Newcomer and Receiving Communities' Perspectives on Latino Immigrant Acculturation in a Rural Midwest Community
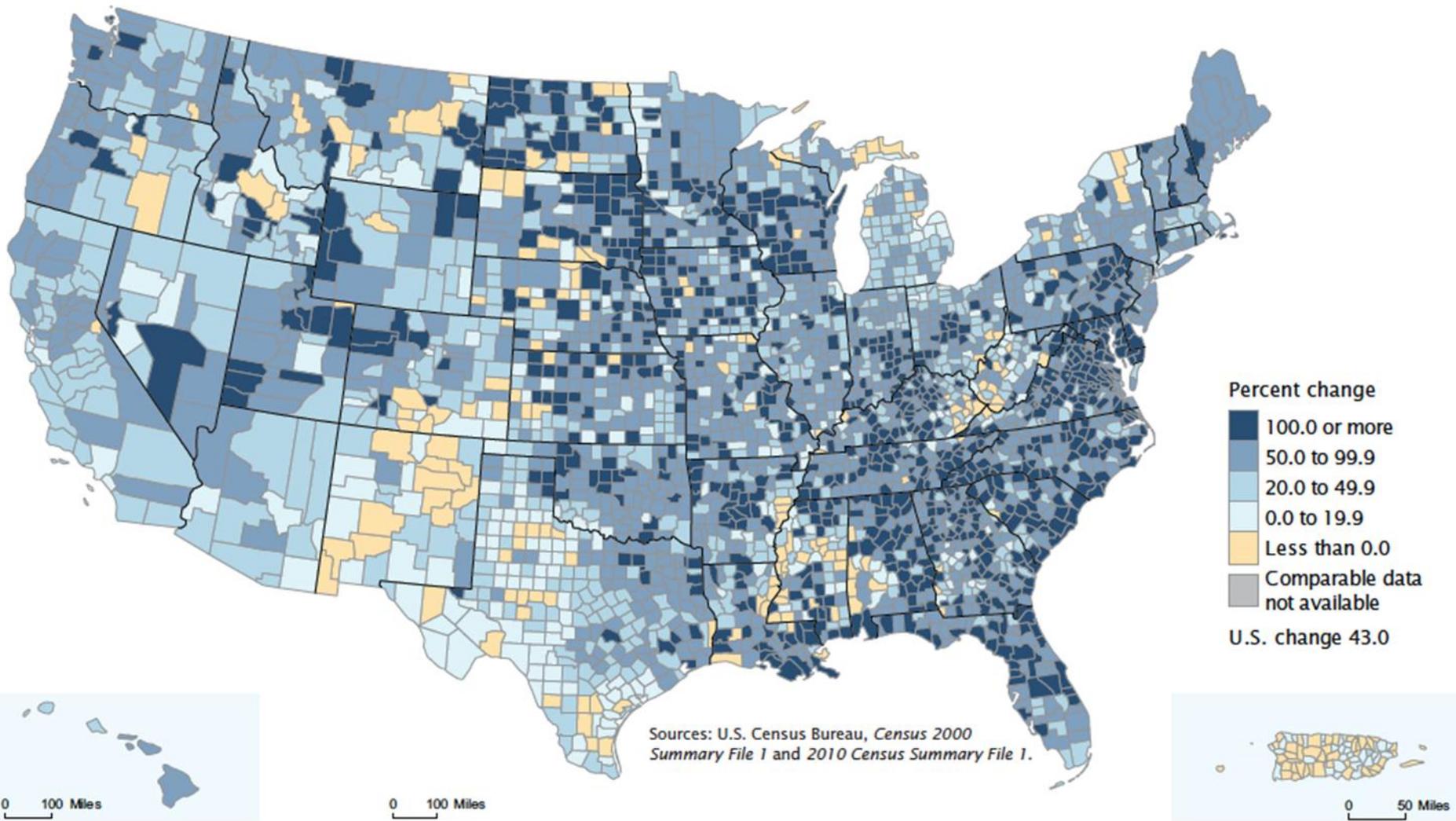
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Introduction

- Rapid growth of foreign-born population

- 11% of the U.S. population, most (53%) of whom come from Latin American countries

- Changing migration patterns
  - Secondary migration to the Midwest is shifting demographics in rural communities
  - Jobs and low cost of living are major pull factors

Percent change

- 100.0 or more
- 50.0 to 99.9
- 20.0 to 49.9
- 0.0 to 19.9
- Less than 0.0
- Comparable data not available

U.S. change 43.0

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000 Summary File 1* and *2010 Census Summary File 1*.

