# Hispanic Residential Segregation in New Immigrant Destinations
*Abstract and Preliminary Analysis*

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## Background

America's Hispanic population is on the move. One-third of recent Mexican immigrants to the United States (i.e., between 1995 and 2000) settled outside of traditional gateway states in the Southwest (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California). This is a remarkable break from the past. During 1975-80 and 1985-90, only nine percent and 13 percent of Mexican immigrants settled outside of traditional gateway states, respectively.[1]

Perhaps more significantly, over 70 percent of immigrants in new gateway states lived in the suburbs (51 percent) or in rural areas (21 percent). Rural Hispanics accounted for nearly 26 percent of nonmetro population growth over the 1990s and 45 percent between 2000 and 2006, while representing only 5.4 percent of the nonmetro population.[2]

This rapid growth of Hispanics has important demographic implications for rural and small-town America. Had Hispanics not moved in, more than 200 rural counties would have shrunk in population during the early 2000s.

Hispanics are rapidly transforming the social and economic fabric of many small towns, where they have come to work—often at low wages—in food processing plants, agriculture, and construction. But to what extent have Hispanic rural in-migrants been incorporated into their new communities and local housing markets? In other words, do they share the same neighborhoods or live apart from non-Hispanic whites?

**Hispanic Segregation in New Rural Destinations**

Case studies of rural destination communities often provide a rather sketchy portrait of immigrant incorporation. Marshalltown, Iowa, a community of about 26,000 people, provides an illustrative case in point. Its Hispanic population increased from less than 300 Hispanics to more than 3,500 between 1990 and 2000.[3] But we have little understanding about how the local housing market (i.e., its availability or quality) has accommodated such an unprecedented influx of Hispanics or how new ethnics are incorporated into Marshalltown's, and other similarly affected communities', previously homogenous Anglo neighborhoods. For rural immigrant communities working in the poultry industry in North Carolina, for example, temporary housing in the form of trailers is sometimes used by employers as a recruiting tool to attract Hispanic immigrant workers.[4] This practice effectively marginalizes new arrivals from the rest of the largely-Anglo community.

Our research addresses questions about Hispanic residential segregation in rural Hispanic "boom towns." We first identified 1,477 places with at least a 10 percent Hispanic population.[5] Block-level data were then used to measure racial residential segregation).[6] Overall, both in 1990 and 2000, the segregation index, or dissimilarity index, was roughly 50which is moderately high by conventional standards. This means that 50 percent of small-town Hispanics would have to move to other blocks in the community to achieve geographic parity with Anglos (i.e., the Hispanic percentage would be identical in each block in the community). Stated differently, each block would have the same percentage of Hispanics as the community overall.[7] The corresponding level for rural blacks was much higher (dissimilarity index= 67). Rural Hispanics

are less segregated overall than rural blacks, but they tend to be more residentially segregated on average than their metropolitan counterparts (see Figure 1).[8]

[Figure 1 about here]

**Boom Town Segregation**

What about segregation patterns in Hispanic boom towns—those experiencing extraordinary Hispanic growth? Here, we identified 20 small towns with very small Hispanic populations in 1990 that experienced the largest absolute Hispanic population growth over the subsequent decade. Anglos in these communities were exposed—for the first time—to significant numbers of Hispanics. As shown in Table 1, Hispanic segregation rates in small towns with fast-growing Hispanic populations exceeded the nationwide average of Hispanic-non-Hispanic white segregation, with the exception of two places (Norwalk, Wisconsin, and Green Forest, Arkansas). Segregation in communities with fast-growing Hispanic populations is often very high, even by metropolitan standards.

