

Immigrant Integration at the Grassroots: A Field Study of NALACC Member Organizations

Written by Sarah Hooker
For the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC)
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Preface

This field research study sought to examine the ways in which immigrant-led organizations understand and promote integration into US society through community-level initiatives. As a coalition of over 75 immigrant-led organizations, the National Alliance of Latino and Caribbean Communities (NALACC) constitutes an ideal subject for this analysis. The multiple objectives of the study included:

1. Counter public misconceptions about the failure of Latino immigrant populations to successfully integrate into US society by illuminating successful examples of community-based immigrant integration initiatives, spearheaded by Latino communities themselves.
2. Enhance self-understanding of the ways in which integration is conceived of and practiced at the community level by Latino immigrant leaders.
3. Position NALACC migrant leaders as key contributors and stakeholders in the policy dialogues taking place on integration initiatives.
4. Contribute to NALACC's internal knowledge-building, and identify opportunities for further learning and analysis.

The document that follows represents this initial effort to spur dialogue and share the perspectives and experiences of NALACC organizations with regard to the timely topic of immigrant integration. After providing an introduction to the theoretical concept of *integration* and introducing NALACC's unique framework, the report summarizes the results of a membership-wide survey and field interviews with ten featured organizations. The case studies speak for themselves, telling a story of a rich variety of innovative approaches to the challenges and opportunities of integration into US society. The concluding sections highlight key trends and achievements and offer questions for internal analysis and further research. A set of preliminary policy recommendations points to the critical role for immigrant-led organizations in the development of a national integration policy agenda.

Conceptual Framework: How We Define Integration

Today's emphasis on integration marks a new phase in the development of theories on how immigrants become incorporated into the US social fabric, and represents a departure from the assimilation perspective. The concept of *integration* may prove elusive and invoke many different meanings for different audiences. These disparities reflect the multiple sides of the ongoing and contentious debate over the role of immigration and diversity in US society. As an immigrant-led coalition, the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC) seeks to contribute to the evolving dialogue on integration by promoting a vision of integration that recognizes the strengths and contributions that immigrants bring to their US communities and illuminates the importance of civic participation. To articulate NALACC's vision of integration, it helps to first examine other prevailing—and sometimes conflicting—viewpoints held by prominent voices in this conversation throughout recent history.

Classical assimilation theory, which emerged in the 1920s, described a process by which different ethnic groups melded into a common, majority culture by shedding the traits of their culture of origin and adapting to the dominant group.¹ By this view, immigrants slowly abandon distinctive ethnic traditions and cultural practices in order to achieve upward mobility. Scholars in the second half of the 20th Century identified many inconsistencies with this theory, as it failed to fully capture the experience of non-European immigrants. Outcomes of the second and third generation varied greatly by socioeconomic background and “ethnic enclaves”—in which immigrants continued to conduct business in their native language and to maintain cultural traditions—survived and prospered throughout the US.

The multicultural perspective, which took hold in the 1960s, rejected the notion of a homogenous US cultural identity and instead emphasized the ongoing process of reciprocal change and adaptation on the part of immigrant and dominant groups. However, some social scientists still sought to explain the uneven levels of economic success in different immigrant groups. Structuralism, or the “ethnic-disadvantage model,” posited that different ethnic groups are disparately affected by discrimination and structural barriers to advancement.²

More recently, the “segmented assimilation” model proposed by Portes and Zhou in 1993 combined elements of assimilation theory and the “ethnic-disadvantage” model in an attempt to explain the possible outcomes facing the children of immigrants. This theory predicted that many members of today's second generation from disadvantaged families will form a “rainbow underclass,” disconnected from jobs and education.³ This viewpoint has been challenged by many authors as being overly pessimistic. Instead advocates look to policies and programs to address the barriers faced by many immigrant youth.⁴

¹ Zhou, Min (1997).

² Alba, Victor and Richard Nee (2003); Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (2006).

³ Zhou.

⁴ Waldinger, Roger and Renee Reichl (2007).

Unlike assimilation theory, *integration theory* emphasizes a mutual process of adaptation and inclusion, on the part of both newcomers and the receiving society. As articulated by Michael Fix, Co-Director of the Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy,

“Integration” is defined as the process of economic mobility and the social inclusion of newcomers. Integration implies a two-way process that involves change on the part of not just immigrants but of members of the receiving community. ... Successful integration builds communities that are stronger economically and more inclusive socially and culturally.⁵

While the language of integration is new, this concept more accurately describes the real process of diverse communities' incorporation into the US that has occurred for generations. Irish and Jewish immigrants, originally ostracized by many social sectors, have achieved social advancement, maintained their heritage and added their unique traditions to the US mainstream. When the entire country celebrates St. Patrick's Day, the US engages in a demonstration of how immigrants have enriched the social and cultural fabric.

Opportunities for positive integration depend upon the protection of immigrants' rights. Donald Kerwin argues for a “mutually reinforcing view of ‘rights’ and ‘integration’ that reflects our constitutional tradition, as well as the aspirations of immigrants.”⁶ In this view, legal rights and responsibilities promote the “common good.” Extending legal status and protections to immigrants facilitates integration, to the benefit of all members of society. NALACC shares the view of integration as a two-way process and agrees with Kerwin's argument that full integration requires full legal status and protections.

Despite the emergence of integration theory as a shared process of learning and growth between immigrants and the host society, some contemporary scholars persist in equating integration with assimilation into the US mainstream.⁷ Even those who articulate a more nuanced version of integration involving mutual adaptation have trouble measuring and observing integration in a way that reflects this perspective. Fix and other key scholars focus their attention on integration indicators and interventions in the areas of employment, English language instruction, naturalization, and the educational attainment of the second generation. Scholars with different ideological perspectives continue to argue about the rate at which today's immigrants are successfully integrating, based on such indicators.⁸ While such research highlights both important progress and areas for concern, that debate is not central to this report which examines other important ways of observing the integration process in action.

NALACC believes that an exclusive focus on the mainstream integration indicators may lose crucial elements of the phenomenon of integration. NALACC members understand immigrant incorporation into U.S. society not only in terms of learning English and becoming U.S.

⁵ Fix, Michael (2007).

⁶ Kerwin, Donald (2007).

⁷ Jacoby, Tamar (2007).

⁸ For a deeper analysis of these arguments, see Fix (2007), Waldinger (2007), Jacoby (2007) and Vigdor, Jacob L. (2008).

naturalized citizens, but also in terms of how immigrants enrich and contribute to the country through their economic and social activities and cultural heritage.

In this initial study, NALACC attempts to illuminate a more balanced approach to integration policy, based on the everyday experience of member organizations in local immigrant communities. This broader view of integration highlights the multiple processes required for immigrant families to become full participants in an inclusive society. Some of these integration activities support the same outcomes measured by the traditional voices on integration policy, while other additions are more difficult to measure but equally important.

NALACC' vision of integration includes the following elements:

- ESL and adult education
- Legal services and naturalization
- Voter education and outreach
- Access to jobs that pay a living wage and uphold workers' rights
- Health care resources and education
- Access to financial education, asset building, and other financial resources
- High-quality pre K-12 education for the children of immigrants and access to higher education for youth
- Acknowledgement and strengthening of cultural identity
- Opportunities for civic participation, cultural exchange, and dialogue with other groups

A few of these elements deserve special mention, as they reflect NALACC's unique vantage point as an immigrant-led coalition. Strong connections with migrants' ethnic communities encourage newcomers to take pride in their cultural identity, and in turn, this healthy self-image leads to positive relationships with other social groups. Immigrant organizations engaged in public service projects with their communities of origin also promote the shared values of philanthropy and volunteerism. A comprehensive understanding of integration should recognize that much of what immigrants bring to the US is the richness of their own culture, as well as their bicultural skills and ability to navigate the cross-border social and economic networks.

