

Examining Immigration on Multiple Levels

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Immigration has been a major catalyst of population growth in the United States both directly and indirectly. Since the 1960s immigration into the U.S. has appreciably increased. This has resulted in policies and practices affecting immigrants at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. The micro level focuses on immigrants and their local impacts. The mezzo level examines how organizations and societal structures interface with immigrants. The macro level unpacks the legal and policy developments resulting from immigration. Each of this symposium's contributors has addressed one or more of these three levels. Increased civil discourse about immigration is needed to uncover implications that these varying levels of response have for public servants, policy makers, and the populace.

Immigration has been a chief catalyst of population growth in the United States both directly and indirectly. Following the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, immigration to the U.S. noticeably increased. Although the Hart-Celler Act, as it is more commonly known, was mainly considered an extension of the civil rights movement, it was significant because it eliminated national origin quotas that disproportionately favored northern Europeans, emphasized family reunification, and facilitated the entrance of many Africans and Asians into the country. This new wave of migration altered the nature of racial and ethnic succession in America's big cities, especially the gateway states of California, New York, Texas, Illinois, Florida, and New Jersey (Frey, 2003). Later, immigrants whom had initially made their homes in the gateway states moved throughout the country, locating in emerging settlement areas, such as, for example, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

While improving the immigration code in other respects, the Hart-Celler Act consequentially imposed, for the first time in U.S. history, limitations on immigration from other nations of the Western Hemisphere (Daniels, 2004, p. 134). Prior to 1966 unlimited immigration was permitted from Canada and Latin America. Later restrictions imposed by Hart-Celler strained relationships that the United States had maintained with some of its Latin American neighbors since the mid-nineteenth century. From one perspective both Latin

American workers and U.S. agriculture and industry benefited for generations from unrestrained immigration. According to an alternative view, Latin Americans have immigrated into the United States in response to North American military and economic interventions in their countries. Gonzalez (2000, xiii-xviii) characterizes Latino immigration as a continuing “Harvest of Empire”. Certainly the histories of Mexico, Puerto Rico, and various Central American and Caribbean nations are intensely intertwined with that of the United States, connections that Hart-Celler blithely ignored.

Until 1965 unlimited numbers of immigrants from Latin America could undergo the process of legalizing themselves, just as many European newcomers had done during the earlier Ellis Island era. The, Hart-Celler imposed an annual ceiling of 120,000 on New World immigration, 51,000 fewer than the 171,000 who had legally immigrated in 1965. Simultaneously, the Bracero Program that had provided a legal, bureaucratically convenient mechanism for seasonal entry of Mexican agricultural workers into the U.S. since 1942 was abolished by Congress in 1964. Those changes (Hart-Celler, Bracero’s end) were premised on the belief that the United States’ economy did not need to receive large infusions of labor from Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. In subsequent decades that expectation proved to be unfounded and immigration outside formal channels increased.

Similarly, two decades later, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 was a critical milestone in the federal government’s response to immigration. IRCA required employers to confirm their employees’ immigration status, thus making it illegal to knowingly hire or recruit unauthorized immigrant labor. IRCA also granted amnesty to certain seasonal agricultural illegal immigrants as well as undocumented immigrants more generally who had entered the United States before January 1, 1982. These changes in policy have resulted in more than 39 million foreign-born people living in the United States in 2009 (Passel and Cohn, 2009). According to recent estimates by immigration experts, 11.5 to 12 million unauthorized immigrants were residing in the U.S. as of 2006, representing almost one of every three foreign-born residents. For the last two decades, however, the U.S. Census Bureau has consistently underestimated the number of foreign-born individuals living in the country and applied questionably low assumptions about future immigration as they projected population growth. Nevertheless, their projections provide the most valid and reliable data, thus when the Census Bureau estimates 1.3 million arrivals a year, it is a statistic worth noting (Joint Center, 2005).

The fundamental question that follows from these demographic shifts is what kind of society the U.S. will become. Will all of these new immigrants and the diverse populations that comprise the U.S. transform into “one America” where cultural identities no longer matter regarding how individuals live and relate to one another? How will these newcomers be absorbed into society, and what role will they assume in influencing the work of public servants and the public policy process?