(Table 1 about here)

As a typical case, Milan, Missouri, the county seat of Sullivan County (in the North Central part of the state), had a population of 1,958 in 2000. Only a handful of Hispanics ( five) resided in Milan in 1990. By 2000, however, more than 20 percent of Milan's population was Hispanic, which was highly segregated from the local Anglo population (dissimilarity index = 48). Milan was home of a poultry processing plant, formerly owned by ConAgra, which was reopened in 2004 under the Premier Foods label and is now making meat rolls from chicken and other meats. As in other communities, the meat processing plant draw many of the Hispanic in-migrants to this mostly Anglo town.[9]

**What's Next?**

The influx of Hispanics has sometimes threatened the social order of many small towns. Whether local communities have embraced their newcomers is clearly revealed here in residential segregation, which are often very high and mean that rural Hispanics live in fairly distinct enclaves with little residential mixing with Anglos. Whether segregation levels will increase or decrease over the near term will depend on whether Hispanic newcomers experience upward socioeconomic mobility.  It will also depend on whether their aspirations for better housing and good neighborhoods are accommodated in their newly adopted hometowns.  The lesson from urban neighborhood studies is that a rapid influx of Hispanic in-migrants may elicit a demographic response, perhaps in the form of rural "white flight," or raise other social and economic concerns, such as changes in housing values or crime, that require dispassionate research.  Answers will depend in part on whether newcomers are embraced by their Anglo neighbors.

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Figure 1



**Segregation in Metro and Nonmetro Areas**
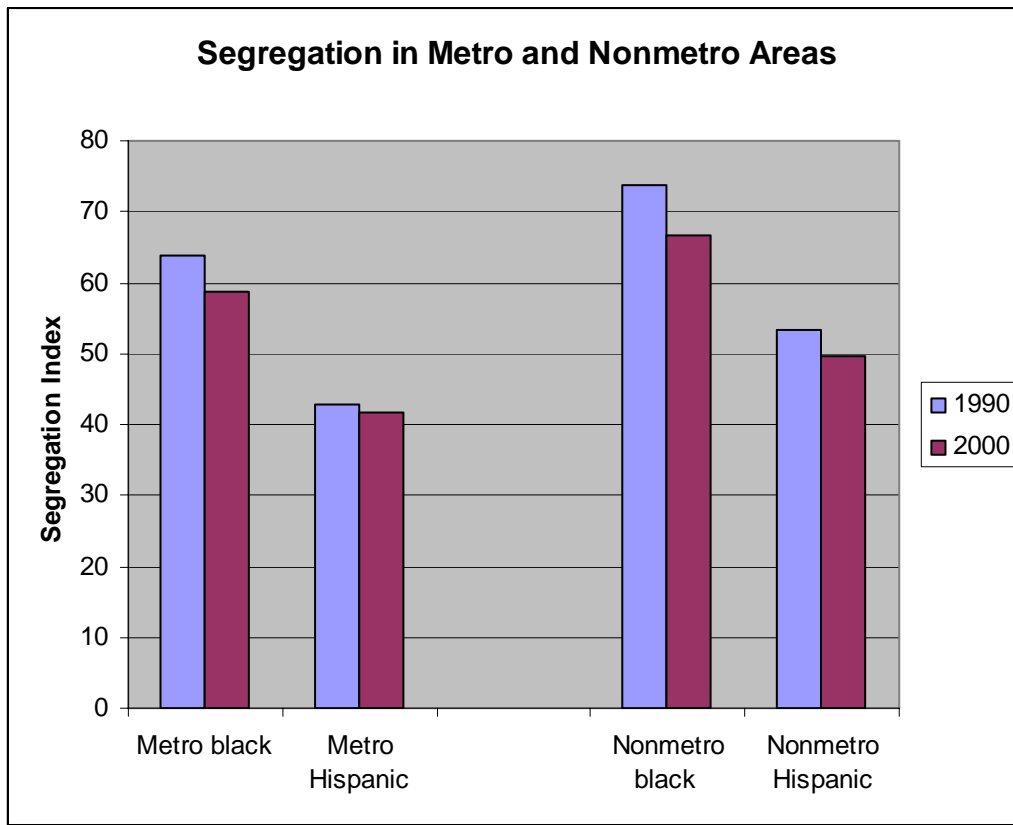
Note: The segregation index, or dissimilarity index, is a measure of segregation. A segregation index of 50 means that 50 percent of small-town Hispanics would have to move to other blocks in the community to achieve the same residential patterns as Anglos.

