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Uniting the Patchwork

Measuring State and Local Immigrant Contexts

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While the federal government has debated reforms to federal immigration law over the past 15 years, state and local governments have sought ways to control immigration through legislation within their jurisdictions, leading to widely varying immigration policy contexts across states. Many researchers have attempted to measure and describe these diverse state contexts, which have been shown to shape residence patterns and affect immigrant families' well-being. But rather than establishing a cohesive set of measures, researchers in this area have used a wide array of metrics to describe immigrant contexts. In this brief, we summarize attempts to measure immigrant contexts, including state and local policies toward immigrants as well as demographic, economic, and attitudinal factors. We review research that has tied measures of context to the well-being of immigrants or of the communities they live in, and we evaluate the state of research to date on immigrant contexts.

Immigrant contexts matter to researchers and policymakers for at least three key reasons. First, researchers and policymakers seeking to evaluate the costs and benefits of passing state or local (referred to in this brief as "local" unless otherwise specified) immigration legislation want to know whether policies achieve their intended objectives, which may include expelling unauthorized immigrants from an area, improving the local economy, or supporting the educational attainment of children of immigrants, among other goals, and whether there are unanticipated costs and benefits of passing local immigration legislation. Second, researchers interested in immigrant integration—the social, civic, educational, and economic outcomes of immigrants and their children—are interested in how local immigrant contexts shape integration trajectories. Third, political scientists want to

understand how local economic and demographic factors, political parties, individual attributes of legislators, and national conversations shape local politics as measured through public opinion or passage of local policies.

Researchers seeking to measure immigrant contexts face several considerations. The first consideration is which facets of local contexts are most important to measure. Researchers must then determine which data points to use in measuring these facets. A second consideration is how to measure local policies—whether to capture proposed laws, laws on the books, or levels of implementation. Once the set of measures has been determined, researchers must decide how to condense data into summary measures that capture a sufficient level of nuance. Finally, researchers must determine the proper geographic and time scales for measuring policies.

This brief summarizes the choices made in each of these areas within published literature that describes local immigrant contexts. We reviewed a wide range of studies that sought to measure local contexts affecting immigrants. Our review is not exhaustive. Rather, we review the studies we have seen most commonly cited in the literature that measure policy contexts affecting immigrant families; select a few key examples of research measuring attitudes, demographic characteristics, and economic factors; and summarize research that elucidates how contexts matter for the well-being of immigrant families and their broader communities. We highlight what that research suggests about the contextual factors that have the most important effects in order to inform choices about which contextual factors are most important to measure.

Our review is organized as follows. First, we describe measures of policy contexts: reception policies (what some theorists frame as "immigrant policies" that shape the experience of immigrants as residents in communities), enforcement policies (or "immigration policy" regarding immigrants' admission and exit), and indices that measure a range of contexts on a scale from welcoming to exclusionary. Next, we describe efforts to measure nonpolicy contextual factors such as attitudes toward immigrants, demographic profiles, and economic characteristics. To better understand why and how immigrant contexts matter, we review the literature that has connected immigrant contexts to various dimensions of well-being, including child well-being in immigrant families, immigrant families' access to benefits, and the employment and wages of immigrant and native workers. We close with some thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of current measures of immigrant context and ideas about next steps for this field of research.

Measures of State and Local Context

In this section we describe measurement approaches in six areas: (1) reception policies (i.e., local policies intended to support and integrate immigrants, including policies shaping public assistance access for immigrants); (2) indices that measure the full range of policy climates, from exclusionary to welcoming, at a local level; (3) local immigration enforcement policies, (4) attitudes toward immigrants; (5) demographic characteristics; and (6) economic characteristics.

Reception Policies

Cities, states, and regions are increasingly adopting policies, legislation, and institutions that support the needs of immigrant residents and facilitate their social, economic, and linguistic integration. Local actions range from the inclusion of immigrant groups in higher education and tuition supports, driver's licenses, and public benefits beyond those required by the federal government; language-access programs; naturalization promotion efforts; and others. Because these reception policies fall into a variety of policy areas and sometimes shift quickly over time, collecting comprehensive data on the dynamic policy landscape poses a significant challenge for researchers.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC BENEFITS

Attention to local policies governing immigrants' eligibility for such public benefits as cash assistance, food assistance, and health care grew sharply in the wake of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, better known as "welfare reform." This act excluded most legal permanent immigrants from accessing most federally funded public benefits during their first five years as lawful permanent residents[1] and allowed states to decide whether to use local funds to provide benefits to excluded groups (Kretsedemas and Aparicio 2004; Zimmerman and Tumlin 1999). Since 2009, states have also had the option to use federal funds to provide Medicaid/Children's Health Insurance Program benefits to lawfully present children and pregnant women, even during the five-year ban. The Urban Institute was the first to map out state eligibility contexts after welfare reform in the late 1990s, detailing state-by-state immigrant eligibility for public benefits and summing this information in a four-point scale of generosity, based on the number of people affected by a policy and the share of the cost borne by the state versus the federal government (Tumlin, Zimmerman, and Ost 1999; Zimmerman and Tumlin 1999).

