Wesley Hedden. Latinos in New Orleans Post-Katrina: A Case Study in Social Network Development in a Lutheran Church
(Professor Elizabeth Fussell, Sociology)
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This thesis analyzes the development of social networks in a small Latino church community in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The first section describes the research setting and the research methods for the study. Next, I offer a brief literature review of the concepts of embeddedness and social capital, paying particular attention to the major sources of social capital in immigrant communities, namely bounded solidarity and enforceable trust. I then analyze the extent to which bounded solidarity and enforceable trust actually exist in the community I researched and how the social capital generated from these sources has been exchanged for other forms of capital. Towards the end of my discussion, I consider the possibility of network relations in the church taking institutional form. My findings suggest that labor, health, and living conditions within the community I studied are better than those of other immigrants of similar backgrounds in New Orleans post-Katrina. I conclude that this differential access to resources is best explained by social network development within the church community that combines a strong core network with strategic weak ties. Finally, I offer policy recommendations based on my findings focused on measures that can be taken at the local level to incorporate the newcomer Latino population.
PREFACE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

II. RESEARCH SETTING

III. METHODOLOGY

IV. EMBEDDEDNESS AND SOURCES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL
   1. Bounded Solidarity at Principe de Paz
   2. Enforceable Trust at Principe de Paz

V. SOCIAL CAPITAL IN ACTION
   1. Emotional Support and the Development of Strong Ties
   2. Housing Strategies
   3. Pastor Martinez the Bridge and the Church as a “Weak Ties Incubator”
   4. Development of Migrant Institutions
   5. Medical Clinic
   6. Negative Repercussions

VI. CONCLUSIONS/POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
I. INTRODUCTION

Hurricane Katrina displaced hundreds of thousands of people from New Orleans. However, it also attracted many people to the city looking for labor opportunities, particularly in the construction and seafood industries. A high percentage of these newcomers to the city have been Latinos, some migrating from other parts of the United States and some directly from various Latin American countries (Fletcher, et al. 2006). This study analyzes the development of social networks and social capital within a community of newcomer Latinos and established Latino residents at a church in the New Orleans area.

I have chosen to focus on migrant networks and social capital for three reasons. The first is that social networks play a major role in determining who migrates to New Orleans, as well as in migration to the United States more broadly (Massey 1999). Of construction workers who came to New Orleans after Katrina, including non-Latinos, 47% heard about the availability of work through friends and family, the largest single factor in prompting migration to the city (Fletcher, et al. 2006). Therefore, understanding in greater detail the structure of these networks is essential to understanding migration processes in non-routine situations such as a natural disaster.

The second reason for studying social networks is that newcomers to New Orleans have limited access to social capital in comparison to those migrating to more established destinations. In the case of many destinations in the United States, migration is highly institutionalized (Massey 1999). However, this does not seem to be the case with New Orleans post-Katrina even in comparison to other new destinations (Zuñiga and
I met people in my study that came to New Orleans without knowing a single person in the city and without having secured housing or work. As a result, studying social networks in this case, given the extreme context, can lead to new insights about factors affecting social network development, strategies employed by migrants to gain access to social capital, and what happens to migrants when networks fail to develop.

The third reason for focusing on social networks is that whether newcomers choose to stay in the city will largely be determined by their development of social networks in the city. Abundant research has been done in the last three decades that demonstrate the importance of social networks in accessing resources, particularly in the case of immigrants. It has also been shown that social networks are especially important in the early stages of a migration stream (Fussell 2004). In short, who a migrant knows and how she knows that person will largely determine her success in a new place. Networks also play an important role in finding a job and accessing health care and legal assistance when necessary. Perhaps, most importantly in the context of post-Katrina New Orleans, social networks provide access to housing in a difficult market. In addition, a migrant's social network provides emotional support that is necessary in physically and psychologically demanding situations that migration to a new place, particularly one heavily damaged by a natural disaster, presents. Finally, whether newcomers are able to extend their networks beyond ethnic lines and develop relationships with established local residents, will greatly affect their access to resources and how they see themselves

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1 Although Zuñiga and Hernández–León (2005) focus on new destinations for Mexicans, these places often receive other Latino migrants as well.

2 The list of works that I refer to would be longer than this paper. Therefore, I refer the reader to one of the founders of this research field, Granovetter (1973). For work on the study of social networks in migration studies, see Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993).
fitting into the community. Therefore, migrant networks and social capital development will play an instrumental role in determining whether or not migrants stay in New Orleans, which will ultimately shape the future of New Orleans.

While I will not provide conclusive resolutions in this paper to all of the problems just posed, I will address each of them to some degree. More specifically, this paper will approach social networks with the goal of developing policy recommendations designed to most effectively incorporate newcomer Latinos into the city's economic, social, political, and cultural structures. The paper is divided into sections. The first section describes the research setting and the research methods for the study. Next, I offer a brief literature review of the concepts of embeddedness and social capital, paying particular attention to the major sources of social capital in immigrant communities, namely bounded solidarity and enforceable trust. I then analyze the extent to which bounded solidarity and enforceable trust actually exist in the community I researched and how the social capital generated from these sources has been exchanged for other forms of capital. Towards the end of my discussion, I consider the possibility of network relations in the church taking institutional form. My findings suggest that labor, health, and living conditions within the community I studied are better than those of other immigrants of similar backgrounds in New Orleans post-Katrina.\(^3\) I conclude that this differential access to resources is best explained by social network development within the church community that combines a strong core network with strategic weak ties. Finally, I offer policy recommendations based on my findings focused on actions that can be taken at the local level to incorporate the newcomer Latino population.

\(^3\) Information about labor, health, and living conditions for other newcomers to New Orleans is based primarily on Fletcher, et al. 2006. However, it is also based on newspaper accounts and anecdotal accounts.
II. RESEARCH SETTING

Principe de Paz\textsuperscript{4} is a Lutheran church located on the western periphery of Metairie, Louisiana, bordering on a suburb called Kenner that was known before Katrina for its large Central American population. The church is located on a high traffic boulevard close to a major interstate. There are several signs posted on the fence in front of the church, written in Spanish, welcoming Hispanic newcomers to New Orleans and to the church and inviting them to enroll in free English classes. The building is oriented parallel to the street with a parking lot in front. The building consists of an office, two bathrooms, a kitchen, a classroom, and a chapel. There is also a large yard on the side of the building with a storage tent. There is a basketball court in the parking lot that is frequently used by members of the church and visitors. The chapel area, in addition to being the location of church services, functions nightly as a dormitory for certain members of the church, a medical clinic on Saturdays, a classroom on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and a common use space for a wide range of other church functions. A trailer is located in the back where the pastor, Pedro Martinez, sleeps when he is too busy with church activities to return to his home.

Between thirty and forty people attend the church on an average Sunday with sometimes as many as sixty showing up. The congregation is diverse in terms of country of origin, household structure, average household income, time spent in the United States and New Orleans, legal status, English language skills, and age. The congregation is almost equally split between Mexicans and Central Americans. The majority of the Central Americans are originally from Honduras and El Salvador. Those from Mexico are primarily newcomer males with families in Mexico. Most of the Mexicans are

\textsuperscript{4} All names of individuals and organizations in this paper are pseudonyms.
undocumented, work in low skill construction jobs, have not been in New Orleans for
more than nine months, and speak little English. Those from Central America tend to
have families in New Orleans, work in industries other than construction, speak English
fairly well, and are more likely to have some kind of documentation. Many of them had
houses or apartments that were damaged in the storm and identify themselves with the
city. They also tend to have been involved with the church for longer than those from
Mexico.\textsuperscript{5} Pastor Martinez, a middle aged man who used to be an oil foreman in Texas, is
of Mexican descent. He frequently refers to himself as “TexMex.” His wife Tami, who
sings in the church band, is of mixed Mexican and Spanish descent. Both were born in
the United States and are United States citizens.

The church became the temporary home of about fifteen people after a fire
destroyed the apartments where several people affiliated with the church lived shortly
after the hurricane. There are about ten people who have lived there constantly since the
fire in November 2005. All are Mexican men coming mostly from the states of Veracruz
and Guanajuato. Three lived in New Orleans before the hurricane, and the others arrived
afterwards for hurricane related construction work. In addition to these ten men, the
church has welcomed other Latinos who need housing. During the period in which I was
completing my study\textsuperscript{6}, there were people living in the church intermittently from other
parts of Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Argentina, and Panama. Immediately after the
fire, there were women and children also living in the church.\textsuperscript{7} However, these families

\textsuperscript{5} Of course there are exceptions to these generalizations. For example, several men living in the church are
from Central America and one is from South America. There is also one person living in the church that
is documented. Other exceptions will come up throughout the paper.
\textsuperscript{6} This study took place between March and June of 2006. As a point of reference, Hurricane Katrina hit
New Orleans in late August 2005.
\textsuperscript{7} Several other Latina women have lived in the church since the first, according to Pastor Martinez.
Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to interview any of the women. An interesting line of future
found more permanent housing arrangements within a short period of time. The number of people living in the church has fluctuated between about ten and thirty people since the church opened its doors. In addition, there have been a number of visitors, mostly white, who have stayed in the church when coming from other parts of the country to do community service in New Orleans. Most recently, a group of fifteen high school students and several advisors stayed in the church while doing a week of volunteer work in the city. Most people sleep in the chapel, which has been partitioned into two bedrooms by curtains. There are between four and eight people in each room. Some people also sleep on cots in the classroom. When there is not enough space, people sleep in the non-partitioned part of the chapel. During the early phase of my study, there were so many people living in the church that some slept in their cars and trucks in the church parking lot.

