

SANCTUARY IN SOUTHERN APPALACHIA:  
FAITH AND HISPANIC IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION INTO APPALACHIAN  
COMMUNITIES

A Thesis  
by  
BRITTANY MEANS

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## **Abstract**

### **SANCTUARY IN SOUTHERN APPALACHIA: FAITH AND HISPANIC IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION INTO APPALACHIAN COMMUNITIES**

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In recent years, the Hispanic population of Appalachia has exploded. This area, which in the national narrative is a white, homogenous space, now boasts over 465,000 Hispanic residents. Much change has happened rapidly in a place that, racially, has not seen this much change in a while.

I examine a town in western North Carolina of about 17,000 people. It has a growing Hispanic population, and I examine the way local churches help shape the response of the community in integrating these newcomers—specifically a Southern Baptist Convention church that, through its outreach, has grown up a small but devout group of Hispanic Baptists. Through ethnographic research, I examine what life is like for this group of immigrants, what services the church offers to ease their transition and help with their daily lives, why the church offers it, and how the Anglo members of the church see this outreach.

Through this work, I engage contemporary scholarship, outline my own research process, present and evaluate my results, and look towards the future of Hispanics in Appalachia. I demonstrate through each of these elements how the religious culture of a place affects its reception to immigrants, and how in a place like Appalachia, where religion is foundational to culture, churches are more likely to welcome immigrants. I also showed that reciprocally, being affiliated with a church allows these immigrants to interact with and integrate into a community in ways that they otherwise could not, if they were not affiliated.

## **Acknowledgments**

I believe that we are the sums of those who love us. Therefore, this thesis is the combined product not only of my own hard work, but of the hard work that others have put into forming my character, providing me with the opportunity to attend graduate school, and assisting me in various and sundry ways along the journey.

I would like to thank my parents: Shawn, Janet, and Amy; and my grandparents: Basil and Faye, Daphne and Bob, and Marshall (though I never met him) for their sacrifice and commitment that allowed me the chance to write this thesis. This work stands as an homage to the unwavering support, encouragement, and accommodation of Joseph Carowick. It is also a tribute to the teachers at Concord University who recognized my potential and believed in me—John Baker, Charles Brichford, John David Smith, and Michelle Gompf in particular.

This thesis would have been impossible without the woman I call María. I cannot thank her and the Hispanic group at Gethsemane Baptist Church enough for allowing me to spend two years living, loving, and learning with them.

And most of all, Laura Ammon, thank you for letting me be your first. You have made this process a labor of love.

## **Dedication**

*Para el grupo hispano de Gethsemane Baptist,  
y todos otros grupos hispanos en Appalachia que todavía no conozco.*

And for my father.

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## Foreword

When I was in high school in West Virginia, I thought that every Hispanic person in America worked in a Mexican restaurant, because all of them that I knew did. As I began to step outside of my hometown, I realized that there was actually a large presence of Latinos in America, and that they were as different as they were similar (much like the people I already knew in Appalachia). In college, the further I got in my studies of Spanish language and culture, the more I saw Hispanic culture to be like Appalachian culture. I figured that both were centered around religion, family, and a pervasive sense of cultural identity, as expressed through strong connections to—among other things—regional variants of food and language. I also saw them both as exclusive cultures that one must be born into to truly be accepted as part of.

During my time as an AmeriCorps member in Durbin, West Virginia, I was fortunate to become close with several Puerto Ricans who lived in the town and worked at the local wood mill. I was able to see first-hand the prejudice and marginalization they encountered because of their skin color and language. I knew then that I wanted to pursue the topic of Hispanic integration into Appalachian communities further. When I came to Appalachian State, I began attending ESL classes hosted by Gethsemane Baptist Church, and I saw differences between the reception of immigrant communities in western North Carolina and West Virginia. This led me to inquire why these places might be different, how the

immigrant groups themselves were different, and what factors influenced these results. The work in the following pages results from these initial inquiries.

In addition to everyone I thanked in my acknowledgements, I would also like to use this space to convey how incredibly important it is to talk about the Hispanic immigrant experience in Appalachia. Many folks are speaking their voice and doing groundbreaking and encouraging writing on the hybrid identity of AppaLatinos—Marcos McPeck Villatoro and Ricardo Nazario y Colón in particular--debunking our national narrative of white, homogenous Appalachians. The work in this thesis boils down thousands of hours of reading, writing, and talking about the abundance of fascinating issues that are involved in discourse about the Hispanic experience in Appalachia. I wish I could talk about them all. But there will be other writers, and there will be other occasions. I only hope that this work may add to the conversation.

## **Introduction: Entering the Forest**

In the following thesis, I examine the Hispanic experience in Appalachia from sociological and religious studies perspectives. Using results from my ethnographic research, I conduct a case study of a town in Western North Carolina to demonstrate my argument: that the religious culture of a place influences its reception of immigrants, especially Hispanic immigrants. I argue that places, such as Appalachia, that have a strong foundation of religion will be more likely to offer assistance, materially and spiritually, to immigrants due to biblical mandates to aid the poor and alien. Churches play a key role in helping integrate immigrants into the local society, though they may not assist with legal or documented status. Reciprocally, when immigrants are religious or religiously affiliated, they are able to integrate into society in ways that they otherwise could not.

To establish this argument, I engage contemporary scholarship, outline my own research process, present and evaluate my results, and predict what lies in the future for Hispanics in Appalachia. Through each of these elements, I demonstrate how the data I uncover supports my arguments.

### **Overview**

In Chapter One, I argue that affiliation with a church community helps immigrants integrate into a new community in ways they could not if they were not affiliated with the church. In order to support this argument, I review the scholarly research surrounding Hispanic immigration to Appalachia and discuss the growth of the immigrant population, investigating factors that contributed to the population boom. I then explore the demographics of these new immigrants, including a rising hybrid identity of “AppaLatinos.” I investigate why these immigrants are coming to and staying in Appalachia, and then dive into reception theory,

detailing how immigrants become integrated into a society and what factors affect the success of that integration. In order to contextualize my findings, I look at the history of immigrant reception in the South at large, especially in religious and church settings, then specifically at Southern Baptist Convention [SBC] Churches, since the church I study is a SBC church. I discuss what services churches usually offer to immigrants, and reasons why they offer it.

In Chapter Two, I describe the methodology of my ethnographic research in Western North Carolina during the years 2013-2015. The interviews, focus groups, and participant observation I conducted during that time allowed me to perform this research. I describe my research questions, data collection, sampling method, data analysis, and research limitations. I also give a quick sketch of Foster<sup>1</sup>, North Carolina, where I conducted my research.

In Chapter Three, I use the qualitative data collected from the words of the people I researched to tell their story. I look at the Hispanic community in Foster, then specifically at the Hispanic group at Gethsemane Baptist Church. I present Maria's story, who is a leader of the Hispanic ministry at Gethsemane. I examine the various services that the church offers to immigrants in the area: food assistance, financial assistance, the facility known as The Lighthouse, and--most importantly--spiritual succor. I look especially at the ways the church helps the Hispanic group develop their faith and interact with one another and the community at large. Then, I examine why the church offers these services (to fulfill its mission) and how the Anglo members of the congregation feel about it. I found that the church community at Gethsemane Baptist helps these Hispanic immigrants integrate into a new community in particular ways they could not if they were not affiliated.

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonym

In Chapter Four, I show how the results I found from my time with the Hispanic Group at Gethsemane Baptist at times conformed to expectations set by the scholarly literature, but at times, challenged established knowledge. I argue if it were not for Gethsemane Baptist's outreach programs, many of its Hispanic members would not be involved with the wider community in Foster. It is through the church that they play sports, volunteer, and go on outings. I evaluate how well Gethsemane Baptist lives up to the resolutions passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2006 regarding immigrant accommodation. I examine the similarities between Appalachian and Hispanic cultures, since I believe that because religion is a cornerstone of both Hispanic and Appalachian cultures, it allows locals and immigrants to relate to one another over a common set of feelings and experiences. This shared human experience of religion ultimately affects the reception that immigrants receive. I also look at current immigration trends (especially as manifested in one town in West Virginia) and implications of changing U.S. naturalization policy to see how, in the future, these policies could affect Hispanic immigrants in Appalachia as a whole and the people in Foster in particular. I examine avenues for further research along the lines of this topic.

I argue in each chapter that the religious culture of a place influences its reception of immigrants, especially Hispanic immigrants. Places, such as Appalachia, that have a strong foundation of religion will be more likely to offer assistance, materially and spiritually, to immigrants due to biblical mandates to aid the poor and alien. Churches play a key role in helping integrate immigrants into the local society, though they may not assist with legal or documented status. Reciprocally, when immigrants are religious or religiously affiliated, they are able to integrate into society in ways that they otherwise could not. This phenomenon can be seen in the case study of Foster, North Carolina. Foster is part of Appalachia and has a strong

religious adherence, especially to the Southern Baptist Convention. Gethsemane Baptist Church fulfills the SBC resolution to aid immigrants physically, emotionally, and spiritually in word and deed. The members of its Hispanic group are able to integrate into the community of Foster much easier than if they were not affiliated with the church. They volunteer in local food pantries, learn English, and obtain jobs through church networks. Without affiliation with Gethsemane Baptist, they would not have access to these opportunities.

### **Terms and Phrases**

Throughout this thesis, when I use the term “Appalachia,” I am referring specifically to the area within the boundaries set by the Appalachian Regional Commission:

a 205,000-square-mile region that follows the spine of the Appalachian Mountains from southern New York to northern Mississippi. It includes all of West Virginia and parts of 12 other states: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. (Appalachian Regional Commission [ARC], 2015)

In general, when speaking about Southern Appalachia, scholars in the field are usually referring to the ARC-designated area from the bottom border of Virginia down through the rest of the region, encompassing the Appalachian areas of North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Central Appalachia usually refers to the ARC area from the southern Virginia border to the southern Pennsylvania border, encompassing the Appalachian areas of Kentucky, Virginia, southern Ohio, and all of West Virginia<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Northern Appalachia, which I do not address in this thesis, is usually understood to include the Appalachian areas of Pennsylvania, New York, and northern Ohio.

Whenever I speak about the people known by the Census as “Hispanic,” I use both the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino.” A recent study shows that among Hispanics/Latinos themselves, most do not care which term is used to reference them (Lopez, 2013), and when a preference is stated, it is “Hispanic.” The term “Latino” tends to be more inclusive of peoples from Central America who have an indigenous, instead of European, ancestry (as is suggested by the term “Hispanic”). Some of the scholars I cite identify as Latino, but the group I study refers to themselves as *el grupo hispano*, or the Hispanic group. Therefore, when speaking about new Hispanic/Latino immigrants to Appalachia, I usually use the terms interchangeably, but when speaking about the Hispanic group at Gethsemane Baptist Church, I generally use their own moniker.

### **Confidentiality**

As I discuss in Chapter Two, I have taken several precautions as a researcher to ensure the anonymity of my informants. All names, such as the town, the church, and the informants in my study, are changed for publication and presentation. It is my hope that readers will focus on the ideas and arguments I bring forth, instead of decoding the aliases and locations of the participants.

### **Context**

The Hispanic presence in Appalachia is fairly new. Hispanics have traditionally settled in large cities and in southern and western border states such as California, Texas, and Arizona. However, in the past twenty years they have made their way into the mountains and valleys of Appalachia (Barcus, 2007). By 2000, the Hispanic population of Appalachia reached 465,000 residents (Hayden, 2004; Pollard 2004). Between 1980 and 2000, the Hispanic population of

Appalachia tripled, and what made many scholars take notice was the revealing statistic that over the 10 years between 1990-2000, Appalachia underwent a 239% increase in Hispanic population (Barcus, 2007; Hayden, 2004; Pollard, 2004).

Since 2000, Appalachia has sustained another 120% increase in Hispanic population (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2011). Southern Appalachia in particular had a 136% increase. Hispanics now comprise 6.9% of the North Carolina Appalachian population-- a significant and growing percentage of minority in the region. There has not been much attention paid to these new immigrants through scholarly research. I examine the research that does exist in Chapter One, but my own voice is important to this story because I examine permanently settled Hispanic immigrants to Appalachia. I use their own words and experiences to tell their story, and allow them to illustrate what life is like for them in Foster, North Carolina. I firmly believe that the religious climate of a place affects its reception of immigrants to the region, so in a place like Appalachia, where religion and biblical literalism is part of the cultural fabric of the region, churches will play a key role in offering aid to the poor and alien because of biblical mandates to do so. Religious affiliation by immigrants will directly affect their integration into the region, as well.

In this thesis, I take the first holistic, up-close look at a Hispanic community in Appalachia that will take its place in scholarly literature about Hispanic settlement in both rural areas and Appalachia in particular. Due to my views on immigrant integration and the effect religion has on the process, I focus especially on the outreach of Gethsemane Baptist Church and how it has helped grow a community of devout Hispanic Baptists. I show how this Hispanic group is able to integrate more fully into the community from the work of Gethsemane Baptist,



in ways they would not be able to otherwise. I believe this is the first look at Latinos in the mountains through this lens contributing to knowledge on the issue.

## **Chapter One: The Forest**

In this chapter, I argue that affiliation with a church community helps immigrants integrate into a new community in ways they could not if they were not affiliated with the church. In order to support this argument, I review the scholarly research surrounding Hispanic immigration to Appalachia and discussed the growth of the immigrant population, investigating factors that contributed to the population boom. I then explore the demographics of these new immigrants, including a rising hybrid identity of “AppaLatinos.” I investigate why these immigrants are coming to and staying in Appalachia, and then dive into reception theory, detailing how immigrants become integrated into a society and what factors affect the success of that integration. In order to contextualize my findings, I look at the history of immigrant reception in the South at large, especially in religious and church settings, then specifically at Southern Baptist Churches, since the church I study is a Southern Baptist church. I discuss what services churches usually offer to immigrants, and reasons why they offer it.

### **When Hispanic Immigration to Appalachia Began**

In the past twenty years, the growth rate of Appalachia's minority population has consistently outpaced that of the rest of the United States. Hispanics have become the most populous minority group in America<sup>1</sup>, and while their presence grows steadily in the United States, the trend is reflected—and in some cases magnified—in Appalachia (Pollard, 2004).

“Hispanics” have lived in the United States for hundreds of years. In the Southwest, Spanish-speakers were there long before governmental boundary lines were drawn. The people

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<sup>1</sup> The Hispanic population of the United States, according to the 2010 US Census, was 16.9%. The second-most populous minority, African Americans, was 13.1% (US Census Bureau, 2013).

who would become either Mexican or New Mexican were often family members who paid little mind to invisible borders when they would visit family or seek employment. Indeed, it was not until 1900 that anyone started paying attention to the legal status of people of Mexican descent in the Southwest (González, 2002). However, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century brought notoriety to immigrants of all kinds, including those of Hispanic origin. Of particular note, the U.S. Census started keeping track of them.

By 2000, the Hispanic population of Appalachia reached 465,000 residents (Hayden, 2004; Pollard 2004). Hispanics had historically settled in southern and western states and large cities, but in the past twenty years have made their way into the hollers of Appalachia (Barcus, 2007). Over the last forty years, the Hispanic population of the United States grew by 58% (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2011). Between 1980 and 2000, the Hispanic population of the Appalachia itself tripled, and what made many scholars stand up at attention was the revealing statistic that over the 10 years between 1990-2000, Appalachia underwent a 239% increase in Hispanic population (Barcus, 2007; Hayden, 2004; Pollard, 2004). What this means is that a lot of change has happened very fast in a place that, racially, has not seen much change in a while.

These numbers are those that have been measured. Due to the nature of contemporary immigration, many Hispanics in the United States, including Appalachia, reside here without government documents permitting their residence. Often times, they are understandably reticent and mistrusting of Census workers or other connections to the government, who could lead to intervention from *la migra*, or the Immigration and Naturalization Service (Velázquez, 1999; Williams, 2002). It is very possible that the numbers we have for Appalachia are a low count—after all, the mountains have always been a good place to hide.

Since the 2000 census' surprising results, another decade and another census have passed. There have been few reports about the 2010 Census findings in light of immigration to the region,<sup>2</sup> however, I found that since 2000, Appalachia has undergone another 120% increase in Hispanic population (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2011). Southern Appalachia in particular had a 136% increase. North Carolina, the focus of my discussion, has the second-highest concentration of Appalachian Hispanics in the data set. Hispanics now comprise 6.9% of the North Carolina Appalachian population-- a significant and growing percentage of minority in the region. Most of this new population has come to the area within the past twenty years (Barcus, 2007). The Appalachian sections of Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina now have higher percentages of Hispanic residents than do the non-Appalachian portions of those states (Pollard & Jacobsen, 2011). This would serve to mean that, contrary to popular conception, Southern Appalachia is actually *more diverse* than non-Appalachia.

Academics at once started trying to figure out what this increase had meant and would mean for our region. They looked at it from several angles: assessing the Hispanic population, as well as other demographic changes (Hayden, 2004; Pollard, 2004), looking at settlement and migration patterns (Barcus, 2007), examining the new facets of race relations (Smith, 1998), exploring the dichotomy of Appalachian/Latino bi-culturalism (Villatoro, 1998), and the transformation of public spaces (Margolies, 2012). Much of Appalachia lies in the mountain South, and so some attention has been paid to issues regarding Southern Hispanics (Odem & Lacy, 2009), who sometimes tend to overlap with Appalachian Hispanics. Municipalities with extraordinary Hispanic settlement, such as Galax, Virginia (Knowles, 2008) and Dalton, Georgia

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<sup>2</sup> Notable exceptions to this statement are Lichter (2012) and Ludke, Obermiller, and Rademacher (2012). Litcher discusses Hispanic settlement in rural America, while Ludke et. al. examine recent demographic change in Appalachia itself.

(Vásquez & Marquardt, 2003; Zúniga & Hernández-León, 2005) have received special attention, but always in the light of some other issue, such as the Hispanic residents' influence on the education system, or labor relations in the South.

Hispanic migration looks different in different parts of Appalachia. The Appalachian parts of South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama all now have higher rates of Latinos than the non-Appalachian portions of their states. In the Appalachian part of North Carolina, where I do my research, between 1990-2000 there was a 625% increase in Hispanic settlement (Hayden, 2004, p. 304). The county I study in this research had a 361% increase in Latino children enrolling in public schools. Now, 8% of the births in that county are Hispanic babies, but the majority of the population are adults who work in agriculture or poultry processing (Lippard, 2010); however, in Central Appalachia, such as my home state of West Virginia, now native born Hispanics “outnumber foreign-born, and nonmetro residents outnumber metro” (Barcus, 2007, p. 313). There are far fewer Hispanic immigrants to Central Appalachia, which is just beyond the established migration route and home to less opportunity for low-wage labor jobs.

### **Why It Happened**

Hispanics have begun to come to the United States in greater numbers for a variety of reasons; there is no one cause. Rather, many things happened at once that all led up to a favorable environment for immigrants in the United States that looks much better than unemployment in Mexico. Over the past hundred years, the United States has set up a variety of programs to recruit Mexican labor, from the Bracero program mid-century, which brought Mexican workers to the United States under seasonal contracts, to the contemporary H2-A visa, which permits guest workers to enter the U.S. to work in the agriculture industry (Barcus, 2007; González, 2002). Meanwhile, the Mexican economy has taken a steady downturn. By 1995, the

adjusted per-capita Gross National Product (GNP) of the U.S. was \$27,000, versus \$6,400 in Mexico (González, 2002).

The advent of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994 brought wide economic destruction on both sides of the border. Decentralization and globalization allowed companies to move anywhere, separating stages of production to locate factories that are involved different levels of the process wherever is most advantageous to labor, shipping, and raw materials (Smith, 1998). Due to these open borders, manufacturing in the South was no longer able to compete with cheaper rates in Mexico, and cheap imported goods all but wiped out Mexican artisan handicrafts and agriculture (Knowles, 2008; Smith, 1998, 2012). Many of Mexico's traditional ways of making a living were rendered obsolete in the changing economy, and on top of it all, the population in Mexico was growing just as the jobs were dying (Barcus, 2007). Mexican people started to look for jobs elsewhere; they found them in the United States.

On the US side of the border, increased industrialization and mechanization sent many southern African-Americans and Appalachians north in search of jobs, opening a hole for low-wage labor in the Southeast, since these minorities had traditionally held those jobs (Barcus, 2007; Pollard, 2004; Smith, 1998). When Appalachians left the fields and low-wage jobs in the South for the industry of the North and metro areas (Barcus, 2007), Mexicans came to fill the holes. The two migration patterns tied together at the right time to counter the out-migration of natives with in-migration of Hispanics—which is why even though the total population of Appalachia has not grown significantly, its Hispanic population has (Pollard, 2004).

