New Faces in New Places

The Changing Geography of American Immigration

Douglas S. Massey
Editor

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Dedicado a la memoria de los migrantes
muertos en la frontera
por el sueño de mejorar sus vidas

Dedicated to the memory of the migrants
killed on the border
for the dream of improving their lives

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CHAPTER 9

HISPANIC IMMIGRATION, BLACK POPULATION SIZE, AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS IN THE RURAL AND SMALL-TOWN SOUTH

HELEN B. MARROW

American immigration scholars are rapidly gaining interest in "new immigrant destinations"—locales that have little historical experience of post-1965 immigration but which are now receiving immigrants (Durand, Massey, and Charvet 2000; Massey, Durand, and Parrado 1999; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005). Implicit in this new interest is the assumption that "context matters." New immigrant destinations raise eyebrows because of the various ways, both objective and subjective, that geographic place and demographic context affect lives. The size and characteristics of cities, towns, and rural areas can be expected to influence how immigrants experience the United States and interact with local Americans; how local Americans react to new immigrants and receive them; and how existing institutional structures, cultures, and historical memories factor into the long-term incorporation of immigrants at the "new" destinations, versus "old" historical destinations in major cities.

The sheer range of new immigrant destinations sets the stage for comparative research on how new destination contexts matter to immigrant incorporation processes at various levels of analysis (Jones-Correa 2005, 88; Marrow 2005). Here, I use results from participant observation and in-depth interviews in a new destination area to examine how the size and relative status of the local African American population affects Hispanic newcomers' experiences of incorporation in the rural and small-town South.[1] What stands out most about the majority (but not all) of new immigrant destinations across the American South are their larger proportions of African Americans and their stronger "binary" conception of

race and racial hierarchy, compared to other places in the United States (see McClain et al. 2006). That is, the American South continues to be the home of a majority of the nation's African Americans, the urban South continues to be disproportionately black and white, and southern blacks still identify more cohesively as a racial group in census data (that is, identifying themselves as "blacks" alone) than do non-southern blacks. Moreover, recent demographic trends have reinforced the region's unique racial profile. The region witnessed greater in-migration of native whites and blacks than of nonwhites and nonblacks in the 1990s (Frey 2001, 2002; Greenbaum 1998; Kochhar, Suro, and Tafoya 2005; McClain et al. 2003; Stack 1996). In this way, the pattern noted by some, whereby "recent immigrants have tended to concentrate in cities in the Southwest and in coastal cities that contain relatively smaller numbers of African Americans but relatively larger numbers of Hispanics" (Bean, Van Hook, and Fossett 1999, 34) is reversed: for now, native African American populations in many southern locales outnumber new immigrant populations (Schmidley 2003).

The American South thus provides a unique opportunity to examine the effects of Hispanic newcomers and African Americans on each other in places where the African American community is proportionately large and cohesively identified, and where Hispanic populations are newer, less established, and not as large as they are in traditional immigrant-receiving states and cities. In fact, when we hear that immigrants are now settling in the South, it is precisely the region's higher proportions of African Americans and historical memory and current lived reality of black-white tension that piques our concern about how newcomers will fare, get along with local residents, and affect local residents' relative standings in the social hierarchy.

Black-Hispanic Relations in the South

Generally speaking, the existing literature on immigrant incorporation and intergroup relations in the United States documents serious black-Hispanic tensions. Even in national-level public opinion data, black-Hispanic relations are viewed as more negative than others, including white-Hispanic ones. For example, "In another Gallup poll in 2004, almost three quarters of Americans agreed that relations between whites and blacks, and between whites and Hispanics, are 'very' or 'somewhat' good. They judged white-Asian relations to be a little better and black-Hispanic relations to be a little worse" (Hochschild 2007, 165).

Three basic theoretical models attempt to account for more negative black-Hispanic compared to white-Hispanic relations by focusing on black-Hispanic competition for economic and political local resources: two economic interest models (personal and group) and the sociological group position model.[2] Keeping these three models in mind, how might the higher proportions of African Americans in the South affect black-Hispanic relations as compared to the situation in other regions and major immigrant-receiving cities? Here, I review two contrasting hypotheses, which I then utilize to guide my analysis of how and why black-Hispanic relations vary across two rural southern counties with different proportions of African Americans.

The first hypothesis is that higher proportions of African Americans in the South will smooth black-Hispanic tensions compared to what often occurs elsewhere. The argument here is that the higher proportions of African Americans in the South may reduce African Americans' feelings of being threatened because of the effect of their own "strength in numbers." That is, higher proportions of African Americans may serve as a shield to feelings of individual-level or group-level socioeconomic or political threat from Hispanic newcomers, potentially smoothing black-Hispanic relations.

More generally, according to this "strength-in-numbers" line of reasoning, higher proportions of African Americans in the South may translate into more opportunities for black-Hispanic contact and, consequently, cooperation and coalition building than would be the case in places with smaller African American populations. In particular, the large number of progressive organizations in the region, which have grown out of the civil rights movement, may help smooth black-Hispanic relations by engaging in proactive coalition building strategies (Smith 2003, 30). Perhaps the more numerous these organizations and the larger the populations of African American constituents they reach, the more progress toward smoothing black-Hispanic relations in the South we will see.

A contrasting hypothesis is that higher proportions of African Americans in the South will exacerbate black-Hispanic tensions. Although it is the case that higher proportions of African Americans in the South may produce more opportunities for black-Hispanic contact and, consequently, cooperation and coalition-building than they would in places with smaller African American populations, it is also the case that they may produce more opportunities for black-Hispanic competition and conflict, as greater numbers of African Americans begin to see themselves in either individual or group-level competition with Hispanic newcomers. Together, these hypotheses represent two directions black-Hispanic relations might go in a heavily African American region of the country, as would be loosely predicted by contact theory.

One ongoing research project, directed by Paula McClain in Durham, North Carolina, offers some preliminary evidence in favor of the second hypothesis—that higher proportions of African Americans in the South are likely to exacerbate rather than smooth negative black-Hispanic relations in comparison to other places. In the year 2000, African Americans constituted almost half of Durham's population: 46 percent of Durham's population identified as white, 44 percent as black, 0.3 percent as Native American, 4 percent as Asian, 5 percent as "other race," and 9 percent as Hispanic or Latino of any race. Durham also has a long-established history of biracial politics and has historically had a very prosperous upper and upper middle class black community (McClain et al. 2003, 19).

Using survey data of 500 residents and twenty-two interviews with elite leaders in Durham, McClain and colleagues found that "relations between the older established black community and the new Latino immigrants are strained and stem from a dislike of each other," and that "the fact that these strains exist at this early stage does not bode well for future social and political relations in Durham" (McClain et al. 2003, 42–43). McClain and colleagues uncovered several disturbing findings: that "Latino immigrants do indeed feel that they have more in common with whites than with blacks," that "contact between blacks and Latinos seems to increase the probabilities that Latino immigrants will see a difference between themselves and blacks," that while "blacks are divided on whether Latinos are taking jobs from blacks, close to two-thirds feel that if Latino immigration continues at its present rate, black economic opportunity will be threatened," that "while an overwhelming majority of Durham blacks believe that Latinos have too little political influence in life and politics, almost half believe that if Latino immigration continues at the present rate blacks will lose political power and influence," and finally, that "blacks are more likely [than whites] to see their political power threatened" (41–42). In a later publication, McClain and colleagues (2006) reconfirm that Latino immigrants hold very stereotypical views of blacks (even more so than whites do), and that contact specifically in neighborhood settings intensifies blacks' and Latinos' stereotypes of each other as well as Latinos' likelihood of feeling they have more in common with whites than with blacks.

Overview of Findings

My research findings show that the proportion of African Americans at the local county level does indeed affect Hispanics' incorporation experiences in the rural and small-town American South, but that it does not affect them uniformly. Rather, it affects incorporation differently in the socioeconomic

and political arenas. In the socioeconomic arena, I will show that the higher proportion of African Americans in majority-black Bedford County compared to majority-white Wilcox County (both pseudonyms for the two counties in North Carolina where I conducted my research) exacerbates black-Hispanic tensions by elevating African Americans' sense of individual- and group-level threat. In contrast, in the local political arena, I will show that the higher proportion of African Americans in majority-black Bedford County compared to majority-white Wilcox County smoothes black-Hispanic tensions by protecting African Americans from feelings of threat, at least initially.

