

Social Disorganization in New Latino Destinations?*

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ABSTRACT Rural industrial restructuring, including growth in meat processing and other nondurable manufacturing, has generated employment opportunities that have attracted Latino in-migrants to new nonmetropolitan destinations. Long-time residents, however, are not always receptive. While some observers point to economic and social benefits of a Latino influx, others believe that the newcomers drain local resources, raise poverty and crime rates, and diminish the quality of life in their communities. We evaluate the influence of rapid population growth on emerging Latino destinations—new boomtowns. We use data from the U.S. census and other sources to measure changes in local economic circumstances and quality of life in nonmetropolitan boom counties experiencing high rates of Latino growth between 1990 and 2000. Our findings indicate that large influxes of Latinos had surprisingly few negative economic consequences for local populations. Furthermore, the quality of life in new destinations did not deteriorate in comparison to other nonmetropolitan counties, especially with regard to crime. Mounting pressure to educate students with limited English proficiency is nevertheless apparent. Our conclusion highlights relevant national policy debates and underscores the need for commitment on the part of firms responsible for Latino growth.

Introduction

Latinos in the United States have traditionally resided in the Southwest (Tienda and Mitchell 2006). In recent years, however, regional economic restructuring, especially in the low-wage, low-skill sector of the economy, has opened up new opportunities for year-round employment and better-paying jobs throughout the country (Crowley, Lichter, and Qian 2006; Kandel and Parrado 2005; Saenz 2004). Many Latino families have resettled in small towns and rural areas in America's heartland (Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005; Kandel and

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Cromartie 2004; Lichter and Johnson 2006). A growing body of mostly qualitative research underscores both positive and negative implications for receiving communities. Large-scale quantitative studies have highlighted some important benefits of new Latino growth, including the reversal of chronic population decline, revitalized local economies, and an expanding tax base (Capps et al. 2007; Donato et al. 2007; Kasarda and Johnson 2006; Waslin 2008). However, community case studies suggest that local economies and social-service providers may be buckling under mounting demographic pressure to meet the special needs of disadvantaged newcomers and their children—especially growing tax burdens associated with public assistance, health care, and schooling (Bump 2005; Schoenholtz 2005). New fiscal pressures have raised additional concerns about white backlash, hostile racial and ethnic relations, and community conflict (Erwin 2003; Fennelly 2008).

Our main objective is to better understand how emerging settlement patterns have reshaped the economic circumstances and quality of life in new Latino destinations. In the 1970s and 1980s, studies often reported increases in crime and other forms of social disorganization in “energy boomtowns” that sprouted in western parts of Canada and the United States (for reviews, see Broadway 2007; Brown, Dorius, and Krannich 2005). Are population increases associated with community disorganization in America’s Latino boomtowns? Our goals are both didactic (i.e., extracting hypotheses from mostly qualitative case studies of community impacts) and analytical (i.e., using nationally representative data and quantitative methods to test them). We begin by providing background information on the emergence of nonmetropolitan Latino boomtowns. Second, we review research and present hypotheses regarding the social and economic implications (e.g., poverty, educational expenditures, and crime) of Latino growth. We then draw from a variety of county data sources (ca. 1990 and 2000), including the U.S. decennial and economic censuses, to document changing patterns of disorganization (or not) in counties impacted by rapid growth in the Latino population. More importantly, we test the specific hypotheses insinuated in community case studies using difference-in-difference models that compare Latino boom counties with otherwise similar counties that did not experience rapid Latino population growth.

Boomtown Growth and Community Impacts

The Latino population has recently experienced an unprecedented pattern of geographic diffusion (Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Lichter

and Johnson 2009). During the 1990s, the Latino population doubled in the Midwest, Southeast, and Pacific Northwest, while increasing by about 60 percent overall. Growth has been driven largely by immigrants, who have bypassed traditional southwestern gateway cities and settled instead in America's Heartland (Durand, Massey, and Charvet 2000; Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Saenz and Torres 2003). More recently, natural increase (i.e., high fertility minus mortality) in new destinations has emerged as a growing source of population change (Johnson and Lichter 2008).

A rapidly shifting low-wage labor market has pushed Latinos out of the metro Southwest while other parts of the country have grown more attractive as places to live and work. Poor schools, crime-ridden neighborhoods, crowded, expensive housing, and immigrant-saturated urban labor markets have encouraged Latinos to leave California, Texas, and other southwestern states (Cantu 1995; Kandel and Parrado 2004; Light and von Scheven 2008). A hostile political environment has exacerbated the exodus. For example, growing anti-immigrant sentiment that culminated in proposition 187, combined with high unemployment and declining wages, pushed Latino immigrants out of California during the 1990s (Durand et al. 2000; Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2000). Meanwhile, the general amnesty provisions of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act provided Latino immigrants with a new freedom to move elsewhere in response to labor demands and a better quality of life (Durand et al. 2005). The post-1990 militarization of the border, especially outside El Paso and San Diego, has shifted the port-of-entry for many undocumented workers and contributed to the geographic dispersion of population inland.

Meat processing has been perhaps the most recognized occupational niche for Latino workers in nontraditional destinations (Broadway 2007; Kandel and Parrado 2005). The scale of production has grown as a result of shifts in diet and export policies. To increase profits, firms have closed plants in unionized urban centers and placed large facilities in nonmetropolitan locales where the cost of land and labor are much cheaper. At the same time, work tasks have been routinized and deskilled, and the pace of production has intensified (Kandel and Parrado 2004; Martin, Taylor, and Fix 1996). Labor shortages and turnover initially rose as a result of low wages, flat job hierarchies, and unpleasant, difficult, and hazardous working conditions (Gouveia and Stull 1997; Stull and Broadway 1995). Latino immigrants filled the labor vacuum. Year-round work with limited benefits offered Latinos, especially immigrants, new opportunities unavailable elsewhere—

allowing them to minimally support a family, buy a modest home, and enjoy a quality of life that many thought was impossible.

Latinos have relocated to parts of the upper Midwest for jobs in turkey, beef, and pork processing, and to the Southeast for work in poultry- and fish-processing plants (Bump 2005; Gozdziaik and Bump 2004; Griffith 2005; Kandel and Parrado 2004, 2005; Stull, Broadway, and Griffith 1995). Burgeoning Latino growth in these areas also reflects low-wage jobs in oil, timber, furniture, carpeting, textiles, and other nondurable manufacturing (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2000; Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Murphy, Blanchard, and Hill 2001). Driven by a perception that Latinos work hard, put in long hours, and tolerate poor working conditions for low wages, employers also recruit Latino workers directly from Texas, California, and Mexico (Broadway 2007; Cantu 1995; Martin et al. 1996).

To be sure, growing employment opportunities in new destinations offer clear financial incentives and job security to Latino newcomers (Crowley et al. 2006). The implications for receiving communities, however, are more complex. Newcomers are strongly motivated to work, but often face the same social and economic vulnerabilities that limited opportunities for upward mobility in their communities of origin. Indeed, Latino in-migrants are often poor and educationally disadvantaged, and many do not speak English well (Capps et al. 2007; Donato et al. 2007; Kochhar, Suro, and Tafoya 2005). Roughly 70 percent of Latinos interviewed near a Nebraska meat-processing plant spoke little or no English, and two-thirds lacked a high school diploma (Gouveia and Stull 1997). Longtime residents of receiving communities often worry about the implications of large influxes in Latinos, and are especially concerned about absorbing “outsiders” without diminishing economic well-being and quality of life in their rural locales. Do these negative perceptions match reality? Much of the immigration literature takes a national perspective to such questions (see Smith and Edmonston 1998), but a growing body of mostly community case studies also has recently attended to these concerns (Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005; Massey 2008).

