

Welcoming, Trust, and Civic Engagement: Immigrant Integration in Metropolitan America

By
DINA G. OKAMOTO,
LINDA R. TROPP,
HELEN B. MARROW,
and
MICHAEL JONES-CORREA

Prior studies have sought to understand how immigrants integrate into U.S. society, focusing on the ways in which local contexts and institutions limit immigrant incorporation. In this study, we consider how interactions among immigrants and U.S.-born within receiving communities contribute to the process of immigrant integration. We emphasize the extent to which immigrants perceive that they are welcome in their social environments and the downstream effects of those perceptions. Drawing on new representative survey data and in-depth interviews with first-generation Mexican and Indian immigrants in the Atlanta and Philadelphia metropolitan areas, we examine what constitutes feeling welcomed and how these perceptions are associated with immigrants' interest and trust in the U.S.-born and with their civic participation. Our focus on two metropolitan areas with long-standing racialized dynamics, coupled with new waves of immigration, provides insights about the role of welcoming contexts in immigrant integration in the twenty-first century.

Keywords: immigrants; refugees; trust; welcoming; integration; metropolitan America

Questions about whether and how new immigrants integrate into U.S. society have been at the forefront of immigration debates for decades, if not centuries (see Alba and Nee 2003). In prior studies of contemporary immigration in the post-1965 era, scholars

Dina G. Okamoto is the Class of 1948 Herman B. Wells Professor of Sociology and director of the Center for Research on Race and Ethnicity in Society (CRRES) at Indiana University. Her research addresses how group boundaries and identities form and change, which has broader implications for immigrant incorporation, racial formation, and intergroup relations.

Linda R. Tropp is a professor of social psychology and a faculty associate in the School of Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. For more than two decades she has studied how members of different groups experience contact with each other and how group differences in status affect cross-group relations.

Correspondence: dokamoto@indiana.edu

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have pointed to the importance of the contexts of reception that immigrants must navigate after arrival. Such contexts comprise formal institutions, state policies, and local practices, all of which ultimately shape immigrants' pathways to social mobility and integration (Kasinitz et al. 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2014; Portes and Zhou 1993).

In this article, we advance research on contexts of reception and immigrant integration in two ways. First, we build on existing scholarship that emphasizes the importance of exclusionary institutions and policies and anti-immigrant attitudes (see Massey and Sanchez 2010; Menjívar and Abrego 2012; O'Neil 2010; Varsanyi 2011; Walker and Leitner 2011). We do this by focusing on welcoming contexts and attitudes, which likely play a role in creating a sense of belonging and inclusion for immigrants. Such a focus is especially warranted given the recent growth in local initiatives designed to welcome immigrants throughout the United States and Europe (see Fussell 2014; Welcoming America 2017) and their potential downstream consequences for integration.

Second, to the extent that prior work has examined how inclusionary efforts have influenced immigrant integration into host societies, it has primarily focused on governmental policies and local institutions (see Bloemraad 2006; Jones-Correa 2011; Schildkraut et al. 2019; Williamson 2018). In contrast, we focus on the everyday interactions that occur between immigrants and the U.S.-born and how immigrants perceive themselves and other groups. Even in places recognized as welcoming cities with inclusive policies (see Huang and Liu 2018; Marrow 2012; Welcoming America 2017), newcomers may still vary in the extent to which they subjectively feel welcomed by the U.S.-born. Immigrants' experiences and encounters with members of host communities may signal acceptance or rejection, and they are key in shaping a sense of welcome and belonging (see Castañeda 2018; Tropp et al. 2018). Thus, we use new representative survey data and in-depth interviews from immigrant populations in Atlanta and Philadelphia to investigate the extent to which U.S. immigrants feel welcomed in their everyday lives and how this sense of feeling welcomed contributes to engagement within their new communities.

The Integration of Immigrants in the United States

To understand U.S. immigrant integration, past research has emphasized the ways in which broader policy and institutional contexts influence the social and

*Helen B. Marrow is an associate professor of sociology at Tufts University. She is author of *New Destination Dreaming: Immigration, Race, and Legal Status in the Rural American South* (Stanford 2011) and coeditor of "Health Care, Immigrants and Minorities: Lessons from the Affordable Care Act in the United States" in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (2017).*

Michael Jones-Correa is the President's Distinguished Professor of Political Science and director of the Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity and Immigration (CSERI) at the University of Pennsylvania. He is a co-principal investigator of the 2006 Latino National Survey and the 2012 and 2016 Latino Immigrant National Election Study.

economic progress of immigrants. Existing studies examine the patterns and processes associated with anti-immigrant attitudes and policies at state and local levels (Ebert and Ovink 2014; Ebert and Okamoto 2015; Hopkins 2010; Muste 2013; Varsanyi 2011; Walker and Leitner 2011), as well as the downstream effects of exclusionary policy contexts (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015; Garcia 2019; Menjivar and Abrego 2012). A handful of recent studies focus on inclusionary, pro-immigrant efforts, attitudes, and policies (Fussell 2014; Haubert and Fussell 2006; Schildkraut et al. 2019). For example, Okamoto and Ebert (2016) examined patterns of collective efforts initiated by local residents to include immigrants in the larger community and found that metropolitan areas with larger foreign-born populations and minority elected officials were more likely to experience pro-immigrant activity. Other recent studies have investigated the social factors that encourage the adoption of inclusionary policies by local governments (see Huang and Liu 2018).

