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Latino Newcomers in Missouri: Cultural Adaptation and Ethnic Identity

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Abstract

Immigrants have slowly stopped migrating to traditional coastal states (i.e., California, Florida, New York, etc.) and have begun settling more in the Midwest. Over 120,000 Latinas/os reside in the state of Missouri, a figure that is double the amount from the 1990 census figures. The migration shift has presented unique challenges for Midwestern communities that have not had diverse populations. These challenges may affect the settlement of these newcomers. This qualitative study will examine the ethnic identity and adaptation process of Latina/o newcomers in three rural communities in Missouri, and will assess the relation of identity and adaptation to their settlement and integration patterns in the host community. Three participants (1 female, 2 male) were recruited and interviewed from three rural Missouri communities through local community gatekeepers. ATLAS.ti software package was used to store, organize, and assist in the analysis of the interview data. Six themes were extracted from the interviews including, networking in community, community life, perceptions and experiences, language, ethnic identity, and challenges. Implication of the findings for practice interventions and community building will be discussed.

Latino Newcomers: Cultural Adaptation and Ethnic Identity

Since the year 2000, the population growth among Latinos has increased by 2.24% every year compared to 0.54% in the general population (U.S. Census, 2000). In Missouri, Latinas/os comprise over 120,000 residents, a figure that is double the amount from the 1990 census figures (Lazos & Jeanetta, 2002). The communities receiving a new wave of newcomers are faced with complicated issues that may influence the relationships that develop between the mainstream communities and the newcomers (Jeanetta, 2007). Also, this population growth affects our national and local community, because each person that migrates to the U.S. does it for different reasons and motives creating a unique, sometimes difficult adaptation experience for the newcomers who decide to reside in the U.S. (Baker, 2002). This study will examine the identity and cultural adaptation of Latino newcomers living in one of three rural communities in Missouri to understand the relation between identity, adaptation, and newcomers' abilities to integrate in the host community.

Cultural adaptation is comprised of acculturation, general coping and intercultural competence, and is an important component in the adaptation process (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Torres & Rollock, 2004). Acculturation refers to the adaptation process that occurs in individuals after entering a mainstream culture different from their own, and describes the process in which both parties engage in new behaviors to create new relationships within their daily lives (Berry, 2001; Sam & Berry, 2006). The acculturation process may be a difficult process for newcomers, which may lead to increased feelings of stress and it may be experienced when confronted with situations that may differ from one's daily routine (Comer, 2001). Newcomers who experience their immigration process as difficult may find themselves feeling more depressed and anxious. On the other hand, those who may have a positive reinforcement

(i.e., family support, social support in the new community, or socioeconomic status) and a positive attitude towards life may experience less depressive symptoms and less stress (Cavalcanti & Schleef, 2005; Dalla, Ellis, & Cramer, 2005; Hovey & Magana, 2000).

Ethnic identity can be a factor that contributes to an individual's transitional coping ability. It is defined as the positive identification, interaction, and membership with one particular ethnic group. Those who have explored and have maintained commitment to their ethnic group, experience a stronger sense of ethnic identity, which may lead to high levels of self-esteem (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Phinney & Ong, 2007). For Latina/o individuals in the U.S., having high levels of self-esteem may allow them to become constructive individuals in society (i.e. pursuing better jobs or an education) and to better integrate to their mainstream community (Phinney et al., 1997; Umana-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007). Bicultural identities or having a strong ethnic identity while still integrating to mainstream community, is believed to be more effective for integration (Cuellar, Nyberg, Maldonado, & Roberts, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2006).

Method

Participants

The study's participants consisted of 3 Latino immigrants (1 female, 2 male). One participant was selected from each of the three Missouri communities that were being investigated as part of a larger project of Latino newcomers' adjustment. Refer to Table 1.

Procedure

Immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for a minimum of 6 months and who resided in one of the three Missouri rural communities were recruited through local community gatekeepers who were known and trusted by the Latino immigrants. Local community gatekeepers were

compensated for taking an active role in recruiting participants for the project and arranging facilities for these interviews. Participant A was interviewed at her house; participant's B interview took place at a local church; and participant's C interview was conducted at a Latino Center. Participants were offered a gift card of \$20 for their participation.

