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Demographic Change and Ethnically Motivated Crime: The Impact of Immigration on Anti-Hispanic Hate Crime in the United States

Michele Stacey[1], Kristin Carbone-López[2], and Richard Rosenfeld[2]

Abstract

In recent years, Hispanic immigration to the United States has become a politically charged public issue, with significant consequences for immigration policies, communities, individual immigrants, and the U.S. residents who resemble them in language, customs, and appearance. We examine one possible collateral consequence of the fear and tension surrounding recent immigration trends, anti-Hispanic hate crime. Drawing on traditional theories of intergroup conflict—and particularly minority threat theory—we hypothesize that recent changes in Hispanic immigration are positively related to hate crimes targeting Hispanics. We find support for this hypothesis in a multivariate state-level panel analysis of anti-Hispanic hate crime from 2000 to 2004. Other predictions, however, are not supported. We conclude that the impact of immigration patterns on hate crime is an important area for continued criminological inquiry and that the notion of cultural threat should receive greater attention as studies of intergroup conflict move beyond the Black–White dichotomy.

Keywords

hate crime, immigration, Hispanics, social threat

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Immigration patterns to the United States have changed considerably over the past century. While the beginning of the 20th century saw an influx of immigrants largely from European countries, by 2007 80% of the U.S. foreign-born population hailed from Latin American or Asian countries (Grieco, 2009). Recent changes in the ethnic composition of immigrant populations coincide with increased public and political concern over U.S. immigration policy (particularly after the World Trade Center attacks of 2001) and have resulted in political lobbying for increased security and funding to build up border-control mechanisms. Immigration legislation and policy increasingly focus on the criminalization and deportation of undocumented individuals, and local and state law enforcement agencies have begun to vigorously enforce federal immigration laws and in some cases supersede them. For example, recent state legislation, such as the passage of Senate Bill 1070 in Arizona in 2010, aims to control illegal immigration through stepped up enforcement of documentation requirements.

Policies such as these are born out of and perpetuate an immigrant-as-threat narrative (Ibrahim, 2005) wherein immigrants are portrayed as threatening national security (through their supposed links to terrorist organizations), economic security (by "taking" jobs away from natural-born citizens), and cultural security (by bringing with them different languages, customs, and religions). The extent to which these threat narratives have filtered down to relationships between individuals, however, is not certain. Immigration and the resultant anti-immigrant sentiment may contribute to increased intolerance of immigrants and even, in some instances, to crimes against them. Recent reports from civil rights advocacy groups, drawing on Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data, as well as a handful of highly publicized cases of violent attacks on Hispanic immigrants, provide initial anecdotal evidence of violent—even lethal—hostility directed toward immigrants (Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund [LCCREF], 2009; Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC], 2008).

In this article, we begin to empirically examine the question of whether population shifts and changes in immigration patterns are associated with ethnically motivated hate crime. Specifically, we ask, "To what extent is anti-Hispanic hate crime related to patterns of Hispanic immigration to the United States?" While research on hate crimes has increased substantially in the past decade, much of the focus has been on crimes against racial or sexual minorities. Less attention has been paid to the role of ethnicity, specifically with regard to Hispanics, who are often perceived to be foreigners in spite of their long history in the United States. Because crimes against immigrant groups are not considered to be "hate crimes"—immigrants are not a protected category in hate crime law—we focus on hate crimes against Hispanics, who are often assumed to be immigrants, and hypothesize that they may be targeted in response to fear over changing immigration trends.

Using the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and Census data, we build on the existing knowledge base regarding bias motivated or hate crimes in a number of important ways. First, we examine the role of recent Hispanic-specific immigration to the United States as opposed to a more generalized immigration indicator or Census data on the percentage of the population that is

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"foreign-born." Recent immigration trends have fundamentally changed the ethnic composition of the United States; Hispanics now represent the largest ethnic minority group at more than 15% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). The extent to which these population shifts—and the corresponding group conflict they engender—are related to the victimization experiences of group members, however, is unclear and our research begins to address such issues. Finally, while much hate crime research is confined to a particular geographic location, we examine state variation in the number of anti-Hispanic hate crimes using a population-averaged model to account for changes within and between states over time.

Demographic Shifts: Changes in Hispanic Immigration to the United States and the Impact on Public Perceptions

Changes in legislation, and particularly the abolition of national origins quotas through amendments to the Immigration Act of 1965, transformed the face of immigration in the United States by the end of the 20th century (Rumbaut, 1994). Historically, the majority of immigrants to the United States were from Europe, but most of the immigrants arriving after 1970 were from countries in Latin America and Asia (Hirschman & Massey, 2009). By 2007, there were more than 38 million foreign-born persons in the United States, and more than 53% of the foreign-born came from Latin American countries. Immigration from Central America, including Mexico, accounts for more than two thirds of the foreign-born from Latin American countries and more than one third of the total foreign-born population (Grieco, 2009). Thus, in the past four decades, Hispanic immigration has been a major force in changing the ethnic composition of the U.S. population.

