

# THE VARIEGATED LANDSCAPE OF LOCAL IMMIGRATION POLICIES IN THE UNITED STATES<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract:* Hundreds of municipalities and counties across the United States have proposed or implemented immigration policies at the local level, ranging from “sanctuary” policies to those designed to exclude undocumented immigrants. Data collected on these policies are presented, and statistically analyzed at the municipal level to interrogate existing hypotheses about factors driving these policy decisions. Municipalities experiencing rapid growth of their foreign-born population and with a high percentage of owner-occupied housing are more likely to introduce exclusionary policies, whereas municipalities with better educated populations are more likely to adopt inclusionary policies. The location of municipalities in the U.S. South and outside central cities is also associated with exclusionary policies. Textual analysis of policy documents for selected municipalities provides insight into why similarly located places adopt contrasting policies. Local ordinances reflect contrasting local imaginaries of race, nation, and place.

## INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, nearly 370 local governments have proposed or implemented policies designed to address issues of undocumented immigration in their communities, largely since 2005. Some scholars situate these policies within a broader trend of the devolution of immigration responsibilities to local levels (Ellis, 2006; Coleman, 2007a, 2007b; Varsanyi, 2008b). They have observed that local governments, rather than the federal government, are not only managing immigrant integration and service provision, but are increasingly engaging in immigration control and policing. One such example is the 287(g) Program that allows localities to enter into a partnership with the federal government to deputize local police officers to check the immigration status of detainees and initiate deportation proceedings (Shahani and Greene, 2009). This devolution of immigration policy, argue some scholars, has effectively “pushed the border inward” from the national to the local scale, making immigration status an increasingly salient issue at local levels (Coleman, 2007b; Varsanyi, 2008b).

Many local immigration policies, however, are less an outcome of the devolution of immigration enforcement to localities than they are grassroots responses to the presence (or potential presence) of undocumented immigrants (Wells, 2004; Varsanyi, 2008a). Certain local ordinances have targeted immigrants specifically on the basis of their legal status, passing ordinances to fine businesses or landlords who employ or rent to individuals

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<sup>1</sup>We would like to thank Steve Manson, Eric Sheppard, Ross Macmillan, Elvin Wyly, and the anonymous reviewers for helpful insights and comments on earlier drafts of this article.

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without proof of legal residence. Other localities have pursued immigration restriction strategies “through the backdoor” by amending or strictly enforcing housing codes to target overcrowding by immigrant laborers, or placing restrictions on unlicensed day-labor markets (Rodriguez, 2008; Varsanyi, 2008a).

In Northern Virginia, for instance, counties and municipalities in suburban Washington have pursued a wide variety of these strategies to discourage the settlement of undocumented immigrants in their communities. A number of local governments in this region participate in the 287(g) Program, including Prince William and Loudoun counties, as well as the cities of Herndon, Manassas, and Manassas Park (US ICE, 2008a). In response to charges of racial profiling, Prince William County has taken immigration policing one step further by checking the immigration status of *all persons* arrested by the police (Singer et al., 2009). Additionally, Prince William County passed a measure requiring all business owners in the county to prove their legal residence in the U.S. (Mack, 2009). Other localities such as Manassas and Stafford County have changed the meaning of “family” in zoning codes to limit the number of persons who can live in a single-family housing unit, and in Herndon officials have attempted to place limits on the ability of day laborers to congregate within the city limits (McCrummen, 2006; Hosh, 2008; MacDonald, 2008).

Not all localities implementing local immigration policies have sought to exclude undocumented immigrant populations, however. According to our survey of local immigration policies across the nation, nearly 100 cities and counties have either proposed or established immigrant “sanctuary” ordinances, including measures stating that local authorities will not check residents’ immigration status; pursued other integrative strategies such as the extension of local voting rights to noncitizens, the acceptance of Mexican *matrícula consular* ID cards as a valid form of identification; or passed local resolutions in support of the rights of undocumented residents (Wells, 2004; Varsanyi, 2006; Ridgley, 2008). One such example of such an inclusionary policy is the sanctuary ordinance enacted by Takoma Park, Maryland, first passed in 1985 and reaffirmed in 2007. The ordinance stipulates that no Takoma Park official may assist Immigration and Customs Enforcement in carrying out investigations or arrests based on an individual’s immigration status. It also prohibits any inquiries into, or discrimination based on, the citizenship status of individuals in Takoma Park, and stresses that information regarding citizenship status should remain strictly confidential (City of Takoma Park, 2007). Thus the adoption of these different types of these policies varies across space. Whereas Takoma Park and the aforementioned localities in Northern Virginia coexist within the same metropolitan area, and are located within 30 miles of one another, their responses to undocumented immigration are drastically different.

The policies discussed above are merely a few examples of the diverse local immigration policies that have proliferated across the United States over the past few years. To date there exists no comprehensive study of this variegated landscape of local immigration policies, and no single institution that assembles information on different local immigration policies. The purpose of this study is to examine the nature of and reasons for the distinct geographies of local immigration policies—i.e., the geographic patterns of, and reasons underlying the adoption of, policies designed either to promote immigrant integration or to exclude (undocumented) immigrants from settling within a given jurisdiction and/or drive them out. This is the first of two studies that seek to analyze and interpret a national database on local immigration ordinances assembled by the authors, in order to test a number

of propositions and hypotheses advanced by immigration scholars concerning the factors and conditions that influence the local politics of immigration.

We start with a brief visual representation and description of the geographic patterns of local immigration policies at the national and metropolitan scale. This is followed by a review of existing scholarship and propositions on local immigration politics. We identify and test the following hypotheses. First, local immigration politics becomes a more pressing issue in localities where immigrants have concentrated (Wells, 2004; Ellis, 2006). Second, it is the pace of change in the immigrant population—rather than the spatial concentration of immigrants—that results in the introduction of local anti-illegal immigration policies (Esbenshade, 2007). Third, anti-immigrant sentiments tend to decrease with increased education and economic security, and with lower levels of unemployment and racial prejudice. Fourth, ideological conservatism and strong nationalistic sentiments are positively related to attitudes supporting immigration restrictions. Fifth, drawing on the findings of some qualitative case studies, we propose that dominant imaginaries of place and community (national as well as local) may influence the type of policy that is considered and implemented. We hypothesize that local communities that value and respect cultural and racial diversity in their jurisdiction and in the national community at large are more likely to reject anti-immigration ordinances and/or favor pro-immigration measures—whereas local communities that value cultural homogeneity are more likely to support anti-immigration ordinances.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS OF LOCAL IMMIGRATION POLICIES