On the one hand this reflects the fact that Hispanic newcomers in both counties currently wield more economic than political power. Although most work, many are undocumented labor migrants and thus are automatically excluded from participating in electoral politics, and others are recent immigrants still learning the ropes of the American political system. In fact, Hispanic respondents, such as Lidia, an immigrant from Oaxaca, Mexico, living in Wilcox County, readily acknowledge their lack of political power in the area, frequently contrasting it with their ability to "work hard" (economic power):

> Lidia: I think the needs of blacks compared with the needs of Latinos are very different. In first place, blacks are [American] citizens. They can express all their rights. And in contrast, Latinos aren't citizens. And they can't ask politicians for special attention. All they can do is . . . their economic impact, that is the only source of strength that Latin Americans have in this country. Latinos are not public charges. They are hardworking people who come here to fight for a better well-being for their families. And I think that for that aspect, the politicians should pay them a little more attention.

In both counties, then, Hispanic newcomers' presence is not as immediately threatening to blacks' political positions as it is to blacks' socioeconomic positions.

On the other hand, I argue that this also reflects how African Americans' "strength in numbers" and progress have been accrued primarily in the political, not the economic, arena since the civil rights movement, especially in the rural South, where the black middle class is weak. African Americans in both counties thus enjoy a significant "competitive edge in the public and political arena" (Morawska 2001, 61) that they do not necessarily enjoy in the low-wage private sector, where Hispanic newcomers pose a greater threat to their socioeconomic positions. I will show that this is especially

the case in majority-black Bedford County, where the high proportion of African Americans creates a greater degree of political security than exists in Wilcox County; this protects them from an immediate sense of political threat in a way that it does not do in the socioeconomic arena.

In other words, I show that black-Hispanic tensions in the rural and small-town South are indeed structured by demographic context (the size of the local African American community) but also by institutional arena of incorporation (where African Americans and Hispanic newcomers hold and exert most of their power). Together, these findings strengthen the call to pay more attention to both demographic context and institutional arena of incorporation in research on immigrant incorporation and intergroup relations (Jones-Correa 2005, 88), including in new immigrant destinations.

Site Selection

I selected two "new" rural southern immigrant destination counties in the state of North Carolina (called here Bedford and Wilcox Counties) for three reasons. First, according to the designations used in the 2000 United States Census, North Carolina experienced the highest rates of growth in its "Hispanic/Latino" (394 percent) and "immigrant" (274 percent) populations out of all states during the 1990s (McClain et al. 2006, 576; Mohl 2003, 38; Suro and Singer 2002). Second, the national economic downturn of the early 2000s was manifested as significant downsizing and restructuring in four major areas that, when viewed together, negatively affected North Carolinians as much as residents of any other state, owing to North Carolina's particular industrial mix: tobacco (agricultural restructuring), textiles (blue collar restructuring), telecommunications (white collar restructuring), and antiterrorism companies (general restructuring).[3] Finally, to compare two counties at the local level we need to hold some higher-level factors constant; here, state-level economic conditions and opportunities and state-level attitudes toward immigration are held constant.

These two counties are similar in other regards. Both counties are nonmetropolitan as well as southern, and both are located in the same generally impoverished rural eastern region of North Carolina.[4] United States census data for 2000 show that both counties' populations are more heavily engaged in agriculture and transformative industries such as construction and manufacturing, and less engaged in professional, financial, and arts services and activities than either the total national or total North Carolina state populations. Moreover, both counties' populations are less well educated, earn less income, post higher unemployment rates, and are more heavily represented below the poverty line than either the national or state averages for these

indicators. In fact, their unemployment rates were at least twice that of the national rate before the onset of the recession of the early 2000s, their individual poverty rates are just under 20 percent each, and Bedford County only left its "persistent poverty status" in the 1990s (Miller and Weber 2004).

Together, these characteristics mean that even though North Carolina has historically been considered more progressive than other southern states (Key, Jr. 1949/1984, 205), its rural eastern region resembles the rest of the Deep South more than do its central Piedmont or western mountain regions (215). And within North Carolina, the greatest growth in the Hispanic population has occurred along the I-85 corridor in the central Piedmont region (near the major metropolitan areas experiencing rapid population and economic growth) and near major military bases (Kochhar, Suro, and Tafoya 2005, 20; Johnson, Jr., Johnson-Webb, and Farrell 1999). Hispanics and immigrants have settled in small towns and rural areas throughout the state, but they are fewer in number and have received much less academic or policy attention to date for that reason, as well as for the relative lack of resources in small towns and rural areas compared to their metropolitan counterparts. Thus, the choice of these two counties reflects my interest in the increasing geographic dispersion of immigration outside of metropolitan areas as well as outside of traditional immigrant-receiving regions and states (see also Kandel and Parrado 2004; Saenz and Torres 2003).

Despite their overall similarities, there are important differences in the local economic and social receiving contexts of these two counties that fall along four general dimensions:

- The nature and operation of their primary immigrant-receiving economies
- Their rates of population growth over the 1990s
- The absolute and relative proportions of their "Hispanic/Latino" and "immigrant" populations
- The demographic relationship of their "Hispanic/Latino" populations to their African American populations

On the one hand, Wilcox County posted a 23 percent increase in its population over the 1990s, which is slightly higher than the population increase for all of North Carolina and well above the 13 percent national increase. Much of the population increase here is tied to immigration, especially in the county's large agricultural sector and booming poultry- and hog-processing sectors, which withstood the recession of the early

2000s relatively well. Consequently, in Wilcox County the proportion of "Hispanics/Latinos" and "other race" persons identified in the 2000 United States census is very high—15 percent and 11 percent, respectively—at least compared to the North Carolina state averages of 5 percent and 2 percent. Finally, in Wilcox County, the proportion of Hispanics (15 percent) is approximately half of the African American population (29 percent).

On the other hand, Bedford County was one of only three counties in North Carolina to lose population over the 1990s—and according to one local county commissioner, the only county in the state to lose population over both the 1980s and 1990s. This loss was partly due to a devastating flood in the fall of 1999, but even more so to the cumulative negative impact of job losses and industry relocations in both its white collar telecommunications and blue collar textile and manufacturing industries over the 1980s and 1990s. Consequently, while immigration has been occurring in Bedford County, primarily in the agricultural and "transformative" (manufacturing and construction) sectors, the proportions of Bedford County's "Hispanic/Latino" and "other race" populations in 2000 are low—3 percent and 2 percent, respectively—even by North Carolina state standards and certainly by national standards. Furthermore, these proportions remain far lower than the very high proportion of African Americans in this majority-black county (58 percent). In fact, today Bedford County ranks fourth in the state of North Carolina in the proportionate size of its African American population, and it is a historical center of North Carolina's section of the southern "black belt" (Key, Jr. 1949/1984).

Overall, these county-level demographic differences between Bedford and Wilcox Counties serve as a proxy for two distinct local social, racial, and economic contexts in the rural South that new immigrants are entering today, even though the two counties lie in the same generally impoverished eastern region of North Carolina and have African American population proportions high enough to be characteristic of the racially divided rural American South (Reed 1993, 7–8):

> [In 1920] a band of rural counties with substantial black populations . . . traced the area of cotton cultivation and plantation agriculture, in a long arc from southeastern Virginia down and across to eastern Texas, with arms north and south along the Mississippi River. This is the Deep South—what a geographer would call the "core area" of the region defined by its staple-crop economy. . . . Two out of three Southerners are now urban folk, and most rural Southerners work in industry anyway, but the fossil remains of this old South can still be found as concentrations of poor, rural black Southerners.

Most specifically, these county-level differences provide a valuable opportunity to analyze and compare Hispanics' experiences and intergroup relations in the context of stagnating or declining low-wage industries, such as tobacco agriculture and routine manufacturing and textiles, with their experiences in the context of expanding low-wage industries, such as food processing, and in a majority-black county versus a majority-white county. In this chapter, I focus on the latter.