Seventeen one-on-one interviews of Latino female and male immigrants were conducted for a larger project investigating Latino Newcomers' adjustment. Individuals reflected aspects of the diversity of the local Latino population based on age, marital status, living arrangements, and employment history. The interviewer engaged the participant in a semi-structured interview that lasted from 60 minutes to two hours. Interviews were conducted in Spanish by a member of the research team. These facilitators were all trained to conduct the interviews. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and translated.

Interview Protocol

During the interviews, the participants answered 29 questions (see Appendix A) across nine general areas pertaining to the strategies Latino immigrants use to integrate into their communities and the factors that facilitated or impeded their economic integration. Nine areas were chosen to help reveal the strategies and/or impediment of the newcomers. The first set of questions related to the age, language, education, marital status of the person interviewed (1-5). The second sets of questions were about their activities and jobs in the country where they came from (6-7). The third sets of questions were about the motives, decisions, and process through which they arrived in the community where they are currently living (8-11). The fourth set of questions addressed their knowledge of government and politics in their country of origin and in the U.S. (12). The fourth set of questions explored the major barriers they faced when they first came to the U.S., their current and past jobs in the U.S., their income and expenses, and formal

and informal institutions they have used to save, invest and to borrow (13-15). The sixth sets of questions were about transferring money to Mexico, the effect the money has in their family in the U.S., and plans for returning to their home country (16-17). The seventh set of questions included questions about their daily lives and how chores at home were organized, as well as the language spoken at home, festivities and traditions, the religion they practice (18-26). The eighth set of questions addressed their work and work conditions (28). Finally, the ninth set of questions asked them about their perceptions of the wellbeing of their children (29).

Data Analysis

Open coding was conducted to identify meaning units line-by-line. Axial coding was used to identify recurring themes. First the interviews were treated as independent sets of data, to discover cultural adaptation and ethnic identity information. Then, they were examined as a group to discover themes that each participant utilized used for their transition process. Once the data was coded, the investigator searched for repeatable patterns and connections between themes. The interviews were analyzed in relation to the participants' cultural and ethnic identity. ATLAS.ti software package was used to store, organize and assist in the analysis of all qualitative data.

Results

Six codes were extracted from the interviews with the three participants: *networking in community, life in community, use language, ethnic identity, perceptions and experiences, and challenges encountered*. The participants' responses were reported according to these codes. Each code will be described in more detail in the following sections.

Networking in community

Networking in the community refers to the tools participants use to integrate into the community. Two themes were extracted to better understand the process for these participants: integration and emotional support.

Integration support refers to the key individuals with whom the participants interacted to integrate into the host community. Participants had familial networks prior to coming to the U.S. Either immediate or extended family served as a junction in the transition between Mexico and the U.S. for these participants. These participants received extensive support, motivation, and encouragement from family members to come to the US. As soon as they arrived to the States, the participants sought assistance from family members, friendships, church services' personnel, and word of mouth at local Mexican businesses. Participants also resorted to federal agencies for assistance:

“the only thing we had to do when we came to this town was just look for the License Bureau Agency...”

Participants continue to rely heavily on key stakeholders in the community who are identified as links between the Latina/o community and the host community to integrate in their community:

“Up to today, we have been helped by Ms. Elvira and Sherry who have connected us with the entire community... if I ever need anything she is always there to help me out.”

Participants reported seeking help from this community gatekeeper to receive aid. The gatekeeper helped the participants connect with other sources of aid in the community, such as church, or social services.

Emotional support refers to key individuals who provided emotional assistance to the participants. Individuals responded that family members and friends of the same racial group

played a critical role when it came to socializing and communicating. Individuals mentioned their interaction with family members by going to the park or watching TV as a family. Taking part on these activities allowed them to relax from strenuous daily activities, such as work. For example, a participant responded:

“I have not had sad times here, I spend some of my time with friends from work; we have a good relationship with them.”

Life in Community: activities newcomer's engage within their community

Participants varied in their responses regarding their activities in their host community. The participants lived with siblings and friends or their own spouse and children. Socially, participants indicated spending time with work friends and having “a good relationship” with them. These participants did not report of having a hobby. Their free time and weekends were spent working, attending church services, staying at home reading or watching Spanish TV, and during the summer, taking the children swimming or doing any other extracurricular activities for the children.

Participants celebrated their home country's holidays at work and at home. It was also important for the participants to develop and celebrate the American community's customs, for example:

“Thanksgiving... I like it very much because it's a day to give gratitude for this country which has given us plenty.”