## **Who Are They?**

By and large, the Hispanics in Appalachia are indeed Mexican (Barcus, 2007; Knowles, 2008), hailing from mostly the Southern states of Mexico (Arreola, 2006). They have much less education than the typical American, but slightly more than the typical Mexican (González, 2002; Pollard, 2004). They are families; men who work, women who raise children and sometimes work, too (Knowles, 2008; Smith, 2012; Velázquez, 1999; Villatoro, 1998). Very often, these immigrants speak limited English (Knowles, 2008), and they tend to live together in ethnic enclaves (González, 2002; Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Velázquez, 1999).

The popular stereotypes of Hispanics are not generally true; not all Latinas are submissive, poorly educated, unassertive, short, or chubby (Pollard, 2004; Velázquez, 1999). In fact, they generally have better health than their American counterparts (González, 2002). They also have more children than their American counterparts; each family has an average of 2-3 children (Pollard, 2004). Most Mexican immigrants have a generally positive outlook on life, despite their often difficult circumstances (González, 2002).

Not all Hispanics are Catholic—in fact, many are Protestant (Castañeda-Liles, 2005; Velázquez, 1999; Villatoro, 1998). Among Mexican-American immigrants in the United States, Protestants make up somewhere between 19-23% (Castañeda-Liles, 2005; Espinosa, Elizondo, & Miranda, 2003) of the total population. Of these Protestants, many Mexicans have found favor in the Pentecostal Church and other evangelical denominations (Espinosa et al., 2003). About 3% of the total immigrant Hispanic population is Baptist.

The typical migration pattern happens in stages (González, 2002; Knowles, 2008; Villatoro, 1998). The first stage consists of young male workers who come as migrant workers.

Then, they start coming back and bringing other friends or family workers if there are jobs in which their kin can be employed. Eventually, the male workers earn enough money to bring their families with them, and the family settles in the U.S.

True to the pattern, initial immigrant Hispanics in the Appalachian region were migrant workers, who came to work mostly in agriculture, forestry, and mineral extraction-- in Western North Carolina, particularly in Christmas tree harvesting or mining for mica (Williams, 2002). In time, out-migration by natives left a hole for low-wage labor (Barcus, 2007; Pollard, 2004) and tighter border security made returning home more difficult (Lichter, 2012), especially for Mexicans. Not all Hispanic labor jobs in Appalachia require workers to migrate. When immigrants begin to settle permanently in the US, they either have or obtain steady work, as well. Immigrants have found steady jobs in construction, the forest-agriculture industry, poultry plants, manufacturing, and the service sector (Barcus, 2007; Williams, 2002). Wholesale manufacturing companies, such as the carpet factory in Dalton, Georgia, are generally steady employers. In growing and wealthy areas, landscaping or house cleaning is typical work for immigrants.

Labor and agricultural jobs typically pay low wages and require concerted effort. Often times, locals do not want this unsteady, grueling labor, which causes employers to recruit outside the region for migrant workers. Hispanics, especially Mexicans who are permitted to come to the US through special visas for a limited amount of time, have proved a great resource for these employers. The jobs themselves are not new to the area, just the workers.

In time, migrant workers changed to families, who began to settle permanently in the mountains. Mostly Mexican (Barcus, 2007; Knowles, 2008), they brought their culture with them. Mexican restaurants and stores began popping up in run-down areas that had cheap rent,



and these new settlers began to revive dying neighborhoods (Margolies, 2012). Once word of work spread, other immigrants followed. Now, about twenty years since Hispanics began to trickle into Appalachia, we see whole families and even second generation immigrants who call Appalachia home (Smith, 2012).

## **Families**

Sometimes young, immigrant men meet young, immigrant women in the United States and decide to begin a family here. Sometimes immigrants form a connection with native Appalachians. In either case, if children result from these unions and are born on United States soil, they are American citizens. These young citizens are sometimes a family's anchor to their new place—both legally<sup>3</sup> and emotionally.

Marcos McPeek Villatoro is one of the early children of what he calls a “*mestizaje*” (Villatoro, 1998, p. 108), which is Spanish for “mixture.” The term has traditionally signified a mixture of indigenous and Spanish blood in Latino parentage, but Villatoro uses it to talk about what he calls “Southern half-breeds” (Villatoro, 1998, p. 108) of Latino/non-Latino heritage. Villatoro's mother, from El Salvador, met his East Tennessee father in California. When he brought her home on the back of his motorcycle, Villatoro's grandfather turned to his wife and said, “My God, Ralph's gone out and married himself a damn Apache” (Villatoro, 1998, p. 109). No one in Villatoro's town in East Tennessee had ever seen someone from El Salvador before.

Villatoro's mixed heritage left him stranded between two worlds as a young child. The title of a collection of his poetry perhaps best captures the sentiment: *They Say That I Am Two*. He says that he often ate “grits and tamales at the same meal” (Minick, 2001, p. 204). Villatoro

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of how these new children affect immigrants' legal status, please see Chapter Four.

was raised going by “Marc” instead of Marcos, and only in his adult years did he reclaim his mother’s last name, in the Hispanic style (Minick, 2011, p. 211).

Tom Torres is a participant in the Highlander Center’s Appalachian Fellows program, and he was born in America to parents who had moved here from central Mexico in the 80s. He said, “No one had to tell me I grew up in the South. This was Georgia; you just knew” (Torres, 2014, para. 2). He grew up in a town with a big poultry processing industry, which is one of the industries in the South that draws undocumented and migrant laborers. Many of his peers had backgrounds similar to his. Torres said this mixed-culture setting was

how I understood the American South: half a dozen families crossing the Mexican-American border and moving to Northeast Georgia pulled by the call of machines and shift changes for the sake of children that would never never [sic] know a life anywhere else. (para. 5)

Torres also talks about trying to balance the two pieces of his identity. He says,

We all grew up in that half-space of not knowing how to be, reconciling skills inherited from thousands of miles away with the demands of a life in the US. The shame of an egg-bean lunch brought to school in a plastic Walmart bag balanced with the love of a community. (para. 5)

The love of that community is what encourages immigrants to feel at home in the South.

### **Why Appalachia?**

What is it that appeals to Hispanics about Appalachia? Jobs, yes, but jobs could be found elsewhere. Villatoro, Barcus, and Marrow bring to light a reason that hits close to home for many

Appalachians, because it is the reason they remain in the mountains, too: safety. Though immigrants give up ethnic connections, the prevalence of their language, specialized stores and bi-lingual education for children when they move to Appalachia, they also “escape the street riots and organized gangs” (Villatoro, 1998, p. 107) of “distressed urban neighborhoods” (Barcus, 2007, p. 302). Crime rates are lower, and the immigrants are allowed to live among the native population “relatively *tranquilo*<sup>4</sup>” (Villatoro, 1998, p. 107; see also Knowles, 2008; Marrow, 2011). However, many of these communities “have neither the infrastructure nor the familiarity with Hispanic culture and language” (Knowles, 2008, p. 1; Marrow, 2011) to deal with the sudden influx of immigrants in an “uncomplicated” (Knowles, 2008, p. 1) manner. Economic success is harder to obtain in rural communities, as well, but many immigrants are willing to trade the opportunity to earn “a Mercedes Benz car” (Marrow, 2011, p. 24) for “peacefulness, beautiful natural landscape, and safety for children” (Marrow, 2011, p. 24).

For many, the landscape looks similar to their native mountains in Mexico, Puerto Rico, or El Salvador (Villatoro, 1998). This sense of familiarity with the topography can ease the transition into a new place and new home. Appalachian Poet Marta María Miranda, who identifies as “Cubalachian, Cuban by birth and Appalachian by the grace of god” (Newberry, 2008, p. 41), says that like her rural home in Cuba, in Appalachia it was “the ruralness, the oral history, the tabacci, the corn, the pigs, the chickens and the sense of community, the rich culture of rural and worn mountain people” that made her feel at home (Newberry, 2008, p. 45).

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4 Literally translated, means “tranquil.”

## **Integration**

Any time scholars talk about immigration, invariably the topic of assimilation or acculturation comes up. In the following discussion, I take Hannah Gill (2010)'s suggestion, using “**integration**” when discussing incorporation into a new community; “**acculturation**” to refer to taking on cultural traits in addition to one's own; and “**assimilation**” in reference to adopting a whole new set of traits (that of the dominant society). Gill (2010) suggests that we opt for the term “integration” in our discussions of immigrant adaptation, because “integration underscores the potential for immigrants to shape the new communities they settle in, rather than places value on the dominant cultural practices of the receiving society” (p. 150). Integration into a new community, however, is not always predictable. Especially in rural areas, immigrant incorporation is not solely a matter of individual will (Dalla & Christensen, 2005). Instead, “individual incorporation of determined by characteristics of immigrants themselves but also by the settlement context” (Lacy, 2011). To understand the issue of immigrant incorporation, we must first understand reception theory.

Immigrant reception into a community takes place first in the context of the place in which it is happening. The environments of these places are affected by many factors, including national and local political situations, labor conditions, and the perceived willingness of immigrants to look, act, and speak like natives to the area, including participating in social norms such as having children in public school (Menjívar, 2006; Prins & Toso, 2012). Successful integration for immigrants therefore “depends not only on individual adaptation but, equally important, on the extent to which social and economic conditions and related policies facilitate their integration” (Dalla & Christensen, 2005, p. 39). Because reception relies on individual effort as well as societal facilitation, “not all immigrant groups or even immigrants from the

same group are affected the same way” (Menjívar, 2006, p. 1009). For example, in a study of rural Pennsylvania, Prins and Toso (2012) found that “Latinos encounter a cooler reception than other groups” of immigrants (p. 457).

### **History of Reception in the South**

How Latinos have been received in the Appalachian South depends, as noted above, on the environment of the specific place where integration is taking place. Even the next town over may receive its newcomers quite differently. In my research, I focus on a small section of the Appalachian South, an area known as the High Country of North Carolina. To understand the Appalachian South, one must first understand that the Appalachian South is a smaller region in the South itself. We must examine immigrant reception in the South as a whole before we can focus on the Appalachian South<sup>5</sup>.

In the entire US South, people have been used to a Black/White racial dynamic for many years (Lippard & Gallagher, 2011; Hill & Beaver, 1998). The South has been the scene of many hate crimes and hate groups, including recently, a 2005 nativist Minutemen crusade in Tennessee to combat the presence of undocumented immigrants (Baker, 2012), not African-Americans. Due to this traditional black/white divide, many scholars credit increased resistance to immigrant settlement to not only resistance to their presence, but also compounded by resistance to a changing racial system (Gill, 2010; Hill & Beaver, 1998). Suddenly, Southerners must consider a third racial possibility, outside the known realms of Black and White (Hill & Beaver, 1998; Lippard & Gallagher, 2011). This can be especially problematic when there become “unusually

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<sup>5</sup> For further discussion on this topic, see Loewen’s (1988) discussion of Chinese sharecroppers in Mississippi and Fink’s (2003) examination of Highland Maya and Hmong refugees in Morganton, North Carolina.

high concentrations of Latinos in some rural areas of the South [such as Appalachia], where there were virtually no racial or ethnic minorities to be found” (Lippard & Gallagher, 2011, p. 3).

While some Southerners may oppose the “bipolar” racial system turning into a “rainbow” (Hill & Beaver, 1998, p. 2), others oppose the rapid change not only in racial dynamics, but also population in their communities. Hispanic settlement in the Appalachian region of the south is fairly new, because “until recently [...] immigration and migration in the U.S. overwhelming occurred in a small set of booming metropolises” (Lippard & Gallagher, 2011, p. 3) and states along the US/Mexico border. Suddenly, not only has Hispanic immigration changed its ultimate destination, but the receiving communities find their population unexpectedly growing from this immigration (Bankston, 2007).

In a study of the Appalachian state of West Virginia, Janet Boggess Welch (1999) reported that “there is a lingering resentment about the attention that refugees from other countries get from the federal government ‘when there is so much need among our own people in this country’” (p. 65). However, Latino reception in the Appalachian South is often mixed, with resistance manifesting stronger “especially during election time” (Villatoro, 1998, p. 106). However, discrimination decreases over time, as non-Hispanic whites become accustomed to living with a growing Hispanic population (Dalla & Christensen, 2005).

In Cameron Lippard’s study of the High Country of North Carolina, several respondents said that the people in that area were “more accepting” (Lippard, 2010, p. 5) than other places they had been. Overt acts of racism were more common in larger cities and places with larger Latino populations. The Affrilachian Poet Scott Lucero talks about moving to Eastern Kentucky. He says, “a funny thing happened when I moved to Hazard. Nobody seemed to notice I was a Latino anymore. When I lived in Lexington and earlier in central Indiana, everybody noticed it

or commented on it—usually in a cryptic or offensive way” (Newberry, 2008, p. 47). He says, “I thought it would be much, much worse the farther south I got. [...] But nothing happened. I’m a holler rat who happens to be a bit browner than some folks and who happens to eat food that some folks never heard of” (Newberry, 2008, p. 47). Lucero’s personal experience affirms Lippard’s research findings, as people were friendlier to him in rural Appalachia than the large city of Lexington.

### **The Church Response**

How do Protestant churches encourage integration of new immigrants? Especially, how do Southern Baptists, “the single largest religious tradition in Central Appalachia and the largest denomination in the United States” (Leonard, 1999, p. 176) serve this population? One of the key elements of reception theory is that integration is affected by personal effort as well as by the “availability of supportive community institutions such as schools, churches, and universities” (Prins & Toso, 2012, p. 437). Churches are certainly available in Southern Appalachia— and when it comes to Latinos and immigrants, “Southern Baptists in general, and Appalachian Southern Baptists in particular, have been, and continue to be, impacted by innumerable beliefs and trends in local, regional, and national levels” (Leonard, 1999, p. 177-178). Therefore it would appear that the new trends in Latino settlement into Appalachia, as well as the beliefs at set by the Southern Baptist convention, affect the Southern Baptist reception of immigrants.

Historically, the majority of US Southern churches have perpetuated racism and discrimination by “endorsing slavery” (Mantero, 2008, para. 6). Indeed, the Southern Baptist churches split from their northern brothers in 1845 over issues that included the biblical right to own slaves (Leonard, 1999). Nowhere is southern segregation more evident than in white and black Protestant churches (Fowler & Hertzke, 2009). However, these “racist” churches also

“helped to clothe and feed those in need” (Mantero, 2008, para.7), an “incongruousness” noted by travel writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Mantero, 2008, para 6). Today, progressive change is occurring, as policies towards immigration adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention place them on the more liberal side of the Christian Right (Jacobsen, 2012). For example,

In 2006 the SBC adopted resolutions that urge Christians to “follow the biblical principle of caring for the foreigners among us (Deuteronomy 24:17-22) and the command of Christ to be a neighbor to those in need of assistance (Luke 10:30-37), regardless of their racial or ethnic background, country of origin, or legal status,” and to “act redemptively and reach out to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of all immigrants” and help them become a part of American society legally and socially (Southern Baptist Convention 2006). (Jacobsen, 2012, p. 170)

If Southern Baptist Convention churches follow their established resolutions, we can expect that they will be more welcoming to immigrants in their communities than other denominations who do not have such resolutions to guide their actions. They will likely material aid, such as food, and make efforts to meet the spiritual needs of immigrants, as well.

### **Immigrant Affiliation with Baptist Churches**

Immigrants are joining Baptist churches for many reasons. Some are already Baptist (Castañeda-Liles, 2005), arriving “in a strange land and finding that a shared religion builds bridges” (Mantero, 2008, para. 3). Some convert. Gill (2010) suggests that assimilation into American society equates with adoption of Protestantism, but Barton (2006) suggests that a hybrid Mexican-American Protestant identity has arisen. Whether assimilation or acculturation is taking place (and in which regions it is happening), integration is surely occurring in the church.



Religious institutions have been “highly significant for immigrants—past and present, an idea that lies at the core of the sociological study of immigration and religion” (Menjívar, 2006, p. 1024). Menjívar (2006) also asserts that churches “play a central role in these immigrants’ incorporation” into their communities (p. 1025).

In his study of Latinos in North Carolina, Lippard found 36 percent said religion affects their daily lives (Lippard, 2010, p. 7). However, in a survey of only Latinas in the US, 94 percent claim that religion provides guidance in their daily lives (Castañeda-Liles, p. 5). Edwin David Aponte (2012) calls this idea of holy daily life *lo cotidiano*. He says that “paying attention to *lo cotidiano* is to be open to the presence of God or the divine in the spaces and happenings of everyday life” (Aponte, 2012, p. 100). This idea is not unique to Latinos, but also prevalent in the South, where we find a “constancy of worship and the presence of this worship in many areas of daily life” (Mantero, 2008, last paragraph).

In addition to daily devotion, “religious institutions are focal points in the lives of many” immigrants (Menjívar, 2006, p. 1026), and churches are often considered a community’s most important places (Vásquez & Marquardt, 2003). New transplants find a ready social circle in a church, and have often “created a lasting community within their congregations by spending much time participating in church activities” (Barton, 2006, p. 106). This has much to do with the heavy presence of religious culture in the Appalachian South, where “daily life frequently exists as an extension of the church community” (Mantero, 2008, para.6).

Since daily life is an extension of the church community, and many of one’s contacts will be part of one’s “church family,” it makes sense that many activities revolve around the church and church centers. Fellowshiping together reinforces these familial relationships. Barton (2006) says that “membership in a congregation and participation in the Protestant community

center or settlement house have offered some the characteristics of an extended family” (p. 80) to new immigrants. Indeed, “sharing *en familia* through religion and spirituality gives [immigrants] a sense of home and community away from the homeland” (Castañenda-Liles 2005, p. 3). Meeting several times per week and sharing meals, both staples of the Protestant tradition, contribute to this sense of family.

The idea of a family in faith is emotionally powerful to immigrants. Barton (2006) talks about the “symbolic power of the [church] family” (p. 80), and how “it is particularly through these relationships established within congregations that immigrants have found support systems for coping with the turmoil associated with immigration” (p. 140). This close church family is thought to be specific to Protestants, as “few Catholic churches can match the intimacy and community of many Protestant Latino churches” (Fowler & Hertzke, 2009). Barton (2006) claims that “entrance into the Protestant church is akin to becoming a member of a new family, one that supports fellow believers spiritually, morally, and sometimes economically” (p. 110).

In a case study of Appalachian Georgia, Vásquez and Marquardt (2003) compare and contrast two churches with large Latino populations—one Catholic, and one Protestant. The Protestant church in their study is a “second family” (p. 156) to the members of its congregation. As above, its members often socialize with one another around church functions that keep them quite busy, and the photos that line the walls of the church’s entryway “reveal that the most important events [...] are not protest marches [...] rather, they are Sunday potluck dinners, baptisms, confirmations, and retreats” (Vásquez & Marquardt, 2003, p. 157). This differentiates from the Catholic experience in their study, where most activity is centered around political participation and impersonal masses. The Protestant church has a higher participation and steady membership than the Catholic church, where parishioners feel somewhat disconnected.

## Services Offered by Churches

Often times, the “Latino immigrant community finds itself abused, exploited, or completely isolated from services” that may help full citizens (Lippard, 2010, p.1). In addition to access to social services, “there are spiritual necessities that run parallel to the material needs of the immediate present” (Mantero, 2008, last paragraph). Often times, the church—already equipped to help with the spiritual needs—steps in for the material needs where the federal or state government has stepped out (Menjívar, 2006; Prins & Toso, 2012). In fact, “many Protestant denominations now have departments that focus entirely on Hispanic outreach, and they even offer Spanish-speaking worship services and various forms of social and economic aid to Latino communities” (Fowler & Hertzke, 2009).

Though they do not generally subscribe to a radical Liberation Theology (Mantero, 2008), Protestant churches in particular have been very influential in aiding Latino immigrants, particularly through such endeavors as the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s (Menjívar, 2006). Historically, “Anglo-American Protestants endeavored to ‘uplift’ the Spanish-speaking—morally, spiritually, economically, and socially” (p. 137). However, Barton (2006) reminds us that “to focus on denominational mission agencies and their Anglo-American missionaries is to treat Mexican Americans [and all Latinos] who converted to Protestantism as objects of evangelization rather than as persons with the ability to make choices” (p. 6). Regardless of historical Anglo-American motivation, Protestant Latinos have remained in the fold. The church has and continues to offer them support in a variety of ways.

“‘If not the church, who else?’” questions an informant in the Menjívar (2006) study (p. 1025). If the government will not help and our neighbors are hungry, “perhaps it is the duty of Christian people to get somewhat involved in ‘cleanin’ up the country’” (Welch, 1999, p. 61).