The spatial distribution of local immigration policies across the United States exhibits some distinctive patterns.<sup>3</sup> For instance, in some metropolitan regions, such as the San Francisco Bay Area, the majority of local policy responses are pro-immigration in nature, with cities such as San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond, Berkeley, and Santa Cruz all implementing inclusive policies. But in many Southern states, including Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina, local governments have overwhelmingly proposed or enacted some sort of exclusionary policy. In North Carolina alone, 15 counties have implemented anti-illegal immigration policies, over half of them in the form of some sort of agreement with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), including the 287(g) Program and the “Secure Communities” Program that allow local governments to check arrested individuals’ information against immigration records held by the Department of Homeland Security (Weissman et al., 2009; US ICE, 2008b).<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 displays the

<sup>3</sup>The information in this section is based on a database, assembled by the authors, of 369 U.S. localities (281 municipalities and 88 counties) that had proposed or implemented an immigration or immigration-related policy as of February 2009. Pro-immigration policies include sanctuary ordinances, policies granting local rights to undocumented immigrants (such as voting rights and ID cards), and resolutions in support of a path to legalization for undocumented immigrants. Anti-immigration policies include 287(g) agreements; Illegal Immigration Relief Act ordinances; and local laws such as anti-day labor policies, housing/zoning laws, or English-only ordinances where the policy debates addressed undocumented immigration.

<sup>4</sup>Since we completed our data collection, the Secure Communities program has undergone fundamental changes. During the Bush Administration the program was limited to a select number of U.S. counties, but the Obama Administration has initiated an expansion of this program with a stated desire to extend Secure Communities to counties nationwide by 2013. Thus our maps in this article do not reflect this expansion of Secure Communities by the Obama Administration, which includes Fairfax County, Virginia at the time of this writing. Our

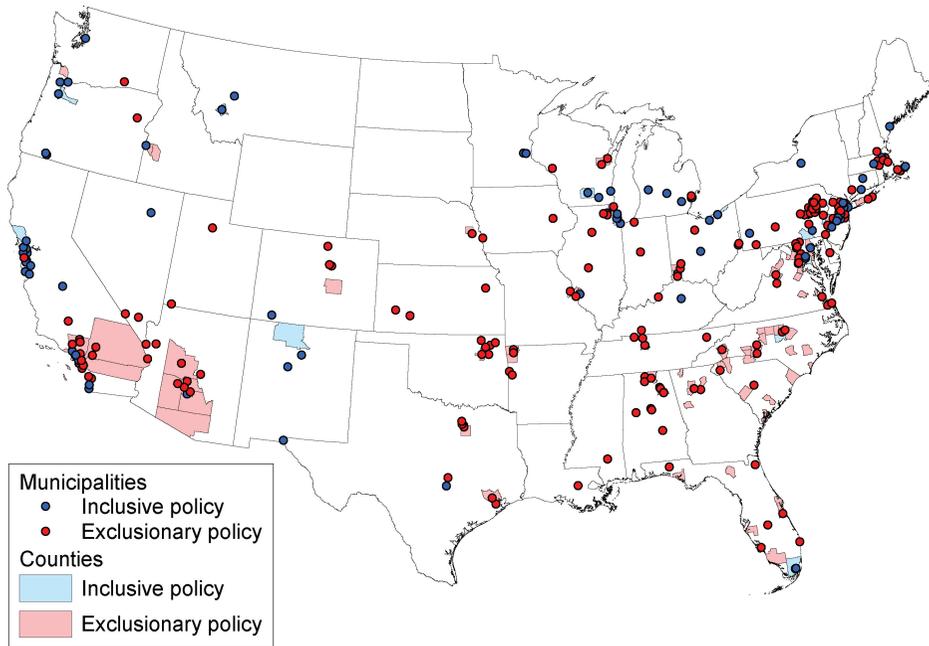


Fig. 1. Distribution of local immigration policies in the United States as of February, 2009.

distribution of municipalities in the U.S. that have proposed or implemented local-scale immigration policies.<sup>5</sup>

The geographical divisions evident in Figure 1 are summarized by region in Table 1, which shows statistically significant regional differences in the nature of local immigration ordinances. The South stands out with nearly 90% of municipalities in the sample introducing anti-immigration policies. This underlines findings from Winders (2007) and Haubert and Fussell (2006) that suggest anti-immigration attitudes may be more prevalent in the South due to historical legacies of segregation and racism. In contrast, the West is the only region where a majority of municipalities in the sample have adopted pro-immigration policies (52%). Within the sample, 57% of municipalities in the Midwest and 74% in the Northeast have introduced local immigration ordinances designed to prevent or deter the settlement of immigrants rather than incorporate them. One Northeast area of concentration is rural Pennsylvania, which contains 40 municipalities that have considered or introduced local immigration policies.

The most prominent example of a local immigration enforcement policy in Pennsylvania is Hazleton, an old coal-mining town in the east-central part of the state that passed its

quantitative analyses, which are limited to municipalities, remain unaffected by these developments because Secure Communities is a county-level program.

<sup>5</sup>In our tabular and statistical analyses, we limit the sample of ordinance localities to municipalities, in order to adequately assess variations across urban, suburban, and rural areas, and to ensure that the localities in these analyses are geographically independent of one another. A more detailed discussion of this methodological decision is found in the "Methodology" section.

**TABLE 1. REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF ORDINANCE MUNICIPALITIES, BY ORDINANCE TYPE<sup>a</sup>**

U.S. region	Percent "pro" <sup>b</sup>	Percent "anti" <sup>b</sup>	Total
West	52.2 (36)	47.8 (33)	69
Midwest	43.2 (19)	56.8 (25)	44
South	11.5 (9)	88.5 (69)	78
Northeast	25.6 (23)	74.4 (67)	90
All ordinance municipalities	31.0 (87)	69.0 (194)	281

<sup>a</sup>Includes the full sample of ordinance municipalities,  $n = 281$ . Census region definitions from the U.S. Census Bureau are used. Chi-square test:  $p < .001$ .

