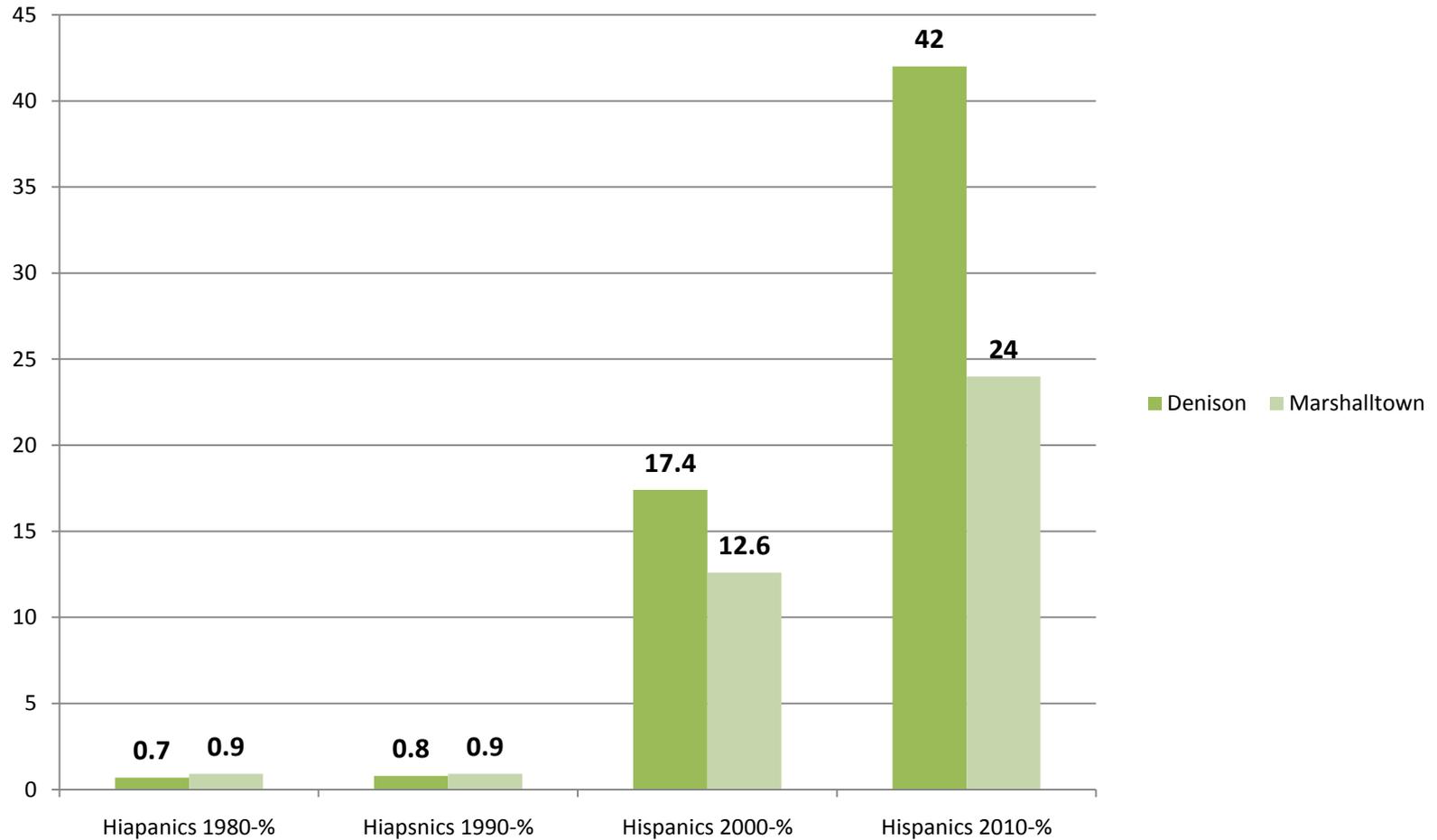


Involving Immigrant Latino Farmers in Local Food Systems: A Community Capitals Approach

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Percentages of Hispanic populations in the two communities



COMIDA project focused on creation and implementation of a farm incubator program for both immigrant Latino farmers and beginning native (Anglo) farmers and the subsequent organization of a local foods group in a non-metropolitan Iowa community.

