

**Title** Small Community Entrepreneurial Linkages to Regional Markets and Manufacturing  
**Subtitle** Employing Institutional Organizational Theory  
**Type** Poster/Exhibit Session

**Abstract** Employing institution organization theory, we empirically study geographic communities in their support of new apparel manufacturing ventures. This research elaborates the local culture and rationalized beliefs that constitute embedded agency and potential linkages to broader market organizations, either of which may hinder or advance the ongoing process of legitimacy in the emerging businesses. The concept of locality is examined for affecting entrepreneurial capacity within the localized community as well as within regional manufacturing systems. The context of the study involves apparel manufacturing startups as organizations in two geographically distant rural Colorado communities with populations less than 20,000. Rural communities are said to seek ideas for new industry and programs aimed at enhancing business growth, entrepreneurship, technology integration, and long-range sustainability. The low overhead and lower cost of living in rural communities allow a business model with competitive pricing for apparel manufacturing. However, rural communities are likely to hold norms that necessitate conformance if the organization is to receive support and achieve legitimacy. Legitimacy may influence the organization's strategic choices. There are also constraints that accompany the small community in terms of individuals who are interested or capable of working in manufacturing. This was evidenced by a rural Colorado apparel entrepreneur who found local and industry capacity were conversely related. She stated, "We were completely surprised by the demand for our services. And simultaneously, completing surprised by the lack of workforce." Using a mixed method approach, we draw together insights from community members and apparel manufacturers, both locally and regionally connected.

**Keyword Set** Legitimacy, Locality, Strategy  
**Knowledge Focus** Research  
**Presentation theme** Organizational Cultures

### **OBJECTIVES – Firm Level**

1. Advance understanding about the effect of locality, and the social capital aspects of bridging and bonding, on a firm's development.
2. Examine the influence of LEGITIMACY on the organizations' strategic choices.
3. Investigate the type and level of interorganizational learning that occurs among firms.