CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND IMMIGRATION IN CHARLOTTE, NC

Claire Schuch, PhD Candidate UNC Charlotte
Charlotte Data Day
October 7, 2015
A Country of Immigrants

- Where are you from?
- Where are your parents/grandparents/great-grandparents from?
- What brought them/you to the US/NC?
- Why do people migrate?

Immigration is political. And personal.
In 2013, 45,790,000 people living in the United States were born in other countries.
Where people who lived in each state in 2012 were born

Each shape represents where the people living in a state were born. Within a state, larger shapes mean a group makes up a larger share of the population.

- Northeast
- South
- Midwest
- West
- Outside the U.S.*
Traditional Immigrant Settlement Geography

- Immigrant “Gateway Cities” key entry points for people and goods moving into the U.S.
- Immigrants settle in the poorest and least desirable neighborhoods
- Center City close to job opportunities, forming enclaves
Gateway Cities – new economies, rapidly growing, interior locations

Suburban Settlement – housing costs, job location, immigrant infill

Invisiburbs → ethnoburbs

Heterolocalism (dispersed settlements)
New Urban Destinations

Between 1990 and 2000, NC experienced the largest percent growth of the immigrant population (274%) of all states.

The 21st Century new immigrant gateways

Charlotte: Latino growth rates of over 800% between 1980 and 2000 (Hispanic ‘hypergrowth’)

Immigrants in Mecklenburg County

Total Foreign-Born 13.6% (128,879)
Citizenship Status 32.2%

Entered U.S.
- Before 2000: 50.7%
- 2000-2009: 43.4%
- 2010 or later: 5.9%

Top sending countries: Mexico (21% of foreign-born), India (10%), Honduras (6%), El Salvador (5%), Vietnam (3%), Korea (3%), Germany (3%), Canada (3%).

Region of Birth
- Latin America 51.5%
- Asia 27.3%
- Europe 10.9%
- Africa 8.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 3-year estimates (2010-2012).
Immigrant Income

Median Household Income $54,417 (U.S. Born: $56,602)
Why Charlotte?
Why Charlotte?

Economy
- Bank of America phenomenon (early 1990s turning point)
- Need for both workers across occupational spectrum

Landscape of Opportunity
- Entrepreneurship encouraged
- Year-round employment
- Female employment opportunities

Welcoming
- Charlotte: little immigration history or experience
- Expansive labor market
- Immigration non-political issue
Charlotte’s Transformation from Old South to New South

- 1980: 315,474 (47% White, 31.3% African-American, 3.7% Hispanic, 5.1% Asian)
- 1990: 395,934 (35% White, 31.8% African-American, 7.8% Hispanic, 1.8% Asian)
- 2000: 540,828 (26% White, 33.0% African-American, 7.8% Hispanic, 1.4% Asian)
- 2010: 734,418 (17% White, 34.2% African-American, 13.1% Hispanic, 5.1% Asian)
Implications and Trends for Charlotte

**Challenges:**
- Costs of service provision
- (Perceived) job competition
- Ethnic and racial tensions

**Opportunities:**
- Revitalization of business and residential districts
- Growing entrepreneurial activity
- Cultural diversity
- New ideas, skills, talents
Immigrant experiences

- Common ground, e.g.
  - Home sickness, questions of belonging
  - Need for support

- Differences, e.g.
  - Education level, SES
  - Degree of trauma
  - Documentation status

- Public, political responses and receptivity
Local Initiatives and Resources

- Welcoming Cities initiative
- Charlotte’s Immigrant Immigration Task Force
- Building Integrated Communities (BIC)
- Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency
- International House
- Latin American Coalition
Conclusions

- People migrate for economic, political, educational, social/familial, and environmental reasons.

- The US started as, and continues to be, a ‘country of immigrants’
  - New geographies of migration, settlement patterns

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg is diversifying.

- Migration influences us all. How do we react to it?
Questions?
Thank you

Claire Schuch: jschuch1@uncc.edu