A second research site was a ranch where Pastor and Señora Martinez live about seven miles from the church in La Place, Louisiana. At the time of the study, they lived in a mobile home on property that was under the care of a long-time member of the church and friend of Pastor Martinez, Javier. When they were forced to move their home after the hurricane, Javier allowed them to move it to his property. While it is not Javier’s property, it is under his protection as the city undergoes a legal battle to determine if the land can be developed. The area is about two square miles in size and is prime real estate due to its location in close proximity to the Mississippi River. Javier and his family live in a house on the same property. Additionally, three other households from the church occupy temporary homes on this property. This property is the site of many social

research would be a study on the gendering of social networks in New Orleans. More generally, any research on women migrants in New Orleans would be valuable from a policy perspective.
functions for the church such as the frequent Sunday picnic. It is an important recreation and relaxation space for those living at the church. The ample space and fresh air provide a pleasant contrast to the cramped living conditions at the church and the noisy boulevard where it is located.

III. METHODOLOGY

Some of the data used in this paper comes from ethnosurveys. The ethnosurvey is a technique developed by Massey et al. (1987) designed to compensate for limitations of traditional surveying methods associated with immigration demographics. For purposes of this paper, it suffices to say that it is a form of data collection that is somewhere between a survey and an ethnography. It is more qualitative than surveys but more quantitative than participant observation. In an ethnosurvey, there are a series of predetermined questions, but the way in which an interviewer phrases the questions is variable. The interviewer has the freedom to improvise how she asks the questions and is even able to ask questions that are not on the survey. In this way, the ethnosurvey more closely resembles a natural conversation. This method is well suited for the case of post-Katrina migration to New Orleans because the event is unique and there is little research done on the topic up to this point. A more extensive study of immigration to New Orleans post-Katrina using ethnosurveys would be valuable because results could easily be compared with other data collected using this method, particularly data associated with the Mexican Migration Project (MMP).\footnote{For more information on the MMP, visit the project website at www.pop.upenn.edu/mexmig/}

While ethnosurveys provided useful general information about the immigrants at Principe de Paz, the primary research method for this study was participant observation.
My data came from translating at the medical clinic at the church, teaching ESL classes, attending church services, doing yard work at Pastor Martinez's ranch, attending parties and other functions hosted by the church, and through informal conversations with members of the church. Other general information about immigration to New Orleans comes from newspaper articles, conversations with immigrants at bars and restaurants, and discussions with my advisor at Tulane University, Elizabeth Fussell, and members of her sociology of migration class who were doing ethnosurveys of newcomer Latinos.

The shortcomings of this methodology are the same as those of any ethnographic study, namely that the results cannot be easily generalized to describe a larger population. The results, strictly speaking, only apply to the case of Principe de Paz. However, given the overall lack of demographic information in New Orleans post-Katrina and the uniqueness of the current migration situation in the city, an ethnographic approach is a fitting methodological option. It can be done by a small number of people and with little funding, it avoids the problem of developing a sampling plan in the chaotic post-Katrina setting, and it provides an in depth look at what newcomers are doing in New Orleans.

More generally, an ethnographic approach has certain advantages in the study of migrant networks and social capital. One reason for this is that migrant networks are difficult to track with more quantitative methods such as surveys and formal interviews because most migrants are temporary and many wish to evade detection because of their legal status (Martin and Midgley 2003). While one can find out from these methods what relationships a person has and what tangible resources people get from these relationships, it is difficult to elicit information with these methods about less tangible resources obtained through people's relationships, such as emotional support.
Furthermore, to get a rich and nuanced view of migrant networks requires the in depth, extended approach that only ethnography offers. In short, an ethnographic approach is ideal for this study because of contextual constraints and the focus of the study.

A potential shortcoming of this study is that I was only able to observe social networks in the Principe de Paz community for three months. Cummings and Higgins (2006) argue that analyses of social networks should ideally be dynamic, observing changes in network structure over several years. Nonetheless, they acknowledge that the reason most studies have not taken a dynamic approach is because keeping track of a group of people and their acquaintances can be extremely difficult over a long period of time. The difficulties are only intensified when we consider following migrant networks, given that migrants are highly mobile, transnational, and frequently trying to avoid detection because of their legal status. Still, an extended, dynamic approach to tracking immigrant networks would certainly be an excellent direction for future research.

In research that is more qualitative and consequently subjective, it is important to give an account of the prejudices and biases of the researcher. In this particular study, I was an outsider to the group with which I was working for multiple reasons. My skin color is different from my informants, I am not a native Spanish speaker, I am a citizen of the United States, I have different access to resources, and I have a higher level of education than my informants. Regardless of how my informants perceived these differences, I felt strange, particularly at first, as a result of them. The most common experience I had as a result of these differences was feelings of guilt. I felt guilty because many of my informants were doing backbreaking work for upwards of sixty hours a week in order to gain access to resources that I often take for granted. A conversation one
evening at Pastor Martinez’s house illustrates the point. They (all men) were telling me about the great diversity of the different states in Mexico and their rich indigenous traditions. A man from Veracruz, Antonio, invited me to visit his home in Mexico one day. He told me about tourist attractions near his home, including an ecotourism farm owned and operated by his friend. We discussed how I would travel to Mexico when I visited. I imagined I would take an airplane. Getting the money for the ticket would not be difficult for me, and my legal status would assure that I would have no difficulty getting on the plane. The irony of this state of affairs suddenly hit me like a train. While these men had to travel four weeks in miserable conditions through the desert on foot and in the back of cramped vans, paying exorbitant rates, just to get somewhere where they would be separated from their loved ones and homeland, work constantly in occupations far below their training for lower wages than citizens working the same job, and be treated like inferiors by natives to the United States, I would be able to visit their country as a tourist, enjoy a luxurious lifestyle, and probably be treated with respect. Unfortunately (or fortunately from the perspective of moral sensibility), I was unable to get past this important difference in background and opportunity.

I should also point out in this section that I spent the majority of my time with the group of people living in the church, particularly those who lived there throughout my entire study. I have focused on their experience because they are mostly newcomers and have been more accessible than those not living at the church. They also were my students in the ESL course I taught. I will refer to this group as the “core community” because they spend the most time at the church and are the most involved with its activities, serving in my opinion as the core of the institution, necessary for it to function
as it currently does. By calling them the core community, I also mean to imply that this community constitutes a core network of strong ties. While I will try to remain as impartial as possible throughout this paper, giving as much voice as possible to the other groups at the church, my account will necessarily still be biased to some degree toward representing the experiences and perspective of the core community, given the disproportionately greater time that I spent with these men and my affinity for them.

Another methodological problem that arose during my research involved my role as an English teacher. About six weeks into my study, I started teaching two English classes a week instead of one. The people at the church already referred to me as “el maestro” or “el profesor.” My identity as an English teacher only strengthened after starting another class. The reason that this was problematic was because it became increasingly more difficult for me to initiate interviews and elicit information useful to my study in a direct form. As social relations at the church became more institutionalized and the church’s role and reputation in the community became more closely linked with providing services to Latinos, the English classes I taught became correspondingly institutionalized. This only increased the difficulty of doing formal interviews. Since I entered the church on my first visit as a researcher from the university it was not difficult at the beginning to ask specific questions about social networks in a formal interview style. However, after my role as a researcher diminished as I became more involved with the church, I no longer felt comfortable conducting interviews or ethnosurveys in the same way as before out of fear that church members would think that I was just using them for research. I therefore had to approach research issues from more indirect and

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9 For a more detailed explanation of the institutionalization of social relations and service provision, see Section V of this paper.
IV. EMBEDDEDNESS AND SOURCES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Embeddedness is a term first coined by Polanyi and his associates (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Granovetter (1985) developed the concept in its current usage with his work on social network analysis. It signals a shift away from neoclassical economic theory, toward a less individualistic model of action and behavior. Embeddedness refers to the way in which social relations condition human behavior. That social behavior is embedded implies that it is not purely individualistic and self-interested, as neoclassical economists would argue. For example, instead of making a decision on rational self-interest, one might make a decision on the basis of one's household or a sense of moral obligation to a friend or business partner. Embeddedness has been used to describe behavior in various areas of study, perhaps most notably in that of economic decision making (Granovetter 1985). The concept of embeddedness is inextricably linked with the study of social networks because social networks are necessarily embedded, and to be embedded entails being part of a social network. Therefore, studying one entails studying the other.

More recently, embeddedness has been applied to the study of immigration (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Immigrants, living in an unfamiliar place and often blocked by a language barrier, are particularly dependent on their ties for resources and services. Thus, immigrants are particularly embedded in their social relations. One application of embeddedness in immigration studies is the new economics of migration approach. In this subfield, researchers analyze the structures of household economies and
how these structures affect migration decisions (Stark and Bloom 1985). The new economics of migration approach is just one of many attempts in recent decades to bring the concept of embeddedness into explanations of migration (Massey 1999).

A term closely linked with embeddedness and widely used in the study of migration is social capital. Social capital is a term developed by Bourdieu in French and Coleman in English (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Social capital has become a common term in a number of disciplines and in the public discourse. Portes (2000), in a study of the use of the term, finds three common meanings for the term: (1) a source of social control, (2) a source of family-mediated benefits, and (3) a source of resources mediated by nonfamily networks. In order to avoid theoretical vagueness, Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) give the following definition of social capital: "those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal-seeking behavior of its members, even if these expectations are not oriented toward the economic sphere."

This is the definition that I use in this paper because it is the most theoretically precise definition and it has been developed within migration studies. An important characteristic of social capital is that, like other forms of capital, it is fungible. That is to say that it can be traded for other forms of capital. In fact, it must be exchanged in order to develop (Portes 2000).

Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) find four sources of social capital: value introjection, reciprocity exchanges, bounded solidarity, and enforceable trust. The latter two are particularly relevant sources of social capital in the case of immigration. The first of these two, bounded solidarity, has its theoretical origins as a source of social capital in the work of Marx and Engels in their notion of the rise of proletarian consciousness.
Solidarity and group consciousness in this case develop from the recognition that a group is being exploited by the bourgeoisie (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). In the case of immigrants, solidarity is formed through various forms of discrimination from natives of the country in which they are residing. In the process of developing bounded solidarity, group members provide mutual assistance to each other, both formal and informal. This mutual assistance is a form of social capital. Important features of bounded solidarity are that it is principle based (i.e. people help each other out on the basis of a sense of duty and obligation to others who are from the same group) and that it emerges as the result of contingent situations (i.e. discrimination) (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). For this reason, development of bounded solidarity is found in certain immigration communities, but not in others. A good example of bounded solidarity is Chinatown in San Francisco. Because of discrimination from the dominant culture, the Chinese in San Francisco in the early twentieth century bounded together and provided support for each other, ultimately forming an ethnic enclave (Nee and Nee 1973). In cases where discrimination is not as prevalent, bounded solidarity will not be a source of social capital to the same extent. This means that bounded solidarity is formed through the existence of a common adversary.

The other major source of social capital in immigrant communities is enforceable trust. Enforceable trust has its theoretical origins in Weber's distinction between formal and substantive rationality (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Formal rationality refers to market behavior based on open exchange while substantive rationality refers to market behavior based on particularistic exchange, or behavior based on the interest of a particular group. With enforceable trust, people invest in a group in order to receive
benefits in the long term. Unlike bounded solidarity, enforceable trust is not principle based; instead it is utilitarian in motivation. A person invests in a group because of the expected long-term benefits. Also unlike bounded solidarity, enforceable trust is not situational and dependent on an adversary. It develops from within the group on the basis of the group’s “internal sanctioning capacity” (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993, 135). It involves what is often referred to as “social closure” (Portes 2000, 6). Enforceable trust can be found in ethnic enclaves in the United States where immigrants give preference in transactions to other immigrants of their nationality in order to strengthen their group and ultimately improve their lot. The example used by Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) of enforceable trust is the development of “trust loans” in the Cuban community in Miami after the Cuban Revolution. Immigrants who used to have access to financial capital in Cuba found themselves with without assets in Miami. However, because of enforceable trust, they were able to provide each other loans based on reputation.

**Bounded Solidarity at Principe de Paz**

Having outlined the concepts of embeddedness and social capital and looked at the sources of social capital in immigrant communities, we can now better understand the extent to which these sources are applicable to the community at Principe de Paz. In order to gauge how much bounded solidarity has been a source of social capital for the community at the church, we need to understand the level of discrimination against them from the New Orleans community. We can understand discrimination in terms of perceived discrimination and actual discrimination. While usually the former is the result of the latter, that is not always the case. Perceived discrimination is most important in terms of the development of bounded solidarity. Therefore, it is necessary to describe not
only instances of actual discrimination, but also the perception of discrimination through the voices of members of the church.

After the hurricane in October, the mayor of New Orleans, Ray Nagin, while addressing a crowd of New Orleanians, asked the question, “How am I going to make sure that New Orleans is not overrun with Mexican workers?” (Roberts 2006). Regardless of what Mayor Nagin intended by this comment, the media latched onto this story because it was logical meeting point of two of the most fashionable issues of the time: Hurricane Katrina and immigration. The mayor’s statements were heavily criticized by Hispanic organizations such as the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, giving Mayor Nagin a negative reputation among many Latinos in New Orleans.10 His comment was criticized for several reasons. First, Latin America is an extremely diverse area, politically, culturally, historically, and economically. To refer to all Latinos as Mexicans is inaccurate and inflammatory. Second, his use of the metaphor of overrunning almost implies a military invasion of the city. Massey, in reference to Mexican migration, argues that “martial metaphors” and “hydraulic metaphors” do not reflect the migration to the United States, but are nonetheless frequently the basis of United States migration policy (Massey, Durand, Malone 2002). Ironically, many newspapers covering the story, including the one cited above used hydraulic metaphors to describe the Latino migration. The Baton Rouge Advocate wrote, “Hispanics poured across Lake Pontchartrain like a new flood.” Regardless of what was intended by this metaphor, it clearly could be considered offensive, particularly within the context of

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10 Nagin ultimately retracted his comments and apologized. His position has since changed to one of quiet acceptance of the increased Latino migration to New Orleans (Belsie and Axman 2006). Unfortunately, the harm was already done by his comments and few Latinos seem to be familiar with his new position.
Hurricane Katrina. To compare something to a flood in a post-Katrina New Orleans is probably the most insulting comparison one could make. These types of metaphors are frequently used by the media to sell their product and by politicians to stir up xenophobic sentiment and create a scapegoat for the problems faced by his or her constituency in order to avoid being held accountable. In a city that was damaged so profoundly by ineptness at all levels of government, it is not difficult to imagine why scapegoating Latinos would be a compelling option for politicians. Incidentally, Nagin’s now infamous “Chocolate City” speech in which he said that New Orleans would once again be a “majority African-American city,” could be interpreted by Latinos as unwelcoming (Axtman 2006).

Nagin’s comments about “Mexicans” became notorious in the Latino community in New Orleans. A Mexican man in the roofing industry who came to New Orleans after the hurricane “to help in the rebuilding efforts” told me that he was considering leaving New Orleans because of Nagin’s comments.

I’m not here just for the money. While I definitely like getting paid more, I’m also here to help rebuild the city. I felt pity and compassion when I saw images of this city on television and all those poor people without any help from the government. It made me think of some of the natural disasters that happened in Mexico. That was a big reason I came to New Orleans. But I’ll tell you that after hearing about Nagin not wanting us here, I really feel like leaving. While this man was not associated with Principe de Paz, people from the church were also angered and saddened by news of Nagin’s comments. The most dramatic example of this sentiment came the Sunday after Nagin’s reelection during a church service. One of the leaders of the church, Javier, a Mexican who has lived in New Orleans for over a decade, said the following in the invocation:

Unfortunately a man who does not want us here, Ray Nagin, has been reelected
mayor of New Orleans. He says that he doesn't want us to take over his city. And the people of this city agree. They don't want us here. Even though we are rebuilding their city, they don't want us here. They don't understand that we are essential to the rebuilding effort. Without us, New Orleans could not be rebuilt. Even though they Mayor Nagin and the city doesn't understand or appreciate our contribution, we will keep rebuilding because it is the right thing to do. We will rebuild this city for them and we will do it with pride. And maybe one day once the city has been rebuilt, they will look back and appreciate what we have done.

Several people in church cheered as he spoke, and others gave nods of approval. Several things stand out in this oration: first, the words of Mayor Nagin are taken to represent the people of New Orleans, second, rebuilding New Orleans has a moral (not just economic), component for Latinos at Principe de Paz and third, there is clear sense of “us” and “them” or “we” and “the other.” Mayor Nagin’s comments and his public mandate with reelection has incited a polarization between white and black New Orleanians and Latinos (both newcomer and established), at least in the eyes of Latinos. Interestingly, in the case of Principe de Paz, this instance of discrimination has bounded together Latinos of diverse age, gender, legal status, national origin, and time in the United States and New Orleans.

Another common form of discrimination against immigrants in New Orleans post-Katrina is wage discrimination. Documented workers in the construction industry average $16.50 an hour while undocumented workers average only $10.00 an hour (Fletcher, et al. 2006). There have also been numerous reports of immigrant laborers not getting paid for work, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the storm. There were numerous media reports covering the exploitation of immigrant laborers. Fletcher, et al. (2006) found that thirty-four percent of undocumented workers reported being paid less than they expected, compared to sixteen percent for documented workers. They also found that discrimination occurred against undocumented laborers with respect to overtime pay.
Employers are able to discriminate against undocumented employees because undocumented workers do have access to the same legal resources as documented workers and are consequently more vulnerable to exploitation. Fletcher, et al. (2006) found frequent reports of employers threatening to have undocumented workers deported when they complained about wage discrimination (2006). Wage discrimination and exploitation lead to a heightened sense of bounded solidarity. It is important to note the difference on this issue between documented and undocumented Latinos. Undocumented Latinos face more wage discrimination than documented Latinos. We will see later that discrimination on the basis of legal status is not limited to wages. This is particularly relevant to the current study because every member of the core community is undocumented.11

Discrimination is not just limited to the political, economic, and legal spheres. Latinos also experience prejudice in social situations. One evening, I asked several of the men in the core community if they would like to go out for a drink later in the week at a bar that I frequent. The first question one of them asked me was if the bar was "Latino friendly." I assured them that it was, but that was beside the point. A question such as this indicates that they have had experiences or heard of people having experiences of discrimination in public spaces. In fact, I was unfortunate enough to witness discrimination against Latinos at a bar in New Orleans recently. When a group of Guatemalan men walked into the bar, the bartender shook his head in disapproval and muttered something about "those damn Mexicans." When they asked for drinks, he was very rude to them and pretended to not understand what they were saying even though it

11 Nonetheless, in the section on social capital in action it becomes evident that the core community, through social capital, has been able to develop strategies to avoid wage discrimination and worker exploitation.
was quite obvious (at least to me and the people I was with) that they were asking for a whiskey. Prejudice, because of how personal it is, has some of the most negative psychological effects on church members at Principe de Paz and serves as an important catalyst of bounded solidarity between members of the church. Prejudice in this case has more to do with skin color and English language ability than it does legal status, although legal status cannot be totally isolated from other causes of discrimination.

While everyone in New Orleans has suffered the effects of a drastically reduced health care capacity in the city, undocumented Latinos have faced heightened health discrimination since the hurricane (Fletcher, et al. 2006). Undocumented workers in New Orleans are more likely to work lower skill level construction jobs that involve greater occupational hazards. They are also less likely to have health insurance and are less likely to seek medical attention for injuries. In fact, only one of ten undocumented construction workers in New Orleans reports having any form of medical insurance (Fletcher, et al. 2006). That New Orleans is desperately lacking medical providers in the wake of Katrina only magnifies problems that undocumented workers would already experience under normal circumstances. Translating at the medical clinic, I encountered many people who had experienced work related injuries, many of which had remained untreated for several weeks. While the clinic offered masks to protect workers gutting houses and performing other jobs that would expose them to dangerous inhalants, there have not been enough to meet the demand. Immigrants also have limited access to dental care. Health discrimination carries a double burden in that it entails financial loss from lost productivity and shortened life expectancy.

