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Measuring Immigrant Integration in the United States South

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Measuring Immigrant Integration in the United States South

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Dedication

For the Frasicas, Eben, Otto and Lorena, Aletta, Sami, the Benalcazars, Ali, Nelia, Jasmine, and many, many others. My hope in dedicating this thesis to you is to offer a level of recognition to the beauty that you bring to the communities in which you live. You breathe life and joy into these spaces and into the lives of people like me. Thank you for your stories and thank you for sharing them with me. Your impact on my life is long-lasting, and I am thankful.

For Mom and Dad. You have shown me the immense value – triumphs, celebrations, loss, and learning – of pursuing welcome. A life in pursuit of building community with friends and family from every walk of life has been the motivation behind this research. Because of your unfailing support, you have pushed me to pursue opportunities that have fostered growth and a richer understanding of the world and the people in it. You are my unyielding source of encouragement, and I am thankful for the consistent knowledge of what it is to belong and to be valued because of you.

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Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Merivaki and Dr. Pugh. I am grateful for your questions and suggestions during the defense which reflect a thorough engagement and interest in this work. I deeply appreciate your willingness to provide wisdom and insight on this project, and to lift up students like me through your careers and research.

Foreword

It is important to recognize that both academic and lay discussion of native and immigrant populations in the United States (and other settler societies) frequently excludes discussion of the truly original native-born populations of indigenous peoples.

All discussion henceforth regarding ‘native’ and ‘native-born’ populations does not seek to minimize or exclude the experiences and realities of these indigenous populations. ‘Native-born’ populations highlighted in this study refer to populations with multi-generational establishment in the United States. However, these ‘native-born’ populations were all at one point immigrants to the U.S. themselves that subjected indigenous receiving populations to displacement, violence, and oppression. While the specific experiences of indigenous peoples at the hands of colonial and American powers is outside the scope of this study, there are tribes and nations that reside specifically within the U.S. South which must be recognized before continuing with this discussion. These include the Caddo, Catawba, Cherokee, Chitimacha, Choctaw, Creek, Coushatta, Osage, Poarch Creek, Quapaw, and Tunica-Biloxi¹.

¹ “Tribal Nations Maps.” *Data.Gov*, <https://www.data.gov/climate/tribal-nations/tribal-nations-maps/>.

Abstract

This study examines the integration success of immigrants in the U.S. South. The design of this study establishes six indicators of integration: employment, education, political engagement, health, housing, and language. In the discussion, each section establishes the indicator's measurement technique, its relevance to integration, and its relationship with other indicators. The proposed measure is a point-based survey which correlates to a hexagonal spider graph as an overall index of integration success. The survey is recommended for individual administration to compare cases and determine change across time of immigrants as they integrate into the U.S. South. Integration is viewed as the extent to which immigrants are able to function and contribute as members of their community. This is relevant for the quality of life of both immigrant populations and the populations in which immigrants settle. There is limited research on measuring immigrant integration, as well as the dynamics of integration specifically in the U.S. South. There is a need to expand this area of research because of increasing immigrant populations in the U.S. South, a lack of pathways to reduce barriers for immigrants, and an increasing generational gap between first-generation immigrants and their children.

Introduction

This research will establish six relevant and interrelated measures of immigrant integration success, a methodology for measuring these measures, and a tool to analyze the measurements across time and individual cases. Previous literature on immigration and integration studies lacks a uniform tool to measure integration. There is inconsistent conceptualization of what integration looks like across the literature. This poses a problem in that there is not an accessible or broadly applicable way to measure, compare, and analyze integration success. The proposed methodology produces a thorough conceptualization of integration, a research structure of how to approach this topic, and proposes an index to visualize the integration metrics.

This discussion is relevant and significant for three main reasons. First, there is a lack of structural strength in the public services and institutions of the U.S. South which are compounded with the de facto approach to integration. This combination of factors creates a disenfranchised yet growing sub-population. Second, there are increasingly polarized receiving populations exhibiting hyper-partisan sentiments towards immigration policy and immigrant populations. This has not been the historical precedent. This creates community- and individual-level barriers to integration for immigrant populations. Lastly, this research seeks to address the inter-generational integration gap between first-generation immigrants and their dependents or second-generation immigrants. This gap reveals a discrepancy between the integration access and ability of different groups of immigrants, and therefore it seeks to address the needs of the groups with higher barriers to integration.

The conceptualization of integration is essential because it has direct effects on the quality of life of immigrants, the quality of life of the communities in which they reside, and the efficacy of the social, political, and economic systems in that community. Integration is defined as the reduction of barriers which hinder participation and belonging within the community systems in which an immigrant resides. This definition is framed by the previous literature which

establishes that integration is not assimilation, and not de facto guaranteed over time. In place of assimilation theory and the goal of reaching the ‘American mainstream’, integration is established to include the reduction of barriers in reaching a parity of life chances alongside native-born populations. This includes a two-way dynamic between individuals and communities which dual responsibility and necessary action.

The limits on the scope of this research and methodology include the region, age, receiving populations, and immigration status. The United States South is defined as the Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. This is the established regional scope of this research because of the limited regional literature, the intra-regional comparability, the sub-national ability to measure immigration, and the historic legacies that exist within this region and directly affect the integration success of immigrants and their communities. The receiving populations factor exhibits a unique dynamic as both an independent, contributing factor and a dependent factor that is affected by immigrant integration. Therefore, it is a valuable topic, but outside of the scope of this research. Additionally, this measure is specifically for adult-aged immigrants because of the aforementioned generational gap and the role that adults play in the majority of the integration measures. Last, the scope of this research is limited to immigrants with legal documentation including refugees, asylees, special immigrants (SIVs), employment-sponsored immigrants, and family-sponsored immigrants. This is because the first and largest barrier to integration is documentation and immigrants without legal documentation face limited integration in all of these measures.

The proposed research structure introduces the independent and dependent variables. Three proposed independent variables include immigration status, country of origin, and demographic variance. These all have independent effects on an individual’s integration success. However, the key variable is determined to be immigrant status because of its direct and foundational effect on the arrival and settlement process and therefore the barriers to integration that an immigrant will face. The dependent variables are established as measures which should change depending on an individual’s integration success. This includes employment, education, political engagement, health, housing, and language. These measures are hypothesized to be interrelated with comparable effects on integration.

The goal of proposing this index is to introduce a standard measurement tool which enables deeper analysis of types of integration, individual integration change over time, and integration success across groups. This is to allow for changes in measurement administration and immigrant movement across the region, and to capture the hypothesized possibility for negative integration change, or backsliding.

The integration metrics explored through this research are employment, education, political engagement, health, housing, and language. The fulfillment of employment capacity and stability of employment are the facets of this measure. Education is a joint measure which combines the previous levels of education with access to further education. Political engagement is measured as the access, knowledge, and representation that one has of personal duty, community participation, and activism outside the realm of citizenship-based political participation. Health integration is defined as the access, quality, and knowledge of health care

and personal health. The individual-level and community-level aspects of housing are captured through the levels of safety, security, and belonging that an immigrant experiences. Lastly, language is measured through English proficiency and the level of autonomy that an individual has with their level of proficiency.

The proposed measure of these six metrics is through a questionnaire intended for individual administration to adult immigrants with documentation within the U.S. South. The responses of the questionnaire will be converted to a number of points in order to directly translate it to a visual spider graph index. Higher scores will indicate greater integration while lower scores will indicate higher barriers to integration.

Literature Review and Conceptualization of Integration

Addressing Relevance and Significance of Study

The United States current societal and institutional structure has been described as “de facto multiculturalism,” (Alba & Foner 2015, 9). This laissez-faire approach to integration relies on individual-based motivation and robust public systems, rather than the use of an organized and unified governmental strategy (Jiménez 2011, 18-19). The reality is that there are not directed policies in place to support the specific needs of immigrants in the U.S. South. There is little facilitation for creating pathways for immigrant participation and belonging in the social, political, and economic systems (Rodríguez-García 2010). Rather, there is a consistent and growing multiculturalism and diversity of experiences without consistently evolving institutions in place to support these populations.

In addition to a general lack of policies and institutional strength in supporting resettlement, immigrants find themselves in polarized native receiving populations in the U.S. South. Where this is the case, immigrants face higher barriers to integration in these communities (Alba & Nee 2003; Alba & Foner 2015). However, this has not been the historical pattern (Esipova et al. 2020; United States Executive Office of the President 2021). For example, the modern U.S. refugee resettlement program began with the 1980 Refugee Act which was passed and experienced wide bipartisan support. However, several factors including the 2015 Syrian refugee flows to Europe, terrorist attacks in France and California, and a presidential campaign with high anti-immigrant rhetoric facilitated the sudden politicization of refugee policy. Despite the Executive branch control over immigration, in November 2015, “...more than half of US governors announced their opposition to Syrian refugees being resettled in their states...ultimately had little practical effect, except, perhaps, for polarizing public opinion and instilling significant concern among already resettled refugees...” (Bauman et al. 2016, 172-73). Additionally, Younis (2020) finds the largest gap between political party identities and preference for increased immigration with Democrats and Independents increasing in support and Republicans generally staying the same or decreasing. Polarized rhetoric stalls bipartisan policy formation, community-oriented resolutions, and does not improve quality of life for immigrant populations in the U.S. South. The hyper-polarization and politicization of immigrant policy and immigrant belonging reveals a relevant concern to address immigrant needs and the needs of the communities in which they reside.

A third aspect regarding the significance of this study is the increasing generational gap between first-generation immigrants and their children. There is a dissonance between the integration success of immigrants born outside of the U.S. and their children or dependents born in the U.S. This is due to various institutional integration failures. These failures perpetuate the problems immigrants face, including family separation (Booth et al. 1997), gaps in education (Dee & Murphy 2018), youth development (Kline 2019; Fix 2020), and poor quality of life and health (Capps & Batalova 2020).

Defining Integration

For the purposes of this research, integration is defined as the reduction of barriers which hinder participation and belonging within the social, political, and economic systems of the community in which an immigrant resides. Such barriers will be further elaborated throughout this section. Measuring immigrant integration has vital implications for the quality of life of immigrant populations and the populations in which immigrants settle. Additionally, thorough integration is essential for the social, economic, and political institutions to operate most effectively. That is to say, if immigrant populations are failing to reach their full capacity of participation, they are unable to access the fullest extent of these institutions. Simultaneously these institutions are failing to serve all of the people who could benefit from and contribute to them. This reveals an institutional ineffectiveness rooted in incomplete integration.

Previous literature and U.S. social norms generally support assimilation theory. This refers to the increasing conformity and uniformity of immigrant groups to the dominant culture of American society. This is problematic for several reasons. First, it implies a need for immigrant groups to change in order to belong or meaningfully contribute. It also assumes a one-sided, ethnocentric view of what the American experience looks like. This poses a difficulty in determining what the majority culture might be, even if assimilation were the goal. This paper's conceptualization seeks to address prevailing societal ideas of immigrant assimilation. Assimilation is not the goal for this research because it promotes ideals of immigrant populations increasingly conforming to a dominant culture and society. Assimilation theory remains insufficient in defining the goals of immigrants in the U.S. South, and therefore the goals of this research.

Alba & Nee (2003) define the "American mainstream" as, "...that part of the society *within* which ethnic and racial origins have at most minor impacts of life chances or opportunities," (Alba & Nee 2003, 12). Later literature by Alba expands on this idea that the mainstream is, "...encompassing those social and cultural spaces where the native majority feels 'at home' or, in other words, where its presence is taken for granted and seen as unproblematic," (Alba & Foner 2015, 5). These definitions lean toward conceptualizing a goal of limited discrimination in order to be a functioning member of American society. It is not the most effective for defining what does and does not constitute the 'American mainstream', especially as fully functioning and native-born members of American society still persistently face discrimination and exclusion. However, these ideas offer some insight for this research regarding the conceptualization of integration as a form of barrier reduction.

Barrier reduction is an essential aspect to integration. Barriers in this sense refer to the obstacles that immigrants face in attempting to integrate in the U.S. South. While systemic barriers exist for native-born populations in the U.S. South, the barriers discussed throughout this paper are typically unique to the migrant experience, or at least to specific immigrant statuses. (However, these native-born populations would be considered by Alba & Nee (2003) to be outside of the American mainstream since they are permanently disadvantaged in accessing barrier reduction, such as freedom from discrimination.) In the broadest sense, barrier reduction is a sign of improved integration. Having lower barriers allows for greater access to integration or resources for integration. This conceptualization is supported by previous literature which frames integration in terms of barrier reduction (Jimenez 2011). Therefore, barrier reduction is essential for immigrant integration conceptualization to address the growing development of permanently disadvantaged immigrant populations as they grow in size and relative population ratio throughout the U.S. South.

Continuing with this conceptualization, many mass migration movements to the U.S. reveal large-scale integration and belonging to economic, social, and political institutions after several generations, or after being substituted by a new wave of immigrants. For example, Irish and German immigrants in the mid-19th century, Mediterranean Catholics in the early 20th century, and Vietnamese immigrants post-1975 have resided in the U.S. for multiple generations at present. They are widely considered to be integrated into the ‘American mainstream’ today (Alba & Nee 2003). However, there are also immigrant populations that have long-established and historical immigration patterns to the U.S. yet still face persistent barriers to full participation in the economic, social, and political institutions. For example, immigrants of Mexican descent have been part of the U.S. population since the Mexican American war of 1846-48, and experienced sharp increases in immigration in the early 20th century (Gutiérrez n.d., 58). Yet, foreign-born Mexican populations in the U.S. – and Hispanic populations more broadly – experience persistently higher poverty rates, lower educational attainment, and lower rates of English proficiency than both the national averages and the rates of U.S.-born Hispanic populations (Noe-Bustamante & Flores 2019). This indicates lower integration success, despite multi-generational settlement and various other waves of immigration that theoretically may have served as substitutive waves. Therefore, this indicates that immigrant integration is not entirely factored upon time or movements of other migrant groups. Additionally, it indicates that immigrant integration success is not entirely based upon an immigrant’s individual ability or motivation to integrate.