Finally, NALACC members embrace opportunities for civic participation in US society as essential opportunities for integration. Civic participation offers one of the strongest expressions of the United States' democratic ideals, and immigrants demonstrate that they are internalizing these founding principles through active involvement in grassroots organizations. By participating in community-based organizations (CBOs), immigrants are carving their space in US civil society, organizing to meet common challenges, and building partnerships with diverse ethnic groups.

Integration as Practiced by Immigrant Organizations: Results of the Member-Wide Survey

As a point of departure for this study of integration initiatives at the ground level, NALACC conducted a general survey of its members. The dual purpose of this brief, Spanish-language questionnaire was to examine what the concept of integration means for members and identify the relevant and innovative programs carried out by member organizations. The information was gathered through an online survey tool, as most NALACC members are familiar with communicating virtually with one another. A total of 23 organizations responded to the survey, representing ten states, including: California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Texas, Wisconsin and Washington, DC.

This online survey allowed NALACC members to define integration in their own words, yielding both a diversity of perspectives and many shared foundations. Many respondents referred to integration as a “two-way” process, and stressed mutually beneficial sharing of cultural traditions and lifestyles between immigrants and native groups. Members highly value freedom of cultural expression and the preservation of their ethnic heritage. According to one member, “For me, [integration] is the ability to share my culture, and enjoy the cultural expression of other groups within my community.”

The majority of definitions of integration included a combination of rights and responsibilities for immigrants. Many mentioned the importance of learning about US laws and civic duties, as well as the freedom to enjoy Constitutional rights. Several members argued that “legal status,” “documentation,” and “immigration reform” are necessary for their communities to realize full integration. Without legal status, immigrants are kept at the margins of society, and their opportunities for participation, economic advancement, and education are severely curtailed.

The concept of “taking advantage of US society’s resources” played a role in many responses, as well. Newcomers need to be oriented to local resources, institutions, and educational opportunities in order to use these tools to their advantage. Finally, the concept of “full participation” echoed throughout the responses as a common goal of integration.

A few illustrative and particularly poignant responses follow.

Integration is: making the correct use of the tools provided by our legal and political system in all its forms—including the civil, business, social, health, and educational realms—without forgetting your roots and the transnational character of what it means to be a migrant. Integration is full participation in the new society in which we find ourselves, without giving up our customs or families. It is enjoying, like any other person, the benefits offered by our new living conditions. It is respecting laws and making others respect us, and demanding just and equal treatment for our communities.

—Marco Medina, International Migrants’ Development Fund; Washington, DC

For me, the concept of integration is the process by which an immigrant can develop a sense of belonging. This person should have all the necessary tools for

their own development, participation, and full functioning in all areas of society, including the economic, political, civic and social arenas.

—Claudia Lucero, Durango Unido; Chicago

In order to understand members' unique programs and services, respondents were asked to identify any of their organizations' activities related to the nine elements of NALACC's vision of integration, and to describe these programmatic elements. Notably, 100% of the respondents offer opportunities for "civic participation, cultural exchange, and/or dialogue with other groups in society." Civic participation represents a shared characteristic and benefit of community-based organizations, as these groups rely heavily upon the support and commitment of their base. Small, immigrant-led groups also understand the importance of working in coalition and building alliances with other groups, in order to pool strength and resources. These strategic relationships effectively carry integration to a deeper level, by building cross-cultural relationships, promoting tolerance, and instilling a sense of shared investment in local communities.

With regard to other elements of integration, the majority of organizations offer ESL classes for adults or adult education (64%), programs for youth and the second generation (62%), and legal immigration and citizenship services (61%). The elements of the integration vision that members practice the least include job search assistance or vocational training (18%) and ESL classes for children and youth (16%). The lack of language classes for children and youth can probably be explained in part by the presence of programs for English-language-learners (ELLs) in the public schools. Community organizations may also view the role of workforce development as falling within the domain of other service providers, including publicly funded workforce development initiatives. The employment-related initiatives conducted by members typically include a focus on protecting workers' rights, versus job placement or training.

The results of this initial survey led to identification of a smaller subset of organizations with whom to conduct more extensive field interviews. Ten groups were chosen on the basis of organizational diversity—with regard to geographic location, ethnic origin, size and history—and particularly innovative or intensive integration-related activities. This study could not highlight all of the organizations providing interesting and important contributions to the field of integration in this small study as only a subset is featured here. Nonetheless, the ten case studies that follow paint an illustrative picture of the variety, creativity, resourcefulness and ideological visions of leadership in integrating these communities to life in the United States. Together they demonstrate the rich contributions of immigrant-led organizations to the field of integration and carve a role for these voices in national policy dialogues.

Case Study: Central American Resource Center (CARECEN)

The Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) in Los Angeles has grown and developed to meet new challenges facing the community. According to Executive Director Marvin Andrade, CARECEN was founded expressly to integrate the Central American community into US society, and the agency has led this work for 25 years. The organization was founded in 1983 by a group of Salvadoran refugees fleeing civil war and seeking political asylum. CARECEN responded to an overwhelming need for legal immigration services, as Los Angeles received more Central American refugees during this period than any other city. Today, the organization operates its own community center in LA's Pico-Union/Westlake neighborhood, offering diverse programs and maintaining a staff of over 28 employees.

CARECEN's mission is to “empower Central Americans by defending human and civil rights, working for social and economic justice and promoting cultural diversity.” The organization's four goals reflect the four essential components of its vision of integration: (1) Work to support permanent resident status, family reunification and active citizenship. (2) Create educational programs that motivate, expand knowledge, promote excellence, enhance awareness of opportunities and foster community identity. (3) Build a strong community through education and organizing. (4) Engage in community economic development. “The focus has always been to empower the community by providing them the tools to be self-advocates,” says Andrade.

Andrade also stresses the primary importance of immigration services and documentation to the integration process, as legal status improves financial opportunities and opens doors to many other aspects of membership in society. As LA's Central American community matured and developed roots in the US, the organization also launched programs promoting social and economic integration, including ESL and civics classes, college-access programs and cultural education for youth, and voter registration and outreach initiatives.

The organization's Youth Leadership Program seeks to develop the leadership capacity and enhance the education of second generation immigrants through a variety of programs including internships and after-school arts and technology classes. One of program's goals is to create and prepare rising community leaders through involvement in all of CARECEN's advocacy activities. Since the program began in 1992, the organization has seen many original participants finish college, and several have even joined CARECEN's staff. As Andrade notes, “Nationally, a new generation of immigrants is taking the reigns as leaders in the social justice sector.” CARECEN's recent institutional changes exemplify this process, as original leaders have reached retirement. Now young leaders who grew up with the organization—including Andrade himself—have deepened their commitment to its future.

CARECEN has played a key role in movement-building at the local and national levels. Locally it has sought to reform public education in Los Angeles and, in the process, build partnerships and coalitions. Nationally, the focus has been immigration reform. CARECEN has remained a vital community resource through its contributions to the transformation of the diverse US society and its promotion of civic engagement. As Andrade argues, organizations like CARECEN should be at forefront of any integration policy development, due to their rich experience in providing services to strengthen the immigrant community.

Case Study: Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (AMEXCAN)

The Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (AMEXCAN) emerged to meet the needs of a rural immigrant community experiencing rapid growth. Established in 2001, the organization conducts programs in several Eastern North Carolina counties with Mexican and Latin American immigrants. AMEXCAN's four areas of focus include culture, education, leadership development, and health. As North Carolina is a newer immigrant-receiving region, many of the activities of AMEXCAN involve partnerships and relationship-building with non-immigrant groups and institutions.

