

# **INSTITUTIONAL OBSTACLES TO INCORPORATION:**

## **Latino Immigrant Experiences in a Mid-size Rustbelt City**

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# How accessible are different kinds of local institutions?



- **Crucial for the incorporation or integration of immigrants and their children into the mainstream.**
- **Does not imply complete cultural assimilation or homogenization.**
- **Relates to broader issue of structural assimilation: Acceptance without disadvantage into schools, workplaces, neighborhoods & other organizations and treated without discrimination by mainstream institutions.**
- **Key to achieving this is institutions opening up to accommodate immigrants.**

# Immigrant Incorporation: Context of Reception



- Too often the initiative of adapting is thought to rest exclusively with immigrants themselves.
- In contrast, how institutional sectors (schools, banks, public agencies, police, courts, hospitals & health care, housing & job markets, etc.) “shape” the kinds and extent of assimilation allowable.
- Key point is that mainstream institutions by their policies, as well as actions by their staff, can either facilitate the incorporation of newcomers OR create unnecessary obstacles and difficulties that push them toward marginal positions.
- Consequences for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation.

# The Dayton context



- **Dayton historically has been a center of invention and manufacture.**
- **However, beginning in the 1970s, deindustrialization and corporate outsourcing responses to expanding global competition decimated the local economic order.**
- **A third of manufacturing jobs (about 50,000) were lost by the mid-1980s, and further losses continue to the present.**
- **Resulting population losses in the two urban centers, Dayton & Springfield.**

<b>Dayton:</b>	<b>1960: 262,000</b>	<b>1980: 194,000</b>
	<b>2000: 166,000</b>	<b>2007: 155,000</b>
<b>Springfield:</b>	<b>1960: 83,000</b>	<b>2007: 62,000</b>

# State of Ohio & City of Dayton recently



**Total Population**    **Percent Foreign Born**  
(population in parenthesis)

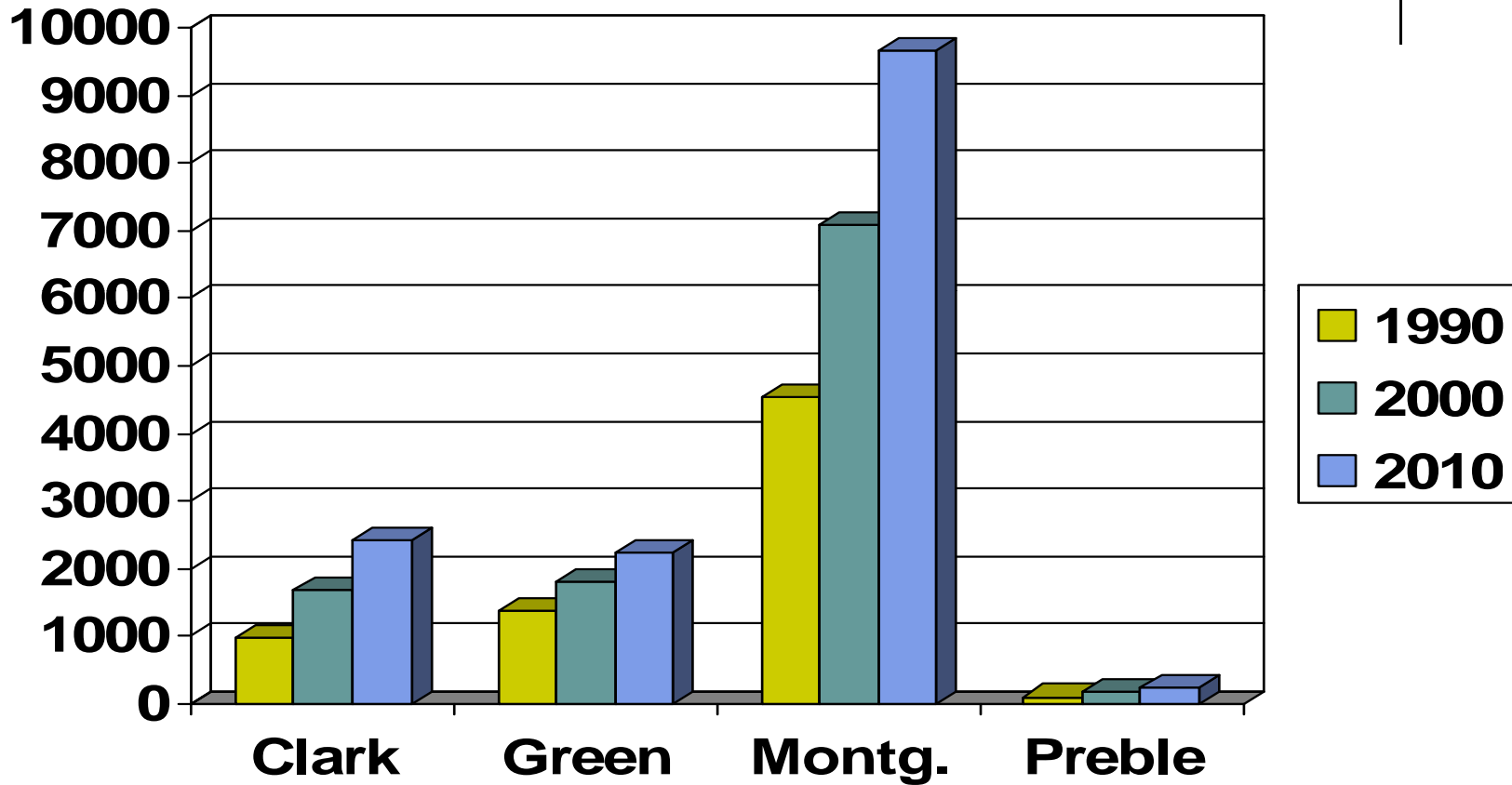
Ohio in 2000	11,353,140	3%	(339,279)
Ohio in 2005	11,464,042	3.5%	(387,216)
Dayton in 2000	166,179	3%	(3,245)

