

**Immigration Policies Go Local:
The Varying Responses Of Local Governments To Undocumented Immigration**

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November 1, 2007

ABSTRACT: This report seeks to advance our understanding of local government ordinances on issues related to unauthorized immigrant residents including day labor markets, housing, unlicensed businesses, and cooperation with federal immigration authorities. We attempt to answer the question of why such ordinances are considered, passed, or fail to pass in some areas and not others. Some factors expected to explain the consideration and passage of restrictionist ordinances were demographic changes, labor market outcomes, and political factors. One of the strongest explanations for restrictionist versus “pro-immigrant” proposals is the proportion of Republicans and Democrats in the county. Controlling for demographic characteristics, Republican areas are twice as likely to propose restrictionist ordinances, and half as likely to propose “pro-immigrant” ones. Even stronger effects can be found for the actual passage of such legislation. Other factors, such as the growth of the Latino population and the size of linguistically-isolated Spanish-speaking households, were not associated with a greater likelihood of proposing or passing restrictionist legislation. Thus, demographic factors are not as important as political factors in accounting for ordinances passed by local governments related to unauthorized immigration, either pro or con.

We thank the American Civil Liberties Union, Migration Policy Institute, and the Fair Immigration Reform Movement for sharing their data on local ordinances, and are grateful for comments from participants in the Omaha Cumbre (April 2007), the Politics of Race, Immigration, and Ethnicity Consortium (September 2007), and the UC Riverside workshop in American politics. We thank the Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity, and Diversity for supporting this research. Any errors are entirely our own. Please direct all correspondence to Karthick Ramakrishnan, karthick@ucr.edu.

“What people are realizing, and what Hazleton and other communities like Hazleton are a sign of, is that even though this is entirely a federal responsibility, the effects of immigration are felt most acutely on the local level,” said [Gabriel] Escobar, associate director of the Pew Hispanic Center in Washington. (Scolforo 2006)

Randy Graf, the former golf pro, wasn't the only self-described Minuteman running. Early in the year another offered himself as a Republican candidate against Governor Napolitano, running essentially a one-issue, tough-guy campaign on Arizona's responsibility — whatever the feds did or failed to do — to control its own southern border. (Lelyveld 2006)

Immigration policy in the United States has largely been the purview of the federal government, with rules establishing who is eligible to enter the United States, the terms of such entry, and the conditions under which immigrants may become citizens. In the past decade, low-skilled migrant labor in the United States has reached new destinations, ranging from rural Kansas and North Carolina to suburbs in Long Island and Georgia. These settlement patterns have brought new attention to issues such as day labor, unlicensed businesses, overcrowded housing, and unauthorized immigration. The presence and growth of low-skilled (and often unauthorized) immigrant populations pose challenges for local governance. For instance, conflicts over the prevalence of day labor centers and informal pickup areas have made news headlines—from suburbs in Long Island and Northern Virginia, to larger immigrant-destination cities such as Salt Lake City (Vitello 2006, Dart 2006). Similarly, issues of housing affordability, overcrowding, and code enforcement seem to be particularly salient in cities with growing immigrant populations (Harwood and Myers 2002, Ramakrishnan and Lewis 2005, Esbenshade 2007).

In the past two years, local governments have increasingly paid attention to the consequences of low-skilled immigrants, many of them unauthorized and of Mexican

origin. With immigration reform deadlocked at the federal level, scores of localities have formally proposed ordinances restricting the economic activity of these groups and have vowed to play a stronger role in aiding federal immigration authorities. Police departments, many of whom have sought to refrain from playing “immigration cops” (Lewis and Ramakrishnan 2007), are now finding themselves pressured by democratic institutions and local activists to play a greater role in cracking down on unauthorized immigration. At the same time, many large cities have considered so-called “sanctuary” ordinances that explicitly declaim such forays into immigration enforcement and provide protections for unauthorized immigrants on matters ranging from the acceptance of consular IDs to the establishment of day labor centers.

While there is widespread recognition that localities are playing a more significant role in regulating the lives of low-skilled immigrant residents, there is little systematic understanding of why some localities may adopt restrictionist policies, while others may do nothing or perhaps adopt more permissive policies. Part of the difficulty in understanding why these ordinances are being proposed in some places but not in others is the fact that many of the places considering restrictionist ordinances are in small municipalities that rarely get coverage in state newspapers and wire stories, let alone national outlets such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* or more regional newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune*. Thus, the dominant understanding of the factors compelling local action on immigration is shaped by heavy coverage of such places as Hazelton, PA, Carpentersville, IL, San Bernardino, CA, and Farmers Branch, TX, with likely explanations centering around the size and growth of Latino populations and attendant challenges such as overcrowded schools and housing, growth of Spanish-language communities, erosion of wages among native-born workers, and perhaps

xenophobia or racial prejudice among native-born populations (Scolforo 2006, Kotlowitz 2007).