AMEXCAN promotes cultural exchange and maintains Mexican traditions through three annual festivals. These festivals provide opportunities for local performers and artists to share their talents, offer a participatory environment for migrant families, and build on partnerships with local educational institutions. Students and faculty from nearby universities, community colleges and other public schools are invited to learn more about their new Latino neighbors. As Executive Director Juvencio Rocha states, "We try to bring everybody to engage in the process."

The organization's education department works with migrant communities on an impressive scale, conducting 21 informational workshops in seven counties last year. The forums cover issues relevant to integration, such as immigrant rights and access to public education and social services. The leadership development branch encourages community members to direct and participate in four local chapters of AMEXCAN. Rocha explains, "You have to empower communities and individuals so that they can address their own needs in their local communities." AMEXCAN staff identifies and develops local leaders, who in turn help to organize their base for community events. Through AMEXCAN's newest program in health, the organization serves on a state-level task force on HIV and AIDS in Latino populations.

An example of AMEXCAN's initiative in dialogues on important integration issues is its role in hosting and organizing the First Mexican and Latin American Leadership Summit in North Carolina in June 2008. This event, cosponsored by prominent organization such as NALACC and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), will bring together approximately 250 people working on the immigration issues in the region. As described by AMEXCAN's website, "This forum will explore how the interdependence between North Carolina communities and Latino migrants can help build bridges and enhance social cohesion." Notably, one of the main panel discussions will address alliance-building between African American and Latino communities. AMEXCAN has already made notable progress in addressing the critical area of interethnic relations. Rocha notes that the African American leadership in the region has been more receptive to immigrants than the white population. He stresses the importance of coalition-building: "The future of the country is going to depend on these minority communities, especially in rural North Carolina."

AMEXCAN's initiatives are most constrained by their small size and limited resources. Currently, the organization has four paid staff, but counts on a base of 150 volunteers. AMEXCAN hopes to expand their leadership development program, recognizing a critical need for this capacity-building, as the migrant community continues to grow at an impressive rate.

Case Study: International Migrants' Development Fund (FIDMi)

The International Migrants' Development Fund (FIDMi, for the Spanish acronym) promotes economic integration by building immigrants' access to, and knowledge of, the financial system. Formed in 2002 to offer an innovative approach to common socioeconomic problems, the Washington, DC organization's mission is to "contribute to the economic security and development of Latino immigrants and their communities of origin through facilitating their engagement in the formal financial system, financial literacy counseling and promotion, advocacy, community organizing and community reinvestment." FIDMi demonstrates the need for these programs, citing that 50% of Latino immigrants are currently "unbanked," limiting their opportunities to build assets in the US and increasing their vulnerability to theft.⁹ Immigrants face cultural, language, education and immigration barriers to participation in the financial service system, and as a migrant-led organization, FIDMi seeks to bridge these gaps by building trust and knowledge within DC's large Central American and Mexican communities.

Chief of Operations and Financial Programs Marco Medina describes how FIDMi's various programs address the different challenges to wealth creation that the organization has observed. The "Semillas" (seeds) program offers a financial literacy course through seven-week workshops at an appropriate educational level for community members. Upon learning about the importance of savings and credit and other topics, participants are able to receive financial services through FIDMi's "Mi Tierra" social enterprise. The organization has developed partnerships with savings institutions and credit unions such as Lafayette Federal Credit Union.

The staff has learned, however, that US credit unions have particularly stringent requirements with regard to legal identification, preventing some undocumented immigrants from accessing their services. As an inventive solution, FIDMi has also developed partnerships with credit unions in immigrants' countries of origin, including Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador and Mexico. This strategy allows undocumented immigrants to use savings and remittances as a tool for investment in their home countries' financial infrastructure, while also building their personal assets to support their lives in the US. Through a Financial Promoters program, community members are trained to conduct street outreach and teach other immigrants about the financial system, with a specific initiative—Latinas en Poder!—addressing women's financial independence.

In the organization's short history, FIDMi has seen increasing use of their programs, and has established strong relationships with government agencies. They receive funding from the city's Office on Latino Affairs, and have advocated for improvements in the city's economic policies. Additionally, FIDMi has had the opportunity to meet with the International Development Bank, the World Bank and the Finance Committee of the US Senate, to discuss the impact of international economic policies on migrant communities in the US. FIDMi also strives to change the dialogue around remittances, by focusing on making the senders of remittances more productive and giving them the resources to grow their assets. Medina credits the organization's accomplishments to the expertise of the board and staff in the area of community development, as well as their clearly defined mission.

⁹ http://www.fidmi-mitierra.org/html/about_us.html

According to FIDMi's perspective, financial integration should be at the heart of any integration agenda. As Medina states, "People come here mainly for financial reasons; to make money and to work.... Integration has everything to do with economic advancement, so that people know how to maximize their resources and labor, which is what they came here to do." He feels that English language acquisition and legal status are necessary supports to immigrants' overarching goals of supporting their families and participating in the US economy.

Case Study: Centro Presente

Centro Presente embraces popular education principles and community ownership throughout all aspects of its work. Founded in 1981 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, as an initiative of the Central American refugee, faith-based, and legal services communities, the organization has grown to become a statewide Latin American immigrant organization with a variety of programs supporting integration and advancing the movement for immigrant rights. Beginning in 2001, the organization engaged in deliberate strategic changes to make itself more participatory and facilitate community ownership. Its mission statement includes: "Through the integration of community organizing, leadership development and basic services, Centro Presente strives to give our members voice and build community power." As with several other NALACC organizations, Centro's areas of focus include legal services, adult education, a youth program, and advocacy, but all programs have been structured to build in the leadership of Centro's members. Executive Director Maria Elena Letona explains, "I think that the overall organizing framework that we use is what makes the organization unique, and due to that, the programs are unique."

The Education for Empowerment adult education program provides ESL, citizenship, and computer literacy classes. As Letona describes, the language curriculum focuses on the rapid acquisition of skills that are most relevant to immigrants' lives, and incorporates content on "immigrant rights, workers' rights, and the global economy." Another unique component of the adult education program is the inclusion of Spanish as a Second Language classes for non-immigrants seeking to improve their language skills for human service careers or personal communication. This initiative fosters two-way integration by giving non-immigrant residents the tools for dialogue and cultural exchange with newcomers to their communities.

The Pintamos Nuestro Mundo ("We Paint our World") youth program promotes leadership development and organizing. The program operates in Somerville and it is the only after-school program in the area geared toward Latino students. Pintamos Nuestro Mundo consists of arts, academic enrichment as well as social and emotional support components. Creative youth initiatives include classes in video production, jewelry-making, and the creation of a business enterprise in which students design and sell t-shirts with socially conscious messages. A partnership with Tufts University provides volunteer mentors and tutors for students, helping

immigrant youth to plan for college and providing exposure to a highly selective university. Such programs support a positive self-identity and facilitate educational advancement.

Letona views civic participation as a crucial component of the integration, and discusses the benefits of community-based organizations in promoting this process. She argues that ownership and involvement in an organization constitute quintessentially American behavior, in accordance with the principles of democratic society. With regard to integration policy, Letona points to the need for more public funding of ESL resources. Compared to formal language institutions, she acknowledges that community-based organizations have capacity constraints, and lack structure and program evaluation. However, she states, “There are other benefits connected to learning your English at organizations like Centro Presente. Students can become leaders and active participants in the organization. Three former ESL students are now on the board of directors.”