Similar efforts followed. Hero and Preuhs (2007) drew on this early Urban Institute report to create their immigrant welfare scale. The National Immigration Law Center periodically published volumes (and still publishes online updates[2]) detailing state policies on immigrants' eligibility for public benefits, intended mainly for social service providers and legal professionals (National Immigration Law Center 2002). More recently, the Urban Institute published an updated snapshot of state immigrant eligibility for public benefits (Fortuny and Chaudry 2011) and the Pew Immigration and the States Project (2014) did the same.

However, existing policy compilations have limitations. All these efforts have created point-in-time snapshots of immigrant benefits eligibility, rather than detailing longitudinal information on which benefits were available to immigrants at each point in time. To our knowledge, the only database of policies in each year is the Urban Institute's Welfare Rules Database, which details state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (the main federal cash welfare program) policies in every state, for every year from 1996 to 2003 (Urban Institute 2014). Further, compilations of public benefits policies for immigrants focus on state policies, even though some counties and cities across the country use local funding for public benefits for immigrants (Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured 2009).[3]

Finally, little research, to our knowledge, examines local availability of immigrant-targeted assistance from private charities.

IMMIGRANT-TARGETED POLICIES

Beyond dictating access to public assistance, more and more state laws shape immigrant access to other public services and benefits such as postsecondary education and driver's licenses (and other forms of government identification), or seek to protect immigrants from abuses such as labor exploitation or trafficking. The National Immigration Law Center documented states' 2013 policies toward unauthorized immigrants in regard to driver's licenses, higher education and tuition supports, and workers' rights, and detailed policies intended to limit participation in federal immigration enforcement efforts such as Secure Communities[4] (Broder et al. 2013). Ramakrishnan and Gulasekaram (2014) created a snapshot of 2014 "pro-integration" state laws that encompassed (1) limited cooperation with the federal Secure Communities program and E-Verify employment verification program, (2) driver's licenses for unauthorized immigrants, and (3) tuition supports for higher education such as in-state tuition and financial aid. The National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL), which creates an annual database of state immigrant-related policies, categorizes policies as follows: budgets, education, employment, health, human trafficking, identification cards/driver's licenses, law enforcement, miscellaneous, public benefits, resolutions, and voting (NCSL 2014). Filindra and Pearson-Merkowitz (2015) are developing a longitudinal database with a more detailed categorization of state legislation proposed and passed since 1990.

In addition to state legislation on the books, local practices and administrative processes implemented in cities across the country may be supportive of immigrant families, even if they are not supported or required by legislation (Rodríguez 2008). These measures include funds to support civic and economic integration, language-access policies requiring translation and interpretation, mayor's or governor's offices of immigrant affairs, municipal identity cards, "sanctuary policies" forbidding government actors from inquiring about immigration status or working with immigration enforcement authorities, and other efforts to promote immigration integration and social cohesion (Cantor 2010; de Graauw, Gleeson, and Bloemraad 2013; Ridgley 2008; Rodríguez 2008; Varsanyi 2006, 2008; Wells 2004). Measuring these practices in a comprehensive way presents a particular challenge, so most researchers report anecdotal examples, and others have relied on community partners and direct conversations with agencies to compile the information (Kerr, McDaniel, and Guinan 2014; Pastor et al. 2012). One particularly innovative approach to detecting hard-to-research institutional and policy contexts involved using crowd-sourcing technology to hire workers who reviewed the websites of all US municipalities of a certain size to search for immigrant-related terms, as an indication of an immigrant-friendly orientation (Smith and Schmitt-Sands 2014). An effort to capture local immigrant policies and practices by surveying leaders in all small- to medium-sized municipalities is currently underway (Fisher Williamson 2014).

Capturing state-level reception policies can be relatively straightforward when the effort is limited to a concise set of policies, as described above, and to legislation on the books rather than proposed legislation or informal practices. But consistent measurement at the local level poses greater

challenges. The approaches described above seek to capture accurate and valid information across diverse municipalities, but they are limited by the difficulty of ensuring consistent measurement and definitions across diverse local contexts, as well as by the fact that the information they seek to capture quickly becomes outdated. Collecting information on proposed but not enacted legislation requires a greater investment of resources, but may capture an important metric of state and local orientations toward immigrants.