This symposium attempted to broach these questions, as well as to examine the benefits and costs of immigration from three levels: micro, mezzo, and macro. An article by Richard K. Scotch and Sai Loganathan, entitled “Local Government’s Role in Health Care for Undocumented Immigrants: Three Counties in North Texas” focused on the micro level, researching the local level impact of immigrants. At the mezzo level, “Barriers to Immigrant

Engagement with Government Policy,” by Shawn Teresa Flanigan, examines immigration and public service through an organizational lens and its relationship to societal structures. The macro level has two articles, Thomas E. Lambert’s “An Analysis of State Level Immigration and the Inequality over the last Two Decades,” and Christine Thurlow Brenner’s “Punctuated Equilibrium and Immigration.” Although distinct in focus, they both examine legal and policy developments resulting from immigration. What follows is a discussion about each of these studies and how their findings inform public management and social policy within the context of immigration.

Micro Level

Local Government’s Role in Health Care for Undocumented Immigrants: Three Counties in North Texas

Scotch and Loganathan’s case study provides necessary insight into the daily reality of many communities located throughout the U.S. Such is not only the case for states with established immigrant populations, but also for emerging immigrant-receiving areas as well. For new settlement areas, the concerns Scotch and Loganathan raise are compounded due to a lack of infrastructure and proactive planning in the face of large demographic shifts, which compromise the ability of the public sector to respond to the well-being of all community residents. Although their focus is on the health care system, the situation described is emblematic also of educational, social, and legal systems.

Due to the interlocking systems of oppression, low socio-economic status, poor education, limited access to health care, and public and private sector policies, immigrants (both documented and undocumented) are exceedingly vulnerable (Border, 2007; Montoya, 2005); consequently, emergency care becomes both the first and last resort for many of them. In their case study, Scotch and Loganathan thoughtfully reviewed three cases that illustrate varying responses to this recurring problem. What they discovered was that the public and private sectors alone cannot provide medical treatment or health services. The nonprofit sector and those engaged in direct service with immigrants are uniquely positioned to facilitate public health services through collaborative arrangements that mitigate immigrants’ need for emergency care. This nonprofit role is especially important in communities with increased levels of anti-immigrant sentiment.

Anti-immigrant sentiment stems, in part, from the cost burdens associated with serving immigrants. Since immigrants who have lived in the U.S. less than five years are excluded from Medicaid eligibility as a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PWORA) of 1996, the only exception for receiving care is limited coverage for emergency conditions through Emergency Medicaid. Thus, some health care costs occur because immigrants are not able to receive preventative care at a fraction of the cost.

The U.S. General Accounting Office reported that states with high immigration rates have experienced a rapid rise in Emergency Medicaid expenditures in recent years because of a lack of preventative health programs and coverage for documented and undocumented immigrants (GAO, 2004). In a North Carolina, an emerging immigrant settlement area, research examined the experiences of 50,000 individuals who received services under Emer-

gency Medical between 2001 and 2004. It was determined that the patient population consisted of 99 percent undocumented, 93 percent Hispanic, 95 percent female, and 89 percent between the ages of 18 to 40 (DuBard and Massing, 2007). Although Medicaid spending for emergency care of recent and established immigrants is a small portion of the total Medicaid budget, it is increasing rapidly in new immigrant-receiving areas like North Carolina. This disparity in health coverage between immigrants and U.S. citizens has increased since the passage of PWORA in 1996, which suggests that the passage of welfare reform legislation had a significant impact on shifting the cost burden of immigrant health coverage to the states (Carrasquillo, Ferry, Edwards, and Glied, 2003).

Even so, little research has been conducted to ameliorate the situation by finding ways to reduce the costs associated with emergency services at the state and local levels, especially since the provider often absorbs these costs without any reimbursement. Therefore, if there were a way to reduce the need for emergency medical services by providing competent and cost-effective preventative and routine services to immigrants, there would not only be improved public health services for community residents, but such a change would also benefit health institutions trying to remain economically viable.

