Hispanic Population Growth, Age Composition Shifts, and Public Policy Impacts in Nonmetro Counties

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Introduction

Data from Census 2000 reveal dramatic increases in the Hispanic population in new immigrant destinations throughout the country. Because the majority of the Hispanic population resides in urban areas, popular attention tends to focus on the skyrocketing Hispanic population growth rates found in Birmingham Alabama, Charlotte South Carolina, Louisville Kentucky, and other unexpected harbingers of urban multiculturalism (Suro and Singer 2002). However, the nonmetro Hispanic population is also growing quickly in nonmetro areas and Hispanics are becoming a widely felt presence throughout many rural regions of the nation. In fact, their *rates* of population increase over the past decade exceeded not only that of Hispanics in metropolitan areas, but also that of all other racial and ethnic groups (Cromartie and Kandel 2002). In addition, for the first time in U.S. history, half of all nonmetropolitan Hispanics now live outside the traditional five southwestern states of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas.

The new influxes have attracted scholarly attention both for the new geography of recent migration flows and because local officials in these new destinations are grappling with new public policy issues as local residents adjust to newcomers. Unlike traditional urban immigrant destinations that have long histories of integrating new flows of immigrants, new rural destinations are often economically and culturally unprepared to deal with new demands for social services from ethnic minorities (Grey 1995; Horowitz and Miller 1999).

Yet, at the root of these social transformations lies several fundamental demographic trends and their policy implications which follow from them. Therefore, in this chapter, we address the following three research questions:

1. How does the demographic profile of Hispanics in counties where they grew rapidly compare to that of Hispanics in other areas and non-Hispanic Whites?

2. How has rapid Hispanic population growth in nonmetro counties affected the demographic profiles of these counties, particularly when contrasted with comparable counties without such rapid growth?

3. What public policy implications for social service demand stem from sudden rural Hispanic population growth?

We proceed by reframing recent migration to rural areas of the country as a demand-driven phenomenon stemming from industrial restructuring that helps shape the demographic composition of migration flows into new destinations. We show this by documenting demographic divergence between not only Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites, but also Hispanics in new versus established destinations. Using a typology of nonmetro counties that highlights differences in Hispanic population growth, we assess impacts of Hispanic in-migration on new demands for public services, such as schooling, health care, and housing, and on local socioeconomic conditions such as employment. Our findings indicate that relatively small

numbers of Hispanics have measurable impacts not only on social service demand but also on the sociodemographic profiles of counties across a broad set of indicators.

The Demand-Driven Hypothesis: Rural Hispanic Immigration, Labor Market Processes and Demographic Outcomes

Demographic phenomena often underlie challenges facing local policy makers. If the demographic profile of the recent rural Hispanic population were similar to that of native residents, social service demands would simply respond to a growing population. However, the demographic profile of new rural Hispanics is quite distinct from that native population, a difference that stems from the broader economic logic of the migration process itself. As a result, rapid Hispanic growth alters the population profile of receiving counties in ways that trigger new public policy demands.

Two processes that motivate Hispanic migration to new rural destinations affect the demographic selectivity of this flow. First, industrial restructuring has increased labor demand in industries employing low-skilled, low-wage workers (Kandel and Parrado forthcoming; Kandel and Parrado 2003). Growing consumer demand for value-added food products has increased labor intensive processes that utilize low-skilled workers, and the resulting concentration of production in large, vertically integrated firms has shifted rural production away from small producers employing domestic workers. In addition, some industries, such as beef processing, have relocated to rural areas (MacDonald et al 2000; Ollinger, MacDonald, and Madison 2000). The relative unattractiveness of these emerging forms of employment within a limited wage structure has fostered labor recruitment of Hispanic and immigrant workers (Carlin 1999; Johnson-Webb 2002; Katz 1996a, 1996b; Smothers 1996; Taylor and Stein 1999).

Consequently, during the past decade, traditional rural-based industries such as meat processing, carpet manufacturing, oil refining, and forestry have employed an increasing share of Hispanic workers (Barboza 2001; Broadway 1994; Engstrom 2001; Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2000; Diaz McConnell 2001; Gouveia and Stull 1995; McDaniel 2002).

