

Latinos in the South: A Glimpse of Ongoing Trends and Research*

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ABSTRACT Since the late 1980s, there has been a tremendous amount of reshifting in the Latino population of the United States. This movement has resulted in the increasing settlement of Latinos in areas of the country that have historically not had Latino populations, particularly in rural settings. In particular, areas in the South and Midwest have experienced significant growth in the Latino population. This article provides an overview of this growth in the South using data from the 1990 and 2000 censuses. In addition, the article provides a brief description of the accompanying articles that are featured in this special issue on Latinos in the South. Finally, the article discusses the implications of the articles contained in the special issue and provides direction for future research.

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The Latino population in the United States has traditionally been concentrated in specific areas of the country. For example, Mexicans have been primarily concentrated in the Southwest, Puerto Ricans in the Northeast, and Cubans in Florida. Since the late 1980s, however, there has been a tremendous redistribution of the Latino population to areas of the country that have historically not had a presence of Latinos. In particular, the South and Midwest experienced a large surge in the Latino population, with much of this growth occurring in rural areas (Saenz and Torres 2003). Much of this growth has been associated with the restructuring of the meat processing industry with such jobs making their way increasingly into rural areas of the South and Midwest (Bates 1994; Fink 1998; Gouveia and Saenz 2000; Griffith 1995a, 1995b; Hernandez-Leon and Zuniga 2000; Saenz 2000; Stull, Broadway and Griffith 1995). Recruitment efforts to lure Latino immigrants along with their well established social networks have assisted in the movement of Latinos to these new-growth areas.

The Latino growth in the South has been especially impressive. For example, setting aside the state of Texas, which has historically had a large Latino (especially Mexican) population, the remainder of the South experienced a doubling of its Latino population from 2.4 million in 1990 to 4.9 million in 2000. Moreover, eleven of the region's states saw their Latino populations more than double during this period. The growth of the Latino population in the region has major implications not only for the Latino newcomers but also for the communities where they settle. Unfortunately, the literature on the new-growth areas in the South, as well as in the Midwest for that matter, has been fairly limited in volume. Because of the relative absence of publicly available data sources to document and analyze the growth of Latinos in these new-growth areas, much of the limited existing literature consists of case studies in specific communities where Latinos are located (Griffith 1995a, 1995b; Hernandez-Leon and Zuniga 2000).

This special issue on Latinos in the South seeks to provide a glimpse of some of this research that has been developed over the last few years in specific areas of the South. We hope that the articles contained in the special issue are useful not only to scholars who are interested in obtaining new knowledge on Latinos in the South, but also to policy makers, community leaders, community

development specialists, and other practitioners who need timely information to better understand Latino newcomers as well as their special needs and resources that they possess. By way of background on the development of this special issue, two of the four authors of this particular article (Saenz and Torres) served as editors. In addition, the Farm Foundation provided financial support for the development of a symposium on “Latinos in the South” held on April 25, 2002 in Atlanta. The authors of the five accompanying articles presented their papers in the symposium. Two of the four authors of this particular article (Donato and Gouveia) served as discussants. In the remainder of this article, we seek to accomplish three goals. First, we provide an overview of the growth and change in the Latino population in the South between 1990 and 2000. Second, we provide a brief discussion of the accompanying articles featured in the special issue. Finally, we provide an overview of the implications of the research presented in this special issue and identify directions for future research.

