Cambio de Colores
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Proceedings of the 10th Annual Conference
Latinos in the Heartland:
Migration and Shifting Human Landscapes
A multistate conference about integration of immigrants
June 8-10, 2011 in Kansas City, Missouri
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The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX III)

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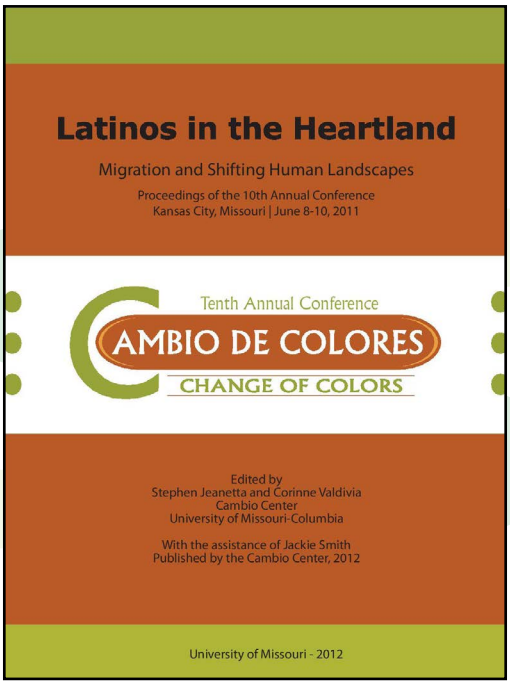

Keywords: immigrant integration, MIPEX, integration policy

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What the Results Mean for the U.S.?:

Integration is an often overlooked but key component of U.S. immigration policy. Successful integration of immigrants fuels their success, strengthens communities, and builds bridges between newcomers and other community members. Time and again, the influx of immigrants into a community has been shown to reverse economic decline and breathe new life into urban areas, small towns, and rural communities. Moreover, integration can be a key to entrepreneurship and future economic growth. For example, research by Richard Florida and Charlotta Mellander found that nations which focus more on immigrant integration have higher levels of economic competitiveness, are more innovative, and have higher rates of entrepreneurship.[1] Understanding how federal and state laws facilitate or hinder integration is therefore an important component of setting integration policy.

Last year, the Immigration Policy Center (IPC) was invited to become the U.S. partner for a major international comparative study of integration laws across Europe, Canada, and the United States. Now in its third edition, the Migrant Integration Policy Index, or MIPEX, is a reference guide and tool that measures and compares the immigration and integration policies of 31 countries.[2] After a year of collaboration and analysis, the MIPEX results showed that the U.S. ranked ninth overall, receiving 62 of a possible 100 points.[3] This overall ranking is good, especially when the lack of a national integration policy is taken into account. However, unpacking the meaning of this score, demonstrates that the United States can, and should, think much more carefully about how we welcome and encourage new immigrants.

This fact sheet provides a basic introduction to MIPEX, assesses the U.S. ratings, and uses the interactive features of the MIPEX tool to speculate on how changes to our immigration laws might affect the MIPEX score. Armed with this information, MIPEX provides an excellent starting point for a much deeper conversation about the ripple effect of our immigration laws on legal immigrants, and the need to think much more strategically about our legal immigration process.

What is MIPEX?:

The Migrant Integration Policy Index, or MIPEX, is a reference guide and tool which measures and compares the immigration and integration policies of 29 European countries, plus the U.S. and Canada. The results are tabulated from a 148-question survey that rates current laws and policies against a set of aspirational standards for immigrant integration developed within the European Union, but tied to many international best-practices instruments. Each country's score is determined through consultations with top scholars and institutions.[4] While the program originated within the European Union, its managers have sought to expand the group of countries, surveyed every two years, on the theory that the broader the sample, the more can be learned from assessing different practices. This is the first year the United States has been part of the study.