While these demographic explanations are clearly important in the ways that policy analysts, local officials, community advocates, and journalists make sense of these ordinances, it is important to expand the analysis to the larger universe of over 20,000 municipalities in the United States to gain a better understanding of whether demographic pressures are indeed of the utmost importance in explaining the recent rash of immigration-related ordinances. Also, it is important to consider other factors that have heretofore been marginal in explanations of local ordinance activity related to immigration, including the partisanship and ideology of local voters, and the political empowerment or fallout from the spring 2006 immigration rallies.

In this paper, we show that partisanship and politicization are crucial factors that help to explain why some localities have considered or passed restrictionist ordinances while a few others have considered “pro-immigrant” ordinances and, just as importantly, why most have done nothing on the issue. Political factors remain significant even after controlling for factors that the competing explanation of “local demographic pressures,” including the growth of Latino populations, the prevalence of recently arrived immigrants, overcrowded housing, and linguistically-isolated Spanish-speaking households, and poverty rates at the local level. Thus, while demographic pressures at the local level may be a common feature to many localities that have considered restrictionist ordinances (Esbenshade 2007), political factors are important in shaping how such pressures find policy expression at the local level.

Past Studies

There has been a long tradition in political science of studies on immigrants, racial minorities, and local governance. Early pluralists such as Robert Dahl (1961) pointed to an assimilationist trend in immigrant political incorporation based on the mobilization of potential electorates. Others such as Steven Erie (1989) and Gerald Gamm (1988) showed problems in the incorporation of immigrants into local party structures, while those in the tradition of minority political incorporation (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb 1984) pointed to the need for minority groups to forge electoral coalitions with white liberals and Democrats. Contemporary studies of immigrants and local political structures (Jones-Correa 1998, Ramakrishnan and Lewis 2005, Rogers 2006, Wong 2006, Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad forthcoming) suggest that the pluralist vision is largely inapplicable to contemporary immigrants, and that significant barriers to entry remain among both political and civic institutions.

While these newer studies help shed light on the continued relevance of earlier models of political incorporation, the current state of knowledge on local government and politics is inadequate to understand contemporary policies related to the growth of low-skilled immigrant populations, especially with respect to the entry of local governments into questions that have heretofore been the purview of the federal government. There are few policy-oriented studies concerned with the effects of immigration and demographic change for local governance (Taylor, Martin, and Fix 1997, Fong 1994 Horton et al., 1995, but see Jones-Correa 2004, Lewis and Ramakrishnan 2005). While these studies have helped to lay some of the theoretical groundwork, this paper presents of the first national studies of local government policies towards immigrants, especially

as they relate to restrictive and permissive policies towards unauthorized or undocumented immigrants.

Research Questions and Methods

This project examines variation in local government policies related to low-skill immigrant labor in localities across the United States. It builds on prior research conducted in California, which indicates that city policies towards immigrants vary according to population size and the partisanship of local jurisdictions, and that these effects hold true even after controlling for demographic factors such as the proportion of the population that is foreign-born, or recently arrived in the United States (Ramakrishnan and Lewis 2005). While California is important to the study of local government policies, it is also important to compare policies across states, each with different histories of immigration and varying rules and institutional arrangements on such matters as partisan local elections, ballot initiatives, and local government autonomy.

Our research questions revolve around the extent to which local governments consider and pass restrictionist or permissive policies regarding issues such as day labor markets, housing, unlicensed businesses, and cooperation with federal immigration authorities. In addition to answering the “what” and “where” questions of the passage of such ordinances, this report will also seek to answer the question of why these policies are considered in some places but not others, and once they are considered—why they pass in some localities but fail in others. Answering these “why” questions entails the collection of various kinds of contextual data (on demographic changes, local economies, and local political opportunity structures) and using such data in a multivariate regression

context to assess the relative significance of each in relation to local efforts to legislate on immigration-related issues.