Indices: From Welcoming to Exclusionary

Researchers have developed indices summarizing local contexts for immigrants, including both reception policies that support immigrants and enforcement policies that seek to exclude unauthorized immigrants from an area. Some of these efforts focus exclusively on policies, and others include a mix of policy and nonpolicy contextual measures. We summarize such efforts below.

The most thorough index we discovered, though only completed for regions within California at one point in time, is the integration scorecard created by Pastor and colleagues (2012). They use 28 measures to create an index summarizing each region's immigrant integration score. The index includes four categories describing immigrant integration: economic snapshot, economic trajectory, warmth of welcome, and civic engagement (Pastor et al. 2012). The warmth-of-welcome scale, a measure of receptivity toward immigrant residents, is worth highlighting. The score is based purely on nonpolicy measures. It includes a media score based on qualitative analysis of print and digital media outlets' coverage of immigration, an academic performance index that describes English as a second language students' performance relative to that of non-Hispanic white students, immigrant-serving organizations, naturalization rates (relative to expected rates), and supply of English classes relative to the number of English-language learners in the area.

Researchers have made numerous efforts to develop indices that focus strictly on policy contexts for immigrants. Hero and Preuhs (2007), who developed the immigrant welfare scale mentioned on page 3, also developed a multicultural disposition scale that addresses state policies toward immigrants in policy areas other than benefits eligibility, such as driver's licenses and resident tuition, as well as policies regarding limited English proficiency and English as a second language resources.

Many state policy indices rely on the collection of state bills compiled by NCSL, which publishes regular reports on immigration-related measures proposed and enacted at the state level and maintains an online database of immigration-related laws that currently covers 2008 to 2013 (NCSL 2014).

Researchers have approached these NCSL resources with slightly different priorities and research questions, and each index they have developed reflects individual interests and idiosyncrasies. A number of authors' approaches to coding NCSL laws are summarized in table 1. Monogan (2013), for example, separates laws not only into "welcoming" and "hostile" categories but also measures the scope of a policy's effects on a four-point scale. A bill can (1) be "symbolic," (2) affect a small group of immigrants, (3) affect a large group of immigrants in a significant way, or (4) affect immigrants' ability to reside in an area. Similarly, Pham and Pham (2014) look at state immigrant climates by recoding NCSL

data into seven categories: law enforcement, employment, language, housing, benefits, voting, and legal services. Within each category, they code a policy as either positive or negative toward immigrants, and then assign a value from -4 to +4 based on the expected impact of the law (Pham and Pham 2014). Allen and Ishizawa (2014) code all bills between 2005 and 2006 on a five-point scale, from very unwelcoming to very welcoming. They exclude nonbinding resolutions, focusing only on laws. Marquez and Schraufnagel (2013), who code legislation from 2008 to 2012 into four categories (restrictive, liberalizing, both, or neither), also exclude nonbinding resolutions. Other authors, such as Monogan (2013), include nonbinding resolutions in their indices but may assign them a low scope or significance score. Leerkes, Leach, and Bachmeier (2012) look only at restrictive laws and create summary scales using factor analysis.

A few newer studies draw on scales built in prior literature. For example, Pedraza and Zhu (2013) create a scale of state contexts that may affect immigrant use of unemployment insurance by using Monogan's scale of state policies, the scale of welfare generosity built by Hero and Preuhs (2007), and a scale of public benefits availability, as well as a few measures of their own creation. However, the majority of studies we reviewed involve original efforts to code NCSL data.

LOCAL-LEVEL POLICY INDICES

Most immigrant-context indices we reviewed focused on state-level contexts. Far fewer efforts compiled local policies, but a few examples exist. Ramakrishnan and Wong (2010) created a database of local ordinances as of 2007, including both proimmigrant and restrictionist policies. Their database was based on various sources, including the National Immigration Law Center, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Migration Policy Institute, and the Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM). Walker and Leitner (2011) assembled a database of proposed or implemented immigration-related policies, both pro- and anti-immigrant, in 369 localities, including 281 municipalities and 88 counties. They drew their data from FIRM, the Mexican American and Puerto Rican Legal Defense Funds, and the National Immigration Law Center, and they verified each local ordinance by drawing on national and local media.