At the same time, research on Hispanic immigration to the United States suggests that migration patterns have changed considerably over the past four decades. Settlement patterns have become more diverse and have been redirected in recent years away from the traditional resettlement or "gateway states" such as California, Texas, Florida, New York, and New Jersey where, until the 1990s, nearly three quarters of all immigrants settled (e.g., Schmidley, 2001). Newly arrived Hispanic immigrants began to settle not just in large cities along the coasts but also in small towns and in areas within the interior of the country that historically experienced very low immigration rates (Massey & Capoferro, 2009). The "virtual absence" of Hispanic immigrants in such regions prior to the 1990s means that even small increases in absolute numbers of new immigrants translate into huge relative growth in immigrant communities in these new destinations (Massey & Capoferro, 2009).

What, then, are the consequences of Hispanic immigration for these new reception areas? An influx of immigrants changes the population structure of communities, transforms the ethnic makeup of social classes, and may also change local politics. The increased presence of Hispanics—and particularly Mexicans—means that certain

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music and foods become more common and Spanish may be heard in public spaces. The arrival of these newcomers may also create new interethnic and linguistic tensions as suddenly communities grapple with questions of ethnic diversity and assimilation and with concerns over the availability and necessity of Spanish resources and education for residents (Cornelius, 2002; Hernández-León & Zúñiga, 2003). Increasing fears of the social, economic, cultural, and political impact of these newcomers—which some refer to as the "new nativism"—are fueled by the growing presence of immigrants in nongateway areas as well as the concentration of new immigrants in just a few states. Evidence from recent ethnographic studies suggests that the new nativism has found fertile ground in communities within these destination areas as newly arrived immigrants face anti-immigrant sentiment and struggle for acceptance (e.g., Montero-Sieburth & Meléndez, 2007).

This ambivalent reception stems in part from concerns that crime rates rise as a result of the influx of immigrants. The public perception, often sustained by the media, is that immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented, are in large part responsible for crime rate increases (Rumbaut & Ewing, 2007). Yet, although it is true that immigrants struggle with acculturation and assimilation processes and often settle into communities that have structural characteristics (e.g., ethnic heterogeneity and increased rates of poverty) that are associated with crime (Martinez & Lee, 2000), there is little systematic evidence that immigrants themselves are more likely to be involved in criminal activity than U.S.-born individuals (e.g., Lee, Martinez, & Rosenfeld, 2001; Morenoff, Sampson, & Raudenbush, 2001). Indeed, research largely suggests the opposite conclusion, with recent studies finding that the reductions in violent crime in the United States in recent years are at least partly attributable to *increasing* immigration rates (e.g., Stowell, Messner, McGeever, & Raffolovich, 2009).

Studies of the relationship between immigration and crime *commission*, however, are not paralleled by research on the victimization experiences of immigrants. This may be due to insufficient information; it is impossible to determine immigration status using existing data sources such as the UCR and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and so it is unclear to what extent immigrants may be particularly vulnerable to victimization. While in recent years more attention has been paid to those crimes to which immigrants may be particularly vulnerable, including human smuggling and labor exploitation, less attention has been paid to hate crimes against immigrants.[1] A potential collateral consequence of anti-immigrant sentiment—and one that has not been examined in any systematic fashion—may be that immigrants are targeted in racially or ethnically motivated crime, in other words, because of *who they are*.

Importantly, anti-immigrant sentiment fueled by changing patterns of immigration also may put nonimmigrant Hispanics at risk of being victimized by hate crime. The fear surrounding immigration and its impact on communities is not necessarily focused solely on foreignness but also contains a strong racial and ethnic component. The further scrutiny triggered by foreignness presents a special problem for Hispanics (Chang & Aoki, 1997). Akin to racial profiling, the assumption exists that *all* Hispanics are immigrants (Perea, 1997). Therefore, the ambivalent reception and fear of immigrants

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likely affect Hispanics generally, even those who are U.S.-born. In sum, then, immigrants or individuals who are perceived to be immigrants (because of their skin color, their occupation, or their language) may be targeted by crime.

Interethnic Relations and Mechanisms of Informal Social Control

A prominent theory of intergroup relations is Blalock's (1967) thesis on minority threat. Blalock argues that minority groups pose a threat to the majority group in times or situations of limited resources. As minority populations grow, and as minority members increasingly compete with majority members for scarce economic and political capital, group conflict may increase and strengthen incentives for the majority group to discriminate against members of the minority group, by both formal and informal means. When economic opportunities are scarce, a growing minority group competes with the established majority for jobs and income. Economic competition may breed animosity between the groups, which can manifest itself in many ways. Likewise, minority and majority groups compete for political power, presumed to be in limited supply. As minority groups grow in size, they gain access to greater political capital; as a consequence, majority groups may feel their own political strength is weakened, increasing animosity and possibly resulting in further conflict between the minority and majority groups. Empirical tests generally suggest that minority threat—an increasing minority population—is positively related to formal mechanisms of social control against minority group members, in particular, control by the criminal justice system including arrest and prosecution (e.g., Eitle, D'Alessio, & Stolzenberg, 2002).

While laws may act as instruments by which dominant groups "maintain power and exercise control over 'threatening' populations" (King, 2007, p. 195), there are alternative ways by which control can be exercised. Indeed, scholars have recently noted that hate crimes can be conceptualized as a means of informal social control against minority group members (King, Messner, & Baller, 2009). From this perspective, such crimes are not merely crimes against individual victims but also serve as an effective (though illegal) means of controlling entire groups of persons through intimidation, fear, and even violence (King et al., 2009; Perry, 2001). In this manner, hate crimes serve both a symbolic and instrumental function (Craig, 2002). The redistribution of immigrants into new destinations—and resulting concerns over the social, economic, cultural, and political impact of these new arrivals—may translate into increased intergroup animosity and conflict and, perhaps, to hate crime as a means of informal social control against members of the minority.