Hypotheses: The simplest explanation for the consideration and passage of restrictionist ordinances across the United States centers on the demographic changes associated with recent migration and associated socioeconomic dislocations from such migrations. However, localities with restrictionist policies are only a small fraction of the thousands of communities in the United States that are transforming due to recent international migration. Thus, while demographic changes and labor market outcomes may be necessary factors, they are by no means sufficient. Ramakrishnan and Lewis's research from California in 2003 suggests that the ideological and partisan leanings of the electorate and of governing institutions plays an important role, and we have reason to believe that the relationship may be even stronger today given the increased polarization among party activists and legislators on immigration since 2003. In the process of testing this hypothesis, we also test the relative merit of other factors that may arguably be related to the proposal of restrictionist ordinances:

- 1) *The Latino share of the citizen population* is a measure of the potential electoral strength of Latinos to push for liberal measures and to counteract conservative measures on immigration. We expect the Latino share of the citizenry to be positively related to the proposal of "pro-immigrant" ordinances and negatively related to the proposal of restrictionist ordinances.
- 2) By contrast, *the recency of migration to the area* would be associated with less electoral strength for immigrants, and also greater potential challenges to local governance in the form of:
 - a. *High proportions of households that are linguistically isolated.* One of the most prominent concerns about recent migration to new destinations, especially of Latino immigrants, is the fear of linguistic balkanization and the visibility of Spanish in public spaces (Huntington 2004).

- b. *Wage competition with blacks and whites.* We expect the effects of wage competition due to low-skilled migration and group conflict over resources to be felt most strongly among those whites and blacks living below the poverty line (Borjas 2006). Indeed, for assessments of the explanatory power of group conflict over resources, it is the difference in poverty rates among blacks, whites, and Latinos that may be most important (Gay 2006).
 - c. *Overcrowded housing.* Past research on the politics of immigration at the local level have shown that issues of over-crowding are more common in immigrant-destination cities. However, these problems are rarely addressed by municipal governments (Ramakrishnan and Lewis 2005) and, so, we may fail to see a positive association between overcrowded housing conditions and city ordinances related to immigrant tenants.
- 3) *The growth of Latino populations* has largely been seen as the most important factor in accounting for the spate of restrictionist ordinances in new immigrant destinations. Here, we test whether the relationship is indeed statistically significant.
 - 4) *The existence of immigrant protests in the area.* There was some concern among political analysts that the immigrant protests of spring 2006 would spark a backlash among nativists. The proposal of ordinances in many localities in the summer of 2006 reinforced the plausibility of this assertion. Here, we can test whether such protests did indeed spark a restrictionist backlash, or whether there was no such effect.
 - 5) *Places with industries that are heavily dependent on immigrant labor* such as agriculture, mining, and construction may be less likely to pass restrictionist ordinances because of the importance of low-skilled migrants to the local economy.
 - 6) Finally, there may be various factors at the *state level*, such as government policies on immigrant benefits and rules on ballot propositions, partisan local elections, local autonomy, and spending on education, health, and welfare.

Data and Methods: We obtained lists of municipalities that have proposed restrictive ordinances and regulations from various sources including the American Civil Liberties Union, the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Fair Immigration Reform Movement, and Migration Policy Institute. We also derived lists of

jurisdictions that have proposed so-called “sanctuary” ordinances from these sources. We merged information on the proposal and passage of ordinances with Census data on various demographic factors.¹ Finally, with many potential explanations at the state-level, including several that may be collinear (rules regarding immigrant benefits, ballot propositions, partisan local elections, and spending on education, health, and welfare), we choose to model state effects by simply including them as dummy variables.

In order to capture the partisan and/or ideological dimension of local politics, we use the vote share of Bush versus Gore (an open-seat presidential election) at the county level. This presents two challenges: First, while it would be ideal to also include measures of party registration, such data is not readily available across states (and, indeed, is not public information in several states). Nevertheless, given the relatively high correlation between Democrat-Republic party identification and presidential vote choice, the latter can serve as an adequate measure of partisanship at the local level. The second challenge is that we are using information on proportion Republican at the county level but information on ordinances at the municipality level. The error associated with this measure is related to a municipality’s share of the county population. We ran an alternative, weighted least squares model based on the municipality’s share of the total county population. This correction for heteroskedasticity does not invalidate our findings regarding the significance of partisanship at the local level.

Findings

Based on our compilation of data from various sources, there were 122 municipalities by July 2007 that had proposed restrictionist ordinances and 47 had

¹ The Census data are primarily from 2000. More recent data are not available for the majority of places where restrictionist ordinances have been proposed, or in the universe of census places more generally.

proposed pro-immigrant ordinances (Table 2). On the restrictionist side, approximately 60 percent of proposals had passed, about 10 percent had been voted down or tabled, and about a quarter were still pending. On the “pro” side, the vast majority of proposals had passed, with about 6 percent still pending and less than 5 percent voted down or tabled.

