

Immigration in Rural America

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Small Town Communities



Rabun County, Georgia



Rabun County, Georgia



In the words of a local employer...

I use a ton of Hispanics, I love 'em. I love 'em....

The Hispanics work...they work their tails off, they don't care if its Saturday, Sunday, Monday, they don't care if they work seven days a week, twelve hours a day, they don't complain [as long as] I treat them well....

--Homebuilder

Share of workers who are undocumented

Farming, fishing, or forestry	26%
Maintenance, grounds keeping	14%
Construction	15%
Drywall installers	31%
Construction painters	26%
Maids & housekeeping	24%

Source: Passel, Jeffrey S. and D'Vera Cohn. 2016. "Size of U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Workforce Stable After the Great Recession." Pew Research Center, November (Estimates based on 2014 American Community Survey)

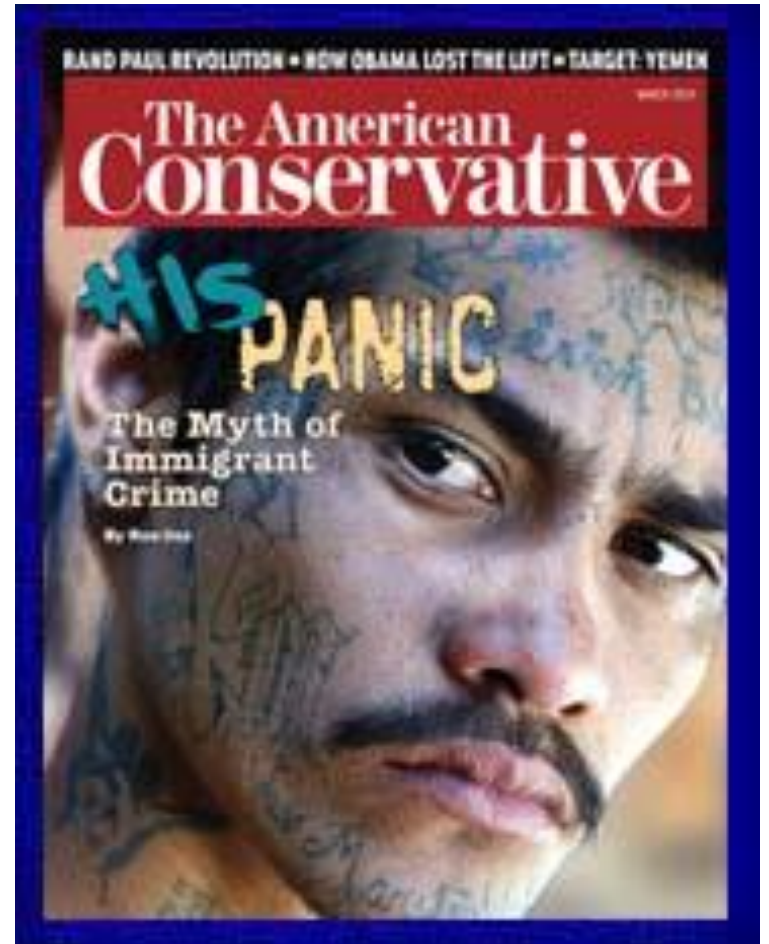
Worthington, Minnesota

“Once a dying town”



Fear and distrust

- Perception that the town has a significant criminal element
 - Rumor of “thugs” hiding under cars.
 - “I don’t want to go downtown at night”
- Facts do not back up the perception



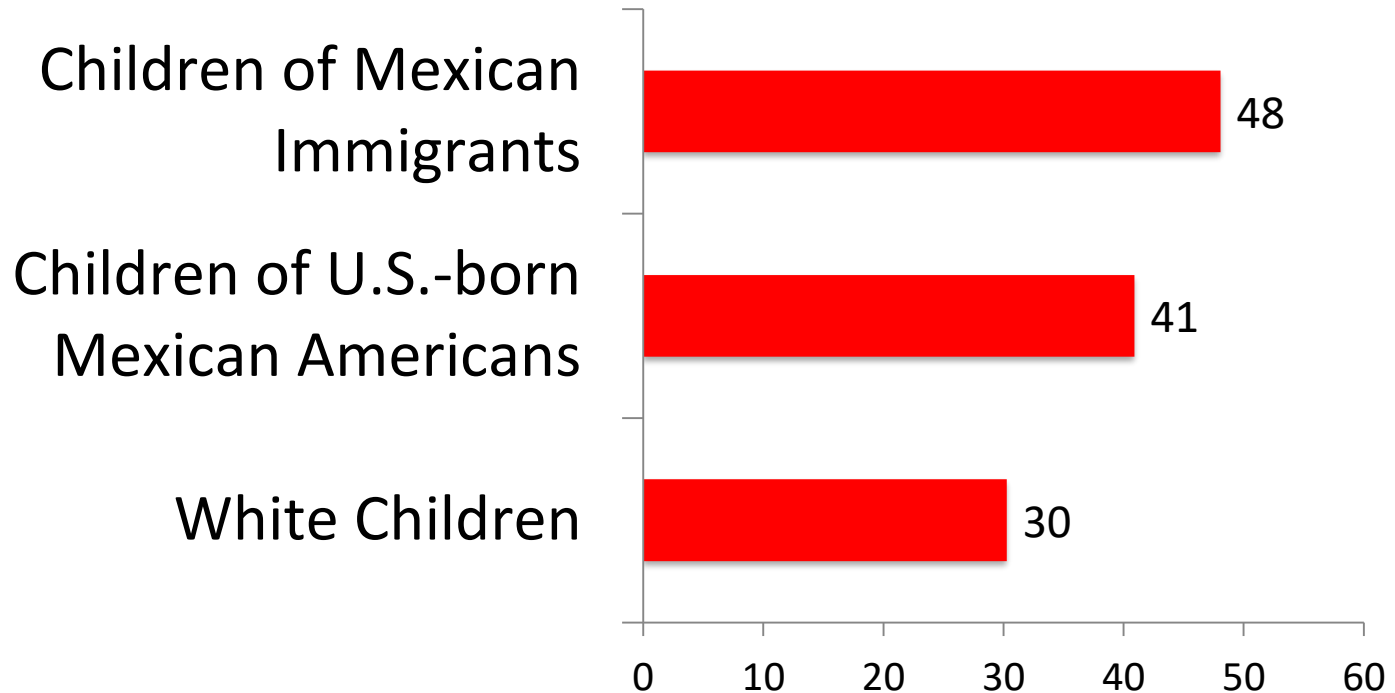




“Immigrant Optimism”

(Grace Kao and Marta Tienda)

% Attended College Among Those
Whose Parents Did Not Finish High School



Source: General Social Survey

Conclusions

New Immigrant Destinations

- New jobs in agriculture/meat packing, manufacturing, construction, and high-end services
- Social networks connect immigrants to jobs
- Now they are growing because of births than migration

Reception of new immigrants

- Mixture of appreciation and fear

Long-term Consequences

- Revitalization of local economy
- Social and economic integration takes time and more likely in 2nd generation