Overview of Recent Latino Population Growth and Change in the South

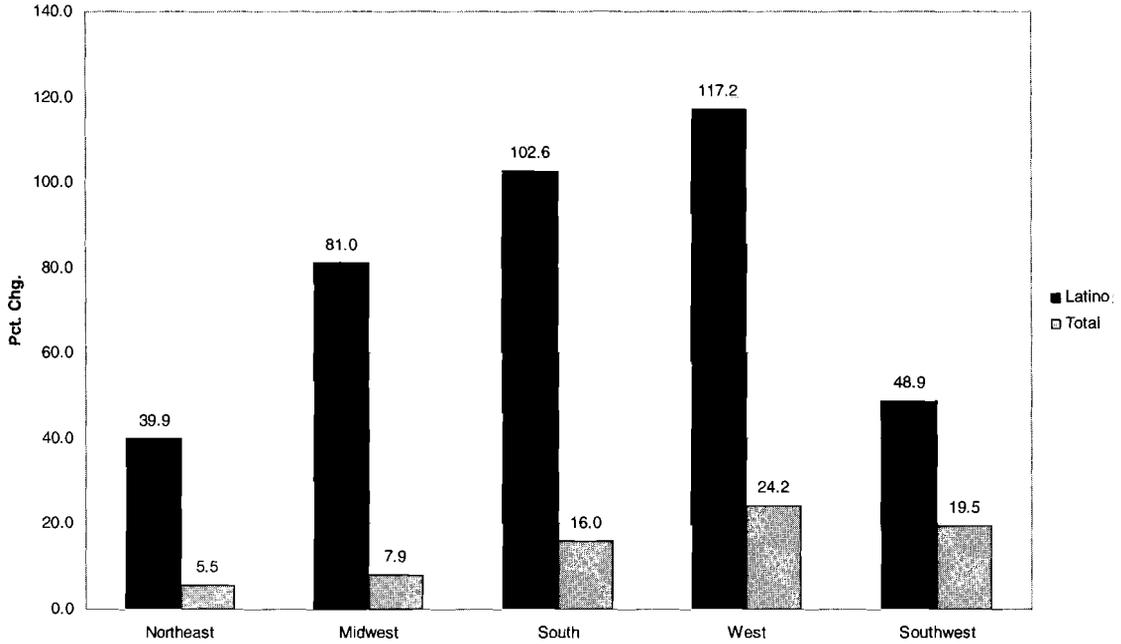
In this section, we use data from 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses (see below) to describe patterns and changes in the Latino population in the South. In particular, we focus attention on the Latino population change in the region during the decade, the shifting origins of Latinos who migrated to the South from other parts of the United States as well as from abroad, and the changing characteristics of Latino newcomers to the region.

Population Change Patterns

We begin with a discussion of the degree of change in the Latino population that the South and other regions experienced between 1990 and 2000.¹ For this part of the analysis we rely on data from 1990 Summary Tape File 1 (U.S. Census Bureau 1991) and 2000

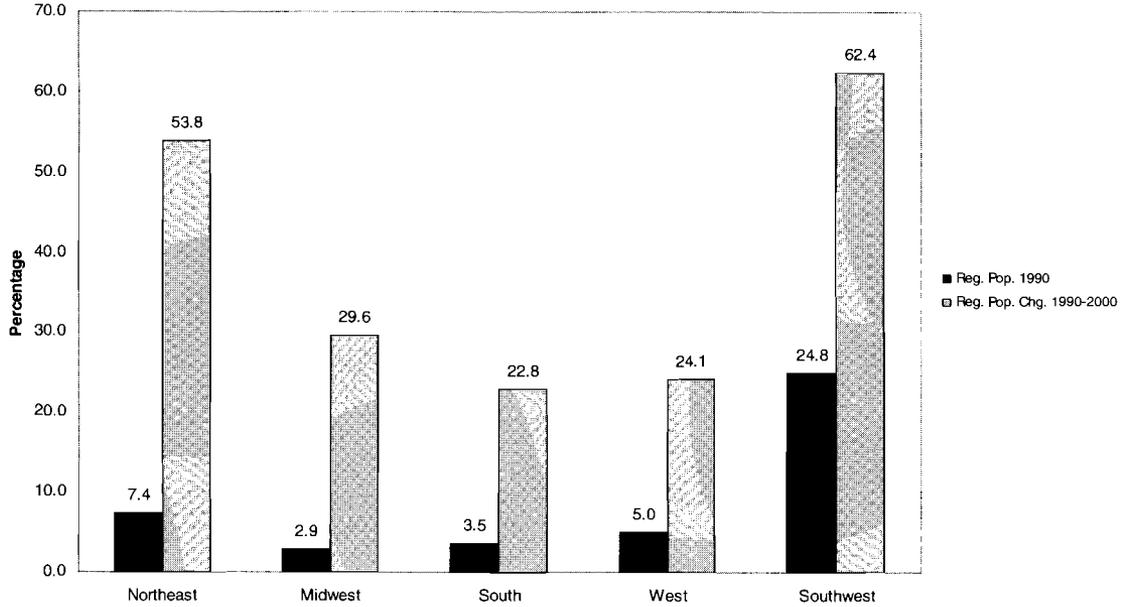
¹ We exclude Texas from the South region as well as Arizona, California, Colorado, and New Mexico from the West region. These five states are grouped into the Southwest region.