Economic Impacts

Poverty and public assistance. The poverty rate among Latinos in 2006 was 20.6 percent, well above the poverty rate among non-Latino whites (8.2 percent) (DeNaas-Walt, Proctor, and Smith 2007). Case studies indicate that longtime residents are often concerned about the fiscal implications for the community—fearing that their towns will be

flooded by poor newcomers, who will drain local resources and place new demands on public assistance and other social services (see Massey 2008).

To be sure, many Latino newcomers are economically disadvantaged, particularly upon arrival (Crowley et al. 2006; Jensen 2006). Donato et al. (2007) have documented the comparatively low education and job skills of Latinos in new immigrant communities. Moreover, heightened job competition in emerging rural Latino enclaves may depress the earnings trajectories of Latino workers, especially if the labor market is highly segmented by race and ethnicity (Pfeffer and Parra 2009). But economic need does not necessarily translate into receipt of public assistance, especially in the case of immigrants. In one rural Nebraska town, requests for public assistance increased sharply with the arrival of Latino newcomers. Yet the percentage of applicants awarded government benefits fell precipitously, from 70 percent to 40 percent; moreover, an Anglo advantage emerged in the receipt of benefits (Gouveia and Stull 1997). In this community, only 18 percent of Latinos in the local meat-processing plant's applications for Targeted Jobs Tax Credits actually received public assistance before seeking work. Many Latino newcomers, especially undocumented workers, are reluctant to ask for government assistance; some fear arrest and deportation. They often choose instead to rely on family and friends or on nongovernmental service organizations, such as Latino centers and churches.

Whether these results can be broadly generalized across rural communities is unclear; comparative cross-community research on links between poverty and public assistance outlays is in short supply. Most previous studies have centered on metro gateway cities or new suburban destinations (see Smith and Edmonston 1998). And just as importantly, there is little or no quantitative evidence regarding whether the geographic dispersal to new destinations, including rural Latino boomtowns, is linked on average to rising rates of poverty, unemployment, or public assistance in the community. Our study addresses this question.

Employment and earnings among natives. A related argument is that rapid growth of the immigrant population will depress local wage rates and raise unemployment rates among low-wage, low-skill natives. If true, Latino boomtowns will presumably exhibit elevated rates of unemployment and stagnant wage growth among the indigenous or American-born population. But overall, previous research on wage impacts is far from clear at the national and state level and in major immigrant gateways (e.g., Bean and Stevens 2003; Kochhar 2006).

In Latino boomtowns, local residents—correctly or not—worry that Latino newcomers will take “their” jobs or that other population segments will succumb to competition from Latino small-business growth (Rich and Miranda 2005). Worksites in new destinations have become more racially and ethnically diverse, providing a new arena—at least in the short term—for intergroup tension or hostility (Winders 2008). These fears often go hand-in-hand with rising prejudice against newcomers; Latinos are easy scapegoats and are often discriminated against by natives (Fennelly 2008; Marrow 2008; Vogt et al. 2006).

Some feel that existing minorities have been displaced in local labor markets. For example, an African American resident of Atkinson County, Georgia, claims: “If you have 10 factory openings, I would say Hispanics would get the majority of the jobs now. . . . And if you look at the little grocery stores, there are more Hispanic businesses than black businesses” (Swarns 2006a). A report from Duplin County, North Carolina, suggests that some residents were alarmed to see Latino adults filling fast-food jobs formerly occupied by African American teenagers (Rocha and Easterbrook 2006).¹

Others have expressed concern that nonminority natives also suffer economically in response to a pool of low-wage Latino labor. Some quantitative research indeed suggests a link between rural Latino population growth and declining wages of skilled workers in rural areas (Newman 2003). Whether this reflects new competition between workers with similar skill sets, however, is much less clear. The changing local economy, such as the opening or expansion of a meatpacking or food-processing plant (e.g., ConAgra or Iowa Beef Packers, Inc.), may create new jobs but ones that do not pay well (Broadway 2007; Kochhar 2005). In other words, changing production arrangements that attracted Latinos to the community in the first place may be more responsible than Latino population growth for stagnant wages. High-immigration communities thus may have experienced economic stagnation whether they became new immigrant destinations or not. Obviously, we cannot observe this counterfactual, but we can compare Latino boomtowns with otherwise similar communities that did not experience rapid Latino growth during the 1990s.

¹ Rates of nonmetropolitan Latino growth in North Carolina and Georgia are among the highest in the nation, attracting the attention of local and state residents and policymakers as well as journalists worldwide. Media reports tend to focus on locales where Latino growth is highly concentrated. They echo researchers’ findings, but sometimes provide more up-to-date data or describe in greater detail particular experiences or concerns of local residents.

Retail sales. Some observers have underscored the potential economic benefits of a Latino influx, particularly if it reverses or slows chronic population declines. Latinos spend money in their communities—buying goods and services from local businesses (Capps et al. 2007; Kasarda and Johnson 2006). For example, Latinos accounted for one-fifth of all customers in a Duplin County, North Carolina, grocery store and one-third of clientele patronizing a nearby Chinese restaurant (Rocha and Easterbrook 2006). Atkinson County, Georgia, was losing population; now, according to one report, Latinos constitute 60 percent of all buyers on a local used-car dealer's lot, one-third of clientele in a local barber shop, and 40 to 50 percent of customers in the town's sole grocery store (Swarns 2006b). The benefits of increased economic activity are clearly apparent. A lifelong resident of a small Illinois river town in which the arrival of a meatpacking plant prompted a 2000 percent increase in the Latino population remarked: "Beardstown was a small, dying town. ... Five, six years ago, you could go down to the square, it would be deserted. Now it's bustling all day long" (Kernek 2001:2).

The local business community is especially receptive to the large and lucrative market that Latino newcomers represent. The focus groups studied by Fennelly (2008), for example, found substantial differences in attitudes between community elites and the working class in a Minnesota meatpacking town. Elites were more likely to see the positive side of economic growth and demographic diversity, and were much less likely to view new immigration as a symbolic or economic threat to the community. Compared with other groups, the working-class population—whose members interacted most closely with immigrants—had a greater tendency to "convey deep prejudice and stereotyped attitudes" (Fennelly 2008:167). A poll of rural Nebraskans yielded similar divides along educational lines (Vogt et al. 2006).

Other case studies similarly show that local merchants, especially in retail, banking, and real estate, have adjusted their business practices to better accommodate the needs of Latinos, including undocumented immigrants (Griffith 2005; Rives 2006). In Duplin County, North Carolina, for example, a Laundromat owner began displaying a Spanish-language sign, selling Mexican fruit drinks, and tuning at least one television to a Spanish-language station (Rocha and Easterbrook 2006). Likewise, in Rogers, Arkansas, the First National Bank and Trust hired bilingual staff, trained workers in Latino culture, provided educational seminars on banking and investing, and developed alternative means of checking credit and underwriting loans (Schoenholtz 2005).

