Int. Jrnl. of Soc. of Agr. & Food, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 102–118

Labor Recruitment and Immigration in the Eastern North Carolina Food Industry

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[Paper first received, 16 April 2011; in final form, 8 September 2011]

Abstract. The food industry has been responsible for much of the immigration into North Carolina, with fruit and vegetable agriculture and factories for processing poultry, pickles, pork, and seafood central to the economies of the state's eastern coastal corridor. Different sectors of the food industry, however, influence communities of the region differently and have varied influences on the communities from which immigrants come. This article compares three branches of North Carolina's food industry – 1. poultry, pickle, and pork producers; 2. seafood producers; and 3. fresh fruit and vegetable producers – in terms of their labor recruitment methods and how those methods have influenced receiving and sending communities. It concludes with a brief consideration of the relationship between immigrants and new food movements oriented toward eating healthier, more locally, and more organically.

Introduction

In 1898, in New Bern, North Carolina, a pharmacist named Caleb Bradham mixed together sugar, carbonated water, and a handful of secret flavorings and ingredients, creating a soft drink he called Pepsi. The drink was meant to please the palate while lifting the spirits and curing indigestion. Caleb's vision was to combine foods and remedies together in such a way that pharmaceuticals would become relegated to the treatment of exceptional illnesses. Yet Pepsi caught on as a beverage more than a remedy, and Caleb's vision got lost in its success. His original bottling plant became two, then three, then dozens across the South and North-east, eventually becoming the keystone product of a food and beverage empire that today boasts over $11 billion in food sales per year and spends over a billion on advertising in the United States (Nestle, 2001). PepsiCo is but one of two leading world food companies founded in North Carolina and one of three with strong ties to rural North Carolina products. RJR/Nabisco and Altria (formerly Philip Morris) – both founded on North Carolina and Virginia tobacco – have strong historical ties to the state and

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ISSN: 0798-1759 This journal is blind refereed.

have joined other large food companies in setting up manufacturing centers in the state, underscoring the importance of the political and moral economies of food production across the region (Griffith, 2009).

Eastern North Carolina is a complex food- and beverage-producing region, not only having given birth to world famous soft-drink brands like Pepsi and Dr Pepper but also home to fairly well-known foods like Mt. Olive Pickles, Butterball Turkeys, Smithfield Hams, and Purdue Chicken. Less well known are local delicacies like soft-shell blue crabs and blue crab meat, Bogue Sound water-melons, and White Lake and New Bern blue-berries. Through most of the nineteenth and twnetieth centuries, food and beverage production in North Carolina was accomplished by African-American and white women and men working in agricultural fields and food processing plants. Beginning in the 1980s, most Eastern North Carolina farms and food processing plants began recruiting migrant and immigrant Mexican and Central American workers to their work forces through a variety of mechanisms. Poultry, pork, and pickle industries, for example, recruited Latino immigrants by hiring them directly from the agricultural work force and thereafter utilizing network recruiting, while cucumber, sweet potato, blue-berry, and other food-producing farmers drew upon a combination of farm labor contractors (who in turn hired migrant Latino crews), long-established ties with Florida winter-growing communities, and temporary foreign workers carrying H-2 visas. The state's seafood industries, located in small towns on or near the Atlantic coast, also used temporary foreign workers with H-2 visas. Given their somewhat different recruiting strategies, I consider these three groups – poultry–pork–pickle producers, fruit and vegetable producers, and seafood producers – as distinct from one another in terms of the consequences of their labor recruiting for migrant sending and receiving regions.

Generally, of these three branches of the food industry, the poultry–pickles–pork industries have stimulated more settlement of Latino families in the region and have been responsible for more of the formation of a complex, heterogeneous, yet increasingly self-aware Latino community in Eastern North Carolina than the other two. As families become rooted to Eastern North Carolina, particularly through children, individual immigrants are less likely to consider returning to Mexico or Central America, although most still maintain ties to natal communities through wire transfer services and other forms of communication. Both Latinos' awareness of themselves as members of an ethnic community and their communication with sending communities have been facilitated by the growth of an entrepreneurial and civically engaged class of Latinos in the region, as well as by the work of universities, community colleges, and state agencies.