Inclusionary governmental policies at various levels affect how immigrants access public resources, build communities, and become formal citizens (see de Graauw 2016; Williamson 2018; Huo et al. 2018a, 2018b). For example, Bloemraad (2006) found that settlement, citizenship, and multiculturalism policies in Canada facilitated the civic and political incorporation of immigrants and refugees. Such policies offered material and symbolic resources to immigrants, which in turn reflected a robust organizational infrastructure that enabled and encouraged migrant newcomers to become full members of Canadian society. Other scholars point to the importance of local policy contexts and institutional actors in aiding immigrant integration (Jones-Correa 2008; Marrow 2009). In particular, Marrow's study (2012) showed how inclusive local policies in San Francisco reinforced healthcare providers' views that unauthorized immigrants were morally deserving of care, allowing them to extend care to immigrants without concerns about financial costs. In a study of police departments, Williams (2015) found that welcoming departments engaged in substantive outreach, collaborated with local organizations and refused to participate in federal efforts to detain undocumented immigrants, which contributed to building positive relations with newcomer communities.

Although local policies and institutional actors can affect immigrants' access to needed services, emerging research has also focused on the everyday interpersonal interactions that occur within institutions (Castañeda 2018; Gast and Okamoto 2016; Mallet, Calvo, and Waters 2017; Williamson 2018). Relations and interactions between individuals within local institutions and across daily encounters influence the extent to which immigrants feel like they are part of the host society (see Calvo, Jablonska-Bayro, and Waters 2017; Fussell 2014; Gast and Okamoto 2016; Jones-Correa et al. 2018; Tropp et al. 2018). Welcoming attitudes bolster immigrants' incorporation outcomes both symbolically and materially. For example, Castañeda (2018) demonstrates that even though undocumented Mexicans in New York did not have access to formal citizenship, they had achieved a sense of belonging and feeling at home due to daily interactions with host society members. By contrast, although they held French citizenship, North

Africans in Paris were stigmatized and treated poorly in everyday interactions with local residents.

We examine immigrants' perceptions of feeling welcomed and how these perceptions shape their trust and interest in relations with the U.S.-born, as well as their civic participation. Though specific experiences are likely to differ across immigrant groups, feeling welcomed may have a similar effect on the attitudes and behaviors of immigrant groups. Thus, we expect that when immigrants feel welcomed by the U.S.-born, immigrants will have positive feelings toward host society members and have higher levels of participation in local communities. Yet we know that immigrant groups vary by socioeconomic and legal status; some may be quite marginalized within institutional contexts—those who are undocumented and with less material resources may not feel that they have access to healthcare and social services, rights as workers and tenants, or even the ability to approach local authorities for help. Therefore, for those who are included as deserving citizens within institutional contexts and are recognized as equal members of society by local policies, interpersonal interactions will play a less critical role. At the same time, the positive associations between feeling welcomed and perceptions of the U.S.-born and community involvement may be less effective for marginalized groups. We investigate whether these patterns hold and pay attention to how they may differ by race of U.S.-born group and national origin of immigrant group.

Data and Methods

Our data come from a larger study on intergroup relations between immigrants and the U.S.-born in the twenty-first century. To examine immigrants' experiences of feeling welcomed, we draw on two new sources of data: a representative survey ($N = 1,001$) and in-depth interviews ($N = 116$) with first-generation Mexican and Indian immigrants living in ten counties in the Philadelphia and Atlanta metropolitan areas (see Jones-Corres et al. 2018; Tropp et al. 2018).

Research sites

We selected Philadelphia and Atlanta as research sites because they are comparable in population size (about 5–6 million people each) and are among the most racially segregated metropolitan areas in the United States.¹ Both metro areas have racialized black-white histories, which are rapidly diversifying due to immigration from across the globe. Though Philadelphia has had a more constant history of immigration than Atlanta, it is only since the 1980s that both metropolitan areas have become home to diverse streams of post-1965 immigrants (Singer et al. 2008). Immigrants from Mexico and India constitute the two largest immigrant populations in Atlanta and Philadelphia, with each group composing at least 10 percent of the foreign-born population in 2010. Mexicans in Atlanta are an exception, as they constituted 20 percent of the foreign-born population in

2010 and upwards of one-third in more recent years. Mexico and India also represent the top two immigration source countries to the United States overall (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2015; see Jones-Correa et al. [2018] for more on selection of sites).

Immigrant groups

We chose to study foreign-born Mexicans and Indians because, respectively, they are emblematic of lower- and higher-status U.S. immigrant groups today (Portes and Rumbaut 2014). Foreign-born Mexicans, on average, tend to have low levels of education and high levels of employment in low-skilled sectors of the economy; they also register low levels of English language proficiency and, following decades of intense border and interior immigration enforcement, have high levels of undocumented status (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015; Durand and Massey 2019; Garip 2017; Telles and Ortiz 2008). In contrast, foreign-born Indians are among the most highly educated and residentially dispersed U.S. immigrant groups; they tend to be employed in high-skilled sectors of the economy, have considerable fluency in English, and few are undocumented (Chakravorty, Kapur, and Singh 2017; Leonard 2007; Mishra 2016; Portes and Rumbaut 2014).

Correspondingly, these two immigrant groups typically draw different reactions from the U.S.-born. Mexicans are often perceived as poorly educated, illegal, and unassimilable (Chavez 2008; Jiménez 2010), whereas Indians tend to be viewed as well educated and talented, even though they may also be seen as economic competitors and as nonwhite (Lee and Fiske 2006; Samson 2013). More generally, public opinion polls suggest that Asian immigrants are viewed more positively than Latin American immigrants (Pew Research Center 2015), which may have implications for their experiences of feeling welcomed by the U.S.-born in everyday life.