Figure 1. Percentage Change in Latino and Total Populations by Region, 1990-2000.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1991, 2001.

Figure 2. Relative Size of the Latino Population in 1990 and Relative Size of the Total Population Change Between 1990 and 2000 by Region.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1991, 2001.

changes in the Latino and total U.S. population during the 1990s. Although the Latino population grew in all U.S. regions, Latinos in the South doubled from 2.4 million in 1990 to 4.9 million in 2000. This growth represented a pace six times more rapid than that for its total population (103 vs. 16 percent, respectively). Other regions also boasted dramatic growth in Latinos, notably the Midwest and West, whereas the Northeast and Southwest witnessed growth but at lower overall rates.

However, despite representing only a small percentage of the total population in these regions in 1990, Figure 2 reveals that Latinos accounted for approximately 23 percent of the 11 million persons added to the population in the South between 1990 and 2000. Other regions show similar patterns. Although they represented relatively small proportions of the total population in the remaining regions (the exception being in the Southwest), Latinos accounted for between 24 and 62 percent of the population added to the West, Midwest, Northeast and Southwest regions during the 1990s.

Changes in Internal and International Migration of Latinos to the South in 1985-1990 and 1995-2000

Using data from the 1990 5% Public-Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) (U.S. Census Bureau 1992) and 2000 1% PUMS (U.S. Census Bureau 2003) on state of residence five years prior to the census (1985 for 1990 census; 1995 for 2000 census), we assess shifts in the internal mobility of two groups of Latino migrants.² The first group represents internal migrants moving from outside the South to the South during the five-year period; the second group is international migrants moving from abroad to the South during the five-year period. In all analyses in this section, we examine these two groups separately by nativity.

Table 1 shows the top ten non-South states of origin of internal migrants among all Latinos, native-born Latinos, and foreign-born Latinos. The top panel represents the 1985-90 period, and the bottom panel refers to the 1995-2000 panel. At the bottom of each panel, we also present the total number of non-South-to-South

² The five-year migration question was not asked for persons less than five years of age.

internal migrants, and of international migrants who moved directly to the South from abroad.

We begin at the bottom of the second panel of Table 1. Between 1995 and 2000, 463,922 Latinos moved from one U.S. region to the South and an additional 746,928 moved from abroad to the South. These numbers represent significant increases compared to the earlier decade; the number of internal migrants rose by 65 percent and the number of international migrants increased by nearly 2.5 times (142 percent gain). Particularly strong was the growth of foreign-born international migrants in the South, with the number rising by 174 percent, from 234,276 in the 1985-1990 period to 642,870 in the 1995-2000 period. Moreover, the percentage of all foreign-born migrants to the South (internal plus international migrants) increased noticeably from 59 percent in the 1985-1990 period to 70 percent in 1995-2000.

