

**William Kandel and Emilio A. Parrado (2004) "Hispanics in the American South and the Transformation of the Poultry Industry"**

**Main Point:** During the 1990s and early 2000s there was a change within the location of the Hispanic community within the United States. First, there was a migration of Hispanic immigrants from the West and South West to the South East and Midwestern parts of the United States. Secondly, along with this migration there was also a Hispanic migration from metropolitan areas to nonmetropolitan communities in America. These two migrations have led to a dramatic change in the recent developments and changes within the poultry industry of the Southeastern states. These changes have occurred within the geographic situation and the employment of the poultry industry. The migration has also led to a change within the local communities, where the culture, organization and everyday life must be adjusted to accommodate the new residents and workers. Lastly, how the existence of this new minority has affected other minority groups within the area.

**Central Idea and Concepts:**

- Up until the 1990s, there was little migration by Hispanic immigrants outside of the Southwestern part of the country. Yet due to increased enforcement against illegal aliens, labor saturation in the region and the recruiting efforts of employers in industries with less than desirable jobs, these immigrants started to move eastward. Most of these undesirable jobs were located within the nonmetropolitan areas of the country, which then led to the migration of Hispanics into these communities. This influx of immigrants would challenge the abilities of the rural communities to provide social services and schooling for immigrant children, since the larger population would be more difficult to handle. The communities would accommodate the Hispanics by adding English as a Second Language classes (ESL) and by providing interpreters in many situations.
- The poultry industry was increasing in size between the late 70s and late 90s. This was the case because domestic and foreign demand for chicken rose dramatically, after the publication of the Framingham Study. The Framingham Study exposed the health risks that were associated with having red meat within in your diet.
- The poultry industry has been a mainstay with the Southeastern United States. Yet because of a lack of rise in wages over the past thirty years and the less than the desirable work that it entails, the poultry industry has experienced difficulty finding local work. So the poultry industry started to recruit people from the Southwest and abroad. Since the Hispanic population within the country was already increasing, the poultry companies had no problem recruiting labor and in fact there is clear evidence that the poultry industry has partially led to the increase in the Hispanic population growth as well.
- The labor force within the Poultry Industry changed during this time period. There were changes within the ethnic and racial composition of the industry, such as the great decrease of whites within the labor force. The Hispanic percentage in

the labor force of the poultry grew seventeen fold, while the black labor force almost doubled. Yet, this does not indicate that there are fewer whites involved in poultry processing, but it does show that there are many more blacks and Hispanics.

- The authors then go on to examine two case studies of counties within the South where poultry plants are located. The two counties are Accomack County in Virginia and Duplin County in North Carolina. From 1990 to 2000 there was a tremendous increase in the number of Hispanics, within both counties.
- They then discuss the employment situations within each county and plant. The Hispanic workers at the plants were almost all manual laborers and in most instances were not displacing other non-Hispanics and in fact were filling new jobs that non-Hispanics did not want to fill. In fact, the mere existence of the less educated Hispanic manual laborers gave the educated white and black employees opportunities to improve their jobs and employment. In addition, some of the Hispanic laborers were just seasonal laborers in the plant, since they worked in agricultural during the harvest months.
- The authors also delve into the demographics of Hispanic societies within these counties. Interestingly, the Hispanic population is on average much younger than the white and black populations and also is considerably dominated by males.
- Lastly, the sentiment of the residents of these communities seemed to be positive. In fact the residents only had a few concerns. Firstly, a few interviewed residents mentioned hearing about job griping between Hispanic and black workers. Secondly, they mentioned that they were concerned with the false licenses that the Hispanics used, since they felt that this could make the roads less safe.
- Overall the intentions of the authors were to show how the industrial restructuring of the poultry industry and plants correlated with the changes in the labor force composition and the patterns of internal migration and settlement.

### **Two Key Quotes:**

“The proportion of Hispanics in industries with low wages and harsh working conditions—meat processing, carpet manufacturing, oil refining and forestry, to name a few— has increased dramatically since the 1990s.” (p. 287)

“The industry’s expansion and concentration within a geographic region whose economic development was already creating an immense demand for low-skilled workers forced the sector to look elsewhere.” (p. 290)

### **Two Questions:**

- Within the poultry industry and many others there is no competition between Hispanics and other minorities. The authors interviewed a well educated Hispanic man who was a high ranking administrative coordinator, who was one of the only high ranking Hispanics in his company. What if Hispanics start becoming educated within these counties and gain a certain sort of equality with the other workers and they start to become a power threat to the other races within the labor

force. Will the Marxist split labor theory become reality and ethno-antagonism become the result?

- If illegal immigration is yielded, how will future industries be able to respond to an immediate demand for labor? Will Americans take these jobs? Who will fill these less than desirable jobs? And perhaps the only reason we are trying to stop illegal immigration now is that Hispanics have started to become a power threat, while before they were just the less educated manual laborers. What should and will come of this situation?