The church as a people often finds a religious charge to do something about current injustices. What they do can vary from offering sanctuary to endangered immigrants (Menjívar, 2006) to speaking out against workplace injustice against Latino immigrants “as a religious value” (Ansley, 2012).<sup>6</sup>

The church as an institution often offers financial support as well as social services to its hurting. These services include sports teams for socialization and physical fitness (Vásquez and Marquardt, 2003), adult education classes that provide “opportunities to socialize and develop English skills” (Prins & Toso, 2012, p. 454), and even scripture-guided marriage counseling to mixed families.

Given the previously discussed church teachings towards aiding the poor, needy, and alien, I believe that the material and spiritual assistance that churches offer to immigrants stems from their fundamentalist interpretation of Scriptural mandates. However, it is important to note that the Southern Baptist Convention in particular advocates a legal path to citizenship, not amnesty. This may affect the extent of legal aid that a church will provide as part of its mission.

It is important to note that the church’s ability to offer services to its congregants and neighbors comes back to the receptivity of the local community in which the church exists. In areas where politics are unfavorable towards immigrants, there is much risk in seemingly normal interactions with friends, neighbors, and even church members. In a study of North Carolina, Latino church attendance dropped off in counties where police forces had recently become more aggressive (Cravey & Valdivia, 2011, p. 223). Even in the welcoming High Country, police set up roadblocks outside churches just after their Spanish-language services have ended (Lippard,

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<sup>6</sup> Appalachians have spoken out against workplace injustice from a religious place before (see especially the discussion of mining unions in Callahan 2008).

2010, p.13). Just as integration is not solely a matter of individual will, neither is it a matter of church goodwill. Both individuals and the church must still function within a society that is either receptive or non-receptive, and that receptivity can fluctuate with changes in any of the factors that contribute to its general atmosphere.

From the contemporary scholarship reviewed above, I have shown the growth of the Hispanic population in Appalachia and investigated factors that have contributed to its rapid increase. I explored the demographics of new Latino immigrants, including the rising hybrid identity of “AppaLatinos.” I investigated why these immigrants are coming to and staying in Appalachia, and then explored reception theory, where I looked at how immigrants become integrated into a society and what factors affect the success of that integration. For background, I showed the history of reception in the South at large, especially in religious and church settings, then looking specifically at Southern Baptist Churches, since the church I study in my research is a Southern Baptist church. I looked at what kinds of services churches usually offer to immigrants, and reasons why they offer it. I believe that in Appalachia especially, the integration of immigrants into a society is influenced by the religious climate of a place, and that churches are more likely to offer services to immigrants due to Biblical mandates to aid the poor and alien. Reciprocally, I believe that church affiliation offers immigrants opportunities to integrate that they would not have otherwise.

## Chapter Two: The Path

In this chapter, I describe the shape of my ethnographic research in Western North Carolina during the years 2013-2015. The research, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation I conducted during this time allowed me to write this thesis. Here, I describe my research questions, data collection, sampling method, data analysis, and research limitations.

This study takes place in an Appalachian county in western North Carolina, a county known for its Christmas tree production and agrarian nature. However, my interest is not in H2-A<sup>1</sup> or migrant workers, but in the growing number of settled Latino immigrants who have taken up residency in the county. The county seat, Foster<sup>2</sup>, has a population of over 17,000, and is also home to a sizable university of about 18,000 students, and it is in this area where most of the county's Hispanics have settled. The 2010 Census lists Foster's Hispanic population at 3.3% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013), or 568 people. 290 of these are Mexicans. Mexicans far outnumber the other Hispanics in the region, as is typical in the Southeastern United States (Barcus, 2007).

Glenwood Park is a trailer park that serves 380 residents on the east side of the county seat where most of the Hispanic population in Foster lives (Advameg, 2014). Similar to the Hispanic makeup of the town, the trailer park residents are predominantly Mexican. At the end of the trailer park is a double-wide trailer owned by Gethsemane Baptist Church. The trailer is called "The Lighthouse," because it is intended to serve as a light to all who search for truth in the darkness (the "light" is the light of an enlightened understanding of Christ). The church hosts a number of activities at The Lighthouse to help engage the Hispanic community. It serves as a

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<sup>1</sup> H2-A is a type of visa that allows foreign agricultural workers to work temporarily in the United States.

<sup>2</sup> All identifying places and people in this thesis are pseudonyms.

gathering place with several regular programs, including after-school tutoring sessions for children and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for adults.

I began attending the ESL classes as a tutor and an observer. Over time, my role changed with the needs of the program and I became an instructor. The research presented in this thesis is conducted from twenty months of participant observation, focus groups, and interviews conducted with members of the ESL classes at The Lighthouse, as well as Anglo members of the Gethsemane Baptist congregation. All of the interviewees attended Gethsemane Baptist, and most of the Hispanic informants lived in Glenwood Park. All participants in the research live permanently in Foster and were born outside the United States. Consistent with research, most of the Latino participants hailed from the southern states of Mexico.

Foster, like much of Appalachia, is strongly influenced by religion. 59% of the population of Foster identifies as Southern Baptist, the largest denomination in the region (Advameg, 2014). Gethsemane Baptist is a Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated church. In this project, I examine the Hispanic Ministry at Gethsemane Baptist and its effect on the Hispanic members of the congregation. I look at how the church receives immigrants and why, as well as how church affiliation affects the adaptation and integration of immigrants into a new community.

## **Research Questions**

The beginning stage of my research was exploratory. I interviewed Latino members of the ESL classes at The Lighthouse, sponsored by Gethsemane Baptist. My goal was to assess how immigrants navigated their experiences in Foster, North Carolina specifically, and Appalachia in general. I asked about their life in Foster and their connections to their cultural

heritage, grouping questions into categories: family, religion, food, social gatherings, music, language, the place of Appalachia, and their experience with prejudice and discrimination. I also asked about their consumption patterns and economic impact, as well as demographic and background questions. The original interviews were conducted at the same time for two separate courses, so the range of questions was quite large.

In the second stage, I investigated how the church conducts its Hispanic ministry. I also asked who is benefitting—and not benefitting—from the church’s outreach and service. I examined the effects of the program from three angles:

- 1) **The Served (Hispanic Group)**-- How are they being helped? What are they getting from the church—spiritual fulfillment, financial assistance? How do they view the services being offered them?
- 2) **The Stakeholder (The Church)**— What are they getting from the attendance of Hispanics and ministry to them?
- 3) **The Bystanders (The other members of the congregation)**—How do they feel about the outreach? Their fellow congregation members who don’t speak English? Integrated Sunday schools? Do they support the church’s efforts?

**Hypotheses.** From the literature, I was led to assume that the church probably provides financial and spiritual support to its Hispanic members, and possibly other programs to help them acculturate or integrate into American society. The Hispanic members of the church also probably view their church as a family, a rock in uncertain times.

I knew the church likely receives benefits and support from the Southern Baptist Conference at-large in helping them secure funding for their Hispanic ministry, as well as guidance. The Southern Baptist Conference has established a commitment to its Spanish-speaking congregants (Jacobsen, 2012). I was not sure in what way this SBC assistance would manifest, but I was fairly certain that it was present.



As discussed in Chapter One, I take reception theory into consideration when predicting the support of the Anglo members of the Gethsemane Baptist congregation. Likely, their backing of the Hispanic ministry is dependent upon the political and economic environment in which they operate. Therefore, their opinions may fluctuate in times of economic distress and elections. They will also likely gain their values from a fundamentalist interpretation of Scriptural mandates to aid the alien, and if they are affiliated with the SBC, the resolutions passed by their larger body.

In addition to these conclusions from extant scholarly literature, I had further inferences that I had gained from the first phase of my research. I believed that the church's Hispanic group places more importance on their spiritual sustenance from the church and its ministry than from the material help they receive (financial assistance, food, clothing, or other donations)—though the latter is by no means unimportant to them. I also thought that the church feels called by God to help this community, and that is why they do it. I gathered that the church sees the Hispanic members of their church as equals, not as objects of pity. I also believed that the other members of the congregation (outside of the leadership) likely support the church's efforts—at least presently, in the contemporary political and economic environment. However, I also thought that their support is abstract and general, and few take it as personal mission. I found many of my hypotheses to be true, as I discuss in Chapter Three.

I focused my second phase of study by separating the congregation of Gethsemane Baptist into three groups. When I examined these groups, I focused on these variables:

- 1) **Services the church offers the Hispanic community.** I thought these might include worship services, English classes, Bible studies, financial aid to members, legal support in immigration issues, spiritual or financial

counseling, and transportation. I wanted to know how the Hispanic community at the church views these services. Do they utilize them? Do they believe they are useful? Could they be improved? I decided I would find out these answers by re-examining old interviews I had already conducted and looking for this information, as well as conducting new interviews with members of the community, specifically asking about it. Additionally, I thought I may need to interview staff at the church who will have information about the processes involved in offering these services.

- 2) **Return on investment for services.** I thought the return the church gets for offering these services could be quantifiable, such as members, converts, baptisms, or money from offerings. Or, they might be intangible, such as satisfaction that the church is fulfilling its calling from God, union with spiritual brothers and sisters, and influence in the community. I determined I would obtain this information both by observing and asking the pastor and other members of the staff.
- 3) **Support from the congregation.** I decided to evaluate the opinions and support of the congregation not directly affected by the Hispanic ministry. To get this information, I directly asked the congregation members.

### **Data Collection**

This project was an ethnographic study; as such, I collected my data through 21 months of participant observation, interviews, informal conversations, and one focus group. Throughout the length of the project, I spoke at length with 17 members of the Hispanic group at Gethsemane

Baptist, three Anglo church members, the pastor, and one member of the church's support staff. However, for further discussion, I will break my research down into sections.

**Stage One.** In the first stage of my research, beginning in September 2013, I conducted four taped, personal interviews with female, Mexican members of the Gethsemane Baptist Hispanic group. This stage was exploratory, so I asked questions regarding how the women navigated life in Foster, how they viewed Mexican culture, and where they spent their money. The questions in this stage were brainstormed for two separate courses in which I was enrolled at the time, so they are quite varied. The interviews were semi-structured; if an informant chose to elaborate or go off topic, I did not try to bring her back too quickly, and at times asked follow-up questions to any new information she provided. The interviews took place at ESL classes, held in the Lighthouse. Appendix A contains the questions used as a guide in the first stage of research, during these interviews.

In addition to these taped interviews, I also sat down with numerous community members who had been involved with the Hispanic community of Foster in some way—two ESL teachers in the county's public schools (one of whom teaches ESL in a neighboring town out of an Episcopal church), two past leaders of Latino support organizations (now defunct), and two leaders of a local soccer/STEM camp that brings math and science education to Latino children during the summer. These interviews were not recorded, but I took copious field notes from them.

I decided to conduct participant observation by attending ESL classes held at the Lighthouse. Here, I acted as a volunteer tutor and occasionally pulled aside an informant for an interview. I watched how and why participants were learning English, how they interacted with one another, the sexes of the attendees, and how beneficial they claimed ESL was, as well as

everything else I could pick up on—as I mentioned, this was exploratory. This participant observation allowed me to become familiar to the Hispanic group, while still maintaining a distance to observe for research purposes. During this participant observation, I had informal members with other members of the Hispanic group—both male and female--, four of which conversations I related in my field notes. During the entire participant observation experience, I made sure to take steady field notes just after leaving the presence of my research subjects.

At the end of this first stage of research, I began to identify my thesis and recognized my desire to focus more on Gethsemane Baptist's influence on the lives of Latino immigrants than on their heritage or similarities between Appalachian and Mexican cultures, which were my previous axes of inquiry. I decided to extend my participant observation to church services at Gethsemane Baptist in order to understand the experience of my participants during the worship service. I paid attention to how they interacted and with whom, the frequency they depended on translation, and how many people attend church who do not attend ESL. I attended five worship services during this stage. I sat away from the Hispanic group and observed them from a distance the first two times I attended. The next three times, I sat with the group and was much more able to pick up on small conversations and overhear the translation that was being transmitted into earpieces. After each of these services, I took regular field notes.

Since my research focus had changed, I decided to return to María to ask follow-up questions from her original interview, as well as speak with the church leadership. From these endeavors, I conducted an unrecorded interview with María, a recorded and semi-structured interview with Pastor Tad, and a recorded, unstructured interview with Stacey Summers, the church assistant. Appendix B contains follow-up questions and questions used to interview church leadership.

**Stage Two.** This phase began in August 2014. After I began to investigate the church's influence on the lives of the immigrants in Foster, it became apparent that the church was a great resource to the community. For this reason, I began to investigate what the church offered and why, how the recipients of its aid viewed the experience, and how the Anglo members of the congregation viewed the actions of the church. During this phase, I conducted one recorded, semi-structured focus group with six members of ESL classes, at ESL class. Since I was no longer focusing on a specific subset of Latinos, the focus group included five women and one man, all of whom were from Mexico, except for one Venezuelan woman. This focus group was impromptu; it began as an interview, but more people kept showing up until it became a focus group. I assured each entering member was comfortable with participating before we continued as a group.

I also conducted two recorded, semi-structured personal interviews with Anglo members of the church, as well as one email interview with another. All of these informants were women in their late 20s to early 30s. The personal interviews took place in a local coffee shop. Appendix C contains the questions that I asked Hispanic and Anglo members of Gethsemane Baptist during the second phase of my research.

In my second phase of research, I continued attending ESL class as a tutor, but occasionally (and with more frequency as the research progressed) I was called upon to act as a teacher. I paid special attention during this time to any mention the participants made of receiving services from the church, as well as any hardships they expressed that were going unaddressed. I did not attend the church for a service again until the very end of my research. However, after every interaction as a participant observer, I took field notes, including every time I saw a member of the Hispanic group in public, away from ESL. Three additional

conversations with new participants from this time received special attention in my field notes. My research terminated in May 2015, having lasted 21 months in total.

### **Sampling Method**

I used the snowball method of sampling, asking informants to refer me to other Hispanic community members and church congregation members who might be willing to participate. I also used my ongoing participant observation at church services and ESL classes to gather continual information. In the first phase, I formally interviewed four Mexican women members of the Latino community, all of whom attended ESL classes at The Lighthouse and Gethsemane Baptist Church. I informally spoke with several others from varying backgrounds and genders, four of whom I specially noted in my field notes. At the end of the first phase, I returned to one participant and also interviewed two members of the church leadership, the pastor and an administrative assistant.

In the second phase, I interviewed six members of the Hispanic group at Gethsemane Baptist (of mixed ages, genders, and countries of origin) through a focus group and three other Anglo congregation members through personal and email interviews. Ideally, I wanted the Anglo congregation members to have been of varying ages and genders, and to attend the 9:45 worship service (the same one attended by the Hispanic group). As I will address in my analysis, this portion of the varied from the plan more than the other interview goals.

### **Data Analysis**

Once I had collected my data, I analyzed it in several ways. First, I transcribed all recorded interviews. For the interviews that were conducted in Spanish, I transcribed and then translated them. I typed all my field notes, as well. I collected church bulletins, information from

the church website, and other handouts I found useful. Then, I examined these documents for themes. I discovered the emergent issues of reception, identity, language barriers, separation, desire for a relationship with God, spiritual benefit from the church, material benefit from the church, and belief in the church's mission. It is from these themes that I formed my thesis and identified what issues to investigate further.

In the second phase, I coded the focus group and Anglo members' interviews to discover what words were used most often to describe a separation between the two groups. However, outside of this endeavor, I did not code the interviews for significant phraseology.

I decided to look at the theme of reception through the lens of integration, as Gill (2010) suggests. I saw uneven assimilation and acculturation occurring in the Gethsemane Baptist community, and ultimately concluded that I was seeing an outward performance of professed beliefs. However, I could not know what went on behind the closed doors of immigrants' homes, where professed adoption of cultural traits could easily be woven into existing cultural practices. Therefore, I would be unable to speak confidently on the amount of acculturation or assimilation occurring in this community. What I could identify, however, was if integration was occurring, and if so, how successful it was.

I also believed that reception was directly affected by area churches' attitudes towards immigrants. For this reason, I chose to examine what Gethsemane Baptist was offering to the community around it, including the immigrant community. I examined particularly the *kinds* of services—material and spiritual—because of the themes I saw when I analyzed interview transcripts.

Why the church offers these services was of interest to me, as well. I was prompted especially by Barton's (2006) discussion of traditional evangelical ministry. Too often, church reach out to the poor and needy to fulfill a Biblical mandate, but do so in a manner that looks down on the aid recipient instead of affirming his or her humanity. Barton cautions against this attitude, which made me wonder about the prevalent attitude within church leadership in Foster.

I also wanted to sense if there was any discord among congregation members in regards to the Hispanic ministry at Gethsemane, because none of my informants mentioned any unrest or discrimination. This attitude seemed unexpected to me, given that Foster is a city in the South, which has traditionally been so divided on the issue of race and faith (Mantero, 2008). I took the issues brought forth by the literature, mentioned above, and examined my data in light of them to obtain my conclusions.

### **Research Limitations**

As ethnographic researchers unfortunately find on a regular basis, we ourselves are human and study humans, and humans are prone to cause each other difficulty. Much of my research went very well, but I did encounter a few obstacles.

At first, I attended the local Spanish-language Catholic mass, assuming that many of the constituents of Glenwood Park would attend there, as well, being Mexican and therefore probably Catholic. However, none of the ESL students went to mass, so in order to focus on the correct subset of population, I saw no further merit in attending for research purposes. This left the Catholic population of Foster unexamined.

Because I was not directly affiliated with Gethsemane Baptist, my ability to perform personal interviewing was problematic. While this method of information collection allowed



informants to be more open with me because they did not have to act or speak in compliance with official church policy, it also worked in the opposite direction, wherein they would not wish to speak badly of the church and its actions to someone outside of the church circle. I also must take my informants' word for truth on many matters, if no competing information is uncovered.

An obstacle I encountered when interviewing at ESL classes was that the classes were not usually well organized ahead of time. This made it hard to plan my interviews, because sometimes I was called upon to teach, instead of participate, if an instructor did not show up. Towards the end of the research period, I was asked to be a full-time instructor. When I only participated as a tutor, it was easy to pull an informant to the side and conduct an interview. Conducting interviews at ESL classes is a convenient time for most informants, because they are very busy most of the rest of the week, and I believe may have felt nervous about inviting me into their homes. The trailer where ESL is held was a neutral space.

One ethical issue I dealt with is understanding informants' residency status. Many of my informants are undocumented residents in the United States. I know this because they have told me, but I make it a policy to never ask. As recommended by my Institutional Review Board, in my consent forms, participants are asked to affirm the following statements:

I understand that there are no foreseeable risks associated with my participation. I understand that I will not be asked questions that may jeopardize my reputation as a law-abiding resident. I understand that I have the right to withhold sensitive information. I also understand that tapes or transcripts of this interview could be subpoenaed in court.

and also; "I understand that this interview is confidential, but that I should not disclose identifiable personal information about other people in my interview."

This affirmation serves to communicate a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy in regard to immigration status. To ensure my informants’ anonymity, when I write papers and disperse information, I use aliases for their names, the name of the church, and the town in which I conduct my research. This guarantees that any sensitive information they tell me, which I use in my results dissemination, cannot be traced back to them without a great deal of difficulty.

Please see my consent forms in Appendix D.

One of the difficulties I encountered was meeting Anglo members of the congregation. I was able to sit down with two young adults in the congregation, and email with a third, but was unable to get face time with any older members of the congregation. The snowball method of sampling did not work as well as I had hoped in this case, because the church is so big that its members do not often know members outside of their age-grouped Sunday school and Bible study groups well enough to provide contact information for them. Most of the multi-generational interaction happens in church or at church events, but seldom outside those boundaries.

A great boon to the latter stage of the project was that many members of the Hispanic group at Gethsemane who I had not met before began coming to ESL classes. This gave me a fresh data set and a new set of people with whom I could bounce around ideas and questions. However, this was countered by a loss of many former research participants. One of my prior informants returned to Mexico, so I could not follow up with her for elaboration on some of the facts she had given me, and two more left town in pursuit of more lucrative opportunities elsewhere. As it was possible to predict from literature, both of these more mobile participants were men.

## **Conclusions**

It is from 21 months of participant observation research, interviewing (through personal interviews, informal conversations, and a focus group) 17 members of the Hispanic group of Gethsemane Baptist, three Anglo members of the church, and the church leadership that I draw my conclusions. I believe that the integration of new Hispanic immigrants in Appalachia is affected directly by the existing religious practices in Appalachian communities. I found that in areas, such as Appalachia, where religion is foundational to community life, immigrants are more likely to be accepted due to biblical mandates to aid the poor and alien. Reciprocally, I found evidence that affiliation with a church community helps immigrants integrate into a new community in ways they could not if they were not affiliated.