Perceptions and experiences of Anglo community

The participants perceived Americans as united and always helping each other. Regarding the American family, the participants did not see familial unity in comparison to their home country. Comparing American traditions to the ones in their home country, the participants

preferred the ones from home. Participants felt that the American community has not been exposed to the different cultures of Latin American, and therefore sometimes discriminated because of this ignorance. However, participants have felt welcomed and comfortable in their host community, and indicated that they did not experience any discrimination or acts of racism. Also, participants sought a need for American businesses to appreciate and defend Latin American workers for fair wages and from being deported because without their work the businesses would not sustain.

Language Use

The participants indicated that they mainly spoke Spanish at home. They read mostly in Spanish, but listened to both English and Spanish music. Each participant in the study reported the ability to manage the language at a level of 50% or more. Participants felt comfortable speaking the English language to the point of defending themselves with it. Also, participants reported interpreting for other people when asked, but when going to serious matters such as, a medical appointment, the participants did not feel comfortable with their English language skills and requested an interpreter. Participants with bilingual children encouraged and used their children's skills to translate and/or interpret for their use or other people:

“... my eight year old can interpret everything and you can take him wherever you need him.”

Participants also had children that spoke only English “like a normal American child,” and did not speak Spanish.

The newcomers reported the need to learn the English language in order to be successful in their host community. The participants indicated that in some parts of the US, like California, is not necessary to learn English, whereas in others there is a need to learn the language:

“... it is fundamental to know English, so you have to try... I had to learn some English [here in Missouri], but in California people don't really need to learn English...”

Ethnic Identity

It was vital for these participants that their children maintained the culture of their home country as well as their host community's culture. Participants spoke Spanish at home, celebrated their country's traditions, and had their children visit their home country. Also, the participants encouraged their country's pride in the conversations with their children regarding being ethnic in their host community:

“It seems as if [my child] wanted to be from here, and I tell her, “No, you are Mexican. You were born in Guadalajara.”

The participants felt it was necessary to help their children retain their ethnic identity. They have heard other Latinos' prefer that their children speak English over Spanish, and these participants disapproved of this approach. These participants believed that their children would better off being bicultural and learning both the English and the Spanish language:

“Some people might believe that their children may have better opportunities if they speak only English, but I don't think so. I have a niece in California who has both languages and she has more opportunities because of being bilingual.”

Challenges

A problem encountered by the participants was the lack of fluency in English. The participants viewed speaking, reading, and writing in English as an important tool to succeed in the U.S. and in their host community. They discussed that not knowing English limited their job opportunities and selection. Not knowing English led them to low-paying and strenuous jobs.

Speaking the language was essential for daily tasks such as socializing, communicating with public agencies, and employers against fairness and likeability of jobs:

“My belief is that if one dominates the language and does not have legal documentation, the language would still help you out a lot. Language is the principal things that will help one succeed in this country.”

Another problem encountered by the participants was not having the proper documentation for residing in the US. Being undocumented prevented the participants from creating any type of business transaction. Not having documentation that allowed them to be in the U.S. legally created discomfort and contributed to constant worry and fear of being caught and deported. The lack of proper legal documentation deprived them from engaging in any type of business activity, owning property, acquiring medical insurance, or applying for a loan. Also, it limited their employment because employers require U.S. work authorization to be employed. Not having this legal authorization limited their work opportunity leaving them with laborious and low-paying jobs:

“The only difficult thing is not having legal documents [if had documents] the first thing I would do is buy a property, open bank accounts, and I would walk around more comfortable.”

Settlement Plans

Participants varied in their plans to settle in the US. Participants planned on returning back to their home country. Their goal was to send as much money home to build a house or open up a business, and return back to their families and continue their lives. Also, participants believed that their home was in the US and had no plans in returning to their home country; staying in the US would provide a better lifestyle for their family, than their home country offers.

Discussion

The themes that were selected through the analysis reflect on the cultural adaptation process of these newcomers in rural Missouri. Cultural adaptation is the principle step when first engaging with the host community and refers to the skills utilized to integrate within the host community and the cultural knowledge of newcomers regarding the host community (Torres & Rollock, 2004). The themes extracted from the interviews provide in depth information about the newcomers' cultural adaptation process including aspects of their ethnic identity.