Case Study: Voces de la Frontera

With a primary focus on protecting the rights and improving the working conditions of immigrants, Voces de la Frontera represents a newer organization that draws upon a variety of local resources to enhance integration. As declared by the organization’s website, “Voces de la Frontera is Wisconsin’s leading immigrant rights group - a grassroots organization that believes power comes from below and that people can overcome injustice to build a better world.” The membership-based organization’s offices were designed as workers’ rights centers, but they have evolved to include ESL classes, youth clubs, voter mobilization, and other initiatives.

Voces de la Frontera originally began as a bilingual newspaper promoting immigrant rights in Austin, Texas in 1995. After co-founder Christine Neumann-Ortiz relocated to Wisconsin, she continued to serve as a leader in the protection of workers’ rights. As a response to the overwhelming need in Wisconsin’s growing Latino immigrant community, Neumann-Ortiz and other immigrant leaders opened the Milwaukee center in 2001, followed by a Racine branch in 2004. Voces now boasts eleven paid staff, and 1400 members. The centers provide legal assistance to immigrants dealing with problems such as discrimination in the workplace, unjustified terminations, and repercussions of the Social Security Administration’s “No-Match” letters. Voces staff inform workers of their rights, facilitate negotiation with employers, and refer cases to the Labor Relations Board when necessary. This framework promotes integration by helping immigrants to realize and defend their civil rights, as well as facilitates economic advancement and an informed workforce.

As Membership Coordinator Juan Ruiz describes, successful partnerships with local institutions and non-immigrant groups enhance the Voces’ programs. Voces staff conducts presentations for the adult civics classes at public schools, and Mormon missionaries serve as ESL teachers. Ruiz also notes that the organization has a “very good relationship” with the local government. The police department has long held a policy that police will not enforce immigration law, but this position came under attack by anti-immigrant groups this year during a transition of authority in

the department. Voces met with the new police chief about the importance of this policy, and has gained his agreement that the policy will not change at this time.

The organization and the city have also partnered to increase new citizens' integration into the political process. Voces' "Get Out the Vote" initiative seeks to increase Latino voter registration, turnout, and education for the 2008 elections. Charged with leading this program, Ruiz explains that Voces is trying to understand the reasons for the low voter turnout in Milwaukee's Latino community—approximately 35% in recent elections—and address these barriers. For example, he has arranged to have a practice polling station placed in the Voces office, in order to familiarize new voters with the technology, which can be intimidating. Voces has also led local efforts to reduce language barriers to voter participation, and the city has agreed to provide bilingual representatives and printed materials at polling sties for the first time.

Ruiz feels that integration depends upon community involvement and positive interactions. Voces promotes active immigrant involvement in improving working conditions, schools, and governance. Latino communities must become educated participants, so that non-immigrants "...can see that we are here to play a role, so that they take us seriously."

Case Study: Hondurans Against AIDS

The history of Hondurans Against AIDS provides an example of a community that has confronted the challenges of integration across the dynamics of race and culture for years, seeking mutual understanding and solidarity. The New York volunteer-led organization was formed in 1992 to "support the population living with HIV/AIDS and reduce its incidence in the Garifuna, Honduran, and overall Central American communities." As a Garifuna-led group, they strive to strengthen Central American black communities, which have been particularly marginalized, and address the additional barriers faced by the immigrant population affected by HIV/AIDS. Mirtha Colón, President and co-founder, describes the group's evolution and lessons learned about interethnic integration.

The Garifuna are an ethnic group of mixed Afro-Caribbean and indigenous American ancestry, with their own rich culture, language, and religion. Originally from the island of Saint Vincent in the Lesser Antilles, they were violently exiled by the British to Central America in 1797. Today the Garifuna diaspora lives in Central America and the US. As Colón relates, the Garifuna have struggled with integration into many social groups, including Central American society, the US Latino community, the African American community, and overall US society.

Hondurans Against AIDS began when Colón and other staff at a community health clinic in the Brox recognized the large number of Hondurans living with this disease lacked support and resources. For the first several years of its existence, they found the stigma against this issue in their community to be so great that the group struggled to advance. They refocused their initial work on transnational issues, particularly land rights struggles in Honduras. The group built

valuable connections and recognition by playing a leadership role in the formation of several transnational coalitions, including the Central American Black Organization (CABO), which was founded in 1995. For both the 200th anniversary of the exile of the Garifuna from Saint Vincent and the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, Hondurans Against AIDS led US-based organizing and developed partnerships with the African American community.

Today, the organization's work in the area of health and integration involves numerous workshops—on HIV/AIDS and issues such as prostate cancer and domestic violence— as well as an annual health fair. The last health fair brought a larger turnout than ever, and over 60 people took free HIV tests during the event. Workshops also focus on leadership development, and the group conducts political advocacy through CABO. The group is comprised of about ten volunteer leaders, with no paid staff, and receives support for their activities from small grants, grassroots fundraising, and in-kind donations.

Colón's conception of integration emphasizes the importance of improving interethnic relations, and stresses the essential role of internal reflection in eliminating racism. Despite Hondurans Against AIDS' extensive involvement in alliance-building with African American leaders, they still struggle to deepen this relationship at the community level, due to cultural differences. Colón feels that diverse racial and ethnic groups must actively learn one another's history and customs, in order to achieve integration, and she always invites other groups to Garifuna cultural events. Hondurans Against AIDS' workshops on Garifuna history also serve to instill the members' pride in their own community. Colón challenges Latino immigrant groups to undergo a deliberate process of learning about their own diverse roots, and feels that Latinos "need to work on their own internal racism and discrimination, before building those alliances." This perspective serves as a reminder of the two-way nature of integration, as well as its potential to enrich the social and cultural landscape of the US.

Case Study: Center of Resources for Central American (CRECEN)

The Center of Resources for Central Americans (CRECEN) in Houston represents another Central American organization that fosters civic participation, education, and public service in its own unique way. Founded in 1985 by Houston's Salvadoran community, CRECEN played a leading role in the Salvadoran American National Network (SANN)'s fight for legal status for Central Americans refugees. In the last three years CRECEN has added an affiliated organization, America Para Todos (America for All), which focuses specifically on youth integration. CRECEN's activities are funded entirely by membership and legal service fees, and the organization takes pride in the community's ownership of its work.

Like many NALACC organizations, CRECEN provides low-cost legal immigration services. Through this assistance, many members have received Temporary Protected Status (TPS) worker permits since 1991, and some are now able to apply for permit residency through the Nicaraguan

Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA). In addition to helping immigrants achieve legal status, CRECEN facilitates integration through ESL and citizenship classes, along with human rights workshops.

America Para Todos has refined CRECEN's earlier youth work to focus specifically on access to higher education for undocumented students. As undocumented youth are ineligible for government-sponsored financial aid, many view college as unattainable. America Para Todos helps youth to overcome this financial barrier, by facilitating the process of finding private scholarships and alternative forms of financial aid. Serving as a resource center, the organization has helped approximately 50 students to obtain college funding in the past four months alone. They are proud to report that one of their undocumented students will be attending Baylor College of Medicine, with all expenses paid by scholarships.

One of CRECEN's most unique programs involves the Latino population in community service trips to impoverished communities in El Salvador. Since this program began in 1997, they have led 17 delegations of approximately 100 people each. Through a rare agreement with US immigration authorities, CRECEN is able to receive special visas for Central Americans with temporary immigration status (such as TPS permits) to travel to El Salvador for up to 30 days on these delegations. As immigrants with temporary status are typically not able to leave the country except in emergency cases, this arrangement offers a chance for many participants to see their family members for the first time in years, while also engaging in service while in El Salvador. Delegations carry aid to new communities on each trip, and have built wells, latrines, and soup kitchens in several towns. Many participants also bring typical Salvadorian crafts, made by residents, back to the US to sell on behalf of the communities.