Data collection

Our survey was administered in 2013, in English or Spanish for Mexican respondents, and in English for Indian respondents.² To be eligible, survey respondents had to be at least 18 years old and reside in the Philadelphia or Atlanta metropolitan area. In total, we surveyed 500 Mexican and 501 Indian first-generation immigrants, with half from each of the two metropolitan areas. We asked respondents about key demographic indicators, their perceptions of and contact with other immigrant and U.S.-born groups, and their levels and kinds of civic participation. We also asked respondents to report the cross streets of their residence, which allowed us to match their geographic information with tract data from the U.S. Census.³ We then linked variables measuring the racial and socioeconomic composition of neighborhoods (measured as census tracts) to our respondents.

In 2014, Mexican and Indian survey respondents were recontacted and invited to participate in semistructured, face-to-face interviews. We conducted interviews

with fifty-eight Mexican immigrants (thirty in Philadelphia, twenty-eight in Atlanta) and fifty-eight Indian immigrants (twenty-eight in Philadelphia, thirty in Atlanta). Each interview lasted one to three hours in a public space (e.g., coffee shop or municipal park) or at respondents' homes. We asked about immigration histories, settlement and adaptation experiences, how they navigated their daily lives, and how they perceived and experienced relations with U.S.-born and foreign-born groups in their metro area. We recorded and transcribed each interview. In the sections that follow, we use pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of our respondents.

Results

We present findings from our analysis in two stages. First, we draw on the survey and interview data to examine general patterns and experiences regarding whether and how Mexican and Indian immigrants feel welcomed. We then conduct multivariate models with survey data to examine how feeling welcomed may predict immigrants' feelings of trust in the U.S.-born, immigrants' willingness to engage in contact with the U.S.-born, and immigrants' reported levels of involvement in the civic life of their local communities.

Feeling welcomed

The concept of welcoming signifies an openness to including members of other groups within a community, with the expectation that all groups are accepted and treated with respect (Fussell 2014; Livert 2017; Jones-Correa 2011; Welcoming America 2017; Williams 2015). To assess welcoming, we asked our immigrant respondents: "Overall, when you think about [whites/blacks] in [greater Philadelphia/Atlanta], how often do you feel welcomed by them?" Possible scores on these items ranged from 0 (*never*), 1 (*rarely*), 2 (*sometimes*), to 3 (*often*).

We also coded the interview transcripts for key themes using Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis program. We produced analytic memos, which identified key themes, and then engaged in more inductive analysis, resulting in forty-eight extensive thematic memos, each comprising hundreds of pages. In particular, three of these memos highlighted the ways in which immigrants felt welcome or unwelcome by the U.S.-born. We reviewed and discussed the thematic memos to refine our understanding of emerging themes.

To begin, we estimated means of welcoming variables for both immigrant groups. Table 1 shows that overall, Mexican immigrants reported significantly lower levels of feeling welcomed by U.S.-born whites and blacks than Indian immigrants did. This is a key difference across our two immigrant groups, which is perhaps related to socioeconomic status, language, and legal status.⁴ But how was welcoming experienced and talked about, if at all, by Mexican and Indian immigrants? Our interview data, which we elaborate on below, reveals that

TABLE 1
Means for Feeling Welcomed among Mexican and Indian Immigrants

Variable	Mexicans	Indians
Welcomed by whites	1.575	2.259
Welcomed by blacks	1.365	2.129

NOTE: The minimum value for feeling welcomed is 0 and the maximum is 3. *T*-tests indicate significant differences between Mexican and Indian immigrants' perceptions of welcoming by U.S.-born blacks and whites, respectively, at the $p < .001$ level.

Indians talked about feeling welcomed more often than Mexicans did, yet similar processes regarding the importance and value of feeling welcomed appeared across both immigrant groups.

Several Indian immigrants expressed that they felt welcomed in their upper-middle-class and affluent neighborhoods, mostly by their white neighbors. For example, Simon, a healthcare professional in his 40s who lives in Philadelphia, explained that his neighborhood is extremely welcoming and people frequently get together for neighborhood events:

Everybody is very friendly. We invite each other—that kind of stuff happens. And then there's always—somebody has some block party. . . . Here, honestly, we've just been very fortunate. This neighborhood has something called a supper club and they welcome every new family to the supper club. . . . And you get to know all your neighbors. So like when we go out for a walk, we know most of the people.

For Simon and many of our Indian immigrant respondents, neighborhood activities and a walking culture in these well-resourced neighborhoods facilitated contact and deeper bonds between neighbors.

Sharmila, an Indian immigrant in her early 30s who works in the medical field in Atlanta, also felt welcomed in her neighborhood. She too had gotten to know her neighbors through neighborhood events and told us, "I'm still new to the neighborhood, it's not been too long—but everybody interacts really well." Like Simon and many Indian immigrants in our sample, Sharmila goes on walks in her neighborhood, where she stops and chats with other neighbors doing the same; she not only feels a sense of being welcome, but she also shares information with neighbors and is often invited to participate in social and civic events. Neighborhood activities, such as holiday cookouts and community meetings provided the context for conversations and friendly interactions that translated into quick greetings and at times, hour-long conversations.

