

Kansas: High Growth Islands in a Sea of Decline

Garden City, Kansas, is not typical of towns on the Great Plains. Signs there come in three languages: English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Arguably, some of the best Southeast Asian food between California and New York can be found in restaurants along Garden City's main street. Schools are populated with non-English-speaking immigrant children, and on the edge of town, sprawling trailer parks populated with highly mobile immigrant workers have sprung up. In 1970, Garden City was home to just 15,000 people and was growing at a slow pace of less than 1 percent annually. By the mid-1990s, the Garden City population was estimated at 27,000, with most of that growth having occurred since 1980 (Stull and Broadway 1990; Benson 1994). A resident who had left in 1978 would strain to recognize the place at the turn of the twenty-first century. There are places, to be sure, that have grown faster than Garden City, but few have undergone such sweeping ethnic changes in the process. And in the context of Western Kansas, home to stable or declining rural populations, the story of Garden City's growth is even more remarkable.

Kansas does not immediately come to mind when one thinks of population growth and demographic change. Exactly for this reason, it stands as a useful contrast to high-growth states such as California, Colorado, and Florida. The state's population grew by 32 percent from 1950 to 1992, where it stood at 2.5 million. Kansas's population is becoming more urbanized, as almost all of its growth has occurred in its larger cities: the Kansas City suburbs, Wichita, and Topeka. The rural farm population has declined, hitting counties along the Nebraska (northern) border especially hard. Long-term trends in population growth and decline are observable in map 4.1, which illustrates the percentage of population change from 1950 to 1992. Although the largest population gains have

occurred in Sedgwick (home to Wichita) and Johnson (Kansas City suburbs) Counties, another area on the map is particularly noteworthy for its growth—southwestern Kansas, particularly Finney (Garden City) and Ford (Dodge City) Counties. These are rural communities, where the addition of a few people can make a big difference, but that fact should not turn attention away from the extent to which these areas have been transformed by the emergence of a rural industrial economy. During the 1980s, southwestern Kansas added 15,500 people, while in the northwest the population dropped by a slightly greater 18,600 (Berry 1992). The difference between the two areas lies almost entirely in the development of rural industry in several southwestern towns. More than 70 percent of job growth during the 1980s was the result of the aggressive labor recruitment efforts of meatpacking plants. Four of these have been built just since 1969 (Stull, Broadway, and Griffith 1995, 25).

Kansas's immigrant population is not large by national standards, nor by the standards of most states, standing at just over 62,000 in 1990, a mere 2.5 percent of the state's total. There are single communities in California with more immigrants than all of Kansas. But the small number of immigrants makes the foreign-born population quite noticeable when it grows as rapidly as it has. In addition, both the Asian and Hispanic immigrant populations cluster in neighborhoods around the industries where they are employed. Garden City and Dodge City, for instance, are ringed with trailer parks, which serve as temporary low-income housing for immigrants working in the local meatpacking industry. In 1990, 10 percent of the Garden City population lived in a single trailer park (Benson 1990).

The composition of the immigrant population in Kansas in 1990 is shown in figure 4.1. Interestingly, Asians are the largest immigrant group, constituting 38 percent of the state's foreign-born population. This is followed by Mexicans (23.7 percent) and Europeans (19.4 percent). Like other states, the proportion of foreign-born residents who are white has dropped drastically since 1965, from over 90 percent to less than half in 1990.

The state's native Hispanic population does not have the long history it can claim in southern Colorado. After World War I, the drop in European immigration meant more opportunities for Mexicans. Hispanics began arriving in Kansas in the 1920s, settling primarily in cities where they were segregated into barrios (Oppenheimer 1985, 431). Discrimination persisted well into the 1950s, and new arrivals almost always found

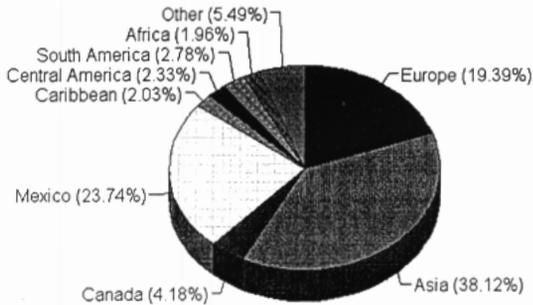
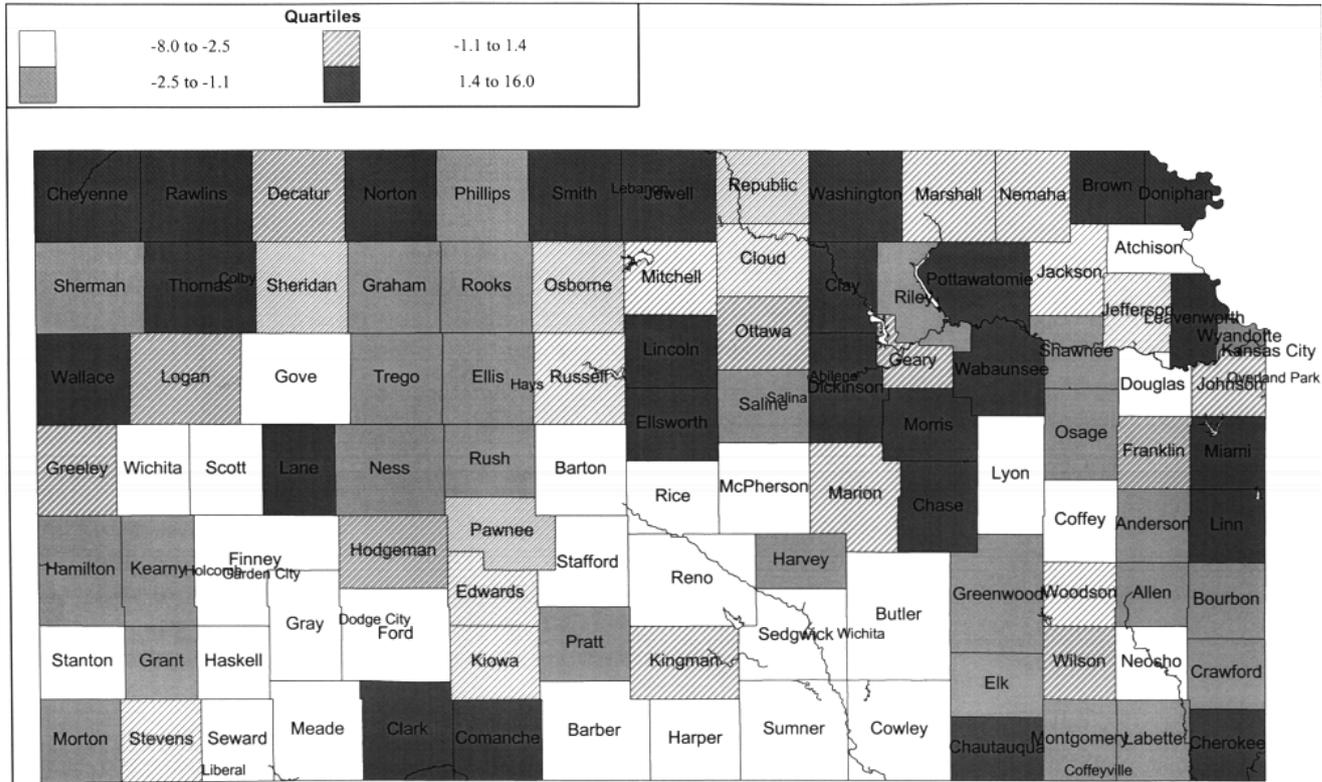


Fig. 4.1. Composition of the foreign-born population in Kansas, 1990

themselves in the lowest occupational and income strata. Jobs in meatpacking, agriculture, and the railways were most common, and all were low paying. The spatial distribution of the Hispanic population in 1990 is illustrated in map 4.3. This map clearly shows that Hispanics comprise the largest proportion of the local population in the southwestern counties, although there are also significant pockets in the Wichita area and eastern Kansas.

As in Colorado, once the early Mexican immigrants learned English, naturalized, and raised children of their own, their status improved. The story of their assimilation follows the traditional model (Hirschman 1996). They worked their way out of “immigrant jobs” into small businesses and the service economy. New arrivals, however, still find themselves working in two main industries: agriculture and meatpacking. Surprisingly little has changed about the status of immigrant workers in Kansas towns since the 1920s. The work at the meatpacking plants, where most immigrants are employed, remains dangerous and debilitating. Injury rates are higher than in any other industry (Stull and Broadway 1995). Still, workers are drawn into meatpacking not as a career but as a temporary way to make money above and beyond the main alternative, which is agricultural labor. Entry-level jobs at a packing plant paid in the seven to eight dollar range in the early 1990s, and with bilingual capacity obtaining a better paying management position was not out of the question.

Mexicans in this region were joined in the 1970s and 1980s by immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, some of whom relocated from California with the help of government-funded relocation programs designed to reduce regional unemployment. The first wave of Vietnamese



Map 4.3. Change in the proportion of internal migrants in Kansas counties, 1980–90. (Mean = $-.53$, Moran's $I = .14$)

and Laotian immigrants arrived after the Vietnam War. The second wave, generally less educated and poorer than the first, arrived in the early and mid-1980s. These immigrants are described as perfect employees for the arduous work on the “disassembly line” of the meatpacking plants, where no command of English was required (Broadway 1995; Benson 1995; Stull and Broadway 1995). The Asian population in southwest Kansas is highly mobile, and the more recent arrivals are far less likely to settle permanently than were those in the first wave, who have established roots in the area. While the Asian population remains small by West Coast standards, its concentration in just a few towns allows for some evaluation of its social and political impact.