Demographic Change and Hate Crime: What Do We Know?

Over the past decade, hate crime research has focused increasingly on the social and ecological context in which hate crime occurs. Focusing on neighborhoods, prior

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studies have found a relationship between demographic change and hate crime rates. Specifically, an influx of minority group members is related to increases in racially motivated hate crime. For example, Green, Strolovitch, and Wong, (1998b) found that crimes directed against racial and ethnic minorities in New York City were highest in predominantly White neighborhoods, particularly those that had experienced recent in-migration of minority groups. Likewise, Grattet (2009) found that changes in the minority population result in increased hate crime of all types in predominantly White neighborhoods in Sacramento, but decreases in hate crime against Blacks in predominantly non-White neighborhoods. Such findings provide increasing support that demographic changes explain at least some of the variation in hate crimes across neighborhoods.

Macroeconomic conditions and the "threat" posed by immigrants taking employment opportunities from native-born citizens may also engender increased hostility toward those immigrants. Thus, an alternative explanation for the link between demographic change and hate crime explored in prior research is that hate crimes directed at minority groups are related to economic conditions in the neighborhood. Research on the relationship between economic conditions and racially motivated hate crime provides mixed results. Lyons (2007) found that racially motivated hate crime was more prevalent in the more affluent neighborhoods in Chicago. However, Green, Glaser, and Rich (1998a) found that changes in economic conditions in New York, specifically the unemployment rate, were not significantly related to monthly counts of hate crime incidents in the city.

Although revealing, these studies focus on a single community and are unable to provide insight regarding the broader impact of demographic change on hate crime. Given the recent political attention to immigration in the United States, and particularly the focus on Hispanics, an important research task is to determine whether an association exists between immigration trends and hate crime victimization experiences of Hispanics. Scholars have reinvigorated research on the relationship between immigration and criminality, but less attention has been paid to the hate crime victimization experiences of immigrants and, particularly, of Hispanics. To address this gap in the literature, we draw on the minority threat perspective, typically used to describe Black–White relations, to examine the relationship between the Hispanic immigration rate and hate crimes directed against Hispanics in U.S. states.

Research Hypotheses

Given recent demographic shifts in immigrant populations and the sometimes inhospitable reception of new Hispanic immigrants, we hypothesize that Hispanic immigration has a positive effect on anti-Hispanic hate crime.[2] Specifically, taking into account recent formulations of the minority threat framework (e.g., King & Wheelock, 2007), we predict that hate crimes against Hispanics will be elevated when and where Hispanic immigration has grown. We also expect, in line with the traditional minority threat framework (Quillian, 1995), that the relative size of the Hispanic population in

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a state should be positively related to anti-Hispanic hate crime. But the threat framework also predicts that minority group size may have a nonlinear effect on social control. When the minority grows large enough to exert significant political power, it may be able to limit the majority group's social control efforts. We test for such nonlinear effects in our analysis.

Finally, the minority threat thesis predicts that social control of minority groups should be related to their economic status relative to the majority group. To test this hypothesis, we examine the effect of the ratio of White to Hispanic unemployment on anti-Hispanic hate crime as well as the effect of general economic conditions on hate crime. In addition, we test for the presence of mediating and moderating effects of the White–Hispanic unemployment ratio and general economic conditions on the effect of Hispanic immigration and group size on hate crime, as explained below.

Data and Method

Data for the current study are drawn from five sources. The hate crime data come from the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). The UCR is released annually and includes all criminal incidents, including hate crimes, reported to police for the previous year. Data from the UCR's Hate Crime Program for the years 2000-2004 are used in the current study. State characteristics, including population and unemployment rates, are drawn from the 2000 Decennial Census and the 2002-2004 American Community Survey (ACS); data for 2001 were interpolated from the two sources. The ACS is based on a sample of housing units in the United States and Puerto Rico and provides data on the majority of geographic areas with populations of 65,000 or more. In addition, a measure of overall economic growth is drawn from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). Finally, additional measures are drawn from the 2000 to 2004 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics produced by the Office of Immigration Statistics within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This source provides estimates of the amount of legal immigration each year.[3]

Given our emphasis on recent immigration patterns during a period of heightened concern and tension regarding Hispanic immigrants, our analysis is limited to state immigration patterns from 2000 to 2004. Missing immigration data preclude the use of data prior to 2000. Although 5 years is a fairly short time span for assessing trends, it is suitable for analytic purposes because both Hispanic immigration and anti-Hispanic hate crimes exhibited marked year-to-year variability during this period (see Figures 1 and 2). States are a particularly salient unit of analysis for the examination of hate crime because hate crime policies (and, increasingly, policies related to immigration) are formulated at the state level. Data sparseness on the hate crime measure (see below) would make comparative analysis at the city or county level unreliable. Moreover, relevant immigration data (i.e., by country of origin) are not publicly available at lower levels of aggregation. Because states are highly heterogeneous units, we control for many state structural characteristics in our analysis that may be related to immigration or reflect differences in how states define and handle hate crime.