That said, not all Indian immigrants felt that their neighbors were welcoming. In fact, instances of perceived welcome in our data are important precisely because they differ from, and stand out against, other moments in which Indian respondents described feeling unwelcome, or experienced hostility or even discrimination. Chanda, a technology professional in her late 30s who lives in

Atlanta, shared an incident when she was waiting for the middle school bus with her daughter in a parked car. It was raining out, and she wanted to make sure that her daughter got onto the bus safely. A white resident approached her car and asked her to leave, assuming that Chanda and her daughter did not live in the neighborhood and, therefore, could not park there. She recalled, "And then he said, 'Okay, I'm going to call the cops. Show me that you do live here.' I said, 'No, I'm not going to.' So I just rolled up my windows because I don't have to prove that I live there." Chanda felt deeply rattled by this experience, and it was clear that she felt surveilled because of how she looked, that she did not "belong." In contrast, feeling welcome makes many Indians feel the opposite—that they are valued and "belong," or at least that they are not actively excluded.

Indian immigrants did not have much contact with U.S.-born blacks in or outside of their neighborhoods, yet some Indian immigrants such as Arjun, who lives in Philadelphia and has been in the United States for nearly 30 years, expressed feeling welcomed by blacks, despite that contact with African Americans was rare:

Actually, one thing I have to tell you is that the few African Americans that I ran into in Philadelphia, they were some of the nicest and genuine people that I met. I think they treat Indians very, very well. I don't know if the reverse is true. But they do treat Indians very well.

Likewise, Mexican immigrants expressed feeling welcomed by blacks and whites at times, but in contrast to Indian immigrants, they generally did not feel welcomed in predominantly white suburban neighborhoods. In fact, several Mexican immigrants talked about how they felt out of place and surveilled in such spaces. For example, Maricela, a woman in her late 20s who is undocumented and lives in Philadelphia, recalled an incident when she was waiting for her employer in a white neighborhood and began to feel uncomfortable. She said that people stared at her, and a neighbor even came outside to ask her what she was doing there. Raul, who lives in Atlanta and has been in the United States for over a decade, talked about how people in white communities feel threatened and are likely to call the police for any small thing. He explained, "Well, you have to be more careful of neighbors because they could call the police on anything you do." Other Mexican respondents like Lucia, a professional who works in the legal field, stated that they would never go to white, conservative neighborhoods because that makes them feel unsafe. In general, our Mexican respondents—regardless of socioeconomic or legal status—did not feel welcome in predominantly white areas of both cities.

Mexican immigrants also described feeling unwelcome at times in public settings, especially in grocery stores or when riding public transit. In particular, our respondents talked about receiving poor service—instances where a cashier would throw change instead of putting it in the customer's hand, or asking for an ID when it is not required—or being stared at in public. While these small actions were not overt forms of discrimination, they clearly sent a message to our respondents that they were not welcome. In addition, Mexican respondents also

mentioned negative interactions with the police, who they perceived were suspicious of immigrants.

Thus, for Mexicans, feeling welcomed was not tied to one's neighborhood; instead, a sense of belonging emerged in particular spaces such as places of worship, children's schools, and community-based organizations, where Mexicans typically had more interactions with whites than blacks. As an example, Antonio, who is undocumented and lives in Atlanta, talked about his experiences attending church each Sunday. He felt welcomed there through "smiles" and occasional "hugs" afforded to him by U.S.-born whites, even though he did not have enough language to communicate directly with them, and often attended services separate from whites within the same congregation or church:⁵

Yes, I've learned, for example, how people are nice, how they treat each other, like for example, in the world we don't always greet each other, or always, we teach each other these expressions, and these people [at my church] when they wave to you, a hug, a smile, that basically teaches you that in reality you matter. When you go to church and they receive you well, you feel like you are welcome, you feel as if you are at home, they receive you in an adequate way.

Likewise, Valencia, who is in her early 30s, talked about how she regularly attends events at her children's school in Philadelphia. While she does not know enough English to hold a conversation, other parents still try to engage and communicate with her. Valencia's children usually translate for her, allowing conversations and positive interactions to take place. Despite the language barrier, she feels welcomed by other parents and teachers, and continues to return to her children's school events.

Some Mexican immigrants did say they felt welcomed in their neighborhoods, though not to the same extent that Indian immigrants did. In such cases, Mexicans reported having friendly neighbors, but did not seem to have deep relations with them. For example, Juan, who is in his 50s, lives in a racially mixed neighborhood in Philadelphia and explained that his neighbors are friendly: "For me, they have treated me very well. I talk to them, they answer me back. Sometimes the neighbors are out just emptying the trash, like whites or blacks, and they'll chat with me. I'm even teaching some of them some words in Spanish, can you imagine that?" For Juan and many other Mexican immigrants, they experience welcoming and friendly interactions with their white and black neighbors, but they were not regularly invited to dinner or encouraged to participate in neighborhood events, as noted in interviews with Indian respondents.

Immigrants' trust and interest in U.S.-born, and community involvement

From our interviews, feeling welcomed appears to have the potential to shape immigrants' perceptions of and attitudes toward the U.S.-born. To investigate these intergroup dynamics further, we analyzed a pooled sample of Mexican and Indian immigrants from the survey data. Using ordinary least squares regression models,⁶ we examined whether immigrants' perceptions of feeling welcomed by U.S.-born whites and blacks were associated with immigrants' trust and interest

in knowing U.S.-born whites and blacks, and their participation in their local community. We discuss and define our key variables next.

Trust in outgroup members. Outgroup trust is a measure of intergroup attitudes and has broader implications for community social capital, civic life, and political engagement (see Citrin and Sides 2008; Fukuyama 1995). The main item used to measure immigrant respondents' trust in each U.S.-born group was, "Overall, when you think about [whites/blacks], how often do you feel that you can trust them?" Responses were scored on a scale: 0 (*never*), 1 (*rarely*), 2 (*sometimes*), or 3 (*often*).

