

# Left Out: Trust and Social Capital Among Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers\*

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*Objectives.* We analyze the levels of trust and social capital among an understudied group: migrant seasonal farmworkers (MSFW). MSFWs of today are likely to become the “Hispanics” of tomorrow, which means that understanding what affects the development of social capital of this group is critical to understanding how these individuals are incorporated—or not—into the U.S. polity. *Methods.* We utilize logistic regression analysis and ordered logit analysis to analyze a data set of 555 MSFWs and comments from four focus groups in Idaho. *Results.* We find that MSFWs have lower levels of generalized trust than do Hispanics nationally. We also find that MSFWs have low levels of trust toward whites and Mexican Americans. *Conclusions.* We argue that an ethnic community’s subgroups must be incorporated into our analysis of social capital, especially when these individuals are likely to become U.S. permanent residents or citizens.

Higher levels of trust held by immigrants are suggestive of strong and healthy connections between immigrants and the broader polity, while lower levels of trust represent a disconnection that has potentially negative consequences as immigrants settle permanently. Social capital, a measure of political and social incorporation, is at the center of political and policy debates on the quality and density of associational life in the United States. Trust is a key component of social capital, which links individuals to “like” communities through “bonding” social capital as well as to “different” communities through “bridging” social capital (Putnam, 2000). Yet, too

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often the debate on social capital ignores important differences within societal groups, including the aggregation of Hispanics into a single group.<sup>1</sup> By looking at one particular subgroup—in this case, migrant seasonal farmworkers—we show that there is a theoretical imperative to include “out-groups” in social capital research and policy debates.<sup>2</sup> This article analyzes the level of trust present among migrant seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs) in the United States, drawing from a unique survey of 555 individuals and four focus groups conducted in the State of Idaho. The level of trust held by MSFWs toward Mexican Americans and white Americans directly affects how this largely immigrant group will be incorporated into the U.S. polity.

According to Hero (2003a, 2003b), Putnam’s social capital construct effectively measures associations among people with similar backgrounds, but it does not capture the interaction of individuals in ethnically and racially diverse societies. Once race and ethnicity are controlled for, Hero argues that “[s]ocial capital and civic culture are negatively and substantially related to racial and ethnic diversity in the states” (2003a:120). Out-groups, such as immigrants, should be studied with respect to their social capital because their current attitudes on trust-related issues have long-term implications for how new groups are incorporated into the societal diversity of the United States. We argue on the basis of our analyses of these survey data that ethnicity is a highly relevant factor in both the acquisition and usage of social capital in contemporary U.S. society, and that MSFWs in Idaho manifest low levels of bridging social capital with the dominant white society and bonding social capital with the settled Mexican American community.<sup>3</sup>

The United States is a nation of immigrants who have historically shaped and been shaped by American society, and it is also a nation of active citizens and joiners (DeSipio and de la Garza, 1997; de Tocqueville, [1840] 1966). Newer groups of assimilated and incorporated immigrants should be able to achieve the Tocquevillian vision of America as have past generations of immigrants. Hispanics, the largest immigrant population in the United States, have not been politically and socially incorporated as easily as other white ethnic immigrants have in the past (Vargas, 1998). Social scientists have begun to turn their attention to assessing levels of incorporation among Latino communities into the broader society in many areas of the country

<sup>1</sup>For purposes of clarity, it should be noted that this article switches back and forth with the usage of the panethnic terms *Hispanic* and *Latino*. We chose to use the term *Latino*, but switch back and forth between *Latino* and *Hispanic* depending on which term the author being cited used. It is not the purpose of this article to promote one term over another.

<sup>2</sup>The following definitions of MSFW are used in this study. A seasonal farmworker is an “individual whose principal employment [51 percent of time] is in agriculture on a seasonal basis, who has been so employed within the last twenty-four months. A migrant farmworker meets the same definition but ‘establishes for the purposes of such employment a temporary abode’” (*U.S. Code*, Public Health Services Act, “Migrant Health”). Four areas of work qualify as agricultural. They are (1) field agriculture, (2) nursery/greenhouse, (3) food processing, and (4) reforestation (Larson, 2002).

<sup>3</sup>We use the term *white* instead of *Anglo* based in local usage. We should note, interestingly, that “whites” are referred to as *Americanos* in Spanish.

(DeSipio, 1996; DeSipio and de la Garza, 1997; Segura, Pachon, and Woods, 2001; Hero, 1992; Fraga et al., 2001). Most of these studies have focused on settled populations and focused on civic participation and engagement in community life.