For ease and consistency, all pseudonyms for geographic places in majority-black Bedford County will begin with the letter *B*, and all pseudonyms for geographic places near majority-black Bedford County will begin with letters close to *B* (roughly, *A* through *E*). Likewise, all pseudonyms for geographic places in majority-white Wilcox County will begin with the letter *W*, and all pseudonyms for geographic places near majority-white Wilcox County will begin with letters close to *W* (roughly, *U* through *Z*).

Methods

Data and results come from ethnographic research and 129 individual semi-structured interviews conducted by the author from June 2003 to June 2004 in Bedford and Wilcox Counties, North Carolina. Slightly over half of the 129 interviews (70, or 54 percent) were conducted with Latin American immigrants of varying nationalities, in either Spanish or English. These foreign-born respondents hail primarily from Mexico (39), but also from South America (16), Central America (14), and Cuba (1). Approximately one seventh of the interviews (18, or 14 percent) were conducted with American-born Hispanics, in either Spanish or English.[5] These native-born Hispanic respondents are from New York (6), Puerto Rico (6), Texas (3), Florida (2), and "other states" (3); none were from California.[6] And approximately one third of the interviews (41, or 32 percent) were conducted with "key native-born informants," in English. These native-born respondents are both white (27) and black (14).

Interview respondents were located by combining theoretical sampling and snowball sampling designs. In the broader project, individual interviews were spread across four arenas:

1. Local workplaces (economic arena)
2. Local elementary school systems (sociocultural arena)
3. Local courts and law enforcement systems (sociocultural arena)
4. Local politics (political arena)

In order to analyze differences in incorporation processes across institutional boundaries, I first employed a theoretical sampling design to generate categories of interview respondents in each of these arenas based on the probability that these types of individuals might have unique and theoretically informative experiences regarding important issues I wanted to examine. My methodology was similar in each of the arenas, such that interview respondents in the project would ultimately include lower-status Hispanic workers as well as some native- and foreign-born line managers and supervisors and salaried employees in workplaces; Hispanic school officials, former students, or parents of Hispanic children in school as well as some native-born school officials familiar with educational issues affecting the local Hispanic population; Hispanic personnel in local courts or law enforcement agencies as well as some native-born legal personnel familiar with legal issues affecting the local Hispanic community; and established or emerging Hispanic political leaders and some native-born political leaders in local and state politics.

To locate these interview subjects, I drew on existing social networks to contact the employers of the three workplace settings that I wanted to study—a tobacco farm and a textile mill in Bedford County and a large poultry processing plant in Wilcox County[7]—as well as several local politicians and service providers who I thought or had heard would be familiar with each county's Hispanic populations. Through these initial contacts, I met various Hispanic "key informants" who in turn helped me locate other Hispanic interview respondents through an informal snowball sampling design over the course of the year.

Interviews lasted from thirty minutes to three hours (most lasted for one and a half to two hours), and respondents were asked a battery of questions regarding their migration history, family background, racial and ethnic-group identification, employment history, opinions and views about race and immigration, opinions and views about other racial and ethnic groups, opinions and views about southern history and culture, and electoral or nonelectoral political participation. Employers, school personnel, legal personnel, and political leaders were asked additional questions about their experiences with Hispanics and their views on the local Hispanic community. All interview subjects were offered ten dollars in cash in return for an individual interview; I donated all inducements turned down by interview subjects to an organization or charity of their choice or to the two emergent Hispanic associations that allowed me to attend and observe their meetings and other activities.

Finally, I supplemented all of these interviews with additional activities:

- Making observations in the three workplace settings.
- Attending some local school board meetings, PTA meetings at elementary schools, and traffic courts (as well as monitoring published county commissioner meeting agendas) in each county.
- Reviewing local newspaper archives for reference to Hispanics or immigration in each county.
- Attending emergent Hispanic association meetings as well as groups formed by local American politicians and service providers to assess Hispanics' needs in each county; in a few circumstances, I also examined these local leaders' connections to Hispanic political groups and initiatives at the state level.

After my field work was completed, I coded all interview material using Atlas.ti, a software program that allows for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, audio, and video data. To ensure the anonymity of my interview subjects, all names were changed, and I have also altered identifying information (such as interview subjects' sex, states and countries of birth, years of arrival in the United States, migration trajectories, occupations and departments of work, and so forth), so that any resemblance to actual persons is coincidental.

Negative Black-Hispanic Socioeconomic Relations

Most broadly, my research findings confirm that in the socioeconomic arena, Hispanics' characterizations of African Americans and the dynamics of black-Hispanic conflict in these two counties closely resemble those already found in the immigrant incorporation and intergroup relations literatures elsewhere in the United States. Despite reflecting the complex and often contradictory array of patterns of intergroup relations that have been located and discussed in the literature (Bobo and Johnson 2000, 81; Hochschild 2007)—including internal ambivalence on the part of many interview respondents (Hochschild 1981, chapter 8)[8]—the predominant patterns that emerge from my research in both of these counties are as follows:

- Hispanics view whites as being of "higher status" than African Americans, on the basis of whites' higher levels of education, and cultural factors in general.
- Hispanics note better white-Hispanic than black-Hispanic relations.

- But most Hispanics are careful to point out that there are often positive and negative relations with both whites and blacks, usually conditioned by class status (see also Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2005; Leitner 2003; Rich and Miranda 2005, 201–6).

Thus, the intersection of race and class helps explain Hispanics' perceptions of better white-Hispanic than black-Hispanic relations in eastern North Carolina. In both counties, blacks are socioeconomically disadvantaged relative to whites at both the individual and group levels, and consequently, blacks are perceived as being more likely than whites to feel as though they are being (or will be) displaced or "leapfrogged" by Hispanic newcomers, and reacting more negatively to newcomers in return.[9]

I will illustrate a brief example of each pattern. First, Pilar, an immigrant from Lima, Peru, living in Bedford County, draws on her personal postmigration experiences to make the observation that blacks are less educated and motivated (in other words, "lower status") than whites in rural eastern North Carolina today:

> Pilar: At my job, you see? I've seen that. There aren't any blacks in the offices. They are all whites. All of them. There is not even one black in the offices. And obviously it's because of their education. The majority of whites in the offices are engineers or they are people who—in contrast, on the other side of the plant, they are all blacks. There are almost no whites. I mean, I've never counted but the majority of them are blacks. And so, whites are people who want to move forward, out of the place where they're from—that's the idea I get, right? Because, just by looking. Not because I've talked with them, but by looking. The whites always want to move forward and make something of themselves. Blacks, getting a job and earning enough, that's sufficient and they stay there. That's the idea that I get. Well, because I don't see anyone in an office who's black, that's probably why. Because they haven't studied, so they stay where they are. They are operators, they implement—they are manual laborers, right?

Second, Álvaro, an immigrant from Coahuila, Mexico, living in Bedford County, describes local white-Hispanic relations as better than black-Hispanic ones:

> Interviewer: In general, how would you characterize the interactions and the relationships here between Hispanics or immigrants and American whites?

> Álvaro: I would say that fifty percent of whites, they have a good attitude to the Hispanics. But the other fifty percent, that's where I would say that it's a bad attitude to the Hispanics. It's like everybody says, there are bad apples and good apples. But at least to me, it's a kind of half and half. I see more white people, Caucasians, doing or trying to do, positive things to the Hispanic community versus the African American people. With a better attitude, with a better approach. They are being more kind. But on the other hand, you know, the bad fifty percent—they really don't care. They're always trying to avoid you, do not talk with you, don't help. . . . Thinking that we are stealing jobs, that we are the kind of people just for cleaning or the workforce. That we don't deserve to be a part of the community. That's the other fifty percent, that's my conception.
>
> Interviewer: How would you describe the relationship between Hispanics or immigrants and American blacks here?
>
> Álvaro: I can't say good. Because my opinion is that a big part of the African American population, they really don't accept the Hispanic community. We are intruders. Just a small part, one probably quarter of the population—they are the ones who realize or can see us as allies.
>
> Interviewer: But you say only about twenty-five percent?
>
> Álvaro: Right.