Table 1 also reveals a great deal of consistency between the two periods in the top five non-South states from which Latino internal migrants to the South originated. In each of the two time periods, slightly more than three-fourths of all internal migrants lived in California, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, and Texas before moving to the South. Note that foreign-born internal Latino migrants to the South were especially likely to originate from these five states (83 percent in 1985-1990 and 84 percent in 1995-2000).

Among these five states, California significantly increased its ranking as a sending state of Latinos to the South. In the 1985-1990 period, roughly one-eighth (13 percent) of Latino internal migrants moved from California to the South. Ten years later, however, California ranked first among non-South states with respect to the number of Latinos it sent to the South. Indeed, close to one-fourth (24 percent) of Latino internal migrants to the South lived in California in 1985. The increasing dominance of California as a sending state of Latinos to the South is especially apparent for the foreign born. Among the internal foreign-born Latino migrants moving to the South between 1995 and 2000, 31 percent originated from California. For the earlier period, just 17 percent of all foreign-born Latino internal migrants did so.

Table 1. Top Ten Point of Origin Non-South States for Latino Internal Migrants to the South along with the Total Number of Internal Migrants and International Migrants, 1985-1990 and 1995-2000.

1985-1990						
Rank	Total		Native-Born		Foreign-Born	
	State	Latino Migrs.	State	Latino Migrs.	State	Latino Migrs.
1	New York	73,232	New York	45,650	New York	27,582
2	Texas	59,209	Texas	34,326	Texas	24,883
3	California	36,007	California	16,892	California	19,115
4	New Jersey	33,208	New Jersey	15,223	New Jersey	17,985
5	Illinois	13,494	Illinois	8,241	Illinois	5,253
6	Pennsylvania	6,385	Pennsylvania	4,671	Massachusetts	2,842
7	Connecticut	6,316	Connecticut	4,559	Michigan	1,828
8	Massachusetts	6,279	Ohio	4,333	Ohio	1,782
9	Ohio	6,115	New Mexico	3,671	Connecticut	1,757
10	Michigan	5,420	Michigan	3,592	Pennsylvania	1,714
	All Non-South	281,507	All Non-South	167,527	All Non-South	113,980
	International	308,600	International	74,324	International	234,276

1995-2000						
Total		Native-Born		Foreign-Born		
State	Latino Migrs.	State	Latino Migrs.	State	Latino Migrs.	
1	California	109,891	New York	56,793	California	64,628
2	New York	96,274	California	45,263	Texas	41,349
3	Texas	86,265	Texas	44,916	New York	39,481
4	New Jersey	37,128	New Jersey	16,738	New Jersey	20,390
5	Illinois	23,258	Illinois	13,986	Illinois	9,272
6	Pennsylvania	16,071	Pennsylvania	12,627	Massachusetts	3,907
7	Connecticut	12,221	Connecticut	9,836	Pennsylvania	3,444
8	Massachusetts	11,817	Massachusetts	7,910	Arizona	2,894
9	Arizona	7,819	Michigan	6,219	Connecticut	2,385
10	Michigan	7,267	Arizona	4,925	Indiana	2,126
	All Non-South	463,922	All Non-South	256,593	All Non-South	207,329
	International	746,928	International	104,058	International	642,870

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1992, 2003.

Table 2. Selected Demographic Characteristics for Selected Groups of Latinos in the South, 1990-2000.

Group	1990	2000	1990	2000
	Sex Ratio	Sex Ratio	Pct. Age 5 to 14	Pct. Age 5 to 14
Total:				
Nonmigrants	98.6	105.7	15.4	16.9
Internal Migrants	111.5	116.3	42.7	19.2
International Migrants	107.7	148.2	16.7	13.6
Native-Born:				
Nonmigrants	103.6	103.3	28.8	31.6
Internal Migrants	107.2	101.9	56.8	30.5
International Migrants	107.0	107.6	25.1	25.9
Foreign-Born:				
Nonmigrants	94.5	107.6	4.0	4.7
Internal Migrants	122.3	137.3	9.6	5.3
International Migrants	107.9	156.3	14.1	11.6

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1992, 2003.