In our study, we collected the views of 555 migrant seasonal farmworkers in Idaho during the spring of 2003; a substantial majority (72 percent) of survey participants lacked proper documentation to legally reside or work in the United States. All the survey participants chose to respond to the questionnaire in Spanish, forgoing the English-language version. Our research contributes to the current social capital literature by specifically examining the perceptions of trust of MSFWs in Idaho, which is representative of two major demographic trends regarding Hispanics nationally—namely, explosive population growth and the increasing presence of MSFWs.<sup>4</sup> Further, we compare this group of MSFWs' levels of trust to Hispanics included in the Social Capital Community Benchmark survey (SCCB).<sup>5</sup> When compared to Hispanics nationwide, MSFWs in Idaho have even lower levels of generalized trust than the already low levels documented among Hispanics. Surprisingly, the levels of trust of MSFWs toward other Mexican Americans were as low as those toward whites.

Among the respondents taking part in the Spanish-language survey, nearly 70 percent plan to remain in the United States permanently. This suggests that the children of the undocumented Mexican workers of today will become the "Mexican Americans" of tomorrow. Ninety-seven percent of the survey participants were born in Mexico, with 3 percent born in the United States and just two individuals from Guatemala. Analyses on civic health and social capital that do not include evidence of "out-groups" such as undocumented MSFWs are as inaccurate as measuring state or national lung cancer rates from only those segments of society that do not smoke. Our findings have implications for the future of Idaho's civic health, and the civic health of any American community with high concentrations of MSFWs.

We begin by discussing the main theoretical underpinnings of social capital theory, particularly as discussed in the literature of social capital and ethnic and racial communities. Next, we include a brief discussion of the role of race and ethnicity—which we argue is a missing piece of the social capital puzzle—before we describe the MSFW population in our study and present the methods for data collection and data analysis employed in examining the levels of trust of MSFWs. We compare MSFWs with whites and other Hispanics in Idaho utilizing demographic characteristics in order to place our surveyed population within a broader demographic context for

<sup>4</sup>The Hispanic population in Idaho doubled from the 1990 Census to the 2000 Census. There are 101,960 Hispanics in Idaho. More than 100,000 MSFWs reside in Idaho for at least part of the year. See U.S. Bureau of the Census (2001); Secretary of State of Idaho (1995–1996:297).

<sup>5</sup>See (<http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey/>).

this study. We use logistic regression analysis to explain what factors are associated with varying degrees of trust within the MSFW community.<sup>6</sup> Finally, we present our conclusions.

### ***Social Capital: Definitions and Literature Relating to Ethnic and Racial Groups***

Robert Putnam helped set the broad parameters of the social capital debate, defining social capital as “connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (1993, 2000:19). Putnam’s central argument is that higher levels of social capital are necessary for democracy to thrive, maintaining that there is a vital connection between civic health and good government (2000) (see also Putnam, 1993; Putnam and Feldstein, 2003). He argues that American social capital has been on the decline since the 1960s at all socioeconomic levels.

Putnam also claims that the “racial differences in social trust are very large indeed,” with group membership declining most markedly among blacks in the 1980s and 1990s (Putnam, 1995:672). Studies that have examined the role of ethnic and racial groups and their levels of trust and social capital conclude that the levels vary across groups and social locations (Harris, 1999; Hero, 2003a, 2003b; Lovrich, 1977; McClain, 2003; Portney and Berry, 1997; Segura, Pachon, and Woods, 2001; Uslaner and Conley, 2003). Harris, for example, uses Putnam’s definition of social capital to examine both formal and informal networks and associational patterns among African Americans (1999). For blacks, “distrust in government and lack of belief in the efficacy of government institutions has a paradoxical link to civic engagement” (1999:320). Harris argues that explanations of the civic health of America at large *cannot be generalized for blacks*. Increased levels of political cynicism among the general population are not the same for blacks because of the unique history of African Americans that has resulted in many reasons for them to mistrust others in many different social settings.