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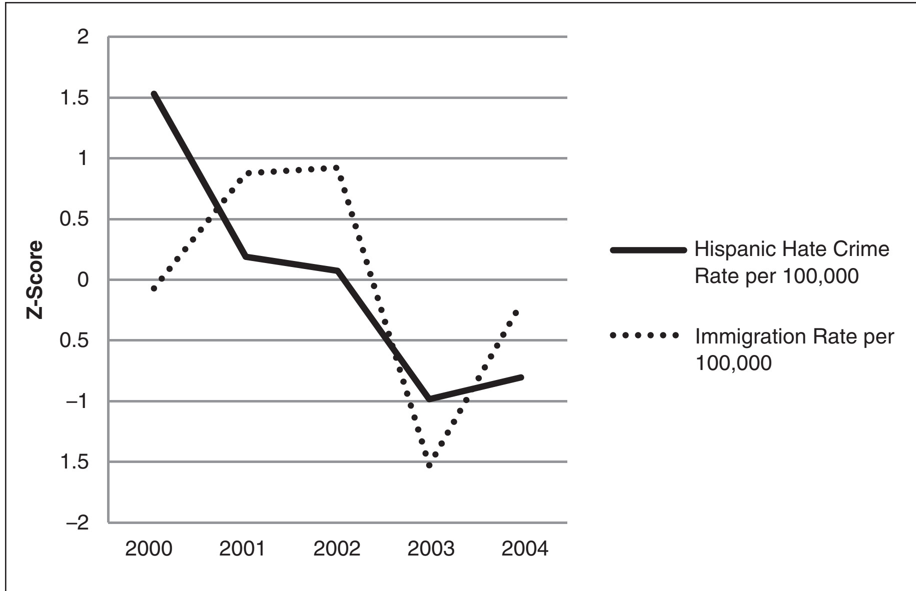

Figure 1. Hispanic hate crime rate by Hispanic immigration rate

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in our analysis is the number of anti-Hispanic hate crimes known to the police in U. S. states and the District of Columbia between 2000 and 2004 (*Hate crime count*). The FBI defines hate crime as "criminal offenses that are motivated, in whole or in part, by the offender's bias against a race, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity/national origin, or disability and are committed against persons, property, or society" (FBI, 2004). An offense qualifies as a hate crime if, after careful investigation, there is "sufficient evidence to lead a reasonable and prudent person to conclude that the offender's actions were motivated . . . by his or her bias" (FBI, 2004). On average, 9.9 anti-Hispanic hate crimes were recorded annually by the police in each state between 2000 and 2004, with a range from 0 to 206. Of these, approximately 56% were personal crimes, with intimidation representing the majority of those offenses, closely followed by simple assaults and then aggravated assaults. The remaining 44% were property crimes, primarily acts of vandalism. Because of low counts in many states, we combine personal and property offenses in our analysis.

Independent Variables and Controls

The primary independent variable of interest is a measure of *Hispanic immigration* taken from the *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics* each year from 2000 to 2004. This

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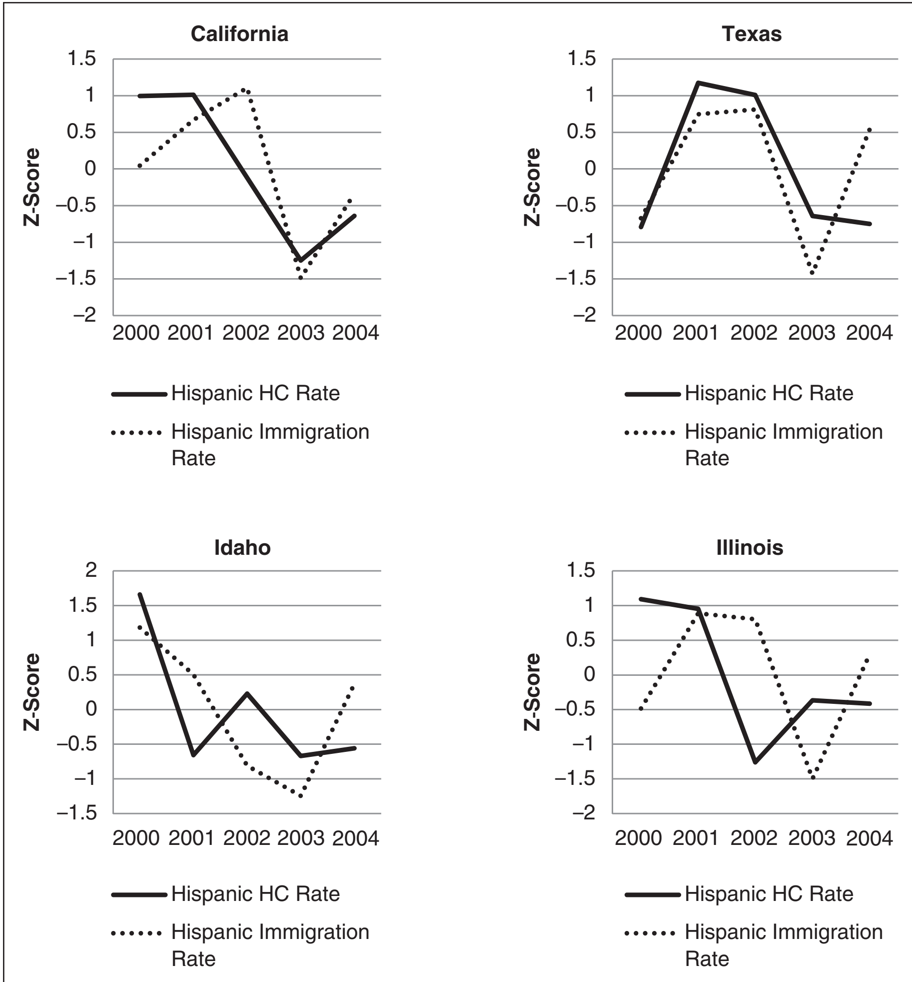