The onus is not entirely on immigrants to integrate by their own merit, or it would happen faster, more often, and this research would not be necessary. Instead, there is a two-way dynamic which involves the institutions and communities in which immigrants reside and the systemic barriers to integration that they face. There is a two-way relationship between the individuals and the structures or communities to which they belong. As immigrants integrate more fully into their communities, the communities will benefit from their capacity to contribute. Furthermore, there is harmful terminology that insinuates that communities must change to their detriment in order to achieve immigrant integration. Rather, integration is a two-way dynamic with benefits for both sides through the goal of transformation between communities and immigrants. Terminology which evokes one-sided detriment does not capture the two-way dynamic that improves integration and well-being for both immigrants and receiving communities. This

integration index attempts to address and capture the two-way dynamic between individual immigrants and receiving communities.

Alba builds on previous literature with Foner (2015) where integration is defined more thoroughly as, "...parity of life chances with members of the native majority group and being recognized as a legitimate part of the national community," (Alba & Foner 2015, 5). This more clearly establishes a belonging to the economic, social, and political institutions of a society and decreased barriers to full participation within them while not implying an obligation to assimilate or dissolve ethnic, socio-cultural, or linguistic differences in order to belong. Parity of life chances also insinuates measurable results. It is hypothesized that higher integration success would see lower discrepancies between measures of stability and belonging between immigrant and native-born populations. Lower discrepancies should indicate greater equality of life chances. These measures of stability and belonging will be expanded upon in later sections of this research through the index metrics.

Overall, the complete picture of integration ensures that immigrants are able to become self-sufficient, functioning, and contributing members of a society. Immigrant identity distinctness and successful integration are not mutually exclusive, and the goal of this research is that there would be opportunity for integration without having to sacrifice or diminish an immigrant's identity.

Throughout this research and in examining the previous literature, there is limited standardization in conceptualizing integration. However, even upon conceptualization, there is no established or broadly applicable tool for measuring integration success. For the remainder of this discussion, we will be looking at establishing a standard integration index tool that is lacking in the previous literature.

Scope of Research

Regional Focus

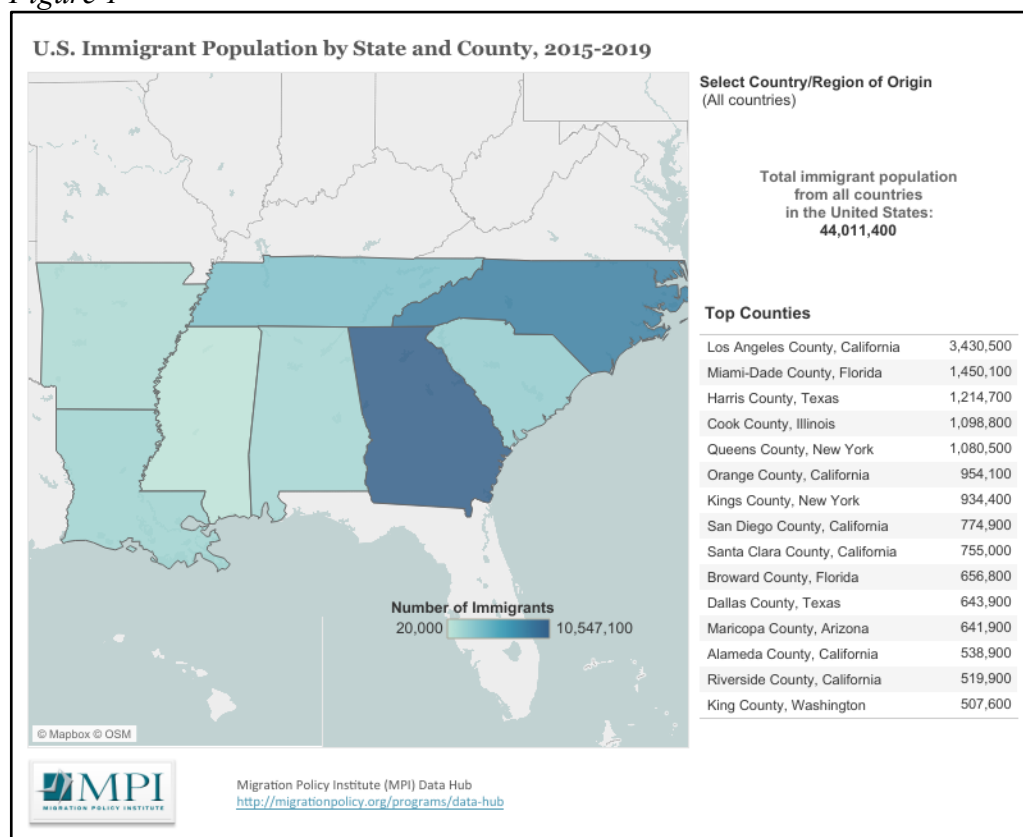
i. Defining and Measuring the Region

This study will be focusing on immigrant integration in the U.S. South through eight southeastern states: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. First, there is limited literature on integration that focuses on this region. Second, this region has specific demographic characteristics that allow for a comparative analysis both between the eight states and between this region and the rest of the country. Third, there are historical precedents which have created specific structures and concerns for immigrant integration in this region.

Figure 1² highlights the states included in this regional scope, and it includes the size of the immigrant populations in each state.

² "U.S. Immigrant Population by Metropolitan Area." *Migrationpolicy.Org*, 20 Nov. 2019, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-immigrant-population-metropolitan-area>.

Figure 1



The Migration Policy Institute (2019) also provides state-by-state data on the number of immigrants by population size. It measures the total number of immigrants in the entire U.S. as 44,011,400³, and this is used to calculate each state share of immigrant population. This data is listed in Figure 2, and it is arranged in decreasing order of immigrant population size.

Figure 2

State	Total # Immigrants (2019)	State Share of All Immigrants in the U.S. (2019)	Total State Population (2019) ⁴	State-Level Immigrant Population Ratio
Georgia	1 053 900	2.4%	10 617 423	9.93%
North Carolina	822 700	1.9%	10 488 084	7.84%
Tennessee	344 000	0.8%	6 829 174	5.04%
South Carolina	252 600	0.6%	5 148 714	4.91%
Louisiana	194 200	0.4%	4 648 794	4.18%
Alabama	172 900	0.4%	4 903 185	3.53%
Arkansas	145 000	0.3%	3 017 804	4.80%
Mississippi	70 500	0.2%	2 976 149	2.37%
U.S. South Total	3 055 800	6.94%	48 629 327	N/A

³ Ibid.

⁴ Bureau, US Census. "State Population Totals: 2010-2019." *The United States Census Bureau*, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/pepest/2010s-state-total.html>.

A key piece of data to highlight from Figure 2 is that of the total share of all immigrants in the U.S., 6.94% live in the region defined here as the U.S. South. This reveals a low distribution, and therefore limited literature and research that has been done on this topic. Additionally, the “State-Level Immigrant Population Ratio” column in Figure 2 may be helpful as a general overview; however, the nature of population distribution is generally not equal across a state. The following Figure 3 will be more relevant in understanding state-level immigrant population dispersion.

Figure 3

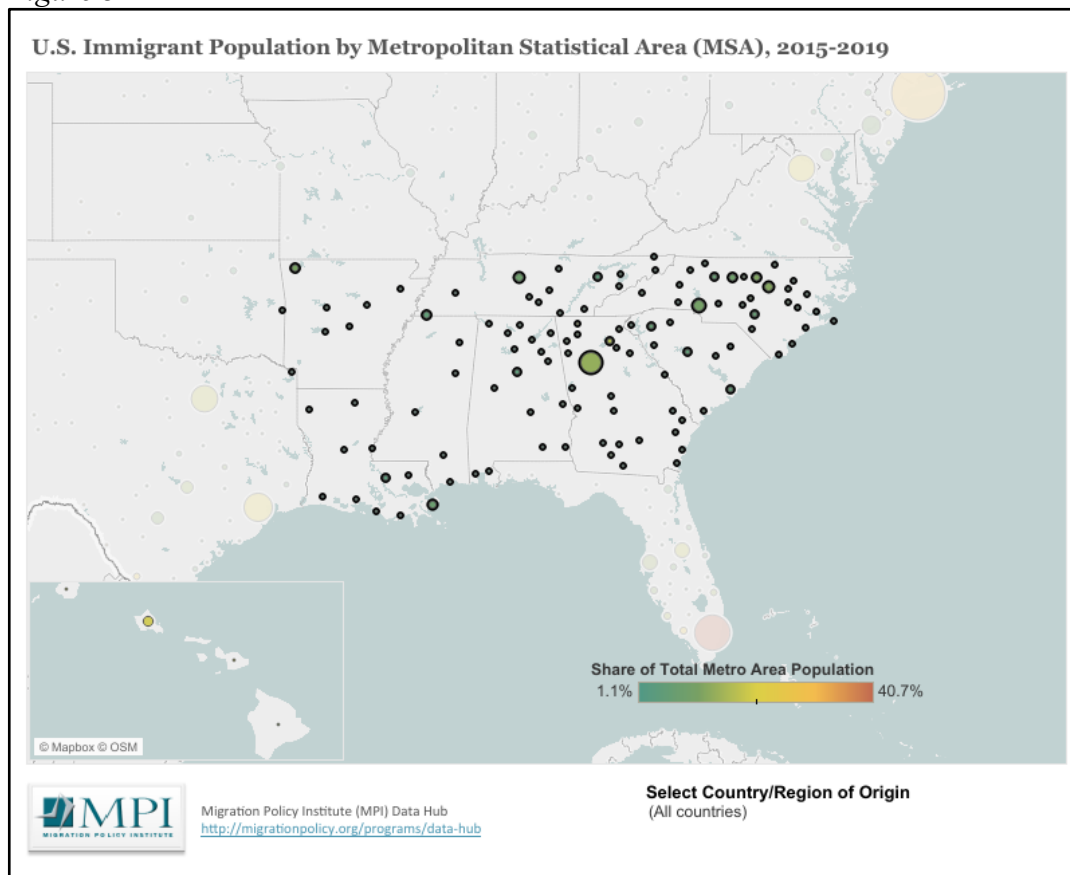


Figure 3⁵ shows clusters of immigrant populations in the U.S. South. While there are some metro-area concentrations specifically in Atlanta, GA; Charlotte, NC; Raleigh-Durham, NC; and Nashville, TN, the blue and green color-coding reveals that within the context of immigration distribution in the entirety of the U.S., all the immigrant clusters in the U.S. South fall below 14% of the overall national share of Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

The data presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3 reveals that the state shares of national immigrant populations in the U.S. South are slim – the majority per state being below 1%. Additionally, while there are some metro area immigrant population clusters in the U.S. South,

⁵ Ibid.

they are minimal in comparison with national-level urban clusters. These observations reflect the fact that the U.S. South is not a traditional immigrant resettlement destination. It also reveals the limited immigrant populations in this region.

ii. Limited Regional Literature

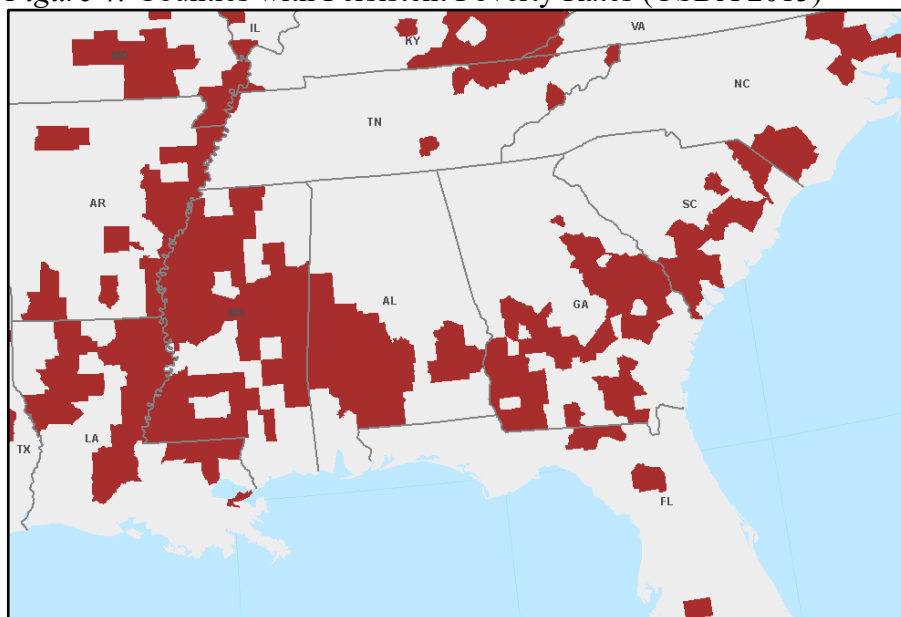
There is limited literature largely because in terms of national patterns, the U.S. South is also a relatively new area of study for immigrant integration. Traditional immigrant settlement areas in the U.S. have historically been California, New York, Texas, Florida, and Illinois, but “Beginning in the 1980s...Midwestern and southern states have seen an especially large influx of immigrants. In 1990, 66 percent of immigrants lived in the traditional gateway states and 34 percent resided in all other states. By 2005, the proportion residing in traditional immigration states shrank to 60 percent, while 40 percent were living in nontraditional immigration states,” (Jiménez 2011, 3).