How do Latinos fit into this broader discussion of social capital and interpersonal trust? Segura, Pachon, and Woods investigated social capital among four distinct Latino communities: two in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, and two in the State of New Mexico. They found citizenship status, English-language ability, and socioeconomic status affected social

<sup>6</sup>It must be noted that while we are comparing views on trust of MSFWs to Latinos nationwide, to our knowledge this is a pioneer study of MSFWs’ views on trust; therefore, we have no way to compare it to other surveys that specifically examine farmworkers on this issue. We believe there needs to be more research on measures of political and social incorporation of respondents such as MSFWs. Additional comparative data would allow us to show how comparable our respondents are to Latino farmworkers nationally, allowing us to make stronger generalizations.

capital and civic engagement among Latinos. With regard to citizenship status, they found that “[b]eing a noncitizen is likely to be a substantial impediment to civic engagement” (2001:89). Naturalized citizens participated at lower levels in civic and political engagement than did native-born citizens. Additionally, linguistic differences also played an important role. Respondents who were Spanish dominant fell in lower socioeconomic status and participated less than those who were English dominant. “[L]anguage barriers are an important intervening variable in the social capital model Putnam envisions. Spanish-dominant respondents are less than fully incorporated into civic society” (2001:92).

To account for the attitudes of MSFWs on trust-related issues, we draw from three different bodies of theoretical and empirical work. First, individual-level demographic characteristics, such as socioeconomic status and gender, may help account for some variation in MSFWs’ attitudes on trust. Second, the degree of acculturation may also affect attitudes. Acculturation, according to Portes and Rumbaut, is a highly varied process in which immigrants and their children adapt to their new society by learning the new language and culture (2001:53). Finally, since we are trying to account for the attitudes of migrant workers, it is necessary to assess how migrant patterns may affect attitudes and social capital.

Within vulnerable immigrant communities, individual-level characteristics affecting social capital include citizenship/residency status, parental status (i.e., residency status, language), family structure, education, income, and gender (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001:62). Lower levels of income and weaker English-language skills, for example, are associated with lower levels of social capital. Portes and Rumbaut also believe that contextual factors, such as how the government and surrounding community receives new immigrants, make a difference for social capital in immigrant communities. When the reception is negative, ethnic support systems become very important. “Social capital depends less on the relative economic or occupational success of immigrants than on the *density* of ties among them” (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001:65). Human capital and dense ethnic ties are both important for immigrant communities’ level of social capital.

Acculturation is a second factor that affects trust. Michelson and Garcia conducted a study that targets the Latino immigrant population of the Central Valley of California. These scholars found that immigrants’ levels of trust toward the government depended on their perceptions of racism and/or discrimination, mainstream concerns such as broken campaign promises by politicians, and age of migration. For immigrants who identified with Hispanic ethnic groups, their sense of discrimination and racism in the larger society did not acculturate them to mainstream society and instead they “are acculturating into the society of the racialized Latino community” (2003:14). The findings from the Michelson and Garcia study demonstrate that different forms of acculturation among Hispanic immigrants directly affect their levels of trust and incorporation.

Uslaner and Conley (2003) complicate the role of trust in social capital by arguing that high levels of social trust and connectedness do not necessarily lead to improved social capital. They argue that close ties to one's ethnic and/or racial community lead to lower levels of social capital and less civic engagement among Asian Americans. The authors found that joining groups of people like oneself alone (bonding capital) does not necessarily increase civic engagement and social capital as Putnam and others frequently contend. Rather, they argue that it is when people join groups *different* from themselves that social capital and civic engagement increase.

Finally, immigrant patterns and the circumstances in which they live may affect social capital outcomes (Fussell, 2004). Much of the literature on migrant farmworkers and undocumented workers focuses on their demographic circumstances (Durand, Massey, and Zenteno, 2001), extremely difficult living conditions (Bowe, 2003), labor policy debates (Rosenbaum, 2001), different labor occupations, particularly in the informal economy (such as gardening and domestic workers) (Pisani and Yoskowitz, 2002, 2005), and even mental health and psychological stressors (Hovey and Magaña, 2002). Low wages, lack of health insurance, limited English proficiency, occupational hazards, and abuse are a widely documented and unfortunate part of migrant farmworkers' lives, and have a huge effect on their health and psychological well-being. These circumstances lead to high incidences of stress and depression (Hovey and Magaña, 2002). Migrant seasonal farmworkers tend to lack familial support and/or social networks, which leads many to experience isolation. In the models developed below, we draw from individual-level data from the survey and we operationalize acculturation and migration patterns (also drawn from the survey) to assess how these factors influence trust among MSFWs.

