



Project Abstract

Comparative Civic and Place Engagement in Three Latino Enclave Neighborhoods in Transition

SES-0433947

Damián Fernández and Patricia Price
Florida International University

Senior Personnel

Daniel Arreola
Arizona State University

Christopher Lukinbeal
Arizona State University

María de los Angeles Torres
De Paul University

Timothy Ready
Notre Dame University

Project Description

With all the talk about rising urban property values in many U.S. cities, gentrification is on the agenda of public agencies and private citizens alike. Gentrification entails a process whereby relatively affluent people move into urban neighborhoods, purchase relatively undervalued single-family homes, renovate them, and reap the rewards of proximity to downtown employment and amenities (or their increased resale value). In some neighborhoods, such as Miami's inner-ring areas, relatively luxurious high-rise condominiums are also being rapidly constructed to address the desire for proximate upscale housing by affluent urbanites. In many cases, those displaced by rising property values are lower-income ethnic minority populations.

In a related, and equally discussed arena, the impact of the rising Latino/a population of U.S. cities has deeply affected public opinion and policy alike. Is the U.S. becoming "Latinized," and if so, what does this mean? Will voting behaviors change? Do Latinas/os behave, civically, in ways similar to Anglo populations, or do they defy established understandings?

This project brings the redevelopment and the Latinization of U.S. cities into conversation. The research entails a three-city comparison of inner-ring Latino enclave neighborhoods: Pilsen (in Chicago), Garfield (in Phoenix), and East Little Havana (in Miami). In all three neighborhoods, established Latino groups face challenges both from new Hispanic immigrants and from relatively wealthy gentrifiers. This research will allow a systematic, comparative assessment of how individuals and groups interact with one another civically through organizations to shape their physical surroundings, and how these surroundings in turn foster or hinder belonging and exclusion. Because the majority of Hispanics in the U.S. reside in urban areas, Phoenix, Chicago,



and Miami – with their large and growing Latino populations, their diverse regional locations, and their historic and contemporary roles as gateway cities for Latino immigrants – are appropriate choices for the proposed research.

The PIs form a six-member interdisciplinary team of geographers, political scientists, and an anthropologist. In each neighborhood, teams of two local PIs will work in tandem with local graduates and undergraduates utilizing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in four phases, including i) preliminary interviews, ii) large-scale survey, iii) in-depth interviews, and iv) focus groups. Data will be geocoded and georeferenced for spatial analysis in a Geographic Information System (GIS). The project duration is three years, from January 2005 – December 2007.

General Objectives

The expected outcomes of this research are threefold: to i) foster interdisciplinary synergy resulting in empirical and theoretical advances, and applications of GIS to social research, ii) to spark continuing comparative collaborations amongst academics and between academics and policymakers, and iii) to train underrepresented graduate and undergraduate students.

This research is strongly supported by initial findings from pilot research which suggests that inner-ring Latino enclave neighborhoods are sites of intense struggle that telescope broader issues. The intellectual merit of this project arises from its contributions to understanding contemporary urban socio-spatial dynamics. These engage at multiple scales, and include negotiation of i) new Latino diasporas and the perceived ‘Latinization’ of the United States, ii) the unfolding uneven geographies of development, and iii) changing bases of human solidarity and cleavage. Research on civic engagement has largely ignored the spatial arena through which civic engagement is conducted and indeed shaped. Likewise, research on the changing spatiality of cities has paid scant attention to the diversities within immigrant and ethnic groups and how these diversities shape the ways that immigrants and ethnics engage with the physical spaces of neighborhoods in materially consequential ways. The dramatic spatial transformations underway in inner-ring neighborhoods provide an ideal environment to query the assumptions that immigrants and inner-city minority populations are civically disengaged, that civic presence amongst Latinos is lacking, and that decisions over the shape, use, and control of neighborhood spaces is out of the grasp of residents. This research also clarifies debates over the existence and modalities of pan-ethnic solidarity, and addresses assumptions about Latinos as political actors.

Progress and Preliminary Outcomes

As of August, 2005, Phases I and II have been concluded in Miami and Chicago, and Phase II is near completion in Phoenix. Thus 400 surveys have been administered in Miami, 400 in Chicago, and to-date 200 in Phoenix. An Access database is being currently constructed, with data coding and entry scheduled for September (and upon conclusion of Phase II for Phoenix). Phases III and IV of the project, which will encompass in-depth interviews and focus groups in each site, are scheduled to begin in September for Miami and Chicago, and upon conclusion of



Phase II for Phoenix. Because survey data has yet to be coded and entered, we currently have no preliminary empirical outcomes. These are expected later in the Fall of 2005.

The PIs and Senior Personnel met in Austin, TX in February, 2005, to discuss launch of the survey phase: design of the survey instrument, random selection methodology, and surveying protocol. We will meet again in Phoenix in November, 2005 to discuss data analysis and the transition to Phase III of the project. In March, 2006 we will present preliminary results at the Latin American Studies Association meeting in Puerto Rico.

Progress on graduate and undergraduate research training has been notable. In Miami 2 graduate and 3 undergraduate RAs were supported during the survey phase (3 of these Hispanic), with similar numbers for Phoenix and Chicago. We expect the training of underrepresented minorities resulting from this project to be substantial and beneficial, in terms of dissertation research arising directly from the project, co-authored publications with PIs, as well as career choice and/or graduate school for the undergraduate RAs.

Broader Impacts

Global changes have set in motion new human diasporas, shaped new geographies of wealth and power, and reworked the social and spatial landscape of large cities. Understanding the human and spatial dimensions of these reorganizations, and how people engage with and actively shape them, constitutes the broader impact of this project. Inner-ring ethnic enclave neighborhoods distill broader contentions over immigration, urban redevelopment, political participation, and citizenship. How these issues are addressed is seen by some to shape the very identity of the U.S. Negative or reactionary policy toward Latino immigration as well as anxiety over the perceived 'Latinization' of the U.S. might be understood in part as a consequence of insufficiently nuanced knowledge. The research addresses calls for collaboration across a broad range of social science themes (urban studies, ethnic studies, immigration studies) and social science disciplines, as well as integrating a spatial statistics component. Finally, the proposed research directly addresses the educational and training goals regarding Hispanic students of the home institutions of the PIs as well as the PIs' respective disciplinary associations.

Website

We had originally planned for the Inter-University Program for Latino Research at Notre Dame to assist in developing a website for this project. However there is not adequate funding, either from IUPLR or the grant, to provide for this. Currently we are looking into the feasibility of graduate assistants at FIU working on such a website. In any event, the website would become relevant only when a significant portion of the raw data are analyzed, which should be mid-2006.