Discrimination has even taken shape within the Lutheran Church. Pastor Martinez
has been criticized by others in the Lutheran Church for letting undocumented Latinos live in the church. They worry that it is an “insurance liability.” Legal justifications such as this are often coded expressions of racism. Additionally, Pastor Martinez has had trouble finding a church that would be willing to house the core community in the case of another hurricane. He was finally able to convince a church in Jackson, Mississippi to agree to house them, but it was only after assuring the pastor that the Latinos were “well-behaved Christians.” There are myriad other examples of discrimination against Latinos, particularly undocumented ones since the hurricane. This discrimination has led to high levels of bounded solidarity in the core community at Principe de Paz. We will see later in this paper how the social capital produced by discrimination vis-à-vis bounded solidarity has been exchanged and negotiated in ways that mitigate the negative effects of this discrimination.

Another important aspect of the development of bounded solidarity is how easily immigrants can exit the country (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). One of the reasons that Chinese communities in California and New York have expressed such high levels of bounded solidarity is because returning to China has been difficult historically for members of these communities. While transportation and communication networks have developed exponentially in recent decades, this factor is still very relevant in the case of refugees and undocumented immigrants. Since most members of the core community are undocumented, it is very difficult for those who would like to visit their families to make return trips. Most of those living in Principe de Paz are undocumented. Legal status can be a tremendous constraint for those who wish to make return visits to their homes. Benito, for example, has not returned to Mexico to see his family in over six years.
because it would be economically and logistically infeasible for him to return. While it would be relatively inexpensive to return to Mexico, return migration to New Orleans would cost thousands of dollars. He would first have to pay for a bus ticket from his home in Veracruz to the United States border. Then he would have to pay upwards of $2,500 for a guide (coyote) to lead him across the desert border. In addition to the economic burden that this presents, the hike is grueling, lasting about ten days and requiring him to carry upwards of fifty pounds of water, his food, and his personal belongings. Upon reaching a pick up station in the United States, he will then get a ride in a crowded van to either Laurel, Mississippi or directly to New Orleans. This ride takes many hours and is extremely uncomfortable. The whole trip from Veracruz to New Orleans takes three or four weeks and can cost $3,000, not including lost wages for time spent traveling. In all likelihood, he would also be fired for taking such an extended leave of absence. In addition, there are psychological costs of such an arduous journey and the constant fear of being apprehended. I have heard Benito’s story repeated in almost the exact same form by other members of the core community.

And they are not alone. With changes in border policy since the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 that placed stricter limits on immigration from Mexico and increased border patrol funding, immigrants have had to cross the border at new locations, leading to more expensive and dangerous journeys. Between 1990 and 1998, the price of a coyote at non-Tijuana border crossing sites increased from $150 to $525, largely as a result of IRCA and the increase in border patrol (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002). “By 1998 the annual probability of a return migration had fallen to just .10, some 70% below the 1990 figure,” (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002, 130). The
average trip length during this period also increased to 8.9 years.\textsuperscript{12} Paradoxically, these tighter restrictions on immigration have come at the same time as large-scale economic integration between the two countries as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which inevitably leads to increased trade in the labor market (i.e. immigration). In sum, Mexicans are immigrating to the United States in higher numbers than ever, yet finding it increasingly difficult - logistically, financially, physically, and psychologically – to make return visits to Mexico. This burden was a frequent topic of conversation with those living at the church and seems to be a serious burden for all of them. This inability to exit the country easily, while not as great as it was for Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s or Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century, certainly is a serious problem for undocumented Latinos in New Orleans and leads to a heightened sense of bounded solidarity.

Language differences between sending and receiving countries are also considered an important source of bounded solidarity in immigrant communities (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). While Spanish and English are not as different from each other linguistically as Chinese and English, language is a significant obstacle blocking the core community’s integration into the established New Orleans community. While church members who have lived in the New Orleans area for a significant period of time and have established families here tend to speak fluent English, the core community tends to speak little English. Being the English teacher, I have been able to assess the language

\textsuperscript{12} These numbers have probably increased significantly since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Increased security concerns have caused a reframing of the immigration issue so that it now considered a question of national security. Correspondingly, what used to be Immigration and Nationalization Services under the Department of Justice has now become Immigration and Customs Enforcement under the newly formed Department of Homeland Security. This shift in orientation has led to increased attention to the issue and more funding towards border control.
ability of most members of the core community. Aside from one person who speaks English quite well, they are all beginner level English speakers. Most are unable to say things other than greetings, numbers, and other simple expressions. The first day of class, I asked those in the class to explain to me (in Spanish) their reasons for learning English. Nearly every response involved needing English to obtain better jobs and to make friends in New Orleans. Limited English skills serve as a major economic and social barrier for them. They have also told me that if they had better language skills then they would be less scared of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers and would be more likely to seek work permits. In short, their limited English abilities cause them to socially isolated outside of the church community and its frequent visitors. Therefore, the language barrier, by limiting members of the core community from interacting with people outside the church, increases bounded solidarity within the community as a source of social capital.

Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) argue that cultural differences other than language between immigrants’ country of origin and their host country also lead to increased bounded solidarity. The reproduction of cultural practices is therefore evidence of bounded solidarity. Various examples of the reproduction of cultural practices can be found in Principe de Paz, especially with the core community. Each evening the men cook Mexican food in the church kitchen. During the World Cup, they watched Mexico’s games. They frequently watch Mexican movies and listen to Mexican music on the local Spanish language radio station. At an Easter picnic at Pastor Martinez’s house, there was traditional Mexican and Central American food, and everyone participated in games from the region. Social relations have also been reproduced. For example, longstanding
conflicts and rivalries between members of the core community dating back to grade
school have been reproduced at Principe de Paz. The reproduction of cultural practices
and social relations is indicative of bounded solidarity within the community.

**Enforceable Trust at Principe de Paz**

An essential characteristic of groups with enforceable trust is the common
perception of shared experiences between members of the group (Portes and
Sensenbrenner 1993). With the case of any Latino migrant community, many will
probably have experienced a difficult border-crossing, particular those who have crossed
more recently. The border crossing experiences for many members of the core
community share striking similarities to each other because many come from the same
town in Mexico and used the same coyotes to cross the border. Their families and friends
even have established relationships with coyotes. As one man told me, “everyone I know
used the same coyote.” They followed the same bus route in Mexico, suffered the same
grueling hike across the border, and took the same van ride to Laurel, Mississippi.
Several of the men even came together on the same trip. Most of the men also lived and
worked in Laurel, Mississippi for a period before coming to New Orleans. As a result,
they commonly talk about their favorite restaurants and clubs in Laurel.

Pastor Martinez, while not an immigrant himself, knows the experience of illegal
border crossing intimately from his years of working with immigrants. He often refers to
crossing the border in his sermons and once even based his entire message on the
experience. In a sermon oriented around the extended metaphor of spirituality as water,
he alluded to the state of thirst that an immigrant experiences as he crosses the desert on
foot. In another sermon, he discussed the importance of spiritual journeys, making a
comparison between the border crossing journey and Jesus’ journey to the cross and subsequently heaven. He compared arriving in New Orleans to arriving in the “promised land” because of its abundance of high paying labor opportunities for immigrants.

Several people yelled out in support of his analogy. Pastor Martinez extended the metaphor further by stressing that a spiritual journey, like a border crossing journey, is something that is shared with other people. In other words, not only does this metaphor have the effect of reinforcing notions of shared experience, but it also has the effect of spiritually reifying the existence of the group. In addition to endowing the collective with a higher ontological status, the metaphor also implicitly vindicates the border crossing as a morally virtuous action. It posits an objective morality, as through the eyes of God, that contradicts and invalidates the immigration laws of the United States.

The members of the core community also share a common fear of “la migra.” The first thing they wanted to learn when I started teaching English classes was what they should do if they had an encounter with the police. A member of the core community related to me one evening:

You can't understand how nervous it makes you to know you could be apprehended at any minute. Everywhere you go in public, you worry. When you see a police officer, or worse yet a migra badge, you tremble with fear. The worst part of it is knowing that you're here just to work and help them rebuild their city. I cannot remember a single day spent with members of the core community that someone did not start talking about the fear of apprehension. Rumors constantly circulated about acquaintances or friends of friends who had been apprehended. Those who had already been deported once were particularly scared because it was believed that a second apprehension would lead to an automatic two-year prison sentence. It would be difficult to overestimate how much this fear weighs down psychologically on undocumented
immigrants in the United States. Chavez (1992, 159), in his ethnographic study of a
migrant shantytown in San Diego County finds that immigrants are “constantly aware
that at any moment they could be apprehended.” He notes their common usage of
metaphors of confinement or imprisonment to describe feelings surrounding their
undocumented status.

The core community coped with this fear by talking about it. When someone
talked about his fear, the others tended to listen supportively, nodding their heads so as to
affirm that they also felt the same fear of the migra. Another way of dealing with the
psychological burden was to joke about the migra. One such way was to jestingly refer to
someone unpleasant as the migra. I was part of a migra joke at a picnic one day at Pastor
Martinez’s ranch. To understand the joke requires knowing that people are sometimes
deported to the wrong countries, particularly Central Americans. While sometimes this is
strategic because it will allow for easier re-entry into the United States, sometimes it is
not, leading to tragedy. At the aforementioned picnic, a Salvadoran woman joked with
me that “if the migra came that day they would probably mistake [me] as Argentine
because of fair complexion and deport me to Argentina.” Talking and joking about
apprehension by the migra is a way of coping with fear and anxiety. A byproduct of this
talking and joking is the development of enforceable trust between undocumented
immigrants.