For several reasons, Texas and Florida have not been included in this conceptualization of the U.S. South. First, there is substantive public consensus, historical development, and regional difference that make Texas and Florida distinct enough to not be effective for vast comparative analysis with the other eight states economically, socially, and politically. Secondly, these two states have significantly different roles and histories in the national immigration context than the other states included in this study which makes Texas and Florida outliers. For example, among the top three states by share of the U.S. Hispanic population, Texas and Florida are second and third, respectively; and among the top ten Hispanic populations by metropolitan areas, three cities are in Texas or Florida (Miami, Houston, and Dallas-Fort Worth) (Noe-Bustamente & Flores 2019). Successful immigrant integration could be studied in these two states alone due to the unique situations and phenomena found there, so they are not included in this study. Furthermore, while there is similarity across the indicated southern states chosen for this study, there is also enough variation amongst them that this study will still produce substantive analysis of how to measure immigrant integration in a broadly accessible way without the inclusion of Texas and Florida.

iii. Regional Comparability

A second key factor in this regional scope is the comparability of the populations. This includes demographics, employment trends, employment type, poverty rates, net population growth, and education levels. There are urban areas within this regional scope including the Atlanta, GA; Charlotte, NC; Durham-Raleigh, NC; Birmingham, AL; and New Orleans, LA metropolises which are largely juxtaposed by significant surrounding rurality (Kline 2019). This rurality factor indicates comparable employment industries including agriculture and manufacturing (USDA ERS 2015). Additionally, there are rates of persistent poverty in these specifically rural areas across states within this scope, as pictured in Figure 4 through the counties in red. As communities and states face narrow employment opportunities and persistent poverty rates in the rural areas, out-migration is observed to the urban areas of this region. Immigrant integration suffers in these conditions because of the lack of funding and institutional strength for measures such as health care, educational opportunities, and housing security.

Figure 4: Counties with Persistent Poverty Rates (USDA 2015)⁶



iv. Sub-National Component

Immigration policy is used as a tool for broader messaging and sentiment-shaping (Kline 2019). While this is not limited to the U.S. South, it is certainly prevalent and therefore worth discussing in this section. Immigration policy can be used to perpetuate ideas of racial otherness, or it can be used to manipulate the utility of immigrant integration. (See, for example, the Bracero Program of 1942-64 which increased immigration capacity to meet labor needs but decreased again when immigrant labor was no longer considered useful.) This messaging can be seen within the regional scope of this study. In the state legislature in Mississippi, several bills were proposed, “In 2011, Republican lawmakers had introduced thirty-three bills that aimed to either deport more immigrants, make life and work nearly impossible for them, or merely exclude them symbolically,” (Eaton 2016, 53). These bills included acts to restrict an immigrant’s access to renting an apartment, denying access to public benefits based on documentation, and English language mandates for government services. These have direct links to the integration measures outlined in this paper including housing, political engagement, and language. In Alabama, bills were introduced which reflected historic legacies of segregation with the goal of suppressing education integration with a bill which, “...requires educators to verify a student’s immigration status before the child can register for public school. It even makes it a crime to give an immigrant without ‘papers’ a ride in a car,” (Eaton 2016, 47). These bills highlight specific barriers that limit an immigrant’s access to belonging and contributing to the community in which they reside.

Barriers in the U.S. South exist not only in legislatures, but in the societal institutions to which immigrants need the greatest access. For example, they exist in schools and places of employment in Mississippi where, “In 2000...reports of Latino workers who had confronted

⁶ USDA ERS - *Go to the Atlas*. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/atlas-of-rural-and-small-town-america/go-to-the-atlas/>.

their bosses about working conditions on the Gulf Coast and who were now being threatened with deportation...educators in Laurel...were refusing to enroll the children of Latino poultry workers. The school administrators insisted that the children needed Social Security numbers to be enrolled,” (Eaton 2016, 50). Although immigration is under the purview of the national-level government, these state- and local-level actions reveal the significant roles in either facilitating or hindering immigrant integration (Kline 2019; Lopes & Thomas 2014). This is why it is practical and highly relevant to compare immigrant integration on a sub-national level within the region of the U.S. South.

v. Regional Historic Legacies

The history of the U.S. South is rooted in the forced migration of enslaved peoples from Africa and the Caribbean. This legacy continues to have effects for immigrants specifically in the U.S. South today. Following the legal end to slavery, legacies of race-based citizenship and belonging based on Jim Crow laws in the southern states have created institutional barriers to full participation and societal integration of Black Americans. This legacy of systemically inequitable access to societal goods remains to this day. These goods are considered the measures and reduced barriers outlined throughout this paper. This historic precedent creates systemic barriers to belonging for racial minority populations. As previously discussed, the elimination of barriers is a key sign of integration. Therefore, the specific role that the legacy of segregation in the U.S. South plays is of particular interest and concern for immigrants. Immigrants arriving to the U.S. South – especially those who are persons of color – seeking integration face these legacies as persistent barriers to full participation and belonging. This creates a dynamic for immigrants where they have inferior resources for barrier reduction compounded with greater and historically rooted barriers to integration that differ than in other regions of the U.S. where there are not the same legacies of legal and race-based segregation.

This legacy of race-based belonging can be seen in each of the six integration measures explicated in this paper. With education, there are highly unequal qualities of educational institutions based on de facto class and racial segregation. Housing is also influenced by the legacy of race-based citizenship. For example, red lining has produced systemic barriers to housing for racial minority populations. On the other side of this discussion, the Civil Rights advancements made in pursuit of equity for racial minorities is discussed by Alba & Foner (2015) who argue that the legacy of slavery in the U.S. South and the subsequent affirmative action policy, voting rights policies, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have created environments which immigrants can also benefit from, even though they are not the original targets of these agendas. Despite what immigrants may gain from these policies, this does not negate the reality that immigrants coming to the U.S. South today face the historical racialization of integration into social and civic institutions in similar ways to native-born populations.

Additionally, this scope does not seek to imply that neither immigrant nor native-born populations will not face systemic barriers outside of the U.S. South. However, the historical precedents within the U.S. South are relevant for determining the scope of this study. Therefore, because of limited literature, comparable characteristics, and historical precedents, the regional scope and context of this paper is the U.S. South.

Receiving Populations Variable

An additional factor that affects the success of immigrant integration is that of receiving populations where an immigrant settles. The demographics of the receiving population can affect the sentiments felt towards incoming immigrants and the level of discrimination that immigrants face in seeking integration. This is largely dependent on the fluid and changing demographics of local communities as well as their similarities to incoming immigrant demographics (Alba & Nee 2003; Thomas 2010; Gagnon et al. 2004). Receiving population density also factors into integration success as immigrants face specific barriers depending on whether they are received in an urban or rural setting (Martin 2009; Macdonald & Sampson 2012; Patuzzi 2020). Third, the presence and prevalence of national ties and support networks in receiving populations can affect the level of integration that immigrants experience.

Several of these factors are also dependent factors that change as immigrants become more successfully integrated. For example, the demographics and sentiments of the receiving populations will change (Alba & Foner 2015). Additionally, as immigrants become more integrated in the society, the receiving native populations may alter their recognition of immigrant belonging and may even work to reduce barriers when they recognize the value of immigrant integration in their communities (Barker 2015). However as previously discussed in the regional scope, receiving population sentiments can also negatively affect integration success through state-level legislation or community-based initiatives and institutions.

Within the U.S. South regional scope, there is a specific role that rurality plays for immigrant integration. Rurality indicates smaller populations and lower indexes of dissimilarity in the population. This is especially pertinent to navigating immigrant integration because of the receiving populations in which they settle.

The study of receiving populations is both an independent and dependent variable, and it is outside of the scope of this research for several reasons. First, the sentiments, demographics, and the interaction between the sentiments and demographics of the receiving populations are an unstable, subjective, and difficult measure to capture for comparative analysis. However, this could be relevant for future research. Second, the focus of this study is on immigrant integration from the perspective of the immigrant's needs. The intention is not to focus on what external communities feel about immigrants. However, this measure cannot be entirely discounted for the specific effect it can have on access to integration measures, especially if communities are antagonistic or discriminatory towards immigrant integration. It also cannot be entirely discounted because of the soft power and internalized impact receiving population sentiments may have on whether immigrants feel and believe that they are or are not integrated and included. This can have direct impacts on the integration measures. For example, if employers or coworkers at a place of employment express sentiments which make an immigrant not feel like they belong, it is likely to affect the employment integration, health and wellbeing, and language acquisition of the individual.

Therefore, the receiving populations variable is unique in the way that it functions as both an independent and dependent variable in measuring immigrant integration. While it is outside of the scope of this work to include in this examination, the potential effects of receiving

populations on integration success – both explicit and implicit – may have consequences for the results of this study that could be examined in future research.

Age Scope

The categories of integration that will be measured through this index include employment, political engagement, housing, health care, and education. These are the direct responsibility of adults or heads of households. While language is not restricted by age, there is significant literature which establishes the discrepancies in language integration between adult and children immigrants. Additionally, previous literature reveals higher success levels of integration with immigrant children than with adults, particularly due to the peer interactions and rapid language acquisition exhibited by children. Due to the measurable factors of this research, the integration index is best suited for adult-aged immigrants. This is a valuable scope of research since there is a need to decrease the negative effects of the generational gap between immigrant children and their parents. As adult-aged immigrant integration improves, it is hypothesized that child and overall household integration will be positively related. Overall, the effects of these integration metrics do affect children and are important for their long-term integration in the U.S. South, but for the purposes of this research, the scope will focus on adult-aged, first-generation immigrants.

Immigration Status Scope

For the purposes of this research, this paper will only be discussing how to measure integration of immigrants with legal documentation. Immigrants without documentation or work authorization residing in the U.S. South face barriers in every realm of integration, and the first barrier that would be necessary to remove is access to legal status. Since integration is discussed in terms of barrier reduction, the barriers that immigrants without documentation face have been discussed in other literature and are outside the scope of this research.

Research Structure

Independent Variables

The independent variable measured in this integration study will be immigrant status. This includes refugees, asylees, special immigrants (or SIVs), employment-sponsored immigrants, and family-sponsored immigrants.

This is a valuable input measure for several reasons. First, it has direct effects on an individual's arrival experience and resettlement process. Depending on status, an immigrant can be sponsored by employer or family, resettled through an NGO, or begin in a detention center ("Oversight of ICE Detention Facilities" 2020; Gonzales et al. 2019; Ciancio & García-Jimeno 2019; Kovak & Lessem 2020). The variations in these arrival experiences establish the foundation for the barriers to integration that immigrants will face in pursuing integration. Second, immigration status has a direct effect on the access an individual has to resources which facilitate barrier reduction and overall integration (Blizzard & Batalova 2019). There is variation among immigrant statuses regarding the available resources and benefits that they have access to. Third,

a migrant's status and subsequent stability of life directly affects their access to the various measures of integration as studied later in this paper: employment, education, health, political engagement, and housing. This will be further elaborated in the Immigration Status Scope section.

A secondary possible contributing independent factor is the country of origin. This is hypothesized to be due to the fact that connections to linguistic, national, ethnic, or kinship communities can promote successful integration (Flores 2016; Weise 2015; Pounders 2007; Eaton 2016), but it can also act as a hinderance (Alba & Foner 2015). Also, the country-of-origin measure is not completely independent of immigrant status, but not precisely correlated. For example, the majority of immigrants from countries in conflict may settle in the U.S. with refugee or asylee status because of the common native country situation, but there may be some that come as SIVs or family reunification immigrants. Therefore, it is useful to consider these two variables as separate, while also maintaining the viewpoint that they are linked. However, since the main theory with this factor is the role of co-national communities, this will be more relevant in the housing metric section.

Lastly, independent variables of gender, religion, and class may have effects on measures of immigrant integration by posing broader, cross-cutting barriers to access across these categories. For example, the gender pay gap or education gap is likely to be reflected in measures of integration success (Alba & Foner 2015). This is important to recognize during the remainder of this study as it reveals that immigrants are not homogenous groups and do not reflect homogenous experiences even if they have the same status and country of origin. These independent variables will not be included explicitly as contributing factors because the measurement and data collection are outside the scope of this research. However, it is hypothesized that the effects on integration of these variables will still be captured through the index. For example, there may be a trend of female immigrant integration measurements which reflect overall lower employment integration than male immigrants, which would capture the broader gender gap effect in the workforce.

Since immigration status is hypothesized to be the key explanatory contributing factor of these three, the various statuses included in this scope are defined below along with the barriers and resources that they are likely to have access to in navigating integration in the U.S. South.

- A. *Migrant*: "...most experts agree that an international migrant is someone who changes his or her country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status. Generally, a distinction is made between short-term or temporary migration, covering movements with a duration between three and 12 months, and long-term or permanent migration, referring to a change of country of residence for a duration of one year or more," (United Nations 2021).
- B. *Refugee*:
 - a. "...Any person outside his or her country of nationality who is unable or unwilling to return to that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear or persecution based on the person's race, religion, nationalist, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion," (USCIS 2021).

- b. Through the Office of Refugee Resettlement and the State Department’s Bureau for Population, Refugees & Migration, refugees have access to resettlement services including cash and medical assistance, employment services, English as a Second Language education, and medical screenings (Jiménez 2011; Office of Refugee Resettlement 2019).