43% of Ohio's population growth 2000-05 due to increase in foreign-born.

*From 2000 Census and 2005 CPS*

- Foreign-born pop was 2.3% of state in 1990.
- Increased 57% 1990-2005 compared with increase of 4.3% of native born (and only 0.5%.from 2000-2005)
- Just under one million people in Ohio are immigrants or the children of immigrants, 8% of the state's population.
- Hispanic population of Ohio projected to nearly double 1995-2025.
- Small as it is, influx of immigrants keeps the City of Dayton's population from declining faster than it is. And has helped keep Montgomery County's population relatively stable, declining 2.6% between 1990 & 2000 and another 3% between 2000 and 2006.

# Growth of Hispanics in Miami Valley



*Source: U.S. Census, projections calculated*

**Note: Hispanic population in Montgomery County grew 56% from 1990-2000.**

# Immigrant Focus Groups

- **9 focus groups of mostly recent immigrants conducted in Dayton area, Oct 2006-April 2007.**
- **Part of the Accessibility Project of the Ethnic & Cultural Diversity Caucus of the Miami Valley Community Summit on Eliminating Racism.**
- **6 focus groups were of Latinos; 2 Europeans, 1 African.**
- **57 overall participants: 43 Latinos, 6 Europeans, 8 Africans.**
- **Asked questions about their experiences in using local institutions: public education, hospitals & health clinics, banks, police & courts, libraries, churches, etc.**
- **Also asked about their experiences at work, in the job market, and in seeking housing.**
- **Answered a questionnaire at the end of the focus group discussions.**

# Interviews with leaders

- **Interviews with leaders of sixteen local organizations that either represent or serve various foreign-born populations from April 2006 to April 2007.**
- **Eleven represented or served Latinos.**
- **They rated the accessibility of different institutions on a 1- 4 scale, with 1 being “very adequate or very accessible” and 4 being “very inadequate or inaccessible.”**
- **Results (mean scores) given below for different kinds of institutions for comparative purposes: Higher the number → institution judged to be less accessible.**



# Focus Group Research

## Limitations:

- Often not a random or representative sample – cannot generalize to a larger population.
- Difficult to check on the accuracy of their descriptions of their experiences.
- Accuracy aside, it's people's perceptions of their experiences and the ways they interpret and understand them that shape their relationship with institutions.

## Advantages:

- Good strategy for bringing out issues & patterns.
- Gives “voice” to participants.
- Many participants thanked us for allowing them to share their experiences & concerns.