The 1990 Census Public Use Microdata 1 Percent Sample contains information about the income, education level, age, and race of 17,700 cross-state migrants, immigrants, and native Kansas residents over the age of eighteen. The differences between these three groups are not as stark as in other states (see appendix A, table A4.1). Internal migrants are wealthier than the other two groups, but immigrants earn slightly more than Kansas natives. Internal migrants are the youngest and best educated of the three groups, and 88 percent are non-Hispanic white compared to just 42 percent of the immigrants. The fact that many immigrants may have gone uncounted in the 1990 census may explain why immigrants and native Kansas residents are so close to one another in income. In addition, the income of Kansas natives is dragged down by the large number of farmers, who regularly report income losses. A better measure of wealth in farm states might be receipt of public assistance income or even the amount of property taxes paid. These figures reveal that immigrants earned more from public assistance than native Kansans and paid much less in property taxes. Property taxes are an especially useful indicator of wealth for purposes of this research since differences in property tax rates across a geographic area directly reflect the extent of social stratification. The disparities in wealth are still modest, however, compared with other states, so we have reason to expect less racial and class stratification across Kansas neighborhoods and communities than we find elsewhere.

Settlement Patterns of Migrants and Immigrants in Kansas

By determining where immigrants are becoming a larger proportion of a local population, it is easy to tell whether a group is becoming more or less

noticeable in an area. Map 4.3 shows the geographic pattern of growth in the proportion of interstate migrants from 1980 to 1990. This growth is concentrated in the northern part of the state, particularly in the northeast. Places where the population of internal migrants has declined relative to other groups include the lightly shaded areas in the southwest and south-central regions. Map 4.2 gives some indication of where immigrants have become more noticeable. The foreign born are a larger percentage of the population in the southwest and in the Kansas City suburbs (Douglas and Johnson Counties) as well as in Wichita (Sedgwick County).

Following the procedure in previous chapters, I use spatial regression analysis to evaluate the influence of several relevant variables on the change in the proportion of the population of counties that consists of émigrés (see table 4.1). For purposes of comparison, the change in the percentage of U.S. internal migrants, depicted on map 4.3, is included with the other results. For most of the foreign born, the 1980 population of the group is inversely related to the prominence of its growth in Kansas. Africans, Europeans, Canadians, and South and Central Americans have all declined as proportions of the population in the counties where they are to be found. In other words, they had become a less noticeable presence by 1990 than they were in the early 1980s. Only Mexican and U.S. internal migrants are becoming a larger proportion of the population in the places where they were most concentrated in 1980. For Mexicans, the effect of previous settlement is striking. For every 1 percent increase in the size of the Mexican population in 1980, there is a .65 percent increase in that population over the decade 1980–90. Growth in the Mexican population is apparently not sensitive to employment prospects or income gains. But growth in the internal migrant population is associated with increases in income across the ten-year period.

Most groups' migration patterns are unrelated to unemployment rates in the early part of the decade, although Asians were particularly adept at avoiding areas that experienced high unemployment. For Asians, these results reflect the secondary migration of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian refugees to obtain industrial employment in southwestern Kansas (Broadway 1987; see also map 4.2). The coefficient for population density shows that not all immigrant concentrations are developing in the more densely populated urban centers (table 4.1). U.S. internal migrants, in particular, are becoming a larger proportion of the population in many suburban and rural areas in eastern Kansas (map 4.3).

The spatially lagged dependent variable in the model shows that the

TABLE 4.1. Influences on Population Concentration in Kansas Counties, 1980–90

Variable	U.S. Migrants	African Immigrants	Asian Immigrants	European Immigrants	Canadian Immigrants	Mexican Immigrants	Central American Immigrants	South American Immigrants
% 1980 group population	.09** (.03)	-1.04** (.08)	-.06 (.08)	-.29** (.04)	-.89** (.04)	.65** (.23)	-.28** (.07)	-.26** (.09)
% unemployment, 1980	.28 (.22)	-.001 (.003)	-.07** (.03)	-.004 (.01)	-.01 (.006)	-.04 (.05)	.005 (.007)	.009** (.004)
Change in real median family income, 1980–90	.54** (.22)	-.0003 (.0003)	-.09** (.02)	.004 (.0008)	.008 (.006)	-.21** (.05)	-.008 (.005)	-.002 (.003)
% net population change	-.04 (.03)	.0005 (.0004)	.02** (.002)	.002 (.001)	.0003 (.001)	.03** (.007)	.002** (.001)	.0009** (.0004)
Population density	-.003** (.001)	-.00002 (.00002)	-.00006 (.0001)	-.00003 (.00004)	.00003 (.00003)	-.0002 (.0003)	.00002 (.00003)	.000005 (.00002)
% college students	-.22** (.05)	.007** (.001)	.04** (.007)	.001 (.002)	.004** (.002)	.009 (.01)	-.000002 (.002)	-.003** (.001)
Spatial lag	.53** (.17)	.11 (.09)	-.35* (.20)	-.03 (.16)	-.03 (.06)	.82** (.12)	-.03 (.08)	.66** (.21)
Constant	-3.81	-.01	.31	.04	.08	.35	.03	.0013
<i>N</i>	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	105
R^2_a	.30	.70	.56	.54	.86	.65	.20	.38

Note: Spatial autoregressive model, weighted for population; income coefficients expressed in thousands of 1992 dollars; dependent variable = change in population group as a percentage of total population. See appendix A for a full description of variables.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$.

growth of several groups is occurring across regions and that this growth is not confined within county boundaries. Such regional clustering in growth patterns is occurring for U.S. migrants, Mexicans, and South Americans. For Mexicans, the results indicate that a .82 increase in their growth in a particular county follows each one-point increase in their growth in neighboring counties (table 4.1). Interestingly, though, the growth pattern for Asians is negatively associated with growth in immediately adjacent areas ($b = -.35$), indicating that the Asian population is not as geographically diffuse as the Mexican.

These analyses, and maps 4.2 and 4.3, demonstrate that internal migrants and immigrants are not concentrated in the same places in Kansas—not a surprising finding given that domestic movers can afford to be more discriminating in where they live than most immigrants. And among immigrant groups settlement patterns vary widely, with Mexicans expanding their presence in the areas where they had settled previously and most other immigrant groups becoming less noticeable. The destinations of migrants and immigrants are neither randomly nor evenly distributed. The most significant growth in the proportion of immigrants has been in southwestern Kansas. Cross-state (internal) migration has been influential in the counties of eastern Kansas. These distinct migration streams have accentuated differences between the eastern and western regions of the state. Sections within Kansas have always been clearly identifiable based on their economic dependence on one or two principal business sectors: agriculture and oil in the west; aviation in Wichita; industry in Kansas City; finance, insurance, and real estate in Johnson County and Topeka; and mining in the southeast. These separate economies have naturally carved out unique political identities, which only occasionally distinguish regions of the state by social class. Now ethnic balkanization is occurring on top of economic balkanization, and the tendency for immigrants to work at low-wage jobs with no benefits threatens to convert ethnic balkanization into a stronger sense of regional and class disparity than Kansas has ever seen.

Ethnic Balkanization and Naturalization Rates in Kansas

Since neighborhoods become ethnically homogeneous long before municipalities, counties, and regions do, it is useful to study the spatial segregation of the population at a lower level of aggregation such as census tracts within counties. As it turns out, some counties in Kansas are highly seg-

regated, others are not, and the variation in the isolation of ethnic minorities across neighborhoods depends largely on the size of the minority population. The larger the minority population, the more isolated from whites it is likely to be (Tienda and Lii 1987; Frisbie and Niedert 1976). Concentration and isolation may also influence the propensity of foreign-born immigrants to naturalize. Isolation undermines the political and social capital of immigrants, exacerbates economic inequalities, and prevents the learning of language skills necessary for assimilation (Espenshade and Fu 1997, 299; Kwong 1996; Liang 1994; Miller 1975). When put to the test, it is clearly the case that those places with the highest concentration of foreign-born residents have lower naturalization rates than those with few immigrants (see table A4.2). The 1980 census data indicate that a one-point increase in immigrants as a percentage of the total population in a county is associated with a 5.9 percent drop in naturalization. In 1990, the effect is smaller but still statistically significant ($b = -3.45$). The coefficients for Asian and Hispanic segregation are negative, but these variables are too closely related to the size of the foreign-born population to be statistically significant in the regression model. The upshot of these results is that even in states with relatively few immigrants the foreign-born population is not uniformly empowered to express itself in state, local, or national politics. Unequal naturalization rates can, in turn, be explained by the uneven concentration of the immigrant population across the state.