The second process driving Hispanic migration to new rural destinations are migrants' own social networks. As migration evolves over time, networks of friends and family members tend to perpetuate population flows. This is especially instrumental for growing industries since firms can increasingly rely on informal social channels rather than open recruitment to guarantee a continuous provision of low-wage workers. In addition, friends and family members at the place of destination facilitates additional migration by providing information, initial settlement arrangements, and transportation financing necessary to overcome the considerable barriers to employment in a foreign environment.

These two processes help explain the demographic structure of the recent Hispanic population and the impact it might have on nonmetro counties. The arduous and dangerous process of international migration and the narrow requirements of many migrant jobs means that most labor migrants, especially from Latin America, are self-selected for "positive" characteristics such as initiative and youth, as well as "negative" characteristics, such lower levels of education (Borjas 1999, Massey et al 2002). Migrants' social and economic characteristics have not changed significantly over the past several decades in the case of Mexico, the source of most Latino immigration (Durand, Massey, and Zenteno, 2001). New labor migrants are primarily young males, often initiating their U.S. work experience as single teen-agers or young adults. Most originate from rural communities in economically depressed regions of Mexico and are neither well-off nor very poor. On average, they have fewer than ten

years of formal education, speak little English, and often begin migrating without documentation.

In addition, to the extent that migration involves families, not just individuals, migrants tend to be at an early stage in the family life-cycle. If the entire immediate family is able to relocate to the U.S., it often means that young children accompany their parents. Alternatively, young migrants in the early stages in the family life cycle will marry and have children in the U.S.

It is this connection between the logic of migration and migrant's demographic characteristics that triggers public policy demands. The age, sex, and educational composition of the migrant flow have attendant economic, social, and political impacts, and popular discussions of public policy demands often stress costs and problems of growing rural Hispanic populations with little regard for benefits and opportunities that often result. It is important to keep in mind that for the most part, Hispanics respond to an actual shortage of low-skilled native workers and new employment opportunities in some rural industries with very little displacement effect. In addition, other factors such as tax contributions, low rate of use of welfare benefits, and the multiplicative effect on employment opportunities for native and more skilled workers should not be overlooked. Our focus on public policy impacts stems from the growing concern among government officials and the public in general about rapid population change. To the extent that we clarify the demographic basis of some of these changes we hope to contribute to the formulation of more even-handed policy solutions.

Analytical strategy and county typology

To disentangle the demographic changes accompanying Hispanic growth and its policy impact, our analytical strategy is to compare counties with different population trajectories between 1990 and 2000. We place these population trends within an economic and employment-related contexts before analyzing characteristics with significant local policy implications for public health, education, housing, and language. Because county-level data broken out by race and ethnicity are difficult to obtain for the entire Nation, we base our analyses on the decennial Census and data from the Area Resource File. Our main expectation is that this cross county comparison will help us identify what is specific about the new areas of Hispanic destination and how their policy demands have been changing.

We create a four-category nonmetro county typology that derives from three factors: the Hispanic proportion in 1990, its growth during the 1990s, and total county population change during the 1990s. When combined, these factors produce a typology that allows us to compare new areas of Hispanic destination against counties that have always had a sizeable Hispanic population, counties that have been growing but not with Hispanics, and counties that are demographically stagnant. We use counties as the unit of analysis because they represent relatively small geographic and legal entities for which Census data can be consistently compared across decades. More formally our typology is specified as follow,

Established Hispanic Counties

1990 Hispanic composition ≥ 3% of the total county population

Rapid Hispanic Growth Counties

1990 Hispanic composition < *3%* of the total county population *and*

1990-2000 percent change in Hispanic composition ≥ 1%

Rapid Growth Non-Hispanic Counties

1990 Hispanic composition < 3% of the total county population and

1990-2000 percent change in Hispanic composition *≤ 1% and*

1990-2000 percent change in total population ≥ 2%

Slow Growth or Loss Counties

1990 Hispanic composition < 3% of the total county population and

1990-2000 percent change in Hispanic composition ≤ 1% and

1990-2000 percent change in Total population *≤ 2%*

After reviewing the distributions for the demographic variables, this typology captures our underlying assumption of differential policy demands based on population composition. To avoid confounding our analysis with misleading mean and median values, we exclude from our analysis counties whose total populations in 2000 numbered less than 5,000 persons, and for whom minor absolute changes in Hispanic population thereby translated into unusually high proportions and growth rates. A typology that defines a handful of mutually exclusive county types necessarily obscures complexity but nevertheless provides a broad framework for distinguishing nonmetropolitan demographic change.