Interest in outgroup members. Another measure tapped immigrants' interest in developing deeper relations with blacks and whites. This concept connotes a level of personal motivation and investment, such that individuals with interest in knowing other groups are likely to engage with and learn more about them (Brannon and Walton 2013; Tropp and Mallett 2011; Ron et al. 2017). Using separate items in reference to U.S.-born blacks and whites, immigrant respondents were asked, "Thinking about [U.S.-born blacks/whites] who live in [greater Philadelphia/Atlanta], to what extent are you interested in getting to know them better?" Responses were scored on a scale ranging from -2 (*not interested at all*) to 2 (*very interested*).

Participation in civic life. To understand immigrants' involvement in their communities, we asked them about whether they had participated in any of the following activities within the last year: attended a community group meeting, organized a neighborhood event, worked with others in your community to solve a problem, participated in or helped organize a festival or cultural celebration in a public space, or contacted a local public official. These items are considered standard measures of civic engagement (see Ramakrishnan and Bloemraad 2008; Uslaner and Brown 2005). To test the robustness of a measure including these items, responses to all five items were entered into a principal components analysis (varimax rotation). Only one factor emerged with an eigenvalue greater than 1.0 (2.34; factor loadings ranging from .59 to .76), and accounted for nearly half of the variance (46.8 percent) in participants' responses. Although the alpha coefficient is sensitive to scale length (Schmitt 1996) and can underestimate scale reliability when dichotomous indicators are used (see Raykov, Dimitrov, and Asparouhov 2010), Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability was acceptable for this five-item measure ($\alpha = .72$).

Controls. We included a number of standard controls for respondents in our models: age, ethnicity, gender, education, employment status, homeownership status, English proficiency, partisanship, and metropolitan area of residence. We also included a control for whether respondents were surveyed in person or by phone.

We also constructed census-tract variables to assess the extent to which neighborhood socioeconomic status, racial composition, and stability shaped immigrants' perceptions of welcoming. We used 2010 U.S. Census summary file (SF1) to create these measures. *Outgroup size* captures the size of a racial outgroup in a geographic area and is measured by percent of relevant outgroup in a census tract. For example, if we are modeling immigrants' trust in blacks, outgroup size is defined as percent black in the census tract. *Neighborhood stability* is defined as percentage of respondents living in the same house for the past five years. If there is less stability in a neighborhood, this could be associated with less trust and less willingness to engage in the community. As additional contextual controls, we included the *percent of residents in poverty* and *percent foreign-born*.

Table 2 displays means for all outcome, predictor, and control variables. Similar to the patterns for feeling welcomed, Mexican immigrants report significantly lower levels of trust and interest in knowing both blacks and whites than Indian immigrants. Mexican immigrants also report significantly lower levels of participation in community life. These descriptive statistics are consistent with our interview data, and in many ways, these differences are not surprising given that 78 percent of the Mexican immigrants in our sample are noncitizens and 36 percent are undocumented. Nearly half arrived within the last 12 years and spoke English "pretty well or very well." About 79 percent of Indian immigrants were U.S. citizens, 1 percent were undocumented, nearly one-third arrived in the last 12 years, and a vast majority (96 percent) spoke English pretty well or very well. Despite these differences, it is still important for us to understand the extent to which immigrants' perceptions of welcoming by the U.S.-born are related to how they, in turn, express trust and interest in the U.S.-born.⁷

Predicting trust. Table 3 displays results from regressions predicting immigrants' trust in U.S.-born whites and blacks.⁸ Models 1a and 2a include individual and contextual controls, and models 1b and 2b add immigrants' perceptions of feeling welcomed by U.S.-born whites or blacks. Estimating the models with controls first and then including our key independent variables helps us to understand the extent to which perceptions of welcoming explain variation in immigrants' trust in the U.S.-born beyond our control variables.⁹

Our results show that feeling welcomed by whites and blacks (Table 3, models 1b and 2b) have positive and significant effects on immigrants' trust in whites and blacks, respectively. Thus, when immigrants feel welcomed by U.S.-born whites and blacks, they report higher levels of trust in whites and blacks respectively, all else being equal. These effects remain robust when individual-level variables measuring socioeconomic status and other key demographics, as well as contextual variables capturing neighborhood characteristics related to socioeconomic, racial composition, and residential stability, are included in the models.

Interestingly, the effects of national origin, English proficiency, type of interview, and neighborhood stability are significant in the reduced models (models 1a and 2a), indicating that Mexicans, as well as immigrants who can speak English less well, who were surveyed in person, and who lived in more stable neighborhoods, reported higher levels of trust in U.S.-born whites and blacks. Yet once

