

Integration Efforts of Latino Immigrants in Three Rural Communities in the Midwest

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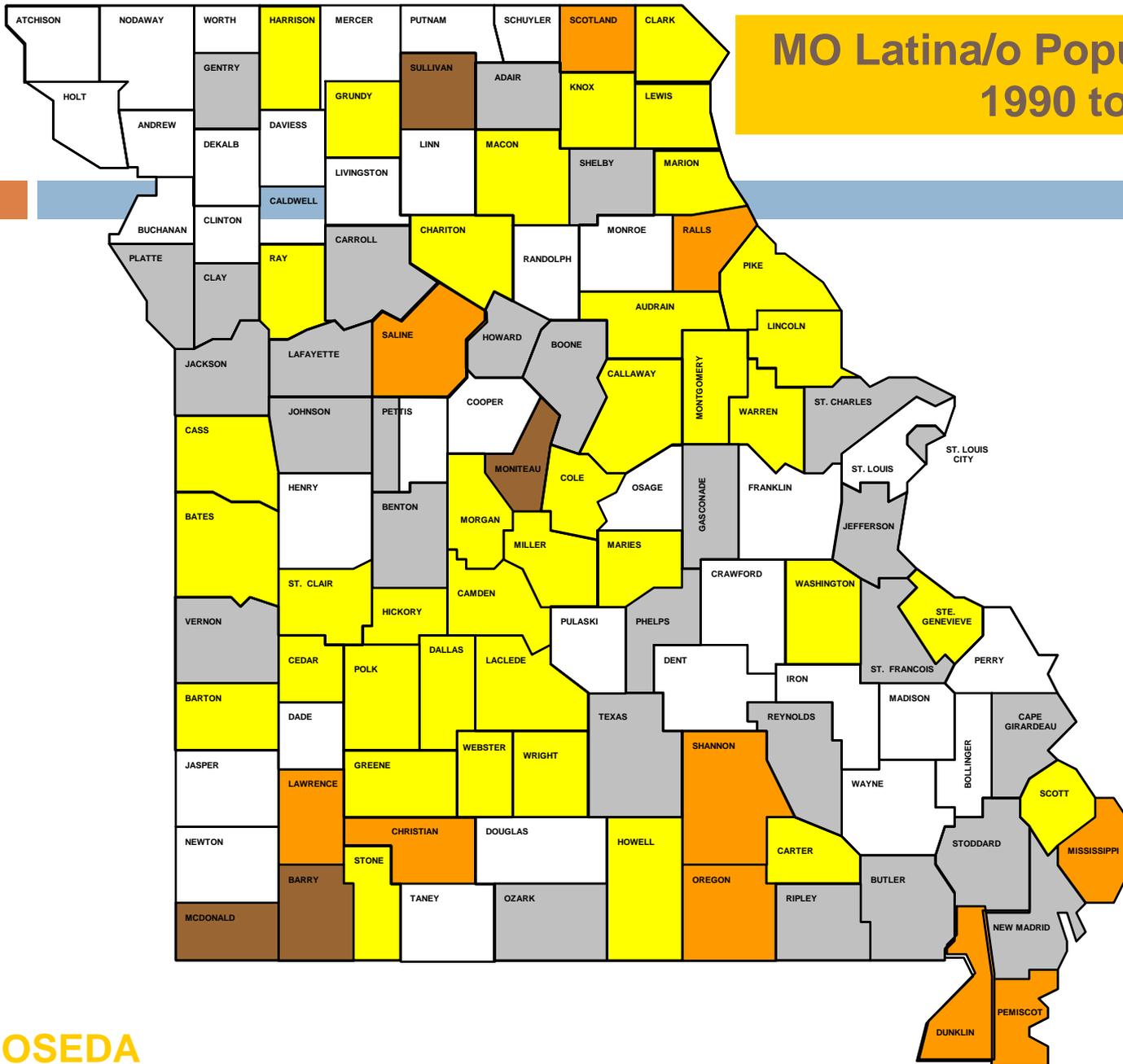
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MO Latina/o Population Change: 1990 to 2000