The fear of being apprehended is not unfounded. It is true that general consensus
among Latinos and non-Latinos in New Orleans is that enforcement of immigration laws
have been relaxed since the storm. A study found that only ten percent of undocumented
workers in the construction industry experienced “unfair treatment” by immigration
officers (Fletcher, et al. 2006, 23). Nonetheless, there have been several major busts of immigrant workers, the most notable being the March 16 bust at Lee Circle, a popular day labor site, when over forty immigrants were apprehended (Varney 2006). Furthermore, several of the men living in the church have been deported. Fear of apprehension is so great in fact at Principe de Paz, that they have initiated what Pastor Martinez calls “migra drills.”

Every once in a while, we'll do what I call a “migra drill.” I'll come into the church unexpectedly and start yelling ‘migra.’ Whatever the guys are doing at the time, they stop and climb into the attic. We know it's unlikely the migra will come to the church, but we have to be careful especially with all of the media we've been getting.

He informed me that migra drills were not uncommon:

Federico's boss at the fish factory also does migra drills. In fact, he rearranged the entire layout of the factory so it would be more resistant to busts. He moved his office to a room in the front of the factory that is the only entrance to the main floor. That way, if the migra comes he can make a signal and stall the officers while everyone goes to their assigned hiding spot.

Migra drills can be seen as strategy for mitigating risks associated with deportation in the same way a fire drill or tornado drill mitigate risks associated with fires and tornados. Pastor Martinez also mitigates risks by having everyone fill out an information sheet that includes their bosses’ contact information and their addresses in their home countries. With this information, Pastor Martinez would be able to get their paychecks and send them to their houses in the case of a deportation. Similarly, Chavez (1992) found that immigrants in San Diego County would go to great lengths to avoid apprehension, sometimes even jeopardizing their health and other family members’ health. Regardless of whether migra drills and other forms of risk mitigation are necessary for the members of the core community’s protection, that such a ritualized theatrics occurs both at home and work, and that immigrants and those who are interested in protecting them believe
that it is necessary, indicates the extraordinary level of fear of the migra. This shared fear leads to enforceable trust in the core community.

While I focused on the negative shared experiences of people at Principe de Paz, it would be a misrepresentation not to include positive experiences that they share. Since a number of members of the core community come from Pasoamapa, Mexico, they are able to reminisce on childhood events and the happenings of mutual friends at home. They also have common experiences in Laurel, Mississippi and can joke about people they knew there or nostalgically discuss how good the food was at the Veracruzana. I will discuss in greater detail how positive shared experience contributes to social capital development in the upcoming section.

V. SOCIAL CAPITAL IN ACTION

So far, I have analyzed the sources of social capital in bounded solidarity and enforceable trust in the Principe de Paz community. In this section, I analyze how this social capital is exchanged and negotiated within the community in order to minimize the effects of discrimination and improve quality of life in the core community. First, I discuss the development of strong ties and the valuable emotional support that they provide. I then look at how social capital is converted into more tangible resources such as housing, transportation, and favorable labor conditions. Next, I analyze the invaluable role of Pastor Martinez as a bridge between networks and the church as an environment conducive to the production of weak ties. Finally, I show how certain social relations within the church have become institutionalized in the context of Hurricane Katrina and the extreme shortage of services and resources for the rapidly growing Latino population.
in New Orleans.

**Development of Strong Ties: Emotional Support**

Granovetter (1973, 1983), in analyzing social networks, distinguishes between what he calls weak ties and strong ties. He claims that weak ties (or acquaintances) are essential to the development of social capital because they serve as “bridges between two densely knit clumps of close friends” (Granovetter 1983, 202). He finds that the most important weak ties are the ones that link together people from radically different groups. He also finds that people who do not have weak ties tend to be isolated, leading to a disadvantaged position in the labor market. On a macroscopic level, “social systems lacking in weak ties will be fragmented and incoherent” (Granovetter 1983, 202). People share information with weak ties. In contrast, people provide emotional support for strong ties and are more willing to provide financial assistance for strong ties. Granovetter (1973, 1983) concedes that both kinds of ties are essential to successfully developing social capital.

Menjívar (2000, 33) also looks at weak and strong ties in her study of Salvadoran immigrants in San Francisco and concludes that while “weak ties are useful in spreading information; strong ties may be more advantageous in accessing influence, which is more costly and difficult to obtain.” Menjívar (2000, 146) found that “providing moral or emotional support was not done as easily as sharing information, for it required a certain degree of closeness and responsibility.” Only strong ties such as kin relations provided this kind of emotional support. However, in the absence of a family, as is this case with many migrants in the core community, this emotional support can come from different sources, such as other migrants. Menjívar found that in providing this emotional support

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13 While some of the men are brother and cousins, they are still missing their wives and children.
for each other, migrants who had strong ties with each other developed their own way of speaking of things, using unique expressions and words. The following story (from my perspective and recorded in my field notebook) illustrates how migrants living at the church provide emotional support for each other in the way that Menjivar describes:

This evening, after doing yard work at Pastor Martinez’s ranch with the men in preparation for the party tomorrow, we sat in a circle, some in chairs and some on the ground, drinking beer. The sun was setting and I can remember the smell of cut grass fading into the other smells of a spring New Orleans evening. The Mississippi River levee could be seen in the distance. One of the men pulled his car up to where we were sitting outside of the ranch and turned on some traditional Mexican music. Many of the men smiled when the music started and the general mood seemed to become more festive with a strong hint of nostalgia. The setting sun, the cooler air, the music, and the spirits created a relaxed environment in which everyone seemed to feel very comfortable. The men told each other stories from their lives in Mexico and bragged to me about how beautiful the countryside was in their respective states of origin. They also told stories about their border crossing and migration experiences. The conversation turned to their families and the men began to joke about their wives’ “Sanchos.” I did not know what Sanchos were and felt confused. As one man explained to me, “Sanchos are men who move into your house after you migrate to the United States. Your Sancho eats your food, plays with your kids, and sleeps with your wife. And every once in while, he sends a letter to you asking for more money.” I was surprised by their nonchalance in talking about Sanchos because I assumed they were real people. However, I was later informed that Sanchos are only fictitious housebreakers. Benito was kind enough to explain to me that, “We only talk about Sanchos as a way of teasing each other.” Benito captured this pleasant evening elegantly: It is times like these that mean so much to me. When I am back home in Mexico and lying in my bed one night next to my wife, I will think of nights like tonight and I will start laughing uncontrollably. My wife will ask me what I am laughing about and I won’t be able to explain it to her. There’s just something about being away from home for so long and being with other people who are in the exact same situation.”

By sharing stories about common experiences and using playful language and teasing, these men provide emotional support for each other to compensate for the absence of their families and to cope with a difficult life in a new city. This emotional support can be seen as a form of social capital that can be exchanged for other forms of capital.

Some examples of the conversion of this less tangible form of social capital into
more tangible resources become clear in something Pastor Martinez said to me:

It's amazing how people help each other out here. It's such a strong community. The guys like to share everything. They live together, cook together - they even buy cars together. Five of them put their money together and bought a car and now they take turns driving each other to work. And the way they take care of the church is amazing. Me and my wife used to have to clean it up and take care of it ourselves. Now I walk in Saturday morning and I know it's going to be clean. If anything needs repaired - no matter what it is - someone will know how to fix it. Sebastian for example is quite a mechanic. They never have to spend much money on car repairs because he's so good at it. They do everything together; they've really bonded since the fire. I was a little nervous at first, but it's really been a blessing having them live at the church.

By sharing in responsibilities, the core community is participating in a system of enforceable trust. By purchasing a car together, these men are exchanging one form of capital for another. This exchange is enabled by the internal sanctioning capacity of the core community. Each knows that his reputation will be ruined if he exploits the trust of others. In the passage above, we can also see how social capital is exchanged for favors that ultimately save money, such as Sebastian's free auto repairs. We will see in the next section how strong ties such as the ones elaborated on in this section have also allowed members of the core community to secure affordable housing at Principe de Paz.

**Housing Strategies**

More than half of the residential units in Orleans Parish experienced extreme flooding from Hurricane Katrina, causing them to be uninhabitable even six months after the storm (Callimachi 2006). Various factors have caused delays in temporary housing, leading to a general housing shortage in New Orleans. While the shortage is not as severe in surrounding parishes, such as Jefferson Parish where Principe de Paz is located, these parishes have also been affected because many Orleans Parish residents have been displaced to them. This presents serious difficulties for temporary migrants seeking
housing in the New Orleans area. A recent report released by University of New Orleans’ Real Estate Market Data Center & Center for Economic Development, found that rental prices in Orleans Parish have increased by twenty five percent since the storm (NOCB 2006).

Although affordable housing is essential for many immigrants because their wages are generally low and they are working to save earnings, securing it anywhere can be a difficult task. Chavez (1992) teases out the extraordinary legal and financial issues that are frequently associated with this process. In his study of a San Diego shantytown, there was no affordable housing, so migrants were forced to squat on vacant land. This led to an extended conflict between migrants and locals who didn’t want “criminals” polluting their neighborhoods. Extended legal battles took place between property owners and immigrant rights advocates. Ultimately, the public health department was called in to force immigrants to move on the basis of public health regulation violations. This situation attests to the difficult situation migrants frequently endure with respect to housing. Their pay is low so they need affordable housing, yet affordable housing is unavailable because the people they work for do not want migrants to live near them. Bluntly put, many people want cheap but invisible labor. This predicament is indicative of a structural socioeconomic dilemma in which there is a demand for low cost immigrant labor but a xenophobic and classist aversion on the part of those benefiting from cheap labor that prohibits the provision of affordable housing to those performing labor.