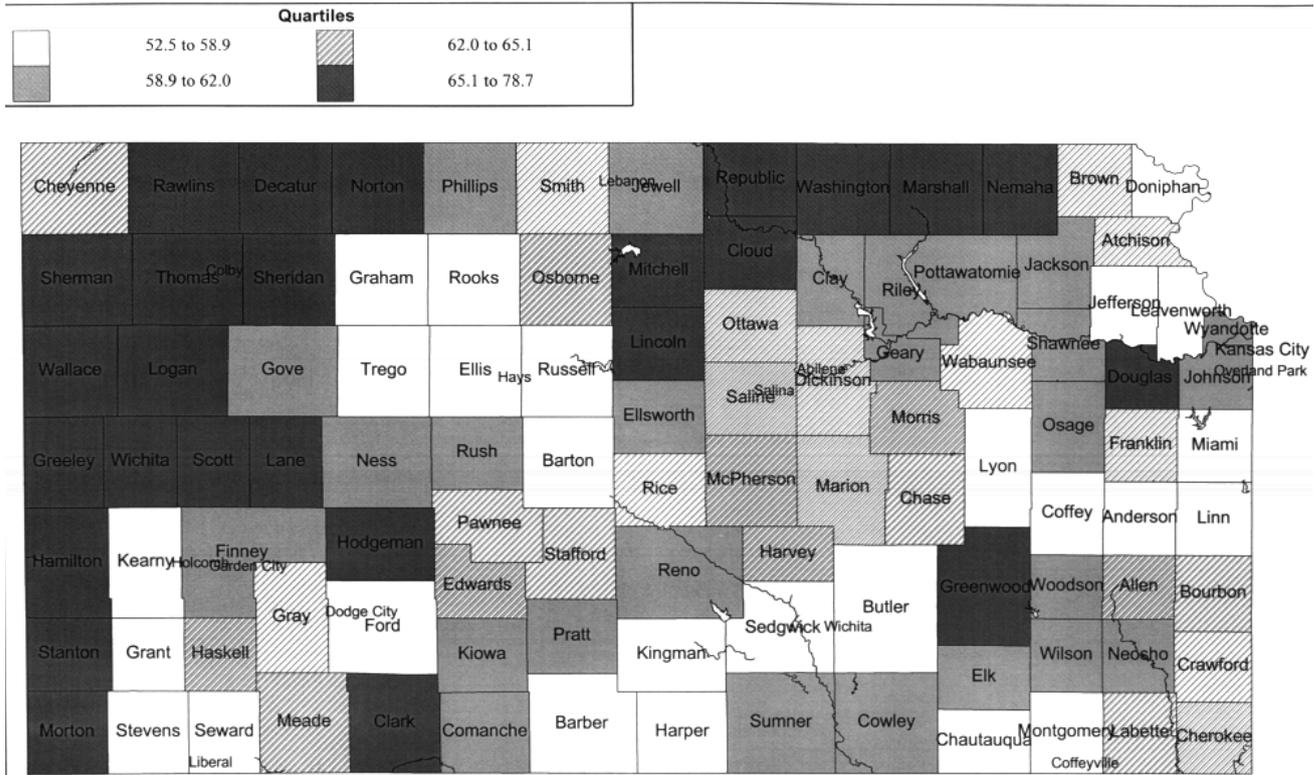
Migrants, Immigrants, and Voter Turnout in Kansas

I have argued that political differentiation across space is the result of social and economic differentiation. In the previous chapters, we have learned that political participation rates are not uniform within or across states. Consequently, some communities have more of a voice in setting the course for local, state, and national politics than others do. Map 4.4 illustrates average turnout patterns across Kansas for two gubernatorial races in the 1990s. As in Colorado, turnout is highest in the most depopulated part of the state, the far western counties abutting the Colorado border. Counties in the lowest turnout quartile are exactly those that have experienced population growth and have large migrant populations. These patterns are prima facie evidence that out-of-state migration and recent immigration are associated with lower voter turnout, especially for off-year (nonpresidential) elections. The reasoning for this is straightforward.

New arrivals may not reregister to vote immediately following a move. Immigrants may not naturalize, and even if they do they may not take much of an interest in politics. These generalizations also appear to hold for Kansas, although the ecological data I present do not yield proof that there is an individual-level relationship. Still, the results do make sense. In four out of the five elections analyzed in table 4.2, increases in the non-Kansas population across Kansas counties help to explain low turnout rates. The three elections in which the relationship is statistically significant occurred in nonpresidential election years, races in which newcomers would be least familiar with the statewide issues, challengers, and incumbents. In all but one election, the percentage of the population comprised of foreign-born residents who arrived after 1970 is associated with lower turnout, especially in 1980 and 1982. Places in Kansas are politically stratified according to whether their populations consist of long-term natives or new arrivals.

The bulk of the new residents in Kansas are internal migrants from other states. Outside of Topeka, a large number of those have settled in the Kansas City suburbs in two counties: Leavenworth and Johnson. The Kansas City metropolitan area is distributed primarily across the border, in Missouri, which means many commuters cross state boundaries every day on their way to work and others move freely back and forth between the Kansas and Missouri suburbs. Inevitably, this movement breeds some apathy on the part of commuters and migrants toward state and local politics. The desire to participate in Kansas politics will generally not be as great for those who spend much of their workday in a different state as it will be for those who both work and live in Kansas. In addition, Leavenworth and Riley counties have large migrant populations made up of army personnel and civilian employees of the military, most of whom are serving temporary stints. Turnout levels in state elections are likely to be lower among this group than among long-term migrants and natives. Certainly these explanations are consistent with the ecological data that report turnout levels. Johnson, Leavenworth, and Wyandotte Counties (see map 4.1) report turnout levels fully one standard deviation below the mean for all counties in 1990. By contrast, just a bit further from the centrality of Kansas City, in counties that are otherwise similar to those closer in (Douglas County, for example), turnout rates jump a full ten points.

Educational levels do not always explain disparities in turnout across Kansas. The relatively low turnout in suburban areas explains why education is not always positively associated with participation in table 4.2. The



Map 4.4. Average turnout in Kansas gubernatorial elections, 1990–94. (Mean = 62.5, Moran's I = 34)

TABLE 4.2. Impact of Population Mobility on Voter Turnout in Kansas Counties, 1980–94

Variable	1980	1982	1990	1992	1994	Pooled 1990s
% college educated	.004 (.14)	.53** (.15)	.22** (.09)	-.16** (.07)	-.001 (.07)	.04 (.06)
Isolation of minorities from whites (within counties)	-.03** (.01)	-.002 (.01)	-.02 (.02)	-.05** (.01)	.03* (.02)	-.01 (.01)
% born out of state	-.02 (.04)	-.13** (.04)	-.14** (.06)	.07 (.04)	-.09* (.06)	-.05 (.04)
% post-1970 immigrants	-2.30** (.54)	-1.88** (.53)	-.55* (.30)	.53** (.21)	-.86** (.24)	-.36** (.19)
% black	.14 (.14)	.68** (.15)	.43** (.12)	-.22** (.09)	-.04 (.10)	.06 (.07)
Population density	.003 ^a (.002)	-.01** (.003)	-.01 (.003)	.009** (.002)	-.008** (.002)	-.003 (.002)
Spatial lag	.82** (.14)	.76** (.11)	.65** (.13)	.07 (.11)	.48** (.14)	.76** (.08)
Presidential race	—	—	—	—	—	.27 (.65)
Constant	15.47	14.28	24.51	58.91	36.58	16.63
<i>N</i>	105	105	105	105	105	315
<i>R</i> ² _a	.55	.68	.46	.44	.70	.36

Note: Spatial autoregressive model, weighted for population; dependent variable = percentage turnout by county. See appendix A for a full description of variable.

^aVariables with low tolerances and high standard errors due to multicollinearity.

p* < .10. *p* < .05.

Johnson County suburbs and Wichita (Sedgwick County) are affluent areas with highly educated populations compared to the rest of the state. But these are also the areas with the largest populations of non-Kansans.

Finally, there is positive spatial dependency in the turnout rates of Kansas counties. Participation patterns in counties are clearly related to the participation rates in neighboring counties. County boundaries appear to be especially meaningless in a state so homogeneous that turnout rates seem to vary more across clusters or groups of counties than across individual jurisdictions.

Migrants, Immigrants, and Party Regularity in Kansas

Party regularity, like turnout, varies within and across states. Differences in the extent to which a place's behavior can be predicted by the underlying partisan predispositions of its population may be explained by the extent to which that place has undergone social change. Rapid social change undermines traditions, including political customs. As in chapters 2 and 3, I hypothesize that party regularity, that is, the extent of congruence between party registration and voting, will be stronger in areas unaffected by the destabilizing forces of population growth. Differences between registration and voting will be much greater in areas where new populations have imported cultures and ways of life from somewhere else and where lower turnout is the norm. The results, reported in table 4.3, indicate strong support for the idea that high turnout areas produce voting in line with registration whereas low turnout areas do not. In all five elections, increases in turnout reduce the extent of party irregularity. Once turnout is controlled, however, it is not clear that places with large proportions of internal migrants will be more irregular. Indeed, locales with non-Kansas residents are more regular in 1982, 1990, and 1992 and in the pooled model for the 1990s. Again this suggests that the reason why some places are irregular in their behavior is because of low turnout by certain segments of the population. The out-of-state migrant population is not necessarily directly responsible for party irregularity through split-ticket voting. In this case, it is because migrants fail to turn out that partisan irregularity is the end result.