# Focus Group Participants: Latinos

- **Median year for first living in the U.S. was 2000, with the range from 1977-2007, with 93% coming after 1992.**
- **Seventy-five percent were currently employed, with 83% employed full time, and two-thirds drive their own cars to work.**
- **Fifty-four percent were referred to their current job by a relative, friend or workmate, while 14% were recruited by the employer or their agent.**
- **Median individual income for 2005 or 2006 was in the \$10,000 - \$15,000 range, with none above \$30,000.**
- **Median years of school completed was 8.5, with 30% completing less than 6 years and 12% having some post-high school education (including 5% with college degrees).**

# Focus Group Participants: Latinos

- **Fifty-seven percent were females, and 43% were males.**
- **93% were born in Mexico.**
- **Ages ranged from 21 to 56, with a median age of 37.**
- **Most common employers: manufacturing (29%), restaurant/food (26%), and nursery/agriculture (24%).**
- **Most common occupations: farm/field worker (includes nursery workers) (27%), assembly/materials (15%), and cook (12%).**
- **The median time with their current employer was 1-2 years, with 18% 5 years or more.**

# Focus Group Participants: Latinos

- **29% lived in the City of Dayton, while the rest lived in other cities and towns in the Dayton area.**
- **Few had developed functional use of English; 29% indicated they could not speak English at all, while another 56% indicated they could speak English “a little.” For reading English, the percentages were 38% (not at all) and 47% (a little).**
- **Fifty-five percent had taken or were taking ESL classes.**



## Primary obstacle: Lack of English language fluency & inability/unwillingness of institutions to accommodate

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- Both the focus group participants and the leaders of organizations interviewed agreed that the lack of English language fluency is the primary obstacle to greater integration into our communities.
- 12 Latino focus group participants mentioned this as the most important factor, and 4 said it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important – the next highest was obtaining a drivers license with 4 responses as most important and 6 as 2<sup>nd</sup> most important.
- 5 of the 11 leaders interviewed (45%) indicated that language issues were the most important difficulty that immigrants experienced, while another 2 (18%) and 1 (9%) gave it as the second or third most important respectively.
- Leaders interviewed gave interpreters and their availability 2.7 and translation of documents and forms 3.2.
- Difficulties with specific institutions reflected this.

## Comments of a Latina in her mid-50's, mother of three sons who all live in Dayton



- ... we cannot integrate ourselves well into the community because... we cannot communicate, specifically about what we even feel. Take me, for example, sometimes at work I have some.... grievance... [But I am going to say] that everything is okay. Some [English-speaking employees] are given more priority, and [our work] is not compensated... we dedicate ourselves to our work, and... they don't compensate us anything. Or they don't recognize it.
- ... we cannot be well-integrated with the community, that they would know that we, as well, as human beings, we also feel and we also realize that things are hurting us, but we don't say anything because we cannot express what we feel. Sometimes, I have had to cry...

# Results of Focus Groups & Interviews



- **With exception of churches & libraries, many focus group participants and clients or members of the local organizations interviewed experienced difficulties with local institutions.**
- **Included hospitals/health clinics, public schools, banks, and police & courts, as well as in jobs and the housing market.**
- **Concluded that this impeded the ability of at least some of them and their families to successfully adapt to life in the U.S.**



# Summary of results

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- **On Handout**
- **Remember, the higher the score, the less accessible the institution is judged**





# Hospitals & Health Clinics

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- Hospitals/health clinics: 2.5 (Emergency Services: 3.1)
  - Expensive [without health care coverage].
  - Lack of interpreters & bilingual staff.
  - Reluctance of some organizations/ personnel to treat someone without English language knowledge or health care coverage.

## Comment by a Latino participant on interpreters

- Sometimes you go to the hospital and they won't do anything for you because they don't have the papers in order. One time I was at the hospital, and there was a woman giving birth. She was there for about 5 hours and no one approached her but the nurses. The nurses kept telling her the doctors only come by for 15 minutes during the birth. At the end of the day, the doctor came by finally and said he would have to operate. My daughter was translating between the women and the doctor. But, my daughter was a minor, so he had to use simple words with her. They could really use interpreters.