Third, Alicia, an immigrant from Santiago, Chile, living in Bedford County, shows how class can mediate both white-Hispanic and black-Hispanic relations in rural eastern North Carolina, such that a less favorable class distribution among local blacks (as compared to local whites) contributes to more negative black-Hispanic than white-Hispanic relations overall:

> Interviewer: Have you ever been discriminated against for being Hispanic or being an immigrant in this country?
>
> Alicia: Yes, I think everyone feels it.
>
> Interviewer: Can you give me an example of this?
>
> Alicia: At the post office. I go to the post office every day. I get the mail every day. And there are a lot of African Americans. [*Whispers quietly.*] And they are, well, fairly aggressive, vulgar. I mean, it's very difficult to say if it's because I'm Hispanic or just because they don't like me. It's very difficult. But because I'm Hispanic, I see it from that point of view. Do you understand? And sometimes here in the office, there are people I know who don't like Hispanics. And I get a feeling

> from them . . . how would I explain it you? Very cold. And so they think that I am a person who, that Hispanics are people who are worth less. But I also have a conception of them . . . how would I explain it to you? The fact that someone can't treat me or anyone else well, or is vulgar. I think we have to make those people understand that we are not strangers to them. We have to give them the possibility of some time to get to know us.
>
> Interviewer: Does this happen more with white Americans or black Americans?
>
> Alicia: More with black Americans.
>
> Interviewer: How come?
>
> Alicia: Well, and like, with the white people that here you call "rednecks." It's social class that accounts for it.[10]

These more positive depictions of white-Hispanic than black-Hispanic socioeconomic relations, frequently mediated by class status, do not only hold in Wilcox County. They also mirror those found at the aggregate national level and in major immigrant-receiving cities, and they have even been noted in other studies of immigration in both the rural (Griffith 2005, 66; Studstill and Neito-Studstill 2001, 75–81) and urban South (McClain et al. 2003; Rich and Miranda 2005, 201–6). They demonstrate how Hispanic respondents in eastern North Carolina tend to locate the source of black-Hispanic tensions in elements of both individual- and group-level socioeconomic competition. On an individual level, the broad socioeconomic differences between whites and blacks in these two counties (regardless of their causes) mean that blacks are disproportionately underrepresented as both employers and skilled workers. Consequently, many whites and Hispanics have incentives to relate to one another in a complementary rather than competitive way (for example, when a white employer wants to hire more workers), while many blacks and Hispanics have incentives to relate in a competitive rather than complementary way (for example, when they vie to obtain jobs in a region where employers are predominantly white).

A Mexican immigrant expresses this in less technical terms when he reports that he "has not yet met a single Latin who works for a black man" (Studstill and Neito-Studstill 2001, 78). Eduardo, an immigrant from Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, living in Wilcox Country, describes poor relations between black and Hispanic line workers in Poultry Processing Plant, Inc., which he ascribes to blacks' perceptions of direct and indirect economic competition, compared to better (but still self-interested) reactions by higher-status white employers and managers to Hispanic line workers:

> Eduardo: The white American race likes Hispanics a lot. And the black race does not like Hispanics very much.
>
> Interviewer: Why not?
>
> Eduardo: Because they think that we are taking away their jobs.
>
> Interviewer: And how come?
>
> Eduardo: Because they say that because of us, they earn less. And the white American race likes us because we do the work like they want.
>
> Interviewer: So white Americans like Hispanics to do those jobs? And the African Americans are scared that Hispanics are going to do their jobs, or are going to take away their jobs?
>
> Eduardo: Or like, well, they don't like that because of us, [whites] don't raise their wages.
>
> Interviewer: So you think that the majority of Hispanics have better relations with American whites than with American blacks?
>
> Eduardo: Yes, because they have more communication because whites say, "Do you think that you can do this job?" And so we tell them, "Yes." And blacks say, "No, it's very hard." So because of that, at work white Americans always talk with Hispanics, if it is possible for them to do the work. And Hispanics will, because we like to work. They give us things, and Hispanics are going to do that work. And I think that white Americans always talk to Hispanics.

Furthermore, even when not singling out specific instances of individual-level socioeconomic competition, Hispanic respondents in these two counties already perceive that blacks are more likely than whites to perceive them as a socioeconomic threat to their group as a whole. Significantly, their perceptions are shared by many key native respondents, including both blacks and whites. For example, Don, a white Bedford County commissioner, muses:

> Don: Oddly, I think there would probably be more tension between blacks and Spanish immigrants than white and Spanish immigrants. And it's just a perception. I tend to feel like many blacks feel like that the immigrants are taking their jobs.

Tyrone and Quincy, two African American truck-tractor drivers at Tobacco Farm, Inc., in Bedford County, go further to illustrate an acute group-level sense of African Americans' declining socioeconomic worth

and power relative to Hispanic newcomers, even though they themselves have not been displaced from their jobs. (Notice how they respond to questions about African Americans and Hispanics' local political power with descriptions of socioeconomic power instead):

> Interviewer: Do you feel that African Americans have sufficient political power in your area?
>
> Tyrone: Ah, we ain't got no power left! [*Both men laugh.*] Blacks ain't got no power left. We just make it by. Especially on this farm anyhow, we just make it. Like I said, like I said you know, it's all about the white person here. Whites going to take over this farm here. The black ain't gonna have no chance over here. The white and the Mexican. They going to take over, 'cause it's hard on the black on the farm, like I said.
>
> Interviewer: And what about Hispanics? Do you feel that Hispanics or immigrants have sufficient political power?
>
> Quincy: They doin' all right [economically]. From what I seen, doin' all right.
>
> Tyrone: After a while we get enough Spanish down here, they gonna run the white out! [*Laughs.*] I really believe that. They gonna run the white out. They get enough of 'em over here, they gonna try to run 'em out. After a while this place might end up turnin' to Mexico. Gonna have 'em all down, family and all of 'em. But they good people, but they come down every year, you know, come down every year and work and get dream cars and stuff.

Such interpretations are compounded by Hispanic respondents' attempts to explain their better relations with (and reactions from) whites than African Americans by focusing not only on perceived job competition between Hispanics and African Americans at the lower end of the class spectrum but also on the social tensions spurred by demographic change in neighborhoods and schools and the feeling that blacks are being displaced by new Hispanics in a larger social as well as economic sense (see also Dunn, Aragonés, and Shivers 2005, 176; Rich and Miranda 2005, 205). That is, one significant finding from my research is that black-Hispanic tensions are most tense outside the workplace, specifically in several neighborhoods and trailer parks, where Hispanics now reside in locales previously occupied by African Americans, and in local public schools, especially middle schools. Even in several elementary schools, some Hispanic students are making such rapid academic progress that local teachers and administrators are

beginning to wonder why African American students—their historical minority group—are not keeping pace. Bedford Elementary School Vice Principal Randy White describes a strong degree of resentment among African American teachers and administrators in response to feelings that African Americans students are being displaced or "leapfrogged" in terms of educational progress:

> Randy White: We are aware that a number of our Hispanic children do well on their course work, as well as their end-of-grade tests. Only in conversations with black colleagues and community members, they're feeling . . . I'm not sure what the feeling is. They're feeling threatened. They're feeling some anger. Resentment. But I don't know that they themselves can put their finger on why. I don't know that they have really thought through and analyzed. But they do know these people who they consider as foreigners have come in, and are now being successful in their school system, where a lot of their people are not being as successful. So there is a resentment there. I mean, you know, you can look at our test scores, and we can point out where some of our Hispanic children have been and where they are now, and how they are becoming more and more successful.

In sum, black-Hispanic socioeconomic tensions are already a serious concern in eastern North Carolina today. At a local milling company where I almost conducted some of my workplace interviews, several employers and employees laughed at me when I told them I was interested in investigating relations between African Americans and Hispanics there to see what kinds of tensions or forms of cooperation existed between the two groups. They reported that there was "nothing but bad blood" between the two groups and suggested that "investigating part of the issue of Hispanics becoming the more prominent minority group [over blacks] might be interesting for me to do" instead.[11] This illustrates how, in both Bedford and Wilcox Counties, respondents explain black-Hispanic tensions by pointing not only to African Americans' objective conditions of economic deprivation or disempowerment but also to African Americans' "low or diminishing socioeconomic status" vis-à-vis Hispanic newcomers and to their "historically and collectively developed judgments about the positions in the social order" that African Americans should rightfully occupy above Hispanic newcomers. This lends greatest support to the group position model's explanation of black-Hispanic tensions (Bobo and Hutchings 1996, 955; Morawska 2001, 49).