Pham and Pham (2014) measured county-level policies by collecting information from (1) advocacy organizations that track local laws; (2) US Department of Justice information on 287(g) agreements, through which state and local law enforcement enforce federal immigration law in partnership with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); and (3) electronic news databases. They then confirmed the presence of each law with the local government. Fisher Williamson (2014), who sought to verify the existence of anti-immigrant ordinances collected by FIRM, found that many of the laws FIRM had compiled were either proposed (but never passed) or no longer implemented. Hopkins (2010) also sought to comprehensively identify only anti-immigrant policies at the local level by using FIRM's data. He generated additional data through analysis of newspaper content by using LexisNexis to search for references to "local," "anti-immigrant," or "English only" in articles in regional newspapers between 2000 and 2006. The references were then skimmed to identify anti-immigrant proposals (Hopkins 2010).

TABLE 1

A Variety of Approaches to Coding NCSL Legislation Data

Author	Time frame	Categories	Notes	Sources of coding decisions
Monogan (2013)	2005–11	Welcoming or hostile, plus four categories of scope: symbolic, affecting small group, affecting many immigrants, and directly affecting immigrants' ability to reside in state.	Broke down omnibus bills into provisions. Excluded laws that were proposed but not enacted.	Author decisions, advised by legal scholars and think tank experts
Marquez and Schraufnagel (2013)	2008–12	Four categories: restrictive, liberalizing, both, or neither.	Created restrictiveness score for each state. Counted items in "both" category as two bills. Took into account how many bills were passed in aggregate.	Author decisions
Allen and Ishizawa (2014)	2005–06	Five-point Likert scale: very unwelcoming, unwelcoming, neutral, welcoming, very welcoming.	Excluded nonbinding resolutions and laws that were proposed but not enacted. Also looked at number of laws.	Author decisions
Pham and Pham (2014)	2005–09	Laws assigned a value from -4 to +4 depending on whether they were restrictive (-) or generous (+), and on the expected impact of the bill (from minor to major).	Excluded nonbinding resolutions and laws that were proposed but not enacted. Included bills related to law enforcement, employment, language, housing, benefits, voting, and legal services.	Author decisions
Leerkes, Leach, and Bachmeier (2012)	2005–09	Laws included with other measures into a weighted scale that was later broken into three categories: high, moderate, and low levels of control.	Looked only at laws restricting immigrants' access to driver's licenses, the labor market (e.g., requiring use of E-Verify), public benefits, health care, or education.	Factor analysis

Enforcement Policies

In addition to papers that detail welcoming policies that exist at the local level and those that create scales for measuring contexts from welcoming to exclusionary, a third set of papers focuses on levels of local immigration law enforcement. Some of these efforts create multipolicy indices, and some focus on

single measures of immigration enforcement. Unlike the literature described above, measures of local enforcement policies place equal emphasis on the *outcomes* of laws—such as the number of immigrant deportations from an area—and on the *passage* of laws. There is a greater focus in this literature on county- and state-level data as opposed to city-level laws.

The internal-control index of Leerkes and colleagues (2012) is an example of a local immigration enforcement index. Leerkes and colleagues base their index on three main factors: (1) employer use of the E-Verify system to verify that new employees have work authorization in the United States, (2) existence of state laws related to a specific set of immigration enforcement issues, and (3) existence of 287(g) agreements. They rely on the NCSL dataset to measure state laws passed between 2005 and 2009 that restricted immigrants' access to driver's licenses, the labor market, public benefits, health care, or education. Watson (2013) provides an example of tracking a single indicator of immigration enforcement. She compiled year-by-year information on 287(g) agreements and coded the number of 287(g) agreements affecting individuals at each point in time (up to three, if there were local, county, and state agreements in force) to investigate the impact of immigration enforcement on immigrants' location choice. Parrado (2012) similarly measures the presence of 287(g) agreements at all government levels in metropolitan areas before 2009.

Much of the work on local immigration enforcement focuses not just on the passage of laws but on levels of implementation of those laws, measured through such enforcement outcomes as number of deportations or number of hires screened through an employment verification system. For example, Watson (2010) measures the number of "deportable aliens located"[5] by drawing on data from the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Stowell and colleagues (2013) use similar information in their analysis of how deportations affect crime within metropolitan statistical areas. Pedroza (2013) focuses on the degree of county-level implementation of the federal Secure Communities program, measuring numbers of Secure Communities removals per 1,000 noncitizens in the county as well as what share of Secure Communities biometric matches in a county lead to a deportation. Bachmeier, Bean, and Van Hook (2012) measure levels of compliance with local mandates that employers use the E-Verify employer verification system by calculating the share of new hires in each industry and state that have been verified through the program, drawing on special data from DHS.