Scotch and Loganathan's Texas-based case study in Dallas County, which alone has a foreign-born population of 24 percent, revealed that care clinics and nonprofit support services decrease the number of both emergency room visits and uncompensated care offered only through public and private health care providers. This finding demonstrates that engaging various stakeholders in collaborative relationships to provide health services is not only a wise expedient for addressing financial crisis, but also a sound fiscal policy. Even so, Scotch and Loganathan caution that these arrangements depend upon "the quality of the internal working climate, the ability of stakeholders to unite under a shared vision of goals and solutions, and for stakeholders to facilitate fair distribution of resources and responsibility" (p. 16). Because immigration is a contentious issue, some communities may not have the capacity to enter into such arrangements, or they may be hostile toward their creation due to a high level of anti-immigrant sentiment. As a result, it is beneficial to consider their findings since reactionary practices resulting from incomplete policy decisions have not met with as much success in comparison to collaborative arrangements as a form of recourse.

This information is all the more important when considered in the context of immigrant employment, whereby immigrants consist of one-fifth of low-wage workers, and almost half of all working immigrants (documented and undocumented) earn less than twice the minimum wage (AFL-CIO, 2005), which makes it unlikely they have employer-sponsored health care or can afford it on their own. Because immigrants are overly represented in "dirty, dangerous, and demeaning jobs" (known as the '3D jobs'), such as construction, farming, forestry, landscaping, manufacturing, meat/poultry packing, and service industries, they are susceptible to unsafe working conditions, and opportunities for routine, preventative health visits would likely decrease the costs associated with their medical care (AFL-CIO, 2005; Montoya, 2005).

In response to increased immigration, the restrictions resulting from PWORA (1996) need to be reexamined, considering how cross-sector collaborations can be used to reduce the impact on the states of this federal, un-funded mandate. More importantly, until com-

prehensive immigration reform occurs the “fragmented and underfunded collaborations between public, private, and nonprofit organizations appear to be the only viable choice to coordinate and provide services to the undocumented population” (p. 15).

Mezzo Level

Barriers to Immigrant Engagement with Government Policy

Flanigan’s article is an effort to examine how government policies may hinder immigrant engagement within the nonprofit sector. Mainstream and immigrant nonprofit organizations lack the skills needed to advocate on behalf of their clients without fearing the loss of their 501(c)(3) status. Ironically, the very fact nonprofits exist is a tacit form of advocacy for the cause or the constituents they represent. Thus, in a small way, it is the social and political obligation of nonprofits to advocate since they are often the front-line experts who understand their stakeholders’ needs, which are otherwise often unknown, overlooked and ignored by policy makers.

To alleviate the fear of losing their tax-protected status and to become more engaged in the policy process, it would be wise for mainstream and immigrant nonprofits to apply for the “h election” under the U.S. IRS Tax Code. Federal tax law already allows for every charitable nonprofit to engage in some lobbying activities, provided it is not “substantial.” The challenge is that the IRS has not provided a definition of what *substantial* lobbying or advocacy-related activities means. Therefore, to remove any uncertainty, nonprofits should file IRS Form 5768, known as the 501(h) election, so they can make expenditures to influence legislation (IRS, 2009). In doing so, the agency can retain its 501(c)(3) status but carry the added protection to engage in lobbying and advocating based upon clear guidelines outlined by the IRS.

Regrettably, nonprofits, in general, and immigrant-serving nonprofits, in particular, fail to file for the “h election,” a step which would facilitate immigrant engagement in government policy. This recommendation, however, only partially addresses the points Flanigan makes because her qualitative research seeks to uncover barriers to immigrant organizations’ interaction with government officials. Her research involves a comparison between New York and California, two established immigrant states that have a long history of immigrant integration, leadership, and policy engagement. Despite these states’ enduring and evolving immigrant histories, Flanigan asserts that how immigrant organizations interact with government varies widely. This is not only due to their age, size, and scope, which are factors common within the mainstream nonprofit sector; but also in the very nature of how immigrant populations retain their culture and the impact this has on their level and modes of engagement. The political cultures and backgrounds of immigrant communities influence their levels of participation; some use their newfound freedom to react while others, as symbol of their freedom, choose to retreat.