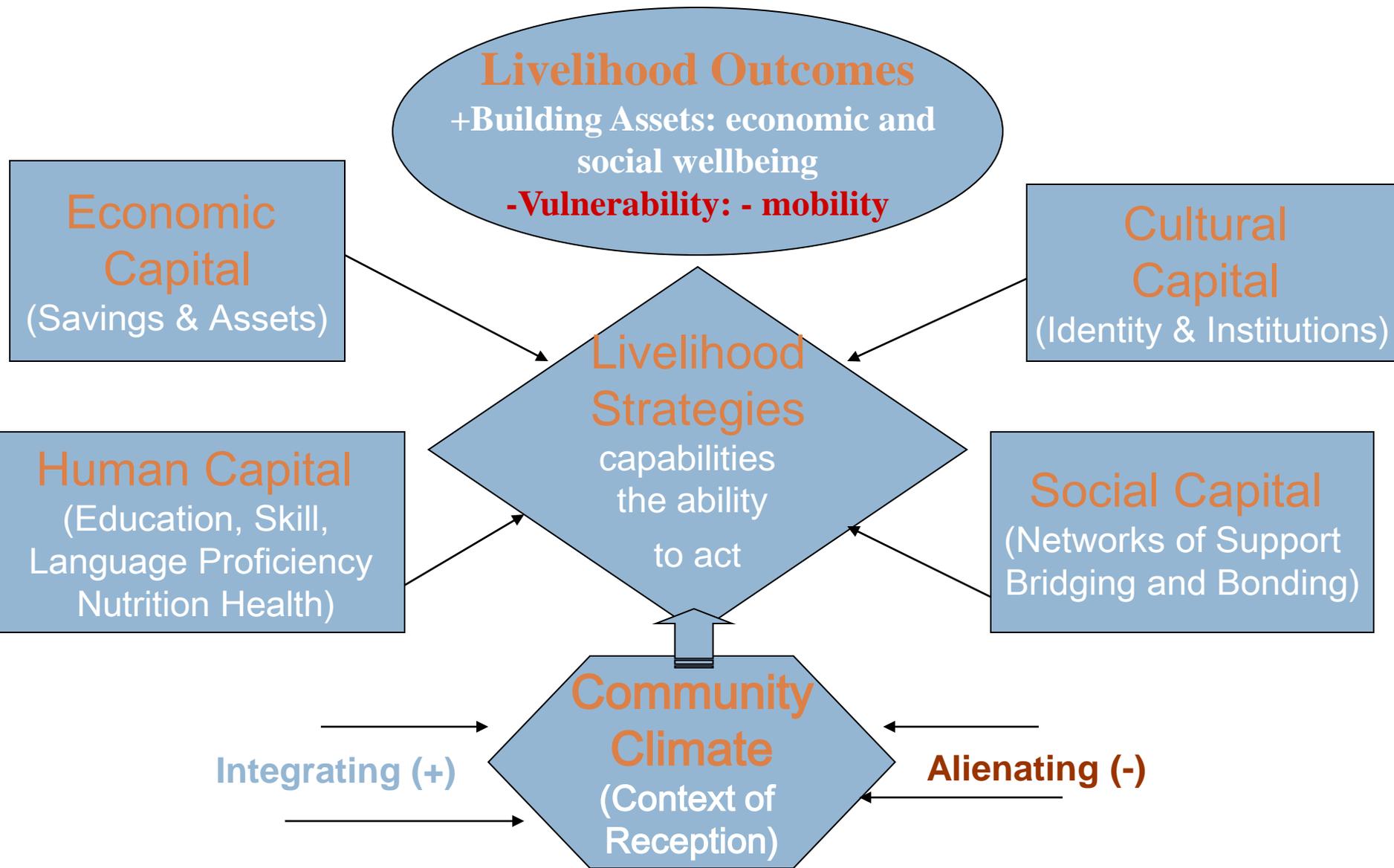


- Less Than National Average
- Higher Than National Average
- More Than 2x Growth
- More Than 4x Growth
- More Than 8x Growth