One paper we reviewed hypothesized that public displays of enforcement shaped immigrants' views of government. Rather than measuring policies or outcomes of policies, Pedraza and Zhu (2013) measured the number of high-profile immigration enforcement events in an area, drawing on information from ICE's newsletter.

Attitudes

As Hainmueller and Hopkins (2013) note in a recent review article, researchers have also considered public attitudes toward immigrants as an important measure of reception climate. Much of this work focuses on national-level trends, but a small portion traces variation across states, generally using data from public opinion surveys capturing opinions about immigrants, unauthorized immigrants, or specific immigration policies. The warmth-of-welcome scale developed by Pastor and colleagues (2012) offers

an alternative way to measure attitudinal climate by describing characteristics of local media coverage, a tactic also used by Hopkins (2010) and Watson (2010). Some of this work treats opinions as a dependent variable, outlining factors—such as immigrant demographic characteristics, political ideology, and educational background—that are correlated with certain attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Conversely, some explores how attitudes shape policies. Hopkins (2010), for example, finds that demographic changes do not always lead to anti-immigrant attitudes. He shows that national discourse framing immigration as negative is necessary to activate anti-immigrant attitudes in areas with fast growth in immigrant or Hispanic populations. Researchers also measure partisanship to describe immigrant contexts, with many researchers finding, for example, that anti-immigrant policies are more likely to pass where the majority votes conservative (Ramakrishnan and Wong 2010), and that immigrant children's educational outcomes are weaker where the state legislature has a conservative majority (Filindra, Blanding, and Garcia Coll 2011).

Demographic Characteristics

Local demographic characteristics and changes are an important facet of immigrant contexts for several reasons. Strong coethnic communities can provide immigrants with an incentive to move to a particular US community or can ensure that immigrants are able to access desired and needed goods and services in the language most comfortable to them. For example, the availability of immigrant-serving legal and other social service organizations may be shaped strongly by the size, characteristics, and length of residence of the existing local immigrant population (de Leon and Roach 2013). While larger *stocks* of other immigrant residents in an area are often related to wider availability of desired services, researchers have tied faster *growth* in immigrant or Hispanic populations to greater anti-immigrant sentiment or passage of state immigration laws under certain circumstances (Boushey and Luedtke 2011; Hopkins 2010; Marquez and Schraufnagel 2013; Monogan 2013; Ramakrishnan and Wong 2010; Walker and Leitner 2011). Demographic changes may result from the passage of immigration laws that push unauthorized immigrants or all immigrants away from a jurisdiction (Bohn, Lofstrom, and Raphael 2013; Leerkes, Leach, and Bachmeier 2012; Parrado 2012; Watson 2013).

Generally, demographic contexts are measured through indicators of the size or growth of the foreign-born, unauthorized immigrant, Hispanic or Spanish-speaking, or children of immigrants populations as well as through indicators of the share of immigrants from particular countries or world regions. Other commonly used demographic contextual measures include US-born residents' race and ethnicity, poverty rates, age structure, and educational attainment (Bachmeier, Bean, and Van Hook 2012; Filindra, Blanding, and Garcia Coll 2011; Pedroza 2013; Stowell et al. 2013; Walker and Leitner 2011; Watson 2010). The literature we reviewed relied mainly on demographic data from the US decennial census and the American Community Survey as well as estimates of the unauthorized immigrant population from the Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project or the Migration Policy Institute.

Economic Characteristics

Like demographic characteristics, economic characteristics form an important facet of immigrant context because they can serve as a pull factor for immigrants, affect immigrant integration and immigrant families' well-being, and affect the likelihood of passage of state or local immigration-related policies. Local immigration policies may, in turn, affect local economic conditions. The papers we reviewed used various measures of local economic contexts, including overall labor force demand and immigrant-specific labor force demand, local unemployment rates, local poverty rates, and state gross product per capita (Marquez and Schraufnagel 2013; Pedraza and Zhu 2013; Pedroza 2013). The economic-snapshot index described by Pastor and colleagues (2012) includes these factors and several others that measure the economic circumstances of immigrant families (some of which are education related): share of households that are owner occupied; share of households with a very high rent burden; share of residents in overcrowded households; educational attainment of adults; share of students who pass California subject-matter achievement tests; share of adults who work full-time; share of workers who are "overskilled" (i.e., those with a bachelor's degree or higher degree who work in low-skill jobs); median personal income; share of people in poverty; share of people without health insurance; number of vehicles per person (related to job access in California); and share of seniors receiving Social Security.

