turn either to family (22.7%) or to one's church (27.3%) for assistance (either a gift or an interest-free loan). Almost all Mexican respondents (91%) reported that they would be able to turn either to their family, their church, or another source for assistance that would not require paying interest, compared to 42% of African respondents who said the same; they were significantly more likely to turn to a bank or to say they had no idea what they would do.<sup>35</sup> This suggests a degree of cohesiveness within the Mexican community that is less strong in the African community: while they are less likely to know those outside of their own ethnic group, the Mexicans at Parkside have a strong degree of relationship with other Mexicans, providing a network to which they can turn in times of difficulty.

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<sup>35</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 6.135, significant at  $p < 0.05$

## Immigrants' Views and Perspectives

The interviews also asked Parkside immigrant residents about their own views' of immigrant integration and reception: while integration depends in part on the immigrant's attitude and effort, it is certainly also affected by the host community's views. Without exception, those interviewed believe that immigrants have made the economy of the United States stronger. There was an interesting divergence, however, amongst the views of Mexican and African immigrants as to how they think that native-born Americans view immigrants: 37% of Mexican immigrants said they believe that most Americans are against immigrants because of racist beliefs, whereas only 9% of Africans thought this was true.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, half of Mexicans, but only 17% of Africans, think that a majority of Americans are afraid of immigrants.<sup>37</sup> The Mexican households composed of childless adults were the most likely group to believe that most Americans viewed immigrants with fear (75%)<sup>38</sup> and racism (60%).<sup>39</sup>

One Mexican resident, who believed that most Americans were anti-immigrant both for reasons of fear and racism, posited that Americans were envious of immigrants' economic progress, which he considered the result of immigrants' strong work ethic. He recounted being mistreated by native-born Americans on multiple occasions, including one instance when an American saw him on the street and called him a terrorist (Interview 23). One Muslim Sudanese woman also mentioned fears of terrorism tainting Americans' views of immigrants (Interview 19).

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<sup>36</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 2.650, significant at  $p < 0.16$

<sup>37</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 2.794, significant at  $p < 0.18$

<sup>38</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 5.226, significant at  $p < 0.16$

<sup>39</sup> Chi-square Test of Dependence = 5.824, significant at  $p < 0.13$

These results very likely reflect the increasing media attention, much of it negative, toward Mexican immigrants, particularly in light of the passage of State Bill 1070 in Arizona, which criminalized unlawful presence in the state and required local law enforcement to ask those whom they “reasonably suspect” of lacking legal status for their papers (Archibold 2010). One Mexican woman said that such laws were possible because the fear that Americans have of immigrants (Interview 16). A Mexican man expressed a similar sentiment, lamenting that all Mexicans pay for the bad actions of a few. While there are a few murderers and kidnapers, he says, most Mexican immigrants “just work. We wash dishes,” but Americans only hear the stories of those few who commit crimes (Interview 18). Another Mexican male, who entered the U.S. more than fifty years ago as part of the U.S. government’s *bracero* temporary worker program, suggested that Mexican workers used to be appreciated and welcomed, but that this had gradually changed (Interview 14).

The variance in views between Africans and Mexicans as to how native-born Americans view immigrants very likely reflects the reception that the respective immigrants received upon entry: most Africans entered as refugees and were welcomed at the airport by a community-based organization, assisted by a North American volunteer or, often, an entire group of volunteers from a church, and helped in the process of procuring employment, learning English, and learning how to navigate American society. The average Mexican at Parkside, on the contrary, lacks legal status, and was unlikely to receive any sort of assistance from a native-born US citizen. Indeed, those residents with legal status reported that it took significantly less time to feel like they had a North American friend—on average, one month after arrival—than those without, who said, on average, that it took six months before they felt like they had a North



American friend.<sup>40</sup> A Sudanese woman, for example, reported that she had a North American friend within one month of arrival: “my teacher in ESL class,” into which her resettlement agency had placed her (Interview 19). A Sudanese man had a similar experience; in his mind, North Americans are very welcoming and hospitable, “especially church people,” who signed up to serve as his hosts for the first month in the U.S., and whom he considered his friends from the first day he arrived (Interview 17). The formal reception process that is standard for refugees but practically non-existent for other immigrants, especially those who enter without legal status, creates opportunities for cross-cultural friendships to form—which in turn builds social capital and facilitates integration.