Philanthropy and volunteerism are often lauded as core American values, and CRECEN's programs promote this mentality of public service. Further, by simultaneously facilitating integration into the middle class and promoting pride in immigrants' cultural roots, CRECEN nurtures the development of a strong bicultural identity.

Case Study: Guatemalan Unity Information Agency (GUIA)

The Guatemalan Unity Information Agency (GUIA) serves as a resource center for the integration of Miami's Guatemalan population and demonstrates the benefits of community organizing based on national origin. Formed seven years ago, the small organization helps orient adult immigrants to a variety of local services, and provides educational and cultural programs. The two paid staff members and many volunteers operate a walk-in referral center, in addition to a variety of classes and a soccer league. Director Marlon González speaks to the importance of ethnic community organizations in supporting the integration of their own newcomers. He states, "It is extremely important for a Guatemalan organization to have this capacity. People have an easier and faster process of adaptation when they identify with their own communities." As he explains, without the help of trustworthy organizations, immigrants are often the victims of

misinformation and fraud, and commit many unnecessary errors. Organizations based on national origin easily instill trust in new immigrants, and convey cultural understanding.

GUIA views technological proficiency as a necessity for successful integration, and gives immigrants the tools to reap its benefits through their computer literacy classes. As most Guatemalan immigrants come from rural villages, many have never had exposure to computers. According to González, “Computers are a necessity of life in the US.” Basic computer skills allow people to access resources, pay bills, and communicate easily and inexpensively with family members in their country of origin. Furthermore, computer abilities open the doors to more highly-skilled and better-paying jobs with career ladders. Such classes represent one component of crucial workforce development for immigrants, as the US economy depends increasingly on a technologically proficient labor force. GUIA is also seeking funding to form a Domestic Service Workers’ Cooperative, which would give workers in this field access to group benefits, information about their rights, and access to classes to increase their marketable skills for other jobs with better career trajectories.

GUIA’s soccer league was formed with the rationale that sporting events offer an avenue to share information and cultural traditions, and build relationships with other ethnic groups. Today the league boasts 16 teams of different nationalities, and always has to turn other groups away due to lack of capacity to expand the program.

González argues that by maintaining and sharing their cultural traditions, Guatemalans are adding to the rich diversity that makes Miami “one of the most international communities in the world.” Nicknamed the City of the Americas, over 60% of the city’s US citizens are foreign-born. As González states, “Sharing our culture with this country enriches the national culture.” He also feels that nationalistic pride in their countries of origin should not impede immigrants’ development of a bicultural identity and loyalty to the US. González reminds immigrant organizations to help their communities understand that “it’s a good thing to come to love both the US and your country of origin as your own.” While GUIA is an exclusively Guatemalan organization, it tries to maintain an outward focus on inclusion in—and contributions to—broader US society.

Case Study: Latinos Progresando

By helping Latino families navigate both the legal process and emotional terrain of integration, Latinos Progresando (LP) takes an innovative approach to many of the challenges facing today’s immigrants. Luis Gutierrez, the US-born son of Mexican immigrants, founded the Chicago organization ten years ago. The youthful staff and board continue to imbue it with the energy to tackle relevant social issues and open the doors to partnerships with new communities.

The organization was originally founded to meet the community’s need for “high-quality, low-cost legal immigration services,” and continues to assist clients with a variety of family-based

immigration petitions. Gutierrez believes that legal services mark the first step toward integration, but that citizenship is not the only important measure. While many of LP's clients are not able to obtain citizenship at this time, the organization equips them with accurate information about their rights and its monthly educational forums draw crowds of over 100.

Acknowledging that the dynamics of the integration are felt most intimately within the family, LP encourages the community to negotiate intergenerational tensions through its volunteer-led theater group, Teatro Americano, and the College-Bound Youth Group (C-BYG). As the children of immigrants absorb the new cultural traits, lifestyles and aspirations of their peers, and even adopt English as their dominant language, members of the same family find themselves caught in a difficult integration gap. According to Gutierrez, "Theater provides a safe space for actors and audience members to explore their bicultural identity, share personal memories, address controversial issues, and celebrate the contributions of immigrants to this country."

C-BYG promotes higher education, while also helping parents to support their children's career path. Several Latina college students took the initiative to form the group as an LP program in 2005, in response to the alarming dropout rate of Latino high school students (as high as 47% in the Chicago region).¹⁰ College students counsel high school students at monthly workshops on the college application and financial aid processes, and they have organized four fundraisers to award scholarships to members of their group. Many of the students are undocumented and therefore ineligible for federal financial aid; their education depends entirely on private scholarships. C-BYG events also incorporate civic education, and LP has been a local leader in advocacy for the DREAM Act for several years. At the family level, C-BYG helps families to feel comfortable with the goal of their children—particularly their daughters—going to college, often as the first members of their families to achieve this level of education.

LP's progressive coalition-building constitutes one of its most unique aspects, particularly regarding the issue of lesbian/ gay/ bisexual/ transsexual/ questioning (LGBTQ) rights. As a founding member of the Chicago LGBTQ Immigrant Alliance, LP demonstrates its support for the particularly marginalized LGBTQ immigrant community. Since homosexuality is still highly stigmatized in traditional Latino cultures, LP meets some criticism for this controversial work. Gutierrez observes that the LGBTQ community has taken the initiative to support immigrants in their struggles for rights, recognizing the importance of this solidarity, while the Latino community has been slower to demonstrate their support for the queer community. He argues that this relationship should be more reciprocal. By promoting diversity and acceptance of all lifestyles, LP practices the type of integration and inclusion that it strives for.

Gutierrez feels that Chicago has been relatively accepting of immigrants, and argues that cities can help facilitate integration by providing more bilingual services and materials. He states, "It's part of a welcoming package; immigrants need to understand the resources they have. That's real integration. The entry point is through the Spanish language." As demonstrated by its following from a particularly youthful community, LP's vision hits home for many families.

¹⁰ Latino Policy Forum, 2008.

Case Study: Hermandad Mexicana

Hermandad Mexicana has a background of over 50 years of education and organizing throughout California, reflecting the strong history and maturation of the region's Mexican community. In 2004, the group formed a new branch called Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional (literally translated as "transnational Mexican brotherhood") focuses on the children of original members and more recent immigrants. Gloria Saucedo, Director of the Hank Lacayo Youth and Family Center in the San Fernando Valley, boasts over 20 years with Hermandad and has played a leading role in organizing Los Angeles' massive marches for immigrant rights.

Saucedo's center began with a primary emphasis on the education and self-sufficiency of adults. As she notes, "Our people have trouble integrating because of the lack of education in their country of origin." Many of the organization's members come from rural areas, and have approximately a third-grade education and low levels of literacy in their native language. A large portion of the community obtained legal residency through the "Amnesty" of 1986, but still needed educational resources to facilitate their success in the US.

Hermandad employs a unique approach to language instruction, by offering adults Spanish literacy classes as a stepping-stone to English attainment. Saucedo notes that this method is based on studies demonstrating the importance of literacy in one's native language, and has observed the success of this method. At the time of the "Amnesty," the program equipped approximately 300 volunteers to teach Spanish in their communities, drawing on funds that were available for language programs at that time. Today, funding is scarce, and there are approximately four teachers. As Saucedo reflects, the parents who have gone through the program are now ensuring that their children receive a better education.