How Local Immigrant Contexts Affect Well-Being

In considering how to define and measure immigrant contexts, one important consideration is evidence on how different contextual factors affect the well-being of immigrant families and the communities where they reside. To inform decisions about what factors to include in future data collection efforts and how to measure those factors, in this section we summarize papers that have tied local contexts to outcomes. We highlight which contexts were measured, how they were measured, and how they seem to affect immigrants and communities. These attempts to tie contexts to outcomes tend to fall into three categories: those that examine direct consequences of policies and contexts, those that examine secondary consequences, and those that examine broad, diffuse consequences. Most of this work focuses on the role of policies, rather than other contextual measures, in shaping outcomes. In addition, most research in this area focuses on the well-being of immigrants and their families rather than that of the communities they reside in.

Direct and Second-Order Consequences

Some authors evaluate whether local immigration policies achieve their intended goals. For example, researchers tie the existence of policies permitting unauthorized youth to access in-state college tuition to higher college enrollment rates among likely unauthorized youth (Flores 2010; Kaushal 2008). Several projects have examined how state public benefits policies affect immigrant families' access to public benefits. Koball and colleagues (2013) found that changes in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program eligibility for immigrants caused lower food stamp receipt among immigrants. Saloner,

Koyawala, and Kenney (2014) found that health insurance coverage of children of immigrants increased more between 2003 and 2011–12 in states that opted to provide federally funded public health insurance for legal immigrant children in their first five years of legal residence than in states that did not take up this option. An earlier body of research found that after welfare reform, state restrictiveness in public benefits policies toward immigrants was associated with lower uptake of benefits even among those who remained eligible, because of what were termed "chilling effects" (Borjas 2003; Fix 2009; Kaushal and Kaestner 2005).

Some researchers have looked at what could be considered second-order effects within the same domain. For example, Potochnick (2014) tied the availability of in-state tuition for unauthorized students to lower high school dropout rates among likely unauthorized youth. Other researchers have explored how the presence of E-Verify mandates affect not just the employment, but also the wages, of likely unauthorized immigrant workers, finding that state E-Verify mandates are correlated with reduced earnings among likely unauthorized immigrant men, increased labor force participation among likely unauthorized immigrant women, and increased wages among US-citizen Hispanic men (Orrenius and Zavodny 2014).

Diffuse Consequences: Intended and Unintended

Another set of studies in this emerging literature assumes that immigrant-targeted legislation may send broader signals about a state's or community's attitudes toward immigrants, shaping a wider set of behaviors and outcomes. There are two strains to this research. One focuses on *intended* broad effects of local legislation on immigrant families, and the other focuses on what we assume are *unintended* effects of legislation.

INTENDED CONSEQUENCES

States that passed broad anti-immigrant legislation did so as part of an "attrition through enforcement" orientation that aims to make life so difficult for unauthorized immigrants that they voluntarily leave.[6] We reviewed a few papers evaluating whether local immigration enforcement legislation drove immigrants away from states and localities. Watson (2013) finds that immigrants were more likely to move out of areas with a task-force style 287(g) agreement than out of other areas of the United States and were more likely to relocate to areas without a task-force style 287(g) agreement. This relationship was stronger for noncitizens with a college degree than for those with lower educational attainment (Watson 2013). Parrado's (2012) analysis finds that 287(g) agreements were not associated with larger declines in the Mexican immigrant population except in four locations (Los Angeles and Riverside, California; Phoenix, Arizona; and Dallas, Texas) he deems to be outliers. Though they rely on a rough measure of the size of the unauthorized immigrant population in each state, Leerkes and colleagues (2012) show a strong negative association between the change in the unauthorized population from 2008 to 2009 and their index of state immigration enforcement measures (which they call the internal-control index), though they note the observed trend may be driven in part by greater impacts of the Great Recession in high-enforcement states than in lower-enforcement states. Bohn and colleagues

(2013) look only at one state, Arizona, but find that the passage of a mandate requiring the use of E-Verify for all hires was associated with a decline in the unauthorized immigrant population in the state.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

Studies looking at likely unanticipated impacts of state immigrant-related legislation tend to focus on the ways in which local immigration enforcement policies affect immigrant families' uptake of public benefits. Pedraza and Zhu (2013), for example, find that a more welcoming attitude in a state is associated with a greater likelihood of using unemployment insurance and that public support for anti-immigrant policies is associated with lower take-up of unemployment insurance. They do not find evidence that more high-profile deportations lead to lower use of unemployment insurance. Watson (2010) finds that higher levels of immigration enforcement in an area are associated with lower rates of Medicaid participation among children with noncitizen mothers.