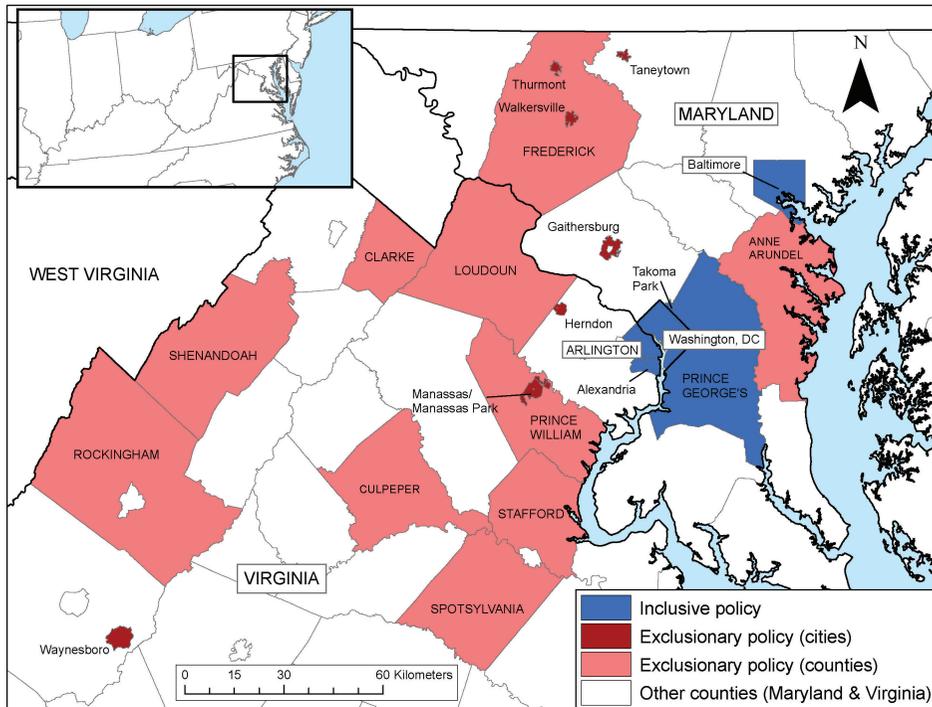
<sup>b</sup> $n$  of ordinance municipalities in the region is indicated in parentheses.

well-known Illegal Immigration Relief Act (IIRA) in 2006. This ordinance made it illegal for business owners to employ undocumented immigrants, and required all businesses to sign an affidavit for the city of Hazleton (declaring that they do not knowingly employ undocumented workers) in order to obtain a business permit. The ordinance also stipulated that landlords were prohibited from renting to undocumented immigrants (City of Hazleton, 2006). Hazleton simultaneously passed an ordinance declaring English to be the town's official language (McKanders, 2007). Dozens of other small towns in central and eastern Pennsylvania followed suit with similar proposals. However, after Hazleton's IIRA was disallowed by the courts, most of these towns tabled their resolutions (Guydish, 2007).

Figure 1 also reveals a significant clustering of both inclusive and exclusionary local ordinances in the Megalopolis corridor stretching from Washington to Boston.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the localization of immigration policy has produced policy "patchworks" in metropolitan areas across the nation, wherein local immigration policies may vary from locality to locality within the same urban region. This mosaic is particularly visible in the Baltimore/Washington urban area, which includes the Northern Virginia localities and Takoma Park discussed earlier (Fig. 2).

Four localities in this metropolitan area have policies to limit the role of local officials in immigration enforcement in place, including the central cities of Baltimore and Washington, and Maryland's suburban Prince George's County and Takoma Park. A fifth locality, the city of Mount Rainier, Maryland in Prince George's County, tabled its proposed sanctuary ordinance in 2008 amidst heated resident debates about the policy (Constable, 2008a). Virginia's Arlington and Alexandria, although without official "sanctuary" policies, have passed resolutions in support of immigrants. By contrast, local governments in the outer-suburban and exurban sectors of this extended metropolis have enacted very different local immigration policies, including the exclusionary policies of the Northern Virginia counties (as well as as Frederick County, Maryland) which participate in 287(g) and have also

<sup>6</sup>This clustering of ordinances is in part a function of the fragmented and dense municipal geography of the Northeast; as such, similar clusters may be absent elsewhere due to differences in municipal geography.



**Fig. 2.** The landscape of local immigration policies either proposed or implemented in the Washington, DC/Baltimore urban region, February 2009.

passed resolutions declaring English as the county's official language (Bernhardt, 2008; Constable, 2008b).

The intra-urban geography of local immigration policy in this region exhibits a distinctive pattern, with inclusionary central cities and inner-ring suburbs with longer histories of racial and economic diversity, exclusionary outer-ring suburbs with historically more homogeneous populations, and some conflicted communities scattered among them. Examples of the last include Fairfax County, Virginia and Montgomery County, Maryland, which have struggled to accommodate demands for stricter immigrant enforcement among some residents as well as the needs of their established immigrant populations (Morse and Miroff 2009). However, there have been localized instances of anti-immigration policy activism in Herndon (Fairfax County) and Gaithersburg (Montgomery County), and Fairfax County now participates in the Secure Communities Program (see note 4).

These intra-urban variations in local immigration policies are summarized in Table 2, which shows statistically significant differences in the nature of local immigration policies among central cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Whereas almost two-thirds of central-city municipalities in the sample have considered or implemented inclusionary policies, more than three quarters of both the suburban and rural municipalities have introduced anti-immigration ordinances. These findings are consistent with those of Fennelly and Federico (2008), who discovered that suburban and rural residents are far more likely to

**TABLE 2. METROPOLITAN/NON-METROPOLITAN LOCATION OF ORDINANCE MUNICIPALITIES, BY ORDINANCE TYPE<sup>a</sup>**

Metropolitan location	Percent "pro" <sup>b</sup>	Percent "anti" <sup>b</sup>	Total
Central city	60.6 (43)	39.4 (28)	71
Suburb	24.0 (25)	76.0 (79)	104
Rural	17.9 (19)	82.1 (87)	106
All locations	31.0 (87)	69.0 (194)	281

<sup>a</sup>Includes the full sample of ordinance municipalities,  $n = 281$ . Chi-square test:  $p < .001$

<sup>b</sup> $n$  of ordinance municipalities in the region is indicated in parentheses.

favor restrictive U.S. immigration policies than residents of central cities. Next, we review the literature examining the forces that shape the geographic patterns and the presence of local anti- or pro-immigration sentiment and policies.

#### FACTORS AND CONDITIONS INFLUENCING LOCAL IMMIGRATION POLITICS

Scholars have interpreted the rise of these local immigration policies as a "politics of scale," a struggle between different tiers of government over rights and responsibilities regarding immigration control and policing (Ellis, 2006; Varsanyi, 2008b). The federal level retains the right to regulate the entry and exit of immigrants at the national border, but since the mid-1990s the Welfare Reform Act has devolved certain responsibilities for the well-being of immigrants to lower tiers of government. As a result, state and local governments have become increasingly responsible for providing social services to immigrants. Ellis (2006) has argued that this "scalar tension" has rendered the politics of immigration more intense at subnational scales.