These practices are not only a means to increase market share. They also have the potential to improve local economic well-being by stemming the “leakage” of economic activity into other areas—an especially serious concern in nonmetropolitan places (Capps et al. 2007; Kasarda and Johnson 2006). Yet in Dalton, Georgia, Hernández-León and Zúñiga (2005) found that whites were split in their perceptions about the positive aspects of ethnic diversity and growth. Industrialists (in the carpet trade), business boosters, and middle-class professionals largely embraced immigrants, while those most directly affected by growth—low-income and working-class whites—felt threatened. Many moved away or took their children out of public schools. Clearly, the new immigration in rural areas is a potentially positive force for commercial and retail activity in local communities, but may have other unintended demographic consequences (e.g., white flight or new class or ethnic hostilities)

Property values, taxation, and local government spending. Whether new Latino growth affects property values and, by implication, property-tax assessments are clear concerns of local residents. The conventional wisdom is that the commercial value of many local businesses has skyrocketed with the influx of Latinos. In Duplin County, North Carolina, for example, the value of a grocer’s warehouse property increased tenfold within eight years, and the value of a local Laundromat (described above) soared from \$36,000 to \$391,000 in just three years (Rocha and Easterbrook 2006). The property tax levied on the latter also increased from \$212 to \$2,302. However, asked how much money he was earning from the property, the owner smiled and remarked: “I’m very much pleased with it.”

Homeowners are ambivalent at best about property-value reassessments and new taxes and highly negative at worst, especially if increases in taxes are linked to the provision of new educational or social services for newcomers. Although Latino newcomers generally seek out low-cost housing, demand at the lower end of the housing market may place upward pressure on other market segments. For example, land values doubled over a decade in rural Rogers, Arkansas, when the Latino population soared (Schoenholtz 2005). When this happens, property taxes tend to rise—potentially burdening homeowners, especially older residents on low or fixed incomes. An Atkinson County, Georgia, resident wary of the implications of Latino immigration was not aware of increases in local property taxes, but worried that they would rise, saying, “They’re coming here to have babies as quick as they can. ... And we’re paying for all of those babies” (Swarns 2006b).

Increased retail sales and property values also expand the local tax base—making available more funds, at least theoretically, to spend on the needs of local residents, including Latino newcomers. On the other hand, government spending may not keep pace with new population growth, which means that boomtown residents—both Latino and non-Latino—may be underserved. Native resentments may also affect local politics and decision making, especially if local taxes are perceived as being spent disproportionately on the needs of Latino newcomers. Concerns about spending tend to focus heavily on local expenditures for public welfare, health care, education, and policing. Unfortunately, previous community case studies have had surprisingly little to say about these fiscal implications of Latino growth.

Quality of Life Impacts

Sense of place. Longtime residents sometimes express the feeling that the arrival and cultural practices of Latinos erode their “sense of place” and community. Fennelly (2008:152) defines this as a “symbolic threat,” which may or may not be rooted in reality. That is, new immigrants represent a putative threat to cultural or national identity, as well as to traditional or nostalgic ways of rural life. For example, a Pearson, Georgia, resident claims, “Before they came, everybody knew everybody. ... Now you don’t know who is living in the trailer next to you or the second trailer from you” (Swarns 2006b). Some discomfort reflects ethnic cultural differences and the need to adapt, whether locals like it or not. A 44-year-old white resident of another rural Arkansas community remarks, “I worry that I’m being swallowed up in a culture that isn’t mine” (Erwin 2003:64). Schoenholtz (2005) found that residents of Rogers, Arkansas, expressed some displeasure at the frequent use of Spanish, the presence of Latino-oriented products on the shelves of local stores, Latino driving styles, and general culture shock associated with practices such as outdoor goat slaughter. The discomfort is not just a matter of new ethnic antagonisms, but also of simple outsider status:

Some of the discrimination is a simple, rural thing about ‘who you know, what you know, who’s your family’ and the fact that the new folks aren’t ‘from’ here and so people don’t ‘know their people.’ They do the same thing to new white people. Important questions like, ‘did you grow up here? Did you go to school here?’ are the first things natives ask. (Erwin 2003:60)

New arrivals of any kind may erode this sense of place, particularly if they are perceived—accurately or not—as changing the rural character of receiving communities.

Health care. A rapidly increasing Latino population places added pressure on local health-care facilities.² Many newcomers forgo or lack access to routine health care, including prenatal visits, and use emergency rooms and community clinics instead (Broadway 2007; Erwin 2003). The implication may be revealed in acute and chronic shortages of doctors in rural areas or overcrowding in local hospitals—problems that affect natives and newcomers alike—an issue we address in our analyses. A growing Latino population may also heighten the demand for Spanish-speaking doctors and other health-care practitioners in the community. Assistance with translation is another pressing need for local health-care providers. Hospitals and clinics often must rely on volunteer community members without professional training or allow the use of professional translators who charge recipients a fee for their services—in violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1994, which mandates linguistically appropriate treatment at no additional cost (Bailey 2005; Dunn, Aragonés, and Shivers 2005).

Although immigrants tend to be young and in good health, they nevertheless have some serious health-care needs. Rates of work-related injury are very high in the meatpacking industry.³ In the Shenandoah Valley, Latinos working in poultry plants often suffer from muscular and skeletal problems due to repetitive-motion injuries, and agricultural workers often develop respiratory and skin ailments from chemical and sun exposure. The Latino population is also heavily weighted toward the childbearing years—a 2001 survey in one boomtown revealed that 60 percent were married and under 35 (Bump 2005). High fertility rates among Latinos, especially among young immigrant families, place new demands on particular kinds of health-care providers (e.g., obstetricians and pediatricians rather than geriatric specialists) that may already be in short supply. Medicaid helps cover the cost of childbirth, even among illegal immigrants, but not all women are eligible.⁴ A report suggests that

² Obviously, the impact on health care will depend in part on the share of new immigrants who are undocumented or otherwise ineligible for Medicaid.

³ In 2001, the U.S. meat industry had an injury rate of 20 percent—more than three times the injury rate of all private industries combined (5.7 percent). Common injuries include severe cut wounds, loss of limbs, and long-term damage from motions repeated as many as 10,000 times per day (Compa 2005; see also Stull and Broadway 1995).

⁴ Illegal immigrants are not eligible for Medicaid coverage unless their condition is life-threatening. Legal immigrants are not eligible unless they have been in the country for at least five years. Of course, children of immigrants born in the United States are eligible for Medicaid if they meet income requirements. However, since 2006, when the Bush administration implemented new policies consistent with the Deficit Reduction Act passed earlier that year, the federal government has barred states from enrolling such children in Medicaid until parents have filed an application and provided proof of their child's citizenship. Doctors and state Medicaid officials have argued that fear of deportation may deter illegal immigrants from filing applications, and that the new policy, at best, delays necessary medical care for newborns (Pear 2006).

some hospitals in rural North Carolina have lost money in recent years as a result (Easterbrook and Fisher 2006). Local governments may intervene to provide financial assistance; following a number of Latino infant deaths, for example, a county-area grant was established in the Shenandoah Valley to provide assistance to pregnant women lacking health insurance and Medicaid (Bump 2005).

A competing hypothesis is that the demand for health-care services among Latinos may not be proportionate to growth of the Latino population. One report indicates that Latinos are nearly three times as likely nationally to lack private health insurance as non-Latino whites, and the rate is far higher among illegal immigrants (Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured 2008). This is also true for rural immigrants, especially those who have recently arrived, who are employed in low-wage industries, or who work “off the books” (Jensen 2006). Latinos in new destinations typically lack health coverage not only before they begin working but also during the probationary period before they are eligible for health-insurance benefits. Many employers fail to provide insurance to low-wage workers, and when they do, low pay is a major economic barrier to enrollment. Latino workers eligible for health insurance often do not sign up if premiums are too expensive or if they are young and in good health (Erwin 2003; Keene and Prokos 2007). Moreover, noncitizens are often fearful of enrolling. Some of them share green cards or give false names when dealing with employers and health-care providers—impeding practitioners’ efforts to keep accurate records (Erwin 2003).