### **Chapter Three: The Trees**

In this chapter, I show through their own words the experiences of 1) the Hispanic group affiliated with Gethsemane Baptist, 2) its leadership, and 3) Anglo members of the church. I look at the Hispanic community in Foster, then specifically at the Hispanic group at Gethsemane Baptist Church. I present María's story and examine the various services that the church offers to immigrants in the area: material assistance, financial assistance, the incredible asset of The Lighthouse, and—most importantly—spiritual succor. I look especially at the ways the church helped the Hispanic group develop their faith and interact with one another and the community at large. Then, I examine why the church offers these services (to fulfill its mission) and how the Anglo members of the congregation feel about it. I find that, as I expected, the church's religious beliefs affect the way they receive Latino immigrants, and the church community at Gethsemane Baptist helps these Hispanic immigrants integrate into a new community in particular ways they could not if they were not affiliated.

#### **Setting the Scene**

The town of Foster is 3.3% Hispanic (US Census Bureau, 2013). The predominant makeup of the town is 89.9% white (1.6% Asian, .2% American Indian, and 3.5% African American) (US Census Bureau, 2013). Foster's demographics are similar to much of southern Appalachia. Though racial diversity is present, it is not prevalent.

The majority of the Hispanic population of Foster lives in Glenwood Park, a trailer park at the edge of town. At the end of the trailer park is a double-wide trailer owned by Gethsemane Baptist Church. The trailer is larger than most of the ones surrounding it, and kept up by volunteers. It has a large wooden front porch, built by a carpenter in the Hispanic group at the church, and sits on an uphill slope. It is kept up by volunteers, so sometimes it is clean and

bright, while other times (between maintenance and washings) it blends in better to the surrounding community. Complete with a big sign on the side of the building declaring its name, The Lighthouse is not fancy, but it gets the job done: the job of being (literally) *in* the community the church serves.

This property sets Gethsemane Baptist apart from other churches in the county who have Hispanic outreach programs, but do not come into the community with the people they serve. Most programs in the area run out of church buildings away from where their congregants live, but Gethsemane Baptist has chosen to headquarter their services in a trailer, a lowly manufactured housing just like the ones in which most of its Hispanic members live. The Gethsemane Baptist trailer is called “The Lighthouse,” because it is intended to serve as a light to all who search for truth in the darkness (the “light” is the light of an enlightened understanding of Christ). Foster, like much of Southern Appalachia, is heavily influenced by religion. As I mentioned last chapter, 59% of the population of Foster identifies as Southern Baptist, which is by far the largest denomination in the region (Advameg, 2014). There are 36 Southern Baptist Convention churches in the local Southern Baptist Convention association, which contains most of the Baptist churches in the county (--- Baptist Association, 2014). Gethsemane Baptist Church is one of these.

Gethsemane Baptist offers many services to the growing population of Hispanic immigrants in Foster, most of who live at or below the poverty level. They offer food assistance, what they call “Benevolence Funds” or monetary assistance, transportation to church, bilingual worship services, Spanish-language Bible Study, prayer groups, and Vacation Bible School. In the Lighthouse are held English as a Second Language classes and “Homework Helper” classes

for children whose parents might not speak English. I will explore the effects of these programs later in this chapter; first, I will introduce the Hispanic community.

### **The Hispanic Community**

The landscape of Foster in late 2013, when I began this study, had many visual reminders of its Mexican population. Three *tiendas*<sup>1</sup>, four Mexican restaurants, and a *taquería*<sup>2</sup> lie within city limits. Two more Mexican restaurants and a *tienda* are thirty minutes away, on the west side of the county, and yet another Mexican restaurant lies 15 minutes south of Foster. The county's division of social services offers translators, and signs at the local Catholic Church advertise hours for a Spanish mass. Two local churches offer free ESL classes, in addition to paid classes available at the community college. Many “Help Wanted” ads in the local classified advertisements are in Spanish, especially ones asking for manual labor. Consequentially, many construction and landscaping crews that residents see around town are Hispanic. The Christmas tree industry in the county has a history of hiring migrant workers, aided by the H2-A visa offered to agricultural laborers, so in the late summer to early winter, there are more Hispanic faces in Foster on the weekends, when workers get a chance to come to town to buy necessities. Most agricultural workers work a six-day week, so “on Sundays you see a lot more Hispanic people-- mostly men who come together in groups,” said a Wal-Mart employee.

The community of Foster, like much of North Carolina, has seen rapid increase in its Hispanic population over the past twenty years. All of the people in my study have come to the United States within the past 15 years, and most within the past 10. Inez, who has been in Foster

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1 Literally translated, *tienda* means “store.” The term is used to differentiate Latino or Hispanic specialty stores from mainstream grocery, convenience, or general stores.

2 A *taquería* is a taco shop.

almost 11 years, told me that it was only in “the past six or seven years” that the landscape really began to change. “Now there are more Mexican people, more Mexican food,” she said. It's not hard to find Mexican ingredients for her family recipes anymore. “Before,” she said, “it was very difficult.”

In addition to the local *tiendas*, most major food stores in the county have an International section that caters specifically to Hispanics. Catharina Lemkes (2004) examined this phenomenon in North Carolina in particular in 2004, when she spoke with a Food Lion purchaser who explained the dramatic growth in their Hispanic orders in recent years. In 2004, the Food Lion employee noted that in a more populous and ethnically diverse area of North Carolina, their food trucks were 1/3 full of foods that were considered “Hispanic.” Indeed, today, Food Lion has the most complete Hispanic product registry of the chain grocery stores in Foster. Even casual shoppers who are not tuned in to the Hispanic community have noticed the changes in their aisles.

Change is not only visible, but audible. Every one of the interviewees with whom I spoke claimed to speak Spanish in public. The outlet mall 10 minutes south of Foster has found value in hiring Spanish-speaking employees in certain stores. One cell phone store in town has a “Se Habla Español Aquí” (Spanish Spoken Here) sign by the road on days when its bilingual employees are working. With all the buzz both in public and in the airwaves, the Hispanic influence is not only seen, but heard.

Once I began to take stock of the evidence of a Hispanic population in Foster, I sought out opportunities to become involved with them in a research capacity. I was welcomed into Gethsemane Baptist’ ESL program as a volunteer.

## **The Hispanic Group at Gethsemane Baptist Church and Their Languages**

At the beginning of my research, I was curious why immigrants in Foster are learning English and how they use it. In larger cities, I had noticed that immigrants were able to subsist in ethnic enclaves and never learn English (regardless of their desire to so, it remained possible to survive in a different language). Foster, however, is a small town, and I was not sure if the same would hold true.

When I met Juan, he was a first-level learner, in the Beginner class. This surprised me, because he had been in Foster the longest of all my informants, but had been able to subsist entirely in Spanish—to the point that he was just beginning to learn to give his address in English, after 14 years. Juan works in roofing, and the construction industry in newly Hispanic areas of Appalachia is often dominated by working-class Hispanics. It is clearly possible that even for tasks related to his job, Juan had been able to speak only Spanish the whole time he had been in Foster. The women in my study mentioned in a group discussion that often times, the men only want to learn enough English to get by at work, and once they can talk to their bosses, they quit coming to ESL class. This held true during my period of observation, as one man, Teo, quit attending ESL class after he felt confident enough at work. As mentioned in Chapter One, it is often the men who are working the longest hours outside the home, so attending ESL classes after long days of grueling manual labor likely plays a role in their decisions to attend only when necessary to their immediate goals.

The reasons for attending “English class” are different for each individual. María, who speaks good English, comes to the Advanced ESL class to practice, improve her pronunciation,



and work on her oral skills. “I can write very well in English. It's more easy<sup>3</sup> for me to write than speak,” she said, “I'm listening to Christian music in English, because it is the way that I am learning the pronunciation.” Carla, on the other hand, learned English “here, in [the] Lighthouse.” She thinks it is necessary in order to help her children in school, and that it is “very important for jobs, because if you're going to work it's [going to be] speaking English.” She also thinks speaking English is good for immigrants, “to be able to improve, to have a better job, to communicate better... like, the parents in the family [so that they can] help the children with their schooling, should learn more English--how to read it and how to speak it; things can be much easier for them, I think, sometimes.” This is part of Carla's own motivation to learn English, and on more than one occasion I helped her fill out school paperwork or write a note to a child's teacher. Girardo, a male member of the group, also spoke about experiencing difficulty helping his children with their homework, since he could not read English to understand the instructions.

Noemi is learning English to surprise her sister-in-law, who is American. Her sister-in-law teaches her a bit of English each time they see each other, and always says, “One day we'll be able to talk in English.” Noemi says that she wants that day to come sooner rather than later, and is hoping to surprise her sister-in-law next summer. “She likes to practice with me, but we don't understand each other. Well, some things,” but Noemi wants them to be able “to understand [fully].” Noemi says there are “words I can't explain in Spanish, much less translate into English,” so it is hard for her to teach her sister-in-law Spanish, too.

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<sup>3</sup> Any time an informant spoke to me in English, their words are transcribed exactly as he or she said them. Occasional language inaccuracies are normal for second-language learners, and I believe it gives a fuller representation of the informants' voices. For this reason, I have chosen not to correct their grammar for them here. Any insertions I make in brackets are for clarity only.

Inez came to America when she was 14, and so she attended the county's high school "for three years." She learned English when she arrived, because she "needed to learn it for classes in school." She dropped out of school in the 11th grade to work and help her family, though, so she comes to ESL to stay in practice with her language. One night during ESL, Inez became very emotional when she told me that she had been attending GED classes. Since she had to drop out of school, she knows her GED is very important and will make her life better, but the classes are held in English. Inez believes that "with a lot of hard work" she can pass the GED test, but the process can be discouraging to her.

Though María has acquired strong English skills, it has not always been the case for her. She told me how she came to learn the language:

I think... 12 or 15 years ago I made a friend, she was working in Mexico City [as] a [journalist]. And when she finished her time there, her mother called me and asked me if I can accompany her back here, and I had a visa--the tourist visa--and I was with her driving all the way from Mexico to Birmingham, Alabama. And I couldn't say any word in English. I couldn't say "yes," nothing. But when I was listening for the first time [to] the English language, I fall in love with the language.

I was helping my friend's mother, and we couldn't communicate; just what signs I show her with my hands. But I help her clean the house and straighten the yard, and she asked me what I want for a gift, and I said, "I want a Bible in English, and Christian music." And she bought me a Bible and a CD, and I was listening [to it] every day at my home in Mexico City. I bought a book, and I

studied by myself, and then every summer—for five years I think-- I was visiting them every summer.

[...] My friend's mother helped me a lot. She taught me a lot. She said, "Repeat, repeat," and I was always repeating after her words and was singing sometimes with her. She's a police officer, and she was working during the night and she stayed at home all day, and we spent a lot of time together, and she learned a little Spanish, and I learned English.

María also brought up the fact that many people in the U.S. do not realize that in Mexico, people may not always speak Spanish as a first language. "A lot of [the immigrants] here, they can't speak Spanish because they have another dialect in their little communities. And they learn Spanish here [in Foster], some of them. Then they start to communicate among the Spanish people, and it is difficult for them to communicate with the regular [non-Hispanic] people."

Noemi elaborates:

In these times in Mexico, the people—the children—are already forgetting the races and are not preserving our languages, and they don't want to learn them. But in this country I've learned that the more languages you know, it's much better. ...I know three [languages]... *Náhuatl*<sup>4</sup>, *Español*, and I am learning English... Part of Mexico doesn't speak *Náhuatl*, Aztec, or *Otomí*. I know a little... I know how to speak perfectly in *Náhuatl*, and a little bit of *Otomí*.

Though Noemi has kept the *Náhuatl* language alive for herself, the Mexican children here are forgetting--some out of spite, and some out of ignorance. "They have a lot to learn," said

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4 *Náhuatl* and *Otomí* are indigenous languages in Mexico.

Noemi. The same happens with second-generation immigrants in the United States who refuse to speak Spanish. María has her own theories on that:

I think the parents [are at] the fault because they didn't encourage the children to speak Spanish with them, and some of them refuse to speak Spanish or use a mix of Spanish and English.... Because they feel embarrassed. Some of them told me, "I don't like." They think is... *inferior*<sup>5</sup>? But I encourage the families to speak with [the children] in Spanish, because when I was in Mexico I saw a lot of their relatives there crying because they can't communicate with their grandchildren or with their family here. And [the Mexican relatives] don't have the money to study English there, and when [the children] are visiting the families in Mexico, they refuse to speak with them.

This is a common phenomenon in second-generation immigrants. As Villatoro (1998) demonstrates, Latino children are often socialized by Anglo peers into believing Spanish is shameful, and they refuse to speak it. Lázaro, a member of Gethsemane Baptist, told me that although he speaks to his children in Spanish, they will only respond in English. Their resistance to communicating with Lázaro has caused him much grief and sadness, because he feels personally rejected by his children.

### **Living and Working In Foster**

Besides María, only the men in my study have steady jobs in Foster. María, as well as the men, came to Foster because there were jobs here. Noemi came with her husband, when he came to Foster for work; Inez and Carla were brought by their mother. All of the men's jobs are in the

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<sup>5</sup> María used the Spanish word *inferior* here. It has the same meaning as its English counterpart, inferior.

construction industry. This makes sense, since the county is undergoing much expansion. The university's enrollment gets larger each year, with corresponding constant addition of new college apartment complexes in the area. The second-home industry is also booming in the county and the ones surrounding it, with several ski mountains in the immediate area. There is certainly enough work to keep my respondents busy.

Many of the women are occasional housemaids for the well-off, seasonal residents who are attracted by the mild climates in the summer or good skiing in the winter. These women do not work through an agency, but rather through word-of-mouth referrals. Often times, labor laws demand documentation of eligibility to work in the US, which prevents immigrants from getting jobs. Carla had such an experience. "It makes it difficult," she said. "I was working in Chick-Fil-A, but because I didn't have the papers... I couldn't work anymore." One lady, Vivida, works at a local *tienda* on Saturdays. Over the course of my study, Inez's husband, who cooked at the *taquería*, got an ingrown toenail and had to have surgery. He could not stand while he healed, so she went to work in his place, cooking at the restaurant until he could walk again.

### **Why Foster?**

All informants said that they enjoyed the pace of life in Foster. Noemi, who lived in Charlotte, North Carolina before, said it is "*más tranquilo*" here, and that "in Charlotte there is a lot of traffic; it's a bigger city. This place is more tranquil, and I like it more." Inez agreed, saying, "I think that [it is] very peaceful here. Very quiet, very tranquil. In other places, [it's] very aggressive. Very different atmospheres." María postulated that "some thing[s are] similar" to where she used to live "like, Mexico City is around mountains, like here. I think there are lot of Mexicans here because it is a small town [like those that are in the mountains of Mexico]."

Inez, who came to the US as a teenager, said:

When I came here, I came because of problems at home, but I wasn't consulted about the decision to come. [...] I came with my mother and other sisters. I was 14 years old then. I wasn't interested in whether we stayed here or not, as long as the problems got better.

Now, however, she loves it. "If someone offered me the chance to go back to Mexico, I would feel I would laugh at them. I wouldn't go," she said. Every informant responded that they unequivocally feel as if they are a part of the community in Foster. "This is my town," said Noemi. "I never want to leave."

The residents of Foster have found a better life here. That opportunity is what motivated them to come. Those who have a good life in Mexico are still there.

**María:** More of the people from Mexico here got here because they [had] problems in Mexico, or they didn't have good jobs, a good income there, and they [are] trying to get the American Dream. A lot of them ask me [about] my family, if they want to come here, and I say no, they have their home, their houses, their families, their work, and they are not interested.

**Noemi:** Where my father lives we didn't buy food; we produced a lot of things. Corn, beans, oranges... we produced it all ourselves. [...] We would sell little things; oranges, popcorn, things so that we could buy sweets and candies [...] We didn't [have to] help to bring home money to buy some food with, to share with our family. [...] My sister came here first and asked me if I'd like to come. I really didn't think twice, and she helped me get situated. [Our family] is still in Mexico. But there isn't much money to spend, because my sisters are studying,

thanks to God, in the university [in Mexico], too—two in the university, one in preparatory school.

This is consistent with predictions from the literature; that immigrants will only immigrate if their situations will improve.

Members of the Gethsemane Baptist Hispanic community share a common faith. They share a language and an ethnic heritage. They share close quarters, most of them living in the same trailer park. But they also share similar values that stem directly from their faith, such as preference for a wholesome music, family-based values, and abstention from alcohol and drugs. These values fit in with the commitments of the wider Foster community, and allows these new residents more ready acceptance than their “wilder” neighbors<sup>6</sup>.

All respondents cited enjoying primarily Christian music. Juan plays Christian music on his cell phone each morning while he showers. Inez, the youngest of the group (at age 24), admits she likes some contemporary pop music. But her values still shine through in that she pays attention to what she is listening to, and avoids vulgar music:

I like Christian music. I like piano music.... bands. I listen to the radio. [...] If we are at church, [we listen to] Christian music. With friends who don't go to church, [we usually listen to] like... bands, *norteña*<sup>7</sup>, *cumbias*<sup>8</sup>. Typical music, contemporary music. I don't

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<sup>6</sup> Many respondents reported that they believe Anglos saw Latinos as overindulging in alcohol due to recent publicized drunk driving accidents by Mexican drivers.

<sup>7</sup> *Norteña* is a type of Mexican music popular in northern Mexico. It is a type of folk music, stemming from rural areas of Mexico, in which the most prominent instrument is the accordion.

<sup>8</sup> *Cumbia* is a dance and music style originating in Colombia, with African roots. It is loosely similar to contemporary Appalachian choreographed “clogging,” with its small steps.

like [*reggaetón*<sup>9</sup>] at all, because I think it's ugly. The first time that I heard what they say in that type of music, I said, "No. I don't like it."

María elaborates on music that still has wholesome qualities, but is not necessarily

Christian:

I [also] love folk music, because the [lyrics], or the meanings, are good. But now the new music, I don't like [it], because [it has] bad words and thinking about sex or about divorce or adultery, immorality, and I don't like that. I like music, not sounds. [...] I think four years ago, [the college] brought a ballet. From Mexico. And [it] was beautiful, so beautiful. And we got the big group and our church let us use the bus, and we got to [the school] in our bus, and I was surprised because the theater was full. We were I think around 50 Mexican people, but the others were American people and they enjoyed that time with the ballet and the *mariachi*. It was a beautiful performance. And yesterday, someone in our church asked me, "When [the college] will bring again the ballet?" And I said, "I don't know..." But [it] was beautiful. That music, I like. But it is our traditional music, Mexican music.

Everyone in the study said family was extremely important to them. All of the women in my study except María have children, and they are either married or are in relationships where they consider their children's father their spouse<sup>10</sup>. Latinos are generally known for having a strong sense of family, among not only their family but also close friends (and idea called

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9 *Reggaetón* is a modern rap-like, beat-heavy music originating from Puerto Rico. It is similar to United States hip-hop.

10 In North Carolina, in order to obtain a marriage license, one must either have a social security card or affirm that he or she is ineligible for one, and give the reason for that ineligibility. Many immigrants are hesitant to identify themselves as unable to get a social security card in public records, in fear of increased visibility to immigration officers. North Carolina law does not recognize common law marriages (--- County, 2013).



*familismo*). Inez told me about seeing church friends when she goes out in the town. “When we see each other it's like a family; 'Hello, how are you? Good...’” Gethsemane Baptist “has special activities with the families,” María said, “and we participate with them.” Birthday parties are only for children, but they bring adult chaperones with them for a merry fellowship occasion for adults and children alike.

Other occasions, like weddings, are primarily adult events. María and Noemi both noted how they like to attend Baptist weddings rather than Catholic weddings, where there is alcohol. “I don't like [it],” María said, “because they have alcohol and always someone is fighting.” She also noted that often times, people get mad because “Mexican or Hispanics are driving with alcohol [drunk driving]. For me, it's a good reason [to be mad]. Because they know the rules.<sup>11</sup>” Noemi agreed:

The [*quinceñaras*<sup>12</sup>] are more for the men, because they have alcoholic drinks and they get drunk. And it's the same at a wedding. Sometimes I think, “Oh, I want to go to a wedding, I want to go and I want to have a good time.” But it always ends up in punches, punishing and killing. Because when you put alcohol there in the first place, then they start destroying themselves... they bring pistols and they start shooting at each other... it always ends in accidents. No, no, no, it's not good. It's different at a Christian wedding. My wedding was very simple, everything was nice. I got married in a church, so there was no alcohol. It's more relaxed.

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<sup>11</sup> As previously mentioned, these comments were made after a rash of recent drunk driving arrests and accidents where Latino members of the community were found at fault. María especially was angered by the behavior of the Latino community members, who she believed knew better.