## **The Study**

This article describes and explains the levels of trust among Idaho's immigrant Latino population using an original data set. We examine findings from a survey we administered in Spanish from March through June 2003 to 555 MSFWs in three counties in Idaho featuring large concentrations of MSFWs.<sup>7</sup> Our survey documented demographic information, explored health issues, and asked about work background, social/acculturation patterns, and migration patterns. Importantly, we also sought to assess respondents' perceptions regarding their sense of trust and incorporation with members of the larger Idaho community, including the established Mexican American community and/or dominant white community. The

<sup>7</sup>Canyon County ranks sixth of all 44 Idaho counties in percentage of population Hispanic (18.6 percent). Payette County ranks 13th (11.9 percent). Twin Falls County ranks 19th (9.4 percent).

interviews were conducted in Spanish by three undergraduate research assistants during weekday evenings and weekend days.<sup>8</sup> The survey asks the following three questions on trust.

1. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?<sup>9</sup>
2. How much do you trust Mexican Americans in your local community?<sup>10</sup>
3. How much do you trust white people (*Americanos*) in your local community?<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the survey, four Spanish-language focus group sessions were conducted in small, rural agricultural towns in May and June 2003. A total of 15 MSFWs participated in these focus groups. The sessions were designed to enhance our knowledge about and understanding of the issues that were included in the survey questionnaire. The towns wherein the focus group sessions were conducted are representative of rural agricultural communities in Idaho and in the American West generally.

### *Survey Methodology Employed for Surveying MSFWs*

Neither the survey interviews nor the focus group sessions are fully random or entirely representative of Idaho's larger Hispanic population. A random sample would require that we first establish a potential pool of survey respondents (i.e., creating a list using phone numbers or home addresses) and randomly select from within that pool. Idaho's estimated migrant and seasonal population is close to 120,000 individuals, many of whom do not have regular access to a phone or lack a permanent address (Larson, 2002; Idaho Tobacco Prevention and Control Disparities, 2002:1). We found it necessary to locate members of this community by utilizing

<sup>8</sup>The survey was originally written in English and then translated into Spanish by a Spanish professor, Juan Amigo, at Boise State University. We employed three research assistants to apply the survey. The research assistants, then all seniors at Boise State University, were either Mexican or Mexican American. They were bicultural and fluent in English and Spanish. They reviewed the draft of the survey instruments and helped us modify the survey to reflect contemporary and common usage of phrases. Our 85 percent response rate was due, in large part, to the fact that all three researchers identified strongly with the MSFW population—all three had family members who were then or had been MSFWs. One research assistant was born in Idaho but spent much of his youth in the central Mexican state of Michoacan. Another research assistant was Mexican. He came to the United States as a teenager and had worked as a MSFW. The third research assistant was born and raised in Idaho and her family worked in Idaho's dairy industry. All surveys, which included 30 questions, were conducted in person.

<sup>9</sup>The possible responses were (with codes in parentheses): People can be trusted (3), You can't be too careful (2), Depends (1).

<sup>10</sup>The possible responses were (with codes in parentheses): Trust them a lot (3), Trust them some (2), Trust them only a little (1), Trust them not at all (0).

<sup>11</sup>The possible responses were (with codes in parentheses): Trust them a lot (3), Trust them some (2), Trust them only a little (1), Trust them not at all (0).

methods and techniques that might more easily identify potential members of the targeted community. We sought out settings where this community is most likely to be concentrated, such as labor camps (housing projects), neighborhoods with known high concentrations of Mexicans and/or Mexican Americans, trailer parks, weekend soccer games, Mexican-owned businesses, and Spanish-language church services. Our method of locating survey respondents in this manner is consistent with nonrandom sampling techniques on communities that are hard to locate. These techniques effectively capture important characteristics of the targeted community. Knowledge of these characteristics helps us explain more fully the targeted community's behavioral patterns (Babbie, 2004:184).

The demographic information we collected indicates that our sample is comparable to existing data on the demographic profile of migrants from Mexico collected in other studies, giving us a high level of confidence that the respondents to our survey are similar to other Mexican immigrants located elsewhere in the country (Durand, Massey, and Zenteno, 2001:114). We assumed prior to implementing the survey that most of our respondents would be primarily Spanish speaking and that they would be either Mexican in nationality or Mexican Americans. According to the U.S. Census *Current Population Survey* report, Mexican-origin Hispanics constitute the major proportion of the U.S. Hispanic population, making up 67 percent of the total (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003). Hispanic groups of different national origins are historically concentrated in different regions of the country, with Hispanics of Mexican heritage historically residing in the West and Southwest. With the surveyed population, 3 percent were U.S.-born Spanish speakers (mostly likely Mexican Americans) and 97 percent were born in Mexico.