Education. Latino workers often bring families with them or start new ones with young children, which may ultimately burden local school districts. In some rural school districts, elementary schools are pushed to capacity (Broadway 2007). For example, in Duplin County, North Carolina, where the Latino enrollment share reached 23.2 percent in 2006, a school administrator says that an influx of Latino students has intensified the need to renovate and expand local schools at a cost the county cannot afford (Rocha and Easterbrook 2006).

Schools with tight budgets and few resources often struggle to educate immigrant students with limited English-language proficiency. Local residents complain about the high cost of teaching English as a second language, translating documents, hiring bilingual teachers and translators, training teachers how to instruct children with limited English proficiency, and adding new courses taught in Spanish (Bump 2005; Rocha and Easterbrook 2006). Many, especially those who believe that a large proportion of Latino newcomers are in the country illegally, feel the dollars would be better spent elsewhere. At the same time,

national polls reveal that Americans often believe that English should be our national language and support an English-only curriculum in the schools.

Additional funding to assist newcomers with limited English proficiency is frequently allocated to schools from the states rather than from local governments. In Rogers, Arkansas, a deputy assistant superintendent of schools reports that the state provides most of the money needed to serve students with limited English proficiency, and notes that schools would not have received the funds otherwise (Schoenholtz 2005). On the other hand, state legislators must be convinced that these expenditures serve a worthwhile purpose. North Carolina often refused requests to fund English as a Second Language (ESL) programs during the 1990s, despite Latino growth rates that were among the highest in the nation. The state ESL director commented to a reporter, "It took awhile for people to really understand that these children were here to stay, that it was in the best interest of the state to have them educated" (Maguire 2006). By 2006, a Duplin County, North Carolina, school district received more than \$1 million from the state—enough, according to one report, to pay for more than 20 instructors to teach English and to provide the training and resources they need (Rocha and Easterbrook 2006).

Crime. National studies show that immigrants are underrepresented in crime statistics (e.g., arrests and prison population). Crime rates nationally have declined at the same time the volume of immigration exploded in the 1990s. Rumbaut (2008), in a summary of the literature, also reports that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes, and that immigrant teens are less likely than natives to engage in delinquent activities. Moreover, city-to-city variation in metropolitan crime rates is negatively related to the size of the immigrant population (Butcher and Piehl 1998; Hagan and Palloni 1999; Ousey and Kubrin 2009; Reid et al. 2005). According to Sampson (2008:31), "[c]ities of concentrated immigration are some of the safest places around."

Still, negative perceptions of immigration persist in many new rural destinations. Indeed, rural natives often believe—rightly or not—that crime rates increase as a result of the Latino influx, although local law-enforcement officials do not always agree. In Atkinson County, Georgia, for example, the sheriff argues that crime has increased with Latino population growth, but the local chief of police disagrees (Swarns 2006b). Little or no comparative quantitative research has provided empirical evidence to adjudicate competing claims about rising crime rates in rural areas. Much of the existing evidence is based on qualitative case studies. In Garden City, Kansas, rates of arrest rose with

Latino influxes, owing largely to increases in population mobility and growing numbers of young single men with less than a high school education (Broadway 2007). In Rogers, Arkansas, traffic violations and nonviolent gang activity have increased, along with reports of increased drug activity and violence. Yet the overall arrest rate of Latinos was low (Schoenholtz 2005). Some fear that Latinos bring gang-related violence and drugs. Latinos sometime unfairly receive the blame for crimes in the community; burglaries committed by two Anglos were initially attributed to Latinos in rural Arkansas, where the Latino population has surged in response to new jobs in poultry-processing plants (Erwin 2003). In those instances where Latinos are convicted of serious crimes, broad media coverage serves to reinforce fear among local residents (Bump 2005).

Complaints about crime may stem from the uneasy awareness of unfamiliar cultural practices. The most common complaints of local residents are associated with property upkeep and how Latinos spend their time at home, which is often portrayed as involving loud music and outdoor socializing (Erwin 2003). In some cases, simple cultural misunderstandings are to blame—ideology about continuity between indoor and outdoor spaces, for example. Some communities criminalize behaviors that Latino newcomers view as commonplace, such as drinking outdoors, listening to loud music late at night, and keeping or slaughtering animals within city limits (Gouveia and Stull 1997; Schoenholtz 2005). Any increases in crime rates may also reflect, at least in part, the greater targeting of Latinos by local law-enforcement officials. Clearly, an adequate understanding of the immigration-crime connection in rural areas requires a cross-community comparative perspective rather than impressionistic accounts that may or may not match reality or be fully generalizable across America's rural Latino boomtowns.

Summary and Implications

Despite the growing controversy associated with the spread of Latinos to new destinations and a growing body of qualitative case studies describing community response (Massey 2008), comparative quantitative research on community impacts (e.g., Donato et al. 2007) is less common. Our study seeks to fill this gap. Specifically, we evaluate hypotheses gleaned largely from community case studies. Is rapid Latino population growth associated with deleterious economic impacts—rising poverty, higher unemployment, and greater welfare dependence? Does Latino growth negatively impact the quality of life as

reflected in overburdened schools, strapped health-care facilities, and rising crime rates? Can the putative impacts identified in case studies be generalized broadly across Latino destinations? These are important questions in light of the spatial diffusion of new immigrant groups (Massey 2008). They also are relevant in light of concerns that growing cultural diversity in American society may impede effective community responses to immigration and pose additional barriers to immigrant incorporation (Putnam 2007).

In the remainder of this article, we describe shifts in the geographic distribution of America's Latino population between 1990 and 2000, and identify nonmetropolitan Latino boomtowns marked by high rates of Latino growth. Then we examine changes in indicators of economic circumstances and quality of life between 1990 and 2000 in Latino boomtowns—comparing them to changes observed in established nonmetropolitan Latino counties and other nonmetropolitan counties. Our results shed light on the implications of a Latino influx on receiving communities, and raise new questions about who benefits from this new and unexpected pattern of population growth.

Data, Measures and Analytic Strategy

Classification of New Destinations

We begin by identifying new Latino destinations using data from the 1990 and 2000 census of population. Following Kandel and Cromartie (2004), we divide nonmetropolitan counties into three categories: (1) those with high rates of Latino growth (Latino increases of at least 150 percent and 1,000 individuals), (2) those with established Latino populations (Latino population shares of at least 10 percent in 1990), and (3) other nonmetropolitan populations. Counties with both established Latino populations and high rates of growth are treated as established Latino. We exclude counties that were metropolitan, located in Alaska or Hawaii, or subject to alterations in county definitions between 1990 and 2000. Virginia established a number of independent cities between 1990 and 2000, requiring us to eliminate 27 of its counties. The result is 2,236 nonmetropolitan counties, 151 of which we classify as high-Latino-growth (6.8 percent), 230 as established Latino (10.3 percent), and 1,855 as other nonmetropolitan (83 percent)

As in previous studies (Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Saenz 2004), we use regional categories relevant to Latino population flows. We define the Southwest as Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, and we adapt the remaining regions. The Northeast comprises

New England and Middle Atlantic divisions, plus Ohio. The Midwest includes the East and West North Central Census divisions, except Ohio. The Southeast contains the South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central Divisions, except Texas (which is included in the Southwest) and Oklahoma (which is included in the Midwest). The West comprises the Mountain and Pacific Divisions, except for southwestern states.