Migrants set up shantytowns and tent cities in New Orleans similar to the one in Chavez’s study shortly after the storm. Camps were set up in parks and other open spaces in the city, most notably in City Park. Newcomers also inhabited inundated and
abandoned houses. While initially, people either tolerated or ignored the issue because of the extraordinary circumstances, public sentiment has become increasingly opposed to these camps and other makeshift housing practices (Webster 2006). This has led to an even more severe Latino housing crisis in the context of a general New Orleans housing crisis.

Given the context, it is not hard to imagine how valuable a commodity housing is for newcomers to the city. People living at Principe de Paz pay twenty-five dollars a week to live in shared accommodation. From what I have heard from people at the church, this is approximately twenty percent of what one would pay to live in a shared apartment in the surrounding area, not including utilities. However, not anyone can live in Principe de Paz. In order to live in the church, one must have references from people that Pastor Martinez knows and one must pass a screening process. This screening process amounts to a consultation with Pastor Martinez that lasts about an hour in which a person is required to give contact information of family and friends and answer questions that indicate how that person would get along with others in the church. Pastor Martinez wants to be sure that people living in the church understand the responsibilities that living in a communal environment entail. These responsibilities include picking up after one’s self, cleaning the church regularly, taking turns cooking, attending church services, and a number of other chores. More importantly, it involves being a good representative of the church and staying out of trouble, so to speak.

In most cases, people that want to live in the church are also required to have a reference.\textsuperscript{14} A person must have a recommendation from someone already living at the

\textsuperscript{14} Recently, there have been exceptions to this rule, which I will argue in the next section is indicative of the institutionalization of social relations in the church.
church or from someone else that Pastor Martinez trusts. This system is similar in structure to the system of “trust loans” that Cubans in Miami gave each other on the basis of reputation.\textsuperscript{15} Here, Pastor Martinez and the other members of the core community take a risk by letting someone in. If the wrong person were to enter the church, it could have serious consequences. A malevolent person allowed to live in the church could quite easily steal other people’s belongings or even commit a violent crime. More likely, a person could be a freeloader and refuse to contribute to the daily chores and activities required to maintain smooth functioning in the church. If someone in the core community were to get in trouble with the law, it could force the entire housing operation to shut down. Despite this risk, there have been few problems in the church\textsuperscript{16}, attesting to the effectiveness of this system of consultation and references, which functions on enforceable trust. A person is let in by his or her reputation and that person knows the responsibilities associated with living in the church. The group has legitimate sanctioning capacity in that they can kick someone out if he is not following the rules. Perhaps even worse, they could ruin his reputation in his hometown in Mexico.\textsuperscript{17} In other words, access to housing at Principe de Paz, much like the joint purchase of cars, operates under a system of enforceable trust.

**Pastor Martinez the Bridge and the Church as a “Weak Ties Incubator”**

Pastor Martinez is an extremely important resource for church members, particularly those living at the church. In addition to providing housing for the core community, he also helps members of the core community fight workplace discrimination. Additionally, he functions as a bridge between people of different

\textsuperscript{15} For more information on “trust loans,” refer to Section IV of this paper.
\textsuperscript{16} There are some exceptions which I will go into later in the section on negative effects of social capital.
\textsuperscript{17} Of course this doesn’t apply to those not from Mexico.
networks, an invaluable resource according to Granovetter (1973).

Pastor Martinez, in addition to being a native English speaker, has lived in New Orleans for more than a decade. During this time, he has established an extensive social network that includes many employers of Latino immigrants. The breadth of his social network is partially the result of him being a pastor at St. Paul, a church in Mid City, before the hurricane. St John’s congregation was composed of mostly middle class whites and African Americans from Uptown and Mid City. As a result, the people he formed connections with at St. Paul were part of vastly different social networks than those of the people at Principe de Paz. This offered Pastor Martinez access to a set of resources apart from those available at Principe de Paz. Since the hurricane, Pastor Martinez has also been working in close partnership with a much larger Lutheran church that also provides services to Latinos in New Orleans.

Pastor Martinez also has extensive contact with people from the Lutheran church outside of New Orleans. He lived in Texas for most of his life and set up several churches there to which he still remains in close contact. One of his sons, is currently a pastor at a major Lutheran church in Houston. He also has a strong relationship with a church in Wisconsin that he was a guest pastor at during the months after the hurricane. Pastor Martinez also has an established relationship with a church from New York.

The broad diversity of social networks translates to numerous resources and services to the people living in Principe de Paz. The Lutheran church provided Pastor Martinez with a salary after the hurricane and funding to continue his churches and work through personal losses from the storm. In addition, one of the churches in Texas provided him with a cash allowance that aided him in refurbishing Principe de Paz. The
church in Wisconsin donated a trailer to Pastor Martinez that has since been used extensively to transport members of the core community to various functions, including work, “La Marcha,” and even a camping trip. Members of the Wisconsin church have come to New Orleans on a monthly basis since the hurricane to assist Principe de Paz and the larger San Jeronimo church. The group from New York has similarly come to New Orleans to engage in community service and redevelopment, much focused on providing services to the Latino community in New Orleans. More recently, a group of fifteen high school students from Texas came to the church for a week to do community service in New Orleans. Other churches have donated refrigerators and microwaves to Principe de Paz to facilitate cooking for those living in the church. It is not surprising that weak ties have been so helpful to the core community. Weak ties have been shown to take on an added importance in the provision of service in resources in the case of non-routine events such as natural disaster (Hurlbert, Haines, and Beggs 2000). Although members of core community’s homes were not destroyed as a result of the hurricane, the fire took place soon enough after the storm that the tragedy has become subsumed in many ways by Hurricane Katrina. One could argue that the core community has been able to borrow the moral capital associated with experiencing Hurricane Katrina.18

Pastor Martinez’s connections with employers of Latinos proved very useful in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Pastor Martinez’s close friend and the impetus for the housing program at the church, Federico, worked at a fish processing plant before the storm. He was the floor manager in charge of about ten other Latinos working in the

18 I introduce moral capital only as a suggestion for one of the factors enabling the core community to access so many resources from weak ties. To demonstrate that this is the case would require more in-depth investigation. For more or moral capital see Valverde, M “Moral Capital.” (1994) Canadian Journal of Law and Society. 9(1): 212-232.
plant. After the storm, the owner of the factory wanted to open back up but did not have any laborers. He contacted Pastor Martinez because he knew Pastor Martinez had a close relationship with Federico. He told Pastor Martinez that he needed Federico to come back to New Orleans (he was living in Mississippi at the time) and asked if Pastor Martinez would help. Pastor Martinez talked to Federico and suggested to him that he could reasonably ask for incentives for returning to work. Federico told Pastor Martinez to tell the owner that he would return to work if the owner would raise his wages from $7.50 an hour to $10 an hour, employ his wife at the same rate, and find housing for him. The owner agreed to all of these conditions and Federico and his family. The owner kept his promise and secured a trailer for Federico and his family. Shortly thereafter, others followed Federico and the factory was able to return to normal operation.

Pastor Martinez has served as an intermediary between employers and employees on a number of occasions. On the day of la Marcha, Pastor Martinez negotiated with employers so they would allow those interested in attending la Marcha to miss work that morning without any penalty. Nonetheless, there are other factors contributing to relatively favorable labor conditions of those in the core community. Members of the core community receive higher wages than other undocumented immigrants in New Orleans, always receive pay for the hours they work, work reasonable hours, have access to proper safety equipment, and get paid vacations. These favorable circumstances are largely the result of bounded solidarity. Since most of the members of the core community work for the same two companies, they make up considerable portions of the companies’ staff. As a result, employers cannot mistreat members of the core community without facing repercussions that could include workers quitting, refusing to work,
refusing to attract additional workers, or intentionally under performing. In other words, the core community is able to convert its close ties and bounded solidarity into very tangible resources: higher wages, safe work conditions, and job security.

Pastor Martinez also tries to create an environment conducive to the development of social networks within the church between the newcomers to the church and established church members and between church members and outside visitors. The theme of his sermon one Sunday was the value of friendships with people who are different than one's self. He referred to a party with white people from his other church he would attend later in the day and how much he enjoyed having their friendship because they were different from him. He highlighted the importance of looking past linguistic, cultural, national, and religious differences with other people, particularly those of other church members. He compared friendship with God's love and asked rhetorically, "what would happen if God excluded people on the basis of language and nationality?" Unity in diversity and reaching out beyond border were common themes in Pastor Martinez's sermons and in discussions with him. This message was intended to create an environment of acceptance within the church and I believe has been instrumental in the development of close ties between members of core community and weak ties with other church members and visitors to the church.

This atmosphere of unity between diverse elements seems to be a reality at Principe de Paz, at least through the eyes of Pastor Martinez, and extends beyond the core community:

Something beautiful happened when the folks from New York were here. One afternoon, I got a call from Benito saying their apartment had burned down. The whole building...burned to ashes. I told him to bring his people and come over as soon as he could. They could stay with us. The people from New York were
preparing for dinner and I explained what happened and that there would be about fifteen people, including children, arriving shortly. I was afraid they would be upset, but I was totally wrong. By the time the group of Latinos arrived, covered in ashes, smelling of smoke, and hungry as hell, those folks from New York had pulled together and made a feast fit for a hundred. They had turned on all the stoves and ovens and microwaves and even started up some grills out back and were cooking everything they could get their hands on. They fed the Latinos first and themselves later. They did everything they could to make sure they were comfortable. It was just beautiful.

Almost every other week there is a group of people from other parts of the country staying at Principe de Paz. In addition to the necessity of interaction with the core community that is entailed by such crammed living conditions, Pastor Martinez organizes functions such as banquets to promote interaction and conversation between the groups. While the language barrier limited interaction between the core community and visitors to a certain degree, I was frequently surprised by their engagement with visitors. One time when I arrived at the church, I had trouble parking because there was a massive (and intense) basketball game going on between members of the core community and a group of high school students from Texas.