Both Miriam Wells (2004) and Mark Ellis (2006) have independently proposed that the local politics of immigration in the U.S. is directly related to the geography of immigration, with these politics becoming a more relevant issue in localities where immigrants have concentrated. Despite the similarity of their arguments, Wells and Ellis focus on divergent types of subnational immigration politics. Wells contends that the decentralization of immigration policy in the U.S. has opened up a space for local governments to pursue integrative measures, notably in places of sizeable immigrant concentration, whereas Ellis theorizes that the spatial concentration of immigrants can produce nativist anti-immigration reactions. As such, these arguments suggest that immigrant concentration may produce contradictory outcomes. The divergent propositions of Ellis and Wells bear distinct resemblance to competing "contact" and "threat" hypotheses concerning the relationships between sociocultural contact and the nature of acceptance or antagonisms between groups. Numerous studies, particularly in social psychology, have found support for the "contact hypothesis," which posits that contact between diverse groups may lead to a reduction of intergroup hostilities (Hood and Morris, 1997; Cain et al., 2000; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Other scholarship, however, argues exactly the opposite. For example, Olzak (1992) proposes a model of "ethnic competition" that assumes contact between groups can breed economic competition and ultimately interethnic conflict (Citrin et al., 1997).

Recent research by Esbenshade (2007) and Esbenshade and Obzurt (2008) claims that it is the pace of demographic change, rather than the absolute concentration of immigrant populations, that influences the decision of a locality to implement a local immigration policy. In their analyses of demographic trends in localities that proposed or implemented anti-immigration ordinances, they find that whereas the absolute concentration of immigrants in these communities was below national averages, the rate of growth of their immigrant populations outpaced national trends. Similarly, in a study of the U.S. localities participating in 287(g) Programs, Shahani and Greene (2009) find that although crime rates in these areas tend to be below national averages, the rate of growth of the Hispanic population is greater than in the United States as a whole. These analyses, however, generally neglect to consider how locality-specific characteristics in places where immigrants have settled may influence the nature of a local immigration policy response. As such, it is possible that these local policies also reflect an outgrowth of particular socio-economic or attitudinal characteristics of local residents that, in turn, relate to divergent attitudes toward immigration and immigrants.

Ramakrishnan and Wong's (2007) study of variations in proposed or implemented immigration ordinances finds no statistically significant relationship between the local demography of immigration and the nature of a locality's immigration policy. Instead, they identify political persuasion (percent Republican voting at the county level) as the major factor influencing anti-immigration policies, and note the positive influence of the presence of pro-immigration protests on pro-immigration policies. However, the 2000 Census demographic data used in their study is now over a decade old. In contrast, as elaborated below, our analyses employ demographic estimates from the 2005–2007 American Community Survey that represent the period when a majority of these policies were first considered. Further, our explanatory variables differ from Ramakrishnan and Wong since we are specifically concerned with testing the aforementioned hypotheses about the determinants of attitudes toward immigration in the context of local immigration policies, as well as measuring how the distribution of immigration ordinances varies spatially.

Scholars have formulated a variety of theoretical and empirical notions to explain individual attitudes toward immigration. This scholarship has reached a near-consensus that opposition to immigration tends to decrease with increased education (Wilkes et al., 2008). For example, in an investigation of the determinants of pro-immigration attitudes in the U.S., Haubert and Fussell (2006) found that holders of advanced university degrees are the most likely to evince positive perceptions of immigrants, whereas individuals without college degrees tend to view immigration unfavorably. Such findings are confirmed by several other studies (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996; Fetzer, 2000; Chandler and Tsai, 2001; Barkan, 2003; Pantoja, 2006; Wilkes et al., 2008). Some researchers have attributed this strong relationship to labor market factors, claiming that more educated individuals are less likely to face economic competition from immigrants (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996). And numerous scholars have further asserted that working-class individuals or those at risk of unemployment will be more likely to oppose immigration, given that they will be competing with low-skilled immigrants in the labor market and wish to preserve their economic self-interest (Kessler, 2001; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Mayda, 2006; O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2006).

Studies testing the economic competition hypothesis have produced mixed results, however. Whereas some studies have found that low-skilled workers are more likely to

oppose immigration than highly skilled workers (Kessler, 2001), other research has not found a significant relationship between personal economic circumstances and attitude towards immigration (Citrin et al., 1997; Burns and Gimpel, 2000). In fact, many of these studies have argued that it is the *perception* of increased economic insecurity due to immigration, rather than actual labor market competition with immigrants, that influences opinions about immigration policy (Pantoja, 2006; Wilkes et al., 2008).

Such findings suggest that pre-existing attitudes or prejudices directed at immigrants may outweigh individual calculations of economic interest. Dustmann and Preston (2004), for instance, analyze the impacts of both economic characteristics and racial attitudes (such as those concerning inter-racial marriage or admitted racial biases) on individual attitudes toward immigration and immigrants. They find that racial attitudes are a much stronger predictor of the nature of these attitudes than labor market insecurity. Similarly, in an analysis of national survey data, Fennelly and Federico (2008) found that the strongest predictors of support for tighter immigration policies/control are negative attitudes toward multiculturalism and perceptions of immigration as an economic and social burden. Similar results are found in studies measuring the relationships between political ideology and attitudes toward immigration, as ideological conservatism and strong nationalistic attachments are consistently related to support for immigration restrictions (Espenshade and Hempstead, 1996; Chandler and Tsai, 2001; Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; Barkan, 2003; Valenty and Sylvia, 2004; Semyonov et al., 2006; Ceobanu and Escandell, 2008). Haubert and Fussell (2006) further reveal that measures of “cosmopolitanism”—which they measure as increased education, having lived abroad, and an ideological rejection of ethnocentrism—are strong predictors of pro-immigration attitudes.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GEOGRAPHY

Few quantitative studies have explicitly accounted for how these socioeconomic, cultural, and political variables may vary by types of geographic location or how geography matters in the formulation of local immigration policies. One exception is Fennelly and Federico (2008), who explicitly investigated the relationship between individual residence in a rural area and attitudes toward immigration policy. Even though they found that rural residents do tend to express stronger support for restrictive immigration policies than residents of central cities, they conclude this relationship is explained by attitudes toward multiculturalism possessed by rural residents rather than their place of residence itself. Similarly, Haubert and Fussell (2006), finding that Southern survey respondents were the most likely to view immigrants negatively, suggested that this perception is not intrinsic to the “Southern” location of these respondents, but rather that other independent variables associated with disdain for immigrants tend to be more prevalent in the South (e.g., a lack of “cosmopolitanism” as previously defined).