Networking in Community

Networking in the community referred to the tools participants used to integrate into the community. Integration and emotional support, two subcategories of networking in community, were identified by the participants in facilitating their transition from their home country to the host community.

Integration and emotional support was provided by key individuals with whom the participants interacted and helped participate to integrate into the host community. The participants reported that they depended primarily on their family (immediate and/or extended), but also friends and church personnel to transition to the host community.

“Up to today, we have been helped by Ms. Elvira and Sherry who have connected us with the entire community... if I ever need anything she is always there to help me out.”

Initially, newcomers depended on people with whom they had developed healthy relationships, either a family member or members of the community's church. These relationships may be beneficial for newcomers to transition and help them take the first step towards networking within their host community (Hovey & Magana, 2000). The support provided to the newcomers during their initial transition may reduce acculturation stress by

providing the essential tools (i.e., information, transportation, translation and interpretation) needed to network in the host community (Hovey & Magana, 2000; Rodriguez, Mira, Paez, & Myers, 2007). Family and friends may also encourage the practice of their ethnic activities (i.e., language use and cultural activities), which may help alleviate the stress of assimilation (Finch & Vega, 2003). The demands of the host community: i.e., speaking the new language when going to the grocery store, restaurants, or school, when the newcomer is still learning to speak it, may lead the individual to high levels of stress. On the contrary, encouraging the host community and the newcomer's support group to assist in celebrating the newcomer's ethnic identity, would strengthen the individual's self-esteem, leading the newcomer to become receptive to the new culture (Finch & Vega, 2003).

Life in Community: Activities Newcomer's Engage within their Community

The newcomers' ways of life in their host community allows them to interact with that community by either enhancing or hindering their integration process (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Some newcomers may be more receptive towards change and easily adapt to the community, while others can be more apprehensive about it and can deprive themselves from any interaction with the community (Hovey & Magana, 2002). The participants of this study reported that during their free time, mostly on the weekends, they worked or participated in social activities within their own ethnic group (i.e., family and friends). According to research, not interacting with members of the host community may hinder their integration process (Berry et al., 2006). The participants' heavy reliance on family and friends may facilitate a smoother transition to the host community, both culturally and ethnically. In the beginning, the newcomers may need the emotional support of close relations to become welcomed and established in their host community, Further, by participating in events that would resemble those of their country of

origin may comfort the newcomers' emotional and psychological needs and help to decrease their homesickness, could lead the participants to lower their levels of acculturation stress (Zheng & Berry, 1991). As time progresses, however, staying close to family and friends of the same ethnic group and not interacting with members of the host community can be interpreted as separating themselves from host community. If they are separated, the newcomers' may feel pressure from the host community to learn the language and participate in other activities within the community. The newcomers may interpret such pressure as a request from the host community to leave behind their ethnic identity and adapt to the host community's. In such manner, the newcomer may become apprehensive in learning and engaging in the host community's activities, and may even lead the newcomer to feel marginalized. In the case that the newcomer utilizes her or his close social group to integrate, she or he may take the opportunity to meet with members of the host community to allow for new relationships and feelings of being welcomed.

Perceptions and Experiences of Anglo community

The participants' perceptions of the host community have been shaped due to their experience among the community. Their experiences influence their thoughts and beliefs towards their host community, which may have allowed them to have an easier integration process.

The participants' had a positive experience as a whole. Although little discrimination was experienced, the participants felt welcomed and comfortable in their host community. Part of these positive feelings may have come with the help of the key individuals, family, friends, and church services personnel, who aided their transition and settlement into their new community. This supports other research, which reports that newcomers who have an established network within their community reduces acculturative stress allowing the newcomers to engage in

interaction with host community (Hovey & Magana, 2002). The participants of this study were able to distinguish between the American lifestyle and their own, which enabled them to easily choose between the two. The participants strongly identified with their own ethnic lifestyle. This may suggest that the participants of this study did not feel obligated by the host community to leave behind their culture, but rather they felt encouraged to display aspects of their identity related to their ethnicity. The responses of these participants support previous research, which suggests that a strong ethnic identity provides a higher self-esteem in Latinas/os, which helps them have a smoother integration process (Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997).

“Thanksgiving... I like it very much because it’s a day to give gratitude for this country which has given us plenty.”