Perhaps the clearest example of this threat to African Americans' current socioeconomic standing can been seen in a question posed by an African American businesswoman to Alexandria County Democratic congressional candidates in Archer Bluff: "she asked directly—even bluntly—what black constituents could expect for their votes from the candidates as a quid pro quo, in terms of economic development, reparations for slavery, and the effect of Latino immigration on the standard of living for blacks in the district" (*Archer Bluff Times* [a pseudonym], June 13, 2004). As she makes clear, many African American residents of Bedford and Alexandria Counties are concerned about their "declining standard of living," and some even draw a connection between new Hispanic immigration and stagnation in African Americans' larger struggle for socioeconomic justice.

Black Population Size and Socioeconomic Threat

I found that black-Hispanic socioeconomic relations were more negative in Bedford County, which is majority black, than in Wilcox County, which is majority white. Not only were reports of black-Hispanic tensions stronger and more prevalent in Bedford County than in Wilcox County, but also, as mentioned earlier, they are disconcerting in the arenas where they are cited most frequently—lower-class neighborhoods (mostly local trailer parks) and public elementary schools (mostly middle schools). For example, although several white and Hispanic respondents in both counties expressed common negative stereotypes of African Americans as lazy, violent, nonworking, or welfare recipients, I was able to locate few descriptions of black-Hispanic tensions in Wilcox County that could mirror those that I heard in Bedford County. Most reports in Wilcox County were more neutral than in Bedford County, such as in the following response by Josefa, an immigrant from San Salvador, El Salvador:

> Interviewer: In general, how would you describe the relations between Hispanics and American whites?
>
> Josefa: Well, at work we have a daily relationship. When we're not at work, we go to the stores, or we meet someone and we say hello.
>
> Interviewer: In general, how would you describe the relations between Hispanics and American blacks?
>
> Josefa: There isn't any problem between the two races.
>
> Interviewer: Do you think that having more Hispanics or immigrants here affects the way blacks think about their race—about what it means to be black here?
>
> Josefa: I think right now it doesn't have anything to do with that. Probably maybe a long time ago, in the time of slavery. But right now, I don't think there is any problem.

Even though some teachers and administrators in Wilcox County share concerns about the balance between Hispanic and black students' educational progress at the elementary school level, those concerns were less heated than those in Bedford County during the time of my research.

To probe this difference further, I began asking Wilcox County respondents who did not note much black-Hispanic conflict in the heavily white and Mexican eastern part of the county or in Weakley Elementary School, which is predominantly white and Hispanic, whether they knew or had heard of any such conflict either in the heavily African American and Honduran western part of the county or in schools other than Weakley Elementary, where more African American students are enrolled. But still, nothing came close to the negative reports voiced in Bedford County. For example, even Jaime Wilson, a North Carolina–born Hispanic who identifies himself as "American of Spanish origin, Hispanic Caucasian," told me that his eldest daughter had not experienced any conflict with African American students at her predominantly black local high school, even though he had been prepared to confront that when she first enrolled there:

> Jaime Wilson: My oldest [daughter] is seventeen. She'll be going to Governor's School this year. She turned down the N.C. School of Math and Science because she did not want to leave her high school. She enjoyed it so much there.
>
> Interviewer: Which school is that?
>
> Jaime Wilson: Wilcox High School. She loves it there. It's supposed to be one of the worst high schools in the county as far as blacks and racism and gangs, but she's the drum major. She's on soccer, she's on volleyball, she's on every committee that comes through there. She loves it. And her lowest grade that she's ever brought home was a 94.

Similarly, Eva, an immigrant from Buenos Aires, Argentina, who taught at Wright Elementary School and Wilcox High School before coming to Weakley Elementary, agreed that "it is very different on the other side of Wilcox County," where there are many more African Americans and the towns are generally a lot poorer than they are near Weakley Elementary on the northern side of the county. But even at those

two schools, which have more African American students than Weakley Elementary, she reports that most conflict "was more between the immigrants, even there," not between African Americans and Hispanics.

These more neutral depictions of black-Hispanic relations in Wilcox County contrast starkly with decidedly negative reports in Bedford County, including African American students harassing and picking on Hispanic students in local middle and high schools and on school buses, "diversity" problems concerning African American schoolteachers not treating their Hispanic students or coworkers well, serious problems concerning robberies committed against Hispanics by African Americans in local trailer parks—to the point where one Hispanic interview respondent told me he had contacted a local Bedford police officer and the Bedford County sheriff about starting a community watch program for Hispanic residents of one local trailer park[12]—and accusations that local African American community groups are not being 100 percent forthright in their efforts to reach out to Hispanics when and where such efforts are made. There are too many of these negative reports to present here; two will illustrate the seriousness of black-Hispanic tensions in majority-black Bedford County today.

Anita, an immigrant from Michoacán, Mexico, is characteristic of Hispanic respondents who perceive that they or their children are more discriminated against by blacks than by whites:[13]

> Anita: Right, because there's another case, too, with my oldest daughter. When she goes to Bedford Middle School, she wears her gold necklace there. She said that some of the black students pick on her a lot, and they even tried to grab her necklace to try and take it off her. And she spent a couple of days scared. And her father told her, "Just ignore them, because if they go to school and don't show respect for other people, well, you can't do anything about it. And sometimes it's not worth worrying about it, if they can't hold themselves back. But if they demand it from you, then there will be problems." And honestly that's what you have to do.
>
> Interviewer: And how do we find a solution for this conflict between blacks and Hispanics?
>
> Anita: Well, it's difficult because you're always thinking about them. Whenever the children go to school—well, in my cases it's daughters because they're all girls—but I'm always hoping that they leave and come home okay. Because with those [black] boys you never know what can happen. That's how you try to protect them like that. When it's time for my daughter to come home and she isn't home, and it's almost time for her to come home and she hasn't come home, you worry. It's not because you want something to happen, but it's because you are conscious that the blacks are people who sometimes even among themselves, they don't hold themselves back or don't think about what they are going to do.

Elisa is an immigrant from Tamaulipas, Mexico, who works as a migrant education program recruiter and parent facilitator in the Bedford County public school system. In her interview, Elisa expressed frustrations with several African American coworkers, who she feels have not adequately supported her either on an individual level, in her occupational missions to provide support to Hispanic students who are experiencing problems in school or to collect donations to give to needy Hispanic migrant workers in the area, or on a group level, in terms of including Hispanics as equal partners in planned community events:

> Elisa: Well, I kind of feel that the black people don't want Hispanics here. I don't mean that bad, but I don't think that they really care for them to be around. And you know, sometimes I got that feeling of, like, "Why are you here?" And also, once I was invited to come speak at a gathering that they were holding. They wanted the black and the Hispanic communities to be there. But I don't know, I guess they had canceled the gathering at the last minute. But they didn't tell me! So I showed up and nobody was there. And then I guess they also rescheduled the gathering for the next week. But they didn't tell me about that either! They went out of their way not to tell they had canceled one meeting and rescheduled another. So I felt like they didn't really want us there. I had wanted to bring some of the Hispanic community, to get them to show up. I even took pictures. I always have my camera on me, you know to take my pictures everywhere, and I took some pictures of everything here and there. Just to show, you know, that I didn't forget about it and that I really did show up. I don't know how the gathering went the next week, because I didn't know about it, but there were no Hispanics there.

These more negative depictions of black-Hispanic relations in Bedford County than those in Wilcox County lend support to hypothesis 2—that higher proportions of African Americans in many locales across the South exacerbate black-Hispanic socioeconomic conflict at the local level. In fact, Davíd, an immigrant from Medellín, Colombia, living in Bedford

County, speculates that this will also be the case at the regional level in the South:

> Interviewer: There are more African Americans in the South than there are in other regions of the country. Do you think this is affecting the experiences of Hispanics or immigrants here in any way?
>
> Davíd: Yes.
>
> Interviewer: How so?
>
> Davíd: Like I said before, I feel the blacks don't like us. And that it is worse than with the whites.