These quantitative studies work with a conception of geography that highlights variations across space and conceives of location as an independent variable. As Agnew (1987) has argued, however, place is more than simply relative location: it also consists of *locale* and *sense of place*—with locale referring to the physical context for social relations, and sense of place as “the subjective orientation that can be engendered by living in a place” (Agnew, 1987, pp. 5–6). For example, more than simply a relative location, living in the American South engenders certain social relations and belief systems, including race

relations and conceptions of nation and place. Accordingly, in her study of immigration politics in the South, Winders (2007) showed how anti-immigration initiatives in Southern states and localities have to be understood within the context of distinct Southern spatial imaginaries of social and cultural belonging. She contends that arguments in support of immigration enforcement frame such policy responses as protecting “a Southern way of life,” and points out how fears of undocumented immigrants of color as carriers of disease draw upon past discourses of racial threat that have prevailed in the South since the Civil War. Similarly, as Archer (2005) suggested, suburbia has historically been constructed as the place where metropolitan residents can realize their “American Dream” of property ownership and upward mobility. In many instances, the association of suburb with “American Dream” has been restricted to white, middle-class Americans, who have used policies such as exclusionary zoning to keep out racial minorities and maintain property values (Freund, 2007). Contemporary anti-immigration policies in suburban America may be seen as a continuation of this exclusively white imaginary.

Similarly, in her qualitative analysis of white residents’ responses to immigrants of color in small towns in the rural Upper Midwest, Leitner (2011) shows how white residents’ racialization of and racism toward immigrants of color is informed by their understanding of the rural Midwest as a white place. The racialization of immigrants serves to defend white privilege and culture as well as recover an imagined idealized place and past, while simultaneously establishing conditions of belonging to the national and local community.

Drawing on the insights of these studies, we find that in order to interpret how geography matters in anti- or pro-immigrant initiatives attention must also be paid to the history of social/power relations (broadly conceived) in particular places, which in turn help to construct and reconstruct belief systems such as race thinking as well as conceptions of nation and place. Recognizing that place is more than location helps to understand why places occupying the same type of location (suburbia) might be associated with contrasting imaginaries of community and place, which are rooted in contrasting imaginaries of the nation. An inclusive imaginary welcomes racial and cultural diversity rooted in an open and constantly emerging conception of multicultural community, place, and nation; an exclusive imaginary desires cultural homogeneity and is rooted in clearly bounded conceptions of a White community, nation, and place. Thus we hypothesize that anti-immigration ordinances are more likely to be introduced in places where the majority of the residents and local government officials cling to an understanding of the American nation and their locality as primarily White places. The introduction of exclusionary immigration policies can be seen as serving to defend White dominance and privilege. In terms of exclusionary policies introduced by suburban municipalities, it is the dominant association of the suburb as the place for the realization of the American Dream, which we hypothesize helps to explain the prevalence of anti-immigration ordinances in suburban municipalities.

## METHODOLOGY

In this analysis, we test the validity of the hypotheses emerging from the literature discussed above. We assess the relationship between foreign-born concentrations and pace of demographic change with the presence of local immigration ordinances. We ascertain whether conclusions about the relationship between sociodemographic and cultural

characteristics and attitudes toward immigration and immigrants at the individual level can in fact be used to explain local political responses to immigration. Finally, we provide a preliminary analysis of the significance of place in understanding the local politics of immigration. We use regression analyses to test relationships between municipal foreign-born concentration, aggregate socioeconomic characteristics, and the presence or absence of local immigration ordinances. Textual analysis of ordinance documents from communities in the Baltimore-Washington urban region is then used to provide preliminary insights into how local immigration ordinances draw on locally contingent understandings of nation and place.

This analysis draws from our database of localities that either had proposed or implemented an immigration or immigration-related policy as of February 2009 (see note 3). Although it is not a complete database of all localities with immigration ordinances, it does provide a representative picture of the geography of local-scale immigration ordinances in the U.S. Its sources include databases on local immigration policies produced by the Fair Immigration Reform Movement, the Mexican American and Puerto Rican Legal Defense Funds, and the National Immigration Law Center. We then cross-checked and supplemented this information with data on local ordinances from our own collection of national and local media documents.

The quantitative analyses focus on a subset of 174 municipalities that have proposed or implemented local immigration policies, for the following reasons. First, considering the very recent implementation of many of these policies, we wanted to include the most recent sociodemographic information (2005–2007) from the US Census Bureau.<sup>7</sup> For reasons of confidentiality, these data are only available for settlements with populations greater than 20,000.

It was also decided to exclude counties from the quantitative analysis. We recognize that many of the most prominent local immigration policies have been implemented at the county level, and that county governments are indeed the most relevant subnational political units in many parts of the country. But the quantitative analysis is limited to municipalities, partly to measure differences in ordinance implementation across the spectrum of central cities, suburbs, and rural areas. This distinction is too difficult to retain for counties, given that many U.S. counties may include combinations of these categories within their boundaries. Further, the localization of immigration policy has produced a complex scalar mosaic of policies that may overlap each other, as observed by Varsanyi (2008b). For instance, the city of Los Angeles has implemented a sanctuary policy, but Los Angeles County which contains the city participates in the 287(g) Program. Thus the limitation of our analysis to municipalities is designed to ensure that all units are politically independent of one another and do not overlap geographically.

For purposes of comparison, the analysis also includes a stratified random sample of U.S. municipalities with populations greater than 20,000 that have not implemented or proposed local immigration policies.<sup>8</sup> Among the ordinance localities, we distinguish

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<sup>7</sup>We use data from the 2005–2007 American Community Survey estimates, which average data collected for localities for 2005, 2006, and 2007.

<sup>8</sup>We took stratified random samples based on the U.S. region of the locality (West, Midwest, South, and North-east) and metropolitan location (urban, suburban, and rural), and subsequently produced sample weights for these municipalities in order to represent municipalities in the U.S. at large.

**TABLE 3.** AVERAGES OF SELECTED SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS FOR PRO-, ANTI-, AND NO-ORDINANCE MUNICIPALITIES<sup>a</sup>

Variable	Pro	Anti	No ordinance <sup>b</sup>
Percent foreign-born***	21.3	15.7	14.5
Percent growth of foreign-born population between 2000 and 2005–07***	10.1	47.6	33.6
Median household income**	\$48,130	\$52,941	\$54,183
Percent owner-occupied housing***	49.4	63.8	63.9
Percent of population with bachelor's degree or higher <sup>c**</sup>	32.5	27.1	28.2
Unemployment rate <sup>d***</sup>	8.3	6.5	7.0
Percent voting Republican at county level <sup>e***</sup>	35.5	54.5	47.5

<sup>a</sup>All municipalities in the sample have populations  $\geq 20,000$ ;  $p$ -values for ANOVA tests: \* $p < .01$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

<sup>b</sup>Sample weights used.

<sup>c</sup>Includes individuals aged 25 and higher.

<sup>d</sup>Includes individuals in the labor force.

<sup>e</sup>2004 presidential election. County data used due to unavailability of municipal-level data.

Sources: All except percent voting Republican at county level: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005–2007 estimates. Percent voting Republican at county level: CNN.com (<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/>).

between municipalities that have proposed or implemented pro-immigration policies (e.g., sanctuary policies, other integrative resolutions such as extending voting rights to undocumented immigrants, or additional resolutions in opposition to exclusionary immigration policies) and those that have considered or enacted anti-immigration policies, including policies such as housing/employment restrictions, English-only resolutions, and participation in the 287(g) Program. We use this distinction (pro, anti, or no ordinance) as the primary dependent variable in the analyses.