The 148 questions in the MIPEX survey cover seven broad policy areas of integration: 1) labor market mobility (how immigrants access jobs and job training); 2) family reunion (who is eligible to bring family members and which family members); 3) access to education; 4) political participation; 5) long-term residence (who is eligible, how does one get it, and can it be revoked); 6) access to citizenship; and 7) anti-discrimination laws and protections. Each of the seven policy areas is divided into subcategories, each one containing several questions that are scored on a scale of zero to 100.

Why is MIPEX Important?:

MIPEX gives policymakers a quick reference guide to assess their country's strengths and weaknesses in integration policy, as well as look for potential solutions to problems. [5]Advocates can use MIPEX to help push for policy changes that would improve immigrant integration. The public can use MIPEX to compare their nation's immigration and integration policies to other countries from around the world. Finally, MIPEX online tools allow researchers and the public to dig deeper into each country's score on

the various policy areas, create charts to illustrate and compare scores, and determine how changes in laws and policies could impact overall scores.

What Are the Limitations of MIPEX?:

Because MIPEX has a short-hand ranking system, it is easy to say the United States ranks in the top ten for immigrant integration laws, but that would only scratch the surface of MIPEX's value and its limitations. More than anything, for an American audience, MIPEX offers an entry point into a much broader conversation about how the United States treats its immigrant population. The IPC found several limitations to the study that users should note.

The survey questions reflect European systems of government and policies that don't necessarily translate to U.S. laws and policies. For example, in most European countries, anyone can apply to immigrate based on various eligibility requirements. In the United States, immigration is generally controlled by pre-existing family or employment relationships. Many European countries allow limited voting by non-citizens, something that is relatively unheard of in the United States. On the other hand, MIPEX doesn't really provide questions that fully measure the range of political activity in which non-citizens participate. For example, MIPEX cannot measure the significant integration value of the role that unauthorized immigrants play in leading DREAM Act advocacy.

In some cases, a low score may not fully reflect the range of options in a country. Conversely, a high score may not always reflect underlying tensions or issues that affect the implementation of a law. Because MIPEX focuses primarily on legal immigration, it cannot be used to give a full picture of the impact of laws on the unauthorized population. Unlike legal immigrants, this large group of immigrants does not have access to legal status, cannot apply for citizenship, cannot apply for family reunion, and is not protected by all of the anti-discrimination laws and policies. Until the U.S. addresses the unauthorized population as a part of comprehensive immigration reform, serious challenges will remain for social, economic, and political integration.

How Did the U.S. Do?:

Overall, the U.S ranked ninth out of 31 countries, but first in terms of its strong anti-discrimination laws and protections.[6] The U.S. also ranked high on the access to citizenship scale because it encourages newcomers to become citizens in order to fully participate in American public life. Compared with other countries, legal immigrants in the U.S. enjoy employment opportunities, educational opportunities, and the opportunity to reunite with close family members. MIPEX also acknowledges that the U.S.'s complex immigration laws, limited visa availability, high fees, and long backlogs may make it challenging for immigrants to integrate into the fabric of American life.[7]

MIPEX also highlights the fact that several U.S. states are taking the lead on immigrant integration. States including Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Maryland, and Washington, as well as major cities like New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, have offices dedicated to welcoming newcomers.

