Sorting Out the Nuevo South: Latino Settlement and Place-Making in Charlotte, NC

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Themes

- The American South’s New Latino Geography
- Why Charlotte, Why Now?
- 21st Century Immigrant Gateways: Charlotte
- Place-Making and Belonging
- The Politics of *Loncheras*/Taco Trucks
Urban Destinations: Hispanic Hypergrowth Metros

- The 21st Century new immigrant gateways
- 18 metropolitan areas designated by Suro and Singer as Hispanic Hypergrowth, 3 of the top 5 are in North Carolina
- Expanding and broadening opportunities in Southern cities
  - Raleigh/Durham (1)
  - Atlanta (2)
  - Greensboro/Winston-Salem (3)
  - Charlotte (4)
Charlotte: From White-Black to White-Black-Brown

- City census numbers
  - 3,091 (0.98%) in 1980
  - 5,571 (1.4%) in 1990
  - 39,800 (7.4%) in 2000
  - 95,688 (13.1%) in 2010

- Real numbers
  - community-based estimates +100,000
## 2000-2010 Trend: Hispanic North Carolinians are Urban

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Hispanic Population</th>
<th>Percentage Increase/Decrease</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mecklenburg (1)</td>
<td>111,944</td>
<td>(24.9%/19.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wake (2)</td>
<td>87,922</td>
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<td>Forsyth (4)</td>
<td>41,775</td>
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<tr>
<td>Durham (6)</td>
<td>36,077</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guilford (3)</td>
<td>34,826</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cumberland (5)</td>
<td>30,190</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnston (13)</td>
<td>21,814</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union (10)</td>
<td>20,967</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Onslow (12)</td>
<td>17,896 (50.4%/39.8%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>800,120 (8.4%)</td>
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Charlotte’s Population Transformation: “Hispanic Hypergrowth” and Beyond

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population Increase</td>
<td>81,487</td>
<td>144,894</td>
<td>190,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Growth Rate</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Contribution</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>29.3%</td>
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</table>

Approaching one-third of Charlotte’s growth in 2000-2010 was Hispanic newcomers
Why Charlotte?

**Economy**
- growing service-based economy
- need for both workers across occupational spectrum
- Bank of America phenomenon (early 1990s turning point)

**Landscape of Opportunity**
- entrepreneurship encouraged
- year-round employment
- female employment opportunities

**Welcoming**
- Charlotte: little immigration history or experience
- expansive labor market
- Immigration non-political issue
Pre-emerging Immigrant Gateways: Southern Style Charlotte’s Latino Settlement Geography

- Middle-Ring Suburban Housing Markets
  - low density 1960’s-1970’s urban landscape
  - succession-replacement processes

- Stage 1: multi-family housing, invisible populations
- Stage 2: single-family housing, incipient place-making
- Stage 3: place identity (“Settling In” processes)

- Poly-nucleated suburban clusters
  - incipient barrios (community/places)
  - socially and ethnically distinctive
  - divergent development trajectories
Significant Suburban Latino Communities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Southwest Charlotte</th>
<th>Eastside Charlotte</th>
<th>North Charlotte</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latino Population</td>
<td>9,678</td>
<td>14,783</td>
<td>5,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Citywide</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican Ancestry</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Foreign-b</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proportion of Not Citiz</td>
<td>61.5%</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in Family House</td>
<td>83.7%</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
<td>79.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak English ‘not wel’</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or ‘not at all’</td>
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Settlement History
Latino Place-Making Processes: Opportunities

- Dominant political and economic leadership refuted or ignored anti-immigrant rhetoric
- Immigrant revitalization: residential and commercial redevelopment and enhancement
- Latino entrepreneurship rapidly growing and employment growth
- Growing international business connections and recruitment
- Enhanced levels of civic engagement (voting, community service)
Latino Place-Making Processes: Challenges

“Eastside of Charlotte is … overrun by illegal immigrants and crime/drug infested communities.”

- National and state-level discourse mythical Latino community
- Latino settlement streams lead to territorialization and construction of Latino “place” (cultural ambiguity)
- Beginning in 2005, resistance and “othering” Latinos and Latino places in media (*The Charlotte Observer*)
- Economic and social competition and tensions between racial/ethnic groups moves from low to high simmer, not yet boil
- Geographically focused *barrio* myth complicates the practice of receptivity
Lonchera Regulations: Controlling Place Identity

- 2008 City enacted *Lonchera* regulations: public health rules
- *Loncheras*: Latinization of public space creates social and gathering space, challenged time-space norms
- Eastside neighborhood leaders lobby new police power regulations (“public health, safety, and general welfare”)
- Key city council members and planners: location and operating hours
- Impact: eliminate operation of *loncheras* from most of city
Planning Regulations for Food Trucks and Street-Side Dining: The Other Side

- City planning and zoning rules foster street-side dining throughout the city (alcohol sales until 2 a.m., except Sunday)

- Downtown Charlotte and city farmers’ market permit food carts and food trucks

- Current national trend for street food and food trucks has led to recent conflicts over revising the zoning rules
Lessons from the *Lonchera* Regulations

- Construction of Latino places and visible identity created backlash from traditional residents
- Private property and business/development political regime mitigate neighborhood resistance
- Old South vs. New South tensions remain but now far more complicated
PowerPoint Presentation is available at: www.mseap.uncc.edu