[Figure 1 about here – Map of County Typology]

Geographic patterns and descriptive statistics confirm that our typology reflects counties with distinct demographic trajectories. The county map in Figure 1 illustrates patterns that we would expect based on our definitions. Established Hispanic counties predominate in traditional rural Hispanic settlement areas of the Southwest. Rapid Hispanic Growth counties tend to be concentrated in the Midwest and Southeast, where industrial transformation in beef processing

during the 1980s and poultry processing in the 1990s generated significant new Hispanic population growth (Kandel and Parrado 2003). They also appear north of the group of Established Hispanic counties. Slow Growth and Loss counties are concentrated in the Northern Great Plains which has been experiencing steady population decline since the 1950s (see Johnson and Rathge, and von Reichert, in this volume) but also extend into the Central Plains and Texas.

Descriptive statistics

We present median values of demographic variables in Table 1 to further illustrate the clear differences between county types. With the exception of Slow Growth or Loss counties, total populations in 2000 and population growth rates over the decade were comparable for the first three county types, at roughly 20-22,000 persons and 10-12 percent, respectively. Differences appear in the Hispanic population stemming from our definition. Despite similar total populations, Established Hispanic counties exhibited the largest median number of Hispanics in 2000 but the lowest Hispanic population growth rate of any county type. This is largely a function of how growth rates are computed, as the same size Hispanic influx will yield higher growth rates for smaller Hispanic populations. Even in Slow Growth and Loss counties, the Hispanic population grew in absolute and proportional terms, ameliorating and even reversing total population loss in some cases (Kandel and Cromartie, forthcoming). Differences also appear in the form of changes in county Hispanic population composition. Although Established Hispanic counties exhibit the highest Hispanic proportion, Rapid Hispanic Growth counties saw the largest increase in this proportion over the decade, roughly four fold the proportion in 1990 (0.8% to 3.0%). The following analysis demonstrates how a relatively

modest three percent of the county population can significantly influence statistics and indicators at the county level.

[Table 1 about here – Descriptive Statistics]

Age effects

Figures 2A and 2B compare population pyramids for Hispanics (left side of graphs) and non-Hispanic Whites (right side of graphs). Each bar indicates the percentage of the total population within indicated five-year age groups. Figure 2A, which shows the age structures of both groups for Established Hispanic counties, resembles that of the entire U.S. population (not shown). Because the Hispanic population is significantly younger than the non-Hispanic White population, proportions of Hispanics in younger age groups exceed those of non-Hispanic Whites. The situation reverses at age 40, with non-Hispanic Whites displaying higher proportions than Hispanics in older age groups.

[Figure 2A and 2B about here – Population Pyramids]

An even sharper contrast between the two groups appears for Rapid Hispanic Growth counties in Figure 2B. While the age structure of non-Hispanics Whites differs little across county types, that for Hispanics is heavily tilted toward prime working ages and young children. Higher proportions of the population pyramid in younger age brackets reflect both family-forming ages of Hispanic parents and slightly higher fertility rates of first-generation Hispanics. Such dramatic differences can affect county indicators such as median age. In Established Hispanic counties, with relatively high average Hispanic composition, median age actually declined during the 1990s from 37.04 to 36.04 years. However, the interesting comparison occurs between Rapid Hispanic Growth and Rapid Growth, Non-Hispanic counties, where the 1990 median ages of 36.26 and 35.87, respectively, increased to 37.18 and 37.78. Both county

types saw their median ages increase over the decade, but the impact of Hispanic population increase among the former actually retarded population aging that continues throughout virtually all nonmetro counties outside the Southwest.