### **Community Assets**

In keeping with the asset-based approach to this research, the researcher also asked each respondent what he or she viewed as the strengths of the Parkside community. The strongest characteristics of the community mentioned is its location: 96% believe that Parkside’s location—within walking distance of many stores, restaurants, parks, and the Glen Ellyn Metra station—is a strength. 87% believe that the relationship between Parkside neighbors of different ethnic backgrounds was a strength, saying that neighbors were respectful toward one another. “Here we’re from many countries,” said one Mexican woman, “It’s beautiful, because there are people from so many places” (Interview 13). 82% said that residents of Parkside had a good relationship with the larger community of Glen Ellyn, and the same percentage said that the neighborhood was safe.

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<sup>40</sup> Independent sample *t*-test with equal variances assumed = -1.673, significant at  $p < 0.11$

Less popular responses included the idea that neighbors at Parkside work together to improve the community (52% agree), that the complex is well-managed (30% agree), and that it is well managed (9% agree). “It’s ugly,” said one Mexican man, saying there was also a problem with bed bug infestation, a problem that others also mentioned (Interview 22). Still, he is among those who said that neighbors had worked together to improve the community, including bringing representatives of the different ethnic communities together to bring their complaints to the apartment manager. A Burundian man who had similar frustrations with the maintenance was less optimistic, saying that no amount of organizing would change the apartment complex’s management style (Interview 5).

Overall, Parkside residents recognize that their community has a great deal of strength, most of it rooted in the individuals who live within its units and in the communal strength that is built when they work together.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

As immigration becomes an increasingly suburban phenomenon, the United States needs all the more to understand how immigrants can best be integrated into suburban communities, and which policies will facilitate this integration. This comparative study of Mexican and African immigrants in the Parkside Apartments, a primarily low-income, multi-ethnic apartment complex in the suburban village of Glen Ellyn, Illinois, elicited the opinions and experiences of twenty-three immigrants to determine what they view as the best model of acculturation and how, based on a variety of measures (political, socio-cultural, economic, and social capital) they are progressing. The different characteristics of the African and the Mexican communities at Parkside, and of the immigrants with legal status as compared to this without documentation, allowed for unique comparisons.

While the variables that could contribute to one immigrant's integration relative to another are too many to definitively isolate causal relationships, the data does provide some strong hints as to factors that have proven helpful for immigrant integration as well as factors that have inhibited integration.

Interestingly, groups that were most integrated by one measure were often the least integrated by another. The apartment units whose residents were all adult Mexicans without children in the household, for example, consistently reported income levels (both household and per capita) that were much higher than either Mexican families with children or African

immigrants, regardless of household composition. This same group of childless Mexican adults, however, was less likely than all other groups to have legal status, to speak English well, to report strong relationships with those of other ethnic groups, or to be acquainted with community-based organizations—and they also were the most likely to believe that native-born American citizens viewed them (and all immigrants) with racism and fear. As such, it is important that efforts to measure immigrant integration not be limited to easily quantifiable analyses of annual income, which may miss the larger picture.

Overall, although they lag behind in some economic indicators, the immigrants who have integrated most fully have been those who entered the U.S. as refugee, and who thus had the benefit of legal status and the assistance and friendship of American organizations, religious institutions, and volunteers. Given that almost all considered this assistance a very positive experience, it would almost certainly be helpful to other immigrants as well. At present, almost no Mexican immigrants, regardless of mode of entry, had experienced assistance or welcome from a native-born American. Their understandings of how Americans view immigrants vary dramatically from those who were warmly welcomed upon arrival, as one might expect.

These interviews highlight immigrants' resilience and strength, which make the specific neighborhood in which they live—Parkside—as well as the larger community—Glen Ellyn—all the stronger. While the scope of this study was limited to this particular geographic location, it would not be surprising to find that immigrants in other suburban communities possess similar qualities and have had similar experiences.

As such, this research can inform several suggestions for how local communities as well as the American government could better facilitate the full integration of immigrants:

1. A lack of legal status stands as a significant barrier to full integration, negatively impacting an immigrant's trust in those outside of his or her ethnic group and thus limiting social capital, in addition to making full civic engagement and integration impossible. The U.S. Congress should pass (and the President should sign into law) some sort of immigration reform that would allow (or require) undocumented immigrants to register for and earn legal status, and which would also minimize the instance of further illegal immigration in the future by creating enough temporary or permanent worker visas (even for workers at the at the "low-skill" end of the job spectrum) to meet the needs of the U.S. economy.
2. Local communities—whether through local government, educational institutions, churches, or other non-profit organizations—should continue to provide English as a Second Language instruction and should do a better job of advertising the availability of their classes, particularly in the Mexican community. Providing quality ESL instruction requires adequate funding, whether from state or private sources, which is at risk given the State of Illinois' current fiscal problems.
3. Community-based organizations, churches, and other religious institutions should be commended for their efforts to assist and befriend refugees—but should consider extending assistance to other immigrants as well. Beyond the assistance itself, these relationships provide mutually beneficial opportunities for social capital generation: immigrants gain access to and understanding of the United States, while native-born US citizens are able to better understand the dynamics of immigration.
4. Newspapers, television stations, radio stations, and online media providers should present a more nuanced, fact-based explanation of the immigration issue. Rather than