C. *Asylee*:

- a. “An alien in the United States or at a port of entry who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality, or to seek the protection of that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Persecution or the fear thereof must be based on religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion,” (USCIS 2021).
- b. Upon receiving asylum, asylees have access to similar integration services as refugees. A key difference between asylees and refugees is the time spent in detention and the subsequent effects on health, language, and other measures of integration in the long term for asylees (American Immigration Council 2014; Blizzard & Batalova 2019; House Committee on Homeland Security n.d.; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2019).

D. *Special Immigrant (SIV)*:

- a. “This refers to...Certain employees and former employees of the U.S. government abroad, and their spouses and children...Certain aliens serving in the U.S. armed forces, and their spouses and children.” (USCIS 2021).
- b. The Special Immigrant Visa program is for Iraqi and Afghan translators and interpreters who worked for the U.S. military. Immigrants with this status have access to the same benefits provided through the refugee program (U.S. Department of State n.d.)

E. *Employment-Sponsored Immigrants*:

- a. The H-1B Visa category is a temporary visa category that creates pathways for highly skilled immigrants to work in the U.S. in specific job fields for 3-6 years (American Immigration Council 2016). Additionally, employment-sponsored immigrants may arrive through permanent worker employment-sponsorship programs based on demand for their “highly specialized knowledge in fields of human endeavor,” (USCIS 2021; U.S. Department of State n.d.). In both of these situations, immigrants with this status will experience higher measures of employment and education integration from the start. These significant first levels of integration contribute to the overall integration ability in comparison with other immigrant statuses.

F. *Family-Sponsored Immigrants*:

- a. This immigration status encompasses immigrants with familial connections in the U.S. They do not have access to the same integration benefits as other immigration statuses, but the kinship ties to more fully integrated individuals upon arrival may be captured through this index (USCIS 2019; Boundless Immigration Inc 2019).

Dependent Variables

There are six dependent variables which have been identified for this research as indicators of integration success measured by an index of dependent variables. This research will elaborate that the success of integration is not solely based on one or two of these categories operating alone. Rather, the different measures all have comparable value and operate in conjunction to contribute to successful integration. For example, an increase in language proficiency would increase access to different employment opportunities, just as employment provides an environment for improved language proficiency. And in tandem, engagement in the labor force and increased language acquisition generally increases the interests and stake an individual has in the political sphere while also increasing access to political engagement through language and employment. Within each measure section, there will be:

- a. An explanation of the index measures;
- b. An explanation of the relevance of this specific measure in immigrant integration, and;
- c. An explanation of why this measure is not the key measure to integration success. This final section of each measure will highlight the need for the comprehensive index which ties all of the measures together.

The purpose of the index is to propose a measure of the outputs of successful immigrant integration across six categories. Through questionnaire responses, the six indicators will be placed on a point-scale system to be translated to the visual index. Lower points will signify less successful integration and more points will signify greater success on the integration scale.

The goal of this tool is to introduce a standard way to measure integration success for individual immigrants. This could then be used to measure integration of individuals across time to determine overall integration fluctuation. Additionally, the index provides an opportunity to compare aggregate individual measurements in a community or of a specific immigration status. Through the measurement index that will be introduced, it will allow for deeper analysis of the needs of individual immigrants, groups of immigrants, and therefore the receiving population needs in which they integrate.

The proposed application of this measurement tool is individual administration once every year for the first five years after resettlement and once every five years thereafter. This is because it is hypothesized that changes in integration will show the most change in the first five years, and that it will be more difficult to maintain annual survey administration after the five years. Since this proposed measurement will provide opportunity for comparison of individual fluctuations in integration across time, there will be visible improvement, decline, or stagnancy over the years.

It is hypothesized that integration is not consistently linear and does not follow a steady path of improvement. Rather, there are likely to be events in immigrants' lives and communities while in the U.S. South which contribute to backsliding integration success. These include occurrences which can lead to losing points on the integration index. This would reveal the higher barriers and higher instability in an immigrant's life and community than may be found in native-born populations. For example, events may be re-traumatizing and make immigrants feel

less belonging and security in their communities. The mass immigration enforcement raids on chicken plants in Mississippi in 2019 have affected the immigrants and community in which they occurred, with visible effects over a year later (Zhu & Clark 2020). Even for the documented immigrants who may not have been directly detained by the raids, the mass arrests and deportations in the community negatively affected integration success of documented immigrants as well. Other potential events that could contribute to backsliding integration could include job loss, economic recession, high visibility xenophobic or racist attacks, or family separation.

It is also relevant to pose the question of the extent of stability of these index measures. For example, if an individual becomes unemployed, is it an indicator of decreased individual employment integration, or is it an indicator of institutional-level vulnerabilities in American institutions? Then, to what extent are immigrants disproportionately affected by macro-level fluctuations when measured over time? Is the ‘parity of life chances’ reflected by comparable susceptibilities to institutional-level vulnerabilities between immigrant and native-born populations? These questions highlight the tensions of two-way dynamics of individual- and community-level integration that evolve over time and those which this index seeks to address.

While integration will be measured across six individual indicators, it will also be added together to establish a threshold of integration through the additive measure of total scores:

- a. 7-13 points indicate Not Integrated.
- b. 14-21 points indicate Partially Integrated.
- c. 22-28 points indicate Fully Integrated.

The six categories will be employment, education, political participation and access, health, housing, and language. The scoring, conceptualization, and reasons for the inclusion of these specific categories are included later in this paper.

Proposed Measure: Integration Index

Figure 5

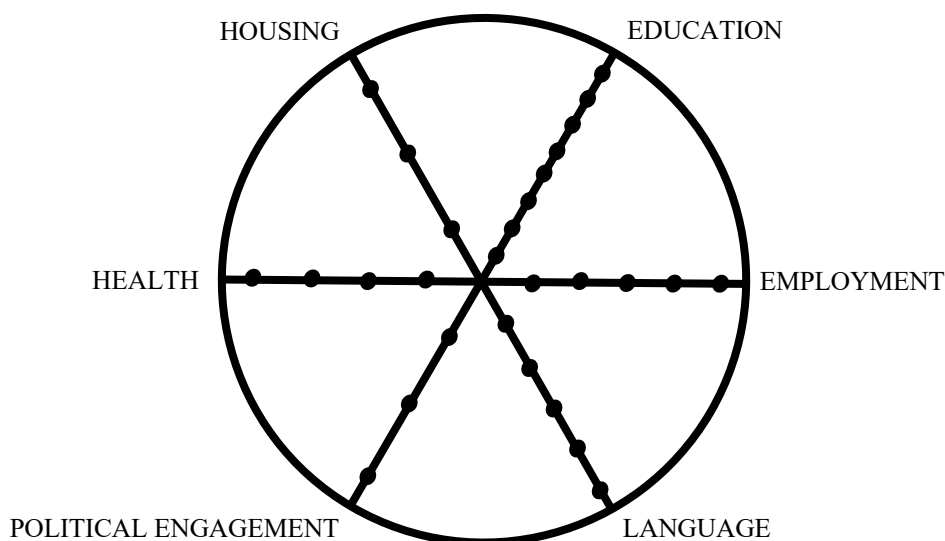


Figure 5 displays the proposed integration index as a hexagonal spider graph with one indicator of integration on each axis. The number of points in each category will be measured through the survey responses and will correlate to the location of a point on each axis. These points will be connected to form a six-sided form which will act as a visualization of integration success within the index. As integration increases, so will the surface area of the index as the points move farther out from the center.

Throughout the discussion in this paper, each index measure will be examined individually, and it will be examined in context of its interactions with other measures. Despite each measure's autonomy, there are some that are more highly correlated than others. The measures are placed at strategic locations in relation to one another to facilitate further analysis of layers of integration. This produces intuitive pairings listed below:

- a. Education and Employment
- b. Language and Political Engagement
- c. Health and Housing

These pairs are placed adjacent to each other to facilitate more thorough visualization of integration success. It is hypothesized that strength in one part of a pair will be correlated to the other part, so pairs should theoretically have similar surface areas.

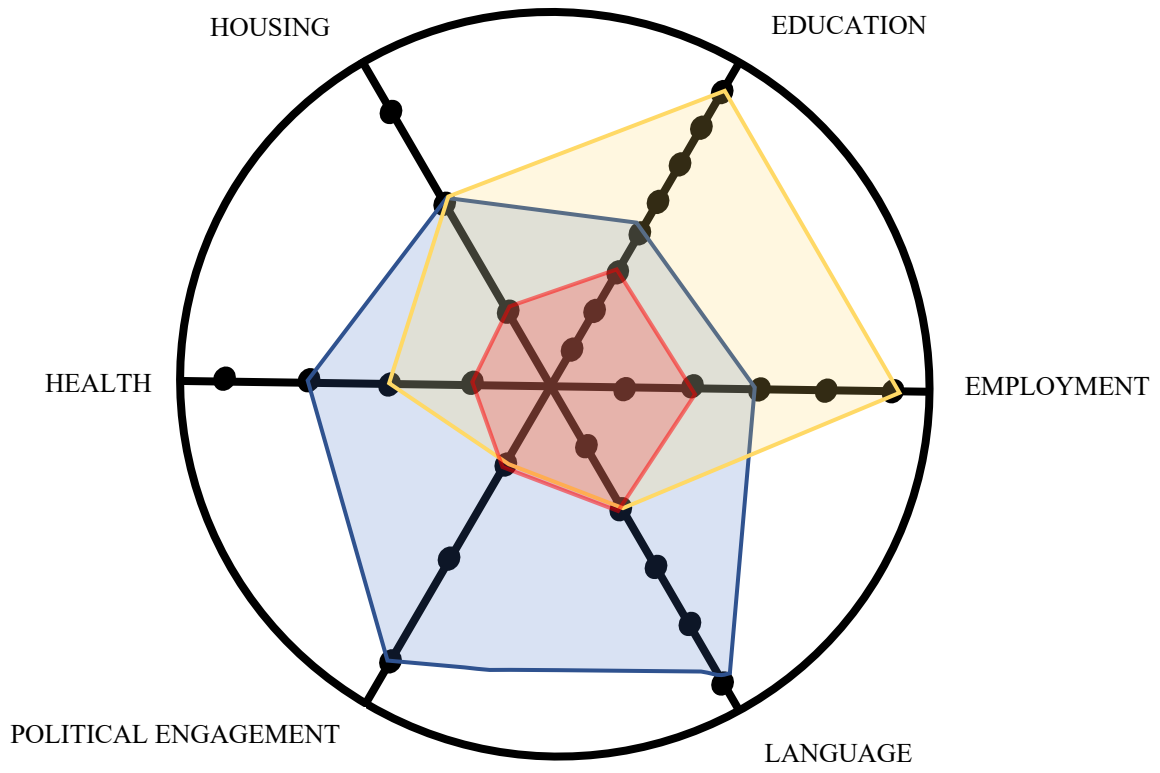
In addition to the pairing, there are additional groups of three measures that indicate different focuses, as seen in Figure 6:

Figure 6

Focus of Integration	Measure #1	Measure #2	Measure #3
Level of autonomy	Education	Employment	Language
Safety and security	Political Engagement	Health	Housing
Socioeconomic	Employment	Education	Housing
Standing in Society	Employment	Language	Political Engagement

Figure 7 displays three individual examples of integration measurements. For example, the yellow area reveals an individual with higher integration success in the education and employment pairing, and comparatively high socioeconomic integration. The blue area has higher political engagement and language integration but reveals lower integration in socioeconomic categories. The red area shows an individual with overall low integration and therefore high needs in the majority of the integration metrics. While Figure 7 shows three different individuals, this index visualization can also be used to map the change over time of integration of one individual.

Figure 7



Overall, these measures are each individually relevant and have direct effects on an immigrant’s life and community. This index will reveal the types of barriers that an immigrant is facing to integration based on the skew of the measures, especially if it reflects one pair or group of three specifically.

Index Metrics: Six Measures of Immigrant Integration

Employment

Employment Index Measures

Employment is a measure on this Immigrant Integration in the U.S. South Index. It will be measured at five increment levels in increasing level of integration success.

Figure 8

# Points	Qualitative Measurement
1	Immigrant is unemployed and not actively seeking work.
2	Immigrant is unemployed and actively seeking employment with some barriers to employment.
3	Immigrant is employed intermittently, seasonally, or temporarily and experiences some barriers to employment.
4	Immigrant is employed and actively seeking job upgrade ⁷ .
5	Immigrant is fully employed.

There are two main facets captured through this index that reflect the presence of barriers to employment integration:

- a. Fulfillment of employment capacity, and
- b. Employment stability.

Fulfillment of employment capacity refers to the extent to which immigrants are seeking and able to work and whether or not that is being met by their employment status. Employment stability captures the measure of security provided as employment integration improves. While the scope of this study focuses on the integration of immigrants with work authorization, there are various documentation barriers that documented immigrants may face in being hired or of which employers unknowingly discriminate against. For example, employers may require a Social Security number to complete a job application, however this requirement does not allow for other documents that immigrants may have that confirm work authorization.

In measuring integration success in terms of employment, this study will be focusing on the individual level of immigrant integration. However, it should be noted that macro-level factors play a large role in this measure. This includes industry-specific fluctuations, economic recessions, and changes in demand for skill-specific labor. For example, in a case study in Dalton, Georgia (Eaton 2016), immigrant populations were attracted in large numbers in the 1990s during a spike in demand for carpet factory labor. However, during the recession of the late 2000s, the demand for carpets dropped drastically with the need for immigrant labor and therefore their employment stability. This reveals the susceptibility of individual-level integration measures to institutional variations. The hope of this metric is to highlight that greater integration success should reflect improved stability of immigrants within macro-level fluxes in job industries.

