

Civic Action for Refugee Empowerment: The impact of refugee and immigrant civic leadership

Anjali Dutt, Farrah Jacquez & Bryan Wright
University of Cincinnati & Cincinnati Compass

Background

- Developing equitable civic spaces requires promoting and sustaining the leadership of diverse community members.
- Previous research has focused on how to support inclusion of refugees and immigrants in civic life, but less is known about what facilitates and sustains civic leadership.
- Refugee and immigrant leaders bring unique and invaluable perspectives and skills that strengthen communities.
- In 2023 we created the Compass Community Council (CCC), which now consists of 22 leaders of diverse and local refugee and immigrant communities, who are working with our partner organization (Cincinnati Compass) to develop a sustainable process for identifying and addressing concerns that immigrants and refugees experience when moving to the city.

Research Questions or Objectives

- What leads immigrants and refugees to become local civic leaders?
- What sustains their civic leadership, and cultivates the civic involvement of others in their communities?
- What impact does refugee and immigrant civic leadership have on the individual and the local community?



What motivates your leadership?

Theme	Description
Being helpful	Motivated to help and make sure people have what they need to succeed
Gratitude	Motivating to hear how they have positively affected someone's life
Community	Friends and family help with burnout and help them stay motivated
Acclimation	Motivated to make sure they and others in their community become acclimate to the new environment and culture in America



For more information,
contact anjali.dutt@uc.edu

Research design and data

- In depth qualitative interviews were conducted with the members of the CCC by a trained graduate student and research assistant.
- Participants were members of several different immigrant and immigrant communities, and hold leadership positions in several organizations that support migrant communities.
- Interview protocol was developed by university professors in collaboration with the CCC, to ensure that research could support the mission and priorities of the CCC, in addition to the academic research goals.
- Using thematic analysis, interviews were analyzed by a team of two professors, two graduate students, and the project manager. Findings were then presented in aggregate to the CCC to gain their feedback on initial analyses.

What are the potential opportunities to apply the study findings?

- Findings can help to identify how to eliminate barriers to civic engagement, and how to cultivate and sustain civic leadership among refugees and immigrants
- Findings will also showcase the benefits of migrant leadership by spreading awareness of the perspectives, goals, and skills of immigrant and refugee communities.