<sup>12</sup> A *quinceañera* is a coming-of-age celebration that takes places on a young girl's 15th birthday.

## **What the Church Offers Immigrants: María**

María was living and working in Mexico City as an accountant when she came to Foster for a summer in 2005. She was also an active volunteer with her home church's Bible study, worship services, and youth ministry. María obtained degrees in both accounting and Christian Education from Baptist Theological Seminary in Mexico City, and taught Christian Education classes for 12 years (Gethsemane Baptist, 2014) before coming to Foster. María told me a little about how she came to coordinate the Hispanic ministry at Gethsemane Baptist full time:

I was visiting a friend [in Foster], ... she had a bad situation in her marriage, and [...] her parents are my friends. They were working in Mexico City and we worked together, [...] and they asked me to help [...] their daughter, and I got here with her and help with her children. And while I was here a summer, she told me there are a lot of Latin people here, and they don't know nothing about God, they don't know they can have a relationship with God. And I started praying, and a year later, God provided me the visa, the religion visa. And [Gethsemane] invited me to work with them, to coordinate the Hispanic community. And it's a miracle, because for a woman, it's very difficult to get the religion visa. And two years later, or three years later, I got the residence.

María came to Foster permanently in 2006 to coordinate and expand Gethsemane Baptist's Hispanic ministry. Because of her training and experience, she was a prime candidate for what she calls “the religion visa,” which is a visa available to temporary religious workers (U.S. Department of State, 2013). This visa requires that you are a member of the denomination you come to work with and that you work at least 20 hours a week with a non-profit religious organization (like a church) (U.S. Department of State, 2013). This temporary visa allows admittance up to three years in the United States. María did not confirm which type of visa she

had in her interview, but it is probable that she obtained this temporary visa. A permanent religion visa, for “Certain Religious Workers,” will allow permanent residency in the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2013). This is most likely the residency that María acquired. The religious visa is fourth preference for admittance to the United States (U.S. Department of State, 2013), out of five preference categories. The odds were indeed against her. “It is just God that helped me,” said María.

Stacey Summers is an administrative assistant at Gethsemane Baptist who came on staff just after María. She remembered a little about the process and the role the church played in helping María obtain residency:

María needed a green card, and [so] the church got a lawyer and paid for that, and paid for her and walked her through the process, so that she could be here, because she was on a work visa for [only] so long, and then I think we were advised to go ahead and [get the lawyer and begin residency paperwork].

Once María came to Foster, she immediately began to work on expanding the Hispanic ministry of Gethsemane Baptist<sup>13</sup>, beginning in the mostly-Mexican Glenwood Park. She recalled her reaction with Anglo church members in the early days of her work:

Well, when I got here, they receiving me like [...] they are my family. They supporting me, helping me, and always when I saw some of them, they told me, "I'm praying for you. I'm proud of you." And they encouraged me to start English, to do my work, and I feel how [...] God used their life to help me, and to make me feel like if I am around my

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13 The Lighthouse was already in existence, but there was no full-time coordinator for its services (Norris, 2005).

family. They [are] a beautiful church. I saw them giving welcome the Hispanic group and support [to] the Hispanic ministry.

“I can remember in the beginning days, just seeing her being what they say [are the] hands and feet of Christ,” said Melanie, an Anglo church member who was involved with church leadership when María first arrived.

Eight years after her arrival, María now heads up a ministry that offers ESL classes, childcare, Spanish-language Bible Study and Sunday School, prayer walks through Glenwood Park, two ministerial interns, and a bilingual worship service. She also works as a translator and general social aide to the community, accompanying her flock to the “hospital, or school, or health department or social service. Before, when I got here, I was everywhere every day,” she said. Melanie remembers “seeing that little green van all over the place, I could [...] see her— she always had kids in the car, always had moms in the car, and so.. that was exciting, just to be like, ‘Man, she’s really out there and getting it, really proving, this is what I actually could be doing with anyone in my community.’” María made an impression not only on members of the congregation such as Melanie, challenging them in their professed commitments to doing the work of God, but also on the community as a whole. Hispanic residents of Foster began to rely on María and accept her invitations to church events.

With the increase in Hispanic population and its necessary accommodation by hospitals and agencies, “now, more people [in the service industry] are speaking Spanish,” said María. These days, María does less translating and more transporting. “Some of [the people], they are not driving or they don't have a car, or they have some problems, [so] they call me and ask me to help them.” She is still using the little green van, which was purchased by the church for the ministry.

It is no understatement to say that María is the lifeblood of the Hispanic ministry at Gethsemane Baptist. She started it, and she leads most of its programs. Under her tutelage, a group of steadfast volunteers have taken up leadership roles. All of these volunteers are younger than María and look up to her as a spiritual mentor and friend. María acts as a sort of mother to the group, opening her arms and heart to anyone who comes through the doors of the Lighthouse.

### **What the Church Offers Immigrants: Materially**

**Financial Assistance.** The church's ESL classes, the "Homework Helper" program for children whose parents may not speak English, and the food assistance programs<sup>14</sup> are reported to be used most frequently by my informants. However, the other services are equally as important and designed to be used less frequently. Some members of the Hispanic group that I interviewed had filled out what the church calls "Benevolence Request" forms, asking for financial assistance, but this was only done in times of great distress, and not on a regular basis. For example, one informant from the Hispanic group, Carla, said, "less than four years ago, [the church] helped me to repair my room in my house and a floor" that were rotting through by providing her with the financial assistance she needed.

Another unexpected cost that Gethsemane Baptist helps the community with is funeral arrangements and costs. Pastor Tad Griswell, the senior pastor at Gethsemane Baptist church, said:

One of the things that I did here my first year [in 2012] was help them with funeral planning and funeral arrangements. And often times the church will contribute towards that to help them. I think there's not a lot of planning for that, and preparation for that,

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<sup>14</sup> I do not go into great detail about food assistance here because although most respondents claimed to use this service, they did not elaborate on how much it benefitted them.

and so we're trying to work with them, see how that looks and how they can prepare for those kinds of expenses.

Gethsemane offers not only financial assistance for funerals, but also helps arrange the specifics with funeral home owners who do not speak Spanish. It can be scary and confusing when a family member dies in a new country, and the church tries to help in that instance. In addition to helping with the funeral itself, as Pastor Tad mentioned, the church offers financial education services to help low-income people think about savings and preparing for unexpected events.

The church, in addition to offering financial assistance, tries to hook people into existing social assistance frameworks. Pastor Tad said:

A lot of [people] just don't know anything about, for lack of a better word here, the system. How do I get help, how do I get assistance? Who do I talk to? And they're just blown away, and so we've got some people here on staff that can come alongside them and say well look, if this is a problem, you can talk to this organization or this... you know, so we're trying to link them up and help them with some different community ministries, as well.

One of those existing ministries is the food pantry run by the local Baptist association, which Gethsemane Baptist helps support. When low-income people come to the church for help with food, they are referred to the food pantry.

**Programs in the Lighthouse.** The ESL, Vacation Bible School, and Homework Helper programs are especially good for the Hispanic community because they are held out of the Lighthouse in Glenwood Park. Stacey said that the benefit of the Lighthouse being in the

community where most of the Hispanic population lives is that “they can get off the bus right there and walk in the Lighthouse and do their tutoring.” The Lighthouse is in Glenwood Park exclusively to serve the population of the park. “This house, it is for the Hispanic ministry. The church pays rent and everything, all the bills,” said María. Gethsemane’s church leadership takes the presence of The Lighthouse seriously. “Designating them space, designating them a staff member, full-time, was a huge step for our church in terms of reaching out to that population,” said Pastor Tad.

**Transportation.** The church also “send[s] a bus to help us go to church, so we are together. That is a good decision,” said Inez, a member of the Hispanic group. The church bus normally comes to Glenwood Park to pick up churchgoers on Sunday mornings, and drops them back off after services, but María also talked about using it to take the Hispanic group field trips to see events, such as the Mexican ballet discussed above. In addition to using the bus, when María first came to Foster, the church helped find her a van that she could use to transport members of the community to doctor’s appointments, grocery stores, and various governmental agency offices. Melanie remembers when the church bought the vehicle:

What was one fun aspect was, how do we get her to the people? And finding a van, and seeing a local body shop—which now employs one of the guys from the ministry, the Hispanic ministry—taking a look at a van with us and helping us see if this was a good purchase and a safe purchase for her...[...] It was very normal, it was, “This is what we need to do and this is things that we need to get for her to be effective.”

**Space.** Pastor Tad also spoke about the process of designating a special space for the Hispanic group to meet at Gethsemane, in addition to the services that go on out of the

Lighthouse. The church made sure to provide a space with a kitchen, so that the members of the group could share meals together. He said:

We set them up with their own space in the church, and that space ha[d] to include food preparation. Because in that culture, it seems to me at least, they don't meet unless they eat. And it's, for lack of a better word, it's like--family. They want everybody together. So, Wednesday at Bible Study, you come here on Wednesday night, they're in their room and they're eating, and they're studying. Sunday morning, same thing. They come back on Sunday nights, same thing.

**Inclusivity.** Clearly, Gethsemane Baptist does not hold back its resources for the Hispanic group's use<sup>15</sup>. This experience differs from other services in the area, because to receive any services from Gethsemane, one does not have to be a member. Magdalena, a Hispanic member of the congregation, said, "In other [churches, there is] the mindset that they are 'Members [...] Only' [...] and] if you aren't a member, they won't help you with more than necessities." This is something that the leadership at Gethsemane Baptist has specifically tried to avoid, instead trying to cultivate an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusion. "Gethsemane has become known as a place where you can come and get help," said Pastor Tad. Inez agrees: "If you need help they will give you help. If they *can* help, they *will* help." And the church gives all kinds of that help, as Pastor Tad says:

It's counseling help; it's financial help. Where do you go or where do you turn when you have a funeral and you don't have the money to pay? Where do you go when you need food or you can't pay your electric bill? Those kinds of things. And we're trying to be that

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<sup>15</sup> For more examples of Gethsemane investing its resources into the Hispanic ministry, see specific discussions in the sections below.



kind of resource, not just for Hispanics, but you know--there's just a lot of hurt in [the] County, and we're just trying to do our part to be able to bring some hope and to bring some light and relief into that context.

### **What the Church Offers Immigrants: Spiritually**

It is precisely that help that goes beyond necessities that the Hispanic members of the congregation cherish the most. All of my Hispanic informants agreed that the material assistance they can receive is appreciated, but spiritual help is what they benefit from most.

**Bible Study.** The Hispanic ministry at the church operates a Spanish-language Bible Study, which Valentina, another Hispanic group member, feels is her favorite activity with the group, “because we are taught to know God, His word, and [...] that God exists.” Others have grown from the weekly gatherings, too: “Nothing has benefitted me more than the Bible study,” said another Hispanic member, Meche. “I am learning more about the creation of God, in many ways. Like, about the creation of ourselves.”

The Bible Study serves as more than just a reading group; it also operates as a theological training ground. As Pastor Tad explains, María’s background in Christian Education plays a large part in the Bible Study’s success, and therefore the church’s:

Here's the thing about María as somebody who has been a trained professor. She's able to communicate those things and able to get it into them through her teaching of the Bible. Like, she'll take books of the Bible and teach through them. She's gone through Philippians with them, and when you're going through a book like Philippians, you're going to learn about the doctrine of Christ. You're going to learn about the doctrine of the church. You're going to learn about worship. And so having that kind of a person who's

trained in that here to do that gives us that ability to get that doctrine taught in their language, so that there's a confidence level that [as] we move forward with folks, especially with baptism and church membership, [that] they understand, they know what is happening and what we're teaching

**Spiritual Formation.** Many of the attendees are new to Christianity, but all of the informants in my study profess a strong faith nonetheless. “It's not 'religion,’” said Noemi, who came to be a Christian through the outreach of Gethsemane Baptist, “It's a relationship with Christ.” This relationship guides their actions and decisions. “It is one of the most important things in my life,” says Inez. They talk about how life is different for them now that they are Christians. Carla shared with me:

I am a Christian and I know Christ. And before... I didn't. Now this new life, the Christian life, is much better. Because there are more possibilities to live better, not just because you are Christian, but because you read the Bible, you realize things that aren't good, that is to say... in my family, my husband, he used to drink, but now he doesn't. Things that benefit us, things that we can teach our children about how to get along better, to live... it's helped us quite a lot.

Magdalena also talked about getting to know a loving God and overcoming the sense of judgement she had felt God had towards her for her past: “I knew a god, but [it was] a god that... if I wasn't married I was going to be punished, [...] if I didn't stay pure I would be punished... and here, no. Here I have known a god who wants me, who loves me.”

Respondents say their lifestyle changes since conversion have come from understanding God's will through church instruction, prayer, and Bible study. “They have taught us how to read

the Bible, and told us some things are good and some things are bad,” says Inez. “We have learned that the church is important in our lives, and what it affects and doesn't affect. They taught us that there is only one God and to respect Him.” “Sometimes, we say that we know [God] but we don't have the opportunity to really *know*<sup>16</sup> and to learn,” said Carla.

Like many new Christians, my interviewees highlight their ability to now tell right from wrong. “You have to see the difference between what is and isn't good,” said Noemi, “Quickly, you can tell the difference.” The Bible Study class helps them discern these truths. As Carla said, “you read the Bible, [and] you realize things that aren't good.” Noemi said, “I have been reading the Bible and I want to learn more, because sometimes I read it at home and I don't understand.” She liked attending the Bible Study with the pastors, who are “disposed to help you.” They assist the Hispanic group with theological insights and Biblical context that otherwise, the group would miss.

Some members of the Glenwood Park community are not new to the faith, however. Juan, an older man I spoke about in the beginning of the chapter, was also Baptist in Mexico. Like the women, Juan finds particular pleasure in the Bible Study class. He said that the church teaches him *how* to read the Bible, which is an important distinction from mere literacy. Perla, a Hispanic group member, attended another Baptist church in the county before, but it was not bilingual, and she felt left out. She says,

I had two years at Trinity, in a church [...] of course, they spoke the Word, but they were all American and all spoke English. And I was envious of my husband because he

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16 This interview was conducted in Spanish. In this sentence, Carla used the verb *saber* for the first “know,” which indicates a mental or intellectual knowledge of a thing. For the second “know,” she used the verb *conocer*, which indicates a personal familiarity with something.

understood<sup>17</sup>, but I didn't understand. And I liked it enough, because the pastor is a good man and his wife, their children--they all play the guitar, the atmosphere is very different. But I was interested [...] to see the Word.

Since coming to Gethsemane, Perla says, "I am integrated with the group and it was what I wanted to know and to learn, like, to read the Bible." Her experience within the Hispanic group has allowed her personal relationship with her God to blossom.

Many of the attendees are converts to Protestantism, and though they were baptized as children in the Catholic church, they have since realized the difference in the theology of the two branches of Christianity. Perla says,

These children that don't know anything have water put on them and it happens, and now they are baptized, and are free from danger, but they never say anything else. Now, with this dipping, we know [salvation is not guaranteed just because] we will [...] be baptized, because we have to walk with the Lord. And if not, we don't go [to heaven].

Pastor Tad believes that the conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism is a serious life change for many Hispanics. He said:

I can't tell you how many of our Hispanics have that cultural Catholic background. And it is very confusing to them, where they really do believe that the ritual of Catholicism is what their life is to be about, yet they're so empty inside, and they're [...] longing for, "Alright, well, what is the truth, and what do I need?" [...] María deals with a lot of confusion and brings clarity to that through the Gospel, and through the Bible. It's amazing how the Hispanics reading the Bible for themselves in Spanish is huge. Because

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<sup>17</sup> Perla's husband is an American and speaks English.

many of them never read it for themselves before. 'Cause they've always had a priest tell them, "Here's what it means," or, "Here's what it says," that kind of thing.

[...María has] some great testimonies, [...] you know, families that go home and just burn their idols because they want to worship the true God. You know? Just, stuff like that that is like, they're so superstitious and they're so ingrained in really some idolatrous practices that, you know, "Wow, I can be accepted by Christ and be loved by God and I can serve him," I mean it just frees them up. And it's like it's contagious, they just continue to tell that.

Pastor Tad elaborated on the biggest difference he saw between Catholicism and Baptism, ritualism:

Most of the time when I have spoken to folks who get caught up in what I call "Catholic ritualism," there's just an emptiness in the forms of religion. And that's not to say that there are not Catholics who have a genuine heart relationship with God, but... there is a side to that that can become mechanical. And I think that is a rejection of their part of, let me see if, to say it this way, that the emptiness and the lack of fulfillment that they feel, I think drives them towards a more intentional pursuit of truth and what they want to know in terms of discovering things for themselves. And I think that that speaks to them in a great way, when you listen to their testimonies.

[...] In religion we talk about nominal Catholics who are Catholic in name only, and I think a lot of the m are just searching for something deeper, something more meaningful, more heartfelt, that resonates with kind of where they are in life. And I think they're finding a lot of that through our church and through María and through studying

scriptures together. [...] And a lot of a ways that they overcome it is just through relationships and pulling them in and becoming friends with them, and letting them hear the Gospel and be around them, and then some... what we would call "relational evangelism." That's how a lot of them are being reached, as opposed to a big event or big crusade or something like that.

Many members of the Hispanic group affiliated with Gethsemane Baptist are not yet fully on board with Christianity or Baptism-- members of the Hispanic group come to Baptism in name, baptism in deed, and deeper faith in their own time; every person I spoke with was at a different point in his or her journey. "For me," said Magdalena, "it's still very difficult" to understand how to have a relationship with Christ. Magdalena has not yet made an official declaration of faith and joined Gethsemane Baptist, though she attends services and activities regularly. She is one of the flock who has been reached by the relational evangelism of which Pastor Tad speaks.

**Sunday Services.** The Sunday services are also beneficial to informants. "What I like about Gethsemane is the Sunday service, but also the classes that we also have for the children in the church, because they realize<sup>18</sup> and I've benefitted so much spiritually," said Magdalena. Perla explained how the Sunday schedule worked: "First we are with the pastor, then later we get together in the Hispanic room. And we have a class with Dr. María [the Hispanic Ministry Coordinator]." Some members took away more from one part of Sunday activity than others. "I like the pastor's sermons best," said Meche. The sermons are translated live by María or another woman and spoken into a small lapel microphone, which transmits to the members of the

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<sup>18</sup> In Spanish, the implication of this term is more along the lines of "discover" or "come to know."

congregation who wear receiving earpieces. These earpieces were originally bought for the deaf and hard of hearing people in the church. Stacey told me about their evolution:

God just worked it out. We had [the earpieces] originally for hearing impaired, and then we were like, "Hey... we could use these, buy more of them, and give them to the Hispanic families that need them during the service." [...] María translates all of the music and all of the-- she does a lot of big events, when we have like a ladies' conference here or things like that, that [the Hispanic ladies] want to go to—Christmas services, Thanksgiving services, anything like that. Her team is really good to come and translate and things like that. Very good at it.

However, the main language of the ministry team (apart from María) is still English. Stacey said, "We try to be as inclusive as we can be. We look at ordering Spanish materials whenever possible," but Pastor Tad admits his Spanish is not great. He is grateful for the translation services that allow him to deliver the same message to two different groups of people. "Allen, the former pastor, went out of his way to learn the baptism language for when he baptized them, he would do that in Spanish," said Pastor Tad. "Down the road, that might be something that I tackle and look at, because I do think that's a significant part [of a successful ministry]." It is not uncommon for mixed-language churches to offer sacraments in the native tongue of the faithful, which seems to be the direction in which Pastor Tad would like to move.

María's bilingual translation seems to go a long way. "Sometimes in the worship time, all church sings in Spanish. Sometimes all in church will sing in English. And a lot of times, we sing in both languages," said María. During my observations, I received handouts of translated songs and overheard the Anglo portion of the church singing the song in English, while the Hispanic portion of the congregation sang to the same tune in Spanish. The shared worship helps

contribute to the solidarity among the congregation as a whole, and to an integrated church family that sees past skin color and language differences. Every one of the members of the Hispanic group at Gethsemane that I interviewed saw the spiritual aspect of the Hispanic ministry just as important, or more important, than their physical needs being met. Noemi is new to the faith, so the spiritual edification she receives from the church is most important to her: “Gethsemane is my first church, and I stayed. Here I came to know Christ. Here I shared in the Gospel. And here I’m going to stay.” She has formed an intense connection not only to Christ, but to Gethsemane Baptist in particular.

**Faith Formation.** The church also supports faith and character formation with funding. The Hispanic group goes “to Camp Caswell every year; [...] that's out at the beach and that is a specific Hispanic conference that they go to and they get training and encouragement, so that's an important part, [...] us sending them [there] and providing for them,” said Pastor Tad. María said, “When we have special conferences or something, [the church] help[s] with the expenses.”