⁷ 'Job upgrade' is defined as moving from part-time to full-time, moving to a skill-specific industry, or moving to a higher paygrade.

There is also the soft measure that is not measured in this study yet remains relevant to immigrant integration and overall well-being. This is the measure of restored self-sufficiency, dignity, and ability to contribute to their societies. For example, immigrants with refugee status have likely experienced numerous years of being unable to work prior to arriving in the U.S. South while living in host countries. Achieving employment integration increases refugee feelings of belonging and security which further contribute to their integration success in other measures (Chancey & Gibson 2019).

Why Employment is a Relevant Measure

A key unique aspect of employment integration for immigrants in the U.S. is the unique economic system compared with other OECD countries. As Alba & Foner (2015) argue, “The less-regulated U.S. economy...has provided jobs for immigrant minorities who, because of weak state protection, often have no alternative but to take low-end, low-paying work that may still leave them in poverty,” (Alba & Foner 2015, 48).

The ‘immigrant bargain’ is the phenomenon of adult immigrants working in underpaying or under-skilled jobs in order to provide for their children’s opportunities to reach full employment and educational integration (Alba & Foner 2015). This study seeks to highlight ways to measure adult employability under-fulfillment within this immigrant bargain.

This measure is also highly affected by immigrant status. Immigrants that come into the U.S. South as economic migrants will have greater transferability and recognition of employment skills and credentials. Alternatively, immigrants with asylee or family reunification status will face higher barriers to accessing employment that fulfills their capacity. Refugees face unique barriers to employment as they often face similarly low levels of skill transferability or gaps in employment history, yet there are policies and organizations in place that specifically target refugee employment and improved employment stability upon arrival. For example, the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement works through state governments and NGOs to provide short-term employment support for refugees (National Immigration Forum 2020).

Alternatively, low-status or low-wage jobs are not to be fully discounted as they can still provide tools for integration in other metrics including furthering U.S. employment experience, developing job skills for future job upgrades, and improving English language proficiency. However, the indicators of higher employment integration reveal that higher fulfillment of employment capacity and higher employment stability provide avenues for greater integration in all other index measures.

Why Employment is Not the Key Measure

There is a close correlation between employment and education integration. The relationships between actively seeking job upgrades and experiencing fulfilled educational and skill capacity in a job are linked. Additionally, experiencing higher employment integration provides opportunity for more educational and skill development opportunities, and vice versa. Language integration is also closely linked to employment. As language proficiency increases there is greater opportunity for job upgrades and employment stability. Additionally, improved

employment integration increases opportunity and methods for language integration. These three factors interact to create a measure of personal autonomy integration.

Furthermore, improved housing and health integration provide widened opportunities for employment integration. This can include proximity to employment opportunities, improved health due to employment or access to physically demanding employment with improved integration in the health care system (Alba & Foner 2015⁸; Luthra & Waldinger 2010). As employment pairs with education and further interacts with housing integration, these form a concentrated metric of socioeconomic integration.

Political engagement integration also interacts with employment as immigrants are likely to gain knowledge and access to political involvement through their employment and language integration. This will contribute to an improved and more deeply integrated position in their community.

As established here, employment is a necessary and relevant measure of immigrant integration. However, additional metrics of integration must be further studied to provide a greater context of immigrant integration in the U.S. South.

Education

Education Index Measures

Education is a measure on the Immigrant Integration in the U.S. South Index. It will be measured through the sum of two sub-categories of previous education recognition and access to further education. The goal of this measurement is to determine if an individual's educational capacity and experience is being exercised to the fullest extent with opportunity for further advancement.

Part A: Previous Levels of Education

1. 1 point: Immigrant has below a high school diploma.
2. 2 points: Immigrant has a high school diploma or equivalent.
3. 3 points: Immigrant has some post-secondary experience, a 1–2-year degree, or professional certificate.
4. 4 points: Immigrant has a bachelor's degree or equivalent.
5. 5 points: Immigrant has a master's degree, or higher.

⁸ "...[S]econd-generation Mexican men's jobs were on average lower in 'quality' than those held by third- and later-generation white men. The jobs typically paid less and were less likely to provide such benefits as retirement plans and health insurance. These disadvantages were explained only partially by educational differences between the groups," (Alba & Foner 2015, 190).

Part B: Access to Further Education

1. 1 point: Immigrant experiences many barriers to further adult or professional education.
2. 2 points: Immigrant experiences some barriers to further adult or professional education.
3. 3 points: Immigrant experiences limited barriers to further adult or professional education, and/or is not seeking further education.

Part C: Combination of Measurements A & B

Figure 9

# Points	Qualitative Measurement
2	Immigrant has low levels of education with high barriers to further education.
3-4	Immigrant has low-mid levels of education with high-mid barriers to further education.
5	Immigrant has intermediate levels of education with intermediate barriers to further education.
6-7	Immigrant has mid-high levels of education with mid-low barriers to further education.
8	Immigrant has high levels of education with low barriers to further education or is not seeking further education.

Education in this context can be considered academic, professional and career development, and language education. Barriers to education integration include impediments to validating prior learning and accessing further education (Morrice et al. 2017) which have been captured through this additive measure in Part C. These can be economic, institutional, or personal barriers. For example, the cost of tuition, program fees, accreditation auditing, or educational resources can pose a barrier for some immigrants (Lukes 2012). Additional barriers include transferability of international education to U.S.-recognized accreditation, including skills, qualifications, and previous education. Previous literature finds that transferability is also affected by receiving population prejudices specifically for accrediting qualifications of migrants from lower-income countries (Guo 2015). These barriers can fortify inequalities between immigrants and non-immigrants in educational attainment and fulfillment (Diedrich & Styhre 2013).

In regard to furthering education, barrier reduction may include access to and knowledge of the U.S. education system and various pathways to further education. Further overarching barriers to education maximization include language accessibility of further educational opportunities. An accommodation for respondents who are not seeking further adult or professional education is included in the highest-point section of Part B in order for integration measurements to not be penalized if they do not desire or require further education. This would signify a higher level of integration because it would indicate that an individual does not feel a need for further education in order to fully participate and contribute to the society in which they reside.

The goal of this two-part measure is to capture first the fulfillment of education capacity of immigrant adults through the previous levels of education. Second, it captures the maximization of educational potential and capital. This first measure is relevant because the attainment of a high school diploma has direct effects on the access that immigrants have to middle-class and upper-middle-class jobs (Alba & Foner 2015; Alba & Holdaway 2013), and therefore pathways for economic and linguistic integration. Additionally, previous education largely varies depending on the origin country of the individual as, "...immigrant parents often have been educated in countries where the average level of schooling is very low. Even if they achieve higher-than-average education for their home-country communities – which is frequently the case owing to the selectivity of most immigration streams – their levels of education place them at the lower rungs of the host-society educational distribution," (Alba & Foner 2015, 177). This once again addresses the relationship between the immigrant status, previous education, and access to further education.

The overall measure is relevant because, "...there are more than 1.6 million college-educated immigrants in the U.S. today whose talents are substantially underutilized... constituting an enormous knowledge waste...especially given skills shortages in sectors such as health care, IT, and STEM," (Kallenbach et al. 2013; Batalova & Fix 2008). This reveals a gap between the previous levels of education and the access to further education measures. Kallenbach et al. (2013) also find, "To move ahead beyond the first job they are able to land in the U.S., most immigrants need further education and training and an understanding about the local labor market and how to pursue the most viable career pathway," (Kallenbach et al. 2013, 26).

Why Education is a Relevant Measure

There is extensive literature that examines the experiences of immigrant youth in the U.S. education system. While there are extensive recommendations of what can be done to improve funding sources (Alba & Foner 2015), on the behalf of educators and administrators (Faltis & Valdés 2010), to increase rural school enrollment, implementing dual-generation programs (Park et al. 2016), and more, that is outside the scope of this research. The intersection between the role of education systems for children with adult immigrant integration affects the access that caregivers have to their child's education, and this will be expanded upon in the language section. Instead, this index seeks to measure the integration success of adult immigrants through the fulfillment of their education capacity and potential.

On a different note, previous literature focuses on the role of the education system in creating and maintaining inequalities between native and immigrant students. Alba & Foner (2015) find that second generation immigrant youth regularly bridge the gap between their parents' education integration and their own. This research seeks to focus on the opportunities for educational advancement for immigrant adults and parents with the goal of decreasing the generational gap within families. While this is also not within the realm of this research, it is important to recognize the role that improving immigrant adult education integration has on improving integration of dependents.

The measure of education integration is also largely influenced by category of immigrant status. Immigrants that are accepted largely on economic capital- or merit-based standards often

enter with different previous educational levels than immigrants who are entering, for example, through the family reunification pathway. Alba & Foner (2015) find that, “As of 2010, nearly a third of adult immigrants had not completed secondary school, compared to 11 percent of the native born. In the main, these immigrants cannot qualify to come to the U.S. except through family ties to permanent residents or citizens. For immigrants with such low levels of education, there is little alternative to the jobs at the bottom of the labor market,” (Alba & Foner 2015, 29). Additionally, barriers to further education may be reduced with the former category of immigrants as they may have accepted entry into the U.S. based on an existing job placement. On the other hand, immigrants that arrive through humanitarian processes such as the refugee or asylum-seeking programs are not accepted based on their educational qualifications or access to job offers. Even within that same category, refugees, asylees, and SIVs have differentiated access to services that work to maximize their educational capacity and potential, such as the immediate employment authorization and services provided to refugees but not asylees.

Kallenbach et al. (2013) find that 56% of immigrants in the U.S. have limited formal education with a high school diploma or less. This would score 1-2 points on Part A of this integration index. This intersects with other measures of integration as Kallenbach et al. (2013) also find that of immigrant workers in the U.S. (16% of all U.S. workers), 75% of those without a high school diploma have limited English proficiency, which reveals a need to improve language integration as well.

This does not imply that all immigrants to the U.S. have limited previous education. In fact, Kallenbach et al. (2013) find that almost 30% of immigrants in the U.S. are high-skilled and credentialed professionals facing low barriers to education transferability and possessing a bachelor’s degree or higher. This would equate to 6-8 points on the total measure of education integration. This reveals a wide spectrum of immigrant education integration from 1-8 points. Therefore, nuanced and holistic approaches to integration are necessary to address the varying needs of improving immigrant integration.

Why Education is Not the Key Measure

While education is a vital consideration to measuring immigrant integration, it is not the only measure. Education is closely linked to other measures of integration which cannot be wholly separated from one another. In examining the pairing of education and employment, as employment integration stabilizes, employer-sponsored education advancement opportunities may increase. Alternatively, as education increases, as do employment opportunities and stability.

As language integration increases, access to education opportunities offered in English increases. Vice versa, as access to further education increases, as does language acquisition and integration. As education, employment, and language interact together, an individual’s level of autonomy is likely to improve overall.

The U.S. education system is funded on a highly local level, so the education that immigrants have access to is largely intermingled by their housing and employment integration – that is to say, their socioeconomic integration. As employment integration and, therefore, economic stability increases, it will increase the funding of the education system. As this occurs

on a community-level, rather than just an individual-level, it affects the community wealth directed at schools and educational institutions. This increases opportunities for further education for adult immigrants. Possibilities for integration backsliding include lack of housing integration among low-status immigrant enclaves and the subsequently lower funding of educational opportunities (Alba & Foner 2015).

Overall, education is an essential two-part measure for indexing immigrant integration. It interacts closely with other measures of integration success and therefore must be viewed as part of a larger picture.

Political Engagement

Political Engagement Index Measures

Political Engagement is a measure on this Immigrant Integration in the U.S. South Index. It will be measured at three increment levels in increasing integration success:

Figure 10

# Points	Qualitative Measurement
1	Immigrant experiences many barriers to political engagement.
2	Immigrant experiences some barriers to political engagement.
3	Immigrant experiences limited barriers to political engagement.

Barriers to political engagement encompass three components of political engagement, based on previous literature, which asserts, "...that there are three types of civic participation that complement each other and that can be cultivated in immigrants and naturalized citizens:

1. A personally responsible citizen who understands and obeys the laws and assists other members of the community;
2. A participatory citizen who participates in the civic affairs and social life of his/her community; and
3. A justice-oriented citizen who assesses and addresses inequities and injustice," (Kallenbach 2013, 35; Mattson 2003).

For the purposes of this research, these three categories will be restructured as:

1. Personal duty of political engagement
2. Community participation of political engagement
3. Activism in political engagement

Each of these will be assessed through the survey questions which will highlight three sub-components of each: access, knowledge, and representation. For example, the personal duty category will have facets including access to personal duty, knowledge of personal duty, and representation of personal duty in political engagement. The goal of these sub-categories is to show the components within the overall metric of political engagement.

This metric of political engagement does not seek to measure immigrant political engagement at a higher standard than that of native-born population political engagement. The

survey questions seek to encompass this nuance so as not to penalize immigrant integration measurements differently than native-born levels of political engagement.

Furthermore, the focus of this measure of political engagement is not direct, citizenship-based participation. For the immigrant populations being studied in this index, this conceptualization of political engagement contingent on citizenship largely decreases the applicability of this index in immigrant populations which have not yet gained citizenship. These activities can include voter registration, voting participation, and running for office. Therefore, measures of political engagement that are solely based on citizenship will not be the main indicators for this index.