highlighting sensationalized, isolated cases of immigrant malfeasance, they should publicize the more typical stories of immigrants, like those who live at Parkside, who have overcome immense challenges and work extremely hard. In doing so, they will contribute to better understanding between the native-born US citizen population and immigrant communities, and they will help to provide the political space for much needed reforms to the nation's immigration legal system.

These recommendations are just a few steps that American society—at the federal, state, local, and individual level—could take to encourage immigrants on the path toward integration. Ultimately, though, immigrant integration is not a process that can be imposed by the receiving culture, but a mutual process that depends both upon the receiving culture and upon the assets and strengths of the immigrant community. Fortunately, the immigrants at Parkside demonstrate that the immigrant community is strong and brings many assets to the process of successful integration.

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**Appendix I: Parkside Community Interview Guide**

1. Interviewer Name:  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Translator Name:  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Interview Number: \_\_\_\_\_
4.  One Bedroom Unit  
 Two Bedroom Unit

**Biographic Information**

5. Gender of Respondent:  
 Male  
 Female
6. Marital Status  
 Single (never married)  
 Married  
 Cohabiting (not legally married)  
 Divorced  
 Widowed
7. How many people sleep in this apartment unit?:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
-  
  - a. Of those people, how many are related to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Of those people, how many are children? (under 21)  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Of those children, how many are enrolled in school presently (or were during the previous school year)?

8. \_\_\_\_\_ out of \_\_\_\_\_  
Ethnicity of Respondent  
 African  
 African American  
 Asian  
 Caucasian  
 Hispanic/Latino  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Note if other household residents are of a different ethnicity:  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. In which country were you born?:  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - a. If Mexico or USA, note State of Birth:  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. If Burma, Thailand, or Malaysia, ask if:  
 Karen  
 Chin  
 Karenni  
 Burmese  
 Other

Note if other household residents are of a different country/state of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

10. What language do you primarily speak in your home?  
 English  
 Spanish  
 Arabic  
 Burmese  
 Karen  
 Chin  
 Somali  
 Dinka  
 Nepali  
 Amharic  
 Tarascan

- Vietnamese  
 Other:
11. Do you or any other people who live in this apartment unit speak any other languages?:

- English  
 Spanish  
 Arabic  
 Burmese  
 Karen  
 Chin  
 Somali  
 Dinka  
 Nepali  
 Amharic  
 Tarascan  
 Vietnamese  
 Other:

12. When did you first move to this apartment complex? \_\_\_\_\_

13. What religion do you consider yourself?

- Roman Catholic Christian  
 Protestant Christian

Note denominational affiliation, if any:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- Other Christian  
 Muslim  
 Hindu  
 Buddhist  
 No Religious Belief  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14. How often do you generally attend religious services?

- Never  
 Less than four times per year  
 About one time per month  
 About 2 or 3 times per months  
 Almost every week  
 More than one time per week

15. (If respondent indicated that he or she attends church or a religious organization), What is the name of the church that you attend most often?: \_\_\_\_\_

- a. At your church, are most of the people who attend

- of the same ethnic group as you?

- white North Americans?  
 of another ethnic group?  
 a mix of different ethnic groups?

16. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- No formal education  
 Elementary/Primary School  
 Some High School  
 High School Diploma or GED  
 Some College  
 Bachelor's Degree  
 Master's Degree or Higher

Note also other household members' level(s) of education:  
 \_\_\_\_\_

17. Did you vote in the U.S. presidential elections in 2008?

- Yes  
 No

- a. Whether or not you voted or could have voted, which candidate would you have preferred to have won?