The proportion of recently arrived immigrants in an area is associated with departures from basic partisanship in three of the five elections, and the black population also contributes something to discrepancies between voting and registration. This is probably not because the immigrant and

TABLE 4.3. Similarity of Party Registration to Party Voting in Kansas Counties, 1980–94

Variable	1980	1982	1990	1992	1994	Pooled 1990s
% college educated	-.44** (.20)	-.20 (.25)	.11 (.14)	-.17** (.08)	-.05 (.08)	-.01 (.08)
% born out of state	.16** (.06)	-.14** (.07)	-.15* (.09)	-.10** (.05)	.002 (.05)	-.11* (.06)
% post-1970 immigrants	-.20 (.86)	1.62* (.92)	-1.23** (.45)	1.28** (.26)	.64** (.27)	.28 (.26)
% black	-.44** (.19)	.02 (.25)	1.09** (.08)	.33** (.10)	.008 (.10)	.51** (.10)
Population density	.002 (.003)	.0007 (.004)	-.02 (.004)	.01** (.002)	-.002 (.003)	-.003 (.002)
% turnout	-.25** (.12)	-.26** (.13)	-.44** (.13)	-.56** (.10)	-.20** (.10)	-.10 (.07)
Spatial lag	.59** (.15)	.90** (.09)	.42** (.17)	.29** (.14)	.62** (.13)	.52** (.10)
Presidential race	—	—	—	—	—	1.29 (1.03)
Constant	29.05	21.85	39.22	43.74	21.14	15.38
<i>N</i>	105	105	105	105	105	105
R^2_a	.20	.60	.41	.73	.37	.24

Note: Spatial autoregressive model, weighted for population; dependent variable = Abs (% Republican vote – % Republican registration); high positive values indicate counties where voting differed from registration. See appendix A for a full description of variables.

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$.

black populations split their tickets or vote contrary to their registration. It is more likely the result of low turnout among these Democratically inclined populations.

As with the turnout models in the previous table, the models for party irregularity indicate that positive spatial dependency figures prominently as an explanation of differences across the state in how easily partisanship predicts voting. Counties can be clustered into larger regions for purposes of explaining spatial variation in party regularity. For example, Leavenworth, Sedgwick, Douglas, and Shawnee Counties in northeast Kansas (see map 4.1), all of which have grown rapidly, voted far more Republican in 1990 than their registration figures would have predicted. Not coincidentally, these are also counties where turnout levels are low in off-year elections. High turnout goes a long way toward minimizing departures from party regularity at the aggregate level. In ethnically heterogeneous counties, Republicans generally benefit from lower turnout since ethnic minorities identify with and vote for Democrats and are less likely to participate than whites.

The pattern of spatial balkanization in the degree of party regularity, then, is related to a combination of migratory and ethnic characteristics of places. Those places in Kansas that are ethnically homogeneous and have stable populations are more predictable than areas that are both heterogeneous and growing. In rural Kansas, changes in party registration have occurred very slowly with attrition—the out-migration of residents once tied to the agricultural economy. The remaining voters can be counted on to turn out year after year, and not much work is required to mobilize them. But in the fast-growing counties of eastern Kansas, campaigns have far more work to do. Newly transplanted and ethnic voters must be registered and mobilized. Upscale neighborhoods full of new residents must be sifted for sympathetic partisans and so, too, must the older neighborhoods with black and Hispanic concentrations. The failure to turn out population subgroups in the state's largest cities can mean the difference between a win and a loss in a statewide race.

Changes in Party Registration in Kansas

Population growth is hypothesized to increase Republican registration growth in Kansas. The theory laid down in the first chapter predicted that those who move in from elsewhere in the nation are more likely to have a Republican than a Democratic social profile. Moving costs money and

requires information about opportunities at the destination. These costs make migrants a highly select group based on the ability to pay. Hence, internal migrants are likely to be white, upwardly mobile, and have higher incomes than those who do not move. The PUMS data presented in table A4.1 support the notion that recent migrants are wealthier than either natives or immigrants. The coefficients in table 4.4 suggest some support for the idea that the concentration of migrants from outside the state helps Republicans. Areas with higher percentages of out-of-state migrants at the beginning of each decade did see Republican growth at the expense of Democrats and third parties.

The increasing concentration of the Hispanic and Asian populations reduces Republican registration in the 1970s, but the influence is not statistically significant between 1980 and 1990 (table 4.4). Areas of the state where Republicans were strong in 1970 finished with a lower proportion of

TABLE 4.4. Impact of Population Mobility on Changes in Republican Party Registration in Kansas Counties, 1974–80, 1980–90

Variable	1974–80	1980–90
% born out of state, 1970 (1980)	.11** (.05)	.11* (.06)
Change in % born out of state	.15 (.17)	–.26* (.16)
% foreign born, 1970 (1980)	1.08 ^a (.73)	–.69 ^a (.46)
Change in % foreign born	–1.40** (.53)	–.23 (.33)
% Republican registrants, 1974 (1980)	–.24** (.05)	.009 (.06)
Population density	–.009** (.001)	–.004* (.002)
Spatial lag	.32** (.16)	.04 (.17)
Constant	8.34	3.91
<i>N</i>	105	105
<i>R</i> ² _a	.30	.02

Note: Spatial autoregressive model, weighted for population; dependent variable = change in Republican Party registrants. See appendix A for a full description of variables.

^aIndicates low tolerances and high standard errors due to multicollinearity.

p* < .10. *p* < .05.

registrants than those that had only weak to middling Republican registration. This finding can be accounted for by the existence of equilibrium cycles in two-party electoral politics. Counties at their peak of Republican registration in one period are likely to move downward in the next simply as the result of natural trends in party support. Similarly, strong Democratic areas often lose ground as Republicans work their way back into a competitive position. Finally, Republican numbers appear to have grown more slowly in the urbanized, densely populated areas of the state, especially in the first of the two decades (table 4.4). The urban counties contain the cities with the most entrenched and loyal Democratic constituencies, such as Kansas City (Wyandotte County), and a few Republican areas, such as Wichita and Johnson County, where the GOP already possesses a high percentage of eligible voters and equilibrating trends may be operating to limit further Republican gains.

The standard model I have used to predict GOP registration growth for the 1980s fails to explain much of the variation across the state's 105 counties ($R^2_a = .02$; see table 4.4). The pattern of variation to be explained is pictured in map 4.5, with registration change blocked by quartile. The darkly shaded counties are scattered almost randomly, which explains why conventional accounts fail to address the variation. The spatially lagged dependent variable in table 4.4 indicates that there is no pronounced regional pattern to the data based on the distance criteria I used to define the spatial weights. Exploratory methods revealed no striking nonlinear patterns in the relationship of the existing variables to changes in party registration, and there are no obvious theories that would suggest such nonlinear relationships exist anyway.

Another alternative is that the model is poorly specified because important variables have been omitted altogether. A closer examination of the cases indicates that changes in Republican registration growth vary according to urban versus rural characteristics of places that go beyond mere population density. For example, counties with the highest concentrations of blacks and Latinos were among those least likely to gain Republican registrants between 1980 and 1990. But high-income suburban counties in eastern Kansas, including Johnson and Leavenworth, were characterized by only modest growth in GOP registration. Why would the rural areas see far faster growth in Republicanism than the wealthier suburban areas? One answer is that Democrats in Kansas are far more willing to compete for voters in the population centers where their efforts as a minority party are likely to pay the biggest dividends than they are to

search small towns for a handful of sympathizers. Registering or converting a few thousand Democrats in Kansas City, Lawrence, Overland Park, or Wichita is also less costly than recruiting the same number of Democrats in a dozen small towns scattered throughout western and central Kansas. Consequently, the GOP is left alone to make gains on its already solid base in the state's rural areas, while it runs into more determined opposition where Democrats can concentrate their limited resources.

A second explanation for the GOP growth in the state's most rural counties is generational replacement. The most rural counties in the state are experiencing population losses due to the long-term trend away from agricultural employment. The population that has remained behind is growing older as the children of farmers leave to find employment elsewhere. As the population has aged, mortality rates have increased relative to fertility rates. The older generation of Democratically inclined voters is being replaced with younger Republican voters. I tested this hypothesis by adding a variable for percentage of the population over age sixty-five in 1970 and 1980 to the models in table 4.4. My guess was that this variable would say nothing about the registration tendencies of the elderly population but would serve as a mortality indicator. In other words, those counties with large percentages of older residents in 1980 would see strong Republican growth between 1980 and 1990. This did prove to be the case, as a 10 percent rise in the elderly population across counties in 1980 was productive of a 3.1 point surge in GOP registration by 1990. There was no statistically significant relationship, however, for the 1970s. The elderly population is concentrated in Kansas's most rural counties. While the population in these places has declined, Republicans have become a larger proportion of party registrants. Hence, the older the rural population the better the prospects are for the Republicans at the county level. Statewide, however, these gains do not mean much for the GOP since these rural counties contain a smaller share of the state's population than in the past.

Ethnicity and Political Behavior at the Individual Level

Political balkanization occurs when there are vast differences in the political behavior of areas, including differences in the propensity to participate in politics and variance in aspects of political behavior such as party regularity. These differences translate into who is elected to represent and govern a community and ultimately what policies are enacted. All other things being equal, representatives elected on the basis of turnout by a

small and select group of citizens will be inclined to pursue a less pluralistic form of politics than those elected on the basis of high turnout. This is why the spatial balkanization of electorates is an important subject for study and why homogeneous electorates may be undesirable as a foundation for electoral representation. Similarly, the separation of areas that are regular in their voting from those that are not undermines the capacity of politicians to run coherent, responsible, party-centered campaigns. Partisanship has one meaning in one community and a quite different meaning in another. Candidates of the same party cannot band together to cooperate in a legislative body such as a county council or a state legislature when their electorates have separate and rival conceptions of the content of the party label.

The data presented in tables 4.1 through 4.4 present a picture of a state that is politically stratified in ways related to population mobility and demographic change, albeit far less so than in California or Colorado due to the much smaller volume of population influx. In 1990, two-thirds of the Mexican immigrants in the state were clustered in just five counties, where their presence is growing more noticeable. Asians are equally concentrated, but their numbers did not grow larger relative to the rest of the population. Many remain noncitizens and therefore politically uninvolved, but even if they were involved it is not clear that their small numbers would change much about Kansas politics except, perhaps, at the local level.