Policy demands

Employment and poverty

What do these changes in age composition imply for public policy? At first glance, Rapid Hispanic Growth counties appear to be relatively prosperous, at least as measured by their employment performance. Census data in Table 2 indicate that unemployment rates were considerably lower in Rapid Hispanic Growth counties than in other county types for both 1990 and 2000. Moreover, when we distinguish by ethnicity, the results show that Rapid Hispanic Growth counties have the lowest unemployment rates for both Hispanics and Non-Hispanic whites than any other county type, 5.7 and 4.0 percent respectively. Especially interesting is the comparison with Established Hispanic counties where Hispanics exhibit an 8 percent unemployment rate. At the other end of the distribution, Slow Growth and Loss counties exhibit the highest unemployment levels, especially for Non-Hispanic whites (5.3 percent). These results are consistent with the expectation that employment opportunities are steering the Hispanic population to new rural destinations.

[Table 2 about here – Economic indicators]

A closer look at these employment data, however, reveals a mixed portrait. Greater employment opportunity does not translate automatically into improved living conditions. While the overall poverty level is also lower in Rapid Hispanic Growth counties than in other county types, differences by ethnicity highlight wide disparities in trends. In 2000, the percent of

Hispanics in poverty for Rapid Hispanic growth counties (25.1 percent) exceeded that for other county types. The opposite applies to the poverty level of non-Hispanic Whites. More notably, during the job creation years of the 1990s, Nonmetro Whites and Hispanics in all other county types saw their proportions of adults with poverty-level incomes decline, while Hispanics in Rapid Hispanic Growth counties saw their proportions increasing. The growing ethnic inequality is reflected in the changing gap in per-capita income between Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites across county types. In 1990 Rapid Hispanic Growth counties exhibited the second lowest gap between the two groups of all county types, but by 2000 their average gap was the highest.

Thus, while employment opportunities appear greater in new destinations, incomes earned by Hispanics in these counties have done little to alleviate their relative disadvantage. Moreover, their economic fortunes and those of the non-Hispanic White population appear to be diverging. The social processes undergirding such trends can be traced back to the concentration of Hispanics at the less-skilled and lower paid ends of the occupational scale (Newman 2003) as well as to the occupational and industrial transformations of industries attracting Hispanics to these new destinations (Kandel and Parrado, forthcoming). From a policy perspective these results suggest that while rapid Hispanic growth is not putting obvious strains on the employment structures of non-metro counties, low-income levels associated with new jobs available to Hispanics are retarding poverty declines and increasing Hispanic representation among the poor. As a result, social services towards the poor might need to be expanded and especially tailored towards Hispanics.

Health: Fertility, mortality, and emergency room visits

Rapid population change is likely to affect health policy demands which have considerable impacts on state and local budgets. Hospitals tend to receive significant amounts of funding from government agencies and rural areas often struggle to provide a relatively complete range of health services for a dispersed population (Capalbo and Heggam 1999). Hispanic population growth yields positive and negative health policy outcomes that affect differently the mix of health service provision. Hence, if many foreign-born Hispanics move to a county with an aging population, they will likely increase and reduce simultaneously specific demands for health services which more broadly might require restructuring local health care systems.

For immigrants, the multifaceted interaction between population change and health service demand is embedded within their legal status that can restrict access to publicly provided social services. Following our assumption that health demand reflects the particular demographic characteristics of Hispanic groups, we concentrate on three public health dimensions: fertility, mortality, and emergency health demand.

[Table 3 about here – Health indicators]

The health indicators presented in Table 3 relate directly to median ages recorded by the 2000 census and shown in the first row. As noted, median ages for all Hispanics populations are significantly lower than those of non-Hispanic Whites, but where this has clear health policy impacts is among women in their child-bearing years. The difference between Hispanic and non-Hispanic White women's median ages is substantial by any measure, ranging from 15 years in Rapid Growth non-Hispanic counties to 18.6 years in Rapid Hispanic Growth counties. In light of the 15-44 age range of childbearing years used to compute general fertility rates,

Hispanic women, on average, have far more childbearing years ahead of them than non-Hispanic White women, and this is particularly the case in Rapid Hispanic Growth counties.