Here it is very important to stress that demographic and structural factors, such as the size of the Hispanic and immigrant population or the local political structure at the county level, cannot account for the more prevalent black-Hispanic tensions I find in Bedford County versus Wilcox County. African Americans constitute 58 percent of Bedford County's local population in 2000 while Hispanics only constitute 3 percent, a gap that suggests full socioeconomic displacement is still a long way off for blacks in Bedford County. Moreover, sheer demographics would have led us to expect to find more evidence of perceived socioeconomic threat in Wilcox County, where blacks constitute 29 percent of the local population and Hispanics constitute 15 percent, yet the reverse is the case. The two counties' local political structures are similar; both currently operate on a "county manager" form of government and have a group of six to seven elected county commissioners, each of whom represents one of the county's electoral districts.[14]

Of course, these findings do not mean that there are no efforts to build coalitions between blacks and Hispanics in Bedford County, or that there are no individual-level examples of cooperation between blacks and Hispanics in workplaces, schools, or neighborhoods there. On the contrary, such efforts are indeed present, but black-Hispanic conflict simply seems to outweigh black-Hispanic cooperation there, at least for now.

Black Population Size and Political Threat

Yet what happens in the political arena differs from what happens in the socioeconomic arena. My research shows that the greater proportion of African Americans at the local level in Bedford County affords them some protection from feelings of political threat as Hispanic newcomers enter their midst, rather than elevating a sense of black-Hispanic political competition. During my field research in 2003 and 2004, I either came into contact with or observed more instances of formal political black-Hispanic coalition-building efforts at the North Carolina state level, where African Americans constituted 22 percent of the state population in 2000, and in Wilcox County, where African Americans constituted 29 percent of the county population in 2000, than I did in Bedford County, where African Americans constituted 58 percent of the county population in 2000.[15]

At the state level, black-Hispanic coalition building is one of the principal goals of the North Carolina Coalition on Black and Brown Civic Participation, a state-level subsidiary of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation formed in 2003 to foster black-brown coalition building and promote long-term voter registration and education projects at the state level, with the goal of networking down to the local level. In Wilcox County, the most visible example of formal, local-level, black-Hispanic coalition building is the Wilcox County Center for Leadership Development's use of external grant money to expand an eight-week leadership training course (originally designed to promote underrepresented African American leadership in the county) to the newer Hispanic community in Spanish, beginning in 2002 and repeated through 2005. No formal efforts of this sort were located in Bedford County,[16] although black-Hispanic coalition building was reported to be "on the agenda" in the Bedford County chapter of the NAACP (I was unsuccessful at contacting local-level NAACP leaders in Wilcox County).[17]

What could account for these differences? In particular, African Americans in Bedford County are reported by whites, blacks, and Hispanics alike to wield substantial political power at the local level, and as Clarence Brown, Bedford County's African American county manager, points out, this power rests largely on their large population size at the county level:

> Interviewer: Do you feel that African Americans have sufficient political power in this area?
>
> Clarence Brown: Sufficient political power? I would have to say yes.
>
> Interviewer: How come?
>
> Clarence Brown: How come? Well, in quite a few leadership roles, you have African Americans in those positions. One of the things that I've said more than once is that African Americans have not participated in the political process long enough to "know how to play the game." But I think that in this area, with the population of the county being 55 percent African American,[18] that there is a good representation of African Americans. There are some wards and districts that

> have been great for African Americans' participation in the political process. Before that time, you could look at boards and commissions, and all of their representatives were basically living in one neighborhood or one geographic area. And by splitting everything up into wards and districts, you almost assure yourself of having a diverse group of people being political leaders.
>
> Interviewer: You mentioned that the African American population here is 55 percent, which is much higher than the national average. How do you think this compares to their political representation at the national level? Do you think they have sufficient political power at the national level?
>
> Clarence Brown: Blacks? No.
>
> Interviewer: So you think it's better for them here?
>
> Clarence Brown: Oh yeah. Yeah.
>
> Interviewer: Do you think that having more Hispanics or immigrants here affects the way that blacks think about their race?
>
> Clarence Brown: No.
>
> Interviewer: Why not?
>
> Clarence Brown: Why not? Because we have not been significantly impacted by Hispanics being here in this county. I mean, the groups of black people I've been around in general don't sit around and talk about or perceive the Hispanic population as being threatening.

The feeling that Hispanics are not yet challenging African Americans' formal political power yet because so far they lack the similar organization or "numbers" at the local county level (even while Hispanics may be making great political strides at the national level) is also expressed by some whites in Bedford County, as Don, the county commissioner quoted earlier, explains:

> Don: My understanding is that the Spanish community is already the largest minority group in the country. And as I hear political debate and strategies, I hear 'em going after the Latino vote and so forth. So I think certainly on a national level it's a recognized stronghold of potential votes, much more so than, than, as I say, here on a local level. And I think when you think of it nationally, they are probably a lot more organized than they are on a local level.
>
> Interviewer: Do you think that African Americans have sufficient political power in this county?
>
> Don: Definitely.
>
> Interviewer: How come?
>
> Don: Well, they have fought for it and they've been successful. In Bedford County, they are a majority in reality. The majority voters in Bedford County are black. They have control of the city council in Archer Bluff, majority control. They have had majority control of the Bedford County commissioners, so they have shown that when they get united behind an issue that they can carry, they will. And they are well represented, I think, although that I am sure some black communities would disagree. They're well represented on all of our elected boards and appointed boards. I think the two communities [white and black] are trying to work together, and certainly their voice is heard strong on every issue. That certainly is not true in the Spanish community.

As these two responses show, African Americans' formal political power in Bedford County is considered relatively secure and so there have been few organized efforts to promote black-Hispanic cooperation to date, despite more black-Hispanic tensions there than in Wilcox County, because such efforts are not considered necessary in terms of numbers yet.

More generally, my research findings diverge between the local socioeconomic and political arenas. They lend support to hypothesis 2 in the local socioeconomic realm—that higher proportions of African Americans in the South will exacerbate black-Hispanic tensions by elevating African Americans' sense of socioeconomic threat, as is evidenced in majority-black Bedford County as compared to majority-white Wilcox County. But they also lend support to hypothesis 1 in the local political realm—that higher proportions of African Americans in the South will smooth black-Hispanic tensions by protecting African Americans from an elevated sense of political threat, as is also evidenced in majority-black Bedford County as compared to majority-white Wilcox County.

In contrast to the "strength-in-numbers" line of reasoning in hypothesis 1, however, my research findings suggest that higher proportions of African Americans in the South may translate into fewer rather than more opportunities for black-Hispanic contact and coalition building than they would in other places with smaller African American populations if African American political leaders and civil rights organizations feel secure due to those numbers and do not sense the strategic need to develop positive black-Hispanic relations by engaging in proactive coalition-building strategies with Hispanics. Although African Americans are certainly considered to be socioeconomic and racial minorities in both Bedford and Wilcox Counties, the fact that their population size has translated into

more formal political power (and therefore less of a political minority status) in Bedford County seems to have depressed blacks' efforts to reach out to new Hispanics at the local political level there. In contrast, at least some leaders in Wilcox County (particularly at the Wilcox County Center for Leadership Development) have already begun to envision local Hispanics as a "political minority group" in a similar position to African Americans at the local county level—in need of political support.

The latter case resonates with at least one other study of immigration in the South. In Dalton, Georgia, a small city of about 28,000 residents in 2000, even though African American responses to new Latinos are varied and have not always been smooth, "Black leaders have organized meetings with their Latino counterparts to find a common political agenda," including beginning a drive to register new Latinos within the local chapter of the NAACP (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2005, 267). Interestingly, these coalition-building efforts are being pursued by the leadership of a small African American population—in 2000, Dalton's population was identified as 66 percent white, 8 percent black, 2 percent Asian, 21 percent "other race," and (according to a separate question on Hispanic origin ethnicity) 40 percent Hispanic or Latino of any race, and blacks constituted just 4 percent of Dalton's surrounding Whitfield County (248).