Hermandad's newer youth component addresses positive integration and cultural enrichment for the second generation. The soccer and folkloric dance programs are designed to promote team-building and health and to prevent criminal activity. Over 70 boys practice soccer every week at the center's own field and frequently travel to tournaments. Hermandad developed this program as a response to the high rates of Latino gang activity in the area and seeks to "replace the whole gang philosophy with the soccer philosophy." The coach seeks opportunities for the teams to interact with youth from other races. As Saucedo summarizes, "They are learning loyalty, to be responsible, to have pride in who they are; their self-esteem is growing."

The folkloric dance program, Estrellitas de Hermandad Mexicana, trains a competitive troupe of about 25 girls in the traditional dances of Mexican states. This program allows immigrant families to maintain their cultural identity, while also enriching the region's artistic diversity. In addition to recreational and cultural outlets, the youth programs also serve as a point of entry for engagement in Hermandad's political organizing for immigrant rights. Hermandad recently brought fifteen youth and 55 adults to Washington, DC to lobby for immigration reform.

Hermandad has worked at the grassroots level for decades to help its members improve their economic, social and political circumstances. Full integration is a lengthy process, requiring different resources at every stage. As Saucedo summarizes, "Change doesn't happen from one year to the next. You have to pass through generations."

Summary of Key Trends and Highlights from Case Studies

These ten organizations, arising out of different historical contexts, political circumstances and local environments, illuminate the richness of integration programs carried out at the grassroots level in communities across the US every day. Their varied approaches, organizational trajectories, and challenges speak to the great diversity of immigrant experiences, but some trends and commonalities can be observed. Furthermore, areas of divergence can point to important lessons learned and questions for further analysis and reflection, offering opportunities for NALACC's internal knowledge-building and leadership development. The successes of the organizations highlighted here demonstrate that integration is indeed occurring from the ground up, along multiple dimensions that expand upon the traditional indicators of integration.

Stages of organizational development with regard to integration

The variations between groups in older and newer immigrant communities demonstrate a progression of different stages of community organization and integration. Organizations in areas experiencing more recent growth in their Latino immigrant populations—such as North Carolina and Wisconsin—are particularly focused on providing legal information about immigrants' rights, building their base, and establishing key partnerships with local institutions and resources. Voces de la Frontera and AMEXCAN both rely on formal relationships with public schools and colleges to expand their outreach to immigrant adults and build an audience for their programs and events. AMEXCAN's leadership in developing alliances with the African American community in rural North Carolina constitutes a progressive response to the region's changing demographics, bridges racial gaps, and positions them at the forefront of local coalition-building.

Organizations in regions of well-established and larger Latino populations, such as Los Angeles, reflect the maturation of these communities. This older generation of organizations includes Hermandad Mexicana, at over 50 years old, as well as organizations developed by Central American refugee communities in the early to mid-1980s, including Centro Presente, CARECEN-LA, and CRECEN. While these organizations originally focused on providing legal services and orienting adult newcomers through education and community organizing, today they all boast extensive initiatives for the youth of the second generation. This trend reflects a shared concern for Latino youth's development, educational attainment, and socioeconomic advancement, as well as a strong commitment to improving graduation rates and closing the achievement gap between Latino and white students.

It is also significant to note that all of the older organizations studied have undergone strategic organizational changes in the last several years, to better meet the needs of their changing communities. Centro Presente has proactively incorporated member participation and a community organizing framework at all levels, while CRECEN and Hermandad Mexicana have both formally established separate organizational entities to focus specifically on youth and the second generation (America Para Todos and Hermandad Mexicana Transnacional: La Nueva Generación, respectively). CARECEN has witnessed the transition of its own leadership, as an earlier generation of youth participants have matured, maintained their commitment to the organization, and risen through the ranks to assume management roles. These groups have all developed extensive community-based advocacy campaigns, as recognized leaders in the fight

for federal immigration reform and legalization. They have obtained powerful media coverage, lobbied their elected officials at various levels, and organized some of the largest mass mobilizations for immigrant rights in the country.

Rights, Legal Services, and Community Education

A shared emphasis on promoting and protecting immigrants' rights—through legal assistance and community education—echoes through the case studies. Over half of the organizations began with a primary emphasis on immigration legal services and legal advice, and they continue to offer these services as core programs. While fewer legal resources exist for many of today's newer immigrant populations than during other periods of recent history, the leaders interviewed continue to point to documentation and knowledge of one's rights as fundamental stepping stones. Nearly all of organizations offer workshops or forums on immigration law, workers' rights, and other topics related to civic rights and responsibilities. As articulated by several interviewees, rights-based education promotes community empowerment, which in turn fosters participation in all aspects of society.

The majority of these CBOs feature adult education programs for English language acquisition, civic education and other skills, and the variety of offerings reflects a diversity of approaches to common challenges. Several interviewees mentioned the low levels of formal education of many Latin American immigrants, which can serve as a particular barrier to learning a second language and accessing jobs that pay a living wage. NALACC members aggressively and creatively address this educational gap by promoting continued learning in a culturally relevant, comfortable community environment. Hermandad Mexicana offers Spanish literacy classes to help adults to build a stronger foundation for learning a second language, and Centro Presente incorporates human rights content into their ESL curriculum. GUIA recognizes computer literacy as a necessary skill for socioeconomic advancement in the US, and teaches immigrants to use technology. FIDMi's financial literacy curriculum builds knowledge of the financial service system, promoting the skills necessary for economic integration.

Cultural Enrichment and Exchange

The case studies demonstrate the wealth of cultural contributions of Latin American immigrants to their new communities. Public cultural and social events serve the dual purpose of promoting exchange with members of other ethnic groups as well the maintaining immigrants' unique heritage. AMEXCAN's annual cultural festivals strive to bring together North Carolinians from all walks of life to learn from—and build appreciation for— Mexican arts, and Hondurans Against AIDS continually exposes new groups to Garifuna history and culture. Hermandad Mexicana's youth programs instill pride in Mexican American identity, through the culturally relevant activities of folkloric dance and soccer, and also allow children to share these traditions with peers of other races.

Many community organizations allow migrants to retain connections with and provide support for their countries of origin. These transnational activities also promote integration by fostering the development of members' bicultural identity, confidence, and commitment to public service. CRECEN's large community service delegations to El Salvador build lasting and supportive partnerships between organized groups of Central Americans on both sides of the border.

Alliance-Building with Other Communities

The case studies exemplify the multiple ways in which Latin American immigrants around the country are reaching out to non-immigrant groups, transcending racial and cultural divides, and developing interethnic alliances. Many interviewees speak to the need to build coalitions in order to enhance their political power and reach common ground with other groups concerned with social and racial justice. From AMEXCAN's dialogues with African American leaders to Hondurans Against AIDS' extensive involvement in coalition-building between African American and Garifuna populations, NALACC members recognize this community as a critical ally with shared goals. These efforts are particularly significant given the volatile racial tensions between Latinos and African Americans in many urban areas. Youth from CARECEN participate in a Multiethnic Youth Leadership Collaborative, building relationships with their Korean peers and members of other ethnicities. Latinos Progresando is at the vanguard of alliance-building between the Latino immigrant and LGBTQ communities.

NALACC organizations also engage in partnerships with Anglo communities, but these relationships are often less structured or strategic. Many groups have developed connections with white churches and members of social justice groups, such as the peace movement, and depend on the contributions of white volunteers and staff. Anglo community members frequently attend cultural celebrations held by immigrant groups, but it is unclear whether that involvement typically translates into a deeper partnership or shared political vision. Rocha of AMEXCAN explains that his group has had a harder time gaining the support of the Anglo community, and mentions a long history of racial tension in his region. Interviewees repeatedly mention the anti-immigrant political climate as an obstacle to full integration. It is interesting to note that other groups sharing the experience of discrimination serve as the most ready allies for many immigrant communities. Such a trend speaks to the need for genuine, two-way integration opportunities that engage the Anglo population as well as minority groups.