Table 1: The Proposal and Passage of Immigration-Related Ordinances at the Local Level as of July 2007

		Number	As Proportion of Total
Pro	Pending	3	
	Passed	42	
	Failed / Tabled	2	
	<i>Subtotal</i>	47	0.2%
Restrictionist	Pending	33	
	Passed	76	
	Failed / Tabled	13	
	<i>Subtotal</i>	122	0.5%
No action		26,529	99.3%
	Total	26,698	

These findings are significant for several reasons: First, it is important to note that the number of restrictionist proposals outnumbers pro-immigrant proposals, and that the total number of proposals has jumped from very few to nearly 200 in the course of two years. Still, the overwhelming majority of cities (99.3%) have not taken any formal steps—”pro” or “con”—on the immigration issue. Another important finding is that a far greater proportion of pro-immigrant proposals have passed. This may indicate a greater selectivity among cities considering “pro” ordinances, choosing to propose only when there is a good chance of passage. It is also possible that restrictionist ordinances gain more opposition once they are proposed, although the presence of national advocacy

groups who monitor, advocate, and file lawsuits on either side of the local ordinances debate suggest that differences in the selectivity of choosing ordinances (between proponents on the pro-immigrant and restrictive side) may be the likelier explanation.²

What Characterizes Ordinance Cities?

One of the conventional wisdoms about the recent spate of restrictionist ordinances is that they are being proposed in places that are experiencing new and rapid growth in immigration, especially among those who are recently arrived in the United States. Other potential explanations include resentment in places with high wage competition for low-skilled jobs, lack of linguistic assimilation among recent immigrants, and potential backlash from nativists over the immigrant marches of spring 2006. In Table 2, we provide comparisons for each of these factors to see whether the reality is in line with these conventional wisdoms. The data is presented for cities based on their proposal activity (whether restrictionist, “pro,” or none), although similar relationships hold when applied to the ultimate passage of such policies.

Comparing characteristics across these three types of cities reveals complicated relationships that are not apparent from examinations of restrictionist cities alone (Esbenshade 2007, Hopkins 2007). Thus, for instance, factors such as overcrowded housing and language isolation are slightly higher in restrictionist cities than in cities that have taken no action. However, these differences are not statistically significant, and are indeed highest in cities that have proposed immigrant-friendly ordinances. Similar

² These include the American Civil Liberties Union, the Fair Immigration Reform Movement, MALDEF, PRLDEF, and the Southern Poverty Law Center (among others, on the pro side), and the Immigration Reform Law Institute, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, and the Minuteman Project (among others, on the restrictionist side),

findings hold true for the Latino share of the population and the Latino share of the citizen population (non-significant differences on the restrictionist end, but significant and counter-intuitive relationships on the “pro-immigrant” end). Indeed, we find the strongest support for our hypotheses regarding partisanship and group political power. Restrictionist and pro-immigrant cities are distinguished most by their partisan composition, with pro-immigrant cities much more Democrat than the U.S. average. Pro-immigrant ordinances are also most likely in those cities where Latinos account for a large share of the citizen population.

Table 2 – Characteristics of Cities Based on *Proposal* of Local Ordinances, 2000

	<i>Restrictionist</i>	<i>No Proposal</i>	<i>“Pro”</i>
% with Republican majority in county***	67	69	22
Latino share of population***	10.6	6.6	31
Latino share of citizens***	7.9	5.7	27.8
Any pro-immigration protest*** (% likelihood)	10	1	28
% employed in agriculture	0.9	3.1	0.4
Growth in Latino population (%), 1990-2000	259.0	177.0	65.8
% of immigrants arrived since 1995**	25.7	16.6	28.5
% of Spanish linguistic-isolated households***	2.3	1.3	9.5
% of households overcrowded***	1.9	1.6	9.7
Black poverty rate	22.9	13.2	26.3
White poverty rate	9.7	10.7	12.6
Latino poverty rate	21.2	15.1	24.3
Population***	75,223.6	7,373.2	635,708.1

Correlation is significant at 10% level (*); at 5% level (**); at 1% level (***)

There is also evidence suggesting a nativist backlash to the immigrant rallies and protests, as cities with restrictionist proposals were more likely than “no action” cities to have had immigrant rallies in spring 2006. However, we cannot rule out the possibility

that nativist reactions to the presence of immigrants preceded the protests. Also, pro-immigrant cities are by far the most likely to have experienced immigrant protests in 2006, suggesting that the factor may represent different political dynamics when considering the pathway towards restrictionist or pro-immigrant proposals. The same can be said for the role played by the recency of the immigrant population: when compared to cities that took no action, restrictionist proposals are more likely in places where the immigrant population is composed heavily of recent immigrants (26% of immigrants are recent arrivals compared to 17% in cities that took no action). However, the same also holds for pro-immigrant cities (29% versus 17%), so the recency of immigration cannot be deemed to be determinative of restrictionist activity. Thus, while the recency of migration may pose challenges to local governance in terms of overcrowded housing, linguistic isolation, and the like, it is actually associated with pro-immigrant proposals in large, Democratic cities and with restrictionist proposals in smaller, Republican cities.