- Barack Obama  
 John McCain  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Economic Integration

18. Are you currently working?

- Yes

- a. How many hours per week (on average)? \_\_\_\_\_

- No

19. Is another household member working?

- Yes

- a. How many hours per week (on average)? \_\_\_\_\_ (note each other individual who is working)

- No

20. Where do you work?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

21. What is your job there?  
 \_\_\_\_\_

22. What is your individual annual income?:

- a. Hourly wage: \_\_\_\_\_ x
  - b. Typical number hours worked per week: \_\_\_\_\_ x
  - c. Typical number of weeks worked per year: \_\_\_\_\_
23. What are the annual incomes of other household members? (use same formula)
24. How many automobiles does your household own?: \_\_\_\_\_
25. How many televisions are in your household?: \_\_\_\_\_
26. Have you ever owned your own home?
- Yes – but not in the United States
  - Yes – in the United States
  - Yes – both in another country and in the United States
  - No
27. Would you like to purchase a home in the United States someday?
- Yes
  - No
28. How much do you currently pay for rent each month? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
29. If you could purchase an apartment in this complex and pay a monthly mortgage payment similar to what you currently pay in rent, would you want to do so?
- Yes
  - No
- a. (If respondent said “No”), Why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What would have to change about this neighborhood for you to want to purchase a home here?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

30. Do you or any member of your household receive any of the following public benefits/services?
- Section 8 or other Governmental Housing Subsidy
  - Medicaid/All Kids
  - LIHEAP
  - Food Stamps (Link Card)
  - Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF/Welfare)
  - Social Security
    - based on age
    - based on disability
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
31. Total Value of Household Public Benefits (cash assistance plus housing voucher plus food stamp amount, per month):  
\_\_\_\_\_
32. Do you, or does another household member, have:
- A Savings Account
  - A Checking Account
  - A Credit Card
  - A Debit/Check Card
  - A Driver’s License
  - An Illinois State I.D. Card
  - A Glen Ellyn Public Library Card
  - A Cellular Phone
  - A “Land-Line”
  - A Computer
  - Internet Access in Your Home
  - Cable or Satellite Television
  - Automobile Insurance
33. What is the total amount of any debt that you currently have? (credit cards, payday loan facilities, bank loans, loans to friends or family, refugee travel loans, etc.)  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_
34. Did you file a tax return last year?
- Yes
  - No
35. Is money taken out of your paycheck for taxes?
- Yes
  - No

36. Do you have health insurance coverage?

- Yes – through my employer
- Yes – purchased privately
- Yes – through a governmental program (Medicaid/AllKids/etc.)
- No (not offered through employer)
- No, but it is offered by my employer

37. Do your children (if any) have health insurance coverage?:

- Yes
- No

38. If you needed some money urgently, would you most likely:

- Ask a family member for a loan/assistance
- Ask a neighbor for a loan/assistance
- Go to a bank for a loan
- Go to a "Pay Day Loan" store
- Go to a church for assistance
- Go to another non-profit

organization/association for assistance

### Socio-Cultural and Political Integration

39. Of the other apartment units in this building, for how many could you tell me the name of at least one person who lives in the apartment unit?

Note first names of people and ethnicities: \_\_\_\_\_

Then calculate number of apartment units from within the same ethnic group: \_\_\_\_\_

and number from other ethnic groups: \_\_\_\_\_

Note if building has:

- 14 Units Total, or
- 16 Units Total

40. Of the other apartment units in this building, how many apartments include at least one individual whom you would consider your friend? \_\_\_\_\_

Note first names of people and ethnicities: \_\_\_\_\_

Then calculate number of apartment units from within the same ethnic group: \_\_\_\_\_

and number from other ethnic groups: \_\_\_\_\_

41. Try to think of who the five people are whom you talk to most frequently who are not related to you:

(Note names, then ask ethnicity of each individual):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Number who are of a different ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

42. Do you or any member of your household receive services or assistance or have any other regular interaction with any of the following organizations:

- World Relief
- Glen Ellyn Children's Resource Center
- The OWL children's literacy program
- B.R. Ryall YMCA
- Exodus World Service
- Ref Bridge
- Helping Hands
- People's Resource Center
- Glen Ellyn Food Pantry
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

43. Since you moved to Parkside, have you ever served as a volunteer in any capacity?

a. If so, where? \_\_\_\_\_

b. How often have you volunteered?

- Regularly – at least three times per month
- Occasionally – at least four times per year
- Rarely – Three times a year or less

### For Those Born Outside the U.S.

44. In which year did you first come to the United States?

45. In what year did you most recently enter the United States, if you have entered the country more than one time?

46. Do you speak English?

- Not at All
- A Little Bit



- Pretty Well
- Very Well

47. Before coming to the United States, did you speak English

- Not at All
- A Little Bit
- Pretty Well
- Very Well

48. Have you ever taken ESL (English as a Second Language) classes?

- Yes – through World Relief
- Yes – through College of DuPage
- Yes – Other Location: \_\_\_\_\_
- No

49. Are you currently enrolled in ESL classes?

- Yes
- No

a. If not, why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

50. Since arriving in the United States, have you enrolled in any school, college, or educational program other than ESL classes?