Changes in fertility rates have responded accordingly. Table 3 reports changes in general fertility rates between 1989 and 1999 by county type. Results show that in Rapid Hispanic Growth counties, the number of average total births over the decade increased by roughly 16, double that of Established Hispanic counties and a sharp contrast with declining numbers of average births in Rapid Growth non-Hispanic and Slow Growth or Loss counties.[1]

Total births result from the population size of women in their childbearing years and the average number of births per woman. As in other industrialized nations, American women are increasingly delaying marriage and childbearing for to invest in their education and careers and are having fewer children within marriage (Downs 2003). Accordingly, the general fertility rate, measuring the number of children born to every 1,000 women aged 15-44, declined throughout nonmetro counties during the past decade, as it has since the 1960s. While this trend appears for every nonmetro county type shown in Table 3, the fertility decline for Rapid Hispanic Growth counties (-3.8 percent) was substantially less than that in all other county types. Once again, a relatively small proportion of the population appears to be having a disproportionate impact on the demographic profile of the total county population.

Similar trends occur for death rates with the opposite effect on health services demands. By introducing greater numbers of relatively younger persons with lower mortality risk into nonmetro counties, Hispanic population growth effectively reduces mortality rates. Crude death

[1] Two competing explanations for this singular and substantial increase might be that total population increases produced higher populations of non-Hispanic White women, but population change figures from Table 1 that show comparable changes across county types make this unlikely. Another explanation is that nonmetro Blacks with relatively higher fertility might be relocating to the same new destinations. Again, this explanations loses power when one considers the declining fertility rates among metro and nonmetro Blacks over the past several

rates in the U.S. have been rising for decades from population aging (see Chapter 3), and Table 3 shows these rates increasing during 1989-99 for Established Hispanic, Rapid growth Non-Hispanic, and Slow Growth or Loss Counties. However, the reverse is true for Rapid Hispanic growth counties, which actually exhibited a decline in the crude death rate over the past decade.

Hispanic population growth also affects the distribution of mortality by cause of death, again, with an alleviating effect on health service provision. American life expectancy continues to increase from advances in medical technological and public health policies. Consequently, death rates from heart disease, diabetes, and other chronic diseases, have declined continuously over the past century. While all nonmetro county types show declines in mortality rates from chronic diseases, the rate drops most significantly for Rapid Hispanic growth counties. While not conclusive, these data suggest that rapid Hispanic population growth reduces the per-capita health service demands of an aging population.

Fertility and mortality rate changes, in turn, influence the allocation of public health resources. Regardless of whether public and private health facilities expand the availability of such resources meet the demands of a growing population, they must confront the impact of changes in demographic composition on service delivery allocation. For example, hospitals with a stable caseload of patients with chronic diseases may need to allocate resources to meet greater demand for obstetrics and gynecology services. However, if health care resources expand on a per-capita basis, and if the cost of treating chronic diseases significantly exceeds that of maternity-related services, some municipalities may find their public health spending declining with an influx of younger residents. Changes in fertility and mortality highlight the complexity

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decades, and the fact that the Black populations in these counties have growth rates similar to those of non-Hispanic Whites.

of health policy implications from rapid Hispanic population growth and that highly visible impacts on fertility rates might be counterbalanced by effects on other health dimensions.

Public health policy makers must also concern themselves with the growing reliance on hospital emergency rooms as medical providers of last resort for those lacking documentation, income, and health insurance (National Center for Health Statistics 2003, Table 77). One might then expect that counties with high proportions of recent Hispanic in-migrants would experience relatively higher numbers of emergency hospital visits. Yet, a comparison of Area Resource File data for all county types, averaged across years1988-90 and 1998-2000, reveals no such relative increase. All county types except Rapid-growth Non-Hispanic counties showed a mean percent increase in emergency hospital visits at roughly 35-40 percent, reflecting broader national trends. The more conservative median values for the same measure indicate a relatively lower increase for counties with rapidly growing populations. While recent Hispanic arrivals in new destinations may be utilizing some public health services, the data shown here suggest that the demand for relatively costly emergency room services may occur independently of their population growth.

