

CALL FOR ARTICLES

RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences

NEW IMMIGRANT U.S. LABOR MARKET NICHE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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Technological change, globalization, and the increasing mobility of workers have shaped the landscape of the U.S. labor market in recent decades. Some jobs have flourished while others have all but disappeared. In this dynamic context immigrants have come to play an increasingly important role in certain jobs and occupations. Some immigrant groups have come to specialize in specific labor market niches, with consequences for themselves and their families, for the U.S. labor market more broadly, and, at times, also for their home country. Specific immigrant groups dominate jobs requiring low levels of schooling, such as agricultural work, construction work, and food preparation, while others dominate jobs requiring high levels of schooling, such as IT specialties, mathematics, and engineering. Immigrant involvements in labor market niches come with costs and benefits, not merely to the laborers but to the overall U.S. economy and, at times, also to their home countries. The changes they generate may be unintended as well as intended. The conference and journal issue will advance our understanding of these phenomena.

What are determinants and consequences of the “colonization” of specific sectors of the labor market by distinctive immigrant groups? What attributes of immigrant groups account for their labor market specializations? In what ways are immigrants creating new labor market activity versus taking over activity previously performed by native-born or earlier immigrant groups? In what ways, if any, are the immigrants transforming the niches in which they are involved? How and why do immigrant men and women, including those of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, become differently involved in labor market niches? To what extent do immigrants build on homeland-acquired skills and networks and in what ways are they impacting their homelands? How have government policies, both in the U.S. and in immigrant homelands, influenced immigrant group involvement in particular niches?

This *RSF* issue will be groundbreaking and agenda-setting. It will be the first collection of articles to bring together, synthesize, and “cross-fertilize” answers to the above questions from different perspectives. It will do so (a) by combining macro approaches with case studies, (b) by drawing on multi-disciplinary analyses, including by sociologists, economists, anthropologists, and political scientists that utilize diverse methodologies and data sources, (c) by addressing experiences of diverse immigrant group laborers across the skill spectrum, and (d) by examining new immigrant labor market niche activity from a global, transnational, and national as well as local vantage point. We expect that the individual articles will be rich in data details, empirically rigorous, and theoretically informed. An introductory essay to the

volume will provide a framework for assessing aspects of immigrant labor market experiences that are generalizable and aspects unique to specific labor market sectors and specific immigrant groups. In addition, it will provide a framework that provides coherence to the essays by individual contributors to the journal issue.

Together, the articles should stimulate new thinking and new understandings of immigrant labor market experiences above and beyond those typically grounded in individual social science disciplines. The special journal issue should also be the “go to” publication for future scholarship on new immigrant labor market experiences.

Proposals for Contributions to the Special Issue

We welcome articles that focus on some of the following sets of issues. However, the list is not exhaustive. We will give preference to studies that are both empirically rigorous and theoretically grounded.

Individual attributes of immigrant groups that influence employment in specific labor market niches

In what ways, if any, do the skills and homeland work experiences of specific immigrant groups, and of specific gender, class, and racial/ethnic immigrant subgroups, account for foreign-born gravitation to distinctive lines of work in America? To what extent do second and subsequent generations of immigrant groups continue to work in the same labor market niches as their parents, in what capacities, and why?

Ways that and reasons why certain immigrant labor market niches are local versus national or even international in scope

What accounts for some niches being rooted in local labor markets whereas others span national and transnational labor markets? In what ways do the nature of the niche activity, attributes of the immigrant groups, and official policies at the local and national levels, in the United States and abroad influence how localized, nationalized, and internationalized a niche is? What labor market conditions induce developments in immigrant niches?

Processes whereby immigrant groups come to dominate specific labor market niches

In what ways have immigrant group networks, norms and cultural heritages within the United States and transnationally shaped labor market niche involvements in the United States? In what ways, if any, do immigrant institutions (including churches and immigrant media) and cultural practices influence labor market involvements—in ways that are inclusionary toward a particular immigrant group but exclusionary towards others?

Work conditions and work relations in the niche and how they have evolved over the years

What are wage and non-wage benefits, including health benefits, associated with employment in specific niches? In what ways does the niche involve “good” and “bad” jobs? To what extent are immigrants involved in the niche as owners/managers and self-employed, and as employees? Did the immigrant

group take over a preexisting labor market niche or did it create a new one? How does the immigrant group relate to other immigrants and to non-immigrants in the work context? In what ways do immigrant entrepreneurs and employees facilitate the growth of immigrant employment in the niche?

The role of official institutions and policies in the development of immigrant employment in the niche

In what ways, if any, have immigration policies (including the issuing of special and short-term visas), bilateral agreements, and variations in enforcement of regulations affected the concentration of particular immigrant groups in certain niches? And conversely, have some niches been destroyed due to changes in policies and policy enforcement? What barriers to entry do specific regulations (such as licensing or citizenship requirements) create in some industries and states and how do they impact immigrant group niche involvement?

Impact of immigrant niche involvement on their homelands

What effects has the development of particular U.S. labor market niches had on immigrants' homelands? To what extent has the niche spurred cross-border linkages, such as supply chains centering on home country imports and exports (including production of inputs for the niche and/or new production in the homeland that builds on skills, services, capital, and networks generated in the niche)? In what ways, if any, has the niche become transnationally embedded (in a transnational "social field" with its own networks and norms)? Do high skilled-niches contribute to a home country "brain drain," "brain circulation," and new economic activity (and under what conditions)?

Impact of immigrant niche involvement on non-immigrant firms and workers

How have non-immigrant firms and workers responded to immigrant domination of labor market niches? Does the immigrant involvement impact prices and quality of goods and services produced? To what extent does an immigrant group displace or replace non-immigrants as owners and workers, and do native-born respond by becoming more specialized? Do firms re-structure their production in light of the immigrant labor, including in ways that impact on productivity? Are bilingual owners, managers, and employees at a particular advantage in the niche?

Anticipated Timeline

Prospective contributors should submit a CV and an abstract of their study (up to two pages in length, single spaced), plus up to two pages of supporting material (e.g., tables, figures, pictures, etc.) no later than 11/15/15 to:

<https://rsfjournal.onlineapplicationportal.com>

All submissions must be original work that has not been previously published. Only abstracts submitted to <https://rsfjournal.onlineapplicationportal.com> will be considered. Author(s) of each journal article will share a \$1,000 honorarium when the issue is published. The journal issue will be edited by Susan Eckstein (Professor of International Relations and Sociology at Boston University) and Giovanni Peri (Professor of Economics at University of California Davis). All questions regarding this issue should be

directed to Suzanne Nichols, Director of Publications, at journals@rsage.org and not to the editors of the special issue.

A conference related to the special issue will take place at the Russell Sage Foundation (RSF) in New York City on 6/3/16. The selected contributors will gather for a one-day workshop to present draft papers that they must submit one month prior to the conference. The draft papers will be circulated to conference participants in advance of the meeting. Based on feedback from fellow conference contributors and the editors, authors will revise their papers and submit a final version, due on 7/1/2016. The papers will then be sent out to two scholars for peer review. Based on feedback from reviewers, as well as from the RSF board, authors will revise their papers by 10/12/2016. The full and final special issue of the journal will be published in summer of 2017. Papers will be published open access on the RSF website as well as in several digital repositories, including JSTOR and Project Muse.

Travel costs, food, and lodging for the New York conference will be covered by the foundation.