Pastor Martinez, through his extensive range of networks and desire to bring people from different backgrounds together serves as an important bridge between communities. These bridges are particularly valuable for members of the core community who frequently obtain resources, such as supplies and funding, from these weak ties. Nonetheless, Pastor Martinez’s knack for creating weak ties between different groups is aided by circumstance. The tragedy of Hurricane Katrina has led to sympathy and support from people across the country. Additionally, the values associated with Christianity can provide a common ground for people of different backgrounds. It is because of this role in stimulating the development of strategic weak ties that I that named the second part
this section, “The Church as a Weak Ties Incubator.”

**Development of Migrant Institutions**

Goss and Lindquist argue “migrant institutions [are] a structural complement to migrant networks,” (Massey 1999, 44). As immigration increases to a destination, so do institutions designed to take advantage of immigrants and institutions designed to provide resources and services to immigrants. Migrant institutions are different from migrant networks in that they persist over time, and roles can be played by different individuals. “The migrant institution is a complex articulation of individuals, associations, and organizations which extends the social action of and interaction between these agents and agencies across time and space,” (Goss and Lindquist 1995, 319). Social relations become formalized and institutionalized.

We can chart the transformation of Principe de Paz from a small, traditional Lutheran church before the storm into the major migrant institution that it is today. Before the storm, Principe de Paz was not focused on providing services to immigrants. From what I have gathered about the character of the church before the storm in my conversations with Pastor Martinez, it sounds like it was a backwater church. Pastor Martinez was dividing his attention between two churches and the congregation was not very large at Principe de Paz. However, after the hurricane the church changed dramatically by becoming a provider of housing, job assistance, medical services, and various other services for immigrants. The church increased communications with other migrant institutions such as local Spanish language radio stations, the Hispanic Apostolate, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, New Orleans Outreach\(^1\), and others. It also was spotlighted in several major newspapers, adding to its reputation as a migrant

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\(^1\) I have used a pseudonym for this particular organization to protect the anonymity of the church.
institution. Pastor Martinez told me:

The role of the church has changed since Katrina. Pastors have become full time social workers. A lot of people in the ministry don't like this and they have left. But me, I think it's great. This is what the church was made for the way I see it. Some people higher up in the Lutheran church don't like that I have taken in all of these migrants. I asked them where I should send them, then. They didn't have an answer.

The change is evident by the church's growing reputation in the Latino community and New Orleans community more general as a major center for Latino resources.

What is striking about this radical shift in the role of the church is that it occurred largely as the result of just a few close ties and extraordinary circumstances (i.e. a hurricane followed by a fire). Pastor Martinez did not plan on having people live in the church after the hurricane. People only began living in the church after a fire destroyed the apartment of several people affiliated with the church, most importantly Narciso, Benito, and Anolfo, the brothers and cousin, respectively, of a good friend of Pastor Martinez, Federico. Initially, it was only these men and several other members of the church living in the apartment. It was only later that Pastor Martinez began letting others live in the church, as it became a humanitarian issue due to the housing shortage for Latinos in New Orleans.

The institutionalization of social relations also affected the English classes I taught. At first, my classes were informal gatherings of people in the core community interested in learning English. By the end of my study, there were people from all parts of the Latino community, Mexicans and Central Americans, established residents and newcomers, men and women, and young and old coming to English classes at the church. A second teacher got involved to take over when I left and Pastor Martinez even implemented a small registration fee for students. Within just a few months, the English
program at Principe de Paz had become an institution for the Latino community.

This housing policy and English program developed in conjunction with the opening of the Latino medical clinic at the church that established ties with the Hispanic Apostolate and New Orleans Outreach. Greater communication with other migrant institutions led Pastor Martinez to an increased awareness of the difficulties facing Latinos in New Orleans, strengthening his resolve to set up programs, such as the medical clinic, to help the community. In the next section, I focus on this medical clinic and its importance to the Latino community and its role in the rapidly changing church structure and function.

Medical Clinic

The medical clinic established at Principe de Paz, in addition to showing the development of migrant institutions in response to migrant networks, provides an excellent illustration of how social capital developed through bounded solidarity resulting from discrimination (in this case healthcare discrimination) can be transformed into other forms of capital for migrants. The founder of the clinic found a permanent place for the clinic through the help of the Hispanic Apostolate, who knew that Principe de Paz was becoming an important migrant institution in post-Katrina New Orleans.

The clinic runs for six hours on most Saturdays and usually has at least one full time practicing physician. There are also usually at least two nurses, one of which is sometimes a nurse practitioner. There are also medical students from local universities, a herbalist, and, during the first months of the clinic, an acupuncturist. Additionally, other non-medical volunteers translate and do basic administrative tasks. The clinic provides services ranging from vaccinations (Hepatitis A and B and tetanus), basic health
information literature in Spanish, work-related injury advice and consultation, prescriptions, herbal health care, acupuncture, dietary consultation and other basic health services.

The clinic formed out of the larger New Orleans Outreach Relief Clinic in Algiers Point on the other side of the Mississippi River in Orleans Parish. This organization has been well known in New Orleans for its community outreach service in devastated areas post-Katrina, particularly in the Lower Ninth Ward. Many hospitals and other health providers in the city have had to close since the hurricane either because of physical damage from the hurricane or labor shortage after the hurricane. As discussed earlier, Latinos were particularly affected from this shortage in medical care in the city.

According to the person in charge of the clinic at Principe de Paz,

We realized quickly after the storm that there was a significant newcomer Latino population in New Orleans and that they would need medical services but would be least likely to seek it given language and legal barriers. Accordingly, we decided to start the clinic at Lee Circle and here at Principe de Paz.

The clinic at Lee Circle, a famous day labor cite, operates on Wednesday mornings. While that clinic is invaluable, it would not likely attract those who are not day laborers, thus largely excluding women and children and those working non-contingent labor, many of whom would be established Latino residents. Accordingly, I have found from my time at the clinic that there is a pretty heterogeneous mix of newcomers and established residents, men and women, and adults and children. While the clinic is physically located at Principe de Paz, less than half of the people seeking attention there are affiliated with the church.

In accordance with the vision of New Orleans Outreach, the clinic works to create bonds and networks between racially, ethnically, and economically disparate groups and
to empower all associated community members. This vision is in line with the vision of
Pastor Gonzalez and contributes to the church's function as weak tie incubator.

Additionally, the clinic works to avoid power hierarchies between the doctor and patient
and to inform those seeking medical attention so that they make their own decisions
about their bodies. Caregivers work diligently to abide by this vision. A nurse at the
clinic related the following to me:

I try to present medical information in an objective way, allowing the patients to
make their own decisions. For example, instead of pushing the Hepatitis B
vaccine on them like a lot of people do, I present the pros and the cons and let
them decide for themselves what is best.

Philosophically in line with this less Western approach to medical care, the clinic offers a
hybrid approach that combines Western medical practice with herbal care. Frequently,
both a doctor and an herbalist will work together to find a suitable treatment plan for the
patient. They develop treatment plans that are geared towards making the most sense to
the patient. On one occasion, a Guatemalan man was experiencing burning sensations in
his legs that seemed to be work related. The doctor/herbalist pair developed a treatment
plan that included an analgesic and an herbal tea. The patient was unaccustomed to
analgesics but was more willing to take it in conjunction with the tea, a remedy he was
more familiar with in Guatemala.

The value of this medical clinic to the Latino community of New Orleans, both
newcomer and established, is obvious from the innumerable services provided and
number of people they treat. People find out about the clinic through a variety of media.
The clinic advertises on a popular Spanish language radio station, “La Fabulosa” 830
AM. This radio station and the other Spanish language station in the area 1530 AM are
important sources of information for members of the Latino community in New Orleans.

Once a Salvadoran man came to the clinic asking for directions to the Salvadoran consul in Kenner. No one working knew where it was, and it was unlisted in the yellow pages because it is a temporary fixture since the storm. The man asked for the number of La Fabulosa and proceeded to call the station for directions to the consul. In other words, radio advertisement is a major channel for spreading information about the medical clinic and the resources offered by it. Within the church community, people find out about the clinic through announcements made during Sunday church services by Pastor Martinez. Outside of the church community, people find out about through word of mouth. People in the church frequently inform coworkers about the clinic.

The person in charge of the clinic brought to my attention an interesting and important case of extending social networks and sharing information that occurs through the medical attention. Acupuncture treatment was an important catalyst for the development of social networks shortly after Hurricane Katrina.

What happened during acupuncture treatment was very special. Between five and ten people would receive treatment at the same time. They would sit around in a circle with the needles sticking out of them. Some would sit and close their eyes relaxing. Others would talk. They would exchange information about health problems and various medical resources that were available in New Orleans. They would also give each other advice about jobs and other information pertinent to adjusting to life in a new place. At first, they were nervous about having acupuncture treatment but pretty soon there were more people requesting treatment than they could handle. There were plans to bring in more acupuncturists and they had housing set up for them and everything. And then the state government came in and closed down the whole operation.

The organization providing complimentary acupuncture service was called Acupuncture without Borders. They came to New Orleans initially after the storm to provide treatment to anyone needing it and quickly found their services were popular with the Latino
community. They were forced to stop administering treatment when the state decided that they needed to have licenses. While the state has since reversed the decision, it will be difficult, according to Jenny, to start the operation back up because so much momentum has been lost in the months since they were forced to stop. Jenny's quote above speaks for itself with respect to the instrumentality of the acupuncture circles in the development of social networks and the exchange of information and resources between migrants.