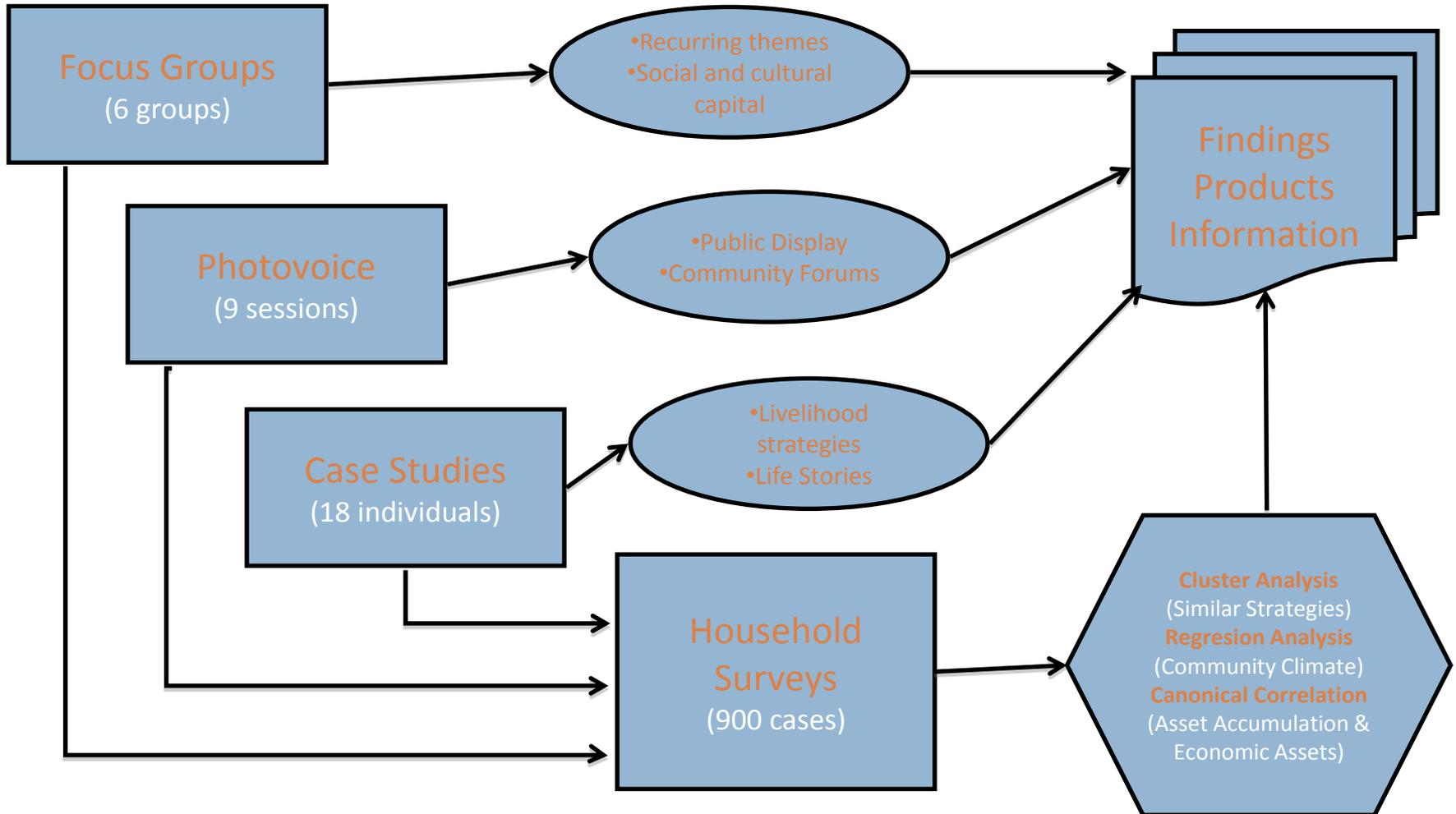
Project Purpose

- Overall goal of the project is to examine the strategies newcomers use to accumulate assets, minimize vulnerabilities, and to integrate in their communities.

Theoretical Model



Research Methods



Purpose of Focus Groups

- To understand...
 - how immigrants are integrating economically and socially;
 - immigrant perceptions on community climate;
 - social relationships and their effect on economic and social integration and community climate.

Communities

- **Criteria**
 - ▣ Diverse groups of Latino newcomers
 - ▣ Experienced high rates of growth in Latino population
- **Community A**
 - ▣ Population of 20,196; 5.6% Latino
 - ▣ Manufacturing/Construction/Agricultural Processing
- **Community B**
 - ▣ Population of 1,863; 22% Latino
 - ▣ Meat Processing
- **Community C**
 - ▣ Population of 6,050; 4% Latino
 - ▣ Hospitality/Landscaping/Construction

Participants

- 46 Latino immigrants
 - ▣ 25 female, 21 male
- Average age 39.93 (SD = 12.11; range = 18-63)
- Average years in U.S. 12.04 years (SD = 10; range = 1-44)
- 63% were married
- 76% had a 9th grade education or lower
- Average children was 2.79 (SD = 2.18; range = 0-8)