## RESULTS/FINDINGS

Table 3 displays descriptive statistics for the means of the socioeconomic variables used to test hypotheses concerning the implementation of local immigration policies by type of municipality. Variables measuring percent foreign-born and foreign-born growth between 2000 and the 2005–2007 Census estimates are introduced to test the hypotheses that immigrant concentration and/or rate of change in the immigrant population has an influence on the introduction of local immigration ordinances. The roles of education (percent with bachelor's degree or higher) and economic marginality (median household income; unemployed) are also evaluated with variables measuring bachelor's degree attainment, median household income, and unemployment in municipalities. We also include a variable on percent owner-occupied housing to test the hypothesis that one of the key strategies to deter the settlement of immigrants has been to prevent the construction of multi-unit rental housing (Davis, 1990; Light, 2006). Finally, to assess the finding of Ramakrishnan and

Wong (2007) about the influence of ideological conservatism on the presence of local anti-immigration policies, we include a variable measuring percent voting Republican at the county level.<sup>9</sup>

Table 3 shows that while the absolute concentration of the foreign-born tends to be highest in municipalities that have considered integrative policies, the rate of growth of the foreign-born population is significantly greater in exclusionary municipalities, with an average growth of 48% between 2000 and the most recent American Community Survey (ACS) estimates. Both types of ordinance municipalities display greater foreign-born concentration than the municipalities that have no local ordinance. Further, while pro-immigration municipalities tend to have more educated populations than the other categories of municipalities in the sample, they also house a larger economically marginal population, as shown by lower median incomes, lower rates of owner-occupied housing, and higher unemployment levels. Finally, exclusionary policies tend to be found in more Republican areas. For instance, municipalities with anti-immigration ordinances were more likely to be located in Republican-leaning counties (measured by the Republican vote in the 2004 presidential election) than municipalities with no ordinance or pro-immigration ordinances (see Table 3).

To assess the relative influence of each explanatory variable on the decision of a municipality to implement a local immigration ordinance, we employed a binomial logistic regression analysis. We ran two separate models with the following binary dependent variables: (1) localities that have not implemented ordinances vs. localities with either type of immigration ordinance (pro- and anti-immigration ordinances); and (2) localities with pro-immigration ordinances vs. anti-immigration ordinances, with the localities that have not proposed or implemented local immigration policies excluded from the model. The results of these regressions are found in Table 4.<sup>10</sup>

Model 1, which assesses the likelihood of implementing any sort of ordinance, finds some geographic variation in the data, as municipalities in the South are less likely to implement ordinances than those in the West and central cities are more likely to pursue local immigration initiatives than suburbs or rural areas. However, these findings may in part reflect the structure of the data: whereas a larger proportion of central cities have adopted local immigration policies, there are quantitatively far fewer central cities in the U.S. than suburban and rural municipalities. Further, the finding that cities in the West are more likely to propose policies than cities in the South also may reflect our decision to omit counties from our analysis, as 46% of Southern ordinance localities in our database

<sup>9</sup>Because municipality-level returns are unavailable, we employ presidential voting data from the 2004 election at the county level to construct this variable.

<sup>10</sup>For both models, tests of deviance residuals for spatial autocorrelation were performed in GeoDa using a nearest-neighbor spatial weighting scheme (Anselin, 2005; Banasick et al., 2009). For Model 2, Moran's  $I = 0.04$ ,  $p = 0.151$ , which indicates no significant spatial clustering of the residuals. For Model 1, Moran's  $I = 0.10$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , which indicates the presence a significant but slight and spatially localized clustering in the residuals. Mapping reveals a clustering of large negative residuals in California. Our random sample of "neutral" municipalities selected a number of these California cities, which are geographically clustered in the context of our national dataset of U.S. municipalities because of the large number of municipalities in California with population  $\geq 20,000$  in the 2005–2007 ACS. Because many of these "neutral" California cities in the sample were classified as Western central cities with large immigrant populations, the model incorrectly predicted the presence of an ordinance in this cluster. As such, this spatial autocorrelation is attributable to the inevitable large presence of California cities in our dataset rather than a systematic bias in our analysis.

**TABLE 4. BINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSIONS<sup>a</sup>**

	Model 1			Model 2		
	$\beta$	SE	Odds ratio	$\beta$	SE	Odds ratio
U.S. region						
Midwest	-.405	.273	.667	.466	.837	1.594
South	-.653***	.243	.520	2.062***	.803	7.860
Northeast	.230	.247	1.258	1.537**	.775	4.652
Location type of municipality						
Suburban	-2.455***	.251	.086	2.107**	.912	8.227
Rural	-1.253***	.279	.286	.558	.979	1.748
Percent foreign-born	.043***	.008	1.044	-.022	.038	.978
Percent growth of foreign-born	.005**	.002	1.005	.033**	.015	1.034
Median household income (in \$10,000s)	.019	.091	1.019	.024	.373	1.024
Percent owner-occupied housing	-.007	.009	.993	.073**	.035	1.076
Percent with bachelor's degree or higher	.013	.010	1.013	-.064*	.039	.938
Percent unemployed	.011	.041	1.011	-.300**	.145	.741
Percent voting Republican	-.0001	.008	.999	.070***	.027	1.073
Constant	-1.313	.842	.269	-5.160*	3.072	.006
Pseudo $R^2$		.171			.738	
$N$ (weighted)		348 (1865)			174	

<sup>a</sup>The dependent variables are coded as follows. For Model 1, no immigration ordinance = 0 and immigration ordinance (either pro or anti) = 1. For Model 2, pro-immigration ordinance = 0 and anti-immigration ordinance = 1. The omitted categories for the categorical variables are as follows: U.S. region = West; location type = central city. For more information about the sample, see Table 3; \* $p \leq 0.1$ . \*\* $p \leq 0.05$ . \*\*\* $p \leq 0.01$ .

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2005–2007 estimates. Election data were obtained from CNN.com.

are counties, as opposed to only 19% in the West. Model 1 also reveals that both the size of the local foreign-born population and its rate of growth are strongly associated with the implementation of a local immigration policy. Such results confirm hypotheses from Wells (2004) and Ellis (2006) that immigration politics is directly related to the geography of immigration, as municipalities are much more likely to pass some sort of local immigration policy when the local immigrant population is either large or growing rapidly.

The first model groups pro- and anti-immigration ordinance localities together in assessing how they differ from municipalities that have not enacted ordinances, Model 2 demonstrates that there are distinct variations between the two subsets of enacting municipalities, with a large pseudo  $R^2$  of .738. With regard to the explanatory variables measuring the demography of immigration in these municipalities, the model reveals no significant difference in foreign-born concentration, but does suggest that municipalities with rapidly growing foreign-born populations are more likely to enact anti-immigration initiatives.