### ***Demographic Profile of White, Hispanic, and MSFW Population***

Our demographic analysis indicates that the MSFW community surveyed in this research project has significantly different social characteristics from those of the rest of Idaho's population and Hispanics nationally. The findings reported in Table 1 demonstrate that Idaho's MSFW population is poorer and has less education than Idaho's white (non-Hispanic) or Hispanic populations, as well as the national Hispanic population. Table 1 summarizes characteristics of all four groups with respect to dimensions of gender, income, education, and citizenship status. The MSFWs surveyed are quite different from the other three groups in all these respects.

### ***Comparison of Demographic Background Information***

Levels of education and household income are key differences that distinguish the MSFW survey population from Idaho's Hispanic population,



TABLE 1  
Demographic Distribution of Idaho's Population

	Idaho's White (Non-Hispanic) Population, %	Idaho's Hispanic Population, %	U.S. Hispanic Population, %	MSFW Survey Respondents, %
<i>Total Population</i>	91.0	7.9	12.5	N/A
<i>Gender</i>				
Female	50.1	46.3	48.6	35.0
Male	49.8	53.6	51.4	65.0
<i>Income</i>				
Less than \$10,000	8.3	10.5	12.4	32.1
\$10,000–14,999	6.9	8.8	7.8	21.3
\$15,000–24,999	14.9	22.5	16.3	34.2
\$25,000–34,999	14.7	19.8	15.2	9.3
\$35,000 or more	54.9	38.6	48.4	3.2
<i>Education</i>				
None	N/A	N/A	N/A	10.4
Less than 9th grade	3.0	38.0	27.8	79.2
9th to high school grad.	38.6	38.5	19.8	9.3
Some college, no degree	35.7	17.3	15.6	N/A
Bachelor's or higher	22.6	6.6	10.4	1.1
<i>Citizenship Status</i>				
Native	98.5	62.7	59.8	6.2
Foreign born	1.5	37.3	40.2	93.8
Not a citizen	0.7	28.9	29.0	93.7

NOTE: The data for this table were as obtained from the U.S. Census 2000 Summary Files ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)) as well as from our survey of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. For post-secondary education, the Census data only consider individuals 25 years and older while the 2003 Idaho MSFW survey included all individuals, including those between 18–25 years of age. SOURCE: U.S. Census 2000 Summary Files ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)); "Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Survey."

the U.S. Hispanic population, and Idaho's white (non-Hispanic) population. Thirty-two percent of the MSFW survey population surveyed lives in households with an annual income of less than \$10,000 compared to only 8.3 percent of white (non-Hispanic), 10.5 percent of Hispanics in Idaho, and 12.4 percent of nationwide Hispanics. Only 3.2 percent of the MSFW survey population surveyed lives in households with an annual income of more than \$35,000, while 54.9 percent of whites (non-Hispanic), 38.6 percent of Hispanics in Idaho, and 48.4 percent of U.S. Hispanics fall in this category.

Educational attainment is one area of particularly stark difference across groups; 89.6 percent of the MSFW surveyed population have less than a ninth-grade education. In comparison, only 3.0 percent of Idaho's white (non-Hispanic) population has less than a ninth-grade education and 38 percent of Hispanics in Idaho have less than a ninth-grade education. With

respect to other noteworthy differences, 94 percent of the surveyed MSFWs are not U.S. citizens, in comparison to 29 percent nationally as well as in Idaho. Although the rates of U.S. citizenship are low, 62 percent of our survey respondents indicated that they intend to remain permanently in the United States. The percentage of survey respondents who responded affirmatively to this question increases to 70 percent among individuals who were full-time residents of Idaho but not U.S. citizens.

The focus group interviews revealed somewhat of a disconnect between behaviors and attitudes. Many migrants may not plan on permanently settling in the United States, but have been here for many years and have no actual plans to return to Mexico in the near future. In other words, there is an intention to return to Mexico, but deepening social, familial, and community ties and continued economic opportunities encourage Mexican nationals to remain in the United States. This suggests that the percentage of respondents who are likely to stay in the United States might actually be higher than the 62 percent who report that they plan on remaining in the United States permanently.

The above discussion comparing the MSFW surveyed population to Idaho's white (non-Hispanic) and Hispanics population is useful to demonstrate the profound differences between these groups. MSFWs cannot be lumped together with a broader Hispanic community due to differences in education, income, and legal status.