Seafood production – although growing through the late 1980s and1990s largely due to access to legal temporary foreign labor brought in from Mexico with H-2B visas – is currently in a state of decline due to a variety of factors, including competition from imports from Mexican seafood producers. Despite the industry's decline, the roles that Mexican seafood processing workers have played in the origins and growth of the Latino community have been significant, in part by contributing individuals to the region's Latino entrepreneurial class. Returning home for several months every season, most Mexican migrants in seafood production maintain close, ongoing, physical, emotional, and material connections with their communities in Mexico. By contrast, most also have little long-term impact on communities in Eastern North Carolina.[1] Over 20 years of this cyclical migration, however, has enhanced the local Latino community. This has occurred specifically because several former

contract workers have remained in North Carolina, marrying locals or settling in towns near where they worked, with some even founding businesses, and these individuals have provided a basis for other contract workers to work outside of the terms of their contracts and, if they so desire, become undocumented immigrants.

Finally, the labor recruitment practices of fruit and vegetable producers have resulted in both some settlement of Latinos in the region and in the persistence of a highly mobile, temporary, migrant Latino labor force whose presence is most visible during the spring, summer, and early fall. Migrant farm-working Latinos thus occupy a middle group in terms of their attachment to and effects on North Carolina rural communities; their attachments to their home communities in Mexico and Central America tend to be mixed as well. Many migrant farmworkers' experiences vis-à-vis both North Carolina and Latin American communities, further, have been mediated by South Florida's winter fruit and vegetable producing region.

These observations are based on several studies I have conducted over the past 25 years as a research anthropologist working in Eastern North Carolina, South Florida, Georgia, Mexico, Honduras, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica. They include studies of the impact of immigration on rural communities in south-eastern North Carolina, Florida, and Georgia (Griffith, 2005, 2008); several studies focusing on H-2 workers in seafood and agriculture (Griffith et al., 1995; Griffith, 2006) and on the state's fisheries (Griffith, 1999); a study of immigrant entrepreneurship in rural North Carolina; a study comparing migration's impacts on sending communities in Olancho, Honduras and Veracruz, Mexico; and an oral history project focusing on Latino leaders in Eastern North Carolina. Along with these research projects, working with Ricardo Contreras and East Carolina University's Nuevo South Research and Action Collaborative, I have participated in three community engagement projects that established partnerships with Latino organizations to address issues of concern to these organizations and to the Latino community in general (e.g. diabetes management, domestic violence prevention, improved opportunities for nutritious food and physical activity). Because these research and engagement projects and partnerships were developed to meet different objectives over different time periods, they utilized mixed methods that included ethnographic work, cultural mapping/ transect walks, surveys, cultural consensus tests, pile sorting tests, photo-voice techniques, and corresponding methods of analysis (e.g. statistical and text analysis).

In the main body of this article, I draw on these studies to focus on the relations between labor recruitment practices of three branches of Eastern North Carolina's food industry on sending and receiving communities. Part of this discussion considers how immigrants fit into the changing political economy of food, recognizing immigrants' critical roles as workers in agribusiness and that immigrant and migrant foodways often change as they move from place to place. Although less central to the article's theme, I also take note of the growing emphasis on community-based agriculture and fisheries in the face of increasing criticism of agribusiness and the fast-food industry, linking them to the importance of food to a nascent Latino entrepreneurial class and considering the immigrant community in relation to the growing moral economy of food production. I discuss moral economy later in the article, but here point out that I draw on E.P. Thompson's (1971, p. 79) use of the term as a 'popular consensus… grounded upon a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community' (Griffith, 2009). Below I briefly trace the history of Latino immigration into

North Carolina, including structural factors shaping this population flow and their implications for theories of migration, immigration, and the settlement process.

History and Theory of Latino Immigration into North Carolina

Immigration as complex as that of Latinos into North Carolina is never due to mere economic processes of supply and demand. Several political economic processes converged during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s to stimulate and sustain Latino immigration into North Carolina and construct the state's food industry labor forces, including processes in Mexico and Central America as well as in the state and across the U.S. South. As the first significant populations of Latinos arrived as migrant farmworkers, changes taking place within the farm labor market contributed to the origins and growth of the state's Latino farm-labor crews. During the 1960s, the Mexicanization of farm labor – dating as far back as 1917 in the West, South-west, and Texas and greatly enhanced during the 1942–1964 Bracero era – began moving eastward, replacing and displacing predominantly African-American and some Puerto Rican crews (Hahamovitch, 1999). This process had its roots in the mechanization of sugar beets and cotton, which disrupted migrant farmworker itineraries and forced both farmworkers and farm-labor contractors to seek alternative employment; many moved into south Florida's expanding winter vegetable and citrus production, at times with the assistance of the U.S. Employment Service, and from there moved into the summer harvests further north, including the Carolinas (Commission on Agricultural Workers, 1992; Heppel, 1983; Heppel and Amendola, 1992; Hahamovitch, 1999).