Latino Community Garden

The second project revitalizes a community garden by involving immigrants (Latinos).



Three main objectives of the projects

- Develop organizations and institutional structures in the two communities to support new immigrant farmers and local multicultural food value chain development, and to develop bilingual training/outreach materials to facilitate implementation of local multicultural food systems.
- Initiate, expand, evaluate, and adjust collaborative project leadership to involve local Latino leaders and build on a previous project for training Extension and Iowa-based USDA officials to work with Latino farmers, with an ultimate outcome being that Latinos and Anglos would be working and socializing together for a common future.
- To make the lessons and bilingual training/outreach materials from these pilot efforts useful to other communities in Iowa and the Midwest

Assumption of the projects:

- Iowa needs a new generation of community-scale organic and sustainable farmers and market gardeners, and that Latino immigrants, many of whom have previous experience in agriculture, whether in their country of origin or in other parts of the U.S., have much to contribute to the resurgence of food production for local use.



Method and Theory:

- These include focus groups with Latino/a farmers and organizers of the program, participant observation in and notes from steering committee meetings, analysis of participatory evaluations, and content analysis of documents from meetings and classes.
- Complexity Theory and Community Capitals Framework

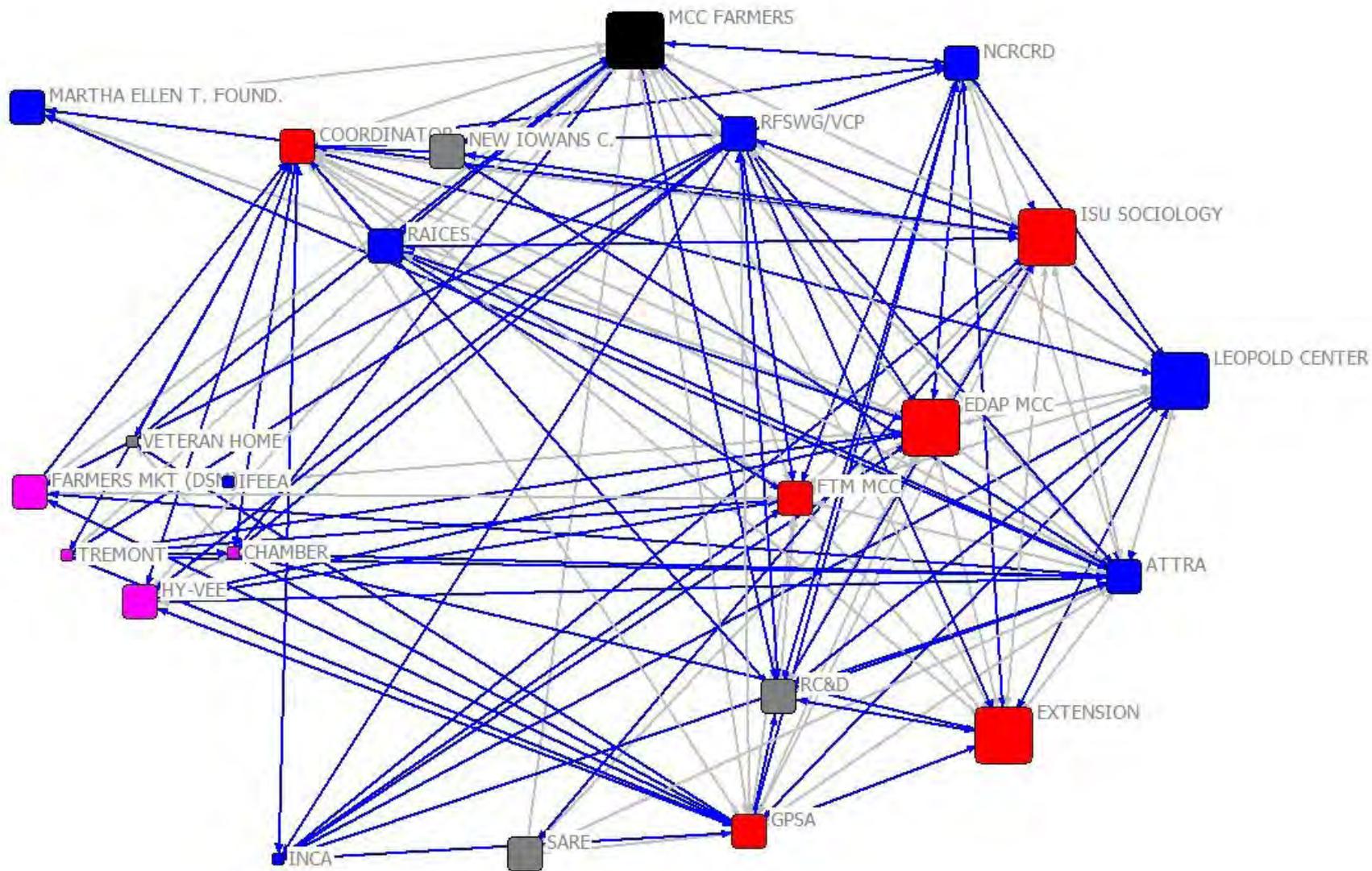


Research question we used at the beginning

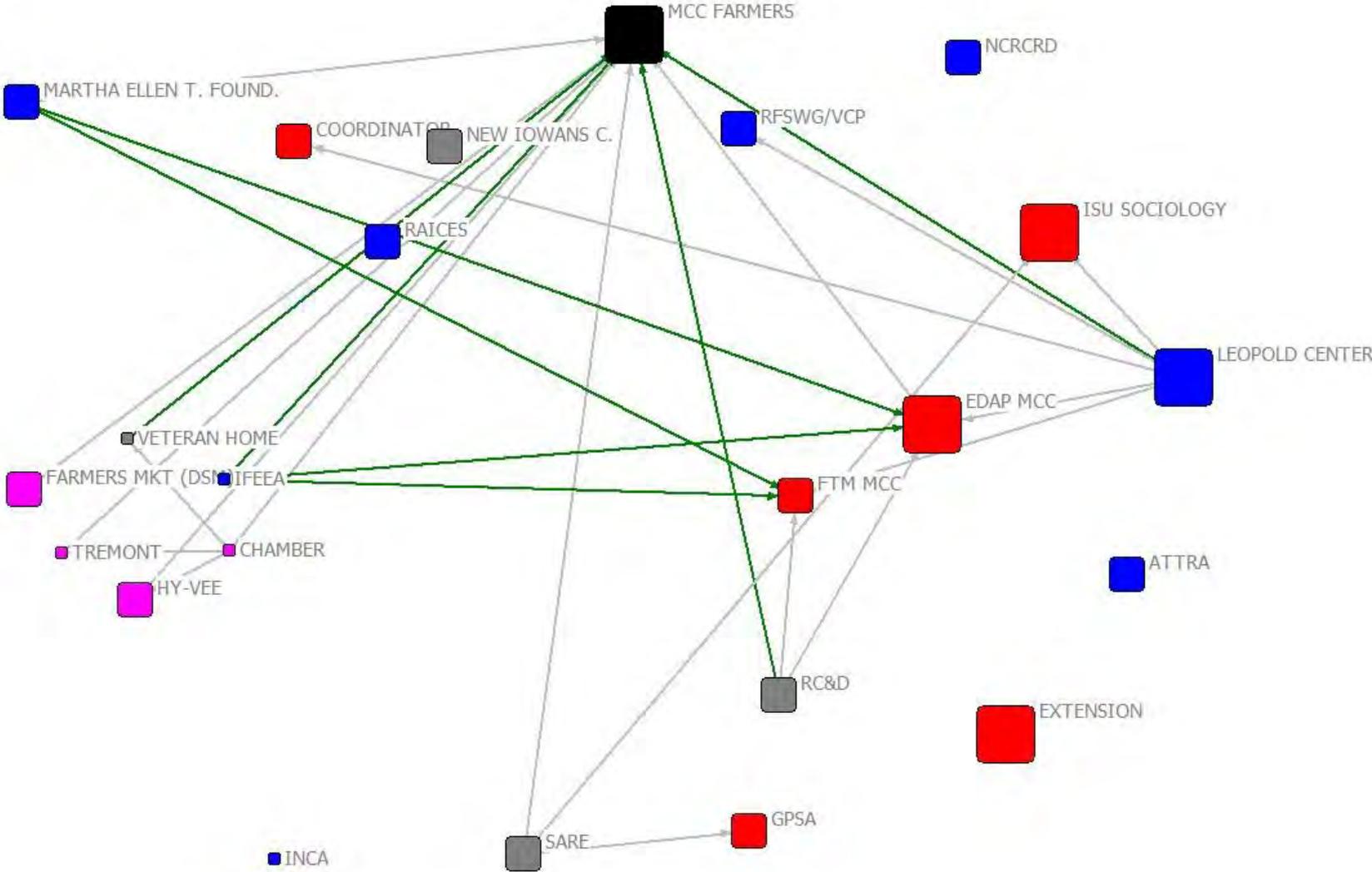


How do we develop locally led beginning farmer programs focused on outreach to immigrants and refugees and local food value chains with immigrants' participation?

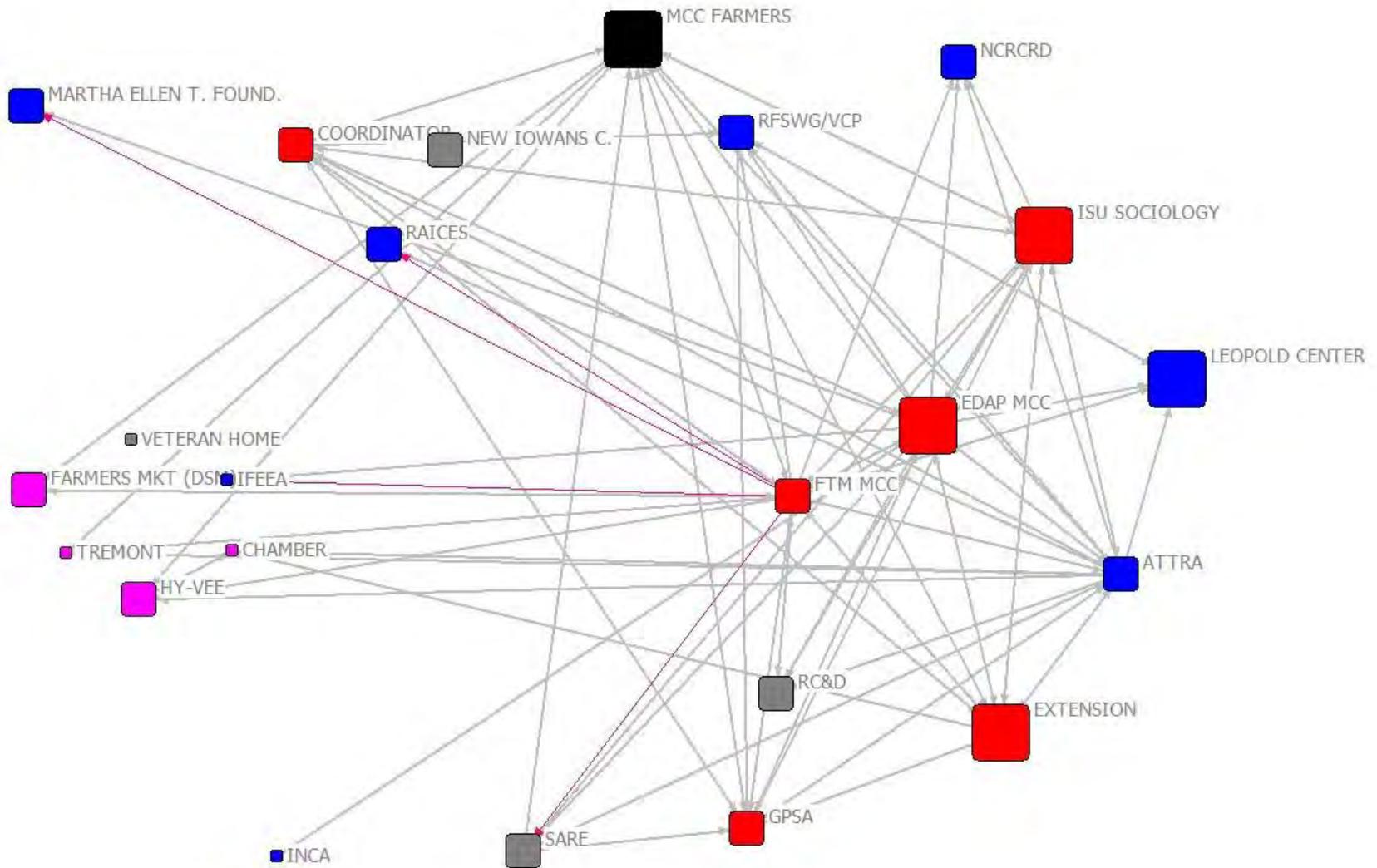
Human Capital- Information and Knowledge