### **Trust Among Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers**

How do the levels of trust among migrant seasonal farmworkers compare to those of Hispanics, whites, and African Americans? Are MSFWs more likely to exhibit higher levels of trust toward Mexican Americans than toward whites? Based on existing research and the demographic data included in Table 1, we should expect MSFWs to have substantially lower levels of trust than Mexican Americans due to factors such as lower income, low levels of education, dislocations caused by migration, and language barriers.

Our first finding is that just 5 percent of our survey population believe that "people can be trusted." The Social Capital Community Benchmark (SCCB) survey, which was coordinated by the "Saguro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America," housed at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, shows that nearly one in four Hispanics believe that "people can be trusted."<sup>12</sup> The SCCB is the largest national and multi-community survey on social capital and trust ever conducted in the United States. This demonstrates a remarkable lack of trust in the MSFW community and the depths of the mistrust are distinct from those experienced by

<sup>12</sup>See (<http://www.cfsv.org/communitysurvey/docs/marginals.pdf>).

Hispanics nationally. Since MSFWs' levels of trust are substantially lower, we must try to account for these low levels.

We performed logistic regression analysis on our MSFWs surveyed to ascertain the factors affecting generalized trust, first reducing the generalized trust variable to responses of "you can't be too careful" and "people can be trusted."<sup>13</sup> In building our multivariate model to explain variation in this nominal-level dependent variable, we focused on independent variables that incorporated the three categories of explanations we have previously identified: demographics (age and gender of respondent, education level of respondent), acculturation (English-language fluency of respondent, has respondent participated in Cinco de Mayo celebrations, does respondent intend to remain in the United States permanently), and migration patterns (does respondent work with anyone from hometown/state in Mexico, age of respondent on first arrival in United States, has the respondent worked in U.S. states other than Idaho).

Our multivariate results reveal that taken together, there are no statistically significant relationships between the independent variables in the full model (Table 2, Model 2.1) and the generalized trust dichotomous variable. The model may suffer from overdeterminism in its use of many independent variables, hence Models 2.2 through 2.5 of Table 2 depict the main demographic and acculturation variables, but insert one different migration pattern variable at a time. Age, educational level, and language fluency of the respondent all significantly affect generalized trust. The older the respondent, the more advanced the education level, and the more fluent the respondent is in English, the more trusting the respondent is of people in general.<sup>14</sup> These are the most consistent results across Models 2.2 through 2.5.

Therefore, acculturation factors, especially learning English, as well as higher levels of education, contribute to increasing individuals' levels of generalized trust. This finding is similar to the conclusion reached by Segura, Pachon, and Woods. The lesson for policymakers and those who advocate on behalf of MSFWs is straightforward: investing in English-language as well as more general education courses may be among the best ways to improve MSFWs' levels of generalized trust.

### ***Particularized Trust***

Do MSFWs exhibit lower levels of particularized trust toward whites (*Americanos*) than they exhibit toward Mexican Americans? We find there is

<sup>13</sup>For this question, we dropped the respondents who declared "depends" in response to whether people can be trusted because "depends" was too vague of a response to interpret accurately.

<sup>14</sup>The coding of the language-fluency variable, ranging from 0 = excellent English-speaking skill to 3 = no English-speaking skill, forces a negative relationship with trust.

TABLE 2

Multivariate Logistic Regression Models of Generalized Trust in Idaho MSFW  
(Dependent Variable is Generalized Trust)

Independent Variables	Model 2.1	Model 2.2	Model 2.3	Model 2.4	Model 2.5
Age	0.03 (0.95)	0.05* (2.28)	0.04 (1.56)	0.04 (1.70)	0.04* (2.00)
Gender	0.37 (0.62)	0.29 (0.57)	0.35 (0.66)	0.35 (0.68)	0.43 (0.82)
Education level	0.45 (1.61)	0.58* (2.26)	0.44 (1.59)	0.55* (2.15)	0.43 (1.75)
English-language fluency	-0.44 (1.12)	-0.68* (1.97)	-0.35 (0.92)	-0.57 (1.56)	-0.60* (2.01)
Cinco de Mayo participation	0.51 (1.06)	0.36 (0.79)	0.51 (1.07)	0.37 (0.79)	0.15 (0.34)
Work with Mexican hometown/state resident	0.26 (0.52)	0.39 (0.85)			
Intend to remain in U.S.	0.45 (0.77)		0.38 (0.69)		
Age on first arrival in U.S.	0.03 (0.77)			0.01 (0.31)	
Worked in U.S. states other than Idaho	0.11 (0.23)				0.10 (0.24)
Constant	-5.12* (2.79)	-4.71* (2.94)	-4.79* (2.74)	-4.68* (2.89)	-4.03 (2.70)
Log likelihood	-70.50	-75.49	-71.21	-75.13	-82.28
Hit ratio	92.7	92.8	93.0	92.5	91.9
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.08	0.13	0.08	0.10	0.11
N	289	306	298	308	322