Measures of Community Disorganization

Economic well-being. To investigate change in local economic circumstances, we examine shifts in county-level economic need, income, retail sales, home values, property taxes, and local government expenditures, converted to the equivalent of dollars in the year 2000 based on change in the Consumer Price Index. Data on local indicators of economic need, including the percentage in poverty, percentage unemployed, and percentage of households receiving public assistance, are derived from the 1990 and 2000 census of population. Income data for 1989 and 1999, including median family income and per capita income for all races (and reported separately for whites, African Americans, and Latinos) are drawn from the 1990 and 2000 census of population. Median home value reflects the value of all owner-occupied housing units reported in the 1990 and 2000 census of population. Using data collected by the economic census, census of governments, and census of population, we compute 1992 and 2002 per capita retail sales, per capita property taxes, and per capita expenditures by local governments for education, health and hospitals, public welfare, and police protection.⁵

Quality of life. Quality-of-life indicators include urbanity, access to health-care providers and facilities, pressure on education resources, and crime. A portion of nonmetropolitan counties may be urban, and percentage urban is reported in the 1990 and 2000 census of population. Access to health-care providers and facilities is measured with the number of active, nonfederal physicians per 1,000 residents and with the number of hospital beds per 1,000 residents reported in the Area Resources File for 1990 and 2000. We measure pressure on educational resources with data from the 1990 and 2000 census of

⁵ The economic census collects county-level data on retail sales and the census of governments collects county-level data on local government taxes and expenditures for years ending in 2 and 7. The census of population provides (and routinely revises) annual estimates of July 1 county population for use in per capita estimates of fiscal data. Data used in this study were reported in the 2007 edition of the *County and City Data Book*.

population. Indicators include the number of students per resident employed in education services (the ratio of individuals aged ≥ 3 enrolled in school relative to county residents employed in the education services industry), and the percentage of school-age children with limited English speaking ability (the percentage of individuals aged 5 to 17 who speak English either not well or not at all). We measure crime rates with rates of arrests and crimes reported per 1,000 residents, which are available via the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program. Due to changes in the methods for adjusting estimates to account for incomplete data, the FBI advises users to refrain from making comparisons of pre- and post-1994 data. For consistency, we also need a ten-year duration between data points. We thus report crime statistics for 1994 and 2004, including arrest rates for all crimes, violent crimes, property crimes, drug-related crimes and liquor-related crimes, along with reporting rates for violent crimes and property crimes.

Unlike our other data sources, county-level crime statistics are subject to nonreporting by local and state agencies. Additionally, arrest data for multicounty jurisdictions are flagged as potentially distorted. We exclude from our analyses counties with missing and flagged data. In our analysis of arrest rates, we drop 257 counties in 1994 and 315 counties in 2004, while we exclude 327 and 150 counties, respectively, from our analyses of crimes reported.⁶ No other variable is subject to missing data, save retail sales per capita, which is missing from (and likewise left out of the computations for) 13 counties in 1992 and 43 counties in 2002. Finally, the census reports county-level, race-specific per capita income as zero when no individuals of that race reside in the county. To eliminate distortion, we recode these zero values, along with the few negative per capita income averages, as missing.

Controls. In our models, we control for attributes of counties in 1990 that may have influenced their trajectories, including racial composition, retirement destination status, commuting patterns, and county dependence on farming, mining, manufacturing, government, or service activities. Percentage African American is reported in the census of population. All other controls are dummy variables from the USDA Economic Research Service 1989 typology of nonmetropolitan counties, which was designed to provide researchers and policymakers with policy-relevant information on rural conditions. A county is

⁶ No pattern was evident with regard to the presence of missing data in our county types apart from a tendency for established Latino counties to be slightly underrepresented among excluded counties.

considered a retirement destination if the population aged ≥ 60 increased by 15 percent or more from 1980 to 1990 due to in-migration. Counties are considered commuting if 40 percent or more of county workers aged ≥ 16 commuted to jobs outside the county in 1990. The ERS computed five mutually exclusive dummy indicators of dependence on farming, mining, manufacturing, service, or government activities using weighted income estimates from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for the years 1987 through 1989 (nonspecialized counties are the reference).⁷

Analytic Strategy

Obviously there are many reasons why the economic and quality-of-life outcomes considered here may differ between high-immigrant destinations and other nonmetropolitan counties. To isolate the effect of rapid immigration, we use difference-in-difference regression techniques. Specifically, we compare change over time for different outcomes (e.g., 1990–2000 changes in crime) in high-growth areas with change over time for other counties that did not experience rapid immigration. The difference over time in these comparisons (i.e., the differences in differences) eliminates the effect of the other fixed or unchanging unobserved variables (for application, see Card and Krueger 1994). In other words, these techniques “difference out” the impact of unmeasured time-invariant variables that may distinguish new Latino destinations from other counties that did not experience high rates of Latino growth (established Latino counties are excluded from these analyses).⁸ A limitation of this approach, of course, is that we cannot identify the specific causal mechanisms that produce changes in community outcomes. But this limitation is offset by the benefits of drawing stronger causal inferences about the role of rapid Latino immigration in community outcomes.

Our baseline difference-in-difference models are specified as follows:

$$I_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * (C_i) + \beta_2 * (Y_i) + \beta_3 * (C_i * Y_i) + \varepsilon_i,$$

where I_i is the community impact measure, C_i indicates Latino

⁷ For more information, see <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Rurality/Typology/Typology1989/>.

⁸ We are interested in the impact of rapid Hispanic growth during the 1990s in new destinations. Elimination of established Latino counties is important because our intent is to compare high-growth counties with the counterfactual, i.e., other counties that did not experience growth. Although they are undoubtedly different, we are not especially interested in comparing new destinations with established Latino counties, which in this case are not appropriate counterfactual counties.

destination status (i.e., new destination or other) and Y_i indicates year of data collection, β_0 , is the intercept, β_1 , β_2 , and β_3 are the regression effects, and ε_i is an error term. The substitution of county/year combinations and regression coefficients into the resulting equation generates figures identical to 1990 and 2000 means. The t -statistic associated with β_3 —a coefficient representing a hypothesized interaction between county type and year (i.e., $C_i * Y_i$)—indicates whether the difference in the two sets of differences (changes occurring between 1990 and 2000 in each type of county) is statistically significant. We report the significance of these interactions (calculated from regression models that included the controls described above), along with means and tests of significant differences.

Results

New Latino Destinations

Table 1 displays the size of the Latino population by region and metropolitan status in 1990 and 2000. The results show that America's Latinos are overwhelmingly metropolitan and predominantly located in the Southwest. However, the share of the Latino population living in these areas is shrinking while the proportion residing elsewhere has grown. Indeed, the percentage of the Latino population located in the nonmetropolitan Southeast increased by 0.8 from 1990 to 2000—a small share, to be sure, but an increase of more than 100 percent in a single decade. Likewise, the percentage of Latinos residing in nonmetropolitan areas outside the Southwest increased significantly over the 1990s—more than doubling in the Midwest and tripling in the Southeast.

Figure 1 illustrates a pattern of highly concentrated nonmetropolitan Latino population growth. Established Latino counties, not surprisingly, are found overwhelmingly in the Southwest, while counties with high rates of Latino growth are located in other regions where economic restructuring has created new job opportunities for low-wage, low-skill workers. North Carolina and Georgia rank first and second, respectively, in numbers of high-growth counties, followed by Texas, where nonmetropolitan Latino growth is evident in the “chicken strip”—the band of poultry-processing plants stretching southward from Eastern Oklahoma into Northeastern Texas (see Erwin 2003).