Figure 2. Hispanic hate crime rate by Hispanic immigration rate for four states

measure indicates the number of legal immigrants entering each state who originate from one of four countries of Hispanic origin (Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and El Salvador).[4] We divide this number by the number of foreign-born Hispanics in each state, and multiply by 100,000, to create the Hispanic immigration rate. This measure indicates the level and rate of growth in the Hispanic immigrant population between 2000 and 2004. To correct for skewness, we transformed the Hispanic immigration rate to its natural log.

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The traditional indicator of minority group threat in prior research has been the relative size of the minority population. Therefore, the analysis also incorporates the percentage of the state population that is Hispanic (*% Hispanic*). The Hispanic immigration rate and the relative size of the Hispanic population may have independent effects on hate crime. Moreover, the two measures are not necessarily related and may trend in opposite directions, especially in "new destination" states with small Hispanic populations. For example, in 2004 Maine's Hispanic population was less than 1% of the total population, and the Hispanic proportion of Maine's population grew by 13% over the previous year. During the same period, however, the Hispanic immigration rate plunged by 83% from 4,755 immigrants per 100,000 foreign-born to 827 per 100,000 foreign-born.

As indicated, the minority threat thesis predicts that the relationship between the social control of minority groups and their relative size may be curvilinear. To test for possible nonlinear effects of Hispanic immigration and group size on hate crime, we include squared terms for these measures in our analysis.

We include as an indicator of economic threat the ratio of the non-Hispanic White unemployment rate to the Hispanic unemployment rate (*W/H unemployment*). According to the minority threat argument, economic threat may mediate or moderate the relationship between group size and social control. That is, increases in Hispanic immigration or group size may result in greater White unemployment relative to Hispanic unemployment, which in turn may trigger more hate crime against Hispanics (mediation effect). Or, in states where the ratio of White to Hispanic unemployment is greater, the association between hate crime and immigration or group size may be strengthened (moderation effect). Finally, the White–Hispanic unemployment ratio may have an additive effect on hate crime. We examine each of these possibilities in our analysis.

We also control for overall economic conditions in the state, reasoning that hate crimes against Hispanic immigrants (or those so perceived) may be elevated where general economic conditions are poor or deteriorating. We include Gross State Product per capita in chained dollars from the Bureau of Economic Analysis as a measure of state economic output and growth (*Per capita GDP*). We examine the additive effect of this measure on anti-Hispanic hate crimes and also the extent to which it may condition the relationship between hate crime and Hispanic immigration or group size.

As a measure of the size of the potential offending population, we include from the Census and ACS the percentage of the state population consisting of White males between the ages of 15 and 29 (*% young White males*). Because Hispanics are more heavily concentrated in the West than other regions, we include a binomial measure indicating whether a state is located in the *West*. A major source of heterogeneity among U. S. states is the extent to which they are urbanized. We therefore control for the percentage of the state population that resides in cities with populations of 100,000 or more (*Urbanization*). Additional sources of heterogeneity across the states are captured by the state effects included in the models. Finally, we incorporate dummy indicators for *Year* to control for time-varying omitted variables that have common effects across the states.

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To ensure we are not simply picking up differences in the likelihood of police agencies and/or states reporting hate crimes to the UCR (i.e., adherence to the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990 that mandated data collection), two correlates of reporting are included, both taken from the UCR's Hate Crime Reporting Program. The participation of law enforcement agencies in the UCR's Hate Crime Reporting Program has grown over time but was far from complete during the period under study. We therefore control for the percentage of the state population covered by the agencies reporting to the Hate Crime Reporting Program (*% population covered*). Many agencies report zero hate crimes against Hispanics in their jurisdictions, which may be accurate, especially in places with very small Hispanic populations, or may indicate a lack of fidelity with the Hate Crime Reporting Program and therefore constitute a source of measurement error. We therefore control for the percentage of agencies reporting nonzero hate crime counts (*% nonzeros*).

Analytic Strategy

To assess changes in anti-Hispanic hate crime over time, we use a generalized estimating equation with a first-order autoregressive correlation structure, log link function, and negative binomial family of distributions. This approach allows us to estimate a population averaged negative binomial regression model for panel data while correcting for autocorrelation in the errors and overdispersion in the state hate crime counts, both of which are present in the data. Given the sparseness of anti-Hispanic hate crimes in many states, our dependent measure is the absolute frequency of anti-Hispanic hate crimes for each state-year. The logged Hispanic population size is included in the model as the indicator of exposure, with the coefficient constrained to 1. The population averaged model assesses average within-state change in the number of anti-Hispanic hate crimes from one year to the next as a function of variation in the predictors. The model incorporates both the within and between unit variation in the covariance matrix. The outcome for this model is the mean response over time across all states. In other words, the coefficients for these models are interpreted as population averaged or marginal effects.