- Yes (please note program or institution: \_\_\_\_\_)
- No

51. When you first arrived in the United States, did any North American volunteer help you to adjust to your new country?

- Yes
- No

a. If so, which organization did they come through, if any?

- World Relief
- Exodus World Service
- Helping Hands
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Not Sure

b. If you had a volunteer, was your experience with this volunteer:

- Very helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Neutral
- Unhelpful

c. If you had a volunteer, have you seen this person in the last month?

- Yes
- No

52. How long did it take, after you arrived in the United States, before you felt like you had a North American friend?

- One Day
- One Week
- One Month
- Three Months
- Six Months
- One Year
- Two Years or More
- I do not feel that I have had any North American friends

53. When you first came to the U.S., did you come

- as a refugee
- sponsored by a family member (not as a refugee)

Which family member? \_\_\_\_\_

- with a tourist visa
- with a student visa
- without any visa
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

54. At the present time, are you

- A refugee
- A Lawful Permanent Resident (green card)
- A U.S. citizen
- On a temporary visa
- None of the above

55. When you came to the United States, how much did it cost you to get here, including travel costs and any expenses paid for assistance in entering the country?

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

56. In an average month, how much money do you (and other household members) send back to relatives or other individuals in your home country?:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

57. Would you prefer:

- to stay in the United States for the rest of your life, or
  - to one day return to your country of birth?
58. In ten years, do you think it is most likely that you will be living:

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- Here at Parkside
  - Elsewhere in DuPage County
  - Somewhere else in the United States
  - In the country in which you were born, or
  - in a different country than the U.S. or your country of birth?
59. Do you think that, as an immigrant, it is important to maintain your cultural identity and characteristics?

- Yes
- No

60. As an immigrant, do you believe there is a value to building relationships with people from other ethnic groups?

- Yes
- No

61. With which of the following statements do you agree:

- America is a nation of immigrants and most Americans welcome immigrants into society.
- Most Americans are afraid of immigrants.
- Most Americans are against immigrants because they hold racist beliefs.
- Immigrants have made the United States a great and prosperous country.
- Immigrants are a drain on the economy of the United States.
- Immigrants should do all that they can to learn English and adopt the American culture.
- Immigrants should adopt some parts of American culture, but it is also important to maintain their own culture.
- I have no interest in being a part of American culture—immigrants should work to keep their own culture.

### Community Strengths

62. What features of this neighborhood do you think are strong?:

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63. Which of the following do you feel are strengths of this neighborhood?:

- Neighbors know one another
- Neighbors watch out for other families' children
- Apartment complex is well-managed
- Apartment units are well-maintained
- Neighbors organize together to work for positive change
- Neighbors from different countries respect one another and are friends
- Residents have good relationships with the larger community of Glen Ellyn
- The neighborhood is safe.
- The neighborhood is conveniently located.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

64. How do you think that the people who live in this community could make Parkside a better place to live at?

65. What skills do you have that could help improve the community?

66. Are you aware of any of the following sort of associations or organizations meeting in Glen Ellyn?

Ethnic organizations:

Churches or other religious organizations:

Sports or Fitness Clubs/Leagues:

Professional associations:

Support Groups:

Music or Arts Groups:

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Parents Associations:

Political Organizations:

Informal groups or meetings:

Other:

67. Of those you mentioned, in which have you participated at some time in the past?  
(Repeat list of any specific associations or groups mentioned)

## **Appendix II: Interviews**

All interviews were conducted by the principal researcher, in collaboration with community translators, between September 2009 and June 2010.

Interview 1: Mexican Male, No Children in Household

Interview 2: African Male, No Children in Household

Interview 3: African Male, Children in Household

Interview 4: African Male, No Children in Household

Interview 5: African Male, Children in Household

Interview 6: African Female, Children in Household

Interview 7: African Male, No Children in Household

Interview 8: African Female, Children in Household

Interview 9: African Male, No Children in Household

(Note: Interview 10 was not included in the sample, as it was not randomly selected)

Interview 11: Mexican Female, Children in Household

Interview 12: Mexican Male, No Children in Household

Interview 13: Mexican Female, Children in Household

Interview 14: Mexican Male, Children in Household

Interview 15: Mexican Female, Children in Household

Interview 16: Mexican Male, Children in Household

Interview 17: African Male, No Children in Household

Interview 18: Mexican Male, No Children in Household

Interview 19: African Female, Children in Household

Interview 20: African Female, Children in Household

Interview 21: African Male, Children in Household

Interview 22: Mexican Male, Children in Household

Interview 23: Mexican Male, No Children in Household

Interview 24: Mexican Female, No Children in Household