**Sense of Family.** The constant togetherness of the Hispanic group adds to their cohesiveness. María noted how their bond when she told me that “when the group is asked to split up for activities, they are like, ‘What do you mean, split up?!’ They like to do everything together.” And they are together a lot—the Hispanic group meets officially three times a week, not including self-improvement activities such as ESL class or lectures on family dynamics and child rearing. “We are always going [to church],” said Inez, “Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays.” Her sister, Carla, agrees. “It's like we are always busy with church.” They go to “every event there is,” said Noemi. (See Table 1.)



Table 1.  
Schedule of Weekly Church Events

Day	Event	Location
Monday	ESL Class	The Lighthouse in Glenwood Park
Tuesday	No regularly scheduled events	
Wednesday	Evening church service	Church
Thursday	No regularly scheduled events	
Friday	Bible Study	Member's Home (rotates)
Saturday	Prayer walks through Glenwood Park	Glenwood Park
Sunday	Sunday School, morning church service, evening church service.	Church

María, of course, spends even more time at church, since “it is [her] work,” also attending “meetings with the pastor [...] or the leaders from church.”

This tight schedule helps to shape the lives of these immigrants. Living in the trailer park where so many of their activities are held encourages them to attend, since they can walk there in a short amount of time. Childcare is provided at every get-together, or children included in the services. The church's schedule gives immigrants who are new to the community an easy pattern to fall into, with ready-made companions. It also gives structure and stability to established immigrants' lives, as well as provides them with a nuclear group of church friends who share their values.

I asked Carla if she ever got together with friends outside of church events. “There is not time!” she exclaimed. Noemi confirmed. Church takes up much of her time, but then there are her other responsibilities:

Now you have a lot of responsibilities, with the children, at work... and I think sometimes you don't get to visit a lot, or you lose friendships then, in work, in responsibilities... you have to run and leave the children at school [...] then you have to work, and you have to pick up the children, then you have to clean the house, you have to cook, you have to wash clothes, you have to... you look at the time and you think, “Ah! I forgot to go meet up with someone,” or, “I was going to go visit but something made me late and I didn't go...” Sometimes it's like go, go, go....

In light of this busy schedule, many participants in my focus group, like Lázaro, reiterated how important it was to be together as a family at church, with the children present. Group fellowship extends after scheduled hours, because as Carla says, “When we go to church we [also] usually get together afterwards.” The Hispanic group also finds occasion to support their children in any way possible, and the church supports a summer soccer/STEM camp in Glenwood Park, as well as church-league sports teams. Noemi’s oldest son “loves playing” soccer on the church soccer team, and it has given him time to bond with his father, who takes him to sports practices that he might not have if he could only play in a school league.

### **What The Church Gets**

I wanted to find out what Gethsemane Baptist is getting from the attendance of the Hispanic members and its ministry to them. Only about half of the members of the Hispanic group who I interviewed claimed to give money to the church, so the amount of money the

church receives from this low-income sector is very small. What, then, motivates their assistance to the Hispanic community? Is it a higher calling from God, a Christian humanitarian obligation?

**Mission Fulfillment.** “We [...] see Foster and the Hispanic ministry and the Lighthouse as part of our mission field,” said Pastor Tad. “For a church to really be a church, it should be a reflection of the community they're trying to reach.” According to the Hispanic group, this is not just lip service. “They are lovely people,” said María, “And they are always [...] serving with helping others. They are very kind, they have compassion for people from different countries. They help a lot around the world.” In regards to the value of the Lighthouse to the ministry in Foster, Pastor Tad said, “We understand that that after school ministry and Saturday ministry that's happening [in Glenwood Park] is too valuable NOT to have [The Lighthouse] open and have it going on.” The church sees the good it does as much more valuable than the cost of electricity and plot rent.

This view is not just that of the leadership. “I think the church as a whole is very missional and very like, ‘Let's go out and embrace the whole world;’ very passionate about that,” said Whitney, an Anglo church member. Pastor Tad agrees; “It's very evident that our people want to love the Hispanics and reach out to them, and intermingle with them.” Stacey Summers, the administrative assistant, said “I think Gethsemane really has a heart to just open the doors and let them come, and really want[s] them to feel welcomed.” As we have seen through the words of members of the Hispanic group, they do indeed feel at home and part of the church family.

**State Organization Support.** Gethsemane Baptist does receive support from the North Carolina state Baptist convention to help support their ministry. Pastor Tad said:

There is an individual named Dr. Soriano who is over Hispanic ministry in the state of North Carolina for the Baptists. And he comes up to speak to our group at least twice a year, and encourage them in terms of their outreach and in reach and their taking care of one another, and so it really is a unique ministry that has been birthed out of a desire to see so many of the Hispanics in Foster to get plugged into a church and a community.

Pastor Tad did not mention whether or not the state convention supports Gethsemane with funding, but it probably pays Dr. Soriano's salary and travel expenses when he comes to churches around the state.

**Servant Leaders.** However, the Hispanics at the church are not just being served. They are taking an active role in leadership and volunteering. Church member Melanie said:

One of the examples of how they've become sort of intertwined in the church is one of them is serving as an usher, you know, like, helping with offerings, and just seeing him at the front door in the mornings and greeting is great—they're feeling like there's a place for them to serve, at least there.

The Hispanic members "serve on the committees, [...] I'm thinking VBS<sup>19</sup>, they helped with VBS so much," said Stacey Summers, an administrative assistant at the church. Pastor Tad said encouraging committee service was one thing he really pushed for when he became pastor at Gethsemane in 2012.

I'll give you a great example of one thing [that has changed since I got here], none of the Hispanics were serving on any of our committees in our church. And when I saw that, I thought to myself, you know, that's not good. Because it makes them feel like, "Well,

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<sup>19</sup> Vacation Bible School

we're part of the church, but we can't be in the leadership of the church”—which in our church, committees are where our leadership functions--so, for the first time, we've actually had Hispanics teaching in Bible school, instead of just attending it, [and] we've had Hispanics serve on our Local Missions committee.

The Hispanic group also mobilizes labor when it is needed. “This past spring we had a work day to clean up the church,” said Pastor Tad. “And if the Hispanics had not shown up ... [...] And they work hard, you know. And it was great, just to see them out with their families and their kids. Spreading mulch and cleaning up debris.” Pastor Tad’s words reinforce Lázaro’s earlier statement that it is important to the Hispanic group that they do things together as a family, especially when it involves faith formation.

The Hispanic members are serving in more than one-time capacities, though; some assume regular volunteer spots, which the church helps accommodate. One Anglo congregation member who volunteers in childcare, Whitney, said:

I've seen [development on the church’s end ] over the past couple years, [to] get past the fact of some parents who want to help with childcare and maybe aren't strong in English, like, partnering them up with people who can help them, so I've seen that kind of strengthen a little bit over the past couple years.

Magdalena, a member of the Hispanic group, attests to this willing-to-serve spirit: “I am prepared to be on a list serving Gethsemane, assisting people or the community.”

Melanie believes service and volunteerism play a large part in creating a new family and a new home for Hispanic immigrants in Foster:

I feel like that's a huge buy-in to assimilating, to feeling really part of a community, is where you can serve, and so [...] seeing that in small, individual ways, where guys are serving as ushers--[it's encouraging.] I think it would be great to see them develop that aspect [further as a group], to say, 'How can we not just receive, but give back?' Because that's always a huge part about church is not just about just receiving—even for me, it's not just about me receiving, I need to find ways that I can give, too [...] There [is] just [...] more fulfillment, I think, in that.

In addition to receiving faithful members and helping hands, Gethsemane Baptist receives mostly satisfaction that they are engaged in valuable, meaningful mission work. This is what encourages them to continue their efforts; the evidence of lives being changed by it.

### **What the Rest of the Church Thinks**

I also wanted to know how the members of Gethsemane Baptist who are not Hispanic felt about the Hispanic outreach at the church and their fellow congregation members. I was advised by a friend who attends Bible Study at Gethsemane, but is not a member of the church, that everything I would hear would be positive. Even María told me that generally in Foster, “a lot of them enjoy the Mexicans.”

Indeed, all my church member informants were in favor of the Hispanic outreach. “Gethsemane is the only church I have been to with a Hispanic ministry,” said Anglo church member Jessica. “So for lack of something to compare [it] to, [...] I think they do a pretty good job. I think the Lighthouse ministry is a great example of outreach.” All of the congregation members spoke favorably of the ministry. Stacey, the administrative assistant at the church who also attends services, said of the Hispanic group:

They're very active, and they're some of the most faithful membership we have here, as far as fellowship, and will come to events and want to sing, and they're the first ones to want to stand up and tell their testimony<sup>20</sup>.

**One Body.** Melanie especially liked that the Hispanic group meets at the same time as the rest of the church. “They’re meeting similar times, they’re not like, ‘You have it on Saturday and we have it on...’—they’re times that coincide with [when] others in the church would be there, as well, for similar activities,” she said. It added to the feeling of community, she said, when the church gave the message that “you are with us, and even though you have different needs that need to be met, you’re here with us.” All respondents liked that the two groups worshipped together. “They have their own space and ministry time but there are many times where they are present and active within the church as a whole,” said Jessica. Pastor Tad said that this togetherness, or as he puts it, “making the Body one Body,” is “the big challenge—it’s easy to see them as a separate group or a separate entity in our church and maybe be treated differently, and what we’re trying to do is integrate them and get them involved.” The intentional integration of the two languages during services, as well as meeting in the church at the same times, seems to be accomplishing the ministry team’s goal of unity.

One example of how the church employs translation for the benefit of Anglo members, instead of Hispanic members, is during baptism services. Pastor Tad explains:

When we do our baptisms, we always have a video testimony. And so the video testimony for Hispanics is twice as long, because they’re saying it, and then somebody’s

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<sup>20</sup> Giving “testimony” is a Protestant worship tradition, especially prevalent among Baptists, where believers tell the story of their personal conversion to Christianity and the blessings God has bestowed upon them since that time. It is the story of how they “got saved.”

translating it, and they're saying some more, and there's more translation. And so most of our baptism videos are around two minutes, and theirs are always four minutes, but we want people to hear their story. And so we just do the translation and show it, and it works out great.

Both Hispanic and Anglo respondents liked being together as one church. “I think originally the vision may have been to establish [the Hispanic ministry] as a separate group, find them their own pastor, find them their own church,” said Pastor Tad, but “the more we’ve worked with them, the more they see themselves as part of Gethsemane.” According to Barton (2006), the idea of creating a separate church for the Hispanic members of a current congregation is the usual path to creation of Hispanic Baptist churches, so it’s no surprise that Gethsemane originally had this goal. However, both Anglos and Hispanics seem to be very happy operating as one congregation. Melanie said, “I do like that aspect of it, ‘cause I’ve heard of [other churches] who [are] like, ‘Ok, on this night it’s Hispanic night, on this night it’s a Korean ministry night...’” It seems that Gethsemane Baptist has not followed the beaten path in regards to its Hispanic ministry, and instead of creating divide, has enhanced inclusion.

### **Integration Through the Church**

**Reception.** Melanie believes that the church’s accepting attitude toward Hispanic involvement is affected by the “normalization to it”—she has been attending Gethsemane for 10 years, and was present when María was brought on as a full-time coordinator. “I feel like it was very... normal. There wasn’t a lot of fanfare. It was just, ‘This is what needs to be done, and this is who we have found that we know has a heart and a passion to serve their people and to be in ministry with them,’” she said. She also remarked that Gethsemane has had a ministry for the deaf for quite some time that operates similarly—using translators, the members of the group



sitting in a certain place each service—so “I think having the church having something like that at the beginning didn’t make it so new or abnormal to have a larger group being Hispanic coming in” and doing the same thing. As we saw in the literature, many things affect the receptivity of a community to immigrants, but one of those is experience with similar situations.

Whitney was the only informant who could recall hearing any derogatory comments being made about the Hispanic members of the congregation from anyone at the church. The comments made her “sad” and were spoken by “teenagers” who were “maybe not as educated about different cultures.” Both Jessica and Melanie said they were not aware of any “‘bad’ issues” or “problematic situations” Latinos as a group in the area might have. Jessica thought that may have something to do with living in Appalachia, and said that she had “seen more [problems with Latinos] in an urban setting.”

Most of my Hispanic respondents reported feeling no prejudice from the community, which is unexpected. I anticipated that they would have encountered at least a little. This may be attributable to the fact that as born-again Christians, they are conservative and law-abiding, so most have not had any direct encounters with police in Foster. María, however, reported two instances of discrimination—both from people she knew:

Last week I saw a woman across from Dollar Tree, and I [had met] her before, when I was with others, [but this time I was with] Mexican people. And I say, "Hi," and she [said hi, but then] told others around me, "I don't like that kind of people."

María also bought a house during the course of my study, and moved out of the apartment she had been renting for seven years. Once she moved into her new house, her male neighbor was not nice to her, and directed some racist comments towards her. But María

continued to be nice to him, because “many people think Mexicans are all bad because some of them are not Christians and they have parties and drink and fight,” so she understood why he might be prejudiced. She continues to live her life as evidence that she and her church family are not like the Latinos that her neighbor may be prejudiced against.

It is worthy of note that neither of the people who exhibited racist behavior towards María knew her from church. Those at her church do not see her, or others in the Hispanic group, the same way. Melanie, for example, believed that going to church with Latinos in the area affected her perception of them as a group:

You see them more in a family; often you [otherwise would] see just what most people would see—here’s your male migrant workers, you know—but having a real face, that these are families and they are here, and they are trying to grow and develop... and so that for me is a difference—not that necessarily that’s not happening with those others, but that’s just not the environment that I get to see them in, so that’s a big difference that I notice, is that I get to see [these people] as a family, I get to see them herd their kids around or get frustrated with them or, that kind of thing.

**Disconnection.** However, all of the non-Hispanic church members I spoke to brought up a feeling of “separation” from the Hispanic group. The most commonly used word was “separation,” which was repeated over and over, but “disconnect,” “barrier,” and “divided” were also brought up. “They seem to keep to themselves,” said Jessica. “The Hispanic community, we see them there, but there’s not a whole lot of mingling between the classes that we go to and what they do during [Sunday school],” said Whitney. Melanie reports “feeling like there’s a point of disconnection.” This theme came up in every interview I conducted. Some, like Pastor Tad, attributed the distance to a language barrier. “To be able to get into a deep conversation, it’s hard,

you know, it's hard because you hit that barrier in terms of language, and so that's kind of where we are," he said. Others, like Melanie, see that "there is a personal responsibility level to it," and would cross the barriers if they knew how.

Melanie believes more communication about how to become involved with the Hispanic ministries activities or meet their needs would go a long way towards cohesion. She reports

feeling... "What can I do for them? What do they need?" [and] not knowing that information. "What can I do with them beyond ESL? What are ways to serve with them?" And you know, maybe that could be things like helping with rides and transportation, if there's a need for those families, some things that I saw María doing at the beginning. But maybe a better communication with the church about, "Here's how we would like to partner with you as a community, or would benefit from you," so, communication [...] about how you could become more involved [would be] good.

Whitney agrees:

I know there's a lot of things going on, like there's a lot of programs, a lot of things they try to highlight on the video [of announcements] that's shown [during the church service] every week and stuff like that, but I think a lot of people probably just don't even know that there is [opportunity to get involved]. So I think if there was a way to communicate that better, even advertise better, that [this is] also something that's happening...

Many members of the Hispanic group echoed this feeling of disconnection. "I would like the group to be integrated with Americans and Latinos," said Perla. Both groups had some beginning ideas about ways to integrate. "If there were more activities or more [...] break out groups or something every so often to kind of bring people from different classes and different

cultures and areas together, to get into conversations together and get to know each other better,” said Whitney.

Both Perla and Melanie brought up the idea of the Hispanic group offering Spanish classes that the Anglo members of the congregation could take, just as the Anglo members help offer the English classes now. Perla said, “If there is a person who speaks wants to speak Spanish better, [we should help] because I think that we need to talk in English [with the Americans and practice].” Melanie agreed, saying, “I’ve actually even thought, ‘Well, we have ESL classes, why don’t we have Spanish classes, you know, where [the Hispanic group members] are going to lead, and they feel like they can contribute?’” Perla takes that idea a step further: “I think that we should have an integrated class [with] the two [languages]. Because I believe that they should also learn, right?” She suggested alternating classes between English and Spanish, with mixed students for each session. “Because each time one learns always the same language, well, [...] we always want to do more.” Since both groups have this idea, I hope that this work and further conversations can open up a path to their fruition.

**Next Step.** What’s next for Gethsemane Baptist? “It’s going to be interesting to see as we get more integrated, and more conversational, how that barrier’s going to come down,” said Pastor Tad, “We try to be as inclusive as we can be.” The inclusivity appears to have an effect on other church members. Melanie recognizes the Latinos at Gethsemane Baptist as legitimate members of the Foster community; “It’s not just like, there’s those group of people who don’t know English who are just here or whatever-- they’re just immigrants--there’s more to understand, they are part of the community.” Whitney agrees. “I don’t know that I could put the whole Hispanic community in just one box,” she said.

## **Summary of Results**

In this chapter, I have shown through firsthand experiences of informants how they feel about the Hispanic ministry at Gethsemane Baptist. The Hispanic members benefit from material and spiritual assistance, including programs like Homework Helpers, ESL classes, Benevolence Funds, Bible Study, and bilingual worship services. The church fulfills its calling and mission, and gains members and new brothers and sisters in Christ. The congregation at large supports the Hispanic ministry and likes worshipping as one church, even though the two groups feel personally disconnected from each other.

These findings support my argument that the integration of new Hispanic immigrants in Foster is affected directly by the existing religious practices in its community—as Foster’s situation is not unique in Appalachia. In areas, like Appalachia, where religion is foundational to community life, immigrants are more likely to be accepted due to Biblical mandates to aid the poor and alien, such as the SBC resolutions previously discussed. These findings also affirm that affiliation with a church community helps immigrants integrate into a new community in ways they could not if they were not affiliated, such as ease into a schedule, meet new people, develop their faith, and volunteer in the community.

## Chapter Four: Looking Ahead

In this chapter, I show how the results I found from my time with the Hispanic group at Gethsemane Baptist at times conformed to expectations set by the literature, but at times, challenged established knowledge. I argue that if it were not for Gethsemane Baptist's outreach programs, many of its Hispanic members would not be involved with the wider community in Foster. It is through the church that they play sports, volunteer, and go on outings. I evaluate how well Gethsemane Baptist lives up to the resolutions passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2006 regarding immigrant accommodation. I examine the similarities between Appalachian and Hispanic cultures, since I believe that because religion is a cornerstone of both Hispanic and Appalachian cultures, it allows locals and immigrants to relate to one another over a common set of feelings and experiences. This shared human experience of religion ultimately affects the reception that immigrants receive. I also look at current immigration trends (especially as manifested in one town in West Virginia) and implications of changing U.S. naturalization policy to see how, in the future, these policies could affect Hispanic immigrants in Appalachia as a whole and the people in Foster in particular. I finally examine avenues for further research along the lines of this topic.

### Expectations

**Conforming.** The Hispanic community of Gethsemane Baptist share many traits with one another, some of which we have been told by the literature are expected of immigrants to the United States. Like many immigrants to Appalachia in particular, they value the quiet life that rural and suburban living affords them. For the most part, their education is below that of the average American—Noemi is the only interviewee to have completed high school, and only María completed college, in Mexico. All Mexican respondents came from the southern states of

Mexico. They came as families, and often times the women work, as well as the men. Many of them speak limited English, and Glenwood Park tends to make up an ethnic enclave in which most people from the Hispanic community live<sup>1</sup>.

As Castañeda-Liles highlights, religion is an important navigation tool in Hispanic life. This holds true for the Gethsemane Baptist Hispanic community in Foster. As seen through interviews with members of the fold, “religion and spirituality overlap considerably in the Latino and Latina context” (Castañeda-Liles, 2005, p. 3). The idea of a “church family,” one often repeated in Evangelical Christian churches, meshes well with the Hispanic conceptualization of family. Family “extends beyond the nuclear circle to include extended family members and close friends” (Castañeda-Liles, 2005, p. 3), including church members. “For many, sharing [...] through religion and spirituality gives them a sense of home and community away from the homeland,” Castañeda-Liles says (p. 3). I found supporting evidence for this claim in my own research; the family that immigrants gain when they affiliate with Gethsemane Baptist is not a blood family, but a faith family. Pastor Tad attributed shared meals, which take place nearly every time the Hispanic group meets, to the sense of family that they intentionally create in this new land. The full slate of activities and numerous opportunities for socialization help newcomers feel more at home. More than once over the course of my research, a new woman would show up at ESL class, shepherded in by María and shyly introduced around.