Changing Characteristics of Latino Migrants to the South

Using these same data, Table 2 examines the age and sex structure of Latino newcomers to the South. For comparison purposes, we also include nonmigrants who were living in the South at the beginning and end of the respective two five-year periods (1985-1990 and 1995-2000). Table 2 shows that Latinos in each of the three groups (nonmigrants, internal migrants, and international migrants) were more heavily male. Moreover, sex ratios rose in each group across the two periods, especially among those foreign born. Among the total population of international migrants in 1990, there were 108 males for every 100 females. By 2000, the sex ratio had increased considerably to 148 males per 100 females. Although sex ratios remained fairly constant among the native-born Latino population, foreign born males increased their relative presence significantly in

each of the three groups. The most significant change occurred among foreign-born international migrants, whose sex ratio jumped from 108 in 1990 to 156 in 2000.

With respect to the age structure of Latinos, significant patterns emerge. Not surprisingly, persons aged 5 to 14 accounted for a relatively small share of foreign-born individuals in each of the two time periods, and their composition did not change much across the two periods. However, among Latino native- and foreign-born internal migrants, we see a dramatic decline in the presence of children aged 5-14. Although children comprised 57 percent of Latino native-born internal migrants in 1990, they made up only 31 percent of this population in 2000. Among the foreign born, children comprised 10 percent in 1990 but dropped to five percent by 2000.

Overview of Articles Featured in the Special Issue

Having provided a broad description of the changes that have taken place in the Latino population in the South over the course of the last decade, we now turn our attention to a brief overview of the accompanying articles that are included in this special issue. These articles are all based on qualitative and ethnographic approaches in specific areas of the South. In particular, the research described in the articles is based on four states (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, and Georgia). The articles cover a variety of topics including immigration, work, integration, health service utilization, and housing. Each of the articles focuses in one way or another on intergroup relations involving Latinos and the established residents of the communities where they settle. Below we provide a brief description of the highlights of each article.

Hernandez-Leon and Zuniga's article titled "Mexican Immigrant Communities in the South and Social Capital: The Case of Dalton, Georgia" illustrates just how different is the process of early immigrant incorporation. The community they have been studying (both as observers and active participants) for much of the 1990s is an exceptional case. Its unusual face represents a small city where carpet production provides most of the jobs and Mexican immigrants draw on knowledge and networks made while residing elsewhere in the United States to initiate successful new business initiatives and to organize community members in Dalton, Georgia.

Their success is linked to the rapid settlement that occurs as a result of prior U.S. experience as well as to the carpet industry's connection to Monterrey (Mexico) and the president of a university in Monterrey. This contact yields an exchange of human capital (Mexican teachers to Dalton; U.S. teachers to Mexico), and leads to resources not seen in many other new immigrant destinations. The exceptionalism of this case study is critically important to understand because it holds enormous promise as a successful model for immigrant incorporation. This is especially true given the dire forecasts made by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) and others about the children of immigrants. The case of Dalton, Georgia, appears to be one where the 1.5 and second generation may fare very well indeed. Of course, the verdict is still out on this point.

Erwin's article titled "An Ethnographic Description of Latino Immigration in Rural Arkansas: Intergroup Relations and Utilization of Healthcare Services" examines the extent to which Latino newcomers are being integrated into three rural communities in Arkansas with special emphasis on social relations and health utilization. The comparison of her study based on rural communities to those generated in large metropolitan settings (e.g., Lamphere 1992; Bach 1993) is quite useful and provides insightful information. This is one of the most useful aspects of the article. Erwin's findings show that in some ways the experiences of Latinos in rural Arkansas are similar to those of their counterparts in places such as Chicago, Houston, Miami, and Philadelphia. Yet, in other ways, the rural Latino experience is different with rural Latinos being more likely to utilize health services compared to their urban counterparts. Despite some degree of the integration of Latinos into their new communities in Arkansas and the development of a small Latino middle class, established residents voice fears that Latino culture will displace their own culture.