Relationships with Government

Many of the case studies highlight working relationships with government at various levels. The public schools in predominately Latino neighborhoods provide a base for recruiting youth members as well as organizing immigrant parents. Parent groups and adult education programs offered by school districts often call upon CBOs to conduct educational forums or workshops for their participants. This symbiotic relationship demonstrates local communities' reliance on ethnic organizations to facilitate the integration of newcomers, as well as CBOs readiness to enhance their visibility and community participation.

Voces de la Frontera speaks of a "very good relationship" with the city of Milwaukee, and mentions that the city has guaranteed that bilingual materials and representatives will be available at polling sites for the 2008 elections for the first time. Gutierrez of Latinos Progresando also points to the provision of bilingual resources as a fundamental way for local governments to support integration. Saucedo of Hermandad Mexicana recalls that far greater public resources were available for language acquisition programs in the Los Angeles area in the years following the "Amnesty" of 1986. At that time, Hermandad had the capacity to engage an

army of 300 volunteer Spanish teachers; today, limited funds have reduced this program to a handful of teachers.

At the state and federal levels, some immigrant-led organizations have been recognized for their expertise and large base of Latino support, and have been invited to contribute to policy dialogues. AMEXCAN was asked to serve on a North Carolina state task force on HIV/ AIDS in Latino populations, and FIDMi has had the opportunity to testify before the Finance Committee of the US Senate as well as international financial institutions.

Emphasis on Leadership Development

The case studies overwhelmingly cited a need for enhanced leadership development and community organizing programs. Above expanding their educational or legal service offerings, many organizations would like to “hire more organizers” or build their leadership programs, if they had additional resources. Many groups share the goal of giving immigrants the tools to help themselves, resolve shared problems and improve their communities. The success of this strategy depends upon the preparation of community members to develop creative responses to new challenges and spearhead successful integration initiatives.

Shared Sense of Accomplishment Despite Obstacles

When telling their stories, these organizations reflect a strong sense of pride in their accomplishments. Many point to the leading role they have placed in the development of national and trans-national coalitions, and the Central American organizations highlight their historic success in obtaining political asylum for their refugee communities. Several groups mention the positive results of their youth programs, as they have seen participants graduate from high school and college, and even become new leaders in the immigrant rights movement. Newer organizations have seen participation in their community forums, health fairs and other programs increase dramatically, often outpacing capacity. With a sense of achievement, the interviewees relate their ability to continue serving their communities, despite an acute shortage of resources and a political context that offers little recourse for legal status. As Andrade of CARECEN concludes, “...I think we are on the right path, and we are going to keep fighting so that there really is a true integration of the immigrant community, because the community contributes to this country in positive way.”

Learning from NALACC Case Experiences: Internal Analysis and Remaining Questions

NALACC's diverse organizations always bring unique perspectives to the table, and shared conversations about their differences can enrich individual members and strengthen NALACC's leadership in the field of immigrant integration. While the case studies represent particularly strong examples in different elements of practice, all organizations face structural and environmental constraints that make others' models difficult to replicate. It is important to examine what conditions facilitate the development of innovative programs, and to explore how other groups may overcome more challenging circumstances. A few key areas for continued analysis deserve special mention.

How do immigrant organizations build productive partnerships with their local governments?

The diverse political environments in different parts of the country play an important role in shaping the relationship between community organizations and local government. In some areas, such as Milwaukee, local institutions approach CBOs as important resources that can help orient a rapidly growing immigrant population. Not all organizations benefit from such a favorable local context, however, and some groups have struggled to achieve government support and recognition for their work. Future studies and leadership-development workshops may wish to focus on how to initiate and improve such relationships.

The observations from the case studies suggest that a good place to start is by focusing on programs that offer clear, mutual benefits for the city and the CBO, by providing information and services to one another's participants, members, and staffs. When immigrant groups are able to demonstrate that they bring unique advantages, such as expertise in a particular field of integration and a base of support from the Latino community, governments are more likely to see them as indispensable partners instead of adversaries. While such connections may begin with an exclusive focus on community education, the reputation and trust garnered opens doors for immigrant organizations to lobby their local elected officials more effectively for policy changes in the future.

What can organizations do to foster a bicultural identity in the second generation and prepare future community leaders?

The number of NALACC organizations engaging in youth-specific initiatives speaks to the shared value placed on the development of the second generation. In particular, the organizations that have survived for decades have increased their emphasis on youth leadership and created extensive after-school and college-bound programs. As the political circumstances that influenced an organization's founding change over time, CBOs remain relevant and responsive to their communities by keeping their finger on the pulse of the issues faced by up-and-coming leaders. It is important to continue to explore the best practices for keeping youth engaged in immigrant organizations and building a social consciousness.

The particularly successful programs highlighted in the case studies allow youth to both identify with their cultural heritage and explore the wealth of extracurricular and educational options available to their generation, thus facilitating their positive integration. Many organizations also

expose youth to issues of immigrant rights and teach civic education by building advocacy skills. When immigrant children develop such a consciousness at a younger age, they may be more likely to visualize public service and community leadership in their future goals. Newer organizations can also learn from the examples of older groups by incorporating strategic youth programs earlier in their development to ensure a vital base of leaders in the next generation.

How do organizations move beyond the politics of division to form productive alliances across racial and cultural divides?

NALACC organizations understand that integration involves bridging cultural gaps, and many have been at the forefront of efforts to build partnerships among leaders of different ethnic communities. A few of the organizations interviewed call on their fellow Latin American leaders to delve deeper into the roots of all forms of racism and undergo a process of learning about other marginalized groups, in order to achieve the cross-cultural understanding necessary for genuine alliances. The case studies suggest that an important place to start is by initiating dialogues with other groups about both shared and dissimilar experiences, which can open the door to increased respect and understanding. Interviewees also suggest that stronger relationships involve not only asking other groups to support issues relevant to immigrant communities, but also ensuring that solidarity and tolerance are reciprocal by supporting issues relevant to other marginalized communities.

Race relations vary greatly across the US, however, yet they affect the point of departure and depth of such partnerships. Future analysis should consider what local conditions facilitate and impede alliance- building between immigrants and other social groups, and illuminate strategies for addressing racial and cultural divides in areas of higher social tensions. Strategic workshops may also wish to focus on the ways in which NALACC can influence the political climate to deter politicians from pitting ethnic groups against one another.

What is the impact of the anti-immigrant movement on integration and alliance- building?

Several interviewees feel that the anti-immigrant, anti-Latino political climate has reached the lowest level than they can remember in their lifetimes. The unwelcoming atmosphere may have led some Latin American communities to reaffirm their ethnic identities more strongly and reduce their interactions with Anglo society as a measure of self-defense. Such a hostile environment can negatively impact both immigrants' ability and motivation to fully integrate into US society. In addition, this anti-immigrant sentiment may be responsible for the lower number of formal partnerships between NALACC members and organized Anglo communities, leading CBOs to focus primarily on alliances with other marginalized groups.

Future studies should delve deeper into the responses of specific communities in the wake of strong xenophobic backlash, as well as the experiences of immigrant organizations that have had greater success in building alliances with Anglo groups. Such an analysis can provide a strong counter-argument to conservative claims that Latinos do not want to integrate. Further, this work can help immigrant groups to look strategically at opportunities for alliance-building with members of the Anglo community who support immigrant rights.

How can relationships with immigrants' countries of origin facilitate integration into US society?