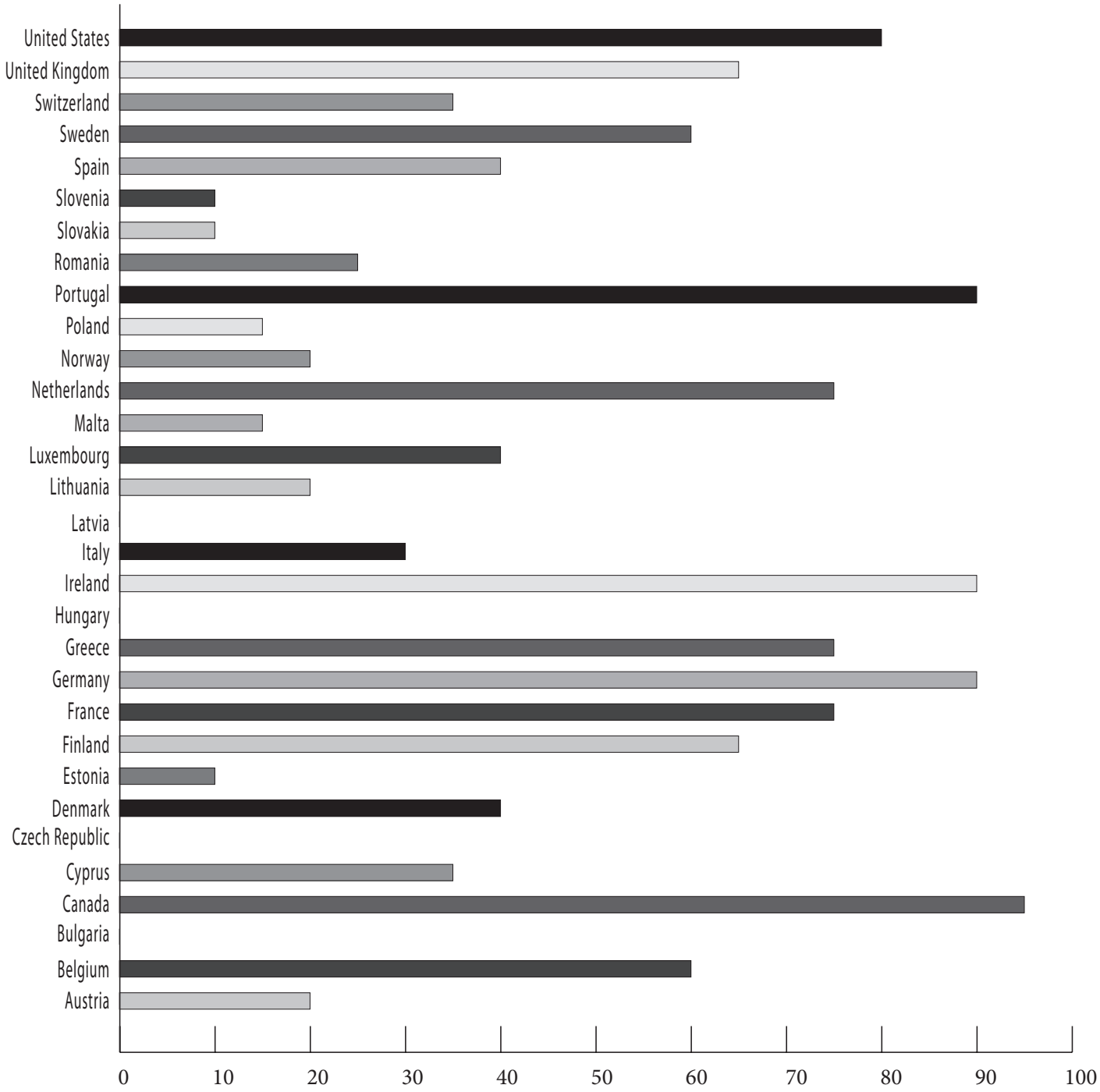
A brief overview of the U.S ranking in each category is provided in the following table:

Policy Area	U.S. Rank	Score (out of 100)	Comments
Labor Market Mobility	11	68	Immigrants with work authorization are allowed to work immediately, start businesses and expect the same working conditions as U.S. citizens. The U.S. does not facilitate the recognition of foreign diplomas, forcing many workers to find jobs below their skill level. [8]
Family Reunion	10	67	The U.S. receieved high marks for giving a "slightly favorable" chance of immigration for the immediate family members of immigrants, but was marked down for having a backlog that can prevent families from reuniting for s long as 20 years. [9]
Education	8	55	All students, regradles of immigration status, may attend free public school. However, the U.S's score was lowered because unauthorized students have "no clear legal path to college", and are often ineligible for in-state tuition (unlike rougly half of the other MIPEX countries). [10]
Political Participation	15	45	UNlike most European countries, non-citizens in the U.S. cannot vote in federal elections and are not represented by federally-sponsored advisory bodies. Several U.S. states are taking the lead on immigrant integration and have created offices for welcoming newcomers. [11]
Long Term Residence	24	50	Many temporary immigrants cannot obtain permanent residency. For those who are eligible, fees are high. Long term residents in the U.S. receive fewer benefits and gaurantees than most other nations surveyes. Long term residents may still be deported for commission of certain crimes. [12]
Access to Citizenship	8	61	The U.S. "slightly" encourages immigrants to become citizens and has a constitutional (birthright) citizenship policy. Visa backlogs and high fees lower that score. [13]
Anti-Discrimination	1	89	Racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination is illegal in all areas of life. Legal residents cannot be denied opportunites because of their national origin or citizenship. [14]
Overall	9	62	

Further on, we take a closer look at some of the policies that influenced the overall score for the U.S. We also use the MIPEX online data analysis tool to see how the U.S. score would change if policies were modified.

Constitutional (Birthright) Citizenship

Subcategory: Eligibility for Citizenship



Citizenship:

MIPEX called the U.S. birthright citizenship policy a "model for most established and reforming immigration countries."[15] The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, the cornerstone of American civil rights, affirms with very few exceptions, that all persons born in the U.S. are U.S. citizens, regardless of their parents' citizenship. As the bar graph below shows, U.S. policy differs from some countries involved in the MIPEX survey and gives the U.S. a relatively high score in terms of "eligibility for citizenship," which is one of the subcategories within "access to citizenship." In this subcategory, the U.S. ranks 5th, behind Canada, Germany, Ireland, and Portugal.

Restrictionist groups and some legislators, have persisted in their attempts to restrict or repeal birthright citizenship in state legislatures and the U.S. Congress. Over the years, several bills have been introduced that would deny U.S. citizenship to children whose parents are in the U.S. illegally or on temporary visas. Using the MIPEX interactive tools, which allow the user to change a score based on potential changes to a law or policy, we can measure the impact on the U.S. ranking if it were to eliminate birthright citizenship. If the Fourteenth Amendment provision of birthright citizenship policy was somehow repealed, the U.S. rank within the "eligibility for citizenship" subcategory would drop to 12th out of 31 nations.

This case illustrates one of the limitations of MIPEX. Even though a change to birthright citizenship would be a huge policy change within the U.S., the overall U.S. score would drop only one point from 62 to 61, but the ranking of ninth would remain the same. Thus, this drop in rankings would not reflect the full weight or impact of a change to the Fourteenth Amendment. For instance, there would certainly be a ripple effect in other areas, such as discrimination law or employment, because an entire group of native-born persons would no longer have the full benefits of citizenship. Even with those limitations, the initial ranking and the projected drop in the MIPEX ranking are both useful in rebutting arguments that the United States is the only country to offer birthright citizenship. Not only is this untrue, but according to the MIPEX survey, the U.S. is not even the most generous in that category.

Family Reunification:

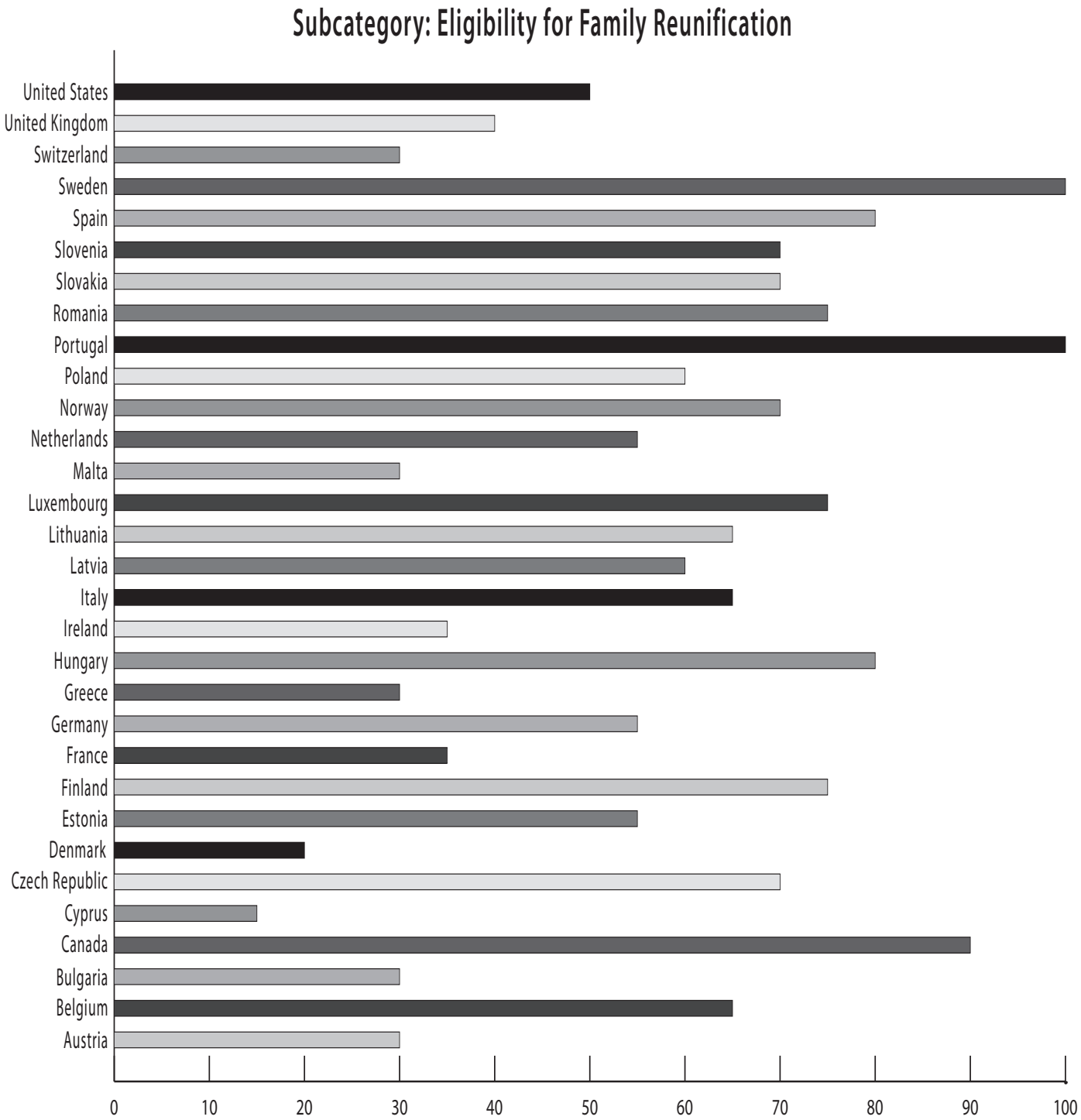
The U.S. did not fare well with family reunification policies, where MIPEX showed that U.S. immigration laws often fail to reflect the many ways that Americans and immigrants live together in families. Unlike legal permanent residents, many temporary residents cannot apply for their families while in the U.S., even with the resources to support them. U.S. legal permanent residents can only sponsor their parents or adult children after they naturalize. No one in the U.S. has the right to apply for a visa to sponsor their foreign homosexual partner, unlike half of the other MIPEX countries.

These issues resulted in a "family reunification eligibility" subcategory score of only 50, placing the U.S. 21st out of the 31 nations surveyed.