Such findings support those of Esbenshade (2007) and Singer et al. (2009), who suggested a link between the pace of demographic change and exclusionary policies, as well as those of Shahani and Greene (2009) who linked participation in the 287(g) Program with demographic changes rather than an increase in crime.

Importantly, Model 2 also suggests a relationship between several of the socioeconomic characteristics and the nature of the local immigration policy. Owner-occupied housing, education, unemployment, and Republican voting are not statistically significant predictors of a local immigration policy in Model 1. However, they all return  $p$ -values of less than 0.1 in Model 2. A larger percentage of owner-occupied housing in an ordinance municipality is associated with the presence of an anti-immigration initiative, whereas higher rates of unemployment and larger college-educated populations are more likely to be found in municipalities with inclusionary policies. Further, the model finds a strong relationship between percent Republican voting and the implementation of an exclusionary rather than a pro-immigration policy. Location is also associated with substantive differences between pro- and anti-immigration ordinance municipalities. Anti-immigration policies are strongly associated with the location of a municipality in the South (in contrast to the reference category of the West), and suburban municipalities are significantly more likely than central cities to pass exclusionary rather than inclusionary policies. Even though Model 2 finds no significant differences between cities and rural areas, this may be due to our decision to drop many rural municipalities from the sample in order to include the newest demographic data from the 2005–2007 ACS.

To summarize, the findings of Model 1 confirm the hypotheses that immigrant concentration and rapid growth of a locality's immigrant population increases the likelihood that local governments will enact local immigration policies. However, only the variable measuring pace of change is a good predictor for the type of local immigration policy, as revealed in Model 2. Instead, sociodemographic characteristics of the local resident population and location within the country and within a metropolitan area seem better predictors of the presence of either pro- or anti-immigration policies. Model 2 points to an association between levels of education and the type of immigration policies—i.e., municipalities with better educated populations are more likely to implement pro-immigration policies. Municipalities in Republican areas, however, are significantly more likely to consider exclusionary policies. Considering the strong links between education and political ideology on the nature of individual attitudes toward immigrants, these findings suggest that municipalities tend to implement policies consistent with the attitudes of their resident population toward immigrants and immigration.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, the findings of Model 2 support the hypothesis of a positive relationship between anti-immigration attitudes and owner-occupied housing. Municipalities that have a high percentage of owner-occupied housing are more likely to pass an exclusionary ordinance than municipalities with a high percentage of rental housing. This finding suggests a possible link, as Davis (1990) and Light (2006) have argued, between anti-immigration

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<sup>11</sup>Tolerance tests for multicollinearity revealed suitable levels of collinearity for all variables; however, we did notice a relatively strong association between education and income. When income (which is not significant in both models) is removed from Model 2, the variable for educational attainment becomes much more significant ( $p = .015$ ). We chose to leave the income variable in the model because it relates directly to the economic marginality hypothesis we attempted to test.

politics and a general resistance to low-income or rental housing in communities experiencing an influx of immigrants. The findings of Model 2 do not support the economic marginality hypothesis, however. The income variable is not statistically significant, and high unemployment is associated with pro-immigration localities rather than with municipalities that enact exclusionary ordinances. The positive relationship between unemployment and pro-immigration ordinances may be a statistical artifact, due in part to the prominent presence of two types of municipalities in the inclusionary ordinance sample: large central cities with high unemployment as well as college towns (Ann Arbor, MI) that possess not only very high levels of education but also high unemployment and rental housing (given the large student population).<sup>12</sup>

Finally, our analyses indicate that location within a certain region of the United States, and within and beyond a metropolitan area, has an independent influence on what kinds of policies are being adopted, irrespective of the socioeconomic characteristics of these locales. We find a statistically significant relationship between location in the South and anti-immigration ordinances. Such a finding is even more striking given our decision to omit counties from our regression analyses, which cover 46% of all ordinance localities in the South and which overwhelmingly (96%) favor anti-immigration policies to pro-immigration initiatives. This supports the argument of Winders (2007), based on qualitative case studies in the South, that anti-immigration initiatives in this region are rooted in distinct Southern racialized imaginaries of national belonging. Hoelscher (2003) and others have shown that the South, although not unique, was the main arena for struggles over racial injustice and the imaginary of the nation, and has defined and seen itself as a defender of Whiteness. Hoelscher (2003, p. 663) argues that the unacknowledged Whiteness of the national imaginary has been more apparent and well defined in the South than in any other American region, suggesting that the region “has become America’s ‘crucible of race’, the key site for the ways the ways in which such profound historical-geographical moments are remembered and re-articulated.” We suggest that a high frequency of anti-immigration ordinances in the South is in part a contemporary extension of this past history and memory—an attempt to defend the unacknowledged whiteness of the national imaginary. However, this does not mean that the legacy of racism and discrimination is restricted to the South.

One of the distinct characteristics that emerges from the analysis of the geographic distribution of local immigration ordinances is the clear spatial variation in the nature of local immigration policies between central cities, suburbs, and rural areas. The preponderance of pro-immigrant policies in central cities (61%) contrasts with that of anti-immigration policies in suburban (76%) and rural (over 82%) municipalities. The results of the binomial regression analyses suggest that location in a central city or suburb has an independent influence on whether a policy is considered or implemented, as well as the type of policy. Thus variations in population characteristics across places do not sufficiently account for differences in local immigration policies. As in the case of the South, variations among suburbs can in part be explained by the contrasting imaginaries of place and community. We suggest that some inner-ring suburbs have already become more racially diverse and

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<sup>12</sup>We ran a suburbs-only version of Model 2 to further investigate our hypothesis that the finding for unemployment was an artifact of the types of cities in the sample. This model found no significant difference between unemployment rates of inclusionary and exclusionary suburbs.

have thus lost White dominance, today housing a White population that is more likely to support a multicultural conception of community and nation and reject exclusionary policies. In contrast, outer-ring suburbs that are sought by residents attempting to escape problems associated with the racial and cultural diversity of central cities and inner-ring suburbs, and whose residents cling on to a conception of a White America, are more likely to favor ordinances that would keep out immigrants of color.