Multivariate Results

While they may be important to provide a “reality check” on assumptions regarding restrictionist and pro-immigrant ordinances, comparisons of city characteristics tell only part of the story. In order to arrive at systematic answers about the conditions under which cities may consider and pass restrictionist and pro-immigrant ordinances, it is important to run statistical analyses that can show the contribution of each factor while controlling for all other factors. At the same time, it is important to be attuned to issues of multi-collinearity: Since some of these factors are highly correlated (see Appendix Table A-1), we ran alternative model specifications instead of putting every factor in the same regression model. We report on findings from these alternative specifications in the text, (full results available upon request).

There are different ways that one could analyze the actions of cities related to immigration policy. Our analysis proceeds as follows:

- 1) Estimate the likelihood of proposal and passage among all cities in the sample, using ordered logit regressions ($Policyproposal = -1$ if anti, 0 if none, 1 if pro) and ($Polycypass = -1$ if anti, 0 if none, 1 if pro).³
- 2) Estimate separate logit models for restrictionist and pro-immigrant ordinances, both in terms of proposal ($Propropose=0,1$, $Antipropose=0,1$) and policy passage ($Propassage=0,1$, $Antipassage=0,1$)

Each approach (ordered logit and logit) has its advantages and limitations. If we conceive of policies going on a continuum from restrictionist to status quo to explicitly pro-immigrant, it would be appropriate to use an ordered logit model. If, on the other hand, we conceive of policymaking as starting in a neutral state, from which cities can go “pro” or “con,” then it makes sense to have two separate models to estimate deviations from the neutral status-quo state. The limitation of using an ordered logit model is that we may be forcing one model to fit two different types of policy pathways. As the regression results in Table 3 show below, the dynamics that explain the proposal of restrictive policies are indeed different from those that explain pro-immigrant proposals. Thus, for instance, the partisan composition of the county is the only significant factor other than city size that is significantly related to pro-immigrant proposals while on the restrictionist side, other factors such as the presence of immigrant protests and Latino poverty rates relative to whites and blacks also make a difference. The ordered logit coefficients in column 1 represent in some ways a composite effect of the individual logit

³ We could look at passage among cities that have proposed ordinances on either the restrictionist or “pro-immigrant” sides. However, the considerations of proposals is likely influenced by odds of passage, especially as Table 1 indicates, on the “pro” side. Thus, we opt to define the outcome as -1,0,1.

models, although the recency of migration becomes statistically significant and the size of the city's population drops from statistical significance.⁴

⁴ This is because restrictionist cities are larger than the national average, but still much smaller than cities with pro-immigrant proposals.

Table 3 – Multivariate model estimations of ordinance proposal

	<i>Model I</i> <i>Ordered Logit</i> <i>(-1=anti,0=no</i> <i>action,1=pro)</i>	<i>Model II</i> <i>Logit</i> <i>(1 = Restrictive)</i>	<i>Model III</i> <i>Logit</i> <i>(1 = “Pro”)</i>
Republican majority in county	-0.085 [0.284]	0.698 [0.347]**	-0.354 [0.850]
% Republican	-0.043 [0.010]***	-0.011 [0.014]	-0.068 [0.026]***
Any Protest	2.326 [0.522]***	1.071 [0.338]***	0.366 [0.666]
Latino Share of Citizens	0 [0.006]	0.011 [0.011]	0.022 [0.015]
Growth in Latino Pop 1990-2000	0.015 [0.016]	-0.054 [0.069]	-0.082 [0.172]
Agriculture Jobs (share)	0 [0.000]	0 [0.000]	0 [0.001]
% of Immigrants Recent Arrivals	-0.008 [0.004]**	0.003 [0.007]	0.032 [0.024]
Overcrowded households (% of total)	0.061 [0.019]***	-0.121 [0.057]**	0.053 [0.037]
Black-Latino poverty differential	-0.009 [0.003]***	0.013 [0.005]***	0.005 [0.025]
White-Latino poverty differential	0.01 [0.005]**	-0.019 [0.008]**	0.016 [0.038]
Population (ln), 2000	-0.065 [0.057]	0.689 [0.082]***	1.308 [0.199]***
<i>Constant</i>		-11.355 [0.968]***	-18.012 [2.451]***
<i>Observations</i>	19293	19246	19185
<i>Pseudo-R2</i>	0.05	0.20	0.71
<i>Cut point 1</i>	-8.34		
<i>Cut point 2</i>	3.45		

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%
Standard errors in brackets.