TABLE 2
Means for Variables among Mexican and Indian Immigrants

Variable	All Immigrants	Mexicans	Indians	Min.	Max.
Key independent variables					
Welcomed by whites	1.914	1.575	2.259	0	3
Welcomed by blacks	1.745	1.365	2.129	0	3
Outcome variables					
Trust in whites	1.868	1.543	2.203	0	3
Trust in blacks	1.577	1.135	2.031	0	3
Interest in whites	0.457	0.289	0.626	-2	2
Interest in blacks	0.228	-0.054	0.513	-2	2
Community involvement	1.115	0.680	1.543	0	5
Individual control variables					
Gender (Male = 1)	0.509	0.500	0.539	0	1
Age	39.98	34.96	45.06	18	91
Education	3.856	2.498	5.247	1	6
Employed (=1)	0.671	0.636	0.706	0	1
Homeownership (=1)	0.503	0.215	0.803	0	1
Partisanship	0.229	0.083	0.387	-2	2
Years in the US	18.55	15.96	21.33	1	55
Interview type (in person = 1)	0.248	0.400	0.096	0	1
English proficiency	2.089	1.156	2.611	0	3
Metro (Philadelphia = 1)	0.500	0.500	0.501	0	1
Contextual control variables					
Percent white	53.93	39.75	65.16	0.510	95.29
Percent black	18.12	24.29	13.22	0.604	97.95
Percent foreign-born					
Percent poverty	12.41	18.49	7.589	0.000	61.60
Percent living in same house in last 5 years	85.05	82.94	86.72	39.80	98.70

SOURCE: Study of Immigrants and Native-Born in Atlanta and Philadelphia (SINAP).

NOTE: Contextual control variables are measured at the census-tract level. For partisanship, higher values indicate more liberal.

feeling welcomed is included in the models, these effects disappear. This suggests that feeling welcomed is indeed important for understanding immigrants' trust in U.S.-born groups, and may be particularly important for Mexican immigrants who are less likely to be well integrated with the U.S.-born in local communities, compared to their Indian counterparts. We also note that the individual-level socioeconomic variables showed no discernable effects in predicting immigrants' trust in U.S.-born blacks and whites in the full models, though more education was associated with higher levels of trust in blacks.¹⁰ In addition, percent poverty in one's neighborhood is associated with less trust in

TABLE 3
Effects of Immigrants' Perceptions of Feeling Welcomed on Trust in U.S.-Born Blacks and Whites

Variables	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2a	Model 2b
	Trust in Whites	Trust in Whites	Trust in Blacks	Trust in Blacks
Key predictors				
Welcomed by whites	—	.426*** (.039)	—	—
Welcomed by blacks	—	—	—	.422*** (.040)
Individual controls				
Homeowner (=1)	-.014 (.088)	-.013 (.079)	-.048 (.094)	-.027 (.088)
Employed (=1)	-.068 (.080)	-.098 (.068)	.054 (.081)	.011 (.073)
Education	.014 (.037)	.009 (.031)	.101° (.043)	.083 (.036)
Age	-.004 (.004)	-.002 (.003)	-.002 (.004)	-.000 (.003)
Male (=1)	.082 (.071)	.045 (.062)	-.013 (.082)	.025 (.070)
Partisanship	.017 (.048)	.012 (.044)	.076 (.058)	.052 (.048)
Metro area	.002 (.078)	-.026 (.072)	-.056 (.081)	-.052 (.078)
Mexican (=1)	-.253° (.117)	-.133 (.100)	-.306° (.136)	-.107 (.116)
Interview type	-.342°° (.111)	-.148 (.100)	-.233° (.114)	-.198 (.102)
Years in U.S.	.002 (.005)	.000 (.004)	.004 (.005)	.002 (.004)
English	.164°° (.065)	.090 (.051)	.153°° (.056)	.043 (.055)
Contextual controls				
Percent white	.003 (.002)	.002 (.002)	—	—
Percent black	—	—	-.002 (.002)	-.001 (.002)
Percent poverty	-.006 (.005)	-.009° (.004)	-.011°° (.004)	-.010°° (.003)
Percent foreign-born	-.001 (.003)	-.002 (.002)	-.008°° (.002)	-.006° (.002)
Percent in same house in last 5 years	-.010° (.004)	-.006 (.004)	-.011° (.004)	-.006 (.004)
Constant	2.690*** (0.496)	1.821*** (0.445)	2.454*** (0.516)	1.442*** (0.517)
Observations	600	600	599	599
R-squared	.233	.394	.329	.459

SOURCE: Study of Immigrants and Native-Born in Atlanta and Philadelphia (SINAP).
NOTE: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Contextual control variables measured at the census-tract level.
°p < .05. °°p < .01. °°°p < .001.

both U.S.-born groups, and percent foreign-born is associated with less trust in U.S.-born blacks.

Predicting interest. When we turn to models 1b and 2b in Table 4, we find highly significant and positive associations between immigrants' feeling welcomed by U.S.-born whites and blacks, and their greater interest in knowing whites and blacks, respectively. We also found that while national origin does not have a significant effect, years spent in the United States is negatively associated with immigrants' interest in knowing whites. In the models predicting interest in knowing blacks, metro area, and percent foreign-born both have significant effects: immigrants who reside in Philadelphia and who live in neighborhoods with higher percent foreign-born are less interested in knowing U.S.-born blacks than their counterparts who live in Atlanta and in neighborhoods with smaller foreign-born populations.

We also estimated interactions between national origin and welcoming. Here, we observed that the effects of feeling welcomed by whites differentially predicted trust and interest in knowing U.S.-born whites among Mexicans and Indians. While feeling welcomed by whites was generally associated with greater interest in knowing whites among both immigrant groups, this effect was especially strong among Mexican immigrants (analyses available upon request). The remaining interactions were not significant, indicating that the effects of feeling welcomed by blacks on trust and interest in blacks did not differ significantly for Mexican and Indian immigrants.