McDaniel and Casanova's article titled "Pines in Lines: Tree Planting, H2B Guest Workers, and Rural Poverty in Alabama" underscores just how important labor contractors are to providing migrant laborers to the forest employers in Alabama. Here the face of incorporation is entirely different than the earlier examples. In an area where poverty rates are unusually high, and where forestry on private lands has become increasingly important, companies are now using recruiters to find Latinos with no U.S. experience willing

to work in low-paid, physically challenging jobs such as planters. Industrial recruitment is filling these jobs with Latino immigrants, and companies offer them whatever is necessary to recruit workers including temporary legal status by providing H2B visas.³ So the resources that potential migrants traditionally rely on to make migration decisions and actually cross the border are very different for these forestry workers compared to migrants as a whole. Forestry workers do not show signs of wanting to stay in the United States; they are mostly men working for months at a time and then returning home. And interestingly, Mexicans are not the preferred workers because they may rely on their network ties and leave if the employment is too difficult. Together, these findings suggest that employers in this industry in Alabama have extensive control over their workforce (with the H2B visas being the most valuable resource), and that the potential for the exploitation of migrants is high.

Finally, Atilés and Bohon's article titled "*Camas Calientes: Housing Adjustments and Barriers to Social and Economic Adaptation Among Georgia's Rural Latinos*" focuses on the housing situation and needs of Latinos in four rural counties in Georgia. They use Morris and Winter's (1978) model for housing adjustment and adaptation alongside the segmented assimilation perspective of Portes and Zhou (1993). This is a very interesting angle given the importance of housing for the incorporation of immigrants into the host society. Atilés and Bohon found that Latino immigrants in the rural Georgia settings have similar housing norms as their white neighbors. However, a variety of structural impediments, including lack of resources, lack of English skills, lack of affordable housing, and in some cases lack of legal immigration status, prevented them from escaping the substandard housing where they were living. Atilés and Bohon observe that Latinos are segregated and marginalized in dilapidated housing, which could well result, in the long-term, in Latinos being trapped in these areas without much social mobility.

³ The H2B visa is offered to employers to hire migrant non-professionals to perform seasonal work that U.S. workers are not willing or able to do and lasts for less than a year (<http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/foreign/h-2b.asp>).

Implications and Directions for Future Research

The set of articles that follow provides a wealth of information to better understand the experience of Latino immigrants in the South. This research adds to the newly emerging research focusing on new immigrants in the South (Donato, Bankston and Robinson 2001; Donato, Stainback and Bankston 2004; Griffith, 1995a; Griffith 1995b; Hernandez-Leon and Zuniga 2000; Saenz 2000). We highlight here some of the key patterns that emerge from the articles that comprise this special issue. First, there is considerable heterogeneity in the early assimilation experience of immigrants. Early immigrant incorporation takes many forms. Second, government involvement and the practice of getting H2B visas for immigrants to temporarily work in the United States isolates workers and blocks their incorporation into local communities in potentially exploitive ways. Third, this type of formal employer control may be mediated by the resources that communities have—whether in migrant social networks, key employers and their community contributions, and a shortened assimilation track created by prior U.S. experience. Fourth, it is clear that Latinos have massive housing needs, which if left unmet have the potential to keep Latinos segregated and marginalized within their communities.

Together these ideas underscore how complex the social geography of migration has become. But now that we, and many others, have charted the different experiences in the southern migration experience, many questions remain. One key question is whether the differences (or complexity) outlined above represent new social processes related to immigrant incorporation in the southern United States, or whether they represent a continuation of the same kinds of processes that existed 100 or 200 years ago in the traditional gateway cities. Are there signs that the early assimilation experiences of Latinos in the South are really new and different from the diverse set of experiences found in southern towns and cities in the 1800s and 1900s when immigration levels were very high? We would say yes, but that we need to articulate these differences and then address the new challenges that they pose.