Natural and Financial Capitals



Social and Cultural Capitals ("Trust")



Results --

None of the three objectives was fully achieved:

1. *Building a successful and sustainable collaborative to support Latino/immigrant participation in local foods systems.*
 - **A local foods group (LFG) was organized out of the leadership team that supported the farm incubator, but a strategic decision was made not to expend scarce human resources to make the extra effort to include Latinos in the group.**
 - **A Latino restaurateur was elected to the board, but does not attend regularly. One family of Latino farmers attends LFG functions, but no effort is made to involve them in decision-making.**
 - **In the community gardens case, a successful handing off of responsibility to a local coordinating team occurred. Latino advocates are on the team is facilitated by the fact that the community has an increasing number of Latinos in responsible positions in city government and elsewhere.**

Results, cont.d --

None of the three objectives was fully achieved:

2. *Creating a farm incubator to support successful small farming efforts.*

- The farm incubator now has a completed washing and packing shed, thanks to an earmark from the local Congressman and the support of a local Foundation. The incubator remains a side activity of the college and recent higher ed budget cuts do not help.
- The incubator (with the wash and pack station and perhaps later an institutional kitchen) may prosper in the future, but more closely linked to the academic objectives of the community college.

Results, cont.d --

None of the three objectives was fully achieved:

3. *Designing a model that can be applied elsewhere are intended to lead to more inclusive, diverse communities, organizations and institutions and to stronger, viable local food systems.*
 - Perhaps this objective came closest to being fulfilled. We learned much about designing and delivering a multi-cultural farm training program to both Anglos and Latino immigrants with widely varying levels of formal education.
 - We will assist another farm incubator civil-society organization in Des Moines in designing a training program for beginning immigrant and refugee farmers.

The evaluation data indicates that emerging Latino/immigrant gardeners and farmers may be as motivated more by four other factors rather than being highly interested in profit-making market gardening):

1. Providing family and friends with a better diet and perhaps lowering food costs.
2. Finding ways to involve children in traditional cultural activities related to farming.
3. Offering a way to give back to the community.
4. Providing a enjoyable recreational activity for the farmer and his/her family.

These factors, while not contributing to the local foods value chain, do contribute to the project's goals of increasing family self sufficiency, making friends across cultures, building trust across the community, and supporting emerging Latino leadership.

Conclusions

- The theory of change embedded in the project proposal focused on Latino/immigrant farming experience primarily in terms of market participation and income generation whereas the gardeners' (and some of the farmers') motivation was more to produce food for friends and family.
- Human, social, and cultural capitals are essential elements for these programs to succeed.
- The interaction among these three capitals mobilizes other community capitals for program improvement. In a multicultural situation, however, these capitals can inadvertently challenge continuity and success.
- The intergroup relations that emerge from the interaction among these capitals can be unpredictable.

Recommendations

The development of local foods systems should be approached from a community organizing perspective: a progressive participation approach in building multicultural, multi-class coalitions for the purpose of strengthening local food systems; improving nutrition of children, youth and adults; and changing policies to facilitate local foods value chains.



Thanks