A similar divergence in explanations can be found with respect to models that predict the *passage* of restrictionist and liberal ordinances related to unauthorized immigrants (Table 4). As before, partisan composition is the only significant factor other than city size in predicting pro-immigrant policies. A similar story holds on the restrictive side, although it is important to note that places with a higher proportion of

jobs in agriculture are significantly less likely to pass restrictionist ordinances, controlling for all of the other factors in our analysis.

Table 4 – Multivariate model estimations of ordinance passage

	<i>Model I</i> <i>Ordered Logit</i> <i>(-1=anti,0=no</i> <i>action,1=pro)</i>	<i>Model II</i> <i>Logit</i> <i>(1 = Restrictive)</i>	<i>Model III</i> <i>Logit</i> <i>(1 = "Pro")</i>
Republican majority in county	-0.407 [0.350]	1.462 [0.466 ***]	-0.469 [0.945]
% Republican	-0.046 [0.011 ***]	-0.026 [0.017]	-0.063 [0.027 **]
Any Protest	2.659 [0.494 ***]	0.965 [0.414 **]	0.589 [0.750]
Latino Share of Citizens	0.004 [0.007]	-0.004 [0.017]	0.027 [0.017]
Agriculture Jobs (share)	0.021 [0.018]	-0.472 [0.207 **]	-0.115 [0.224]
Growth in Latino Pop 1990-2000	0 [0.000]	0.0002 [0.0001 *	0 [0.001]
% of Immigrants Recent Arrivals	-0.011 [0.004 **]	0.004 [0.009]	0.031 [0.029]
Overcrowded households (% of total)	0.048 [0.022 **]	-0.03 [0.063]	0.062 [0.039]
Black-Latino poverty differential	-0.005 [0.004]	0.007 [0.008]	0.02 [0.026]
White-Latino poverty differential	0.008 [0.006]	-0.018 [0.011 *	0.005 [0.044]
Population (ln), 2000	0.01 [0.066]	0.704 [0.105 ***]	1.317 [0.219 ***]
<i>Constant</i>		-11.565 [1.227 ***]	-18.997 [2.800 ***]
<i>Observations</i>	19293	19251	19224
<i>Pseudo-R2</i>	0.08	0.20	0.71
<i>Cut point 1</i>	-8.71		
<i>Cut point 2</i>	3.99		

Standard errors in brackets

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Given the difficulties in interpreting logit coefficients for substantive effects, we summarize the substantive effects of the statistically significant factors in the foregoing

analyses in Table 5.⁵ We see that city size by far the most significant predictor of proposals and passage, as large cities are 4 times as likely as small cities to propose restrictive ordinances. Pro-immigrant ordinances are also 14 times more likely in large cities as in small cities.

Table 5 – Simulated changes in the likelihood of ordinance proposal and passage

	PROPOSAL		PASSAGE	
	<i>Restrictive</i>	<i>Pro</i>	<i>Restrictive</i>	<i>Pro</i>
Republican majority in county	1.97		3.90	
% Republican		0.58		0.39
Any Protest	3.11		2.80	
Agriculture Jobs (share)			0.31	
Growth in Latino Pop			1.03	
Overcrowded households	0.83			
Black-Latino poverty differential	1.24			
White-Latino poverty differential	0.67		0.85	
Population (ln), 2000	4.44	14.0	4.63	12.0

NOTE: Standardized effects on statistically significant variables are changes in probability of the outcome when the variable is moved from the 25th to 75th percentile, and all other variables are kept at their means. In cases where the variable is binary, we go from 0 to 1 on the variable value.

The next strongest set of effects are associated with political factors: Cities in Republican areas are about twice as likely as those in Democratic areas to propose restrictionist legislation, and four times as likely to have passed such measures. On the passage of pro-immigrant legislation, Republican areas are about half as likely to consider or pass such measures (another way to say this is that Democrat areas are about twice as likely as Republican areas to consider and pass pro-immigrant measures). Finally, the presence of protests does not seem to be associated with the empowerment of Latinos: There is no significant relationship to the consideration of pro-immigrant

⁵ We use CLARIFY (King et al., 2000) to simulate the effects on the dependent variable of changes in each individual variable while holding other variables at their means.

ordinances, and there does indeed seem to be a negative relationship for the consideration and passage of restrictionist legislation.

What is also important to note from Tables 3 through 5 is the number of factors that are weakly related to the consideration and proposal of immigrant-related ordinances. Below, we return to our initial set of hypotheses to examine how they fare in our models:

1) *Party composition* – Has the strongest and most consistent effects after city size.