Finally, in Table 5, we turn to models predicting immigrants' community involvement. For this analysis, we created a composite measure of feeling welcomed by blacks and whites, because these two measures were highly correlated ($r = .64$). Similar to our other analyses, our results show that when immigrants feel welcomed by whites and blacks, they display greater involvement in the local community, all else equal (model 1b). We also found that English proficiency is a significant predictor of community involvement, such that immigrants who are more proficient in English show greater involvement in civic activities. We found that no other individual and contextual controls have significant effects, and that when we estimated interactions between feeling welcomed and national origin, no significant effects appeared when predicting community involvement.

Discussion and Conclusion

Given recent debates about whether and to what extent immigrants integrate into the U.S. context (see Alba and Nee 2003), this article advances past research by focusing on immigrants' perceptions of their communities. We argue that the structural contexts that immigrants must navigate—namely, institutions and policies—are important for understanding immigrant integration, but they constitute only one piece of the puzzle. We must also examine immigrants' perceptions of and everyday interactions with the U.S.-born, as these can have important

TABLE 4
 Effects of Immigrants' Perceptions of Feeling Welcomed on Interest in
 U.S.-Born Blacks and Whites

Variables	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2a	Model 2b
	Interest in Whites	Interest in Whites	Interest in Blacks	Interest in Blacks
Key predictors				
Welcomed by whites	—	.291*** (.060)	—	—
Welcomed by blacks	—	—	—	.337*** (.057)
Individual controls				
Homeowner (=1)	-.132 (.133)	-.126 (.132)	-.043 (.158)	-.027 (.149)
Employed (=1)	-.101 (.103)	-.119 (.099)	-.089 (.106)	-.085 (.103)
Education	.069 (.052)	.056 (.050)	.035 (.058)	.016 (.059)
Age	.003 (.005)	.004 (.005)	-.001 (.005)	.001 (.005)
Male (=1)	.014 (.094)	-.010 (.091)	-.049 (.101)	-.063 (.095)
Partisanship	.126 (.072)	.126 (.108)	.077 (.075)	.063 (.072)
Metro area	-.100 (.110)	-.107 (.108)	-.427*** (.119)	-.417*** (.114)
Mexican (=1)	-.100 (.188)	-.037 (.185)	-.273 (.195)	-.135 (.182)
Interview type	-.515*** (.147)	-.381** (.140)	-.589*** (.149)	-.559*** (.150)
Years in U.S.	-.013 (.007)	-.014* (.007)	-.005 (.006)	-.007 (.006)
English proficiency	.030 (.090)	-.018 (.092)	.179* (.072)	.091 (.072)
Contextual controls				
Percent white	-.000 (.003)	-.002 (.003)	—	—
Percent black	—	—	-.005 (.003)	-.004 (.006)
Percent poverty	.002 (.007)	-.003 (.007)	.003 (.006)	.004 (.006)
Percent foreign born	-.003 (.004)	-.004 (.004)	-.009* (.004)	-.008* (.004)
Percent in same house in last 5 years	-.004 (.006)	-.002 (.006)	-.013* (.006)	-.010 (.006)
Constant	1.038 (0.795)	0.547 (0.798)	1.847** (0.704)	1.058 (0.720)
Observations	614	614	611	611
R-squared	.075	.123	.173	.228

SOURCE: Study of Immigrants and Native-Born in Atlanta and Philadelphia (SINAP).

NOTE: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Contextual control variables measured at the census-tract level.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 5
Effects of Immigrants' Perceptions of Feeling Welcomed on Community Involvement

Variables	Model 1a	Model 1b
Key predictor		
Welcomed by whites and blacks	—	.245 ^{°°} (.081)
Individual controls		
Homeowner (=1)	.259 (.146)	.265 (.146)
Employed (=1)	-.029 (.133)	-.041 (.133)
Education	.109 (.068)	.102 (.067)
Age	-.000 (.007)	.001 (.112)
Male (=1)	-.075 (.113)	-.090 (.112)
Partisanship	.038 (.116)	.033 (.113)
Metro area	-.068 (.143)	-.061 (.141)
Mexican (=1)	.061 (.246)	.147 (.247)
Interview type	-.165 (.176)	-.103 (.178)
Years in U.S.	.004 (.008)	.003 (.008)
English proficiency	.241 ^{°°} (.095)	.188 [°] (.095)
Contextual controls		
Percent white	.002 (.003)	.002 (.003)
Percent poverty	-.004 (.006)	-.005 (.006)
Percent foreign-born	.001 (.004)	.000 (.004)
Percent in same house for past 5 years	.005 (.007)	.007 (.007)
Constant	-.410 (.794)	-.863 (.803)
Observations	608	608
R-squared	.148	.164

SOURCE: Study of Immigrants and Native-Born in Atlanta and Philadelphia (SINAP).

NOTE: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Contextual control variables measured at the census-tract level.

[°] $p < .05$. ^{°°} $p < .01$.

downstream effects on social integration and engagement with local communities.

In this article, we focused on immigrants' perceptions of feeling welcomed by the U.S.-born. While welcoming by members of a host society can be a symbolic gesture, it can also be an important signal to immigrants and other marginalized groups. Acceptance and belonging are not simply produced by institutional policies and practices; they also reflect interactions and local practices of recognition and inclusion (see Bloemraad 2018; Glenn 2011).

We found that Mexican immigrants have significantly lower levels of feeling welcomed by the U.S.-born than do Indian immigrants. This is not surprising given the socioeconomic and legal status differences between these two groups. We also discovered that Indian immigrants often felt welcomed in their neighborhoods, as they chatted with their mostly white neighbors and were invited to local events, where they further developed interpersonal ties and relations. For Mexican immigrants, feeling welcomed by the U.S.-born sometimes took place in racially mixed neighborhoods, but most often in the context of their children's schools, community-based organizations, and places of worship. Mexicans talked about welcoming less than Indians did, and feeling welcomed was expressed a bit differently between the two immigrant groups. Nevertheless, similar processes regarding the importance and value of feeling welcomed appeared across both immigrant groups.