Results

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the variables included in the analysis. The distributions are presented for all states and by region given the uneven regional distribution of the U.S. Hispanic population. On average, states reported approximately 10 anti-Hispanic crimes each year between 2000 and 2004, but this varies considerably by region, with nearly twice as many hate crimes against Hispanics reported in the West as in the Northeast and four times as many as in the Midwest and South. Hispanic immigration, on the other hand, appears to be more evenly distributed across regions, with an average overall Hispanic immigration rate of 1,464 per 100,000 Hispanic foreign-born (not shown). On average, Hispanics constituted about 8% of

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables in the Analysis

	Overall		West		South		Midwest		Northeast	
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Hate crime count	9.945	21.119	19.969	43.275	4.506	8.387	5.517	6.414	11.644	14.473
Hispanic immigration (ln)	7.289	0.543	7.404	0.432	7.116	0.613	7.433	0.536	7.256	0.474
% Hispanic	8.268	9.148	15.260	12.179	6.436	7.953	4.212	3.221	7.039	5.474
W/H unemployment	0.721	0.304	0.680	0.244	0.773	0.302	0.692	0.345	0.724	0.325
Per capita GDP	35,046	12,104	33,728	5,173	36,153	19,762	33,254	2,587	37,248	3,163
% young White males	9.529	0.995	9.831	1.295	9.468	0.872	9.971	0.466	8.618	0.525
West	0.255	0.437								
Urbanization	21.536	19.061	30.137	20.802	20.371	23.043	19.046	9.024	14.634	13.264
% population covered	81.397	28.335	79.333	30.736	78.949	34.082	78.644	23.186	92.670	12.806
% nonzeros	21.440	23.943	24.947	26.147	17.442	23.560	21.301	25.988	24.112	17.128

Note: Ln = natural log

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state populations during the period, with a strong concentration of Hispanics in western states. The average White-to-Hispanic unemployment ratio was 0.721. The UCR's Hate Crime Reporting Program covered about 81% of state populations, with somewhat higher coverage in the Northeast than other regions. Finally, about 21% of the reporting agencies reported nonzero anti-Hispanic hate crime counts, which underscores the importance of controlling for nonzero hate-crime counts in the multivariate analysis.

Figure 1, introduced earlier, presents the relationship between the average state trend in the anti-Hispanic hate crime rate and the Hispanic immigration rate between 2000 and 2004. To place them on the same scale, the two series have been expressed in units of standard deviation from their respective means. After rising through 2002, the Hispanic immigration rate dropped in 2003 and then rose in 2004. The hate crime rate fell through 2003 and also rose in 2004. Although suggestive, the nationally aggregated data conceal variation across the states in both trends. Figure 2 illustrates these state differences by comparing the hate crime and immigration trends (in standard scores) in two traditional Hispanic immigrant "gateway" states (California and Texas) and two states with low rates of Hispanic immigration during the observation period (Illinois and Idaho). In each case, we observe a rough correspondence between the fluctuations in the hate crime and immigration trends. However, the question remains whether a significant relationship exists between Hispanic immigration and hate crime controlling for other state characteristics.

The results of the multivariate analysis are shown in Table 2. Model 1 presents the effects of each of the predictors on anti-Hispanic hate crimes, excluding moderating and nonlinear effects. In this model, the effect of Hispanic immigration is significant and positive, consistent with the minority threat thesis. By contrast, the relative size of the Hispanic population is inversely related to anti-Hispanic hate crime, whereas minority threat theory would predict a positive effect of minority group size on hate crime. The ratio of White-to-Hispanic unemployment, the measure of economic threat, does not have a significant effect on anti-Hispanic hate crime, nor does per capita GDP, the measure of overall state economic conditions. Neither measure, therefore, mediates the relationship between hate crime and either Hispanic immigration or group size. Anti-Hispanic hate crime is not significantly related to the size of the young White male population or to the degree of urbanization in the state, but hate crime targeting Hispanics is more prevalent in western than nonwestern states. Finally, both of the reporting controls are significant and positive, suggesting as would be expected that states with a greater level of participation in the Hate Crime Reporting Program and fewer law enforcement agencies reporting zero hate-crime counts have more reported hate crime.

Model 2 of Table 2 incorporates squared terms for the Hispanic immigration rate and the Hispanic percentage of the state population. In neither case do we observe a significant effect, suggesting that these measures do not have nonlinear effects on anti-Hispanic hate crime. Model 3 adds interaction terms for the immigration and group size variables and the measures of economic threat and overall state economic conditions, respectively.