Internal U.S. migration, on the other hand, is balkanizing Kansas, and here the numbers are sizable and harder to ignore. Northeastern Kansas and the counties around Wichita (Sedgwick, Reno, Butler) have benefited from employment and income growth. This growth has drawn internal migrants from many states, dividing a new, growing, mostly urban Kansas from an older, declining, agricultural one. Evidence from table 4.4 shows that areas where the out-of-state population was especially large in 1970 and 1980 did see GOP growth in the following decade. But these areas of migrant settlement, such as Johnson County, are less regular in their political behavior than the older, more stable counties around the state. Table 4.3 paints a picture of a Kansas as a state with distinct political tendencies. One, that of rural Kansas, is characterized by the stable, high turnout of regular partisans (usually Republicans) who have a long history in the state. The other is characterized by the much weaker party attachments of more urban and suburban voters as well as the nonparticipation of many would-be Democrats. Suburban and urban Kansas usually votes far more

Republican than its registration figures would predict due mostly to the low turnout among ethnic minorities.

Verifying that these patterns of political stratification and differentiation have roots at the individual level is no easy task. Network exit polls, sampled by state, are a good source of data for comparing states by ethnicity, partisan identification, and party regularity. While exit polls only survey those who show up to vote, their accessibility and standard format makes them superior to surveys in which question wording and varying sampling frames do not facilitate comparison. Figures from the 1990s show that Kansas is a mostly Republican state, with roughly half of the population identifying with the Republican Party (see table 4.5). Even blacks are surprisingly likely to report Republican Party identification. For Hispanics, whose numbers remain small, independent party identification is especially strong. The figures for Asians in table 4.5 are not reliable given the small number of Asian respondents surveyed. Estimates of the proportion of Hispanics registered as Republicans across the state's counties, based on the ecological inference model developed and advanced by King (1997), show that like elsewhere, Hispanics in Kansas are more Democratic than non-Hispanics (29.6 percent to 42.9 percent in 1992), but in some contests, these differences fade. For instance, in the context of the lower turnout of the 1994 gubernatorial contest, an estimated 43.1 percent of Hispanics were registered as Republicans, compared to 43.7 percent for non-Hispanics.

On the matter of Kansans' party regularity, survey data from the 1990 gubernatorial race show that voters in the Kansas City and Wichita areas are slightly more likely than rural voters to abandon their party identifications (table not reported). This suggests that the absence of party regularity in counties in urban Kansas is not only a function of turnout but of the independent sensibilities of the voters in these areas, many of whom come from other states.

Comparing the polling data in table 4.5 with similar data from other chapters reveals some striking contrasts. First, Kansas's white and black populations are far more Republican than in either California, Colorado, or New York. But, unlike these other states, minorities are not much of a force in statewide elections. The influx of Asians and Hispanics into the state has not made a decisive difference given that most of them are non-participants and show little interest in politics. Indeed, the state's traditional Republican bias may encourage more minorities to declare Republican Party affiliation than they would if the Democrats were more viable.

Since the number of migrant minorities is small relative to the number of natives, the native political culture exercises influence on the attitudes and behavior of the new arrivals.

Political Change and the Internal Composition of Kansas Counties

Political differences across places within states can be understood with reference to variability in the population composition of cities, counties, and substate sections. Given the Democratic leanings of blacks and Hispanics, Republicans do best in areas where such Democratically inclined ethnic groups fail to gain a political foothold. The political influence of ethnic minorities is obviously minimized when their numbers are small (minority status is acute). But it is also minimized when they are highly segregated from the majority white population. Table 4.2 showed that the degree of white from minority segregation was negatively associated with turnout, particularly in presidential years. Similarly, foreign-born concentration depresses the naturalization rate in immigrant communities (see table A4.1).

Residential segregation is associated with many traits that conspire to depress political participation and community involvement: poverty and

TABLE 4.5. Party Identification by Race/Ethnicity in Kansas Elections, 1990–94

Race/Ethnic Group	Year	Democrat	Independent	Republican
White	1990	29.8	21.5	48.7
	1992	28.3	23.1	48.6
	1994	28.0	20.3	51.8
Black	1990	59.0	19.4	21.7
	1992	58.2	18.6	23.2
	1994	74.1	16.1	9.8
Hispanic	1990	27.8	38.2	34.0
	1992	60.2	39.8	0.0
	1994	42.7	26.4	30.8
Asian	1990	29.0	16.8	54.3
	1992	46.4	36.5	17.2
	1994	0.0	100.0	0.0

Source: Voter Research and Surveys, General Election Exit Polls, 1990–94 (weighted data).

welfare dependency, lack of access to burgeoning labor markets, and inferior schools (Miller 1975). By reducing interracial contact, highly segregated communities may keep interethnic conflict to a minimum, but opportunities to resolve the tensions that do arise are lost. In this respect, highly segregated communities are adverse to the practice of pluralist politics and instead foster a politics dominated by the interests of monolithic groups. As V. O. Key repeatedly noted in the 1940s and 1950s, political party competition is also minimized in homogeneous communities. Such electoral one-sidedness marginalizes the value of an individual's vote in deciding electoral outcomes, depresses turnout, and undermines the accountability of officeholders to the electorate. In settings of fierce electoral competition, the value of one's vote is maximized, turnout is high, and so is accountability to the voters.

When considered in isolation from other states, Kansas provides a difficult challenge for this thesis because ethnic minorities and immigrant groups are such a small proportion of the state's population. While table 4.4 did show that the proportion of domestic migrants at the beginning of each decade is associated with modest Republican gains, the size of the foreign-born population had no definite influence on changes in party registration. Notably, though, *growth in the proportion* of foreign-born residents was associated with diminished Republican registration. Political party competition is strong, in spite of heavy Republican biases, and Democrats have repeatedly overcome the statewide Republican edge. Certainly, if the presence of immigrants is important for politics, it is in closely contested races and a few local areas where minorities constitute a sizable voting bloc.

To complete the investigation of this chapter, I have selected three counties and one county area within the state that exhibit a variety of demographic and political characteristics. These are Wyandotte, Johnson, Sedgwick, and four rural counties in southwestern Kansas: Hodgeman, Finney, Ford, and Gray (see map 4.1). Republican registration growth was stronger in Kansas during the 1980s than in Colorado, rising an average of 7.5 points. Sedgwick County's Republican registration exceeded the state average, moving up about 9 points from 1980 to 1990, and Johnson's Republican strength was boosted by 6.4 points. The GOP in Wyandotte made only modest gains, a mere .6 point increase over the course of the decade. The four-county area in southwestern Kansas varied. The most rural of the four counties, Hodgeman, saw impressive Republican growth—a full 14 points. Finney County (Garden City) and Ford County

(Dodge City), on the other hand, home of the largest meatpacking operations, saw slow Republican growth, 3 and .2 points, respectively. Finally, Gray County Republicans moved up about 6 points from 30 to 36 percent of all registered voters.

As in the previous chapters, I hypothesize that aside from the sheer number of ethnic minorities the activation of the ethnic population goes a long way toward explaining political trends and behavior. Counties that are characterized by ethnic homogeneity and spatial isolation are likely to have lower levels of political activism among minority and low-income voters. The argument is not only that political activism is low in areas of residential segregation because minorities are poor, uneducated, and do not feel politically efficacious. Rather, it is their lack of interaction with the majority white society that retards their mobilization (Lamare 1977). Those new to the community may feel more secure interacting only with members of their own group, but this separation does not facilitate assimilation, political or otherwise (Kwong 1996; Miller 1975). Balkanized in an enclave of their own making, the making of their employers, and/or the making of planners and developers, ethnic minorities are less likely to seek solutions to community problems through politics or the political party system. Since lower income ethnics are more likely to express their political preferences within the Democratic Party, the spatial segregation of minorities from whites usually improves Republican electoral prospects.

The mechanism for ethnopolitical balkanization in Kansas is slightly different than for other states, as it involves migration from out-of-state sources rather than rapid growth in the ethnic population. By choosing to live in areas where the costs of housing are higher than minorities can afford, internal migrants inadvertently contribute to the racial segregation of the areas where they move. Predictably, Republican growth has been very strong in these parts of the state. In other areas of Kansas, such as Wyandotte County (Kansas City), growth in the immigrant and ethnic minority populations has played a role in keeping Republican registration to a minimum. The model of party change in table 4.4. does suggest some tendency for Republican growth to be smaller in areas with significant and growing immigrant populations. By constructing a dissimilarity index for each county, one may be able to determine whether the areas where Republicans did well were areas where ethnic integration was especially low.

Spatial segregation for each area, as indicated by the dissimilarity index, is described in table 4.6. Like other urban areas in the United

TABLE 4.6. Index of Dissimilarity for the Black, Asian, and Hispanic Populations Relative to Whites in Kansas Counties, 1980 and 1990, by Census Tract

Variable	Kansas		Wyandotte		Johnson		Wyandotte and Johnson		Sedgwick		Southwest Kansas	
	1980	1990	1980	1990	1980	1990	1980	1990	1980	1990	1980	1990
Asians	.45	.47	.40	.48	.22	.21	.64	.28	.37	.40	.36	.42
Blacks	.68	.63	.65	.58	.34	.28	.73	.72	.73	.63	.36	.37
Hispanics	.41	.44	.34	.40	.15	.17	.39	.40	.32	.33	.40	.39
<i>N</i>	684	684	75	75	75	75	150	150	101	101	15	15

Source: U.S. Census 1990, and author's calculations.