For example, one type of diversity that exists now but did not a century ago is organized around legal status. Although most case studies discuss undocumented migration to some extent, what

we know from other studies is that the incorporation process for immigrants and communities varies by legal status—no matter what the context of immigrant reception. This should not be a surprise. Persons without legal documents are among the most disenfranchised in the United States. They face the highest risks of poverty, job instability, and untreated job injuries. As suggested by Hernandez-Leon and Zuniga (2000), their education mobility (and future) may be blocked by their inability to receive college loans to improve their educational credentials. And consider the lives of undocumented migrants in the forestry industry in Alabama: given what we know about legal migrants, successful incorporation of migrants without documents seems especially bleak.

Keep in mind that diversity by legal status was not an issue 100 years ago. Some foreign born *first* became illegal after anti-immigrant legislation was passed in the late 1800s, but since then, with the development of federal government infrastructure in the twentieth century came the construction of legal status—and it has now become a salient predictor of immigrant well-being.

Another type of diversity is reflected in whether and how new immigrants in the South lived elsewhere (i.e., had prior U.S. experience). With this experience and good economic opportunities in Dalton, migrants are better equipped to overcome traditional obstacles that block successful assimilation in the United States. In contrast, without experience, migrants may work as planters in the forestry industry in Alabama and face enormous obstacles to incorporating in the U.S. economy. This range in the effect of U.S. experience—prior to living in the South—is another attribute that appears very different from immigrants 100 years ago. Immigrants in the South in the late 1800s were often transplants from the North. Although there are state differences, Lieberman (1980) certainly documented the north-to-south internal migration of the foreign born in many southern places.

A final point refers to the permanence of the new Latino immigrants in the South. Again there is considerable diversity by destination as to how established immigrant families are. In Dalton, and perhaps Little Mexico in Arkansas, there are strong signs of permanent Mexican communities. Did we see this diversity 100 years ago? Yes, probably—or certainly—one may say for certain southern destinations, but we believe the verdict is still out on this

question. In our future research, we should consider explicitly making this comparison to understand whether what we are seeing now in the South represents new forms of diversity that demand different responses than those 100 years ago. This seems to be a key theoretical question, and more work like the provocative case studies discussed here (and elsewhere) will eventually provide us with the answer.

In some ways, the observed patterns suggest that Latinos in the South represent a new demographic reality, a new process of social and economic assimilation that did not exist 100 or 200 years ago in traditional gateway cities. There are many signs that the early assimilation experiences of Latinos in the South is new and different compared to the experiences of immigrants who settled in popular destinations of the past. For example, many Latinos in the South arrived directly from their national origin. Rather than participate in a stepwise process whereby they enter a large U.S. city and eventually migrate to smaller areas, many foreign-born Latinos arrived in the South from the countries of their national origin. The short term impact for receiving communities is dramatic, as they attempt to offer employment, housing, and other services to their new foreign neighbors. Nonetheless, for those who have had other U.S. experience and then migrate to the South, migrant prospects may look especially favorable. With this experience and good local employment opportunities, migrants may be better equipped to overcome the traditional obstacles that blocked successful assimilation of immigrants in the past.

Finally, we also recommend that future research will need to develop comparative research designs involving Latino new-growth areas in the South and the Midwest. Each of these regions has experienced tremendous growth in the Latino population and concomitant transformations of community institutions. There is an impressive body of scholarship that has been generated on Latinos in the Midwest (Fink 1998; Gouveia and Saenz 2000; Gouveia and Stull 1995; Stull 1995). There is great potential to develop research projects that compare and contrast the experiences of Latino newcomers in the two regions.

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