The participants of this study reported that they felt fluent in the English language and celebrated some of the American traditions (i.e., Thanksgiving), which suggests that the participants may have had a smooth cultural transition without the need to jeopardize their cultural background.

Language Use

In the acculturation spectrum, learning the host community’s language is an important part of the newcomer’s integration process (Berry et al., 2006). Learning the English language involves reading in English, listening to English music, and participating in conversation with English speakers. The participants knew that it was imperative to learn the host community’s language in order to succeed in it. This positive inclination towards the English language may have allowed them to be receptive towards learning it and becoming fluent in English. Further, the participants’ high level of education in comparison to other immigrants may have enabled these participants to learn the English language easier than lower educated immigrants who

traditionally have a more difficult experience learning the new language. Although the participants were able to learn English, they reported not being comfortable speaking it, and that they requested for a translator when going to a bank or a medical appointment. The participants' lack of interaction with the host community may have been the reason why the participants did not feel comfortable speaking the language. Interacting and speaking with the host community may expose the newcomer to new range of vocabulary and may increase language fluidity through conversations. Instead, they maintained heavy relationships within their ethnic group (i.e., family and friends). In the long run, not participating within the host community, in group activities, town hall meetings, or even attending English classes, may create limitations in other parts of their cultural adaptation.

Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity has been defined as the positive identification and membership with one particular ethnic group and those who have maintained commitment to their ethnic group will have achieved a stronger sense of ethnic identity (Phinney & Ong, 2007). Previous research suggests that having high levels of self-esteem may allow Latina/o newcomers become constructive individuals in society, and for Latino newcomers, high levels of self-esteem may allow them to better integrate to their host community (Berry et al., 2006; Phinney et al., 1997). Participants of this study reported the vitality of maintaining their identity as Latinas/os in their host community. The participants identified strongly with their ethnicity, and even encouraged their children to understand the concept. Particularly, they understood the ability of speaking both Spanish and English as being financially rewarding. The participants reported interacting and participating in ethnic events, such as potlucks and celebrating their country's holidays within their social circle. This may suggest that the participants have a strong sense of their

ethnicity. By understanding the concept of speaking both languages and practicing their ethnic activities, the participants may not feel that their ethnic identity is jeopardized by the host community. The participants' social network, family and friends, may have had supported their cultural transition and encouraged them to practice their ethnic activities, which may have played a role in reducing their acculturation stress (Phinney et al., 1997).

Challenges

The challenges the participants reported having were the most crucial in respect to having a healthy cultural adaptation. Although the participants spoke more than fifty percent of the English language, they still reported not feeling comfortable speaking it. Also, the participants reported that their lack of legal documentation prevented them from engaging with their host community. These challenges may build acculturation stress in newcomers, preventing them from fully integrating into their host community (Koneru & de Mamani, 2006).

Implications

The participants of this study reported to have a high dependency on their family, friends, and church personnel. Although, these relationships are essential to the cultural adaptation of the newcomers, depending solely on them after the initial transition process may become problematic. The sole dependence on these relationships may prevent the newcomer from interacting with the members of the host community and participating of different events within the host community. In addition, this could also create a strain on the newcomer's relationships (i.e., family, friends, and church personnel), allowing a possibility for burnout. Networking more broadly within their host community would allow them to get acquainted with the different resources that the community can provide. This exposure could potentially allow them to extend a broad network, and they could become a resource to other newcomers. One of the ways that the

host community could help is by providing Spanish information for these individuals to inform them of the resources in the community. Also, individuals in the host community could be trained in Spanish so that they could interact with and possibly provide resources to the newcomers. Professionals, such as counselors, could create support groups in the host community with host individuals to assist in the transition process of the newcomers. These support groups could encourage the practice of the newcomer's ethnic identity, which according to research, may lead the newcomer to being receptive towards learning the host language and culture (Finch & Vega, 2003).

The host community can facilitate the cultural transition for the newcomer by creating a system in which newcomers are welcomed in the community. Members of the host community, families and friends can form a coalition to introduce the newcomer to the new community. Hosting welcome gatherings (i.e., potluck) where the newcomer can engage with members of the host community and where she or he can also bring ethnic dishes to share, may create a positive environment. The positive environment may allow the newcomer to see the host community's receptiveness towards their cultural background (i.e., language and traditions) and may encourage and expose the newcomer to the host community's culture and traditions. Further, counselors could train other professionals (i.e., teachers, government officials, and employers) to encourage the language and activities of newcomers, which may create a receptivity towards the host community.

