New Faces, New Places and New Spaces:
Immigrant Spatial Assimilation across Metropolitan American

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Abstract:

As a result of simultaneous changes in the metropolitan form *and* in immigrant residential settlement patterns, contemporary immigrants find themselves living not only in new *places* but also in new *spaces* (e.g. suburban rings) within those places. The purpose of the present paper is to conduct an empirical test of how immigrants gain access to different types of neighborhoods and whether this process varies across metropolitan areas. In this article we build upon an existing literature that investigates how specific ecological conditions shape divergent residential opportunity structures for non-Hispanic Blacks and Whites (Crowder, Pais and South 2012; Pais, South and Crowder 2012; South, Crowder and Pais 2011a; South, Pais and Crowder 2011b). We plan to extend this research to the case of contemporary immigrants using geocoded data from the New Immigrant Survey (NIS), a representative sample of immigrants who were granted a greencard between May and November 2003.

Metropolitan America is currently being remade by immigrants. Massive waves of immigration from Latin America and Asia have radically altered the fabric of U.S. cities, increasing racial and ethnic diversity while simultaneously heightening anxiety over their prospects for assimilation. Their numbers alone (immigrants currently make up 13% of the country's population and accounted for one-third of the population growth between 1990 and 2010), make understanding how immigrants fare in the U.S. intimately tied to the future well-being of the entire country. This paper focuses on one of the most significant dimensions of their prospects for successful integration: residential settlement. *Where* immigrants live is a key barometer of their prospects for success and is intimately tied to the challenges they and their offspring will confront as they begin their lives in the U.S.

Gaining a better understanding of their residential settlement process is timely not only because of the large numbers of immigrants currently in the U.S. and increasing anxiety about their future, but also because of their relatively recent dispersal across the country (Singer 2008). Increasing variability in where immigrants live raises the question of whether they experience divergent processes of residential settlement across metropolitan areas. Are immigrants experiencing unequal access to advantaged neighborhoods across metropolitan areas? Are immigrants better able to convert human capital into desirable residential outcomes in some metropolitan areas rather than others?

In this article we build upon an existing literature that investigates how specific ecological conditions shape divergent residential opportunity structures for non-Hispanic Blacks and Whites (Crowder et al. 2012; Pais et al. 2012; South et al. 2011a; South et al. 2011b). This body of work has corrected an imbalance in previous research on racial residential segregation that emphasized within-metropolitan area variation in racial segregation. Using data from multiple waves of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) and decennial censuses, the authors demonstrate that the residential attainment process (in the case of blacks and whites) plays out in the broader geographic context of the surrounding metropolitan area. They find that different residential opportunities afforded by the metropolitan area significantly influence race-specific patterns of neighborhood attainment. South and Crowder have argued that their research on black and white neighborhood attainment patterns "should move future research beyond the identification of aggregate-level correlations to a focus on how specific ecological conditions shape divergent opportunity structures for members of different racial and ethnic groups" (South, Crowder and

Pais 2011). We argue that this is particularly urgent in the case of immigrants for whom residential attainment is a key barometer of their adaptive trajectories and who display increasing diversity in where they settle. In this paper we ask the question, how are immigrant residential opportunities shaped by the metropolitan context in which they reside?

BACKGROUND

Beginning in the middle half of the last century, metropolitan America was irrevocably altered by two large scale demographic changes. First, high rates of residential mobility resulted in dramatic increases in levels of suburbanization. The decentralization of economic and residential space that began after WWII continues today. Second, large and continuing flows of immigrants from places such as Latin America, Africa, Asia and elsewhere arrived and, more recently, dispersed across the country. By the 1990s, many immigrants were bypassing traditional immigrant enclaves located in the central city in favor of living in new immigrant destinations and increasingly suburban communities (Singer 2008). Labeled the "the new geography of immigration," immigrants at the beginning of the twenty-first century are located in a more diverse set of residential contexts than at any point in prior U.S. history (Massey and Capoferro 2008). As noted by Hardwick (2008), "The increasing concentration of immigrants in the suburbs of new gateways is one of the most viable and visible characteristics of metropolitan areas in the United States" (45). As a result of simultaneous changes in the metropolitan form *and* in immigrant residential settlement patterns, contemporary immigrants find themselves living not only in new *places* but also in new *spaces* (e.g. suburban rings) within those places. The purpose of the present paper is to conduct an empirical test of how immigrants gain access to different types of neighborhoods and whether this process varies across metropolitan areas.