\* $p < 0.05$ .

NOTE: Absolute z scores in parentheses.

no significant difference regarding the trust responses toward Mexican Americans and *Americanos* by MSFWs. Only 27 percent of MSFWs said they trusted Mexican Americans a lot or some, and 26 percent of MSFWs said they trusted *Americanos* a lot or some. This is a surprising finding. We expected that MSFWs, almost of all whom included in the survey are of Mexican origin, would feel higher levels of trust toward Mexican Americans than toward white Americans. In the focus groups we held with MSFWs, we found that many MSFWs were deeply critical of Mexican Americans.

*El que es mecanico sabe de el trabajo que hace el campesino. Y el Chicano que es de cobarta no sabe de lo que sufrimos.*

[The guy that is a mechanic understands the kind of work that farmworkers do. And the Chicano (Mexican American) that wears a tie doesn't know of our suffering.]

TABLE 3

Multivariate Ordered Logit Models of Trust in Mexican Americans and Whites by Idaho MSFWs

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable = Trust in Mexican Americans	Dependent Variable = Trust in Whites
Age	- 0.03** (2.33)	- 0.004 (0.35)
Gender	0.44* (1.94)	0.30 (1.31)
Education level	0.29** (2.27)	- 0.06 (0.47)
English-language fluency	- 0.33* (1.95)	- 1.21** (6.69)
Cinco de Mayo participation	0.43** (2.22)	0.20 (1.03)
Work with Mexican hometown/state resident	0.08 (0.43)	- 0.14 (0.72)
Intend to remain in U.S.	0.49** (2.22)	0.25 (1.12)
Age on first arrival in U.S.	0.04** (2.44)	0.05** (2.79)
Worked in U.S. states other than Idaho	0.20 (0.97)	0.25 (1.29)
Log likelihood	- 483.71	- 456.61
Hit ratio	55.7	53.2
Nagelkerke $R^2$	0.18	0.22
$N$	429	419

\*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \* $p < 0.10$ .

NOTE: Absolute z scores in parentheses.

To examine this further, we perform an ordered logit analysis of our survey questions that ask specifically about trust toward *Americanos* and Mexican Americans, respectively. Since these trust questions are multi-categorical, ordered logit is the appropriate multivariate statistical technique. The multivariate model is the same as the one employed in Model 2.1 of Table 2.

The results of the ordered logit analyses are presented in Table 3, Models 3.1 (dependent variable is trust in Mexican Americans) and 3.2 (dependent variable is trust in whites). The demographics, acculturation, and migration frameworks all help explain patterns of particularized trust among MSFWs.

Demographically, younger males who are more educated are more likely to trust Mexican Americans. It could well be the case that more educated people have positions of greater responsibility in the MSFW community

and thus experience more positive contact with other Mexican Americans. It may be that older MSFWs have had more frequent negative interactions with Mexican Americans because the latter are the middlemen that help find them jobs, secure places for them to live, and are the MSFWs' bosses. There is intense intra-group competition within Idaho's Hispanic community, which is why it is appropriate to analyze the settled Mexican American community separately from the MSFW community.

In terms of acculturation, language fluency appears to be key for expressions of trust on the part of MSFWs. According to one focus group participant, "I don't understand why Mexican Americans who speak Spanish won't talk in Spanish and help us out." The more fluent the respondent is in English, the more likely the respondent is to trust both Mexican Americans and white people. Again, to increase trust among MSFWs, language-skills programs would seem to be essential.