# Experience of a Latina

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- I was seven months pregnant [in 2002] and... told the doctor [at a local hospital] that my head hurt a lot, it was what was most bothering me. And he gave me medicine [and said to come back in 2 weeks]. [She continued to feel bad but was told to wait until her appointment.]

# Experience of a Latina (cont)

- I arrived there at the hospital, [and] they did the ultrasound, they took x-rays, and [told her] the baby was already dead, [and] they no longer could do anything... they went and put me in bed and there they left me, all night there I stayed. The only thing that they did was give me... an injection in order to provoke the delivery, and that I was there from, like from two in the afternoon, they put me in bed around eleven o'clock at night, like at eight in the morning was when I gave birth to the baby, but alone. Without anyone... the only one that was there was \*\* [her partner]. ... afterwards, I was also sick for a long time because it gave me a lot of depression. And that's up to today.

# Some comments by leaders on hospitals and health clinics



- **Interpreters – they have to wait awhile for the hospital to bring in an interpreter. Bills – all bills from the hospitals are in English. Accessibility varies a lot – it depends on the hospital or clinic.**
- **There are often no interpreters (or very few), but that is slowly changing as the population is growing rapidly.**
- **Not accessible, got to know where they are and how to get there, but the good ones are overwhelmed.**
- **Interpreters need to be more readily available; staff needs to be more sensitive.**
- **There is frustration in this area. On the one side, the caregiver tries to communicate the system, and the person being helped is trying to communicate their needs. The frustration goes both ways when they can't communicate. The caregiver's role has changed in the last five years. Before, [potential patients] were turned away because of... not being able to communicate. This is getting better. The translation services and written forms have improved, although they're not there yet.**



# Schools

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- Education from Pre-School to College: 2.5
- Too often a lack of assistance for students not fluent in English.
- Letters/announcements/reports in English only.
- Perception of discrimination (against Latinos).
- Some schools much better in these respects than most.

# Comments from a Latino parent



- When the children arrived here, in the United States, they had to speak English. For example, they were in the first and the second grades because they didn't speak English. They would be at home crying, traumatized, they didn't want to go to school because they would have to speak English but they didn't know it. We've been here 2 years now and the children have learned English, but when we first arrived we felt that it was a really serious problem.

## Comments from another Latino parent



- For the first two years, they [school administrators] said they sent home the grades. I told them that I hadn't received them in the mail. They stopped sending the grades and [I] tried to make an appointment, but they wouldn't give me one. A whole year passed, until a year ago I was able to talk to the office about what had happened with the grades the first year. I told them I wanted to know what kind of grades he was getting and how he's doing. So, they knew I didn't speak English and they needed someone to translate. They got a Spanish teacher to translate and we made an appointment. They told me that they had sent all the grades, even though I never received them. [I told them] I have my mail key, no one else checks our mail besides me and I hadn't received anything, so you must not have sent me anything. I kept checking and nothing arrived.



## Comments from a Latino parent (continued)



- If you don't tell me and the teachers send me anything to tell me if my son's doing well or if he's doing badly, I'm not going to know how he is, if he's taking his courses. If he's trying to deceive me or if he's doing what's right, I won't know. So, the teacher told me that they couldn't let us know how he's doing because we don't speak English. She said "You don't know how to speak English, so you won't understand what we tell you, but *you* can send us a note or call to make an appointment." If I don't understand English, who do I look for to talk to?



# Banks

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- Banking and Financial Services: 2.3
  - Forms only in English (except for many ATMs)
  - Lack of interpreters and/or bi-lingual staff, especially in branches outside downtown.



# Police

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- Law Enforcement: 3.3 (The Legal System and the Courts, including Access to Legal Services: 2.8)
  - General distrust of police (among Latinos) and not just from fear of arrest & deportation.
  - Poor treatment by individual officers.
  - Confiscation of Mexican driver's licenses and ID cards.
  - Stopped without a valid reason.
  - Variety of other complaints.
- Creates hesitancy to report crimes which in turn makes people vulnerable to crimes.