Other researchers look at a broader set of outcomes, some of which are positive. Cort's (2012) analysis of passage of the restrictive Proposition 187 in California in the 1990s shows that the law seemed to drive up naturalization rates among legal immigrants in Los Angeles. Allen and Ishizawa (2014) show that the political climate toward immigrants affects Hispanic but not Asian immigrant homeownership rates. And Filindra and colleagues (2011) find that public welfare generosity to immigrants is associated with higher high school graduation rates of children of immigrants compared with children of US natives, but that the existence of more multicultural policies is associated with lower graduation rates among children of immigrants.

Summary and Considerations for Future Research

Our review of the literature revealed clear trends in how authors have handled the measurement of immigrant contexts, including their decisions about domains, measures, target populations, level of analysis, and time frame. These trends suggest a range of possibilities worth exploring to lay the groundwork for a comprehensive database. A shared resource for researchers in multiple fields should be designed to be flexible enough to answer a wide range of research questions, yet sufficiently targeted to allow accurate and valid measurement.

Domains: What to Measure?

The existing literature focuses heavily on measures of state and local policies. Other contextual factors, such as demographic and economic contexts, served as control variables in quantitative models. The California integration scorecard is one strong exception (Pastor et al. 2012). Although some papers focus solely on reception policies, particularly those detailing public benefits policies, most include welcoming-to-exclusionary indices or focus solely on immigration enforcement. The ease of use of the NCSL database, ICE compilations of information on 287(g) and Secure Communities agreements, and ICE data on deportations may have shaped the heavy reliance on those measures, though some researchers used creative sources such as city websites, newspaper articles, and little-used data on Secure Communities biometric matches.

Table 2 lists the most commonly used data sources we identified in our literature search, with examples of papers drawing on each data source.

Commonly Used Sources of Local Immigrant and Immigration Policies

Data source	Level of geography	Example citations
National Conference of State Legislatures database	State-level policies	Allen and Ishizawa (2014), Leerkes, Leach, and Bachmeier (2012), Marquez and Schraufnagel (2013), Monogan (2013), Pham and Pham (2014)
Fair Immigration Reform Movement data	Local-level policies	Hopkins (2010), Fisher Williamson (2014), Ramakrishnan and Wong (2010), Walker and Leitner (2011)
National Immigration Law Center data on in-state tuition, driver's licenses, public benefits policies for immigrants, and state E-Verify mandates	State-level policies	Hero and Preuhs (2007), Pew Immigration and the States Project (2014), Potochnick (2014), Ramakrishnan and Gulasekaram (2014), Ramakrishnan and Wong (2010)
Urban Institute reports on state public benefits policies toward immigrants	State-level policies	Hero and Preuhs (2007)
DHS information on 287(g) agreements	Local-, county-, and state-level policies	Parrado (2012), Pham and Pham (2014), Watson (2013)
DHS list of Secure Communities sign-up dates	County-level information on dates of Secure Communities activation	Pedroza (2013)
DHS data on biometric submissions and removals and returns	County-level information	Pedroza (2013)
DHS Office of Immigration Statistics data on "deportable aliens located"	Information at the level of Border Patrol sector and/or ICE field office jurisdiction (covering states, parts of states, or groups of states)	Stowell et al. (2013), Watson (2010)
DHS data on companies using E-Verify	State-level information (state where each company is based)	Bachmeier, Bean, and Van Hook (2012)

Measures: How to Measure Contexts?

The existing literature represents a variety of decisions about how to operationalize concepts, how to reduce large amounts of data into summary measures, and what is most important to measure in looking at policies: proposal, passage, implementation, or public perception. As Table 1 shows, researchers took a variety of approaches in summarizing NCSL data on state policies into scales. Some of the research we reviewed includes measures across scales, summarizing city, county, and state

policies all together, but most focuses on just one geographic level. The varied measures different researchers used to get at a similar concept (e.g., the level of immigration enforcement in an area) reflect different hypotheses about what aspects of policies have the greatest impact for immigrants and communities. Several papers and Filindra and Pearson-Merkowitz's (2015) ongoing work consider proposed policies an important indicator of immigrant context, but most papers are concerned with the passage of new policies. Few focus on policies already on the books at the beginning of their period of interest. A smaller set of studies, mostly focusing on enforcement, move beyond the passage of laws to look at their implementation. In contrast to these eclectic approaches to measuring policy context, there seems to be general agreement on how to conceptualize and measure economic, demographic, and public opinion contexts.

Target Population: Who Interests Us Most?