For a country that has long prided itself on family values, this assessment of U.S. family reunification principles is an important reality check for lawmakers. The MIPEX data confirms a long-standing critique by immigration experts that current U.S. immigration laws place undue burdens on legal immigrants, permanent and temporary, who seek to live in the United States with their families. Leaving the compelling humanitarian arguments for family reunification aside, as a practical matter, the U.S.'s low rank gives some quantitative support to the arguments that the U.S. is not doing all it can to recruit foreign talent. The low score then offers additional evidence that the U.S. is losing its competitive edge. Problems with family reunification have been cited as one of the key issues discouraging foreign talent from immigrating to the United States.

Another area where the U.S. ranks far below its European and Canadian counterparts, is in the recognition of same-sex marriage or partnerships for immigration purposes. Again using the interactive MIPEX tools, we can see that adoption of different policies would change the U.S. ranking favorably and arguably reflect increased U.S. competitiveness. For example, if the Uniting American Families Act (UAFA)[18] was passed, which gives eligibility to same-sex permanent partners for immigration benefits,

the U.S. score in family reunification eligibility subcategory would improve from 50 to 60 and the ranking from 21st to 16th.[19] The overall MIPEX score would not change.



Conclusion:

As the United States continues to struggle with its own immigration policies, the MIPEX index offers policymakers, and the public, a framework for analyzing our best and worst practices on immigrant integration compared to other countries in the world. MIPEX invites a conversation on immigrant integration and offers both scholars and advocates a chance to analyze the impact of existing and potential laws and policies. As Richard Florida points out, "Americans like to think of their country as the world's great melting pot. But this new immigration index and our analysis suggest that's no longer an assumption that can be taken for granted."[20]

References

1 Richard Florida, "The Melting Pot That Isn't: Why America Needs Better Immigration," The Atlantic, April 19, 2011.

2 MIPEX is led by the British Council and the Migration Policy Group. 37 national-level organizations, including think-tanks, non-governmental organizations, foundations, universities, research institutes and equality bodies are affiliated with the MIPEX project.

3 MIPEX at 10-11.

4 For each question, there are 3 answer options. The maximum of 100 points is awarded when policies meet the highest standards for equal treatment. A score of 50 is given when policies lie halfway to the highest standards, and a score of 0 is given when they are furthest from the highest standards.

5 MIPEX Blog, "How MIPEX was used to reform Greek citizenship laws," March 29, 2011.

6 MIPEX at 24-25.

7 MIPEX at 210.

8 MIPEX at 208.

9 MIPEX at 208

10 MIPEX at 209.

11 MIPEX at 209.

12 MIPEX at 210.

13 MIPEX at 210.

14 MIPEX at 211.

15 MIPEX at 207.

16 The new ranking is calculated by changing the answers to two questions on the U.S. MIPEX survey. Under Access to Nationality, Eligibility, the answers for "second generation immigrants (born in the country)" and "third generation immigrants (born in the country)" are changed from "automatically at birth" to "naturalization procedure," with the U.S. score in both categories going from 100 to 0. This recalculation is made because if constitutional citizenship was repealed, sons and daughters of immigrants born on U.S. soil would no longer automatically be citizens at birth, and instead would have to go through a naturalization process.

17 MIPEX at 208.

18 The Uniting American Families Act of 2011, H.R. 1537, S. 821.

19 The new ranking is calculated by changing the answer to one question on the U.S. MIPEX survey. Under Family Reunion, Eligibility, the answer for "eligibility for partners other than spouses (average)" is changed from "only one or only for some types of partners" to "both" (registered partnership and stable long-term relationship, which includes homosexuals), moving the score on that question from 50 to 100. This recalculation is made because UAFA would allow eligibility for persons in stable long-term relationships to be eligible for immigration benefits.

20 Richard Florida, "The Melting Pot That Isn't: Why America Needs Better Immigration," The Atlantic, April 19, 2011.

▶ Transnationalism and Housing and Health Risks of Rural Latino immigrant Families

Kimberly Greder & Christine C. Cook, Iowa State University

Abstract

In-depth interviews with rural low-income Mexican immigrant mothers explored 'How, if at all, do the housing and health issues of rural Latino immigrant families vary based on level of transnationalism?'