Measuring political engagement requires specific attention to first, the nature of the measure, and second, the population being studied. There is extensive literature examining the extent to which political engagement can be accurately measured. There can be discrepancies between self-reported and actual behavior of respondents and tendency to overreport political engagement due to the sporadic nature of political behavior, the role of memory confusion, and the U.S. societal value of political participation (Keeter 2002). This intersects with the immigration status and country of origin factors which constitute an immigrant's experience and background. These factors may produce different results and patterns to address in measuring political engagement. For example, if an immigrant's origin country does not value political engagement, they may be less affected by the tendency to overreport found among native-born U.S. populations. Additionally, if an immigrant experienced hardship or persecution due to their political engagement or membership in a political or social group in their country of origin, there may be a tendency to underreport political engagement or not be interested in political-related activities due to fear or disinterest.

Political engagement is an interesting index measure as immigrant populations in the U.S. South are likely to be highly influenced by institutional barriers. It is also likely to be compounded by low integration success in other measures of this study. For example, structural characteristics of the U.S. democratic system are going to reveal certain barriers to political engagement for immigrant populations such as laws which disproportionately affect racial minority voters, limit polling places and access to polling places for minority populations (Freedom House 2020). While there are systems which affect the political engagement integration success of immigrant populations, that is outside the scope of this research. Instead, this research will be focusing on the access, knowledge, and representation that individuals have to exercise political engagement in the three previously identified categories.

Why Political Engagement is a Relevant Measure

Measuring political engagement is relevant for the strengthening of the social and political fabric of communities in which immigrants settle. It provides a two-way dynamic for integration between immigrants participating more fully as members of the community, and the community benefitting more completely due to the political engagement of immigrants. Previous literature highlights the value of political engagement. In Kallenbach's research on "Adult Education and Immigrant Integration" (2013) it is argued, "[Civic participation] develops leadership skills and social and professional ties that can expand immigrants' access to resources

and job opportunities,” (Kallenbach 2013, 5; Putnam 2007). This reveals various benefits to immigrant lives and immigrant communities as political engagement integration improves.

Political engagement is exhibited by Kallenbach (2013) as such activities as volunteering in school activities, serving on community task forces, and organizing neighborhood activities. Keeter (2002) also highlights volunteering in civic organizations, social activism, attending protest events, contacted elected officials, group membership, and discussing politics and current events. On the local level, involvement in hometown associations allows immigrants to be involved with concerns that directly affect them on the political level without necessitating formal belonging through citizenship (Jiménez 2011). This literature will inform the survey questions of this proposed measure in order to capture the types of political engagement activities that immigrants may be involved in, while also maintaining focus on the nuances and special interests that are likely to be present in the population being studied.

Representation is also a key aspect of political engagement. It first reveals the extent to which immigrants in the U.S. South feel like their needs and opinions are represented. It should not be assumed that all immigrants have homogenous opinions and political views, or that representatives from a particular background will represent their community of origin. However, there is a level at which representation also reveals the ability of immigrants to access political engagement on a highly formalized level through a. being represented, and b. being an elected official (Alba & Foner 2015). The survey questions for this section seek to address the nuances within this measure regarding the feeling of being represented along with the access that one has to the representative system.

Why Political Engagement is Not the Key Measure

Political engagement is a unique measure of integration because it is not inherently linked to immediate or long-term survival needs in the same way as employment, housing, or health. However, including it in this index of integration introduces a specific layer of depth which highlights that integration is not solely about immigrant survival in the U.S. South. Rather, integration emphasizes the ability of an immigrant to meaningfully contribute and belong to their community. In this way, measuring political engagement is valuable because of its interactions with an immigrant and their community, as well as with the other measures of integration.

The three categories of political engagement discussed here have effects on the different ways that immigrants can integrate into the society. On a personal level, community-based involvement, and through activism and advocacy, immigrants can improve their access to other areas of integration. For example, as political engagement increases, an immigrant will have greater access to voicing their needs in housing, for their health, or to their employer. These interactions reflect a measure of safety and security in integration. As political engagement increases for individual-level needs, immigrants should experience greater political engagement for community-, state-, and national-level needs. Furthermore, as language integration increases, so will the realms in which an immigrant can access political engagement. Overall, improved levels of political engagement will also contribute to the intrinsic feeling of integration as immigrants feel belonging and can contribute to their community.

While political engagement is an important measure on this index, it is not the only measure. It is necessary to consider other measures in order to gain a more comprehensive picture of immigrant integration.

Health

Health Index Measures

Health is a measure on this Immigrant Integration in the U.S. South Index. It will be measured at four increment levels in increasing level of integration success:

Figure 11

# Points	Qualitative Measurement
1	Immigrant is uninsured with severe lack of access and knowledge of to quality health care.
2	Immigrant experiences limited access and/or low quality and knowledge of health care.
3	Immigrant is insured with access with access and knowledge of primary care provider.
4	Immigrant is insured with access and knowledge to quality primary and secondary health care providers (including preventive, dental, behavioral, etc.)

The goal of this index is to measure the integration success of immigrants, and to see opportunities for increased integration. In the case of health care, indicators of improvement in integration would include increased access to quality healthcare systems. The result of this would be improved individual health conditions and subsequently improved community health levels. As physical, mental, and communal health improves, it will also improve the ability of immigrants to integrate in other aspects of their civic and social life.

Below are the three indicators of overall health integration. The intersecting needs of immigrants integrating into the health care system are reflected in the interactions with these sub-facets:

- a. Health Care Access
- b. Health Care Quality
- c. Health Care Education and Knowledge

First, access to health care is indicated by insurance and ability to access local treatment including transportation and distance to care and/or language barriers. Access and insurance are primary to quality of care because, “Those without insurance are often diagnosed at later, less treatable disease stages than those with insurance and, overall, have worse health outcomes, lower quality of life, and higher mortality rates,” (University of Wisconsin 2021). Additionally, access to care is not the only measure because it is not always synonymous with quality of care. Specific barriers that immigrants in the U.S. South face include racial disparities in treatment and limited quality of care based on language (University of Wisconsin 2021). Furthermore, access to health care, even that which is of high-quality, is not a wide enough scope to understand the interactions of immigrants with health care (Dwyer 2004). Education about and knowledge of health care systems is essential for immigrant integration.

Preventive and secondary care is listed as an indicator of the highest level of integration because it indicates a sustainable longevity of health care system integration. If an immigrant has access to and knowledge of quality preventive health care, they will experience less reactive health care measures and costs, including emergency room visits and emergency procedures. Immigrants with Level 4 of health care integration will have the capacity to invest in their long-term health care.

Why Health is a Relevant Measure

Previous literature on immigrant integration reveals the needs of immigrant populations in terms of health care integration. Although immigrants generally arrive in the U.S. healthier than native-born populations (Kline 2019), immigrant health declines due to their experiences with working and living in the racialized legacy of the U.S. South (Himmelgreen et al. 2000; Antecol and Bedard 2006; Abraído-Lanza, Chao, and Flórez 2005; Mays et al. 2007).

Additionally, while this study focuses on measuring integration of documented adult immigrants, there are effects of immigrant policing and immigration enforcement procedures that have effects on individuals and communities that are related to non-documented immigrants, even while they themselves may be documented. For example, separation anxiety was found to be particularly salient among Latino youth – even those born in the U.S. – and was, “...strongly related to the fear of having a parent, relative, or a close friend deported,” (Capps & Fix 2020). In this literature, the demonstrated mental health needs affected the social activities of these youth and therefore their further integration, and the integration of their families, in American life. In relation to employment, poor immigrant health is often directly linked. This is in part due to the prevalence of construction and agriculture industry employment (Kline 2019; Arcury and Quandt 2007).

Poor health conditions and living conditions that continue to contribute to a decline in health conditions contributes to higher need for access to health care. Some of the same contributors to decreased health (ie. racial discrimination) also affect further integration in health care systems (ie. access to and quality of health care). The need to examine immigrant interactions with the health care system, and their integration is necessary for this study.

Why Health is Not the Key Measure

A case study in Dalton, Georgia highlights the needs and barriers faced by immigrant populations with integrating into the public health system (Eaton 2016). Dalton is a rural community in north Georgia which saw an influx of immigrants during an economic boom in the 1990s and an increased demand for labor. The Dalton community saw gaps in health care provision and efficacy as the health care system failed to adapt to the changing demographics and needs of the town. For example, the immigrant populations faced barriers in access and quality of care, but also in knowledge of health care systems. Eaton found that the language barrier to health care access created a generational gap in health care access as immigrant children became responsible for understanding and interpreting health care for their guardians.

Health alone is not a key explanatory index measure for immigrant integration. It is paired in this research with housing, and secondarily with political engagement in order to

capture integration in the form of safety and security. As housing integration improves, immigrants will experience improved distance and transportation to health care, and they should also experience improved living conditions that will not create a negative effect on their overall health and need for care.

The categories of health access, quality, and knowledge are also linked to employment integration. For example, as immigrant employment integration improves, immigrants will experience higher stability in their employment. Higher stability in employment signifies integration through measures such as increased access through insurance, improved health conditions in the workplace, and access to health care education and knowledge.

As language integration improves, immigrants will experience improved access to health care when interpreters are not available. This also reveals the two-way need for integration between institutions and individuals as multi-lingual and cross-cultural access to care should improve. Eaton's (2016) case study examined a community-based program, Promotoras de Salud ("Protectors of Health"), which acts as a bridge between immigrants and the formalized health care system. They provide education and resources in linguistically and culturally relevant methods to the immigrant communities in Dalton, Georgia.

Health care is a necessary and relevant measure of immigrant integration. However, additional metrics of integration must be examined to establish a larger picture of overall integration.

Housing

Housing Index Measures

Housing is one of the six measures on the index for measuring success levels of immigrant integration in the U.S. South.

Figure 12

# Points	Qualitative Measurement
1	Immigrant experiences many barriers to housing and neighborhood security.
2	Immigrant experiences some barriers to housing and neighborhood security.
3	Immigrant experiences limited barriers to housing and neighborhood security.

For the purposes of this paper, housing and neighborhood security is an overarching term used to encompass the various factors that affect the safety, security, and belonging that immigrants feel in their homes. This can include such factors as affordability, quality, safety, permanence of living situation, access to amenities, and access to other forms of integration (ie. schools, health care providers, employment). Barriers include, but are not limited to, overcrowding, cost of housing, susceptibility to forced moves or eviction, and homelessness (American Housing Survey 2019). The goal of housing integration is housing security. Housing security enables integration in other measures on this index. The scale of access to housing security as captured in this index seeks to offer a comprehensive and immigrant-oriented measure of housing integration through the questions asked in the survey.

Through this measure, this paper examines the role of immigrant housing situations on their ability to successfully integrate. While this index is viewed on the individual level, the role of neighborhoods must be recognized. An immigrant's housing situation and ability to improve can only go so far independent of the neighborhood in which they reside. This also directly ties to the receiving populations variable discussed in the earlier conceptualization of this paper. The prevalence of immigrant communities in neighborhoods has both positive and negative effects on housing integration success. Previous literature examines whether immigrant-concentrated neighborhoods, or 'ethnic enclaves', act as pathways to immigrant integration or whether they exacerbate inequalities between immigrant and non-immigrant populations (Alba & Foner 2015). Jiménez (2011) addresses this tension as a generational function. As immigrants initially settle in the U.S., it is both common and attractive to settle in areas with similar ethnoracial or national concentrations for social and economic support through community ties. However, if high immigrant concentration continues over generations in housing situations, Jiménez argues that it is likely an indicator of exclusion – both socioeconomic and social. Immigrant enclaves that are specifically affected by native exclusion (specifically, 'white flight') and offer no opportunity for social mobility of immigrants affect both housing integration and other measures of integration. Immigrant enclaves face historical and present-day barriers to integration including housing dilapidation and overcrowding, decreased quality of schools and segregation, and higher rates of unemployment (Alba & Foner 2015). These issues stem from the community-level barriers to neighborhood housing integration. This exclusion would reveal lower score of integration across later generations, but the scope of this paper focuses primarily on integrating adult, first-generation immigrants. Following the literature, the population in question will be more likely to benefit from and experience greater housing integration in communities of co-nationals.

Due to the potential barriers to housing mobility that immigrants face within communities of co-nationals, the focus on choice of mobility is introduced to this study through the survey questions. If an immigrant is not seeking to move from an ethnic enclave, this will not be penalized against their measurement of integration success. Rather, it will reflect the choice of the immigrant to remain wherever they wish while also capturing the possibility that if they face high barriers to housing or neighborhood access, this is a reflection of limited integration opportunity.

Why Housing is a Relevant Measure

Previous literature refers to aggregate housing integration in indexes of dissimilarity, or segregation. This is used as a tool to determine the extent to which immigrant populations have integrated outside of ethnic enclaves and are able to access limited barriers to integration. For example, in Atlanta, Georgia, Hispanics⁹ are 10% of the population and the dissimilarity index between white and Hispanic people is 49, which is relatively equal to the national average of Hispanic population dissimilarity (Alba & Foner 2015, 76). In Raleigh, North Carolina, Hispanics¹ are 10% of the population and the dissimilarity index is 37.

The U.S. South is largely considered as part of the 'new destination areas' (Jiménez 2011; Alba & Foner 2015) for immigrant settlement in comparison to traditional destinations of mainly urban gateway cities. However, the overall rates of segregation in new destinations for

⁹ The categorization of "Hispanics" does not differentiate into immigrants or native-born Hispanics nor immigrant statuses, but this data is relevant in demonstrating the use and application of the dissimilarity index.