In fact, Rubén Hernández-León and Víctor Zúñiga (2005) show that African American leaders' efforts to find a common political agenda with Latino newcomers there partially reflect their feeling that "in the wake of a massive inflow of Latino immigrants" they were at risk of becoming "irrelevant" (267). This suggests that in contrast to what I find in majority-black Bedford County, the presence of smaller African American populations may encourage greater black-Hispanic coalition building for strategic demographic reasons, instead of or in combination with visions of shared structural status or what Michael C. Dawson (1994) calls "linked fate":

> [A]lthough in the words of their leadership, black Daltonians have no power, politically active African Americans have seen Latino immigration as a way to overcome their marginal status (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2005, 267).

At the same time, it is worth noting that several Hispanic political and community leaders in Bedford County were starting to show frustration over inattention from black political leaders during the time of my research, even though they were not actively voicing it yet.[19] This suggests that black-Hispanic political competition in Bedford County could emerge in the future as Hispanics become more politically organized and begin to vie for formal political power with the local African American as well as white political leadership. In this case, my research findings in the political arena, which currently lend support to hypothesis 1, could begin to lend more support to hypothesis 2—that higher proportions of African Americans in the South will exacerbate black-Hispanic tensions by elevating African Americans' sense of political threat *after* an initial period of security due to their strength in numbers. This would lend qualitative support to the idea that competition arises among various groups "when the size of one group obviates the need to form coalitions with other minority groups" (McClain and Tauber 2001, 115).

In fact, if this occurs, it could be that the initial period of protection from political threat that the higher proportion of African Americans affords blacks in Bedford County compared to Wilcox County could exacerbate black-Hispanic political competition in Bedford County once it arises, owing to Hispanics' perceptions of inattention now. Such a possibility does not seem far-fetched, given what has happened in other majority-black locales where new immigrants have settled, such as Compton, California, where it has taken heated black-Latino conflict to bring to light Latinos' concerns over "absence of Latino representation" in local politics and limited access to institutional resources (Camarillo 2004). And it underscores the need for proactive black-Hispanic coalition-building efforts even in rural new immigrant destinations with large, politically secure African American populations.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed one reason why Hispanic newcomers in eastern North Carolina feel that, on the whole, they are treated better by whites than African Americans: how race interacts with the local class structure in the rural American South. In both Bedford and Wilcox Counties, blacks are socioeconomically disadvantaged relative to whites at both the individual and groups levels. Consequently, they are perceived as being more likely than whites to feel as though they are being (or will be) displaced or "leapfrogged" by Hispanic newcomers, both inside and outside the workplace. In academic parlance, respondents note that blacks perceive a greater degree of socioeconomic and symbolic "threat" from Hispanic newcomers than do whites, and that in response to this threat, their reactions to Hispanic newcomers are more negative than are those of whites, contributing to more tense black-Hispanic relations overall.

Within this picture of class-based racial group threat, furthermore, I have shown how local-level differences in black population size interact with institutional arena of incorporation to structure intergroup relations in the

rural South. In the local socioeconomic arena, the higher proportion of African Americans in majority-black Bedford County compared to majority-white Wilcox County exacerbates black-Hispanic tensions by elevating African Americans' sense of individual and group-level threat. In the local political realm, by contrast, the higher proportion of African Americans in majority-black Bedford County compared to majority-white Wilcox County smoothes black-Hispanic tensions by protecting African Americans from similar feelings of threat, at least initially. Interestingly, this initial political security seems to reduce the strategic demographic incentives that blacks in Bedford County have to reach out to Hispanic newcomers to engage in coalition-building strategies there.

These findings demonstrate how intergroup relations in new immigrant destinations are indeed nuanced by demographic context. The larger size of the local African American population in Bedford County compared to Wilcox County does impact Hispanic newcomers' incorporation experiences in various arenas, including in workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, and local political systems. Viewed alternately, however, these findings demonstrate how the specific demographic contexts that new immigrants are entering are influenced by the institutional arena of incorporation. That is, black-Hispanic tensions in Bedford and Wilcox Counties are structured not only by the size of the African Americans population at the local level but also by the arenas where African Americans and Hispanics hold and exert most of their power—primarily in the local political arena in the case of rural southern African Americans and primarily in the local economic arena in the case of rural southern Hispanics.

Together, these findings strengthen the call to pay more attention to both demographic context and institutional arena of incorporation in research on immigrant incorporation and intergroup relations (Jones-Correa 2005, 88), including in new immigrant destinations. That Hispanic and other newcomers are now entering a variety of locales across the country raises important questions about how majority-minority and interminority relations will play out in various arenas outside major immigrant-receiving states and cities. My research findings foresee a fairly bleak scenario for black-Hispanic socioeconomic conflict in rural locales with large populations of relatively disenfranchised African Americans who are beginning to feel their standing threatened by the entry of Hispanic newcomers. In contrast, my research findings foresee greater initial political tension, but perhaps also earlier efforts to promote black-Hispanic coalition building, in rural locales with smaller populations of African Americans who are beginning to feel threatened with political irrelevance.

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Notes

1. I focus on Hispanic rather than all immigrant newcomers, since the overwhelming majority of immigrants who arrived in the South during the 1990s are (using the Census Bureau categories) "Hispanics/Latinos," the great preponderance of them foreign-born, primarily in Mexico (Smith 2003, 3). The United States Census Bureau currently defines the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" interchangeably to refer to all "persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race" and regardless of whether they are born in the United States or abroad (U.S. Office of Management and Budget 1995, 1997). I am aware of the many debates concerning the appropriateness of, as well as the differences between, the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" as they relate to different subpopulations of people with ties to Latin America. Elsewhere in my research I pay close attention to how "Hispanic/Latino" respondents understand, define, accept, or resist these terms as racial and ethnic self-identifications. However, for two reasons I employ the term "Hispanic" loosely throughout this chapter. First, it is a convenient way to refer to all individuals in eastern North Carolina who fit the United States Census Bureau's official definition of "Hispanics/Latinos." Second, and more important, it reflects how both of the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used in eastern North Carolina today—largely interchangeably and referring to both foreign- and American-born individuals of Latin American heritage—while maintaining consistency by using only one term as much as possible.
2. For an introduction to the personal economic interest model, which emphasizes individual-level economic competition between immigrants and American-born natives, especially low-skilled Hispanics and African Americans, see George J. Borjas (1998); Kristin F. Butcher (1998); and Daniel

S. Hamermesh and Frank D. Bean (1998). For an introduction to the group economic interest model, which emphasizes group-level competition between immigrants and American-born natives, see Peter Burns and James Gimpel (2000) and Jack Citrin et al. (1997). For a review of the group position model, which emphasizes both "objective conditions" of economic and political deprivation or disempowerment and "subjective" beliefs and representations toward one's own and other groups, see Lawrence D. Bobo and Vincent L. Hutchings (1996); Bobo and Devon Johnson (2000); and Ewa Morawska (2001). For other research on various aspects of competition between African Americans and Latinos and other immigrants, see Frank D. Bean and Gillian Stevens (2003, chapter 9); Albert M. Camarillo (2004); Jeff Diamond (1998); James H. Johnson, Jr., Walter C. Farrell, and Chandra Guinn (1999); Nestor Rodríguez (1999); Michael J. Rosenfeld and Marta Tienda (1999); Roger Waldinger (1996); Waldinger and Michael I. Lichter (2003).

3. Personal communication from James H. Johnson, Jr., July 17, 2003.
4. Divisions between the rural east and the central Piedmont are strong in North Carolina: "North Carolina has more-tender sectional sensibilities than any other state in the South, including even tripartite Tennessee. . . . The bulk of population, money, and productive activity now rests west of the fall line and gives that [central Piedmont] section the pre-eminence long ago held by the agricultural counties of the [eastern] coastal plan and tidewater" (Key, Jr. 1949/1984, 218–20). For a more detailed description of eastern North Carolina, see also David Griffith (1995a, 1995b, 2005) and Rebecca M. Torres, E. Jeffrey Popke, and Holly M. Hapke (2006).
5. These proportions capture the dominance of Mexicans among North Carolina's Hispanic and Latino population, which was 65.1 percent Mexican, 8.2 percent Puerto Rican, 1.9 percent Cuban, and 24.8 percent "other" Hispanic or Latino (generally meaning from other Spanish-speaking Central and South American countries) in 2000 (Mohl 2003, 40).
6. Several of the foreign-born respondents migrated indirectly to North Carolina through California, but none of the American-born Hispanics was born there. Torres, Popke, and Hapke (2006) also find that migrants in Greene County, eastern North Carolina, are now arriving primarily from abroad, not in response to post-IRCA "push" factors in traditional receiving states, especially California.
7. All three are "traditional, low-wage southern industries" that immigrants in the South have entered disproportionately (Kochhar, Suro, and Tafoya 2005; Smith 2003). For research on immigration and manufacturing/textiles in the region, see James Engstrom (2001); Rubén Hernández-León and Víctor Zúñiga (2000, 2005); and Rachel Willis (2005). For research on immigration and poultry processing in the region, see Altha J. Cravey (1997); Leon Fink (2003); Elzbieta Gozdziak and Micah Bump (2004); David Griffith (1995a, 1995b, 2005); Greig Guthey (2001); William Kandel and Emilio A. Parrado (2004); and Steve Striffler (2005).