Percent Change in Hispanic or Latino Population by County: 2000 to 2010

Source: US Census Bureau, 2010

Introduction, cont'd

- Rural Midwestern communities facing challenges as a result of the shifting migration patterns

- Understanding the perceptions of members of the receiving community can provide valuable knowledge regarding integration efforts

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Purpose of the Current Study

- To understand the perceptions of **both Latino newcomers and receiving community members** regarding the integration of Latino immigrants in rural communities in the Midwest.

Goals of Larger Project

- This study is part of a larger participatory action research project that seeks to examine effective strategies for integrating Latino newcomers into rural communities.

Procedures

- Worked with trusted organizations (churches, community centers) and gatekeepers in the community to access both newcomers and long-time residents

- Focus groups for newcomers were conducted in Spanish; English for long-term residents

Procedures

- Focus groups lasted from 1 hour – 1.5 hours

- Conducted 4 focus groups:
  - 2 receiving community
    - One for men, one for women
  - 2 newcomer community
    - One for men, one for women

- Interviews were transcribed
  - Newcomer focus group interviews were transcribed in Spanish and then translated in English
  - The English translated transcript was reviewed by a member of the team

Interview Protocol

- **Community**
  - *How did you end up in this community?*
  - *What is it like to live in this community?*
  - *What would you like us to know about your community?*
- **Relationships**
  - *Where do you find support?*
  - *How are these relationships helpful to you?*
  - *Tell us of opportunities you have had to interact with members of the receiving/newcomer community.*
  - *How would you like to see relationships develop between receiving and newcomer communities here?*

Community

- Population of 1,962

- 45.3% Latino

- Manufacturing; accommodation and food services; agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting

Participants: Receiving Community

- 11 participants (6 women, 5 men)
- **Women**
  - Average age: 58.6 years (range 46-67)
  - Average time in community: 39.9 years
  - 2 graduate degree, 2 bachelor's degree, 1 some college, 1 high school
  - Occupations: teacher, nurse, human resources, medical assistant
- **Men**
  - Average age: 49.4 years (range 36-59)
  - Average time in community: 26.8 years
  - 2 graduate/professional degree, 1 associates degree, 1 some college, 1 high school
  - Occupations: medicine, education, nursing, operations director, federal government

Participants: Newcomer Community

- 17 participants (11 women, 6 men)
- **Women**
  - Average age: 35.3 years (range 25-40)
  - Average time in community: 7.2 years
  - 4 5-6th grade, 1 8th grade, 3 some high school, 1 high school diploma, 1 associates degree
  - Occupations: stay-at-home mom, receptionist, manufacturing
- **Men**
  - Average age: 40.6 years (range 23-53)
  - Average time in community: 7.2 years
  - 2 8th grade, 1 10th grade, 2 some high school, 1 high school diploma
  - Occupations: labor, custodial, religious leader, unemployed

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Data Analysis

- Develop codes based on the data

- Themes were generated using the codes
  - Seeking themes or patterns that emerged from the data

- Representative quotes are provided to describe each theme

Themes

- Community Appeal

- Integration Attitudes

- Community Progress

Community Appeal

- Economic opportunities

- Educational opportunities

- Small town atmosphere

- Attachment to community

Community Appeal: Economic Opportunities

- **Work opportunity for self or family member**

- *So that was what called us here, that they (brothers) had the opportunity to work here.* [Newcomer, male]

Community Appeal: Educational Opportunities

- **Safe schools, good FFA and Ag programs in schools, school is old and limited opportunities that larger schools have**

- *We have a special needs child, and I couldn't… the school system just didn't… couldn't give him what he needed. [Receiving, female]*

Community Appeal:
Small Town Atmosphere

- **People know one another; good place to raise a family; not enough activities for youth; safe, peaceful, calm community; not a city; lack of resources found in bigger towns; low cost of living; conservative, work ethic**