Hispanic populations are higher than in traditional immigrant destinations with indexes of dissimilarity of 60 and 45 respectively (Jiménez 2011). This reflects a potential that cross-generation integration is possible as a function of time and generational establishment. However, this paper seeks to address the barriers to integration found in first-generation immigrants in the U.S. South which is evidenced by the discrepancy between indexes of dissimilarity within and outside of new immigrant destination areas.

Previous literature signifies that diverse communities are a prime condition for integration success, and this can be measured through the indexes of dissimilarity. Rugh & Massey (2010) define three categories of neighborhood diversity including ‘minority concentration’, ‘racially mixed’, and ‘high-opportunity’. The goal of stabilizing diverse suburbs is to combine, “...the prosperity of predominantly white suburbs with urban amenities of central cities. They are, in many senses, health communities: economically healthy, environmentally healthy, politically healthy, and socially healthy,” (Squires 2018, 233). Diverse communities offer numerous forms of integration. Additionally, the negative effect of being excluded from fully integrated residential areas is seen on the aggregate level as, “Neighborhood or communities that are more than 30 percent non-white overwhelmingly tend to be both resegregating and in economic and fiscal decline because of unredressed housing needs,” (Squires 2018, 242). On a macro-level, the goal is fair housing planning and diverse communities that facilitate stabilized integration.

Noe-Bustamante & Flores (2019) recorded the individual-level housing situations among U.S. Hispanics¹⁰ in the Figure 13 below. Homeownership is shown as a key measure in establishing housing security. The foreign-born owner-occupied category is especially pertinent to this study. Increased levels of immigrant homeownership would indicate higher housing integration, as defined by previous literature and indicators on the American Housing Survey.

Figure 13¹¹

HOMEOWNERSHIP	All	U.S. born	Foreign born
Owner-occupied	47%	49%	46%
Renter-occupied	53%	51%	54%
IN A MULTI-GENERATIONAL HOUSEHOLD			
Multi-generational household	9%	9%	6%
HOUSEHOLD TYPE, BY PERSONS			
Married-couple household	58%	57%	61%
Other family household	25%	26%	21%
Non-family household	17%	17%	17%

¹⁰ This data on U.S. Hispanics is included because of its availability, however there are some limitations to address. First, not all Hispanics in the U.S. are immigrants as defined within the scope of this study. Second, not all immigrants in this study are Hispanics. However, “...the great majority of contemporary Hispanics are immigrants or descended from immigrants who have entered the United States since 1950,” (Alba & Foner 2015, 153), so this has been determined to be relevant data for comparison and index measure development.

¹¹ Noe-Bustamante, Luis, and Antonio Flores. “Facts on Latinos in America.” *Pew Research Center*, 16 Sept. 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-u-s-fact-sheet/>.

The furtherance of housing integration through fair housing enforcement enables the strengthening of residential markets, increased access to credit for immigrants, stabilization of local schools, and provides jobs (Squires 2018). Improving housing integration not only benefits immigrants and their households, but will produce more equitable, integrated, and effective neighborhoods for native-born populations as well. Therefore, it is relevant and timely to address housing integration in the U.S. South both on the individual level of barriers that immigrants face based on historical legacies, as well as community-level barriers to neighborhood integration.

Why Housing is Not the Key Measure

As established, housing is a valuable measure for immigrant integration, especially in the context of the U.S. South. It applies on the individual level and can be observed and facilitated on the neighborhood-level. This is important for navigating immigrant integration because of its effect on other forms of integration.

Housing is closely linked with health integration in measures of overall safety and security on individual- and neighborhood-levels. Research finds that neighborhood patterns of opportunity have intersecting effects with other factors that are measured in this index. This reflects, "...that spatial variations in social systems, markets, and institutions affect a range of social outcomes. Most research into 'geographies of opportunity' focuses on documenting disparities in education, health, and wealth by geography and race," (Leopold et al. 2016, 8). For example, immigrant enclaves with low access to residential mobility have less community wealth and funding that is redirected into community integration efforts (Alba & Foner 2015, 173). This affects the sustenance of local education institutions and health care systems which evidently have direct effects on education and health integration success of immigrants. Additionally, as employment integration improves, it stabilizes the economic situation of immigrants and their access to higher quality or more permanent housing. Simultaneously, access to safe and quality housing enables greater access to employment opportunities and thriving within employment opportunities, and overall socioeconomic integration. And as language integration improves, as does an immigrant's ability to navigate housing markets and access greater housing integration. Therefore, housing integration is a piece in the larger picture of immigrant integration.

Language

Language Index Measures

Language integration is a measure on the immigrant integration index because of its relevance as well as its applicability in other realms of integration as well.

Figure 14

# Points	Qualitative Measurement
1	Immigrant is not proficient in English.
2	Immigrant has elementary proficiency in English.
3	Immigrant has limited working proficiency in English.
4	Immigrant has full professional proficiency in English.
5	Immigrant has native or bilingual proficiency in English.

It is possible to experience other areas of integration with proficiency in a language other than English. For example, it is possible to work in a manual labor-concentrated job or to have language accommodation at one's place of employment. However, this does not signify high levels of integration because of the niche accessibility of these examples. This paper will measure language integration specifically through English proficiency.

The focus on English is not a normative prescription promoting an idea that immigrants must learn English to belong in the U.S. South. However, it is considered valuable as a measure because it first reveals a deeper level of integration, and it enables further integration in other realms. It is important to recognize that although this measures language integration from the perspective of immigrant proficiency, this paper is not seeking to insinuate that receiving populations and institutions are free of responsibility in language accessibility. Policies, schools, employers, health care providers, and others can increase their capacity to operate in non-English languages.

An interesting factor to highlight in measuring language integration is the scale of low to high incidence languages within the receiving population. This can affect the ability to improve language integration. On one side, speakers of high-incidence languages, or those with more densely concentrated populations, will have greater access and less barriers to accessing programs and services for integration. This is done through availability of interpreters, multi-lingual resources, and multi-lingual programs. Alternatively, some literature supports the argument that if there are fewer multi-lingual programs available, it may prompt faster acquisition of English because of increased need among low-incidence language speakers. Jiménez (2011) finds, "...Latin Americans have higher LEP rates. It is partly because of this fact that the descendants of Latin American immigrants maintain Spanish-language use alongside English language use more than immigrants from other regions of the world," (Jiménez 2011, 5). As seen with this Latin American immigrant population, the access to multi-lingual services has furthered other measures of integration while also stalling language integration in terms of English proficiency. The measure of language incidence is highly volatile given changing demographics, migration within the U.S., and changing language skills. This is a factor that should be weighed throughout this research and will be captured through the index questionnaire.

Why Language is a Relevant Measure

Language a measure that is critical for integration in the U.S. South, and it interacts with other measures of integration. English proficiency is defined in the literature as, "...when non-English proficient individuals have acquired the necessary English language skills and related cultural knowledge to be able to meaningfully contribute to their community," (Kallenbach 2013, 4).

Like other measures of integration, English proficiency varies across a wide range within incoming immigrant populations, depending on origin locations and levels of previous education. Jiménez (2011) tracks the cross-generational rates of English proficiency across three broad immigrant-origin regions. Jiménez finds that the first-generation levels of limited English proficiency¹² vary greatly across regions with 64.7% from Latin American origin, 46.6% from

¹² "Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals report speaking English 'well', 'not well', or 'not at all,'" (Jiménez 2011, 5).

Asian origin, and 29.8% from European origin. By the second generation, rates increase to approximately 80% across regions and, “By the third and higher generations, close to everyone, regardless of ethnoracial group, reports speaking only English or English very well,” (Jiménez 2011, 5). Since there is such high variance in language integration levels among first-generation immigrants, this is a relevant measure for this index because it reveals a high diversity of needs among resettling immigrants.

This data in Figure 15 by Noe-Bustamante & Flores (2019) reveals the language integration levels of Hispanic populations in the U.S. in comparison with native-born Hispanic populations. The findings reveal that overall population English proficiency (“All”) is 70%, which includes adults, children, U.S.-born, and foreign-born persons. The overall adult English proficiency level is lower at 64%. This reveals that Hispanic adults have a lower average rate of English proficiency in comparison with the entire population measurement. This signifies that children included in the measure have higher rates of English proficiency than the overall level of adults. Additionally, the U.S.-born measure of English proficiency is 90%, which is significantly higher than the foreign-born measurement of 36%. Overall, this reveals that measuring foreign-born, adult immigrant language integration is relevant because this population specifically faces specific barriers to integration not experienced by children or U.S.-born counterparts.

Figure 15¹³

Population	English proficient ¹⁴
All	70%
U.S. born	90%
Foreign born	36%
Adults	64%

Language integration is especially important to adult English learners with children or dependents. Previous literature finds that, “...parents’ English language ability and the circumstances of their migration to the United States—for example, as refugees, agricultural workers, engineers, or computer scientists—are important factors in children’s overall well-being and their chances for success in school and the job market,” (Faltis & Valdès 2010, 7). This reveals that generational integration is largely affected by adult language integration success. Therefore, measuring language is essential not only for the well-being of adult immigrants, but also for the long-term sustainability of family and community integration success.

¹³ Noe-Bustamante, Luis, and Antonio Flores. “Facts on Latinos in America.” *Pew Research Center*, 16 Sept. 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-u-s-fact-sheet/>.

¹⁴ Measured as a percent of those ages 5 and older who are proficient in English. “Proficient English speakers are those who speak only English at home or speak English at least ‘very well,’” (Noe-Bustamante & Flores (2019).

Across the categories of country of origin and generational gaps, language plays a vital role for the barrier reduction of immigrants seeking to integrate through belonging and contribution of their communities.

Why Language is Not the Key Measure

Language is a cross-cutting measure that heavily influences and interacts with the other measures of this index. It is essential to include, but not an isolate in itself. Language integration is shaped by other levels of integration just as other factors are shaped by individual levels of language integration.

For example, English proficiency enables access to further education, and to children's education for immigrant caregivers. As English proficiency increases for adults, the generational gap decreases as the children have less responsibility to act as interpreters for their parents. In terms of employment integration, improved English proficiency provides substantial employment opportunities, which act in conjunction with the multilingual skills of immigrants. As they integrate further into the workforce and education systems, language will also improve, especially in specific ways relevant to those professional environments. The relationship between language, education, and employment integration captures the extent to which an immigrant experiences levels of autonomy in their life.

Language integration also provides greater ability to navigate health care and housing systems and advocate for one's needs. In terms of political engagement, this paper discusses the limit of measuring engagement by citizenship because of the population being studied. English proficiency allows for participation in political engagement outside of the voting sphere. Furthermore, English proficiency is a measure of citizenship eligibility, so not only does language integration enable immediate political engagement integration, but it also provides an avenue for further integration through citizenship outside of the measure of this index. Overall, the connection between language, employment, and political engagement improvement increases measures of an individual's standing in society.

As exemplified, language integration is an essential part of the overall measure of immigrant integration. However, it is not the key measure because of its close interactions with other measures as well. Additionally, if attaining English proficiency was the key measure, there would be nothing to differentiate immigrant integration in the U.S. South from that of immigrant integration in other English-speaking countries.

Proposed Methodology: Questionnaire

In this section is the proposed questionnaire used to assess and measure the six categories of integration proposed throughout this paper. In a sample of native English speakers, this survey lasted between 21-30 minutes. Assuming that each individual respondent will not be a native English speaker, this survey needs to be accessible in multiple languages with the opportunity for spoken responses if preferred or through an interpreter if necessary. These factors are likely to increase the average length of time to administer the survey. If any questions are found to be continuously difficult to understand or answer and therefore determined to be irrelevant for this measurement, future alterations of the survey can be determined.

Additionally, it is recommended that this survey be administered once every year for the first five years upon resettlement in the U.S. South, and then once every five years afterward in order to facilitate analysis of integration across time. If individuals find these measurements to be personally helpful, it may be more widely distributed to allow for self-assessment following the first five years. The format of this survey also seeks to be broadly objective and accessible across changes in administrators for a quantitative and comparable collection of integration measurements.

Each question will provide a scale of one through five with the lower numbers signifying higher barriers to integration and higher numbers signifying lower barriers to integration. This will be used to determine the level of barriers that the respondent faces, and subsequently be used to assign points within each of the categories according to the index.

Qualifying Questions

- a. Were you born outside of the United States?
- b. What immigrant status did you arrive with to the United States?
- c. Are you a non-dependent adult?
- d. Do you reside in one of the following states in the U.S. South: AL, AR, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN?

Employment Questions

1. What is your current employment status?
2. Are you actively seeking a job upgrade?
3. On a scale of 1-5, do you feel it is necessary to work more than one job for you to survive?
4. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent have you experienced racial, ethnic, linguistic, immigrant status, or national discrimination in your employment?
5. On a scale of 1-5, how much do you feel that your current employment is relevant to your skillset and qualifications?
6. If you participated in a political advocacy activity, on a scale of 1-5, how concerned would you be that your job would be jeopardy?
7. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do your daily roles at your job negatively affect your health?
8. On a scale of 1-5, if you experienced a job-related medical emergency or accident, would you know where to go and who to talk to?
9. On a scale of 1-5, how does your place of employment have an effect on the affordability of your housing?
10. On a scale of 1-5, how consistent is your mode of transportation to your employment?
11. On a scale of 1-5, is your employer able to make language accommodations for you?
12. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent can you communicate with your coworkers?
13. On a scale of 1-5, has your current employment improved your English proficiency?