Researchers' analyses of different facets of immigrant context emphasize different subgroups of the immigrant population. For example, analysis of reception policies and welcoming policies toward immigrants tends to focus on policies related to both legal immigrants and unauthorized immigrants, but compilations of enforcement policies and outcomes focus primarily on measures targeting unauthorized immigrants. Other contextual factors, such as attitudes, demographic characteristics, and economics, have bearing on immigrants regardless of their immigration status, gender, age, or national origin. As in most research on US immigrants, research on how policies affect well-being is skewed toward focusing on Hispanic immigrants, who make up the majority of US immigrants—though we observed some exceptions such as Allen and Ishizawa (2014), who also include Asians as a priority subgroup. The lines between policies affecting legal immigrants and those affecting unauthorized immigrants are not always clear because, as some researchers note, policies can be important because of the symbolic messages they send about a community's attitude toward immigrants. Therefore, policies restricting or augmenting the rights of unauthorized immigrants may have implications for the well-being of legal immigrants as well as for unauthorized immigrants.

Level of Analysis: Where Do We Cut In?

Across the domains covered, existing research efforts have focused primarily on state-level policies, for good reason. Although contextual measures can be captured at both the local and state levels by using US Census data, state-level policies are much easier to capture than local-level policies, given the smaller number of states, the good resources available (such as the NCSL state policy database), and the existing compilations of immigrant-specific state public benefits policies from the Urban Institute and the Pew Immigration and the States project. One policy indicator—the existence of a 287(g) agreement—is often measured at the local level simply because comprehensive data on which cities and counties have (or had) a 287(g) agreement are easy to access. We encountered a few interesting models for how to collect comprehensive data on local policies, ranging from crowd-sourced Internet searches to media analyses to surveys of local officials.

Time Frame: When Should We Measure?

Most of the papers we reviewed focus on immigrant contexts in the past decade, from 2005 until the time of publication, with the exception of those focusing on state public benefits policies in the wake of the 1996 welfare reform legislation. The National Conference of State Legislatures started compiling state immigration policies in 2005, when state legislative action on immigration increased substantially and garnered a lot of attention in the media and in immigration policy circles. The ramp-up in the use of E-Verify and 287(g) agreements and the rollout of Secure Communities all occurred in the late 2000s and early 2010s, making this decade a key period in the evolution of diverse immigrant contexts around the country. However, many measures of policy context to date provide a one-time snapshot of policies rather than historical information. Further, many measurements of policy context are ahistorical in another sense, in that they focus on the passage of new policies and the number and types of new policies, rather than looking at the cumulative set of laws on the books at any point in time. Finally, only a few papers discuss the time period in which the researchers expect a change in policy or in demographic or economic context to affect outcomes.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Further research will be required to assess optimal measures and data sources and to explore the range of opportunities and challenges described above. This review has led to a number of key considerations for a future database that could serve as a centralized, rigorously collected, consistent resource for researchers working across different fields. Development of this database should be shaped by the following priorities:

- collection of longitudinal data rather than a one-time snapshot;

- exploration of multiple levels of analysis at and below the state level;

- use of creative approaches to measure implementation of policy, beyond the passage of legislation;

- consideration of the data sources and methodologies used by previous indices; and

- consideration of the potential of crowdsourcing to overcome data collection challenges.

Having a consistent data source would allow us to better understand the range of immigrant contexts across the United States as well as to test their implications for immigrant and community well-being. It would provide a solid base for stronger research and a more informed policy debate.

Notes

1. These benefits included Supplemental Security Income, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, food stamps (now called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program.

2. "Guide to Immigrant Eligibility for Federal Programs Update Page," National Immigration Law Center, accessed October 20, 2014, http://www.nilc.org/guideupdate.html.

3. Ibid.

4. Secure Communities was a program that required an extra background check on everyone arrested and booked by local law enforcement to determine whether there was a match with immigration databases. If there was a match, the local Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) office made a determination about the immigration status of the individual and decided whether to issue a detainer. If ICE issued a detainer, the local law enforcement agency was asked to hold the person for up to 48 hours, until ICE could get involved. Secure Communities was initially voluntary but became mandatory for all jurisdictions in the United States in 2013. President Obama announced the end of the Secure Communities program through executive action on November 20, 2014. It will be replaced by a similar program with a more targeted scope.

5. "Deportable aliens located" refers to Border Patrol apprehensions as well as ICE administrative arrests.

6. Luis Megid, "Meet Kris Kobach, the Man Who Taught 'Self-Deportation' to Mitt Romney," *Thisisfusion* (blog), Fusion, March 9, 2012, http://thisisfusion.tumblr.com/post/19001507481/kris-kobach-self-deportation-romney.

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