Note: Figures represent the percentage of each group that would have to move in order for the group to be evenly distributed across all census tracts.

States, at the tract level blacks are the most spatially segregated group in Wichita (Sedgwick County), Kansas City (Wyandotte), and the Kansas City suburbs (Johnson). Segregation has diminished some since 1980, but over half the black population in both Wichita and Kansas City would be required to relocate for this population to be evenly distributed across census tracts. In the rural counties of southwestern Kansas, there is less difference in the degree of segregation of the three groups from white residents. Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics are about equally isolated. In Johnson County, the low degree of segregation is mostly an artifact of the county's affluence and its very small minority population.

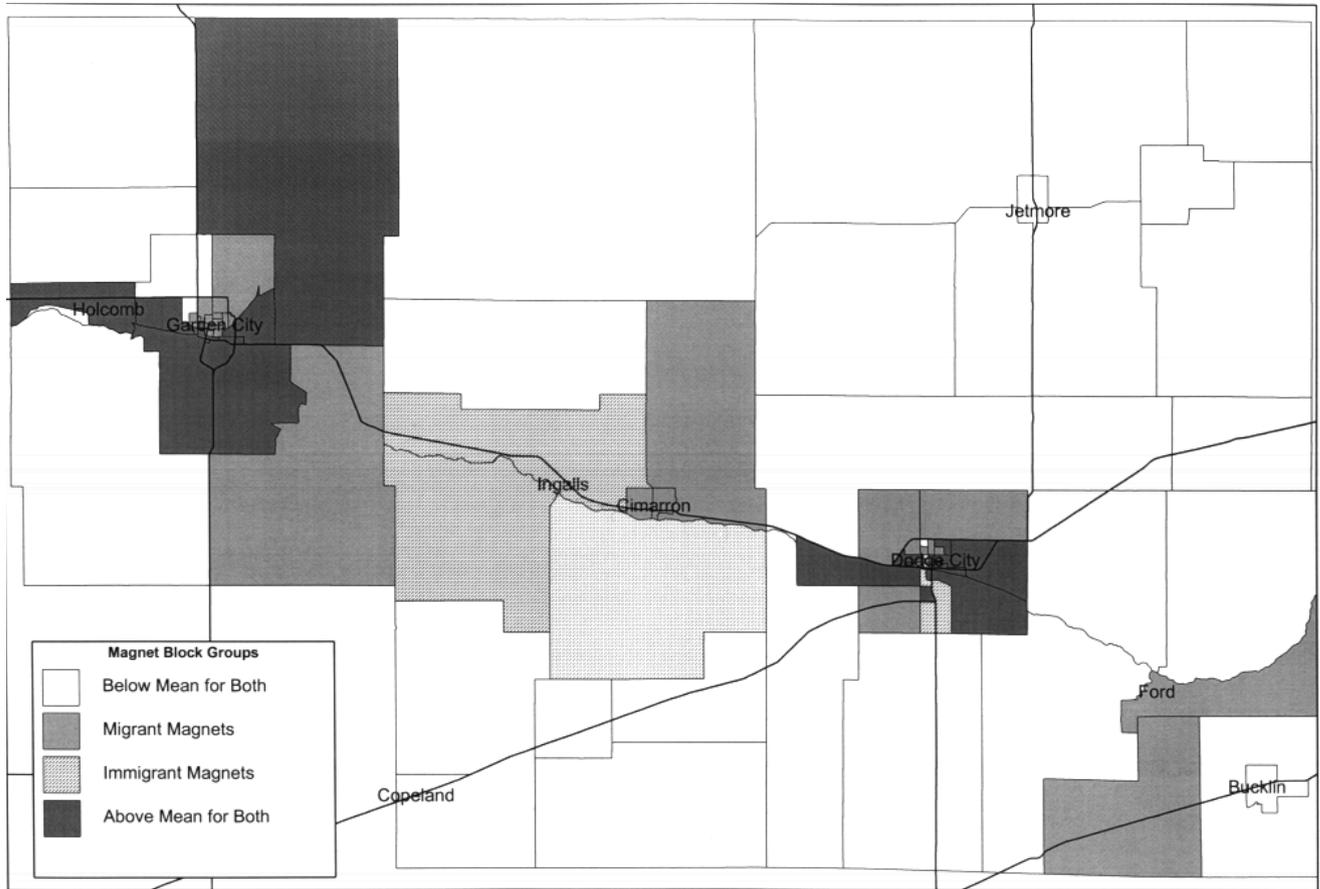
As in Colorado, the black population is tiny—less than 2 percent of the state's population in 1990—and it is not growing. The Hispanic population, while only 4 percent in 1990, has grown more rapidly, especially in the southwestern counties, where Mexicans have been recruited to work in the meatpacking business. It is noteworthy that the spatial concentration of Asians and Hispanics in the four southwestern counties did not diminish from 1980 to 1990 and that Asians have become even more concentrated. Not coincidentally, Hodgeman and Gray have the fewest minorities and the strongest Republican growth. Hodgeman is typical of the rural Kansas counties that have lost population in the last few decades (see map 4.1). Several of the darkly shaded neighborhoods in map 4.6 consist of low-cost trailer park housing in Dodge City and Garden City, which was built to accommodate workers at the meatpacking plants (Gouveia and Stull 1995, 90; Benson 1990). While at the broad level of tracts and block groups the degree of spatial segregation may seem modest, the concentration of lower status minorities in trailer parks should not be overlooked. When the dissimilarity index is calculated at lower levels of geographic aggregation, the spatial concentration of Asians is more acute. Within the Asian community, spatial segregation is highest for Laotians and Cambodians and lowest for the Vietnamese, who have a longer history in the community and have worked their way into permanent jobs and housing. The established residents in Garden City stigmatize the newcomers in the mobile home parks and fiercely resist efforts at integration (Benson 1990; Campa 1990). Observers of life within the trailer courts report that they are also highly segregated internally, with Asians, Mexicans, and Anglos clustered in separate sections (Benson 1994, 372).

Southwestern Kansas

The Garden City area (Finney County) grew by 43 percent in the decade of the 1980s, and as a rare example of rural multicultural society it has been extensively investigated by sociologists and anthropologists (Lamphere, Stepick, and Grenier 1994; Stull, Broadway, and Griffith 1995; Lamphere 1992). The growth came largely as a result of the recruitment of laborers for the meatpacking plants in the towns of Holcomb and Garden City. In the mid-1990s, the two plants employed about 4,500 workers. Lacking a local labor force willing to take the hazardous jobs in meatpacking, company personnel offices advertised around the country and in areas of high unemployment within Kansas. Nearly two thousand Southeast Asians moved in to take the jobs, many coming from Wichita (Stull, Broadway, and Erickson 1992, 42), where the aircraft industry experienced a recession in the early and mid-1980s. In 1988, Hispanics were estimated to hold about 50 percent of the jobs in Monfort's Garden City plant (50).

Most of the migrants to southwestern Kansas do not expect to stay, so their direct political impact on the communities has been minimal. Migrants come and go "at an amazing rate. And their attachment to and influence on the community is little felt" (62; see also Benson 1994). A 1987 study by the local school district discovered that 44 percent of all newcomer households left the community within one year and only a third remained after two years (Stull 1990). The Garden City School District's student population was 51 percent minority by 1997 (Lessner 1997). Similar to Weld County, Colorado, Finney and Ford Counties have attracted a low-skilled labor force that takes little interest in the community. This inactivity has not kept resident Anglos from resenting their presence. The political reaction to ethnic diversity in Garden City has varied with the class standing of the residents. Upper income professionals are more tolerant than lower income workers, who are often competing for the same jobs and housing. Many Anglo residents suspect that increases in crime and traffic congestion can be tied to the meatpacking plants and their foreign-born workers.

Map 4.6 illustrates the settlement patterns of immigrants and internal migrants in southwestern Kansas for block groups in 1990. Note that immigrants have mixed well with internal migrants in a number of the neighborhoods on the outskirts of Garden City but the central and northern neighborhoods of the town are more attractive to financially better off internal migrants than to immigrants. In Dodge City, internal migrants



Map 4.6. Internal migrant and immigrant magnets in southwest Kansas, 1990 (Finney, Ford, Gray, and Hodgeman Counties)

have thoroughly mixed with the immigrant population except in one area on the south side of town where immigrants have concentrated. There are also rural areas between Garden City and Dodge City, in the towns of Ingalls and Cimarron, that are attractive to immigrants but not to internal migrants.

There is a permanent population of ethnic minorities not tied to the meatpacking plants, and they have set down roots and established a long-term presence. The established Hispanic population in Garden City originally came to work in the sugar beet fields and on the Santa Fe Railroad in the early 1900s (Oppenheimer 1985; Smith 1981). The descendants of these farm and railway workers have become the core of the permanent Hispanic community in southwestern Kansas (Campa 1990, 349). While lacking the roots of the Hispanic population in southern Colorado, these Mexican Americans are established enough to earn high school diplomas, speak fluent English, and compete for better jobs than the newer arrivals. Inter-marriage between the Hispanic and Anglo populations has helped integrate the two communities. Their presence in local politics has provided the Democrats with a political base in an area that is predominantly Republican. Hispanics have held City Council seats and are commonly elected to the local school board. As in Colorado, the native Hispanics disassociate themselves from the poorer classes with shorter tenure. "Immigrant Hispanics are much more likely to interact in the workplace with Southeast Asians than with native Hispanics. Relatively few local Hispanics work at the meatpacking houses, and these are likely to be in managerial positions" (Campa 1990, 357).