Difference-in-Difference Estimates of Community Impacts

Tables 2 and 3 report changes in county-level economic circumstances and quality of life over the 1990s, respectively—along with the

Table 1. Latino Population Size, Latino Residential Distribution, and Residences' Percentage Latino, 1990 and 2000

	Number of Latinos			Latino Residential Distribution			Residences' Percentage Latino		
	1990	2000	% +/-	1990	2000	% +/-	1990	2000	% +/-
Southwest	13528329	20435280	51.1	61.8	58.0	-6.1	24.5	31.0	26.4
Metropolitan	12993523	18773639	52.7	56.1	53.3	-5.1	24.8	31.5	27.1
Nonmetropolitan	1234806	1661641	34.6	5.6	4.7	-16.4	22.0	26.1	18.9
Northeast	3770340	5458366	44.8	17.2	15.5	-10.0	6.1	8.4	37.4
Metropolitan	3689771	5328346	44.4	16.8	15.1	-10.3	6.8	9.3	37.0
Nonmetropolitan	80569	130020	61.4	0.4	0.4	0.3	1.1	1.7	53.9
Midwest	1611426	3068441	90.4	7.4	8.7	18.3	3.1	5.4	75.2
Metropolitan	1421194	2646375	86.2	6.5	7.5	15.7	3.9	6.6	69.4
Nonmetropolitan	190232	422066	121.9	0.9	1.2	37.9	1.2	2.6	109.9
Southeast	2283459	4704256	106.0	10.4	13.3	28.0	3.5	6.2	77.2
Metropolitan	2121815	4167807	96.4	9.7	11.8	22.1	4.5	7.5	64.7
Nonmetropolitan	161644	536449	231.9	0.7	1.5	106.3	0.9	2.7	205.3
West	706535	1572138	122.5	3.2	4.5	38.3	4.9	8.7	79.1
Metropolitan	507541	1216362	139.7	2.3	3.5	48.9	5.0	9.4	86.0
Nonmetropolitan	198994	355776	78.8	0.9	1.0	11.1	4.4	6.9	57.0
Total United States	21900089	35238481	60.9				8.8	12.5	42.2
Metropolitan	20033844	32132529	60.4	91.5	91.2	-0.3	10.1	14.2	40.2
Nonmetropolitan	1866245	3105952	66.4	8.5	8.8	3.4	3.6	5.6	53.8

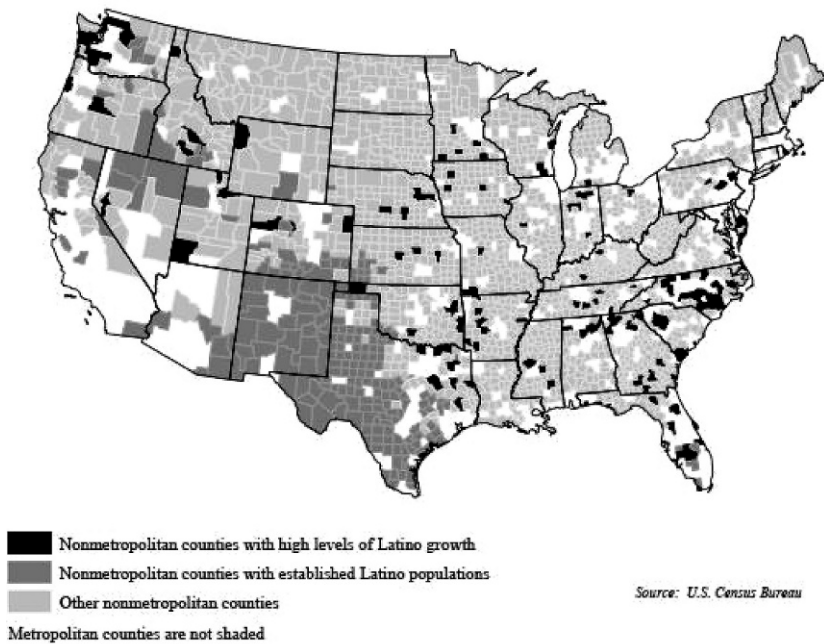


Figure 1. Latino Population Growth in Nonmetropolitan Counties, 1990–2000

significance of between-county differences, change between 1990 and 2000, and the interaction of time and place (differences-in-differences of high-Latino-growth counties versus their counterfactual: other nonmetropolitan counties lacking both high rates of Latino growth and established Latino populations). All difference-in-difference models include controls for county circumstances that may have influenced their trajectories between 1990 and 2000.⁹ Throughout our discussion, “other nonmetropolitan counties” refers to counterfactual counties, which do not include counties with established Latino populations.

Economic impacts. We begin with a discussion of economic impacts shown in Table 2. By definition, the percentage Latino rose much more rapidly in new Latino destinations—almost quadrupling between 1990

⁹ Significance levels of difference-in-difference coefficients for models including controls vary little from baseline models. The difference-in-difference coefficient for violent crimes reported becomes marginally significant (at $p < .1$) with the addition of controls. All other variables remained in the same significance category. In other words, all coefficients significant at $p < .001$, $p < .01$, $p < .05$, $p < .1$ in the baseline models were significant at those same levels in the models that included controls.

Table 2. Economic Impacts: Change in Local, Household, Family, and Individual Economic Circumstances of Established Latino, High-Latino-Growth and Other Nonmetropolitan Counties, 1990–2000

	Established Latino Counties ^a			High-Latino-Growth Counties				Other Nonmetropolitan Counties		
	1990	2000	% +/–	1990	2000	% +/–	DID ^b	1990	2000	% +/–
Percentage Latino	31.7	35.9	13	1.9	7.6	297	***	1.1	2.1	81
Economic need										
Percentage in poverty	22.6	18.8	–17	15.4	14.0	–9	*	18.2	15.1	–17
Percentage unemployed	7.4	3.7	–50	5.8	3.3	–43	***	7.0	3.4 ^d	–51
Percentage of households receiving public assistance income	9.3	4.4	–52	7.8	3.2	–60	*	9.2	3.5	–62
Income ^c										
Median family income										
Income per capita	34175	37480	10	39167	43285	11		35768	40002	12
All races	13886	15767	14	15592	18120	16		14106	16798	19
White	15260	17443	14	16725	19683	18		14992	17830	19
African-American	10243 ^d	11558 ^d	13 ^e	10054	11933	19		9760 ^d	12301 ^d	26
Latino	7855	9699 ^d	23	10617	9660	–9	**	9437	11166	18
Retail sales per capita ^e	5898	6453	9	8009	8778	10		5940	6934	17
Median home value ^e	57436	62930	10	70061	85672	22		56834	68988	21
Property taxes per capita ^e	1123	1334	19	535	614	15		628	686	9
Local government expenditures per capita ^e										
Education	1482	1762	19	1065	1281	20		1127	1362	21
Health and hospitals	292 ^d	423 ^d	45	319	389	22		221	288	30
Public welfare	70	55 ^d	–22 ^e	42	47	11 ^e		61	69	12
Police protection	124	145	17	93	115	23		78	102	31

^a Established Latino counties were at least 10% Latino in 1990. High-Latino-growth counties had Latino increases of at least 150 percent and 1000 persons.

^b Difference-in-difference computed significance of change in counties with high levels of Latino growth compared to change in other nonmetropolitan counties (excluding counties with established Latino populations) for models including all controls *** ($p < .001$) ** ($p < .01$) * ($p < .05$) † ($p < .1$).

^c 2000 dollar equivalents of values reported for years 1989 and 1999 (income), 1990 and 2000 (home value), and 1992 and 2002 (sales, taxes, and expenditures).

^d Not significantly different from the same-year mean of counties with high levels of Latino growth ($p < .05$).