MSFWs who participate in community activities such as *Cinco de Mayo* show more trust toward Mexican Americans, thus indicating that MSFWs who are incorporated into events supported by Mexican Americans will feel greater levels of trust. The implication is that leaders of Mexican-American and MSFW communities must work together to create events that incorporate both MSFWs and Mexican Americans. This finding presents clear opportunities for advocates and leaders within both communities to use cultural events to increase the level of trust among the most marginalized populations. However, this is not an easy task because our focus groups showed high levels of mistrust and apprehension among MSFWs toward Mexican Americans. We should note that the focus groups were conducted concurrently with the survey. We did not intend to focus on MSFW-Mexican American interactions, but it became a central topic of discussion in all four focus groups. In the focus groups, MSFWs expressed attitudes that may make it difficult for them to participate in Mexican American events. "The ones that are born here [Mexican Americans] feel superior and treat us like dirt." Another participant asserted that "Mexican Americans with one look—they make us feel like dirt and put us to the floor with their superior attitude." When MSFWs do participate, trust increases, but there is sufficient intra-group animosity that it is difficult to encourage the newer and more marginalized groups to engage in these cultural events.

Finally, the migration patterns of the MSFWs matter for expressions of trust. Those MSFWs who intend to remain in the United States permanently show greater trust in Mexican Americans than do those who do not intend to remain in the United States permanently. It is impossible to establish causality based on the existing data, but we can speculate that MSFWs who have positive interactions with Mexican Americans are more likely to want to settle permanently in the United States because they can see a place for themselves within this community. Finally, the older the MSFW was on first arrival in the United States, the more likely the individual was to trust both Mexican Americans and whites.

## Conclusions

In this study, we affirm the importance of studying subgroups within a broader racial or ethnic group to better account for the acquisition of attitudes supportive of social capital formation. Ethnicity matters in both the acquisition and usage of social capital, and we hope this study adds to the growing literature that addresses the implications of race on social capital acquisition (García Bedolla and Scola, 2004; Chavez and Fraga, 2003; Hero, 2003a, 2003b). Subgroups, such as the MSFW community within the Hispanic community, illustrate the importance of analyzing the behaviors and attitudes of key groups. This study demonstrates that MSFWs have attitudes on social capital that are distinct from those of Hispanics and non-Hispanics.

MSFWs are less trusting of others than Hispanics nationally; this is a significant finding because MSFWs of today will likely be the “Mexican Americans” or Hispanic citizens and voters of tomorrow. Although we do not have comparable sets of data on MSFWs from the 1950s and 1960s, these lower levels of trust are a major concern because they suggest that we may be creating a subclass within the United States. With the increase in immigration, especially of Mexicans, we may be creating a rural underclass that is not connected to American society. We suggest that further research is warranted to analyze whether the increase in trust from MSFW to “Hispanic” is due to (1) time in country (acculturation vs. incorporation), (2) improvements in the quality of life (better jobs and pay), (3) better English skills, or (4) the timing and type of immigration experience.

We cannot conclusively state why the MSFWs’ attitudes are so much less trusting than the comparison groups, but it suggests that a considerable difference exists between the MSFWs and other Hispanics. We find that MSFWs have low levels of trust not only toward whites (not surprisingly) but also vis-à-vis the broader Hispanic community. This finding shows that intra-group solidarity *cannot* be assumed. Rather, intra-group competition may lead to lower levels of trust and a lack of formation of bonding social capital. Weak English-language skills make it difficult to promote bridging social capital because the inability to communicate with the dominant white population is a serious impediment to establishing deep connections. One key theoretical contribution of this article is to show that the theoretical and empirical debates that conflate individuals into categories of “Hispanics” or “Mexican Americans” do not reflect profound differences within these groups. We need to analyze immigrant and MSFW immigrants as a particular classes of individuals who will likely be permanent residents.

The odds are long that the MSFW community will demonstrate high levels of trust in the immediate future. Considering recent anti-immigrant initiatives such as the 2004 Proposition 200 in Arizona (the Arizona Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act), the 1994 Proposition 187 in California

(Save Our State), the recent targeting of immigrants after the September 11 terrorist attacks, and the growth of the Minute Men in the United States, it is little wonder that immigrants in our study have such low levels of trust. Any discussion of America's civic health without the examination of groups at the bottom of society is likely to be incomplete and misleading. MSFWs' level of health, trust, incorporation, and quality of life (to name a few) affect the broader communities in which they reside. Our study demonstrates that more work needs to be done by government organizations and mainstream civic organizations, as well as by Hispanic organizations and leaders, to improve these low levels of trust exhibited by Idaho's MSFW community. It is our hope that this research brings us one step closer to fully incorporating these new immigrants—who are most likely here to stay—into American society.

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