The state Democratic Party has a Hispanic caucus, which has sought to activate the native-born Latino community in southwestern Kansas. A major registration effort aimed at Hispanics took place during the 1996 presidential election. New issues in Kansas politics have spurred this effort, including the attempt to pass English only legislation and restrictions imposed on enrollment in the state universities. But local sources suggest that many Mexicans and Asians are afraid to get involved in politics, thinking that taking sides in the system may result in some kind of retaliation, targeting, or even repatriation of themselves or their relatives. Although they may be legal residents, or even citizens, many have relatives who are not. As a consequence, the overriding cultural tendency is to try to solve problems within the community of coethnics rather than outside it. The mobilization of Hispanics and Asians into the ranks of the Kansas Democratic Party promises to be a slow process that may not pay

statewide dividends until well after the turn of the century. But Republican growth in this area was considerably slower during the 1980s and early 1990s than the state average. The barons of beef, never friendly to the Democratic Party, may be setting the stage for a Democratic resurgence in southwestern Kansas.

Wichita and Sedgwick County

Wichita (Sedgwick County), is Kansas's largest city and one of the most conservative in the nation. It is the only major U.S. city that has resisted the fluoridation of its water. City blocks are still required to pay for the upkeep of their streets, and consequently many residential streets remain unpaved. The Republicans have traditionally been the dominant party, although the city of Wichita's black and Hispanic neighborhoods are solidly Democratic. The city's industrial workers in the aircraft industry have provided some support for the Democratic Party and there is a large machinists' union, but the white working-class voters are conservative populists, hostile to people of color, trade agreements, and immigrants who compete for their jobs. The union rank and file commonly abandon the Democratic Party in statewide and national elections.

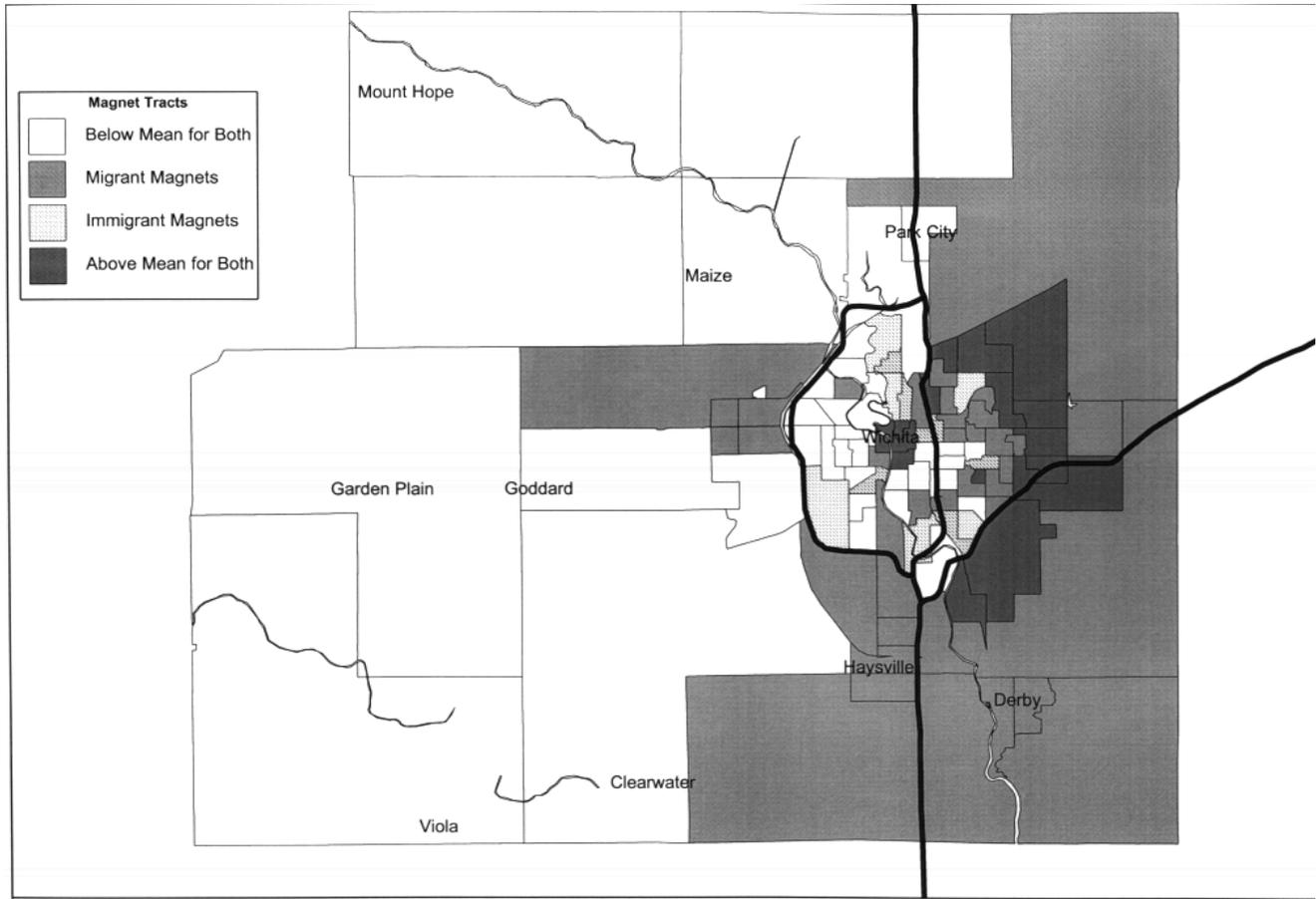
Sedgwick County's population influx during the 1980s and 1990s, much of which has come from outside the state, has contributed to a rising Republican tide. The GOP share of registrants moved up a full nine points from 1980 to 1990 and an additional three points from 1990 to 1994. Yet the county's population is 9 percent black, and Hispanics and Asians are a growing presence. What accounts for such rapid Republican growth in the midst of an expanding ethnic minority population? The answer is that the minorities are highly segregated and therefore not as politically active as they might be if they were more dispersed. Following the path taken by older central cities, Wichita is becoming a city of ethnic minorities and poor whites who cannot afford to move out (Broadway and Snyder 1989). The forces of internal migration and immigration have balkanized Wichita. Map 4.7 illustrates the spatial patterns well. The small proportion of new immigrants is concentrated in scattered tracts on the south and west sides of the downtown area, areas of internal migration are on the far eastern side of the county, and in between are about ten tracts where the two populations have mixed. Native-born Kansans, on the other hand, dominate the western tracts of Sedgwick County, displayed in white on the map. While there is no ghetto, locals admit that it is difficult to find an integrated neighborhood in Wichita. This impression seems well founded.

Until 1954, the black population was segregated by law and forced to live on the northeast side of town. The dissimilarity index reveals that the city's black population is as spatially concentrated as any in the nation (see table 4.6). The Hispanic and Asian neighborhoods are less segregated from white neighborhoods than from black, but there are distinct enclaves of these groups also. The few Hispanic and black representatives in the Kansas state legislature have come largely from majority-black districts within the city, but the concentration of the minority population would ensure the election of these politicians regardless of minority turnout, so votes for them do not have much value. When black politicians seek higher office, their racially conscious affiliation with majority-black districts dampens their appeal to the broader community. In this manner, the spatial concentration of a minority population that has been hailed as an instrument for the election of a few minority politicians to local office provides only an illusion of empowerment. Even local African American politicians recognize that race-based, "superliberal" politics has held them back (Flynn 1991). Sedgwick County Commission chair Billy McCray, a black politician from Wichita, admitted in the early 1990s that budgetary restraint was necessary to prove to the broader community that blacks can be trusted in higher government offices (Flynn 1991). The isolation of the white and minority populations has ensured internal political balkanization within Sedgwick County, which limits the political influence of minorities while giving Republicans increasingly lopsided victory margins in the areas in which they are dominant.

Helping to balkanize the Wichita area is the arrival of affluent white migrants from out of state, nearly all of whom choose to live in the suburbs. This new population is employed in white middle management jobs connected to the aircraft industry and its spin-offs. Growth east of Wichita, in Butler County, has consisted of fewer out-of-state migrants and more native Kansans who have exited the city. Since these short-distance migrants are more likely to be lower income, working class whites, the number of Butler County Republicans has declined slightly as a share of total registration.

Kansas City

Kansas City (Wyandotte County) is an aging industrial center. While the meatpacking plants that were the core of the economy forty years ago have long since gone out of business, tire and auto plants remain major local employers. It has many of the characteristics of rust belt cities further east.



Map 4.7. Internal migrant and immigrant magnets in Sedgwick County, Kansas, 1990

Besides having a large concentration of blacks (28 percent of the population in 1990), this area contains an ethnic enclave of older immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Locals describe it as a quiet, hard-working community where voters are preoccupied with getting the bills paid. Issues of economic well-being dominate their political thinking. In response to long-term job loss, the population has declined as residents have moved southward to Johnson County or out of the area altogether. Like cities elsewhere, the middle class white population has gradually been replaced by a poorer black and Hispanic population.