A vision of integration that includes the role of transnational activism constitutes a particularly cutting-edge and underdeveloped perspective. Many NALACC members see the two planes of activity as inextricably linked, understanding migration as a global phenomenon that affects both sending and receiving countries. However, the connection between programs supporting migrants' countries of origin and activities promoting integration into US society remains unclear for many scholars. NALACC can lead the way in strengthening this perspective by drawing on the experience and ideological foundations of its members.

Further studies and dialogues should strive to illuminate the ways in which involvement in migrants' countries of origin fosters strong civic participation in the US. Strong points of departure include examining how transnational activity promotes a philanthropic culture, contributes to cross-cultural exchanges, and builds the skills necessary for political participation and engagement with US government.

Recommendations

Based on the lessons learned from immigrant organizations' vast experience in leading integration initiatives at the community level, NALACC offers the following policy recommendations:

1. The US should develop a national immigrant integration program that invests resources into local community-based organizations with original approaches to integrating newcomers into the nation's social, economic, political and cultural fabric.
2. Immigrant organizations need to be at the forefront of the process of creating such an integration agenda and designing models for public-nonprofit partnerships.
3. Public and private funding sources should invest resources into developing the leadership programs of immigrant-led organizations, with the goal of enhancing civic participation and expanding the capacity of innovative but under-funded groups in different regions of the US.

NALACC organizations critically engage in the analysis and practice of immigrant integration on a daily basis, relying heavily on dedicated community volunteers and very small staffs. Recognizing such achievements, Murguía and Muñoz of the National Council of La Raza note, "Perhaps the most extraordinary thing about the integration of immigrants in this nation is just how much is being done by the immigrants themselves, with a minimum of effort by government or society at large."¹¹ By providing funding and coordination through a national-level integration program, the federal government has the opportunity to advance the goals of positive integration by putting resources into the hands of innovative CBOs.

Immigrant-led organizations should be featured as key members of integration policy discussions, due to their rich expertise and leadership in this field. Andrade of CARECEN argues, "Not only can we provide the services, we would like to be part of creating a model of integration policy, since the experience is there." Immigrant-led organizations instill trust in newcomers, provide culturally-relevant services, and mobilize members to become active participants in their communities. According to González of GUIA, "People have an easier and faster process of adaptation when they identify with their own communities." Migrant leaders benefit from an intimate knowledge of the various challenges of the integration process, and are able to implement programs to address their communities' unique needs and serve as role-models for the development of a bicultural identity.

While the immigrant organizations surveyed boast remarkable achievements, their impact would be much stronger with deliberate investment in leadership development initiatives. The interviewees speak to a need for leadership programs that would strengthen members' abilities to give back to their communities and foster new initiatives to respond to the every-changing demographic and political landscape. In the words of Aguiluz of CRECEN, "We need new leadership groups and classes to keep people's dreams alive."

¹¹ Murguía, Janet and Cecilia Muñoz (2007).

Selective Annotated Bibliography

Alba, Victor and Richard Nee. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

The authors review historic scholarship on, and controversy surrounding, the concept of assimilation, and present their own version of a revised assimilation theory. They recognize the flaws in past thinking on assimilation, but argue that the concept retains validity, as a way of understanding “the decline of an ethnic distinction and its corollary cultural and social differences” (p. 11). Their perspective recognizes changes to the mainstream US society through the incorporation of diverse groups, but still believes in the existence of a “majority culture.”

Fix, Michael. “Immigrant Integration and Comprehensive Immigration Reform: An Overview.” In *Securing the Future: US Immigrant Integration Policy, A Reader*. Michael Fix, Ed. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2007.

Fix lays out a theory of integration as a “two-way process that involves change on the part of not just immigrants, but of members of the receiving community” (p. vii). He reviews recent additions to the debate on how well today’s immigrants are integrating into US society. Fix calls for the development of a new, national integration agenda, and offers policy recommendations in areas such as education, workforce development, and health care, and proposes the creation of a National Office of Immigrant and Refugee Integration.

Grantmakers Concerned With Immigrant and Refugee Rights. *Investing in Our Communities: Immigrant Integration Toolkit*. Sebastopol, CA: 2006.

This guide seeks to inform the funding of immigrant integration initiatives by offering examples of best practices across various fields. It also incorporates academic research. The authors use a broader lens of analysis than the mainstream integration indicators, and in the presentation offer a balanced theoretical framework that prioritizes “mutual responsibility and benefit, multi-sector involvement, and multi strategy approaches” (p. 25).

Jacoby, Tamar. “Immigrant Integration—The American Experience.” In *Securing the Future: US Immigrant Integration Policy, A Reader*. Michael Fix, Ed. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2007.

A leading Manhattan Institute scholar and conservative voice on immigration, Jacoby equates integration with assimilation and “absorption,” making no mention of integration as a two-way process. She lays out a set of priorities by which to measure integration and concludes that integration has proceeded at a strong pace, despite the impediments of the US’ overemphasis on multiculturalism and identity politics.

Kerwin, Donald. “Immigrant Rights, Integration, and the Common Good.” In *Securing the Future: US Immigrant Integration Policy, A Reader*. Michael Fix, Ed. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2007.

Kerwin argues that a false dichotomy has been created between the concepts of “rights” and “integration,” as a result of the contentious immigration debate, and proposes a “mutually reinforcing view” of the two concepts. He holds that the protection of immigrant rights furthers the common good and promotes positive integration.

Latino Policy Forum. *An American Agenda from a Latino Perspective*. Chicago: Latino Policy Forum, 2008.

This policy agenda, based on community meetings with over 600 Latino leaders in different fields, outlines critical challenges facing the Latino community in the Chicago metropolitan region and offers recommendations for policymakers, CBOs, business and other sectors. Latino leaders identify education as the most pressing area of concern, and offer suggestions for improvement at all levels of the public education system.

Murguía, Janet and Cecilia Muñoz. “From Immigrant to Citizen.” In *Securing the Future: US Immigrant Integration Policy, A Reader*. Michael Fix, Ed. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2007.

The President and Vice-President of the National Council of La Raza draw attention to the lack of any strategic, national integration policy, with particular emphasis on the under-funding of English-language acquisition programs. They recognize the important contributions of immigrant-led organizations in filling the gap in ESL and other integration services, but their focus is on the need for elected officials—particularly on the left side of the political spectrum—to start paying attention to integration imperatives.

Vigdor, Jacob L. “Measuring Immigrant Assimilation in the United States.” New York: Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, 2008.

This study analyses US Census Bureau data on the “assimilation indicators” of English-language fluency, intermarriages with US citizens, naturalization, participation in military service, income level, and homeownership. Based on these criteria, the author holds that assimilation levels are lower today than at any point during the 20th Century, and that Mexicans have the lowest level of assimilation when compared with other immigrant groups.

Waldinger, Roger and Renee Reichl. “Today’s Second Generation: Getting Ahead or Falling Behind?” In *Securing the Future: US Immigrant Integration Policy, A Reader*. Michael Fix, Ed. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2007.

The authors test the segmented assimilation theorists’ “rainbow underclass” hypothesis by examining the outcomes of children in the first, second and third generations, as well as their relative success when compared with their native peers. They conclude that successful

integration is taking place but concerning trends remain, particularly regarding the educational gap between Mexican American and white youth.

Zhou, Min. "Segmented Assimilation: Issues, Controversies, and Recent Research on the Second Generation." IMR; 30 (4); pp. 975-1001. New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1997.

This article reviews the development and major tenets of the "segmented assimilation theory," which seeks to explain the disparate outcomes of the second generation. The theory presents three possible scenarios for the children of immigrants: convergence with the white middle class, rapid upward mobility while deliberately retaining one's ethnic heritage, and poverty and assimilation into the inner-city's most disadvantaged groups.