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Table 2. Regression Analysis of Anti-Hispanic Hate Crimes on Predictors, 2000-2004 (Robust *SE*)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coefficient	*SE*	Coefficient	*SE*	Coefficient	*SE*
Intercept	−15.541**	1.128	−14.430*	7.346	−14.464	7.588
Hispanic immigration (ln)	0.366**	0.127	0.118	1.935	0.110	2.008
Hispanic immigration $(\ln)^2$	—	—	0.015	0.130	0.012	0.134
% Hispanic	−0.066**	0.009	−0.112**	0.038	−0.119**	0.040
% Hispanic^2	—	—	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
W/H unemployment	0.568	0.441	0.571	0.460	0.569	0.456
W/H unemployment × Immigration	—	—	—	—	0.003	0.028
W/H unemployment × % Hispanic	—	—	—	—	−0.000	0.001
Per capita GDP	−0.000	0.000	−0.000	0.000	−0.000	0.000
GDP × Immigration	—	—	—	—	−0.000	0.000
GDP × % Hispanic	—	—	—	—	−0.000	0.000
% young White males	0.040	0.062	0.029	0.062	0.047	0.074
West	0.457*	0.193	0.537*	0.212	0.539*	0.214
Urbanization	−0.001	0.007	0.001	0.008	0.002	0.008
% population covered	0.026**	0.003	0.027**	0.003	0.027**	0.003
% nonzeros	0.016**	0.004	0.018**	0.004	0.018**	0.004
Exposure: Hispanic population	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wald chi-square	265.19		236.91		353.35	
Obs	255		255		255	
Grps	51		51		51	

Note: Year effects not shown. Obs = observations; grps = groups
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

The interaction terms are introduced to determine whether the effects of Hispanic immigration and group size on anti-Hispanic hate crime are moderated by the economic indicators. The results reveal no support for the moderating hypotheses.

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Robustness of Results

Consistent with expectations, we observe higher levels of anti-Hispanic hate crime in periods and places with higher levels of Hispanic immigration. Yet, contrary to expectations, we find less hate crime against Hispanics when and where Hispanics constitute a larger fraction of the population. To test the robustness of these results against reasonable modifications in the data and model specification, we conducted a number of sensitivity analyses. We first restricted the sample to those state-years with at least one anti-Hispanic hate crime. This resulted in 152 observations across 31 states. The immigration measure remains positive and significant and the group size measure remains negative and significant, and neither has a nonlinear effect on hate crime, when estimated on the restricted data. In addition, the White-to-Hispanic unemployment ratio becomes significant ($p < .05$) in this model but, contrary to expectations based on the minority threat framework, its effect on hate crime is negative. In other words, anti-Hispanic hate crime is reduced as White unemployment grows in relation to Hispanic unemployment.

Second, we reestimated Model 1 of Table 2 after dropping the nonsignificant predictors from the equation. This produced no change in the results for the immigration and group size measures. Third, it is possible that the level of economic deprivation in a state has greater relevance for hate crime than the measure of general economic conditions used in the analysis. We therefore substituted the state poverty rate for per capita GDP in our models. The poverty rate does not have a significant additive effect on hate crime nor does it moderate the effects of Hispanic immigration or group size. Finally, prior research reveals important similarities in patterns of hate crime and aggravated assaults not associated with a hate or bias motive (Messner, McHugh, & Felson, 2004). The majority of hate crimes against Hispanics are interpersonal while overall crime patterns (such as the index crime rate) tend to be heavily influenced by larceny offenses that rarely carry a bias motivation. This raises the possibility that our measure of hate crime may be confounded to some degree with state trends in interpersonal violence such as aggravated assault. We therefore controlled for the UCR rate of aggravated assaults per 100,000 state residents in our models. The aggravated assault rate is consistently nonsignificant in these estimations and our major findings remain unchanged.[5]

Conclusion

Recent Hispanic immigration to the United States has become a politically charged public issue with significant consequences for immigration policy, the communities in which immigrants settle, and not least, the immigrants themselves. Although political conflict centers largely on illegal immigration, in practice legal and illegal immigrants are not easily distinguished, nor are immigrants readily distinguished from coethnic residents who resemble the new arrivals in language, customs, and appearance. Any Hispanic person, regardless of residency status, may be targeted by the new nativism.

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Therefore, one collateral consequence of recent Hispanic immigration, we have hypothesized, is hate crime.

The results of our analysis of anti-Hispanic hate crime reveal a positive relationship between state-level variation in anti-Hispanic hate crime and recent Hispanic immigration. This result is consistent with the minority threat framework, which implies that growth in a potentially threatening group will result in an increase in actions, informal as well as formal, to control that group. But other results do not support minority threat theory and are more consistent with the defended communities' perspective although that perspective, developed to explain bias crime at the neighborhood level, cannot be directly tested at the state level. We find a significant negative linear relationship, and no evidence of a nonlinear relationship, between anti-Hispanic hate crime and the relative size of the Hispanic population. Where Hispanics are more numerous, hate crimes against them are less frequent. Furthermore, we find little evidence that anti-Hispanic hate crime is triggered by economic threat to the majority Anglo population, another implication of minority-threat theory. Taken together, these results suggest that anti-Hispanic hate crime is a consequence of Hispanic immigration, and arguably the fear and anger it produces in segments of the majority population, rather than the relative size or economic position of the Hispanic minority, which if anything may serve as protective factors.

Our results withstand controls for several state characteristics, including the degree of urbanization, general economic conditions, the size of the potential offender population, unobserved state and period effects, and reasonable modifications to the sample and predictors. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge several limitations of the analysis.

States are highly relevant policy units for an analysis of hate crime, but we cannot assume that similar research based on smaller, more homogeneous population aggregates, such as cities or neighborhoods, would have yielded the same findings. An important direction for future research, therefore, is to examine the relationship between Hispanic immigration and hate crime using different units of analysis.