Cities in Republican areas are twice as likely to propose restrictionist ordinances, and four times as likely to pass such ordinances, when compared to Democrat areas. Finally, cities in Democrat areas are about twice as likely to consider and pass pro-immigrant ordinances.

2) *Immigrant protests* – Is strongly associated with the proposal and passage of restrictionist legislation, with magnitudes that are similar to those of party composition.

3) *Growth of Latino populations* – Has weak effects, with slightly higher chances of restrictionist policies in cities with the highest percentage growth of Latino populations.

4) *Latino share of the citizen population* – Has weak effects.

5) *Recency of migration* – Has weak and inconsistent effects.

6) *Local economic interests* – The prevalence of industrial sectors that are heavily dependent on immigrant jobs was generally not significant with one important exception: the likelihood of restrictionist policies being passed is much lower in places where agriculture accounts for a sizable number of jobs.

- 7) *Economic competition* – Higher levels of black disadvantage relative to Latinos is associated with a slightly higher likelihood of proposing restrictionist legislation. These results are in line with Claudine Gay’s (2006) findings in Los Angeles neighborhoods, where economic competition between blacks and Latinos erodes African American support for policies favorable to Latinos. A similar dynamic *cannot* be found for poor whites, where the relationship is indeed slightly positive where poverty rates among whites exceed poverty rates among Latinos.
- 8) *Overcrowded housing* – Is weakly related to the proposal of restrictionist ordinances and unrelated to their passage.

Diagnostics And Corrections To Multivariate Models

There are a few potential issues with our multivariate models that merit examination. First, as we have already noted, using county political data can be seen a valid measure of political context (a city in a Republican county, for instance), but it may also be subject to heteroskedasticity if the variable is supposed to accurately capture party composition in the city itself. We ran weighted least-squares models separately and found that the effects of party composition drop in significance in only one of the four instances (proposal of restrictionist ordinances) but remain significant in the other three models (proposal and passage of pro-immigrant, passage of restrictionist). In this model, the share of agriculture jobs becomes statistically significant in three of the four models (with the exception of passage of pro-immigrant laws).

We also ran the logit models on a much smaller sample of cities because of potential biases and inflated standard errors in using the full sample for the analysis of

rare events (King and Zeng 2002). We used a normal randomization technique to select a total of about 1,000 cities. The coefficients for party composition remain significant in the same three of four models mentioned above. The only other variables of significance are city population size, housing overcrowding, which is associated with a higher consideration and passage of pro-immigrant legislation, and the share of agriculture jobs, which predicts lower passage rates for restrictionist legislation.

Finally, in order to take into account various state-level factors such as varying rules and institutional arrangements on partisan local elections, ballot initiatives, and local government autonomy (as well as others that may be relevant), we ran the same logit models with 49 state dummy variables. Party composition continued to be significant for three of the four models (passage of restrictionist ordinances and the proposal and passage of pro-immigrant ordinances).

Conclusions

Our analysis suggests that the restrictionist responses of local governments to undocumented immigration is largely unrelated to demographic pressures—whether it be the growth of recent immigrants, or the proportion of Spanish-dominant households. They are also unrelated to the political empowerment of Latinos, as places with large proportions of Latino residents and citizens are no more or no less likely to propose legislation whether it be restrictionist or pro-immigrant. Instead, we find that political factors are more important, most notably partisan composition and the politicization of national immigration reform legislation at the local level.

The partisan composition of the area plays an important role, second only to city size, which by far is the most important predictor of policy proposal and passage.

However, since city size is positively associated with both pro and restrictionist ordinances, party composition is the only factor that displays statistically significant and theoretically consistent effects (negative on the restrictionist side and positive on the pro side). Also, it is important to note that since we control for all factors simultaneously, the finding on party registration is not simply a function of demographic change or city size (since Republican party registration tends to be greater in smaller cities and counties).

The politicization of federal immigration reform efforts is also relevant in terms of the consideration of restrictionist policies by localities. In reaction to punitive policies being considered at the federal level, immigrants in hundreds of localities across the United States participated in rallies to plead for fair treatment by their host society. There was some concern of a backlash from local nativist populations, either in the form of legislation or hate crimes. Such a backlash was not present in the largest of cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago, but our data indicates that places such as Allentown, PA, Costa Mesa, CA, and Tulsa, OK were not so immune. Even in these places, however, it may not be evidence for a nativist backlash as much as something in a longer-term process of contentious politics surrounding immigration. For instance, in San Bernardino, CA, protests on immigration-related issues preceded the massive mobilizations in May 2006, and were based primarily on local punitive measures being considered in the city. Regardless of the dynamic of politicization, our findings therefore suggest that political factors (party composition at the local level and nativist reactions to immigrant empowerment) play a more important role in shaping local ordinance activity related to immigration than demographic factors that capture economic or cultural challenges to local governments and native-born populations.