**Negative Repercussions**

We have seen the numerous positive benefits of social capital in accessing resources at Principe de Paz. However, Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) also discuss negative consequences of social capital. One problem is that the internal sanctioning capacities of a group that enable enforceable trust can also severely limit the freedom of individual group members. Additionally, a negative consequence of bounded solidarity can be the problem of "freeloaders." Someone in a group might take more from the group than she gives. However, because of the moral obligation that enables bounded solidarity, it is difficult to exclude freeloaders from the group. These problems have been so great in parts of Latin America, according to Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) that some successful individuals have resorted to converting to Protestantism. Since Catholicism plays such an important role in social identity in the place studied, converting to Protestantism was a way of becoming an outsider, thus releasing the person from duties and obligations to the group. Another negative consequence discussed by Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) is leveling pressures. In communities without many resources, community members might work to restrain individuals from escaping the poor conditions of the community. They offer the Haitian community in Miami as an instance
of leveling pressures.

Unfortunately, negative consequences of bounded solidarity have manifested themselves in the core community at Principe de Paz. The most extreme example involves two men, Narciso and Marco. When they were teenagers, Marco attacked Narciso with a knife. Narciso took legal action against Marco, which led to him spending time in jail. Several years later, Narciso sought revenge on Marco and attacked him at a bar one evening while still in Mexico. While Narciso considered the conflict over at the point, Marco felt otherwise. Uncomfortable mentioning the conflict to Pastor Martinez, he unknowingly has allowed the two to live together. While normally the two simply try to avoid each other, this has proven difficult given the cramped living conditions. A fight almost erupted recently when Marco returned to the church intoxicated one evening. This conflict has led to people siding with either Narciso or Marco and led to a temporary divide within the core community. While kicking one or both of them out of the church could easily solve the problem, the group cannot do this because of the sense of obligation to group members discussed earlier.

If we consider the church community more generally, established residents and long time church members might see the core community as freeloaders. After all, many newcomers are probably competing with established residents for jobs post-Katrina. Additionally, donations given to the church by established church members inevitably contribute to housing and providing other services to members of the core community and other newcomers. Finally, Pastor Gonzalez has shifted most of his attention towards helping newcomers to New Orleans, perhaps causing established church members to feel abandoned. Nonetheless, long time members of the church feel a sense of obligation to
the newcomers for reasons associated with group consciousness and bounded solidarity.

Freeloading has also been a minor problem within the core community. Members of the core community have complained to me on several occasions that two men, Benito and Jose, do not do their share of work around the church. They apparently complain frequently and are not as willing to help out as the others. Nonetheless, I would not say that freeloading is a serious problem in the core community at Principe de Paz.

VI. CONCLUSIONS/POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

On the whole, members of the core community at Principe de Paz are faring much better than most undocumented newcomers to New Orleans. Their wages are slightly higher than the $10.50 average for undocumented construction workers in New Orleans (Fletcher, et al. 2006). There have been no reports in the core community of serious worker exploitation, as have been relatively common with other undocumented workers in New Orleans (Fletcher, et al. 2006). Housing conditions for those in the core community, while crowded, are reasonable, providing cots, kitchen, bathrooms, air conditioning, and showers just a short walk away. Most importantly, housing is very inexpensive at Principe de Paz compared to housing in the rest of the city. Members of the core community also have better access to medical care than most undocumented workers because they live at the site of the medical clinic. While not everything associated with living in the church is positive (i.e. conflicts between members of the core community and the “freeloader” problem), the pros seem to outweigh the cons overwhelmingly when we compare the community to rest of the New Orleans undocumented labor force. Aside from fear of the migra, their desire to speak English
better, and missing their families (which are all serious issues that could be addressed through immigration policy reform), people in the core community rarely seem discontented with their lives in New Orleans.

Abundant research has shown that social networks promote access to resources. This study suggests this to be the case in post-Katrina New Orleans, as well. The differences highlighted above between the core community and other undocumented laborers in New Orleans can be largely attributed to social capital developed through the church community. Affordable housing was made available through Federico’s close friendship with Pastor Martinez. Medical services were made available through Pastor Martinez’s extensive networks and an increasing institutionalization of the church as a Latino service provider. Exploitation by employers was avoided by employers’ friendships with Pastor Martinez and by the collective strength and labor value of the core community. If an employer were to mistreat someone from the core community, there would be serious repercussions imposed by the core community. The members of the core community also provided each other emotional support and help coping with the numerous hardships associated with being an undocumented immigrant in the United States. More generally, this study suggests that networks that combine a core network of strong ties and strategic weak ties leads to increased quality of life for immigrants in New Orleans.

In terms of policy, major reforms in national migration policies would be instrumental in addressing needs of both newcomers and established residents in New Orleans. However, because of time restraints and focus of this paper, I will focus on what
can be done with policy at the local and state level.  

To begin with, it would be useful for city leaders to redefine the meaning of the Latino presence in New Orleans. By this I mean two things: first, city leaders could more openly acknowledge that there is much larger Latino population in New Orleans than there was before the storm so as to bring the issue into the public forum. As it stands now, the issue gets little attention by local politicians and media. The second part of redefining the issue would involve framing the Latino influx as something essential to rebuilding the city. To see it as a peripheral issue is to misunderstand or overlook the structural conditions in the labor market, particularly the construction industry, in the Gulf Coast and the United States that have made it a necessary and inevitable that the majority of those rebuilding the city will be Latinos, many of whom will be undocumented. To reframe the issue in this manner would be an instrumental step in developing policies that simultaneously address the needs of the newcomer population and established New Orleans residents, both of whose needs must be addressed in order to successfully incorporate the newcomer population into the social, economic, political, and culture structures of the city, and consequently the future success of New Orleans.

On a more practical level, a special task force created by the mayor would allow for experts and leaders from various disciplines, backgrounds, and political orientations to research the needs of the new Latino community and its effects on the city and the rebuilding efforts. This task force could include local community leaders, individuals engaged with the New Orleans Latino community, and migration experts from around the United States and Latin American countries sending migrants. Creating a task force such

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30 For the interested reader, a compelling and well-researched plan for national immigration policy reform can be found in the last chapter of Massey, Durand, and Malone (2002).
as this would not be a new phenomenon in New Orleans. In fact, New Orleans was the first city in the United States to create a local task force designed to research the incorporation of immigrants. In 1981, Mayor Morial created a special task force to research the effect of the newcomer Vietnamese community on jobs in New Orleans, with a particular focus on resolving tensions between the local African American and Vietnamese communities. This task force had measurable success in cooling heated relations between these two groups. By having public meetings, a task force of this nature would be able to engage the New Orleans community, newcomers and established residents alike. The financial costs of creating such a task force in the current setting would be minimal in comparison to its potential short term and long-term benefits.

One the basis of this study, I conclude that healthcare, language, and legal issues are the most pressing issues in protecting immigrant rights and working toward their successful integration into the city. Of these three issues, legal status is the most important because undocumented immigrants are more vulnerable to numerous forms of discrimination and exploitation. Marginal groups are shown to experience more negative effects from social problems than less marginal groups. Undocumented immigrants are doubly marginalized by both language and legal status and experience the brunt of Hurricane Katrina’s negative social effects, including unhealthy living conditions, poor labor conditions, limited access to healthcare, and various other forms of discrimination and exploitation. Fletcher, et al. (2006) found that the differential conditions of documented laborers and undocumented laborers in New Orleans stems from the fact that federal laws protecting all workers’ rights are not being protected in practice. They (2006, 27) conclude that “either we enforce immigration laws effectively and prevent
illegal immigrants from working or we allow them to work and provide them with the same labor, safety, and health protections afforded documented workers." To not do so would be a human rights violation.

Given the importance of a fully employed construction industry in the rebuilding of the New Orleans and the fact that over one quarter of the industry in New Orleans is comprised of undocumented workers, it seems impractical if not infeasible to begin enforcing immigration laws in this context. A more effective solution might be to provide special temporary work permits for those working in recovery efforts. This would significantly reduce abuses against undocumented immigrants and be more politically viable than broadly reforming national immigration policies. Incidentally, it would be symbolic of city official’s recognition that Latinos, documented and undocumented, are necessary for New Orleans’ recovery.

Inadequate access to health care is major problem for Latinos in New Orleans, particularly those who are undocumented. While this is a problem for all New Orleanians post-Katrina, as we saw earlier, the problem is greater for Latinos. The medical clinics at Principe de Paz and Lee Circle have been invaluable in providing health care to Latinos. However, they are desperately undersupplied and understaffed and consequently unable to service the entire Latino community. The task force proposed earlier could have a special subcommittee for the research of Latino health conditions in New Orleans. It would be in the city’s best interest to take aggressive measures towards bringing health care supplies and providers to the city, some for the explicit intent of providing services to the Latino community. While not as pressing, dental care shortages also need to be addressed in the medium term.
Another major obstacle to Latino integration to the city is the language barrier. Newcomers, in particular, have limited English language skills. While many are motivated to learn, there is a shortage of ESL courses being offered, they frequently are too expensive for immigrants, and classes are not at convenient times for them. To solve this problem, the city needs more ESL teachers. While students benefit from highly trained ESL instructors, relatively little training has been shown to go a long way in language teaching. Therefore, I would recommend that the city sponsor a large scale ESL teacher training program. In the search for potential ESL teachers, the city could capitalize on underutilized resources. For example, they could encourage high school students and college students to become ESL teachers. This would also promote communication, understanding, and networking between the Latino community and the greater New Orleans community. The city could also work on developing an ESL initiative with Tulane University, which has recently implemented a community service requirement for all students. Each year the university will be contributing tens of thousands of hours of student labor to the community as a result of this initiative. Many of these hours could go towards ESL instruction.

In sum, how New Orleans incorporates the new Latino community into its economic, social, political, and cultural structures will play an important role in the city’s rebuilding efforts and ultimately the future of the city. To quote Mitch Landrieu’s mayoral slogan, “The world is watching and the city of New Orleans only has one chance to get this right.”
REFERENCES