^e 1990–2000 change was not statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Table 3. Quality of Life Impacts: Change in Quality of Life Indicators for Established Latino, High-Latino-Growth and Other Nonmetropolitan Counties, 1990–2000

	Established Latino Counties ^a			High-Latino-Growth Counties			Other Nonmetropolitan Counties		
	1990	2000	% +/-	1990	2000	% +/-	1990	2000	% +/-
Percentage urban	39.9 ^d	43.7 ^d	9	37.7	45.9	22	23.6	25.6	9
Health care									
Physicians per 1000 residents	.6	.7	13	1.0	1.2	19	.7	.8	20
Hospital beds per 1000 residents	4.7 ^d	3.3 ^d	-31	4.6	3.3	-29	4.9 ^d	4.1	-16
Education									
Students per resident employed in education services	7.2 ^d	6.5	-10	7.4	7.2	-3	7.1	6.6	-7
Percentage of school-age children with limited English speaking ability	3.1	3.4	9 ^e	.7	2.1	221	.5	.7	51
Crime ^e									
Arrests per 1000 residents									
All crimes	59.0 ^d	54.1 ^d	-8 ^e	61.6	53.2	-14	41.0	39.9	-3 ^e
Violent crimes	2.1 ^d	1.7 ^d	-20	2.3	1.7	-28	1.5	1.2	-23
Property crimes	6.8	4.1	-39	7.9	5.9	-26	4.9	3.4	-31
Drug-related crimes	4.3 ^d	6.5	49	3.8	5.0	31	2.6	4.2	63
Liquor-related crimes	18.0 ^d	13.5	-25	17.4	11.0	-37	12.1	9.8	-19
Crimes reported per 1000 residents									
Violent and property crimes	32.3	26.5	-18	42.2	37.1	-12	26.7	22.8	-15
Violent crimes	3.8 ^d	3.1 ^d	-19	4.4	3.4	-22	2.8	2.2	-19
Property crimes	28.5	23.4	-18	37.8	33.8	-11	24.0	20.5	-14

^a Established Latino counties were at least 10% Latino in 1990. High-Latino-growth counties had Latino increases of at least 150 percent and 1000 persons.

^b Difference-in-difference computed significance of change in counties with high levels of Latino growth compared to change in other nonmetropolitan counties (excluding counties with established Latino populations) for models including all controls *** ($p < .001$) ** ($p < .01$) * ($p < .05$) † ($p < .1$).

^c A change in uniform crime reporting procedures rendered pre- and post-1994 data unusable for comparison. Therefore, we report crime statistics for 1994 and 2004.

^d Not significantly different from the same-year mean of counties with high levels of Latino growth ($p < .05$).

^e 1990–2000 change was not statistically significant ($p < .05$).

and 2000 (Table 2).¹⁰ Contrary to residents' fears, however, Latino growth is not strongly associated with increases in aggregate levels of economic need. For example, the poverty rate fell by nearly 10 percent over the decade in new destination counties. The 2000 poverty rate in new Latino destinations is lower than in either of the other two county types. On the other hand, the difference-in-differences estimates indicate that poverty declined more rapidly in other nonmetropolitan counties than in new destinations, suggesting that the Latino influx slowed the pace of decline in poverty rates during the 1990s. A similar pattern is apparent in the percentage unemployed; the unemployment rate was lowest in new destinations in 2000, but declines were significantly slower over the 1990s than in other nonmetropolitan counties.

Relatively slower declines in poverty and unemployment rates in new Latino destinations raise the specter of welfare dependence. However, our estimates suggest that fears that Latino newcomers will drain local coffers to meet their needs for social services are unfounded. In both 1990 and 2000, the proportion of households with any public assistance income were smallest in high-Latino-growth counties, and the rate of decline in high-Latino growth counties was only slightly slower than in other nonmetropolitan counties. Perhaps more significantly, welfare receipt fell more rapidly in new destinations than in established Latino counties, which experienced larger percentage declines in poverty and unemployment. One potential explanation is that tougher eligibility requirements for welfare receipt have imposed tighter constraints on Latinos in new destinations because more of them are ineligible for public assistance (e.g., they are undocumented or are post-1996 arrivals in the United States).

County median incomes also do not appear to have been influenced by a Latino influx. In fact, median family income and per capita income were larger in high-Latino-growth counties than in other nonmetropolitan counties in both 1990 and 2000, and they rose at similar rates (difference-in-differences were not significant). Likewise, the median income of whites was higher in new destinations and rose at nearly the same rate.

The effect of Latino influxes on income growth among other race groups is much less clear. Our analyses, for example, indicate that African American per capita incomes grew more slowly over the 1990s in counties with high levels of Latino growth, but the difference-in-

¹⁰ A 100 percent increase would have doubled the 1990 level; likewise, a 300 percent increase would quadruple it.

differences was not significant. Perhaps surprisingly, Latino per capita income, which increased more in established Latino counties than in other nonmetropolitan counties, actually decreased in counties with high levels of Latino growth. One interpretation is that this highly significant difference-in-difference estimate simply reflects the large demographic influx of low-wage, low-skill Latino workers in new destinations. That is, it is a compositional effect. Another less benign interpretation is that the deteriorating wages of Latinos in new destinations is a consequence of the expansion in the low-wage sector in these counties—a consequence that has affected both Latino newcomers and old-timers (see Kochhar 2005).

Compared to other nonmetropolitan counties, median home values are markedly higher in counties with high rates of Latino growth, both in 1990 and 2000; and absolute dollar increases were larger. Residents' fears of skyrocketing housing costs have not materialized. In fact, the difference-in-difference estimates indicate similar rates of growth in median home values in new destinations and other nonmetropolitan counties.

Increases in retail sales appear to have been slower in high-Latino-growth counties than in other nonmetropolitan counties, but the difference-in-difference estimates were not statistically significant. Given the higher median home values in high-Latino-growth counties, we were surprised to find that per capita property taxes were lower in these counties than in other nonmetropolitan counties both in 1990 and 2000. Increases appear to have been faster in counties with high rates of Latino growth; however, the difference-in-difference estimate was not significant. Neither new destinations nor other nonmetropolitan counties had rates approaching those of established Latino counties, whose per capita property taxes were approximately double those of comparison categories in both 1990 and 2000.

Other economic concerns of longtime residents have to do with public spending on social needs of Latino newcomers. How do public expenditures for education, health and hospitals, public welfare, and police protection compare? Difference-in-difference estimates suggest that high-Latino-growth counties did not significantly differ from other nonmetropolitan counties in spending increases for any of these purposes. In both 1990 and 2000, high-Latino-growth counties spent less per capita on education and public welfare than other nonmetropolitan counties, and more on health and hospitals and police protection. But change from 1990 to 2000 does not appear to have been influenced by the presence of Latino newcomers. Any fears that local governments will need to increase spending to meet the growing

needs of Latino newcomers seem unfounded. Counties with high levels of Latino growth did not even register a significant increase in per capita spending on public welfare between 1990 and 2000, unlike other nonmetropolitan counties.

Quality-of-life impacts. Table 3 reports change in quality-of-life indicators. There is some empirical basis for concerns about the impact of Latino population growth on the rural way of life. New Latino destinations experienced significantly larger increases in their percentage urban than did other nonmetropolitan counties—though this change likely has as much to do with the industrial shifts that attracted newcomers to the area as with the arrival of the Latinos themselves. In other words, new destinations are growing due to increasing numbers of Latinos and other population groups.

Evidence of strains on health-care resources is somewhat mixed. For example, the number of physicians per 1,000 residents is highest in high-Latino-growth counties, but increased at a rate similar to that observed in other nonmetropolitan counties. Conversely, new destination counties have fewer beds per 1,000 residents and declines over the 1990s occurred nearly twice as fast as in other counties. These difference-in-difference estimates were statistically insignificant, however.