Themes

- Acculturation
- Perceptions of Community
- Racism
- Social Capitals
- Barriers to Integration

Acculturation & Identity

- Individual Acculturation
- Community Acculturation

Individual Acculturation

- Strong maintenance of ties to culture of origin
 - ▣ Language use
 - ▣ Traditional beliefs and practices
 - Gender roles
 - Religion
- Change and adaptation to host culture
 - ▣ Desire to learn English
 - ▣ Generation differences
 - *“My son doesn’t want to speak Spanish with me. He tells me he doesn’t like it.”*
 - ▣ Adjusting to “American” food
 - ▣ Time orientation and acquiring new skills
 - *“You identify with the order...wake up at certain times and be punctual.”*

Community Acculturation

□ Community Level

▣ Little interaction between newcomers and receiving community

- Main contacts are with family & other Latino newcomers

- Superficial connections with European Americans

- *“There isn’t much contact between Americans and Hispanics, even when they live right next to each other, there is lack of contact or sharing.”*

▣ Adjustments on both sides

- Newcomers perceive that both receiving community and newcomers are adjusting to one another

- *“It is very different from ours [host culture], but you adapt to it and they to yours.”*

- *“For example, if your children were raised here, you have to celebrate the rabbit. I haven’t found any meaning in it but they do.”*

Perceptions of Community

- Appeal of host community
- Community reception

Appeal of Host Community

- Good community
 - ▣ *“Here it is a calm place to live really. You come here and the place attracts you, the peacefulness more than anything...”*
- Raise family/children’s education
 - ▣ *“You feel more relaxed because you don’t like see on the news about gun shots in the schools....You trust the school because here in this town it’s very quiet.”*
- Cost of living
 - ▣ *“We were in LA but the rent was very expensive and [work] paid very poorly.”*
 - ▣ *“It’s cheaper here.”*

Community Reception

- Welcome reception

- *“I am pretty confident that 75% of them support us.”*

- *“This community is very friendly, it’s very receptive, since I arrived here I have never had problems feeling rejected as a Latino.”*

- Others are willing to help

- *“...when I go to a store to buy something, and I do not know how to say something, it never fails that someone will arrive and if they see me struggling, they lend a hand.”*

Community Reception (cont'd)

□ Unwelcome reception

- *“One time, I went to the store with a friend and we were talking in Spanish. And there was a blond man there and he said, “Why don’t you speak in English?” Because he thought that I did not understand, he said “You should go back to your own country. You have no business here if you can’t speak English.”*

□ Changing reactions: Cold to acceptance

- *“They feared us, and now they have accepted us a little more.”*

Community Reception (cont'd)

- Changing reactions

- *“When we bought the house, next to us lived an American woman. She was 70 or 75 years old. ... she put signs up on the property division. The signs said things like, “Do not trespass,” “Do not litter.” ...with time, we won her over. She took down the signs and said that the children could play. She would go to the house and bring us cookies, and she would sit and chat with us.”*

Racism

- Overt acts of discrimination
- Microaggressions

Overt Acts of Discrimination

□ Target of stereotypes

- ▣ *“My husband got mad when she told him, “You people are...you don’t pay your taxes and you eat off of welfare.”*

□ Housing discrimination

- ▣ *“They wouldn’t rent to us, they said because we had 5 kids.”*
- ▣ *“They [realtor] didn’t want me to buy it [home] because they wanted a white environment, an Anglo-Saxon neighborhood.”*

Overt Acts of Discrimination (cont'd)

□ Mistreatment at work

- *“They know very well that you are working like this [without documents] and this is the reason they treat you like putting you down a little. They give you the hardest jobs.”*
- *“They don’t give you work or don’t pay you for the work you do.”*

Microaggressions

□ Alien in own land

- *“There were very few Hispanics, and yes, the Americans looked at us somewhat strangely.”*
- *“You should go back to your own country.”*
- *“What are you doing here?”*
- *“We are considered foreigners, not locals.”*

□ Color-blindedness

- *“Speak English!”*

Microaggressions (cont'd)

- **Criminality / assumption of criminal status**
 - *“They feared us...”*
 - *“It [distrust toward Latinos] could be for the same reason that I am telling you, that because one is a criminal, they think all are the same.”*
- **Second-class citizen**
 - *“He attended to everyone and I was waiting my turn and suddenly the man said, “What do you want?”*