Studies have shown the importance of creating a network beyond one's own social and support group and participating in the host communities activities in order to facilitate a smoother cultural transition, including learning the new language (Hovey & Magana, 2002). Thus, the participants could engage in activities within the host community or even attend

English classes provided by non-profit organizations. However, knowing the participants fear of being deported for not having legal documentation may prevent them from engaging in learning opportunities in the community. Communities may consider teaching Spanish and training church personnel and governmental officials (i.e., WIC services) that would be approach by the newcomers in how to interact with these newcomers.

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culture (Finch & Vega, 2003). Members of the host community, families and friends can form a coalition to introduce the newcomer to the new community. Hosting welcome gatherings (i.e., potluck) where the newcomer can engage with members of the host community and where she or he can also bring ethnic dishes to share, may create a positive environment. The positive environment may allow the newcomer to see the host community's receptiveness towards their cultural background (i.e., language and traditions) and may encourage and expose the newcomer to the host community's culture and traditions.

Counselors could also train other professionals (i.e., teachers, government officials, and employers) within the community to encourage the language and activities of newcomers, which may create receptivity for the newcomers towards the host community. Communities may consider teaching Spanish and training church personnel and governmental officials (i.e., WIC services) who would be approached by the newcomers in how to interact with these newcomers.

Limitations

This study was a sub-study of a larger research project. The larger study examined the strategies Latina/o newcomers utilized to accumulate assets, to minimize their vulnerability to risk exposure, and to become part of their new communities. The larger study did not directly examine cultural adaptation and ethnic identity as an integration strategy. Therefore the current study was only able to investigate a minimal aspect of cultural adaptation and ethnic identity of the participants. A future study should employ a methodology that is relevant to its objectives to clearly account for its findings.

Another limitation considered is personal bias. The findings of this study were subjected to the personal biases of the researcher who analyzed the data. The primary researcher himself came from an immigrant population, and his experience as an immigrant could have played a

role in the analysis of the findings. Future studies may consider having more researchers, with different backgrounds, analyzing the data acquired in order to decrease bias.

This study was employed under a grounded qualitative theory, which helped discover and develop crucial themes that explored the cultural adaptation and identity of each participant. However, the findings are not to be generalized to newcomers migrating to the Midwest. Future quantitative studies in the larger sample are suggested. Being able to interview participants from many different rural communities is also recommended.

The participants of this study came from an immigrant population. Findings can therefore not be directly generalized to all Latinas/os living and working in the U.S. Future projects can account for the documented and undocumented status of participant, which can be obtained with the confidentiality of the participant.

Lastly, this study focused on post-migration rather than pre-migration or migration, which can be a limitation. Considering all three migration stages is critical, because post-migration only involves the outcomes of migration, and does not consider the situation of the individuals prior to the migration.

Table 1

Participants

Communities	Participants
<p><i>Community A:</i> The population was 20,196, and Latinas/os composed 5.6% of this population.</p>	<p><i>Participant A:</i> A 35-year-old married female with three children, who has been in the U.S. and in Missouri for 9 years. She completed her high school in Mexico and reported to speak Spanish. This participant understands English, but has difficulty speaking it.</p>
<p><i>Community B:</i> The population was 6,050, and Latinas/os composed 4% of this population.</p>	<p><i>Participant B:</i> A 24-year-old single male with a partner and a child in Mexico. He had been in the U.S. for two years and resided in Missouri for 17 months. This participant completed one semester of university work in Mexico. He reported to be fluent in Spanish and speak and understand 60% of English.</p>
<p><i>Community C:</i> The population was 1,863, and Latinas/os composed 22% of this population..</p>	<p><i>Participant C:</i> A 46-year-old married male with three children. He had been in the U.S. for 30 years and resided in Missouri for six years. He completed one year of high school in Mexico. This participant reported being fluent in Spanish and assessed his English skills as sufficient to be understood.</p>

