“Immigrant Related Projects and Programs in Federal Empowerment Zones: Comparing Homogeneous, Bifurcated and Multiethnic Places”, Co-Sponsored with the Sustainability Scholars Forum

Richard Smith, Social Work, Associate Professor

Recent scholarship has proposed that urban spatial structure (i.e., homogeneous, bifurcated, or multiethnic) shapes the context of reception for immigrants and how local governments incorporate immigrants. Specifically, some scholars have argued that a bifurcated population (e.g., about half Hispanic and half Anglo), would have better policy outcomes for immigrants than a multiethnic population (i.e., no majority), which in turn would have better outcomes than a homogeneously Anglo population. My study uses content analysis of the Clinton Administration’s Renewal Communities/Empowerment Zones/Enterprise Communities (RC/EZ/ECs) (n=127), to provide insight. First, I categorize RC/EZ/ECs having immigrant-related projects or programs. Second, I categorize RC/EZ/ECs by type of spatial structure (i.e., homogeneous, bifurcated, multiethnic) using census data. Then I test associations between the two. I find that RC/EZ/ECs with increasing immigrant populations, Hispanic bifurcation, or homogeneously Hispanic were associated with local governments developing immigrant-related projects and programs. Homogeneously Hispanic and bifurcated Hispanic places had better outcomes than multiethnic places. While this research is not generalizable outside the study population, it is consistent with the theory that bifurcated places are more likely to have pro-immigrant outcomes. This research is also consistent with theory in that multiethnic places may not successfully form coalitions for change.