Community Appeal:
Small Town Atmosphere

- *…this is the lifestyle I looked for, which wasn't quite as fraught with danger for raising children and everything else; it's a fairly calm community. On the other hand, it's resource poor. Both in the… If you need computer parts or things like that, you're gonna be on the internet, you're gonna be driving, or you're gonna be trying to get it by UPS. And it's resource poor, and doesn't have job opportunities for younger people right out of school.* [Receiving, male]

Community Appeal:
Small Town Atmosphere

- *Well, where I'm from, [big city], there are places to go out, there are things for young people to do when they go out…here no, there is none of that. For the adolescent-aged kids, there were afternoon events, dances for the kids, for the teenagers, this 'swap meet', Boys Club again, there were a lot of things to do. And here, when I got here, it was a total, drastic change for me.* [Newcomer, male]

Community Appeal: Attachment to Place

- **Native of community, family or friends living in area**

Integration Attitudes

- Attitude toward Change

- Perceptions of Immigration/Immigration Policy

- Perceived Supports and Barriers to Integration

- Perceptions of "Other" Community

Integration Attitudes: Attitude toward Change

- **Thoughts and feelings related to increasing diversity in the community; perceptions of how the community has changed as a result of the increased diversity**

- *Receiving: neutral, revived the community (socially, economically), like Latinos, accepting, increased self-awareness*

- *Newcomers: provide more information for immigrants (health care, educational, financial resources), more comfortable with us, decreased feelings of safety, trust as population*

Integration Attitudes:
Attitude toward Change

- *When they (Hispanics) were coming in here, I don't think there was a lot of resistance…I think we bend over backwards trying to do things to help accommodate the folks, because lots of times when they come here, they're struggling. They don't have any money, they don't have any support, they don't know anyone, they're trying to work and do a job… it's a difficult position to be in, and we've done a lot of different things to try and help these folks. I'm sure it's helped us too, and our community has grown, probably, but I don't know that every place would be quite as accepting.* [Receiving, male]

Integration Attitudes:
Attitude toward Change

- *So I was raised not to be prejudiced, but I couldn't tell if I was, because I wasn't exposed to anything else. But you know, Hispanic people moved in and there was a little bit of resistance to it…it's just interesting to test out my beliefs or reasons, and watch them change themselves.* [Receiving, male]

- *They're an asset to our town, I think.* [Receiving, female]

Integration Attitudes: Attitude toward Change

- *There have been changes because before it was a lot more peaceful than now. Before you could sleep with the door and windows open. You could sleep in your house's backyard, you could leave the door to your car unlocked, the groceries outside and there you would find them, and it was so peaceful. Compared to 13 years ago, it's different...we are all strangers to each other.* [Newcomer, female]

Integration Attitudes: Perceptions of Immigration/Immigration Policy

- Made community less safe; employers' hiring practices influence local immigration; assimilation expectations

Integration Attitudes: Perceptions of Immigration/Immigration Policy

- *Its like…we expect them to come all the way toward us. It's what we should do a better job of… I know there's a thing in the United States where, well they're coming to my country, by gosh they better speak our language.' That's a big deal. I mean, if I went to Mexico, I would feel like I would have to learn Mexican just to survive… I don't think we do that much here, meeting them half way; we expect them to come the whole way.* [Receiving, male]

Integration Attitudes: Perceptions of Immigration/Immigration Policy

- *And I know she (my wife) has heard the argument from time to time about, "Why should we spend our money on these Hispanics?" But they're going to grow up and be a part of our community, so it helps to support them and then in turn, our community.* [Receiving, male]

- *People that don't like that we are around here.* [Newcomer, male]

Perceived Barriers and Supports to Integration

- <u>Supports</u>: educational system; providing translating services; churches; friends, Centro Latino, family

- <u>Barriers</u>: language; closed community; misconceptions held by receiving community of immigrants; lack of interactions & communication with one another; prejudice attitudes; self-segregation; translation increases time in providing services

Perceived Barriers and Supports to Integration

- *I bet there are several of them that I'd like but I can't talk to them without having to have an interpreter there and it makes it difficult.* [Receiving, female]