Social Capitals

□ Bridging Capitals

□ Bonding Capitals

Bridging & Bonding Capital

□ Participation in Local Communities

□ Church

■ Bonding

- *“Now that I have been coming to the church and its meetings, it has been a little better. Before, I was feeling somewhat alone. I had never been so alone. I did not go out until I got involved with the church.”*

■ Bridging

- *“I went to a church and there they gave me information and directions, how to search for doctors, the hospital and a little bit of English, I was already able to fill out applications and all that.”*

Bridging & Bonding Capital (cont'd)

□ Neighborhood

□ Bonding

- *“The neighbors, only “hi”, but it’s not like there where one is very gift giving or sharing.”*
- *“We talk very little and greet each other, but to have the trust to ask him for something, no.”*

□ Schools

□ Bridging

- *“They (bilingual teachers) inform us that there are special classes for kids if they don’t know English. They let us know that if we have any questions or need information about the school and everything, we can communicate with them.”*

Bridging & Bonding Capital (cont'd)

□ Work Connections

□ Bonding

■ Social connections made at workplace (primarily for men)

- *“The people I have met at work, friends and so forth, they know you and you know they will be helpful whenever there is a problem.”*
- *“You only find this sharing at the workplace [btwn Americans and newcomers].*

□ Bridging

- *“When I came by contract here in this job, I asked for information about everything and they gave it to me. Things like where I had to take my kids to school and such. I asked them about everything.”*

Bridging & Bonding Capital (cont'd)

□ Community Institutions

■ Bonding

- *“I came to the Centro and I met V., and in that manner, I met people as they came along. If I have time, I come to the Centro to see if there are people that need help.”*

□ Family and Friends

□ Bridging

- *“...when I arrived here I didn't count on a job, but thanks to some relatives and Miss E. that she was able to contact a company, where I started to work.”*

Bridging & Bonding Capital (cont'd)

□ Family and Friends

□ Bonding & Support

- *“The help with the children comes from friends, I have my daughters, my mother takes care of my daughters when I am working with my wife.”*

□ Primary social network

- *“Social life, with family and that’s it.”*
- *“Our social life for the most part is with family.”*

Barriers to Integration

□ Language

□ Legal status

□ Access to resources

Language Barriers

- Access to health care
 - ▣ *“At times in the hospital, there was a problem that they didn’t have translator.”*
 - ▣ *“At the doctors, nobody spoke Spanish.”*
- Access to services for children
 - ▣ *“Well, to register my kids in school in another language [was a problem].”*
- Access to certain jobs
 - ▣ *“I can’t even [speak English] though I want to, for example to get a job in a restaurant.”*
 - ▣ *“I’ve had opportunities for work and the language is always the problem, I’m losing a lot of excellent jobs.”*

Legal Status

- Limits educational opportunities
 - ▣ *“...it is just because of a simple paper that they cannot go to a university.”*
 - ▣ *“It’s a future for this country. It’s a future that this country is throwing away by not providing the opportunities [educational] to these boys and girls.”*
- Blocks economic sources
 - ▣ *“We work like this, and if we had legal papers, I think that we would work in other better areas, less tiring, and less exhausting! We would make more money or we would have a better future for the family because without papers here, there is nothing.”*
 - ▣ *“Without the legal papers, nobody will offer us a loan or credit.”*

Legal Status (cont'd)

□ Fears of “La Migra”

- *It's like you are always running away here. You feel worried every time you travel, and you don't feel comfortable.*
- *It doesn't matter if you are here legally, because we have relatives [that are not] and you feel it when it happens.*

Access to Resources

- Lack of Latinos at community institutions
 - ▣ *“...the lack of Hispanic personnel [at the hospital].”*
- Access to information
 - ▣ *“...the minority doesn’t have the support of information, we don’t have things in our own language.”*
 - ▣ *“Yes, because the majority of the information comes in English. Here, they hardly provide information in Spanish.”*
- Access to credit
 - ▣ *“When I came here there was no Hispanic store, so it was my intention to start one, but in my case, when I went to the bank I didn’t have credit, they couldn’t give me a loan.”*
 - ▣ *“You can’t even get a car.”*

Implications for Communities

- Provide “welcome packets” in Spanish for newcomers about services and resources in the community
- Provide English language classes at work or in the communities that are accessible to newcomers
- Employers, service providers should acquire basic Spanish language skills to communicate with newcomers

Implications for Communities (cont'd)

- Create opportunities for dialogues and relationship building between newcomers & members of host community
- Provide training for members of the host community about the challenges and barriers that the newcomers experience