The evidence provided in Table 3 clearly supports claims from community case studies of growing pressure on public schools from Latino in-migration. Although all nonmetropolitan counties experienced declines in the number of students per resident employed in education services, the ratio remained highest in counties with high-levels of Latino growth. Even more striking is the increase in strain associated with serving children with limited English skills. Rates are highest in established Latino counties. But rates of poor English use were also high in new Latino destinations and they increased at a significantly faster rate in the 1990s than in other nonmetropolitan counties. An average of more than 1 out of every 50 school-age children in Latino boom counties did not speak English well in 2000—a more than threefold increase over the decade. This rate of growth was more than quadruple that of other nonmetropolitan counties.

Our comparisons indicate a sharp decline in crime in all county types during the 1990s. More importantly, new Latino destinations experienced significantly larger reductions in overall arrest rates, and in rates of arrest for violent and liquor-related crimes in particular, than other nonmetropolitan counties. The same was true for reports of violent crime, which decreased in new Latino destinations by 3 percentage points more than in other nonmetropolitan counties. Furthermore,

average increases in drug-related crimes in high-Latino-growth counties were about one-half the size of increases in other nonmetropolitan counties, although these differences were not statistically significant. Only property crimes lack any evidence of a speedier decline in crime among counties with high levels of Latino growth, yet declines were both sizable and similar to other nonmetropolitan counties (with nonsignificant difference-in-difference coefficients). Our results run counter to widespread beliefs that Latino growth has been associated with rising crime rates.

Discussion and Conclusion

America's Latinos are on the move (Lichter and Johnson 2009; McConnell 2008). An increasing share of the Latino population now lives outside of traditional gateway cities and states (e.g., California and Texas). Many have relocated to new rural destinations in the Midwest and South, where employment opportunities for low-wage, low-skill work, such as in food processing and construction, have grown rapidly since 1990 (Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Tienda and Mitchell 2006). Over 200 nonmetropolitan counties would have experienced population declines in the early 2000s in the absence of Latino influxes (Johnson and Lichter 2008). Latino population growth may have reinvigorated many declining small towns, but also may have contributed to the apparent rise in nativism and to new fears about lost or declining community traditions and changing cultural values. Ethnic diversity has also raised concerns about growing poverty, overburdened social-service delivery systems, rising local taxes, increased crime, and a declining quality of life.¹¹ These concerns have been evident in most previous research (see, for example, Massey 2008; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005).

In this article, we have culled out hypotheses from previous (mostly) qualitative community case studies, operationalized various economic and quality-of-life circumstances, and evaluated comparative community impacts in new Latino destinations and other nonmetropolitan places. We accomplished this using county data from a variety of secondary data sources, circa 1990 and 2000.

¹¹ A recent Nebraska Rural Poll shows that only 15 percent of rural Nebraskans believed that immigration "has been good for rural Nebraska" and the percentage is even lower among less-educated groups (Vogt et al. 2006). Whether the apparently rising nativism among rural residents will lead to more discrimination (e.g., anti-immigrant ordinances) or spawn hate crimes or violence is a fertile area for additional research in rural immigrant destinations.

Our findings from difference-in-difference models (which control for unobserved heterogeneity and a range of county attributes that may have influenced county trajectories) point to a singularly important conclusion: Large influxes of Latinos have had surprisingly few negative economic impacts on new destinations. For the few economic indicators where negative impacts were apparent, the overall trend during the 1990s was nonetheless generally positive. For example, poverty rates and unemployment declined over the 1990s in new Latino destinations albeit at a slower pace than in established Latino counties. Per capita income also declined among Latinos in new destinations while increasing for each of the other racial groups. The 1990s nevertheless brought larger declines in the share of households receiving public assistance in new destinations than in established Latino areas, a fact that suggests that disadvantaged Latinos may be underserved because of the new restrictive eligibility rules introduced with the 1996 welfare reform bill. Our comparisons of new Latino boomtowns versus other nonmetropolitan counties also point to little or no discernible aggregate economic cost to local citizens in terms of local taxes, government expenditures, and cost-of-living indicators considered here.

Untangling the implications of Latino growth for African Americans and uncovering how longtime residents and newcomers adjust to cultural differences are important goals for future research. Our results indicate that the quality of life in new destinations did not deteriorate over the 1990s in comparison to other counties. In fact, declines in crime rates were larger in new Latino destinations than in other counties in the 1990s. The empirical evidence thus challenges the conventional view that the rapid influx of new Latino groups is associated with more crime. The implication is clear: The fear of crime does not match the reality of declining and comparatively low crimes rates found in destinations with large recent influxes of Latinos. Our results are consistent with a recent national study that showed that Latino immigrants are actually less involved with crime than are natives (Hagan and Palloni 1999). Of course, new immigrants—especially undocumented workers—may also underreport crimes or victimization if they mistrust the legal system or fear deportation.

We lacked access to data directly tapping new challenges faced by rural health-care providers (such as lack of insurance and English-language skills among health-care recipients). Our analyses nevertheless strongly supported calls for more government assistance for schools serving students with limited English proficiency, and, by extension, health-care providers serving both non-English-speaking youngsters

and their parents. Our findings also highlighted the unusually large increases in children with limited English language skills in new destinations, a fact that suggests that the new growth comprises mostly immigrants rather than native-born Latinos. Others have suggested that states are helping communities meet educational needs, while local governments pick up the tab for increased health-care expenses. Perhaps receiving communities will join the growing national debate on the funding of health care, since they have a sizable stake in the outcome. Their involvement would also be of value in debates over renewal of No Child Left Behind legislation, which mandates improvement in math and reading scores of children with limited English proficiency (LEP)—particularly if these debates turned to issues of funding provisions to help schools meet annual yearly progress goals for LEP students.

Although this article draws together findings from many community case studies and provides quantitative evidence on the implications of Latino growth, our study is limited in some respects. Ideally, we would have been able to measure change in some key aspects of community well-being highlighted in qualitative research, including health-insurance coverage, English proficiency of health-care recipients, and residents' subjective experience of place or community satisfaction. Despite controls for commuting to work, our results may be influenced by spillover between counties, especially near metropolitan employment centers. That is, Latinos may be living and working in different counties, with different social and economic consequences for each. For example, crime rates may plausibly increase in surrounding counties but not in the counties in which newcomers live.

Our empirical framework focused on short-term change over a pivotal time period marked by the emergence of rural Latino destinations. They cannot speak to long-term trajectories associated with rural nativism, racial formation and identity, or shifting group boundaries (e.g., intermarriage or residential segregation). In the end, these issues may matter most to rural people. Moreover, boomtowns of any sort typically have boom and bust cycles, and few studies have focused on the long-term implications of rapid growth (Smith, Krannich, and Hunter 2001). We have focused on the dislocations associated with the boom cycle, and have shown surprisingly few deleterious economic and social consequences associated with Latino growth. But as Broadway and Stull (2006:64) warn, "[s]ooner or later, booms go bust." Their research describes the economic and social upheaval that resulted when a large beef-processing plant closed its doors in 2000. More than 2,000 people—mostly Latinos—were put out

of work and the town's economy deteriorated, even though many families remained. In the three-year period that followed, retail sales plummeted, crime rates rose, and expenditures on food stamps more than doubled. The cautionary lesson is clear: The economic and social implications associated with high rates of Latino growth will only be fully understood in the longer term—when we learn whether the industries (e.g., food-processing plants) that brought Latino workers to new boomtowns in the first place remain economically viable and committed to communities and their residents.

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