- *The dynamic that I do see, with the kids especially, it seems like when they come into elementary and start school together, they really are integrated together. They play with each other, they do everything, you know… then as they go through the middle grades they start separating again.* [Receiving, male]

Perceived Barriers and Supports to Integration

- *But I don't know that it's as much that people are prejudiced, as much as just not understanding or not feeling comfortable…* [Receiving, male]

Integration Attitudes: Perceptions of "Other" Community

- **RECEIVING: friendly; increasing population in our community; keep to themselves; family oriented; respectful toward elders; hard working; run down rental properties; use false documents; drink too much; diversity among Latinos**

- *I think they're very family-oriented. Because I've lived across from them and I've rented to them. They get together with their families and they barbeque, they have all the kids there… sometimes I think they might drink a little too much, and you know, they keep the kids up late. But its like we used to do when we were kids; they have company over and most people don't do that very much anymore. I look at 'em sometimes and I wish I could do like they do… go out and just sit out on my porch swing and watch my kids play.* [Receiving, female]

Integration Attitudes: Perceptions of "Other" Community

- *…but it's not like they integrate with the American culture. They keep, very much, their Mexican culture even though they're living in the United States area, … people that immigrate from other areas interact and become part of the American group. Their culture seems not to do that.* [Receiving, female]

Integration Attitudes: Perceptions of "Other" Community

- **NEWCOMER: Friendly; offer help; good relations; some don't want us here; welcoming; prejudiced attitudes; some feel superior to us**

Integration Attitudes: Perceptions of "Other" Community

- *People that don't like that we are around here. …go back to our country…stop making babies and causing chaos…ignorant stuff.* [Newcomer, male]

- *…the Americans, they don't try to get to know us, but when they do know us, they like us. It takes them years to see more than what they see on the outside.* [Newcomer, female]

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Community Progress: Ideas for Integration

- **RECEIVING COMMUNITY**: Improve school systems; <u>increase activities for youth</u> (i.e., youth center, recreation activities); create opportunities for interactions between groups; improve city infrastructure to accommodate growth; provide translation services; provide cultural education; hire Hispanic teachers in schools; have member of Hispanic community on school board; bilingualism is an asset; development of a multicultural festival.

Community Progress: Ideas for Integration

- *They just wanted some place to come and sit with their friends, have a snack, play games… funding stopped; the grant stopped. The kids were so disappointed They miss having someplace to go after school, and um… that's something that's needed.* [Receiving, female]

- *I have an interpreter in my office now, where I didn't before. I see a lot of Hispanics…* [Receiving, male]

Community Progress:
Ideas for Integration

- *Some of our community organizations, like the Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce, need to work actively to try and get them to participate, I don't mean it that way… but we need to work on participation and getting the two groups together. I don't know exactly how we're going to do that, but we sure won't unless we start trying.* [Receiving, male]

Community Progress: Ideas for Integration

- **NEWCOMER:** <u>increase activities for youth</u> (recreational activities, youth centers); involve community leaders; require uniforms in schools; offer more community events in the city square; educate Latino community about immigration policies and initiatives; hire interpreters; increase Latinos and/or Spanish speakers in service positions; provide sexual education to youth

Community Progress: Ideas for Integration

- *Do more activities for people to come together, regardless whether its swimming or parades or whatever it is, just some small functions that get people together and get them to come out their house and open up, would be good enough.* [Newcomer, male]

Discussion

From what you have seen in this presentation, what was most relevant to you?

What did you find most challenging?

What are your overall impressions of what we've learned in the project so far?

What else would you like to learn about this issue?

Discussion

- Community interventions to improve integration in this community can begin by finding common areas of agreement across receiving and newcomer communities

- Potential barriers to integration (from both sides) need to be addressed
  - Problem solve with community members on how to reduce and deal with barriers

For More Information…

- The Integration Project: *Immigrant Integration & Sustainable Rural Development: Linking Receiving & Newcomer Communities*

  http://www.cambio.missouri.edu/Integration/

- The Assets Project: *Asset Accumulation Strategies in 3 New Settlement Communities*
  http://www.cambio.missouri.edu/Assets/

- University of Missouri Cambio Center
  - http://www.cambio.missouri.edu/