

FR3.40.09 Welcoming Cities and Suburbs: Immigrant Integration and Community Building

Immigrant Integration, Place-Making Practices, and Processes of Receptivity in “Welcoming Cities”

Presenter: Paul N. McDaniel, Kennesaw State University (pmcdan11@kennesaw.edu)

Authors: Paul McDaniel, Kennesaw State University

In recent years, a growing number of cities across the U.S. have been planning and implementing a variety of strategies to attract and retain immigrants. Such cities often label themselves as “welcoming” toward newcomers. In many cases such places become “welcoming cities” through Welcoming America’s Welcoming Cities and Counties program, an initiative designed to foster opportunity for local programs to come together and share information about challenges, opportunities, and best practices. Through a qualitative methodology using semi-structured, open-ended interviews with key informants involved with local efforts pursuing a comprehensive approach to immigrant and refugee integration in three case study cities, this paper examines local leaders’ perspectives on why and how their communities embarked upon such efforts, their actual experiences attracting and welcoming immigrants and refugees, and their view on best practices of initiative implementation. The case study cities, each with distinct histories and geographies of immigrant settlement and receptivity, and each being among the earlier affiliates of the Welcoming Cities and Counties initiative, include Chicago, Illinois, Dayton, Ohio, and Nashville, Tennessee. In part, this research investigates the types of actions the nexus of local leadership in “welcoming cities” pursue by addressing the following question: What was the genesis of a place’s welcoming city initiative and how does it fit within a place’s broader strategy of place-making for receptivity and development? The findings suggest that a place’s welcoming city initiative can act as broker and bridge-builder across all sectors of a place, helping to leverage knowledge, expertise, resources, capacities, and partnerships at multiple scales, as part of a multisectoral place-making practice; but to take root, whether welcoming city initiatives emerge from a local community-based effort or are housed in local government offices or private-sector entities, public support from local leadership is key.

The Variegated Landscape of Local Immigrant-Welcoming Policies

Presenter: Xi Huang, Georgia State University & Georgia Institute of Technology
(xhuang9@student.gsu.edu)

Authors: Xi Huang, Georgia State University & Georgia Institute of Technology; Cathy Liu, Georgia State University

A growing number of localities are passing more inclusive policies aimed at facilitating immigrants’ economic and social integration, particularly after the Great Recession. What characterizes this latest wave of local immigration policies is its various policy areas in which efforts of immigrant integration are made, including business and economic inclusion, civic and community inclusion, political inclusion, as well as bureaucratic inclusion. Many immigrant-welcoming cities and communities joined the Welcoming America’s Welcoming Cities and Counties initiative to collaborate, share resources, and exchange best practices. Much research has paid attention to the forces underlying local governments’ adoption of anti-immigration policies and found motivations ranging from demographic changes, locational contexts to interaction between local and national conditions and local governments’ economic calculations

(Hopkins, 2010; Ramakrishnan & Wong, 2010; Oliver & Wong, 2003; O'Neil, 2011; Walker, 2011). However, little research has explored the different types of immigrant-integration policies and the different motivation patterns associated with adopting each of them. Using an internal survey conducted by Welcoming America covering goals, incentives, barriers, and specific tools of participating cities and communities, we summarize the range of specific immigrant-integration policy items and incentives and quantify the intensity of use of each policy, followed by a detailed analysis of diversity of these communities in terms of geographic location, city size, as well as demographic and socioeconomic characteristics using the American Community Survey (ACS) data. We also perform a regression analysis to explore how these motivation factors lead to the adoption of different policies as well as the intensity of use of each policy. Our preliminary results show that traditional gateway cities employ a more comprehensive approach in integrating immigrants while cities with slower immigration growth and lower economy vitality concentrate more efforts in business and economic inclusion.

Political Machine or Bureaucratic Incorporation? Immigrant-Friendly Communities and Municipal Structure

Presenter: Richard J. Smith, Wayne State University (smithrichardj@wayne.edu)

Authors: Richard Smith, Wayne State University; Catherine Schmitt-Sands, Wayne State University

This paper makes a contribution to the study of immigrant integration and urban politics by using a comprehensive database of immigrant-friendly communities in the United States to determine the relative impact of having a mayor council structure compared to a council manager structure. In the literature, immigrant political incorporation typically involves a coalition with other progressive interests to gain integration services. Recent scholars have observed that civil servants who are responding to professional values of non-discrimination engage in bureaucratic incorporation of immigrants. To test the relative importance of these two processes, we estimate the odds that mayor-council governments (i.e., political) set immigrant-friendly policies in contrast to council manager governments (i.e., bureaucratic). The dependent variable, existence of an immigrant-friendly policy, was generated from policy scan, utilizing Amazon's Mechanical Turk data services, of websites of 13,871 U.S. municipalities with 500 or more people. The key variable of interest, council-manager vs Mayor-council, relies on data from the International City/County Management Association. Control variables come from the U.S. Census. There were 1024 municipal governments with four types of immigrant-friendly policy: 1) rhetorical (e.g., resolutions affirming immigrants, cultural events), 2) outreach (e.g., cultural events, bilingual materials), 3) integration (e.g., English and citizenship classes); and 4) facilitation (e.g., civic training for serving on commissions, housing & business assistance). Mayor-council governments have lower odds of an immigrant-friendly policy. The effect is statistically significant for rhetorical, outreach, and facilitation, but not for integration. The results suggest that all things equal, council-manager forms of municipal government are more likely to set immigrant-friendly policies. However, the largest cities (e.g., New York, Chicago, Los Angeles) are Mayor-council. As immigrants migrate to smaller cities, advocates for immigrant facilitation into civic life may have a better reception in council-manager cities.

Neither Enclave Nor Ethnoburb: Latino Residential and Business Location Patterns in Norcross, Georgia

Presenter: Jessica Doyle, Georgia Institute of Technology (jessica.doyle@gatech.edu)

Authors: Anna Kim, Georgia Institute of Technology; Jessica Doyle, Georgia Institute of Technology

Norcross, Georgia is an example of a “new gateway” city (see Singer, ed., 2004) in a metropolitan area where the immigrant population has more than quadrupled in the last thirty years. By 2010 the city was majority-minority, with almost 60% of the population speaking a language other than English at home and 40% self-identifying as Hispanic or Latino. Research shows that the Latino population of Norcross is, by some measures, not confined to an “ethnic enclave” (see Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990, or Portes and Jensen, 1989) but integrated into the city; but by other measures, the Latino population is segregated and poorly connected to city government and decision-making. A primary difference lies in how Latino-owned businesses are integrated versus the residential population. The latter is largely confined to that section of the city featuring deteriorated housing stock, a less walkable transportation infrastructure, and higher poverty rates. By contrast, Latino-owned businesses are scattered throughout the city. Moreover, in a survey of business owners, nearly half of ethnic businesses owners served customers outside their own ethnicity, and three-quarters hoped to. As Norcross’s immigrant population lacks the economic and political clout to make an “ethnoburb” (Li, 1998), this development suggests that Norcross is doing a better job of providing a platform for the growth of immigrant-owned businesses than for increasing the mobility and access to services of its residents. By taking a fine-grained look at the spatial dynamics of immigrant settlement in a new gateway city, this paper will broaden our understanding of how cities with little history of immigrant settlement integrate—or isolate—new populations.