Past studies that have evaluated how immigrants sort into different residential contexts have relied either on aggregate data (Alba et al. 2010; Iceland 2009) or been limited to single metropolitan areas and/or focus on one region of origin group (Brown 2007; South, Crowder and Chavez 2005). In a project closely aligned to the one proposed here, Alba et al. (2010) focus exclusively on Latinos and use aggregate census data to evaluate the residential environments of Latino children (Alba et al. 2010). They find that neighborhood contexts vary considerably across metropolitan regions, with Latino families located in metropolitan regions with higher proportions of immigrants and/or Latinos living in more distressed neighborhoods (e.g.

neighborhoods characterized by higher levels of neighborhood poverty, racial segregation, and linguistic isolation). This finding suggests that in metropolitan areas where Latino immigrant clusters are smaller and/or just beginning to form, Latinos experience more positive neighborhood contexts. Although the authors argue that this finding "is limited by its reliance on aggregate data from census summary files" they argue that, "since this is typically the primary data source for studies of residential patterns, we are not any more limited than most other studies" (5). The present study represents one of the few opportunities to rise above these past limitations and conduct an analysis of the residential integration of the country's largest immigrant wave.

DATA

The questions posed in the present proposal demand considerable data requirements including a representative sample of immigrants with identifying information on residential location. The New Immigrant Survey (NIS) is the *only* national representative sample of *any* sub-set of the immigrant population, specifically the country's most recently legalized members. The NIS sample is unique in that it is the only survey that is nationally representative of any broad part of the U.S. foreign-born population, specifically immigrants who achieved legal permanent residency at the beginning of the 21st century. The NIS consists of a representative sample of immigrants who were granted a greencard between May and November 2003. Because the eventual transition to citizenship *begins* with the receipt of a greencard, the NIS represents an important demographic: those who have initiated the process of becoming the country's next adult citizens. Assessing their patterns of residential attainment and subsequent adaptive outcomes is a key first step in understanding the ways in which our country integrates its newest members. It is important to point out here that the NIS does not include members of the currently unauthorized population. Accordingly, the NIS is not nationally representative of the entire foreign-born population in the U.S. but rather the *newly* authorized population (of course, this necessarily includes some who began their settlement in the U.S. in an unauthorized state but subsequently adjusted their status). Arguably, those who have initiated the legalization process are of particular interest in the context of the research questions presented here, principally because they are the most likely out of the entire immigrant population to become the country's next *citizens*. The ways in which they residentially settle and adapt to the U.S. serves as a

barometer for the capacity of our country to integrate its newest members. The NIS focuses on immigrants exclusively (and not subsequent generations) which allows us to concentrate precisely on those individuals who set the stage for the residential integration of future generations. Only by first understanding how the foreign-born population navigates the residential settlement process across metropolitan America will we begin to understand the constraints and opportunities faced by their descendents. One of the primary strengths of the NIS is that it includes a diverse sample of immigrants from a wide cross-section of immigrant sending countries. By examining patterns of residential settlement across a diverse sample of immigrants we can access the possibility of differentiated patterns across several demographic domains: 1) pre-migration characteristics including education level and childhood social class of immigrants and 2) race/ethnicity 3) region of origin.

Important for the present paper, we have geocoded the NIS data so that it contains geographic information on the primary residence of each respondent (geocoding completed by Applied Technologies for Learning in the Arts and Sciences (ATLAS) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). 8573 observations have been geocoded (all of Round 1). Equally important for this project is that the data include immigrant residential locations across over 150 metropolitan areas. Because the sample is nationally representative we have information on immigrants who continue to live in the central cities of the well-established gateway metropolitan areas (e.g. Los Angeles, Chicago, New York) as well as those reside in the suburbs (inner ring and newer faster growing suburbs) and immigrants who live in smaller metropolitan areas (Singer 2008). Nearly half of the metropolitan areas included in the data have less than 500,000 inhabitants. In terms of the sample, nearly one quarter of the respondents reside in either pre-emerging or re-emerging immigrant gateways (as defined by Singer 2008). It is precisely this diversity that will permit us to determine how immigrant residentially integrate *across* metropolitan America.