# Some comments by leaders on the police



- **Need more interpreters. 9-1-1 has a line they can call, but the police dept. has 4 police officers that speak Spanish. They are underpaid and overworked. Plus, police tend to confiscate their IDs. Some are unable to get a license or documentation.**
- **There are a lot of misunderstandings about what their rights are. Cultural differences. Reluctance of Asians to report a crime.**
- **There is not a decent relationship that exists between the police and the Hispanic population. There needs to be more minorities in law enforcement and among probation & detention officers... If this country wants to slow down racism, law enforcement must reflect the population that is not all white by including all populations.**
- **Hispanics don't even call the police for fear of being deported. Domestic violence is a problem, but the women don't call because of this fear. [He told a story about the neighbors calling the police on a man for domestic violence because he was beating his wife. The man was arrested and deported, and his wife felt guilty for it afterward.]**



# Housing and Jobs

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- Housing and Jobs: (Housing: 3.0; Employment and Knowledge of Job Availability: 2.8)
- Many reports of discrimination (some reported that some landlords won't rent to Latinos).
- Given worst jobs or paid the least (believe this is because they are Latinos).



## Some comments by leaders on jobs and informal job networks

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- There are a lot of places that will take advantage of them or will not pay well. There is one factory known for hiring them and firing them before a 2 year period because that is when they will have to start providing benefits. [It] rehires them [undocumented] again a few months later.
- There is a remarkable word of mouth job network among Latino immigrants.
- In restaurants, people apply through others who already have jobs. Knowledge and acquisition of jobs often occurs through networks. When they fill out applications for jobs they can list a reference who is already working at the place where they're applying.

## **Lack of English language fluency: Not just Latinos**

- **4 of the 6 European focus group participants mentioned lack of English fluency and jobs/employment issues as the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> most important factors.**
- **In contrast, 5 of the 8 African focus group participants gave jobs/ employment issues and the cost of higher education as the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> most important factors.**
  - **Their issues included paying out-of-state tuition for colleges, even though one has lived in Ohio for many years or decades + some immigration statuses forbid students to work.**
  - **All African participants were college educated and fluent in English.**



# What can institutions do?

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- **While some leaders commented that there has been improvement in some areas, the overall perception is that too many seem to be unable or unwilling to accommodate non-English speakers.**
- **This was a major theme of both the focus groups and especially the interviews with leaders.**



# **Some comments by leaders on making institutions accessible**

- Immigrants face barriers, and many organizations & institutions are not multicultural or multilingual.**
- Look at every point of entry from their shoes. Outreach, helping to change telephone lines to provide Spanish, checking for language accessibility, make yourself known in their community and their events so they come to trust you.**
- First, recognize that this population exists, and local institutions need to accommodate it. For example, there is a genuine need for Spanish-speaking bank tellers. The Ethnic & Cultural Diversity Caucus helps, and so do various religious organizations. More broadly, there is a need for “reciprocity” in immigrant/employer and immigrant/local business relations. Local businesses need to quit thinking about how they can extract something from immigrants and begin to think a bit more about how they could benefit immigrants.**

# Some comments by leaders on making institutions accessible



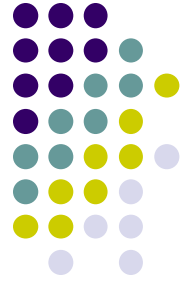
- Simply educate themselves about different ethnic groups that live in the community. Education leads to understanding. If you understand a population you can serve them, live together, and everything just works better. This process works when people want to make themselves accessible and have the willingness to understand another group.
- Promote hiring of bilingual staff. ESL classes on site, because immigrants have a busy work week. Both these are directed at the private sector. Bilingual signs are a huge necessity. Employers should pay immigrants as they would pay an American native. A key to bilingual staff, especially with the police, on a domestic violence call, is that the bilingual staff be bicultural. This way, they can pick up on cultural cues, such as a woman not speaking, because as a Latina she is not allowed to speak up over her husband.