Education

Enrollment rates provide some of the clearest evidence of demographic shifts associated with Hispanic in-migrants. Young median ages of Hispanics, relatively higher Hispanic fertility rates, and immigrant family reunification policies have yielded a school-age population that has grown far more rapidly than the dominant non-Hispanic White population. This demographic contrast has profound implications for rural school districts. Table 4 presents mean enrollment rates for each county type for pre-school to middle schoolers, and high school students. In Rapid

Hispanic Growth counties, enrollment rates for all students attending preschool through middle school as well as high school are only slightly higher than in Rapid Growth non-Hispanic counties. However, if we examine these enrollment rate data by race and ethnicity, a more compelling story emerges. During the 1990s, enrollment rates for Hispanic children increased dramatically compared with those for non-Hispanic White children in every county type. In Rapid Hispanic Growth counties, for example, these rates increased by over 1,000 percent at both schooling levels.

[Table 4 about here – school enrollment rates]

Although Hispanics still comprise a relatively small average proportion of the school age population in nonmetro counties (Table 4), high rates of enrollment growth foreshadow the considerable challenges facing rural schools that must devote substantial resources to address the needs of this distinct population. These include additional classroom space and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, as well as orientation seminars and translation services for their parents. Moreover, schools facing state and national mandates for instructional performance, such as the recent "No Child Left Behind" policy, are at a distinct disadvantage to achieving such standards during periods of limited or declining public education budgets.

Housing

Influxes of Hispanics working in predominantly low-wage and/or unstable employment and who often limit expenses to maximize earnings or remittances to family members in countries of origin will likely affect measures of housing availability, affordability, and quality. We focus on rental housing because a relatively small proportion of recent Hispanic newcomers possesses the geographic stability and financial means required for homeownership. Recent

Hispanic settlement exhibits relatively greater temporality due to relatively high numbers of persons engaged in seasonal, unstable, and less attractive employment. First time U.S. migrants who typically travel alone are more likely to return home within a few years, interrupting their employment and settlement continuity.

Ethnographic accounts of migrants living in new rural destinations routinely describe substandard and exploitative living conditions characterized by overcrowding, poor housing quality, and excessive rents (Atiles and Bohon 2003). Yet, Census data continue to provide the main source for housing information available at the county level by race and ethnicity. Housing quality is the most difficult to measure because of its subjectivity. For example, Census measures of housing quality include the existence of phone service, plumbing, and electricity, utilities that even most shoddy rental units possess. More accurate gages of rental unit quality - whether the plumbing works adequately or the walls have insulation – remain unrecorded. Therefore, in this analysis, we focus on housing tenure, rental costs, and overcrowding.

[Table 5 about here – Housing indicators]

Data from Table 5 illustrate rental versus owner-occupied housing tenure. In nonmetro counties, which have relatively high rates of home ownership compared to metro counties, a fourth of residents rent. During the 1990s, this proportion declined by only 1 to 2 percent in all nonmetro county types. Among Hispanics, however, declines were more pronounced. In Established Hispanic counties with significant numbers of Hispanics who settled prior to 1990 and benefited from legalization provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, the proportion of renting residents declined by 20 percentage points. In all other county types, declines ranged between 8 and 12 percentage points. What stands out, however, is the relatively high proportion of Hispanic renters in Rapid Hispanic growth counties, which

remained above 40 percent by 2000, in sharp contrast not only with non-Hispanic Whites in the same counties but also with Hispanics in other nonmetro counties. Hence, Hispanics are more likely to have to contend with the vicissitudes of the rental housing market in Rapid Hispanic growth counties than in other nonmetro counties.

Rent increases may be more revealing than absolute rent levels themselves. During the 1990s, median gross rents increased throughout the country, but counties with rapid Hispanic population growth exhibited increases several percentage points higher than in other county types, a trend even more pronounced for aggregated rents (across each county) averaged for each county type. Although not shown in Table 5, actual average rents in 2000 - at just over $400 – differed only slightly across county types. Moreover, upward limits to rents that landlords can charge stem from corresponding limits to wages and what is realistically affordable.