Flanigan’s work illuminates how service providers at these immigrant nonprofit organizations, who are either immigrants or first-generation Americans themselves, are exposed to the American political system. Lack of staff, skills, and knowledge impedes their ability not only to orchestrate engagement activities, but also to sustain them to successfully influence government policy (Rodriguez, 2008). Thus, heeding Saidel’s (2002) recom-

mentation that nonprofit employers should be proactive in personally, socially, and professionally developing their staff to increase organizational capacity is imperative. If such development does not happen within an entity, it will be difficult for nonprofit stakeholders, especially if they are immigrants, to mature along with the organization.

Flanigan noted that as staff members become equipped to become advocates, fears of being “un-American” surface. Ironically, feeling American has often been associated with citizens exercising their right to vote. However, immigrants who do not have the privilege of voting, may depending upon their ethnic background, choose to deliberately remain quiet, conforming to societal expectations by not “making waves”. Within each immigrant group – generation, ethnicity, English language skills, and length of residence in the U.S. – levels of involvement, skills, and fear change over time. Having nonprofits serve as mediators or brokers between immigrants and government officials can be a practical means of reducing barriers.

Macro Level

An Analysis of State-Level Immigration and the Inequality over the Last Two Decades

Thomas Lambert’s article recognizes that comprehensive immigration reform is vital, and points out that states that have experienced high levels of immigration are actually at an advantage over those with lower levels. He bases that conclusion on a sophisticated analysis using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Labor Statistics Office, and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. His first analysis focused on the foreign-born population and inequality within the state. The premise is as follows: If increased immigration is responsible for greater inequality because of wage losses by low-skilled and less educated workers, then the level of the foreign-born population in a state should be a strong, positive predictor of a state’s Gini coefficient (a measure that captures greater inequality). Using state data on unemployment and poverty, college graduation rates, union membership, and the gross domestic product, he found that for every ten percent increase in the foreign-born population, there is a 0.02 increase in the Gini score.

His second analysis focused on the relationship between a state’s foreign-born population and a state’s business profitability. Lambert’s premise regarding this issue is as follows: “If business profits are doing well in states that also suffer from high levels of inequality, then some type of remediation could be deemed equitable” (p. 56). In short, if foreign-born laborers are paid lower wages than native laborers (Independent Task Force, 2006), it contributes to greater profitability for their employers, and thus the financial benefits acquired from the surplus should be used to provide services to the foreign-born laborers. His findings reveal that a one percent increase in the foreign-born population leads to a 13 million dollar increase in the gross operating surplus for a state, which is deemed as the state’s business profits. Both of these findings support the premise communicated by other scholars: “The benefits of immigration outweigh the costs” (p. 49).

Interestingly, Lambert advocates redistributive policies at the federal level to subsidize states and localities with increased levels of immigration. The federal government benefits financially from undocumented immigrants’ labor, but states are charged with serving them. Such is especially true since the foreign-born do not take advantage of government benefits

for which they are eligible to receive, and undocumented immigrants are ineligible, as in the case of Social Security. According to Stephen Goss, Social Security's chief actuary, without the flow of payroll taxes from wages in the suspense file – money that is unclaimed, which results from undocumented immigrants paying money into the system for benefits they will never collect – the system's long-term funding hole over 75 years would be 10 percent deeper (Porter, 2005). As a result, the Social Security Administration's projection factors in the money that undocumented workers and their employers pay. It is believed that half of all unauthorized immigrants pay Social Security taxes. Meanwhile, as Lambert notes, because "there is little incentive [for states] to operate programs that are re-distributive in nature, the federal government should address equity problems associated with immigration" (p. 56). To accomplish this, Lambert encourages more engagement in research about local initiatives that have worked well fostering immigrant assimilation and support.

Punctuated Equilibrium and Immigration

The premise of Brenner's article is that "external pressures or internal processes provide a window for radical change" and if *that* change, in the case of federal immigration policy, does not take place, responses will be undertaken by state and local governments (p. 26). This is based on the concept known as punctuated equilibrium, which was popularized by Kingdon (1995).

Although attempts have been made for two decades to address immigration nationally, little has been accomplished that satisfies. Because immigrants and natives reside and recreate in local communities, immigration's challenges are more immediately experienced at the local and state levels. The situation has stimulated responses within states, motivated by both support for immigrants and also antagonism towards them. Many of these efforts are relatively new (2005-2008), signifying growing awareness by state executives and legislatures that a response is required.