*Contrasting Imaginaries of Place and Nation*

In order to examine the role of such imaginaries, we conducted a preliminary textual analysis of ordinance documents and local media reports, using the Baltimore-Washington urban region as a case study.<sup>13</sup> Two contrasting imaginaries of community and place emerged from these texts: (1) an inclusive imaginary that celebrates and values cultural diversity and an open and constantly emerging community, place, and nation; and (2) an exclusive imaginary that values and appreciates cultural homogeneity and a clear bounding of place, community, and nation. These contrasting imaginaries are associated with disparate understandings of who belongs and who does not to a particular community and place, which we argue lead to differences in supporting exclusionary or inclusionary local immigration policies. However, it is important to reject any tendency toward spatial determinism. Indeed, as the following example of two suburban communities in the Washington area shows, there is no straightforward relationship between urban, suburban, and rural location and the dominant imaginary of community and place. Takoma Park and Prince William County are both suburban locales in metropolitan Washington whose residents have argued for the necessity of local immigration ordinances. And both use similar language to express their goals in implementing these policies, as evidenced by the following two document excerpts (authors' emphasis):

*Takoma Park:* The Takoma Park Police Department has made it a priority to gain the trust and confidence of the entire community as part of its community policing program ... Loss of cooperation with the immigrant community threatens **the health, safety, and welfare** of the entire Takoma Park community. (City of Takoma Park, 2007)

*Prince William County:* The Virginia State Code, Section 15.2-1200 states that any county may adopt such measures as it deems expedient to secure and promote **the health, safety, and general welfare** of its inhabitants which are not inconsistent with the general laws of the Commonwealth. (Prince William County, 2007).

However, the two localities quite differently define those whose welfare, health, and safety they seek to protect. The "sanctuary city" of Takoma Park seeks to extend legal

<sup>13</sup>We obtained and analyzed ordinance documentation for localities throughout the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. In this preliminary analysis, we refer to two specific policy documents: Prince William County Resolution 07-069, entitled "Immigration—Reaffirm County Policy with Respect to Compliance with Federal Law and Issue Directives Incident to Such Reaffirmation to the Prince William County Police Department and the Prince William County Staff," and City of Takoma Park Ordinance 2007-58, "An Ordinance Reaffirming and Strengthening the City of Takoma Park's Immigration Sanctuary Law."

protection to all individuals, regardless of legal status, defines community as diverse, and stresses inclusivity of all persons of all nationalities.

*Takoma Park:* Takoma Park is comprised of racially and ethnically diverse individuals, both native born and immigrants, whose collective cultures, backgrounds, and viewpoints join to form a rich community which prides itself on welcoming persons and families of all backgrounds and nationalities. (City of Takoma Park, 2007)

In contrast, Prince William County positions itself as an exclusive national space where the right to legally reside within the U.S. is just as important within the county's boundaries.

*Prince William County:* The Prince William County Board of County Supervisors has determined that illegal immigration is causing economic hardship and lawlessness in this County and that illegal immigration may be encouraged by public agencies within the County by failing to verify immigration status as a condition of providing public services. (Prince William County, 2007).

These divergent policy languages indicate that two vastly different conceptions of who belongs and has the "right" to be present within a locality are operating in the suburbs of the same metropolis. Whereas Takoma Park argues that legal status within the United States ought to have no bearing on an individual's right to reside within its boundaries, Prince William County believes that this distinction is of fundamental importance not just at the national but also the local scale.

## CONCLUSION

Hundreds of municipalities and counties across the United States have proposed or implemented local immigration policies, ranging from "sanctuary" policies to those designed to exclude undocumented immigrants. Our statistical analyses support a number of existing hypotheses, but also provide new insights into potential factors driving local immigration policies. Our findings support the suggestions of Ellis (2006) and Wells (2004) that the local politics of immigration is related to the concentration of immigrants within a locality. However, our analysis shows that the pace of growth in the immigrant population is a better predictor for the nature of the local immigration policy because municipalities experiencing rapid growth of foreign population are more likely to introduce exclusionary policies. Further, places with better educated populations are less likely to pass exclusionary policies, as are places with high unemployment. In contrast, predominantly Republican areas with a high percentage of owner-occupied housing are more likely to introduce exclusionary policies. This suggests that the socio-demographic characteristics as well the political views of the resident population help explain the nature of the local immigration policy.

Finally, our analysis shows how geography matters in understanding the variegated landscape of local immigration policies in the U.S.: municipalities in the South and outer-ring suburbs are more likely to introduce exclusionary policies. We suggest that in order to interpret these regional and intrametropolitan differences, we need to pay attention to

the history of social relations in particular places, which helps to construct and reconstruct belief systems such as race thinking, conceptions of the nation, and place—and that these are more easily uncovered through qualitative analyses. Preliminary textual analysis of selected local ordinance documents suggests that underlying contrasting local immigration policies reveal divergent conceptions of community, nation, and place.

We do acknowledge some limitations of the analyses. In order to accurately measure intrametropolitan geographic variations and to include the most recent demographic data from the U.S. Census, we had to omit counties and many rural municipalities from the analysis. As such, a follow-up study that incorporates data for small areas from the 2010 Census could capture the substantive demographic changes that occurred in small towns during the period in which many ordinances were proposed. Furthermore, we feel that the models as specified in the quantitative analyses do not fully capture the complexity of factors at work in the creation of the variegated landscape of local immigration policies. For that purpose we are now examining, via qualitative case studies, the role of locality-specific political activisms and power struggles that have accompanied discussions and implementations of local immigration policies. For example, in Prince William County, a grassroots organization called Help Save Manassas, led by anti-illegal immigration activist and blogger Greg Letiecq, helped organize support among residents for immigration restrictions into the area (Miroff, 2007; Singer et al., 2009). Under pressure from residents organized by Help Save Manassas, the Board of County Supervisors unanimously approved Resolution 07-609, thereby granting immigration enforcement authority to local police. Later in 2007, Prince William passed further restrictions on immigration, this time targeting businesses (Singer et al., 2009). The importance of individuals like Greg Letiecq in influencing local governments to implement immigration policies is something that cannot be captured in a large-scale quantitative analysis, and these activists are found across the country in both localities that have implemented pro- or anti-immigration initiatives. This points to the necessity of further research that documents the role of individual actors and local organizations in creating support for, and ultimately influencing the passage of, immigration-related policies at the local level.

The social movements inspired by individuals like Letiecq do not exist in a vacuum, however. Our analysis suggests the importance of Prince William County's social and geographic characteristics in creating a milieu where an anti-immigrant local policy response might emerge: a historically conservative place with a fast-growing immigrant population located on the fringes of metropolitan Washington as well as on the northern periphery of the American South. As such, we argue that this county is precisely the kind of place where activists such as Letiecq are able to capture the imagination of the local population regarding their attitudes toward immigration. Accordingly, any analysis of the localization of immigration policy in the U.S. must take into account the importance of the local social, demographic, and geographic context of these policy responses.

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- Prince William County Resolution No. 07-609*, 2007, Immigration-Reaffirm County Policy with Respect to Compliance with Federal Law and Issue Directives Incident to Such Reaffirmation to the Prince William County Police Department and the Prince William County Staff.