We urge some caution in the interpretation of our findings. While we are able to address some of the challenges associated with using county political data, it would be ideal to get information on party registration or presidential vote choice at the municipal level for the over 20,000 municipalities in the United States. Unfortunately, such data is unavailable across all states. We may also find systematic difference in state policies to be important in ways that are not adequately captured in our state-by-state controls. In addition to looking systematically at state-level factors, it is important to supplement these large, quantitative analyses with more fine-grained studies at the local level to see how the process of politicization over immigration takes places. Comprehensive fieldwork can also shed more light on how the demographic “realities” on the ground are shaped for political purposes, on both the “pro” and “con” sides of the immigration debate. Finally, we also need to obtain measures on the timing of such proposals and their geographic proximity to each other to say something about the diffusion effects of ordinances on each other. Findings about diffusion, however, are unlikely to change the fundamental results of this analysis, which are that local ordinances on immigration are related primarily to political factors such as partisan politics and nativist backlash to immigrant protest activity, and have little to do with the economic or cultural disruptions to local communities.

About The Authors

Karthick Ramakrishnan is an assistant professor in the department of political science and holds a Ph.D. in politics from Princeton University. His research interests include political participation, civic participation, and urban politics, with special attention to immigration, race, and ethnicity. Relevant to this paper, Ramakrishnan was the principal investigator on a project in California that examined the responsiveness of local governments to immigrants and their concerns. His recent book from Stanford University Press, *Democracy in Immigrant America* (2005), analyzes the political

participation of U.S. immigrants in a cross-racial perspective. Prior to joining UC Riverside, Ramakrishnan was a research fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, where he authored several policy-relevant reports on the topics of civic participation, demographic diversity, and local governance. He is also an editor of a volume on immigrant civic and political incorporation from the University of Virginia Press, and his journal articles have appeared in *International Migration Review*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *Urban Affairs Review*, and *PS: Political Science and Politics*.

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Appendix

Table A.1 - Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables (values 0.5 and higher in bold)

	repmajority	antiorg	protest	latinoshare	latinogrowth	recent immig
% vote Bush	1.00					
Any Anti-Immigrant Org	-0.02	1.00				
Any Protest	-0.03	0.41	1.00			
Latino share citizens	-0.10	0.05	0.08	1.00		
Growth of Latino population	0.06	-0.01	-0.01	-0.03	1.00	
% immigrants recently arrived	-0.01	0.05	0.07	0.04	0.16	1.00
Difference, Black vs. Latino poverty	-0.03	0.01	0.01	-0.08	-0.05	-0.05
Difference, White vs. Latino poverty	0.03	-0.03	-0.05	-0.14	-0.09	-0.16
Population (ln)	-0.20	0.23	0.28	0.16	0.00	0.28
% employed in agriculture	0.11	-0.04	-0.03	0.18	0.00	-0.05
Spanish linguistically isolated	-0.08	0.06	0.10	0.83	0.04	0.10
Latino poverty rate	-0.01	0.02	0.04	0.17	0.10	0.16
White poverty rate	0.07	-0.02	-0.01	0.07	0.03	-0.01
Black poverty rate	-0.04	0.04	0.05	0.07	0.04	0.11
% employed in agriculture, mining, and construction	0.17	-0.04	-0.05	0.19	-0.01	-0.08
% of households overcrowded	-0.10	0.05	0.09	0.49	0.00	0.04

	black-hisp poverty	white-hisp poverty	population(ln)	% in agric	Spanish isolated	Latino poverty
Difference, Black vs. Latino poverty	1.00					
Difference, White vs. Latino poverty	0.63	1.00				
Population (ln)	0.05	-0.21	1.00			
% employed in agriculture	-0.06	0.01	-0.30	1.00		
Spanish linguistically isolated	-0.08	-0.14	0.14	0.22	1.00	
Latino poverty rate	-0.65	-0.92	0.15	0.05	0.17	1.00
White poverty rate	-0.03	0.22	-0.16	0.15	0.07	0.17
Black poverty rate	0.64	-0.12	0.22	-0.03	0.07	0.17
% employed in agriculture, mining, and construction	-0.06	0.03	-0.35	0.71	0.20	0.04
% of households overcrowded	-0.05	-0.07	0.10	0.17	0.50	0.11

	White poverty	Black poverty	Ag, mining, const	overcrowded
White poverty rate	1.00			
Black poverty rate	0.13	1.00		
% employed in agriculture, mining, and construction	0.18	-0.04	1.00	
% of households overcrowded	0.10	0.06	0.14	1.00