Brenner reviews five states that, through executive orders from their governors, have attempted to include various stakeholders and constituents to identify, investigate, and inform policy recommendations to facilitate the integration of newcomers and to enable them to thrive and contribute to their communities. Through these executive orders, councils or offices for "New Americans" have been established at the gubernatorial level and have made policy recommendations to inform the public, private, and nonprofit sectors how to achieve integration. Although Brenner discusses how the states of Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Washington have sought an integrationist strategy, there are just as many states that have promulgated a restrictive approach to immigration.

Most poignant has been Arizona Governor Jan Brewer's passage of the "Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act," known as SB1070, which makes it a state misdemeanor for an alien to be in Arizona without carrying the required immigration documents, or for anyone to shelter, hire, or transport illegal aliens. Similarly, Maine's Governor Paul LePage, on the day he took office – January 5, 2011 – issued an executive order to all state employees to begin asking individuals about their citizenship/immigration status. Ironically, undocumented immigrants only make up approximately one percent of the total population of the state, yet he has portrayed them as responsible for the state's fiscal problems (Young, 2011).

Knowing that these positions are in stark contrast to the executive-order states Brenner discusses, sub-national responses to integration will undoubtedly produce pressure for Congress to adopt some form of comprehensive immigration reform replacing the patchwork responses that exists today. Interestingly enough, these small policy windows opening and closing may lead state agencies and nonprofit organizations to address needs of newcomers through legislation.

Concluding Thoughts

For progress to occur, discussions on equity, fairness, public safety, and social justice need to take place. Forums where native and foreign-born individuals can have egalitarian, civil discourse about their rights and responsibilities are required. Rational discussions are needed at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels to advance a reform agenda.

The fact that immigrants may be “pushed” to migrate to the United States due to poverty, unemployment, and civil unrest in their countries of origin in efforts to survive or to maximize family income needs to be considered (Lee, 1966). Similarly, there are “pull” factors that result from improved employment and income opportunities. These include improved living conditions, education, public safety, and social welfare that arise from having a globalized economy (Bogue, 1969). Understanding this context for why individuals are motivated to immigrate is important to uncovering the issues that impact undocumented and documented immigrants, affecting both policy effectiveness and social justice.

According to Myers (2008), between 2010 and 2030, first- and second-generation immigrants are projected to account for all growth in the U.S. labor force, as Baby Boomers retire. Immigrant workers are needed to keep the economy strong, to serve as caretakers for the aging population, contribute to the social security system, and help forge the future of the United States. But, due to anti-immigrant legislation, economic downturns, and changing labor opportunities, more recent immigrants may have a more difficult time assimilating than did their predecessors (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001).

Because immigration, both legal and illegal, has caused so much discord within the country, throughout communities and even amongst family members, it is unlikely that the pro- and anti-stances will be able to come together without a suitable catalyst. Regrettably, under the Obama Administration we have had more deportation take place than at any previous time. This year the Immigration and Enforcement Agency is reported to deport approximately 400,000 people in the 2010 fiscal year (Slevin, 2010). But little is said about how these deportations not only disrupt families, but in many ways the communities in which they live and depend on for their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Such disruption to society, calls to mind W. E. B. Du Bois’ poignant declaration in the *Souls of Black Folk*: “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line.” If one reads his text carefully, the “color-line” can be interpreted as being both local and global. It is localized when Du Bois invites his “gentle reader” to show patience as he gives meaning to being black in America and explains how the study of race makes an impact on all people (1903, p. 5). Simultaneously, Du Bois asserts that the “problem of the color-line” is also global through “the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea” (1903, p. 16). Arguably, twenty-

first century efforts to address immigration related problems continue DuBois' struggle against racism. Public servants should heed DuBois' caution because the problem of the "color-line" has yet to be resolved, even as much progress, both local and global, has been achieved for "black folks" and others at society's margins. Americans need to develop an improved meta-narrative about immigration but this challenge is not exclusively their own. Similar issues arise pervasively world-wide. Hence, this symposium challenges practitioners, policy makers, and students of the field to build upon the on-going discussion, contributing at the micro, mezzo, macro and/or global levels.

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