Figure 16: Employment Survey Response to Index Point Converter

Number of Points	Survey Response
1 point	If unemployed, and “No” to #2.
2 points	If unemployed, and “Yes” to #2.
3 points	If intermittently, seasonally, or temporarily employed, and/or 11-33 points on Questions #3-13.
4 points	If employed, and “Yes” to #2, and/or 34-55 points on Questions #3-13.
5 points	If employed and “No” to #2 or 3-5 points on Question #5.
Total Points for Employment Index: _____	

Education

Questions

1. What previous levels of education do you have from your native country?
2. What previous levels of education do you have from the United States?
3. Do you wish to further your professional, academic, or language education?
4. On a scale of 1-5, have you been able to fully transfer your previous education to a U.S.-recognized certification?
5. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel that your educational potential is being fulfilled?
6. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you know where to access a program or resources to further your education?
7. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent has the cost of further education hindered you from accessing it?
8. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your employer offer opportunities for further professional education?
9. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you require additional professional education in order to improve your employment stability?
10. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your personal health affect your ability to access further education?
11. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your housing situation affect your ability to access further education?

Figure 17: Education Survey Response to Index Point Converter

Part A: Previous Levels of Education, in response to Questions #1 and #2	
Number of Points	Survey Response
1 point	If less than a high school diploma.
2 points	If high school diploma or equivalent.
3 points	If some post-secondary experience, a 1-2-year degree, or professional certificate.
4 points	If bachelor's degree or equivalent.
5 points	If master's degree or higher.
Part B: Access to Further Education, in response to Questions #4-11	
1 point	If 8-18 points on Questions #4-11.
2 points	If 19-29 points on Questions #4-11.
3 points	If 30-40 points on Questions #4-11, or "No" to Question #3.
Part C: Sum of Points in Part A & B	
Total Points for Education Index: _____	

Political Engagement

Questions

1. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent are you aware of the responsibilities of your local city councilperson?
2. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you know how to contact your local city councilperson if you needed to?
3. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel knowledgeable about different opportunities to become politically engaged in your community?
4. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel knowledgeable of your political rights?
5. On a scale of 1-5, if you wanted to participate in a political movement or event, to what extent would you feel safe doing so?
6. On a scale of 1-5, if you wanted to be a member of a political organization, to what extent would you feel safe and able to participate?
7. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel like your local government officials represent your interests and needs?
8. On a scale of 1-5, do you feel like you are able to express your ideas and opinions, even if they are different from your community and friends?
9. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel a level of responsibility and duty to be involved in different levels of government?
10. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent did you participate in political engagement activities before you came to the U.S. South?
11. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel committed or a sense of responsibility to your local community?
12. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent are you aware of your employment rights at your place of work?

13. On a scale of 1-5, if you faced an issue at your job, to what extent would you feel able to advocate for your rights to your employer?
14. On a scale of 1-5, if you wanted to participate in a political organization or movement, would you feel that your employment stability would be at risk?
15. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel knowledgeable of your rights to education?
16. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel able to advocate for your rights to education?
17. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel able to advocate for changes to your health care access?
18. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel able to exercise your rights to fair housing in the job market or to your landlord?
19. On a scale of 1-5, if you wanted to participate in a political organization or movement, would you feel that your personal life and safety is at risk?
20. On a scale of 1-5, if you wanted to fix an issue in your neighborhood, to what extent would you feel able to address the concern with your city councilperson?
21. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel like your English proficiency level hinders you from participating in political systems?
22. On a scale of 1-5, do you feel that you would be able to communicate effectively with your local city councilperson if you wanted to address a concern?

Figure 18: Political Engagement Survey Response to Index Point Converter

Number of Points	Survey Response
1 point	If 22-51 points on Questions #1-22.
2 points	If 52-81 points on Questions #1-22.
3 points	If 82-110 points on Questions #1-22.
Total Points for Political Engagement Index: _____	

Health

Questions

1. What is your level of health insurance?
2. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you know what you are entitled to with your health care coverage?
3. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you know how to access health care?
4. On a scale of 1-5, how regularly do you access primary health care services?
5. On a scale of 1-5, how regularly do you access preventive and secondary health care services?
6. On a scale of 1-5, if you were in a health emergency, would you know how to access the health care system?
7. On a scale of 1-5, do you wish you knew more about accessing the health care system?
8. On a scale of 1-5, do you feel that you would have improved health if you were better able to access or knowledge of the health care system?
9. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your employer provide health insurance?
10. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent has your health been affected due to your employment due to increased physical or mental strain?

11. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your personal health hinder you from accessing further education?
12. On a scale of 1-5, do you feel greater levels of physical or mental strain because of the adjustment to living in the U.S.?
13. On a scale of 1-5, do you feel greater levels of physical or mental strain based on fears of immigration enforcement for people in your community?
14. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you have health concerns in relation to the adequacy of your house?
15. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel greater levels of physical or mental strain in meeting financial needs regarding your housing?
16. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you fear for your physical safety or wellbeing because of your housing conditions?
17. On a scale of 1-5, do you fear for your safety or wellbeing because of your neighborhood?
18. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent is your access to the health care system affected by your English proficiency?
19. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel greater levels of physical or mental strain while completing daily tasks in English?

Figure 19: Health Survey Response to Index Point Converter

Number of Points	Survey Response
1 point	If “Uninsured” to Question #1 and/or 18-36 points on Questions #2-19.
2 points	If 37-54 points on Questions #2-19.
3 points	If “Insured with primary care” to Question #1 and/or 55-72 points on Questions #2-19.
4 points	If “Insured with secondary care” to Question #2 and 73-90 points on Questions #2-19.
Total Points for Health Index: _____	

Housing

Questions

1. Do you rent or own your current housing?
2. Does your house lack adequate hot and cold running water, a bathtub or shower, and a flush toilet?
3. Does your house suffer from vermin, mold, leaking, or improper sewage for prolonged periods of time?
4. Have you missed a rent or utilities payment in the past six months?
5. Are there multiple families living in your housing unit?
6. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel like you belong and can contribute as a part of your neighborhood?
7. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel that you are able to fully participate in the services available in your neighborhood?
8. On a scale of 1-5, if you had a problem with your rental property, to what extent would you feel comfortable asking your landlord to resolve the issue?

9. On a scale of 1-5, how much of your household monthly income is spent on housing costs?¹⁵
10. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel at risk of eviction or homelessness?
11. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel safe in your housing unit?
12. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel safe in your neighborhood?
13. On a scale of 1-5, if you wanted to move housing units or neighborhoods, would you be financially able to?
14. On a scale of 1-5, if you wanted to move housing units or neighborhoods, to what extent do you feel that you could belong and contribute to a different neighborhood?
15. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your housing situation affect your access to your current employment?
16. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your housing situation affect your access to future employment opportunities?
17. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your housing situation affect your access to further education opportunities?
18. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your housing situation affect your access to opportunities for political engagement?
19. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your housing situation negatively affect your physical health?
20. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your housing situation negatively affect your mental health?
21. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your housing situation affect your access to health care?
22. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your housing situation affect your ability to improve your English proficiency?

Figure 20: Housing Survey Response to Index Point Converter

Number of Points	Survey Response
1 point	If “Rent” to Question #1 and 2-4 “Yes” responses on Questions 2-5, and/or 17-39 points on Questions #6-22.
2 points	If “Rent” or “Own” to Question #1, and 0-1 “Yes” responses on Questions 2-5 and/or 40-62 points on Questions #6-22.
3 points	If “Rent” or “Own” to Question #1 and “No” to Questions 2-5, and/or 63-85 points on Questions #6-22.
Total Points for Housing Index: _____	

¹⁵ “Housing cost burden is measured by dividing a household’s monthly housing costs (rent and utilities) by its monthly income,” (Leopold et al. 2016, 3).

Language
Questions

1. What is your English proficiency level?
2. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you feel that your level of English proficiency hinders or helps your ability to meaningfully contribute and be part of your local community?
3. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you rely on children or family members to interpret for you?
4. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent do you wish to improve your English proficiency?
5. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your English proficiency affect your ability to access employment?
6. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your English proficiency affect your ability to participate in your place of employment?
7. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your English proficiency affect your access to further education opportunities?
8. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your English proficiency hinder you from participating in civic organizations or events that you are interested in?
9. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent would you feel comfortable accessing an English-speaking health care professional if you needed care?
10. On a scale of 1-5, to what extent does your English proficiency affect your ability to look for different housing if you wanted?

Figure 21: Language Survey Response to Index Point Converter

Number of Points	Survey Response
1 point	If “Not proficient” to Question #1 and/or 9-15 points on Questions #2-10.
2 points	If “Elementary proficiency” to Question #1 and/or 16-22 points on Questions #2-10.
3 points	If “Limited working proficiency” to Question #1 and/or 23-30 points on Questions #2-10.
4 points	If “Full professional proficiency” to Question #1 and/or 31-38 points on Questions #2-10.
5 points	If “Native or bilingual proficiency” to Question #1 and/or 39-45 points on Questions #2-10.
Total Points for Language Index:	

Conclusion

Since its inception, the United States has been defined by the participation, belonging, and contributions of immigrants. Immigrants form the fabric of the nation and the foundation for its functioning. This paper has established a measurement for immigrant integration with the hope of promoting a robust understanding of what fully functioning and integrated immigrant populations can look like alongside robust community flourishing and systematic barrier reduction across the U.S. South.

This research has introduced a standard conceptualization of immigrant integration as the reduction of barriers which hinder participation and belonging within the social, political, and economic systems of the community in which an immigrant resides. The specific regional, age, and immigration status scopes of this research that have been proposed offer a unique frame for integration research because of the specific barriers to and resources for integration posed within this scope. The research is structured around a key independent variable of immigration status type alongside six dependent variables including employment, education, political education, health, housing, and language. These dependent variables are all determined to be interrelated and have comparable effects on an individual's integration success. In order to capture this six-sided output of integration measures, a questionnaire is proposed. It is intended for individual administration with utility across time and administrators. The responses from the questionnaire will be transferred to a point-scale system that will be placed on the proposed visualized integration index.

The theoretical extensions of this work include expanding to a national-level scope or to a different region. This would allow for cross-national analysis as well as comparison between the U.S. South region and other regions in the U.S. This could be used to further assess the specific regional barriers seen in the U.S. South in contrast to other parts of the country specifically related to the regional rurality and historic legacies of race-based belonging.

The implementation of this methodology would establish measurements of integration as a practical tool for improving the quality of life of immigrants, their communities, and the effectiveness of the social, political, and economic systems in which they live. The measurements resulting from this integration index would highlight the specific barrier reduction needs of immigrants and their communities as well as highlight the strengths of both individual- and community-level integration success. This proposed methodology is pertinent for service providers, employers, educators, caseworkers, and community leaders involved with immigrant populations. They play specific roles in integration as outlined in this research, and they already have a level of trust based on their direct interactions, if not also due to linguistic, cultural, ethnic, or religious similarities. This first should enable most effective and widely applicable measurement through the proposed methodology. Second, this provides a direct tool for working with immigrant individuals and community-level institutions to improve livelihoods. Therefore, this serves as a tool which captures the two-way dynamic between individuals and communities in navigating integration.

The U.S. South is a place for immigrants to integrate and experience high levels of functioning, belonging, and contributing to their communities, just as seen in more historically traditional gateway resettlement regions of the U.S. Although the U.S. South is not a traditional gateway resettlement region within the national scope, the reality of immigrant integration remains relevant and significant. As established through this research, there are barriers to immigrant integration, but through implementing this methodology and determining areas of high barriers in order to reduce them, integration can be reached. The United States South has much to offer to immigrants, and much to gain from fully integrated immigrant populations.

Figure 22

Qualitative Measurement to Point Converter, Meta Table	
# Points	Employment
1	Immigrant is unemployed and not actively seeking work.
2	Immigrant is unemployed and actively seeking employment with some barriers to employment.
3	Immigrant is employed intermittently, seasonally, or temporarily and experiences some barriers to employment.
4	Immigrant is employed and actively seeking job upgrade.
5	Immigrant is fully employed.
# Points	Education
2	Immigrant has low levels of education with high barriers to further education.
3-4	Immigrant has low-mid levels of education with high-mid barriers to further education.
5	Immigrant has intermediate levels of education with intermediate barriers to further education.
6-7	Immigrant has mid-high levels of education with mid-low barriers to further education.
8	Immigrant has high levels of education with low barriers to further education or is not seeking further education.
# Points	Political Engagement
1	Immigrant experiences many barriers to political engagement.
2	Immigrant experiences some barriers to political engagement.
3	Immigrant experiences limited barriers to political engagement.
# Points	Health
1	Immigrant is uninsured with severe lack of access and knowledge of to quality health care.
2	Immigrant experiences limited access and/or low quality and knowledge of health care.
3	Immigrant is insured with access with access and knowledge of primary care provider.
4	Immigrant is insured with access and knowledge to quality primary and secondary health care providers (including preventive, dental, behavioral, etc.)
# Points	Housing
1	Immigrant experiences many barriers to housing and neighborhood security.
2	Immigrant experiences some barriers to housing and neighborhood security.
3	Immigrant experiences limited barriers to housing and neighborhood security.
# Points	Language
1	Immigrant is not proficient in English.
2	Immigrant has elementary proficiency in English.

3	Immigrant has limited working proficiency in English.
4	Immigrant has full professional proficiency in English.
5	Immigrant has native or bilingual proficiency in English.

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