To understand how feeling welcomed mattered for immigrant integration, our analysis of the survey data revealed that when immigrants felt welcomed by U.S.-born blacks and whites, they were more likely to trust and express interest in blacks and whites, respectively, and more likely to engage in civic activities in their communities. These effects were robust, as we included a battery of individual measures of socioeconomic status and other demographic variables, and contextual measures for neighborhood racial and immigrant composition, socioeconomic status, and stability. Although neither socioeconomic nor national origin variables consistently predicted immigrants' trust and interest in U.S.-born populations, feeling welcomed was positively and significantly related to trust and interest in the U.S.-born in all the models. In short, these findings suggest that successful immigrant integration involves interpersonal and interactional processes beyond formal institutions and policies. In other words, an inclusionary policy context may not produce optimal outcomes if immigrants do not feel welcomed in their interpersonal interactions with the U.S.-born. Existing theoretical frameworks of immigrant integration should further consider how individuals' perceptions of everyday encounters with others operate as a key part of the integration process.

How might our results apply to other immigrant groups, or even refugees or migrants with temporary or discretionary statuses? Given that the positive effects of welcoming held across two differently positioned immigrant groups, we surmise they may also hold for other groups as well. For example, refugees often have lower average levels of human capital and less English language fluency than economic migrants do, but they also benefit from policies that provide services and resources, including legal status and access to material support upon

arrival. Yet despite the support embedded in resettlement programs, refugees also face uneven and at times hostile receptions from local communities, and their governmental supports have recently declined to “modest” and “temporary” levels compared to the past (Fitzgerald and Arar 2018, 397–98; Fujiwara 2008; Portes and Bach 1985).

In many ways, the Mexican immigrants in our sample have similar profiles to those of refugees. In this vein, Fitzgerald and Arar (2018) broadly critique the idea that migrants and refugees are distinct and argue that the “categorization of refugees is malleable both from above and from below” (pp. 388–91). We posit that the distinction between refugees and migrants may be even more malleable in terms of host society perceptions and attitudes, especially since host society members often do not understand official categories or state-sanctioned differences between them. Thus, future research should investigate linkages between broader institutional and political contexts, hosts’ attitudes toward immigrants in their communities, and immigrants’ perceptions of both to clarify how welcoming within a community fits into broader patterns of social integration and exclusion and how it varies for migrants with different legal-political statuses.

Notes

1. In Philadelphia, the white-black dissimilarity index in 2010 was 73.3 and in Atlanta it was 58.3, indicating that a majority of whites (or blacks) would need to move within and across neighborhoods to achieve racial integration within the larger metropolitan area. Further, both metropolitan areas exhibited high levels of racial isolation. In 2010, the average black and white resident lived in neighborhoods with relatively high percentages of their own racial groups (for whites, 80.0 percent in Philadelphia and 67.0 percent in Atlanta; and for blacks, 62.9 percent in Philadelphia and 58.1 percent in Atlanta) (Logan and Stults 2011).

2. Using the entire Philadelphia and Atlanta metropolitan areas for our sampling frame, the survey employed a stratified sampling design to reach foreign-born Mexicans and Indians. We drew a random sample from cell phone lists as well as surname dictionaries, in conjunction with an oversampling of high-density census tracts based on American Community Survey (ACS) block-group level estimates of where Mexican and Indian immigrants live, as well as some face-to-face survey administration to subsamples of Mexican and Indian immigrants.

3. We compared characteristics of respondents who did and did not provide cross-street information for their place of residence; respondents who provided cross-street information tended to be older, were more likely to be homeowners, and had higher levels of education than those who did not provide cross-street information.

4. In general, Mexicans as a group and in our sample are more marginalized than Indians, as Mexican immigrants are less likely to be supported by institutional and policy contexts and by everyday publics (Bean, Brown, and Bachmeier 2015; Massey and Sanchez 2010).

5. These separate church services for Mexicans and whites are referred to as “parallel services” within the same congregation or church (López-Sanders 2012; see also Jiménez 2017).

6. We also estimated our models using ordered logit models and the results were generally the same as the ordinary least squares (OLS) models. We ultimately chose to use OLS models for ease of interpretation of results.

7. Immigrants’ interest and trust were moderately correlated for U.S.-born whites (.36) and blacks (.42). As such, we treat them as separate outcomes in our analysis.

8. We included weights for age and income to ensure that our sample is representative of the larger Atlanta and Philadelphia metropolitan areas. Additionally, because our models include individual and census-tract level predictors, we estimated robust standard errors.

9. We checked for collinearity and calculated variance inflation factors (VIFs) for each model and for individual variables. The mean VIF across our models ranged from 1.6 to 2.6, and nearly all of the contextual variables reached individual VIF values within the range of 1.6 to 2.3. Percent white was the exception with an individual VIF value of 3.4, which is within an acceptable range, as VIF values above 10 warrant further investigation.

10. In reduced models estimated only with individual-level controls, we find that immigrants' education is positively associated with trust in both blacks and whites, though the effect is marginal ($p < .10$). Additionally, when we included a measure of undocumented status in our full models, this did not change our results, as the effect of feeling welcomed remained positive and highly significant. Tables are available upon request.

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