Table 1.  Top 20 Fastest Growing Nonmetro Hispanic Communities

| | Segregation Index | Hispanic Population | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Place** | **2000** | **1990** | **2000** | **Change** |
| 1. AR, Green Forest | 41.19 | 16 | 902 | 886 |
| 2. MS, Forest | 71.57 | 19 | 761 | 742 |
| 3. NC, Wallace | 76.65 | 19 | 608 | 589 |
| 4. AR, Waldron | 47.78 | 20 | 537 | 517 |
| 5. TN, Bells | 76.15 | 14 | 495 | 481 |
| 6. IA, Postville | 66.63 | 1 | 469 | 468 |
| 7. NC, North Wilkesboro | 64.67 | 9 | 464 | 455 |
| 8. NE, West Point | 74.60 | 6 | 440 | 434 |
| 9. TN, Monterey | 57.59 | 11 | 444 | 433 |
| 10. MO, Milan | 48.04 | 5 | 428 | 423 |
| 11. NC, Angier | 61.71 | 22 | 416 | 394 |
| 12. GA, Ellijay | 56.65 | 10 | 399 | 389 |
| 13. AL, Collinsville | 47.32 | 11 | 386 | 375 |
| 14. NC, Dobson | 66.51 | 24 | 376 | 352 |
| 15. SC, Hardeeville | 57.09 | 6 | 348 | 342 |
| 16. NC, St. Pauls | 64.40 | 14 | 315 | 301 |
| 17. GA, Trion | 60.58 | 7 | 264 | 257 |
| 18. NC, Cricket | 63.35 | 15 | 263 | 248 |
| 19. NE, Wakefield | 67.23 | 0 | 246 | 246 |
| 20. NC, Magnolia | 62.47 | 10 | 234 | 224 |

Note: The segregation index represents a measure of segregation that varies between 0 (no segregation) and 100 (complete segregation of Hispanics from Anglos).

Source: Estimates calculated by the authors using place and block data from the 1990 and 2000 Census Summary Files.

References

[1] See chapters in Víctor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León (eds.). 2005. *New Destinations of Mexican Immigration in the United States: Community Formation, Local Responses and Inter-Group Relations.* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. Also, Jensen, Leif. 2006. *New Immigrant Settlements in Rural America: Problems, Prospects and Policies.* Reports on America. Volume 1 (3). Durham, New Hampshire: Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire.

[2] Kenneth M. Johnson and Daniel T. Lichter. 2007. "Demographic Components of Population Change: Immigration and the Growing Hispanic Population in New Rural Destinations." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, Santa Clara, CA, August 4, 2007.

[3] Phyllis L. Baker and Douglas R. Hotek. 2003. "Perhaps a Blessing: Skills and Contributions of Recent Mexican Immigrants in the Rural Midwest." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25:448-468.

[4] David C. Griffith. 2005. "Rural Industry and Mexican Immigration and Settlement in North Carolina." Pp. 50-75 in V. Zúñiga and R. Hernández-León (eds.), *New Destinations of Mexican Immigration in the United States.* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

[5] Data from the 2000 decennial Census showed that a large share—nearly 60 percent—of the nonmetro Hispanic population lived in our nonmetro sample of places in 2000; our sample accounts for roughly 40 of the entire nonmetro Hispanic population.

[6] The index of dissimilarity is a measure of segregation. This index varies from 0, which indicates no segregation, to 100, which indicates that Hispanics and Anglos live in completely separate blocks or neighborhoods..

[7] If 20 percent of the community was Hispanic, then a completely unsegregated community would be one in which each block in the community would be 20 percent Hispanic.

[8] Lichter, Daniel T., Domenico Parisi, Steven M. Grice, and Michael C. Taquino. 2007. "National Estimates of Racial Segregation in Rural and Small-Town America." *Demography* 44:563-581.

[9] Kandel, William and Emilio Parrado. 2005. "Restructuring of the U.S. Meat Processing Industry and New Hispanic Migrant Destinations." *Population and Development Review* 31:447-471.