Many of the results I found through my research met my expectations, as set by the research discussed in Chapter One. Gethsemane Baptist Church offers the financial assistance,

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<sup>1</sup> These findings are consistent with the findings of González (2002), Barcus (2007), Arreola (2006), Knowles (2008), Villatoro (1998), Smith (1998, 2012), Marrow (2011), and Keefe and Padilla (1987), as reviewed in Chapter One.

food assistance, and spiritual guidance that we are led to expect from a Protestant church who has a mission to reach out to Latinos, especially a Southern Baptist church.

**Non-conforming.** Marrow (2007) suggests that most immigrants moving to rural America are second or third-stop immigrants. However, in Glenwood Park, I found exactly the opposite. Of the 23 informants, only Noemi (who lived for a while in Charlotte) and Javier (who lived in Tennessee) have lived multiple places in the U.S.; the rest of the Latino community came straight from their home countries to Foster. Javier worked in a factory in Tennessee, but now, he works in construction. He likes Foster very much, and does not foresee moving again. Noemi, as well, said that Foster “is my town” now.

**Additions.** Lemkes (2004) asserts that Mexican immigrants, in particular, keep strong connections to their home country due to the *familismo* nature of Hispanic life and because they hail from a neighboring country. In this way, their experience differentiates Mexicans from other Latin American immigrants, who have often traveled through several other countries and continents to come to the US. I would add to Lemkes’ argument that it is not only the proximity of Mexico that allows Mexicans to “retain strong ties with their mother country” (Lemkes, 2004, p. 5), but also the new age of globalization, which makes it much easier to wire money, send packages, or call home. Every *tienda* in Foster offers in-store telephones that dial cheaply to Mexico, calling cards, and money orders. This easy access to international exchange was not present in the mountains twenty years ago, and now, with the internet and neo-liberalist trade practices, it is everywhere.



## **Analysis in Light of SBC Resolutions**

We can revisit Jacobsen's (2012) summary of the 2006 SBC resolutions to assess how well Gethsemane Baptist upholds its charge. Does it "follow the biblical principle of caring for the foreigners among us (Deuteronomy 24:17-22) and the command of Christ to be a neighbor to those in need of assistance (Luke 10:30-37), regardless of their racial or ethnic background, country of origin, or legal status?" (qtd. in Jacobsen, 2012, p. 170). I believe that Gethsemane Baptist does. It does not deny assistance or succor to any member of the community, regardless to whether or not he or she is a member of the church. It also distributes food, Benevolence Funds, and helps with funeral costs.

Does the church "act redemptively and reach out to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of all immigrants' and help them become a part of American society legally and socially?" (Jacobsen, 2012, p. 170). Gethsemane Baptist certainly tries to meet its immigrants' spiritual needs, and indeed that is what they find most helpful from the church. As discussed above, the also meets their physical needs the best ways that it can. Beyond adhering to SBC resolutions, Gethsemane Baptist attempts to serve its Hispanic community in any way possible, from facilitating Bible Study and ESL classes to helping children with English-language homework and faith formation. These programs illustrate that Gethsemane is reaching out to meet the needs of immigrants in more than just an obligatory manner.

As previously discussed, the SBC resolutions do not advocate amnesty, but rather, a legal path to citizenship. Pastor Tad admitted that "we deal with all those issues here, with, even within our church, with immigration, and having proper documentation... we just had a couple in our church that was sent back to Mexico, who was in our Hispanic group," but he did not expand on how the church approached or discussed the issue as a congregation.

## Religion as Cultural Cornerstone and Other Similarities

Native Appalachians and their new Hispanic neighbors have more in common than they may think. As I argued in Chapter One, both value the quiet lifestyle of a “*vida sencilla* [simple life]” (Nazario y Colón, 2011), which is why they come to or stay in Appalachia. For many, the landscape looks similar to their native mountains in Mexico, Puerto Rico, or El Salvador (Villatoro, 1998). Although part of Southern identity is affiliation with a past—as attached to a place—that recent immigrants do not share, both Appalachian and Hispanic cultures have been traditionally agrarian and share the sense of nostalgia for pre-industrialization.

Several scholars of both Appalachian and Hispanic cultures draw particular attention to the *familismo* (sense of family) or kinship relations of each (Beaver, 1986; Jones, 1994; Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Velázquez, 1999). In both cultures, extended family and close friends are considered part of one's family. The women in each circle are extraordinarily preoccupied with keeping harmonious relations within the family, and the family becomes the main social group. Many families and kin groups live together in one place, be it a *barrio* or a holler (Beaver, 1986; Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

Published research shows that immigrants will migrate to America only if they will gain economic status (González, 2002). We saw this to be true in both Noemi and María's experiences, as their families are still in Mexico. This being said, most immigrants who come to the U.S. are familiar with poverty. Sadly, so are Appalachian citizens. Once Hispanics move to Appalachia and become part of the local economy, their socioeconomic status improves, but they are by no means part of the upper class. However, though Appalachia's poverty rates are higher than those of the rest of the United States, poverty rates for minorities in Appalachia are twice what they are for whites (Pollard, 2004). In distressed areas like eastern Kentucky, the poverty

rates for whites, African-Americans, and Hispanics are relatively close, proving that both cultures are familiar with poverty here in America, too (Pollard, 2004).

The strong presence of religion in both cultures is paramount to my discussion. Religion acts as a guiding light to one's actions and a cultural measuring stick, regardless of personal devotion, in both Appalachian and Latino cultures (Castañeda-Liles, 2005; Jones, 1994). The observance of death rituals heavily involve religion, including in the veneration of ancestors in both Hispanic and Appalachian cultures (through the Day of the Dead celebrations and Decoration Day and Homecoming, respectively) cultures (Knowles, 2008). Also, in both cultures religion is transmitted informally, primarily through “women of faith” (Castañeda-Liles, 2005, p. 5), such as María, though the official priest or pastor is traditionally male (Beaver, 1986; Castañeda-Liles, 2005), like Pastor Tad<sup>2</sup>.

In communities such as Foster, shared “Christian values” help aid immigrant integration. Both the incoming Hispanics who participate in the Hispanic ministry and the established church share a commitment to conservative lifestyles, abstinence from drugs and alcohol, and regular spiritual development. These values guide their choices, from taste in music and the way they dress to the way they raise their children. For Anglo church members, it is much easier to see the similarities in Hispanic immigrants when they share many of the same commitments. I found that immigrants also feel more welcomed when they are able to worship in the same space with other members of their congregation and receive the same pastoral message.

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<sup>2</sup> Pastor Tad spoke at length to me about the implications of a female ministerial lead for the Hispanic group, since Baptists do not affirm female pastors. He mentioned that the ministry team had been advised by their state convention Hispanic director, Dr. Soriano, to hire a male Hispanic pastor if the ministry continued to expand. Pastor Tad believed that, as effective as María is, because of her violation of the expected gender roles in Hispanic and Baptist life, there are members of the Hispanic community who resisted attending Gethsemane Baptist.

These Protestant values often include aversion to ritualistic Catholic customs, which are common elements of the culture in Mexico and other countries. Shedding Catholic practices and traditions is not uncommon in recent converts to Protestantism, as Barton (2006) shows us. Some of the members in my study saw evidence of this difference in Baptist Hispanic church members and other Hispanic community members. For example, Whitney told me that at the church's Fall Festival, which is also a Halloween party, the Hispanic children who attended Gethsemane Baptist dressed up the same way that Anglo children did. But "there were a lot of families coming through that I didn't recognize, probably don't go to church, that like, very much dressed like with the face paint that's kind of more the traditional Day of the Dead<sup>3</sup>, like ancestor, kind of stuff that's part of their culture," she said. Whitney could identify the children who were still firmly rooted in cultural Catholicism and Day of the Dead celebrations, and recognized theirs as a different experience than that of the Baptist Hispanic children, who are acculturating (due in part to their religious affiliation).

### **Aid and Integration**

I have argued that the integration of new Hispanic immigrants in Appalachia is directly affected by the existing religious practices in Appalachian communities. In areas, such as Appalachia, where religion is foundational to community life, immigrants are more likely to be accepted due to biblical mandates to aid the poor and alien. Reciprocally, I believe that affiliation with a church community helps immigrants integrate into a new community in ways they could not if they were not affiliated.

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<sup>3</sup> *El Día de los Muertos*, or Day of the Dead, is a three-day Mexican tradition where families build altars to deceased ancestors and loved ones. On the first day, children make altars to other deceased children to invite them back to play. The second day, adult spirits come. On the third day, families bake *pan de muerto* (bread of the dead) and place it on the graves of their ancestors. During the entire period, they pray for the souls of the departed and ask for guidance for their spiritual journey. It is closely associated with Catholicism, purgatory, and the celebration of All Saint's Day.

As Menjívar (2006) predicted<sup>4</sup>, we see Gethsemane Baptist play a crucial role in integration of new immigrants. Menjívar (2006) told us that religious institutions “play a central role in these immigrants’ incorporation” into their communities (p. 1025). If it were not for Gethsemane Baptist’s programs, many of its Hispanic members would not be involved with the community in Foster. It is through the church that they play sports, volunteer, and go on outings. These events form a close community of the Hispanic group, and allow the Hispanic ministry at Gethsemane Baptist to aid their integration into the wider community.

As Dalla and Christensen (2005) discovered, the longer a Hispanic or Latino community has been in an area, the less resistance there is to its presence. As Melanie, an Anglo Gethsemane Baptist member, told us, there has been a “normalization” to the Hispanic ministry at Gethsemane. This normalization would serve to encourage the members’ acceptance and integration into the congregation and community at large. While there may still be some resistance to outsiders in Appalachia, I have shown that Gethsemane members have welcomed their Hispanic congregants and hope for closer relations in the future; however, in other places in Appalachia where immigration is new, we could expect to see more resistance to integration of new immigrants.

### **Next Generation**

Hispanics and Latinos have more children than white Appalachians, and even African-American Appalachians. A new, populous generation of “Latino Southerners” is now being raised in the *Nuevo* New South. They face a variety of challenges, not least of which is integration, regardless of acculturation or assimilation<sup>5</sup>. As more of these youngsters are born

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<sup>4</sup> For a more complete discussion of Menjívar, please see Chapter One.

<sup>5</sup> For a more complete discussion of this phenomenon, please see Chapter One. These claims have been established by Keefe and Padilla, 1987; Knowles, 2008; Villatoro, 1998; Williams, 2002; Nazario y Colón, 2011.

and raised, there is much speculation on how they will come to identify themselves. Will they be comfortable creating a bicultural identity, or will they feel they must choose between being Latinos and being mountaineers?

The increasing intermarriage of Hispanics and white Appalachians, some of which I found occurring in Gethsemane Baptist Church, has given new life to the term “mestizo,” which originally was used to refer to a child of a conquered indigenous person and Spaniard. Now, it is being used to refer to whites and Hispanic mixes (Villatoro, 1998). As Nazario y Colón says, Appalachia is being literally “reborn in the hands of southerners/who happen to speak Spanish” (Nazari y Colón, 2011, p. 4). As these “half-breed” (Villatoro, 1998, p. 109) children live and grow with roots on both sides of the border, how will they navigate their own ethnicity? And what will they do about it—stay in Appalachia, or go elsewhere?

### **Where Is the Next Foster?**

Though this study has focused on Appalachian North Carolina, in terms of Hispanic population, the rest of Appalachia is growing as fast, if not faster, than Foster—sometimes even faster than the non-Appalachian portions of their states. It is evident that immigration is moving north, as Mexican immigrants wick their way up through the Southeast.<sup>6</sup> I expect this northward trend to continue as Mexicans and other Latino immigrants push established immigration routes further into new territory. Further research is needed to predict the impact of impending Hispanic immigration into Central Appalachia.

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<sup>6</sup> Southern Appalachia's Hispanics make up 7.6% of its population, followed by South Central Appalachia's 4.6%. Central Appalachia, though growing by 72.8% between 2000-2010, clocks in at only 1.3%, and North Central Appalachia has a similar 1.2%. Northern Appalachia claims 2.4%, but this number is probably skewed by its proximity to large metropolis destinations such as New York City and Philadelphia (Pollard & Jacobsen 2011).

In Central Appalachia, however, immigration has a different face than in Foster. Native born Hispanics “outnumber foreign-born, and nonmetro residents outnumber metro” (Barcus, 2007, p. 313). These nonmetro, natural born Hispanic Appalachians could have a great impact on the perception of immigration in Central Appalachia. “Illegal” immigration is not occurring as frequently as native-born Hispanics are moving out to rural areas; Central Appalachia is just beyond the established migration route and home to less opportunity for low-wage labor jobs. When migration routes do push into the territory, will the presence of AppaLatinos serve as the invigorating economic breath Central Appalachia so desperately needs? Or, will immigrants skip over this job wasteland and leave it as is?

Recent events in the Central Appalachian town of South Charleston, West Virginia would indicate that immigration is in fact moving north and having positive, economically rejuvenating effects. Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church held its first Feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe, a popular Mexican mass and celebration, in December 2014, completely in Spanish. The church felt a need to offer these services in Spanish because of the “growing population in [the] area [of Hispanic people,] and most speak English, but Spanish is the first language and usually their language of prayer,” said the parish priest, John Finnell (C. F. Smith, 2014). The celebration began late on a Friday evening so that restaurant workers could attend. In addition to the rosary and mass, complete with a candlelight procession, after the service the Latino members of the congregation baked desserts for a reception that sounded oddly like the gatherings at Gethsemane Baptist Church.

The Feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe in West Virginia clues us in to several trends in immigration: first, Latinos in the South Charleston, West Virginia area primarily work in restaurants. They are not involved in agricultural labor and construction, as they are in North

Carolina. Many Latinos speak good English, so they are probably second-destination settlers, which the literature predicted for North Carolina, but I did not find. A good percentage of the immigrants are Catholic, or are gathering at the Catholic church to fellowship with other members of their culture. All of this suggests that there is a welcoming community of faith for new transplants to the area, a community that will help integrate new Hispanic residents. Based on my research, we can expect the immigrants who are affiliated with the church to integrate into West Virginian society easier than their non-religious peers.

Blessed Sacrament offers a Spanish-language section of its website, advertising that confessions can be heard in either Spanish or English as well as Spanish-language bulletins that began to appear at the beginning of March 2015. There is no information, however, about the language of mass. It would appear that the Spanish-speaking population of the Blessed Sacrament parish is large enough to publish bulletins for them, but not yet large enough for a separate ministry of some sort. When immigration hits West Virginia, will South Charleston be the next Foster?

### **Immigration Implications**

Toward the end of my research, in November 2014, President Barack Obama declared a new immigration policy by executive action. In Obama's policy, "the undocumented parents of U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents who have lived in the country for at least five years can apply, starting this spring, for relief from deportations for a period of three years," in the words of a Washington Post article on the policy (Nakamura, Costa, & Fahrenthold, 2014). Obama also expanded a 2012 program that provides "administrative relief to nearly 600,000 young people brought to the country illegally as children" (Nakamura et al., 2014), removing the age cap for



the children. These expanded policies were projected to affect 4.9 million immigrants altogether (Nakamura et al., 2014).

This policy certainly affected people in Foster. Vivida, originally from Honduras, still has children there, but she and her husband have had another child while living in Foster. On the night of the president's televised speech, Vivida posted a screen shot of Obama from her TV, onto her Facebook page, and described his announcement to those who had not tuned in. In the comments on the post, various family members thanked God for the child's birth and demonstrated that they view the President's announcement as an answer to their prayers. Vivida herself said that she and her husband have been hoping for this announcement, and "praised be the Lord."

It remains to be seen if President Obama's action will be upheld by the courts, as an oppositional Congress has taken issue with it. If it does, though, the implications for the immigrants in Foster and the rest of Appalachia will be extremely promising for further study. A new generation of AppaLatinos are growing up in the region, and this could be a key piece in their attachment to place.

### **Opportunities for Further Research**

In addition to the effect of immigration reform on permanently settled immigrants, additional research on low-income housing would be beneficial to a complete conversation on the topic. How does trailer park living affect the sense of community among immigrants? Do these ethnic enclaves threaten the possibility of economic success for their dwellers, by encouraging them to stay in the neighborhood instead of acquiring better housing? What is life like in Glenwood Park for the Hispanics who do not attend Gethsemane Baptist? How many

others are there who hear the prayers of our group that walks among the trailers each Saturday, praying for their neighbors' salvation?

Much attention has been given to the new wave of Hispanic Pentecostals in Appalachia and the South, through both local media and national study. “Given the sense of alienation that Latinos and Latinas (particularly new immigrants) experience, it is easy to see why traditions like Pentecostalism are so attractive” Castañeda-Liles argues (p. 3). Little attention, however, has been paid to Hispanic Baptists in the area. There have also been no area-specific studies of Hispanic religious affiliation, except for Vásquez and Marquardt’s (2003) study of two churches in Dalton, Georgia<sup>7</sup>. Does Baptist affiliation have anything to do with where immigrants settle? Baptist denominations are much more prevalent in Appalachia and the Southeast than the Southwest or Pacific Coast (as seen in Foster, where nearly three out of five people are Baptists). Does religious affiliation affect settlement patterns? How do Baptist Protestant Mexicans exist differently from other Protestant Mexicans in Appalachia? These are fruitful questions for further research.

There have been several efforts to humanize immigration in divisive Southern towns by publishing the voices and stories of immigrants. However, to date, this has not focused on an Appalachian setting<sup>8</sup>. A collection of immigrants’ own words from Appalachia would be a worthy pursuit—it could be used in church discussion groups, educational settings, and by civic leaders.

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>8</sup>A notable exception is one short publication focused on Western North Carolina, as excerpted from the *100 Stories* Project, led by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

I focus primarily on permanently settled Hispanics in Appalachia; however, the experience of migrant workers is decidedly different than that of the people I studied. Most of what has been written about immigrants in Appalachia has been short articles focused on migrant laborers, especially those in the Christmas tree industry. However, there is room for further exploration into their experience. Great headways have already been made<sup>9</sup>, but investigation into the religious and spiritual experiences of these migrants would be a great companion piece to my own research.

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<sup>9</sup> See Alice Brooke Wilson's (2006) thesis on migrant workers and their relationships with Christmas tree farmers in Western North Carolina.

## **Chapter Five: Leaving the Forest**

In the previous chapters, I engaged contemporary scholarship, outlined my own research process, presented and evaluated my results, and looked towards the future of Hispanics in Appalachia. I demonstrated through each of these elements how the religious culture of a place affects its reception to immigrants, and how in a place like Appalachia, where religion is foundational to culture, churches are more likely to welcome immigrants. I also showed that reciprocally, being affiliated with a church allows these immigrants to interact with and integrate into a community in ways that they otherwise could not, if they were not affiliated.

In Chapter One, I argued that affiliation with a church community helps immigrants integrate into a new community in ways they could not if they were not affiliated with the church. In order to support this argument, I reviewed the scholarly research surrounding Hispanic immigration to Appalachia and discussed the growth of the immigrant population, investigating factors that contributed to the population boom. I then explored the demographics of these new immigrants, including a rising hybrid identity of “AppaLatinos.” I investigated why these immigrants are coming to and staying in Appalachia, and then dove into reception theory, detailing how immigrants become integrated into a society and what factors affect the success of that integration. In order to contextualize my findings, I looked at the history of immigrant reception in the South at large, especially in religious and church settings, then specifically at Southern Baptist Churches, since Gethsemane Baptist is a Southern Baptist church. I discussed what services churches usually offer to immigrants, and reasons why they offer it.

In Chapter Two, I described the shape of my ethnographic research in Western North Carolina during the years 2013-2015. The research, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation I conducted during that time allowed me to perform this research. I described the

two stages of my research, obstacles I encountered, and evaluated my own methods. I also gave a quick sketch of Foster, North Carolina, where I conducted my research.

In Chapter Three, I used the words of the people I researched to tell their story. I looked at the Hispanic community in Foster, then specifically at the Hispanic group at Gethsemane Baptist Church. I presented María's story and saw the various services that the church offers to immigrants in the area: food assistance, financial assistance, the incredible asset of The Lighthouse, and--most importantly--spiritual succor. I looked especially at the ways the church helped the Hispanic group develop their faith and interact with one another and the community at large. Then, I examined why the church offers these services (to fulfill its mission) and how the Anglo members of the congregation feel about it. I found that, as I predicted, the church community at Gethsemane Baptist helps these Hispanic immigrants integrate into a new community in particular ways they could not if they were not affiliated.