Our analysis is limited to the relationship between hate crime and legal immigration, even though current political debates and public concerns focus on the control of undocumented immigrants. The validity of our analysis rests heavily on two assumptions regarding the connection between legal and illegal immigration. The first is that undocumented immigrants have generally the same destination and settlement patterns as legal immigrants. The second is that, as a practical matter, potential hate crime offenders cannot reliably distinguish legal and illegal immigrants or, for that matter, immigrants and the longstanding residents who resemble them. Although both assumptions appear reasonable, much more research is needed to validate them. Existing estimates of illegal immigration are imperfect and vary considerably depending on the source. Criminologists should be particularly concerned with understanding the factors affecting target selection by hate crime offenders.

While the measurement of hate crimes has improved in the years since the FBI first began collecting data, many agencies consistently fail to report any hate crimes in their jurisdiction. The large number of zero counts in the hate crime data indicates the

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continuing need to improve hate crime reporting by both victims and law enforcement. Immigrant victims may fail to report hate crime incidents because they fear deportation. Although Congress has created a number of special visa categories (the S, T, and U visas) to encourage and facilitate reporting of particular crimes by undocumented immigrants, it is unclear to what extent these efforts alleviate the underreporting problem (Kittrie, 2006). There are strict limits on the number of such visas that can be extended each year and only victims of certain crimes (i.e., human trafficking or domestic violence, or victims who offer substantial assistance in the prosecution of a criminal or terrorist organization) are eligible. An alternative approach to increase reporting may be the implementation of "sanctuary policies" within law enforcement agencies to ensure that undocumented immigrant crime victims are not reported to federal immigration authorities (Kittrie, 2006). In addition, specialized training of police officers in hate crime identification and formal policies within police departments on how to handle hate crime could improve the accuracy and integrity of hate crime statistics. In any case, further inquiry into such matters is crucial and, in particular, greater attention should be paid to those crimes experienced by immigrants that go unreported to police.

In summary, our analysis is based on strong assumptions regarding our key measures. We therefore regard our results as provisional and encourage other researchers to evaluate the relationship between immigration and hate crime with alternative measures, methods, and data. In particular, researchers should incorporate other important contextual characteristics such as gateway status (perhaps at lower levels of aggregation) as well as both minority and majority political strength. If future research confirms our finding that anti-Hispanic hate crime is a consequence of immigration, we suggest several directions for policy and theory development. Assuming that Hispanic immigration is a robust predictor of anti-Hispanic hate crime, immigration data may prove useful in forecasting such crime for law enforcement. Policy makers in the United States should also consider extending current hate crime statutes by including immigrants as a protected category. The response to immigration from policy makers has, in general, been to make it more difficult for immigrants to enter the country. Even policy makers who would toughen current immigration laws, however, should want to minimize violence and other crimes motivated by bias against immigrants, or those who are perceived to be immigrants, and to make it easier to identify immigrant victims.

Finally, the current research highlights the importance of continued development and, perhaps, modification, of the minority-threat framework by incorporating immigration and nationality as sources of threat to majority cultural identity. Our results imply that the primary threat posed by immigration may be cultural rather than economic. Prior research has shown that public views of immigration are shaped more by perceived cultural threats, especially to English language dominance, than by economic position or outlook, political ideology, or even fear of crime (Chandler & Tsai, 2001). In addition to moving beyond the Black–White dichotomy, a renewed focus on immigration would enrich minority-threat theory by directing attention to culture as a source of group conflict and social control.

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Notes

1. Although numerous media accounts exist of violent and lethal attacks on immigrants and a handful of reports highlight the "human faces" of anti-immigrant sentiment (see, for example, LCCREF, 2009; SPLC, 2008), the growth in anti-Hispanic crimes reported by the FBI has gone "relatively unnoticed" by policy makers (Martinez, 2010). There is evidence of such research elsewhere, however. For example, Bunar (2007) analyzes the increase from 1997 to 2003 in xenophobic crimes in Sweden.
2. Minority group threat predicts a positive relationship between minority population growth—in our case, immigration—and hate crimes against Hispanics. The defended communities' perspective (Green et al., 1998b; Suttles, 1972) also proposes a positive relationship between minority population and the use of social control. The argument is that ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods develop a sense of cohesion which, when threatened, will be defended through the use of mechanisms of informal social control. Thus, racially motivated crimes will occur most frequently in areas where the majority (Whites) have long dominated and in areas experiencing a rapid influx of minorities. Given the focus on community cohesion, we believe that this perspective is more suitable for analyses involving neighborhoods as the unit of analysis, yet we do consider it in the discussion of our results.
3. Although there is a considerable amount of "illegal" or undocumented immigration into the United States, there are a number of difficulties in determining a reliable estimate of the number of undocumented persons entering the country each year. The Census Bureau and other government agencies do not count the number of undocumented immigrants directly, but rather use a "residual method" to estimate the size and characteristics of the undocumented population (Passel, 2006). Such estimates rely on a number of assumptions that are difficult to verify.
4. Data from other Latin and South American countries are missing for a number of years and are excluded. The four countries of origin included in the analysis represent a large proportion of recent Hispanic immigrants to the United States. Specifically, with the exception of 2002 when Cuba contributed only 9,000 immigrants, each of these four countries contributed more than 20,000 immigrants each year. Together, they account for about 70% of all Hispanic immigrants and about 25% of total immigration each year.
5. The results of the sensitivity analyses are available from the authors by request.

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