As for residential segregation, table 4.6 shows that Wyandotte's Hispanic and Asian communities became more segregated from the white population from 1980 to 1990. The major black enclave is in the northeast, and Hispanics are concentrated in the southeast. The working class white population lives predominantly in the western tracts and the town of Edwardsville (see map 4.8). There are occasional ethnic tensions between black residents and the local police department, but race relations are not as volatile as in larger cities. Kansas City was one of the first places in the nation to integrate its public schools.

Wyandotte is the strongest Democratic county in the state. It is the one place in Kansas where Democrats can mobilize voters on a block by block or geographic basis. Indeed, a machine-style organization has controlled city government for decades based on an alliance between white and black elites. Local politicians are described as having a siege mentality. Facing an overwhelmingly Republican state, they have grown defensive and inbred. Serious political party competition does not exist. The Republican Party has been moribund for years and often cannot slate candidates. Turnout is often below the state average—a reflection of the one-sidedness of elections as well as the lower education and income levels of residents. As in other densely populated communities, though, there is sufficient interaction between minority and white neighborhoods to give ethnic minorities a sense that they have a stake in community politics. Population concentration mitigates the adverse impact of residential segregation on political participation. Unlike ethnic populations that are isolated in rural areas, whites and blacks are in contact in Kansas City as a function of everyday life.

Johnson County

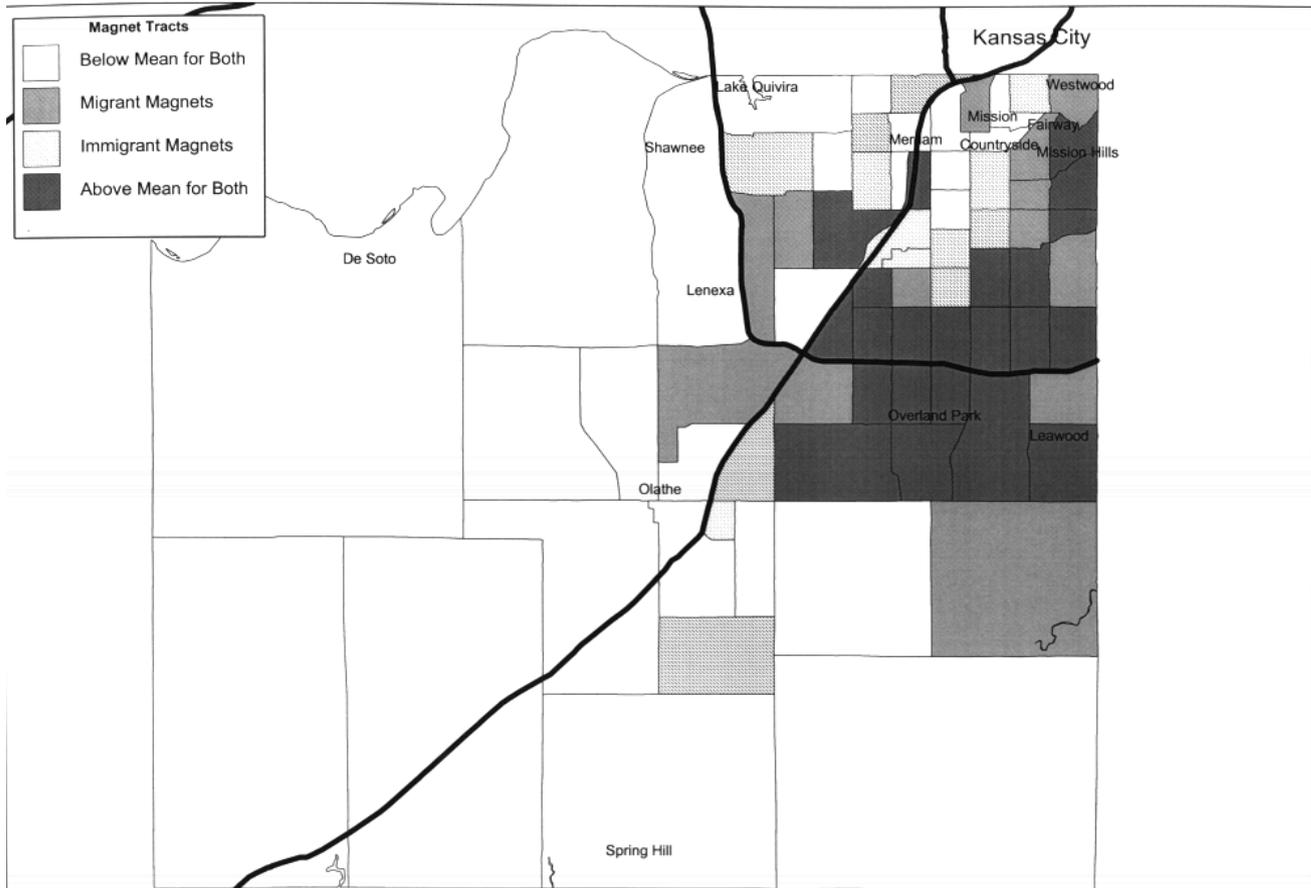
Immediately south of Kansas City lies Johnson County, a collection of affluent, white suburbs, including Overland Park and Mission Hills (see



Map 4.8. Internal migrant and immigrant magnets in Wyandotte County, Kansas, 1990

map 4.9). Many of its residents are Wyandotte County exiles and their children. When Johnson County residents look north, they see a population they consider poor, uneducated, unsophisticated, and of the wrong color. "Not many people from Johnson even come to Wyandotte," said one local newspaper man. "They feel that their life is in danger when they come near Kansas City." Politically, Johnson's suburbs are exactly contrary to Kansas City. Democrats moving to Johnson County often register as Republicans because the Democratic Party has traditionally been so weak that it cannot field candidates for many offices. The overriding concern of voters in these affluent suburbs is the avoidance of higher taxes. For years, the state government has relied mainly upon property taxation, which weighs heavily on the rural farms and ranches of western Kansas. Talk of shifting more of the burden of state revenue collection to an income tax is anathema to Johnson County's wealthy residents. This is one of the most rapidly growing areas of the state, and it has attracted many residents and businesses from Missouri. In 1990, 22 percent of the population had come from other states in the previous five years. Consistent with Thad Brown's (1988) theories about the role of migration on the weakening of partisan identification, the number of independent voters is rising. In 1992, 48 percent of the population were registered Republicans and 21 percent were Democrats, but one-third were independents. Ross Perot did better in Johnson County than he did nationally in the 1992 race, winning 26 percent of the vote. Because of its highly informed electorate, turnout is high in these affluent suburbs in presidential years. Off-year races, though, show substantially lower turnout as the result of the large percentage of non-Kansans who are unfamiliar with state issues, candidates, and parties.

Like Douglas County, Colorado (chap. 3), Johnson County shows relatively little geographic isolation of its ethnic minority population from whites (see table 4.6). Hispanics and Asians are themselves very affluent, and their numbers are small. Map 4.9 shows that many tracts in the southern part of the county contain both migrant and immigrant concentrations that exceed the local mean. When considered as a two-county area, however, it is clear that the degree of spatial clustering across Johnson and Wyandotte Counties is at least as high as in Wichita (table 4.6) due largely to the sparse number of minorities in Johnson. The dissimilarity index calculated for the combined counties shows that blacks and Asians were about as segregated in 1990 as they were in 1980. Only Asians became significantly less segregated from whites from 1980 to 1990. Local reports



Map 4.9. Internal migrant and immigrant magnets in Johnson County, Kansas, 1990

suggest that blacks and other minorities are beginning to trickle into the older suburban towns of Merriam and Shawnee in the northern reaches of Johnson County. Even so, the dissimilarity index for the two-county area shows that 72 percent of blacks would have to relocate for them to be evenly distributed across the area's 150 census tracts.

Isolated and Politically Irrelevant Minorities

At a statewide level, race relations and ethnic politics have been an inconsequential part of most Kansas elections. Blacks, Hispanics, and the foreign born have not been a large enough voting population to decide many elections. Nor has the immigrant population in Kansas generated much in the way of a political backlash among natives. Locally, however, patterns of interaction among whites, blacks, Asians, and Hispanics are similar to many other places. Generalizations about ethnic politics that hold elsewhere also apply to Kansas. For example, the longer the ethnic population has been established in the community the more likely it is to be assimilated into the political life of that community. Naturalization, turnout, and political involvement by ethnic minorities are also contingent upon the racial composition of areas, with lower participation in southwestern Kansas where there is geographic isolation and low population density coupled with recent immigration streams. In areas of residential segregation and high population density, as in Kansas City, the level of interethnic interaction that exists ensures that minorities are more actively involved in politics than in the state's most rural counties.

As in Colorado and California, Republican registration growth has been strongest in areas where the migratory trends that facilitate it have worked unaffected by countervailing pressures such as the presence of a growing and active Hispanic or black community. The Kansas City and Wichita areas, characterized by upscale interstate in-migration to white suburbs and an increasing proportion of blacks and Hispanics in older city neighborhoods, are examples of locales where ethnic balkanization has generated political stratification. Wyandotte County is as monolithically one party as Johnson County. Democrats are as disadvantaged in one area as Republicans are in the other. For democratic theorists and those practicing politics in the trenches, the areal balkanization of neighborhoods, suburbs, cities, and counties in a place as white as Kansas is a

subject for careful thought and further study. It reminds us of how arbitrary geographical boundaries can be and yet how important such boundaries are in determining a group's level of political engagement. Ethnic minorities may not be much of a force in Kansas politics for many years to come, but they are sure to be marginalized as long as they remain in isolated residential pockets.