Shared housing and overcrowding is a function of income as well as a critical element of migrants' strategy to maximize financial remittances and savings. The Census Bureau does not formally define overcrowding, but many housing studies use more than one person per room as a conventional measure (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Although this modest threshold fails to differentiate between a family with two children sharing a large room, and a dozen temporary workers sleeping in shifts in a mobile home, we assume such differences are randomly distributed over time across all county types and crowding categories. Data in Table 5 indicate that only a small percentage of rental units are so classified, but this percentage increased from 1990 to 2000 in Established and Rapid Hispanic Growth counties, and declined in the other two. Moreover, Rapid Hispanic Growth counties experienced the largest percentage growth in the absolute number of crowded rental units. These aggregate measures by county type reflect the influence of a relatively minor portion of the total population and accordingly mask substantial

differences by race and ethnicity. When compared, Hispanics and non-Hispanic Whites show very different rates of overcrowding, with the highest levels for Hispanics occurring in Rapid Hispanic Growth counties.

Patterns of immigrant adaptation in rural counties

Thus far, our discussion has emphasized impacts of rapid Hispanic population growth on county-level measures of fiscal and public policy. Yet, policy demands arising from rapid Hispanic growth change as immigrants adapt to the U.S. We now consider indicators of Hispanic social and economic incorporation and compare results across county types to highlight the association between policy demands and immigrants' characteristics.

U.S. experience differs significantly across counties. Two Census measures include foreign birth and previous residence. Almost half of all Hispanics living in Rapid Hispanic Growth counties were born outside of the U.S., almost double the rate of Hispanics in Established Hispanic counties. However, foreign birth does not necessarily imply lack of U.S. experience. Sizable proportions of Hispanic newcomers to nonmetro counties possess substantial U.S. experience in other areas, and some cite a higher perceived quality of life in rural destinations as a reason for relocating (Kandel and Cromartie 2004). Data measuring place of residence in 1995 for Hispanic Census respondents in 2000 indicate that significantly larger proportions of Hispanics resided in another state or country that in Rapid Hispanic Growth counties than in other nonmetro county types.

[Table 6 about here: Social and economic incorporation]

Another critical indicator is English language proficiency, a function of schooling and, more typically for adults, U.S. experience. We use the Census variable for "linguistic isolation",

defined as living in a household where no member over age 12 speaks English "very well". In 1990, the percent of Hispanics linguistically isolated in Established Hispanic counties exceeded those living in other county types by a wide margin. By 2000, however, those living in Rapid Hispanic Growth counties exhibited roughly the same proportion of linguistic isolation, growing at a rate that exceeded all other county types. English skills are particularly important, not only because of their policy implications for many public services, such as language translation in courts, schools, and hospitals, but because of what they imply about newcomers' ability to acquire important information about living and working in the U.S. The variety of issues that new destination communities must consider can be summed up in a paragraph of fieldnotes taken by the authors while visiting a North Carolina elementary school experiencing significant Hispanic student growth:

> "El Puente Parents Center was started by the school and the Chamber of Commerce. They are the only school system that has this [center]. Services provided include: tours to public institutions, such as the hospital, court house, church, etc., to show them what is available, public transit, and so on. They hook families up with immigration lawyers, domestic violence counselors, parenting skills classes, and ESL classes for adults. They have a child care program that involves both parents so that the support is family oriented. They also have GED and computer classes that are often held on weekends. There is a tutorial program for kids having academic difficulty, before, during, and after school. They are a year-round school, and during the various intersessions, they provide 7-8 full days of instruction of ESL for kids who have difficulty with the language."

Summary and discussion

Hispanic population growth in new nonmetro county destinations represents one of the more profound social transformations affecting rural America, not only for its real social, economic, and political impacts, but also for its alteration of our perception of rural populations. Hispanics in new nonmetro destinations are likely to have a different profile from Hispanics in other county types. Hispanics in new Hispanic destinations tend to be younger, less experienced in the U.S. than their counterparts in other nonmetro counties, and consequently more disadvantaged economically.

Despite their small numbers, Hispanics in these new destinations are altering demographic profile of rural counties, which implies a distinct shift in the mix of public service spending and delivery by rural communities. In this analysis, we have shown how such changes might have significant implications for medical services, public education, housing, and language-related services. In light of the economic forces that generate Hispanic population growth in new rural parts of the country, precise measures of fiscal impacts, state and federal support, and the economic contribution of newcomers would be fruitful areas of research.

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