# Some comments by leaders on making institutions accessible



- **Institutions should educate their workers/employees/ staff. Often institutions have a system set in place to help immigrants but the everyday workers who are low in the hierarchy know nothing about it.**
- **Hire more bi-lingual persons who are in touch with their communities. Provide translation services that are more inclusive. For instance, in the courts, have bi-lingual staff translate and help fill out paperwork for the public defender and for probation services. At hospitals, have bi-lingual staff make sure that forms needed for medical financial assistance are filled out. Stop charging so much for services. They need to have forms in Spanish, have sensitivity training for their staff, and provide a hospitable welcoming environment for immigrants.**

# Implications



- **Our perspective is that the incorporation experience is central to the well-being and civic participation of immigrants and their children.**
- **It is also important for the nation at a time when the white population is aging, the native-born workforce is not growing at a rate sufficient to meet future labor needs, and the “baby boomer” generation is nearing retirement.**

# Possibilities



- **A well-integrated 1<sup>st</sup> generation and well-educated 1.5 & 2<sup>nd</sup> would increase the numbers of workers, taxpayers, homeowners and professionals.**
- **A coordinated strategy that engages both immigrants and other stakeholders would address opportunities and challenges that integration efforts create.**

# Possibilities



- **New immigrants offer a substantial promise of local revitalization by creating immediate economic activity and vibrant cultural infusions.**
  - **Many occupy housing that would otherwise be vacant.**
  - **Some open businesses along streets where many previous businesses have closed.**
  - **Their children bolster the numbers in public schools with declining enrollments.**

# Forums on Immigration at Univ of Dayton (2008 & 2009)



- **Themes of institutional accessibility (2008) and the 1.5 & 2<sup>nd</sup> generation (2009)**
- **Brought together people in education (K-12), social services, advocacy, and health care to discuss, network, share best practices, etc.**
- **Speakers (academic and professional practitioners) addressed specific topics in line with those covered in the focus groups and interviews.**
- **Presented in the broader context of public policy and human rights.**
- **120 -150 attended.**

# Human Rights Perspective



- **Citizen rights, which often stress individual rights, sometimes pit individuals & groups against each other.**
- **In contrast, human rights are based on principles of social justice and the well-being of the human person.**



# Human Rights Perspective



- **Example: Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “Everyone has the right to education... Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups...”**
- **Such a perspective would emphasize steps to better integrate immigrant & 2<sup>nd</sup> generation children into their schools.**

# Applying Human Rights



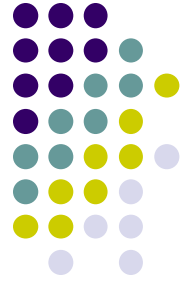
- While some solutions to human rights dilemmas lie at the federal level, many obstacles are ones that institutions at the local level can reduce or eliminate.
- As Fix, McHugh, Terrazas and Laglagaron (2008, 63) conclude, “decisions are made every minute of every day... by key government administrators, elected officials, foundation officers, employers, and many other stakeholders that could be harnessed to achieve integration goals.”
- Suggestions concerning improvements in accessibility were made throughout the focus groups and interviews.
- The results of our study suggest that a general strategy of making organizations accessible to those not yet fluent in English would be a good starting point for many institutions that might then explore ways to confront more specific issues and obstacles relevant for immigrant incorporation.

# National evidence of Contemporary Assimilation



- Four areas show assimilation is occurring:
    1. English language acquisition (& preference for English among 2<sup>nd</sup> generation)
    2. Socio-economic mobility: gains in income & education for 2<sup>nd</sup> generation
    3. Residential mobility
    4. Friendships and other personal relations (intermarriages), especially in 2<sup>nd</sup> generation
- See: Richard Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation & Contemporary Immigration* (Harvard Univ Press, 2003); Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, *Immigrant America* (Univ of Calif, 2006)

# Contingencies of contemporary assimilation



- **Three big contingencies on the progress of assimilation of immigrants & the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation:**
  - 1. Sizeable undocumented population**
    - **Many afraid to utilize institutions for fear of arrest & deportation  $\leftrightarrow$  Assimilation difficult**
    - **Key issue: their children – many born in U.S.**
    - **Don't know impact (but can guess) of growing up in situations of marginalization and fear**
  - 2. Pre-existing racial divisions and stratification impact ability of some to enter mainstream**
  - 3. Immigrants in “new places” can be met with hostility (and fear)**



# Implications of NOT accommodating

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- **Can lead to marginalization of significant proportions of specific foreign-born populations.**
- **This marginal/disadvantaged status MIGHT be passed on to the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation, the children of immigrants, many of whom are U.S. citizens.**
- **Has the potential to create a cycle of disadvantage.**



# Conclusion

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- ❖ **What is at stake is not just the well-being of immigrants and their families but also the vitality of our communities and our future of our society.**