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Appendix A

Case Study: Interviews about Livelihood Strategies – Interview Guide

1. How old are you?
2. Can you read and write (in Spanish)? What other languages do you speak? Read? Write?
3. Can you speak (read, write) English? What language do you prefer when you speak with your children? Your spouse/partner? Your friends? Your co-workers? What TV channels do you watch? What kind of music do you listen to? What language do you prefer to read books, magazines, or newspapers?
4. Have you gone to school? What grade have you completed?
5. Are you married, have a partner, widow, divorced, single?
6. What did you do, besides home chores, before you came to the US?
7. What did you and your family do for a living before coming to the US? (here we want to find out if they came from a rural or urban community, employment, if they own land, and how they were treated in the community they came from. Were there stereotypes that affected her and her family?)
8. How did you decide to come to work to the US? If you have children, what did your children think about you coming to work, and if left behind, who take care of your children. What were your motives to migrate to the US?
9. Who was the first to migrate in your family and where did they arrive? Who helped you to migrate, and how much did they spend. (Talk about how they saved their money to migrate, and identify in the process who helped them, and how much they paid to travel.
10. Where did you arrive in the U.S. (urban or rural region) and who helped you by providing housing, food and employment (were they family, friends, people they knew, from their ethnic

group, church). How did you choose the community and which organizations helped, and/or continue to help your family?

11. How long have you been working in the US, and how long do you plan to stay. Tell us about your plans.

12. Do you know the political parties, and what is your preference? Do you identify with any particular party? Please talk first about Mexico or the country you come from, and then about the US.

13. When you arrived in the US what were the most serious problems you faced. Identify the most important ones, and tell me how you solved them.

14. Where do you work, what job do you do, and how much do you earn. What percentage of your earning do you send to your family back home. Now? If you do, which bank or agency do you use. Do you invest, and what, and how? Who do you borrow from? We would like to know how do you manage to save, rent or buy a house. And if you have a business how did you manage to establish it.

15. How many jobs have you had since you arrived in the US. Always in the same place? How have these changed?

16. How often do you send money to your family, to who and how. Please explain how you distribute your income among expenses in food, education, health care, housing, savings (individual or in group), and with whom do you share decisions about expenses. How many household members contribute to the expenses? Do you spend in health or investments, and how?

17. Do you think that the living standards of your family have improved since you started to send them money from the US? Explain how they have improved and what are these improvements and how your family benefits.

18. Have you thought of bringing or sending for, other members of your family, who and why.

19. How do you organize your work and chores here in the US.

20. How did you organize your activities where you came from?

21. Do you belong to any groups, at home, church, school, clubs, other?

22. What language did you speak with your family before you came.

23. In which traditional celebrations did you and your family participate, and how are they different here?

24. Which church do you belong to, and do you attend?

25. Did you marry someone from your own community?

26. When you marry which traditions do you follow?

27. What traditions (social, cultural, religious) from your home country do you practice in the U.S.? What traditions (social, cultural, religious) have you adopted since moving to the U.S.?

What beliefs and behaviors from your home country do you continue to follow? Have you developed any new beliefs or behaviors since you migrated to the U.S.? If so, tell me about these new beliefs and behaviors. Mention the various spaces: school, work, foods, festivities? Do you have an identification document from your country, birth certificate (in Mexico it is the Population Census Registration CURP?)

How important is it to you that your children practice traditions from your home country? That they learn and practice traditions in the U.S.?

How would you describe the Mexican way of life? How would you describe the American way of life? How closely do you follow the Mexican way of life here in the U.S.? How closely do you follow the American way of life here in the U.S.? How closely do your children follow the Mexican way of life? The American way of life?

28. What are your work conditions, do you have breaks, have you had raises, how long have you worked for the same employer. What type of work do you do? Do you have accident insurance? How did you find this job, and what plans do you have for the future? (which shift do you often work?)

29. Indicators of the wellbeing of your children? Do all your children live with you? As questions about what worries does she have about the education and health of their children, especially about their youth.

How do you identify culturally/ethnically? How do your children identify themselves?

How do your friends in the U.S. identify themselves?

Please share with me your experiences that have helped you feel welcomed in this community.

What about experiences that have helped you feel unwelcomed here.

What has made you feel a part of this community? What makes you feel connected to your home country? What has made you feel like you are not part of this community?

What do you think of Americans? What do you think about Latino Americans? Tell me about your experiences with Americans? Latino Americans? Other immigrants?

How would you describe the climate here for immigrants? Would you recommend this community to other immigrants? What advice would you give to others who want to make immigrants feel good about living here?