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05. Geography

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Abstracts from the 2015 Oklahoma Research Day

Held at Northeastern State University

04. Liberal Arts

05. Geography

04.05.01 Immigration, Ethnicity, and Community Formation in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area

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Two important shifts in the settlement patterns of immigrants to the United States have occurred over the past few decades: the immigrant populations are increasingly of Latin America, Asian, and Sub-Saharan African origins. The destinations of these groups are expanding in the rapidly growing urban areas of the South, Southwest, and Great Plains regions. Oklahoma City (OKC) has experienced significant overall growth in the 21st century, including growth due to international immigration. Our research seeks to understand how Oklahoma City's immigrant populations, through the spatial configurations of the ethnic communities they support, have become part of the city's changing landscape. To identify the types of ethnic communities present in the OKC metropolitan area, our study first maps the residential patterns of the foreign-born populations using data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey. The discovered settlement patterns are compared to the location distribution of places that serve immigrant communities: worship offering non-English services and ethnic grocery stores. The research explores human agency by interviewing ethnic business owners on their reasoning for establishing their company within the city. Our findings support the idea that ethnic communities in new destination cities like Oklahoma City are not separate, but these ethnic clusters constitutes for multiethnic neighborhoods and ethnoscaapes throughout OKC.