8. Other studies have also identified mixed reactions to immigrants in receiving communities, including internal ambivalence among individuals. Mark A. Grey and Anne C. Woodrick (2005, 140–41) uncover mixed reactions to immigrants in Iowa communities, grouping them together in what they term the "twenty-sixty-twenty rule": "In any rural Iowa community, about 20 percent of the people actively welcome immigrant newcomers or they are at least open to making it work. At the other end of that spectrum, we usually run into about 20 percent of the population that is dead set against immigrant influxes. Motivated by any number of concerns or biases, they have made up their minds that newcomers are bad for their community and nothing will change their perspective. The large 60 percent of the population is not sure about newcomers. They are not actively welcoming immigrants, but they are also not actively working against their arrival either. This portion of the population is ambivalent and often fearful of change. Most take a wait-and-see attitude. Many are open to learning more" (141). Brian L. Rich and Marta Miranda (2005) also "identify an ambivalent mixture of community responses toward immigrants, which include paternalistic, benign, and cooperative assistance, as well as negative racialized attitudes" (Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2005, xxii). Finally, Barbara Ellen Smith (2003) also uncovers internal ambivalence among African American respondents in the form of "contradictory and varied responses" to immigration (24).
9. In North Carolina, United States census data for 2000 show that the economic profile of African Americans living in nonmetropolitan areas is considerably weaker than that of their counterparts living in metropolitan areas. In terms of education, 29.3 percent of nonmetropolitan African Americans age twenty-five to sixty-four had not completed high school in 2000, compared to 17.8 percent of their metropolitan counterparts. In terms of labor force participation, 5.5 percent of nonmetropolitan African Americans age twenty-five to sixty-four were unemployed in 2000, compared to 4.4 percent among their metropolitan counterparts. In terms of occupational distribution, 20.2 percent of nonmetropolitan African Americans age twenty-five to sixty-four and in the labor force were employed in managerial or professional occupations in 2000, compared to 25.8 percent of their metropolitan counterparts, while 46.4 percent of nonmetropolitan African Americans age twenty-five to sixty-four and in the labor force were employed in production, craft, or repair occupations in 2000, compared to 28.8 percent of their metropolitan counterparts. Finally, in terms of income, the median wage or salary income for nonmetropolitan African Americans age twenty-five to sixty-four and in the labor force was $18,500 in 2000, compared to $23,000 for their metropolitan counterparts (Ruggles et al. 2004, weighted data, author's calculations). These figures reflect the rural South's lack of an established black middle class. Indeed, generally speaking, whites in Bedford and Wilcox Counties belong either to the middle class or to the poor and working classes (for a discussion of this class division among whites in the "highland" southern city of

Dalton, Georgia, see Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2005). Blacks' socioeconomic position is much weaker than whites'; most African Americans in both counties belong to the poor and working classes, and only some belong to the middle class. In Bedford County, one white resident notes, "It is sad, but you know, really, I could count them [local middle class blacks] on my hands. And I know who all of them are" (post-fieldwork notes, November 26, 2004).

10. The term "redneck" denotes elements of cultural orientation as well as social class. Nonetheless, it is significant that Pilar associates many white "rednecks" with lower class status.
11. Field notes, Victoria Milling Company (a pseudonym), June 23, 2003.
12. Field notes, Marco Ramírez, March 3, 2004.
13. Griffith (2005, 66) and Rich and Miranda (2005, 204) also document Hispanics' perception that they are more discriminated against by blacks than whites.
14. In both counties, the county manager serves as the spokesperson for the County Board of Commissioners, whose main responsibilities include adopting a budget, establishing the property tax rate, enacting ordinances, establishing policies and procedures for the operation of county programs, and hiring and overseeing county staff.
15. I did not attempt a comprehensive review of all local- or state-level coalition-building efforts or African American responses to Hispanics in this project. Rather, I attempted to gauge the incidence or visibility of such efforts through individual interviews with Hispanics and some African American respondents as I conducted my research, and to take note of any efforts that came to the attention of the emerging Hispanic associations or local-level service-provider meetings that I attended and observed during my research. While this may not constitute a comprehensive review of existing coalition-building efforts, it does document which efforts were currently salient or important to Hispanics in these two counties at that time, primarily from their point of view.
16. In both counties, there are more examples of black-Hispanic cooperation in service and nonprofit agencies than in the electoral political arena. For example, Hispanics are increasingly employed (and also most visible in their positions) as interpreters in county and municipal service agencies, such as county health departments, community colleges, town clinics, and even nonprofit agencies such as local Partnerships for Children, where they come into contact with African American coworkers and often become good acquaintances. But as of 2003 to 2004 no Hispanic occupied any formal political leadership position in either county, such as a local school board member, town council member, or county commissioner. Regina, an African American Bedford County commissioner, illustrates this when she says, "I've worked with several people in nonprofit organizations who are working with the Spanish-speaking population and that kind of thing. But none who are actually in the political arena." In Archer Bluff, Hispanic political leader respondents speak positively of an African American mayoral candidate who has expressed interest in the local Hispanic community, and Kendra, an African American human relations representative for the Archer Bluff city government, is an active member of Latinos Unidos and has provided this emerging Hispanic association with much-needed institutional as well as personal support. However, as of 2004 there was nothing in Bedford or Alexandria Counties that could rival the Hispanic Leadership Course developed by the Wilcox County Center for Leadership Development in an explicit attempt to build a black-Hispanic coalition in the realm of political and civic leadership development.
17. Interestingly, after my field research was completed, I learned that Bedford County Manager Clarence Brown had invited an emerging local Hispanic school and political leader to head up planning for the county's 2005 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day festivities (*Bedford Newspaper* [a pseudonym], December 22, 2004).
18. In the 2000 United States census, African Americans constitute 58 percent of Bedford County's population.
19. Field notes of an informal conversation after a Hispanic Assistance Council meeting, March 3, 2004.

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CHAPTER 10

NASHVILLE'S NEW "SONIDO": LATINO MIGRATION AND THE CHANGING POLITICS OF RACE

JAMIE WINDERS

> Even Nashville . . . has a new sonido: the norteño music booming from its three Spanish-language radio stations. Los Tigres del Norte compete with Garth Brooks and chipotle complements chitterlings across a vast stretch of the South, in urban "Little Mexicos" . . . like Nashville's Nolensville Road district.
>
> Mike Davis (2000, 4)

In 2000, the urban and labor scholar Mike Davis wrote that "even Nashville ha[d] a new sonido"(sound) and was feeling the effects of Latino migration. In a clever rhetorical maneuver, Davis highlighted the ubiquity of Latinos across the United States by calling attention to their presence in the most unlikely of places, Nashville, Tennessee, the country music capital of the world and a city virtually absent from the map of urban and immigration studies. Davis mentions Nashville to signal the reach of Latino influence to the very edges of urban America and, in so doing, alludes to a historically powerful trope of southern distinctiveness and exceptionalism (Woodward 1960/1968, 1971; Greeson 1999; Winders 2005b). His allusion to this discourse of southern exceptionalism is, however, meant to be ironic and to mark its contemporary failure. Southern cities, long positioned outside the influences of transnational migration, are increasingly central to Latino movements to and within the United States, a fact which, for Davis, offers irrefutable evidence that Latino migration is a powerful force across the country. If "even Nashville" is swinging to the rhythms of a norteño beat (a