In Chapter Four, I showed how the results I found from my time with the Hispanic Group at Gethsemane Baptist at times conformed to expectations set by the literature, but at times, challenged established knowledge. I argued if it were not for Gethsemane Baptist's outreach programs, many of its Hispanic members would not be involved with the wider community in Foster. It is through the church that they play sports, volunteer, and go on outings. I evaluated how well Gethsemane Baptist lives up to the resolutions passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2006 regarding immigrant accommodation. I examined the similarities between Appalachian and Hispanic cultures, since I believe that because religion is a cornerstone of both Hispanic and Appalachian cultures, it allows locals and immigrants to relate to one another over a common set of feelings and experiences. This shared human experience of religion ultimately affects the reception that immigrants receive. I also looked at current immigration trends

(especially as manifested in one town in West Virginia) and implications of changing U.S. naturalization policy to see how, in the future, these policies could affect Hispanic immigrants in Appalachia as a whole and the people in Foster in particular. I examined avenues for further research along the lines of this topic.

I have argued in each chapter that the religious culture of a place influences its reception of immigrants, especially Hispanic immigrants. Places, such as Appalachia, that have a strong foundation of religion will be more likely to offer assistance, materially and spiritually, to immigrants due to biblical mandates to aid the poor and alien. Churches play a key role in helping integrate immigrants into the local society, though they may not assist with legal or documented status. Reciprocally, when immigrants are religious or religiously affiliated, they are able to integrate into society in ways that they otherwise could not. This phenomenon can be seen in the case study of Foster, North Carolina. Foster is part of Appalachia and has a strong religious adherence, especially to the Southern Baptist Convention. Gethsemane Baptist Church fulfills the SBC resolution to aid immigrants physically, emotionally, and spiritually in word and deed. The members of its Hispanic group are able to integrate into the community of Foster much easier than if they were not affiliated with the church. They volunteer in local food pantries, learn English, and obtain jobs through church networks. Without affiliation with Gethsemane Baptist, they would not have access to these opportunities.

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## Appendix A

### First Set of Interview Questions in Bilingual Format (Fall 2013)

1. Tell me what you think of when you think of Mexican culture.

*Digame que piensa Ud. sobre la cultura Mexicana.*

#### **Family**

2. In a normal Mexican family, what things are women responsible for?

*En una familia mexicana tipica, ¿que responsabilidades tienen las mujeres?*

- a. How about the men?

*¿Y los hombres?*

- b. Do children have any responsibilities?

*¿Tienen algunas responsabilidades los niños?*

- c. Does one spouse have the final say on financial or family matters?

*¿Quién tiene la última decision en cosas financieras y en cosas de la familia?*

3. Tell me how your family affects your daily life.

*Digame como afecta su vida diaria a su familia.*

4. Who lives in your household?

*¿Quiénes viven en su casa?*

- a. Do you have relatives living nearby?

*¿Tiene parientes que viven cerca?*

- i. Who?

*¿Quiénes?*

- ii. Where?

*¿Dónde?*

iii. How often do you see them?

*¿Con qué frecuencia Ud. los ve?*

5. How did you decide to come to North Carolina?

*¿Cómo decidió venir a Carolina del Norte?*

a. Did your family affect your decision?

*¿Su familia afectó su decision?*

### **Religion**

6. Is religion important in your life?

*¿Es la religion importante en su vida?*

a. Tell me how religion affects your personal life. Does it influence how you make decisions?

*Digame cómo se afecta la religion su vida personal. ¿Influye sus decisions?*

7. Do you attend church?

*¿Asiste Ud. a alguna iglesia?*

8. How often do you go to church?

*¿Con qué frecuencia va a la iglesia?*

i. Tell me about your church.

*Digame sobre su iglesia... ¿cómo es?*

ii. Do you attend English or Spanish services?

*¿Asiste Ud. a los servicios en inglés o español?*

iii. Do you have relatives that attend your church?

*¿Tiene Ud. familia que asiste a su iglesia?*



9. What opportunities does the church provide for Mexican families?

*¿Qué oportunidades provee la iglesia para las familias Mexicanas?*

- a. Does it provide opportunities to socialize with other Mexicans that you would not have otherwise?

*¿Provee oportunidades para socializar con otros Mexicanos que no tendría si no fuera a la iglesia?*

### **Food**

10. What foods do you consider “Mexican”?

*¿Qué comidas considera ud. “Mexicana”?*

- a. What foods taste like home to you?

*¿Cuáles comidas tiene sabor como el del hogar de Ud.?*

11. How did you learn to prepare Mexican foods? (Or, if they do not cook: How did your wife learn?)

*¿Cómo aprendió Ud. a preparar las comidas Mexicanas?(¿Cómo aprendió su mujer?)*

- a. Are there any recipes that have been passed down in your family?

*¿Hay recetas de herencia en su familia?*

12. Is it difficult to find ingredients for Mexican recipes here?

*¿Es difícil encontrar los ingredientes para recetas mexicanas aquí?*

### **Social Gatherings**

13. How often do you get together with other Mexicans or Latinos?

*¿Con qué frecuencia se reúne con otros mexicanos o latinos?*

- a. Tell me about these get-togethers.

*Digame sobre estas reuniones.*

- i. Where do they happen?

*¿Dónde ocurren?*

14. For what occasions are there normally parties?

*¿Para cuales ocasiones hacen fiestas?*

15. Do you have friends who are not Mexican?

*¿Tiene Ud. amigos que no son mexicanos?*

16. Describe your interaction with Anglos in Foster.

*Describe Ud. su interacción con angloamericanos (americanos estadounidenses) en Foster.*

### **Music**

17. When you are at a social gathering with only other Mexicans, what music do you listen to?

*Cuando está en un reunion con solo otros mexicanos, ¿qué música escucha Ud.?*

- a. Does anyone play music at gatherings?

*¿Toca alguien música en vivo en las reuniones?*

- b. Does anyone dance?

*¿Bailan los invitados?*

- i. What type of dancing?

*¿Qué tipo de baile?*

- ii. Who dances?

*¿Quién baila? ¿Qué tipo de gente?*

18. When you are in your home, do you or members of your family listen to music?

*En su casa, escucha Ud. o algún miembro de la familia musica?*

- a. What kind?

*¿Qué tipo de música?*

### **Language**

19. Can you tell someone is Mexican just from the way they speak?

*¿Puede Ud. distinguir si alguien es Mexicano por la manera de hablar?*

- a. What distinguishes Mexicans from other Spanish speakers?

*¿Qué distingue a los mexicanos de otros que hablan español?*

- b. If someone speaks Spanish, but doesn't have a Mexican accent, does it affect the way you view them?

*Si alguien habla español, pero no tiene un acento mexicano, ¿se afecta la manera en que se le considera?*

20. Do you speak Spanish in public?

*¿Habla español en público?*

21. Do you speak English?

*¿Habla inglés?*

- a. How frequently?

*¿Con qué frecuencia?*

- b. Where did you learn it? Why?

*¿Dónde aprendió? ¿Por qué?*

- c. If not, what is stopping you from learning?

*Si no, ¿que le impide aprender?*

## **Prejudice & Discrimination**

22. What are some stereotypes of Mexicans?

*¿Cuales son algunos estereotipos de mexicanos?*

a. Do you think they are true?

*¿Cree que son ciertos?*

b. How do you think they got started?

*¿Cómo piensa que empezaron?*

23. How do you think people in Foster see Mexicans?

*¿Cómo piensa Ud. que la gente en Foster ve a los mexicanos?*

a. Is there a difference in how Mexicans are seen between students and other community members?

*¿Hay alguna diferencia en cómo ven a los estudiantes mexicanos y a otros miembros de la comunidad mexicana?*

24. What kind of jobs do you feel you can apply for locally?

*¿Qué empleos siente Ud. que puede obtener en el área local?*

25. Have you or your family ever experienced discrimination in Foster because you are Mexican?

*¿Ha sufrido Ud. o su familia discriminación en Foster por ser mexicanos?*

a. At school?

*¿En la escuela?*

b. At work?

*¿En el trabajo?*

- c. With the police?

*¿Con la policía?*

### **Appalachia**

26. Do you think that people who live in the mountains are different from other Americans?

*¿Cree Ud. que la gente que vive en la region de montañas es diferente de otros americanos?*

- a. How?

*¿Cómo?*

- b. Do you see any similarities with it to Mexican culture?

*¿Ve Ud. algunas similitudes con la cultura Mexicana?*

27. Are there any stereotypes of mountain people that you know about?

*¿Conoce Ud. esterotipos de la gente de las montañas?*

28. Have you lived anywhere else in the US?

*¿Ha Ud. vivido en otros lugares en los EEUU?*

- a. How is this area similar and different from those places?

*¿Cómo es esta área similar y diferente de esos lugares?*

29. Do you feel like part of the community of Foster?

*¿Se siente Ud. como parte de la comunidad de Foster?*

## **1Consumption & Economic Impact**

30. Where do you buy groceries?

*¿Dónde compra su comida?*

31. How do you decide where to buy groceries?

*¿Cómo decide dónde comprar su comida?*

32. Do you buy different kinds of groceries from different stores?

*¿Compra Ud. tipos diferentes de productos a tiendas diferentes?*

33. Do you shop at the Mexican tiendas in Foster?

*¿Hace Ud. compras a las tiendas mexicanas en Foster?*

a. Which one (or ones)?

*¿Cuál?*

b. Why that one (or those)?

*¿Por qué esta?*

34. Do you ever shop at Wal Mart?

*¿Hace Ud. compras en Wal Mart?*

a. For what?

*¿Para qué?*

35. Where do you buy home goods?

*¿Dónde compra cosas para la casa?*

36. How do you decide where to shop?

*¿Cómo decide dónde hacer compras?*

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<sup>1</sup> This shaded area shows that this particular subset of questions was asked at the same time, but for use in a different class.

37. Do you have a garden?

*¿Tiene Ud. un jardín?*

38. Have you ever been to a farmer's market in --- County or the surrounding area?

*¿Ha ido Ud. a un mercado de granjeros en el condado --- o el área cercana?*

39. Have you ever been to a flea market in --- County or the surrounding area?

*¿Ha ido Ud. a un mercado de pulgas en el condado --- o el área cercana?*

40. Do you sell anything to make money?

*¿Vende Ud. algún producto para ganar dinero?*

a. What do you sell?

*¿Qué vende?*

b. Where do you sell it?

*¿Dónde lo vende?*

41. Have you ever been to a yard sale in Foster or the surrounding area?

*¿Ha ido Ud. a una venta de garaje en Foster o el área cercana?*

42. Which restaurants do you eat at in the county?

*¿En cuales restaurantes come Ud. en el condado?*

43. How do you decide where to eat?

*¿Cómo decide Ud. dónde comer?*

44. Do you know any of the restaurant owners?

*¿Conoce Ud. a algunos dueños de los restaurantes?*

45. Do you go to a mechanic?

*¿Va Ud. a un mecánico?*

a. Which one?

*¿Cuál?*

b. Why that one?

*¿Por que ese?*

### **Background questions**

46. How old are you?

*¿Cuántos años tiene?*

47. Where in Mexico are you from?

*¿De dónde es en Mexico?*

a. Where are your parents from?

*¿De dónde son sus padres?*

b. Your grandparents?

*¿Sus abuelos?*

48. What is your gender?

*¿Cuál es su sexo?*

49. Who else do you think I could talk to about this?

*¿Con quién cree Ud. que pueda hablar de estas cosas?*

*¿Conoce a otra persona que pueda entrevistar sobre esto?*

50. How many years of education do you have?

*¿Cuántos años de educación formal tiene?*

51. What is your occupation?

*¿Cuál es su ocupación/trabajo?*



52. How many years have you been living in the US?

*¿Cuántos años ha vivido en los EEUU?*

a. In North Carolina?

*¿En Carolina del Norte?*

b. In --- County?

*¿En el condado ---?*

## Appendix B

### Follow-up Questions and Questions for Church Leadership

#### Additional Interview Questions for María

##### **The Lighthouse**

1. You came here in 2006. Was The Lighthouse already here?  
*Veniste aquí en 2006. ¿Ya existe El Lighthouse?*
2. What do you know about its founding and early years?  
*¿Qué sabes sobre el fundación y los años inicios?*
3. How has The Lighthouse's ministry changed since your arrival?  
*¿Cómo ha cambiado el ministerio del Lighthouse desde tu llegada?*

##### **Outreach**

4. How has Gethsemane reached out to the Hispanic community in Foster?  
*¿Cómo ha comunicado a Gethsemane con la comunidad hispana en Foster?*
5. Why do you think so many Hispanics go to Gethsemane?  
*¿Por qué crees tan muchos hispanos van a Gethsemane?*

##### **Identity**

6. Besides yourself, were any of the Hispanic church members Baptist before they came to Foster?  
*Aparte de tu misma, ¿identificaban algunos miembros de la iglesia como baptistas antes de vengan a Foster?*
7. Why do the Hispanic members of Gethsemane prefer to go to a Baptist church instead of a Catholic church?  
*¿Por qué prefieren los miembros hispanos de Gethsemane ir a una iglesia baptista y no una iglesia católica?*

##### **Hispanic Church Life**

8. Describe a typical week of events for the Hispanic ministry.  
*Descríbeme una semana típica de los eventos para el ministerio hispano.*
9. In what ways does Gethsemane help its Hispanic members?  
*¿En cuales maneras se ayuda Gethsemane a sus miembros hispanos?*

7a. In life?

*¿En la vida?*

7b. At church during services?

*¿A la iglesia durante las ceremonias religiosas?*

### **Interview Questions for Pastor Tad (or his more-knowledgeable referral)**

#### **Personal Influence on Outreach**

1. How long have you been at Gethsemane Baptist?
2. What efforts have you made in regards to the Hispanic outreach at Gethsemane? How are these different from or similar to the efforts of previous pastors?
3. Do you speak Spanish?

#### **Church Outreach (General)**

4. Why has the church placed an emphasis on Hispanic outreach?
5. How does the church accommodate its Hispanic members?
6. How have language barriers affected the development of a cohesive community—or have they?
7. Why do you think Gethsemane has drawn so many members from the Hispanic community in Foster?
8. Do you think the Hispanic attendees understand the finer points of Baptist theology?
9. Why do you think Hispanic members choose to attend Baptist services as opposed to Catholic services?

#### **The Lighthouse**

10. What can you tell me about the founding of The Lighthouse? Whose idea was it, how did it happen?
11. What costs are involved in operating The Lighthouse?
  - 11a. Who pays the bills?
  - 11b. Where does that funding come from?

12. How has having The Lighthouse affected your outreach plan?
13. Is there anyone else I could speak to about The Lighthouse or the Hispanic Ministry?

## Appendix C

### Phase Two: Interview Questions for Hispanic and Anglo Church Members

#### Interview Questions for Hispanic Members

1. What services does Gethsemane offer to the Hispanic community in Foster?  
*¿Cuáles servicios se ofrece a Gethsemane a la comunidad hispana en Foster?*
2. Have you ever used any of these services? Please explain.  
*¿Ha usado Ud. algos de esos servicios? Explica, por favor.*
3. Do you give money to the church?  
*¿Da Ud. dinero a la iglesia?*
4. What do you like most about attending Gethsemane?  
*¿Qué le gusta más sobre asistiendo a Gethsemane?*
5. What do you think Gethsemane could do better—if anything?  
*¿Que parece Ud. que Gethsemane puede hacer mejor—si algo?*

#### Interview Questions for Church Leaders (Not Already Answered in Other Interviews)

1. Do you offer legal counseling to your Hispanic members?
2. How do you approach the situation if one of your members were to be deported?
3. What support do you receive from the Southern Baptist Convention to help with your Hispanic outreach?

#### Interview Questions for Anglo Members of the Church

1. Could you tell me a little about the Hispanic ministry here at Gethsemane?

2. Do you know any of the Hispanic members of the congregation? Describe your relationship.
3. In regards to its Hispanic ministry, what do you think Gethsemane does well?
4. What could it improve?
5. What is your personal opinion of the Hispanic population in Foster?
6. What about those who come to church?

**Interviewee Consent**

I agree to participate as an interviewee in this research project conducted by Brittany Means of Appalachian State University, which concerns both Appalachian and Mexican cultures and the Hispanic community in Foster. This project will begin in Fall 2013. I understand that my comments will be audio recorded, transcribed, and used for a class project and Master's thesis. The interview(s) will take place once and should last about an hour and a half. I understand that there are no foreseeable risks associated with my participation. I understand that I will not be asked questions that may jeopardize my reputation as a law-abiding resident. I understand that I have the right to withhold sensitive information. I also understand that tapes or transcripts of this interview could be subpoenaed in court.

I give Brittany Means ownership of the tapes and transcripts from the interview she conducts with me and understand that tapes and transcripts will be kept on a password-protected computer and backup drive. I understand that Brittany Means will keep these tapes and transcripts for up to two years, or until she writes a thesis. I understand that information or quotations from the tapes and/or transcripts may be published, but my name will remain anonymous. I understand that this interview is confidential, but that I should not disclose identifiable personal information about other people in my interview.

I understand that the interview is voluntary and I can end it at any time without consequence. I also understand that if I have questions about this research project, I can call Brittany Means at 304-389-0442 ([meansba@appstate.edu](mailto:meansba@appstate.edu)) or Dr. Laura Ammon at 828-262-7641 ([ammonll@appstate.edu](mailto:ammonll@appstate.edu)) or contact Appalachian State University's Office of Research Protections at (828) 262-7981 or [irb@appstate.edu](mailto:irb@appstate.edu).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Interviewer (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Interviewee (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Interviewer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Interviewee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Interview

## Consentimiento de Entrevistado

Yo quedo participar como un entrevistado en este proyecto de investigación conducta por Brittany Means de Appalachian State University, que trata ambos de las culturas de Appalachia y de México y la comunidad hispana en Foster. Este proyecto principará en el otoño de 2013. Entiendo que mis comentarios grabarán por cinta de audio, transcribirán, y usarán para un proyecto de clase y un tesis de maestría. La entrevista pasará una vez y durará por casi una hora y media. Entiendo que no hay ningún riesgos relacionado con mi participación. Entiendo que no me preguntará preguntas que pueden poner en peligro mi reputación como un residente obidiente de las leyes. Entiendo que tengo el derecho retener información sensitivo. También entiendo que las cintas o transcripciones de este entrevista puede ser citando en el corte.

Yo le doy a Brittany Means posesión de las cintas y transcripciones de la entrevista ella se conducta conmigo y entiendo que las cintas y transcripciones quedarán en una computadora con un clave. Yo entiendo que Brittany Means quedará estes trancipciones y cintas para dos años, o hasta ella escriba un tésis. Entiendo que la información o las citas de las cintas o/y trancipciones puede ser publicados, pero mi nombre quedará anónimo. Entiendo que esta entrevista es confidencial, pero no debo divulgar información personal y identificable sobre otras personas en mi entrevista.

Entiendo que la entrevista es voluntario, y puedo terminarla a algún tiempo sin consecuencia. Entiendo, tambien, que si tengo preguntas sobre este proyecto de investigación, puedo contactar Brittany Means a 304-389-0442 ([meansba@appstate.edu](mailto:meansba@appstate.edu)) o Dra. Laura Ammon a 828-262-7641 ([ammonll@appstate.edu](mailto:ammonll@appstate.edu)) o contactar la Oficina de Protecciones de Investigaciones de Appalachian State a 828-262-7981 o [irb@appstate.edu](mailto:irb@appstate.edu).

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Nombre de Entrevistador

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Nombre de Entrevistado

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Firma de Entrevistador

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Firma de Entrevistado

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Fecha de la Entrevista



## Vita

Brittany Augusta Means is a West Virginia native. Her early achievements included winning spelling bees and being knighted a Lady of the Order of the Golden Horseshoe. She graduated from Concord University in 2012 with a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, combining her interests in Spanish, Appalachian studies, and creative writing. Her father prefers to think she majored in Sigma Sigma Sigma, where she did hold many leadership positions including Membership and Recruitment Director, Parliamentarian, Music Chair, Efficiency Chair, and Alumnae Relations Chair.

Ms. Means believes in giving back to her community. After her undergraduate graduation, she served a year as an AmeriCorps member in Pocahontas and Pendleton Counties, West Virginia. In 2013, she was accepted into the Master's program at Appalachian State University and began a career of professional and community service there, as well, to accompany her studies. Ms. Means served on the steering committee of the Appalachian Studies Association, chaired the Young Adult Leaders and Learners committee of the same organization, served as Senator and then Vice President of her Graduate Student Association Senate, sat on the Cratis D. Williams Graduate School Graduate Council, and volunteered with other community organizations.

Ms. Means' M.A. was awarded in May 2015. She has been published in the *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, *Appalachian Journal*, *The Bluestone Review*, *Reflexes*, and *Holler*.