APPROACH

We propose to use the NIS to test the hypothesis that immigrants experience divergent processes of residential settlement across metropolitan areas. Specifically, we will use Wave 1 data from the NIS to examine the relationship between metropolitan characteristics and residence in neighborhoods characterized by the three primary domains of segregation relevant to

immigrants: 1) immigrant concentration to capture residence in ethnic enclaves 2) racial/ethnic composition to measure the extent of social distance from the non-Hispanic white majority and other co-ethnic minority populations and 3) poverty level to capture neighborhood quality. Following the release of Wave 2 of the NIS we also plan to disentangle the causal ordering involved in the associations described above by evaluating the metropolitan effects on mobility between neighborhoods characterized by these three segregation domains (e.g. South, Pais and Crowder 2011).

A confluence of two trends, 1) the relatively recent geographic dispersal of contemporary immigrants and 2) the changing structure of metropolitan American and its effect on immigrant spatial assimilation, makes this a timely opportunity to study how specific ecological conditions shape divergent opportunity structures for immigrants.

Dependent Variables. We plan to utilize a multi-level modeling framework to identify differentiated patterns of neighborhood location with individual immigrants as the unit of analysis. Our approach involves predicting three different neighborhood characteristics that are particularly relevant for immigrant residential attainment.

Immigrant Concentration. We begin with the level of immigrant concentration. A central tenet of the canonical literature on U.S. immigration is that upon arrival immigrants tend to cluster within their own communities, historically located within the center city, and then experience a process of spatial assimilation over time whereby they increasingly settle in neighborhoods the same as or equivalent to those of the native-born population. The recent dispersion of immigrants across the U.S., coupled with increased levels of suburbanization, raises the prospect that the classic spatial assimilation model fails to capture variation in extent of immigrant concentration *across* communities for contemporary immigrants. While on the whole, aggregate patterns of immigrant residential location show that, since 1960, immigrants have experienced increasing levels of segregation from the population at large, Cutler et al (2008) also note that this trend masks: “a remarkable degree of variation in the experiences of different ethnic groups and trends in different parts of the country (Cutler 2008: 478).

Racial/ethnic segregation. One of the most salient, and intractable, features of the U.S. residential context is the high degree of racial/ethnic segregation. The second neighborhood characteristic we are interested in estimating is the extent of racial/ethnic neighborhood

segregation that immigrants experience. That is, we predict the likelihood that immigrants reside in racially/ethnically segregated neighborhoods. As in the case of immigrant concentration, we first determine whether the extent of neighborhood racial/ethnic segregation varies across metropolitan areas according to our set of metropolitan characteristics and, secondly, examine whether metropolitan-level influences on neighborhood racial segregation are conditioned upon individual immigrant characteristics (e.g. race/ethnicity, SES background and/or region of origin).

Poverty. In addition to immigrant concentration and racial/ethnic segregation, we are also interested in the quality of neighborhoods in which immigrants reside. The final neighborhood feature we examine is neighborhood poverty.

Metropolitan-level Predictor Variables. Our focal independent variables are the characteristics of the household's metropolitan area of residence. We hypothesize that several distinct domains of the broader geographic context will be important in determining the residential attainment process experienced by immigrants. They include:

Demographic: the racial/ethnic composition of the metropolitan area, historical migration flow (as measured by the average percent foreign-born over the 1970-2000 period) and the percent increase in the foreign-born population in the last 15 years), population size

Economic: percent employed in manufacturing, in professional occupations and in local, state or federal government, inequality, percent with a college degree, percent in poverty

Political: A progression towards local, e.g. state and county, immigrant enforcement is well underway, largely through the federal secure communities initiative. As the enforcement of immigration shifts from federal towards increasingly localized intervention initiatives, we might expect to find increasingly distinct immigrant experiences across different metropolitan contexts. We will explore several strategies for capturing variation in anti-immigrant enforcement policies (e.g. if a 287(g) application was submitted to ICE).

Geographic: level of suburbanization, housing availability, degree of new housing construction.

Individual-level Independent Variables. We will also control for an array of individual-level predictors of neighborhood segregation and test for the possibility for cross-level interactions,

that is whether individual-level predictors (e.g. race/ethnicity) condition the relationship between metropolitan-level characteristics and neighborhood attainment.

TIMELINE

Our analysis of how immigrants residentially integrate across metropolitan America is underway. We have recently received the geocoded data and are in the process of creating the tract and metropolitan characteristics and appending them to the individual-level datasets. We are confident that the analysis will be complete prior to the Population Association Meetings scheduled for April 11-13, 2013.

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