At the same time, the Civil Rights movement and other developments expanded opportunities for African-Americans outside of agriculture. The expansion of Florida's hospitality, fast-food, and construction industries and recruitment into the military for the Vietnam War, a process also affecting large numbers of Puerto Ricans, joined increasing militancy and racial consciousness among African-American youth to erode the reproduction of African-American crews in Florida agriculture. As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans had similar opportunities (Duany, 2001). A tobacco farmer in North Carolina said of this period that African-American youth simply began refusing to take orders from white men; as elder African-American farm supervisors retired or died, it became impossible to work with African-American youth (Griffith, 2006, p. 61). While a handful of African-American crews and farm-workers lingered in agriculture (Amendola and Griffith, 1992; Griffith, 2007), both the supply of African-Americans and the demand for African-American crews declined through the 1970s (Commission on Agricultural Workers, 1992).

Developments in Latin America also contributed to Latinos flowing into eastern agricultural harvests, with sporadic influxes of Haitian labor and a sustained presence of Jamaicans in south Florida sugar and east coast apples (Richman, 2005; Griffith, 2006). In Central America, civil wars in the late 1970s and early 1980s occurred in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, with many Guatemalan refugees in particular ending up in Florida agriculture (Burns, 1996). Across Latin America, peasant communities began to see the erosion of state support for agricultural production and, somewhat later, the liberalization of trade that flooded Latin American markets with cheap commodities, including beans and basic grains (Fischer and Benson, 2006). Mexico, for example, began withdrawing from support of coffee production in the 1980s, following Venezuela's model of shifting its emphasis to support of pe-

troleum (Roseberry, 1983). The Mexican Coffee Institute (Instituto Mexicano del Café or INMECAFE) began to be phased out in the late 1980s and was disbanded completely in 1993. Similar developments took place in Guatemala and elsewhere, creating economic crises in peasant communities even before the trade agreements (e.g. NAFTA) of the mid-1990s further flooded Latin American markets with U.S. corn and other commodities. Developments such as these forced many more families into international migration streams.

By the mid-1980s most of the African-American farm-labor crews in the eastern United States had been replaced by Latino crews from Mexico and Guatemala. It was also during this time that significant changes were taking place in meat and poultry processing, laying the groundwork for recruitment of Latinos to those industries. The development of new 'further processed' product lines such as boxed pork and beef and boned chicken-breasts shifted demand for food processing labor from local supermarkets scattered around the country to rural processing plants (Skaggs, 1985; Griffith, 1993; Stull et al., 1995). The new products were developed in response to the increasingly busy life-styles of working women, to fuel the growing fast-food industry, and as a result of growing consumer demand for leaner meats and particularly for chicken, which surpassed beef consumption in the United States in 1987 (Griffith, 1993; Schlosser, 2001; Striffler, 2005). Ironically, it was into poultry, pork, pickle, seafood and other food processing that many African-Americans went from farm-work, yet in the late 1980s they began to suffer competition from Latino workers who were actively recruited into food processing, through networks, from farm-labor crews (Griffith, 1993, 1995b; Fink, 2001; Striffler, 2005).

A principal player in this process was the U.S. Congress, which passed the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) and work authorized around 1 000 000 farmworkers under the Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) provision of the law – the vast majority of them Latino (Commission on Agricultural Workers, 1992). Once work authorized, SAWs could move from agriculture into other occupations, including food processing, cross the Mexico–U.S. border freely, and spread the word that in order to be legalized in the United States it was best to work and live there first. IRCA also created two new visa classifications from one that were instrumental in fueling North Carolina agriculture and seafood processing: the H-2A and H-2B visas. H-2A visas were formerly H-2 visas issued primarily to Jamaicans working in sugar cane and east-coast apples and Basque shepherds working in the western United States; after IRCA the supply of H-2A agricultural workers shifted from the Caribbean to Mexico, with North Carolina tobacco and cucumber farmers spear-heading the use of the visa to import Mexican workers. H-2B visas were created to supply temporary foreign labor to non-agricultural seasonal occupations, such as seafood processing, and were used heavily by seafood processing houses in North Carolina, Maryland, and Virginia. The availability of this visa enabled seafood processors to import Mexican women during a time that the former African-American, female work-force was beginning to age out of the work-force and failing to reproduce itself (Griffith, 1987). Although some displacement of African-American workers by Latinos took place, the younger African-American women had been finding jobs in the nursing home, hospitality, and fast-food industries and entering community colleges as these colleges enhanced their recruitment of minorities and other non-traditional students (Griffith, 2006).

These diverse political economic processes in the United States and Latin America – including industrial restructuring, immigration and food policy, and changing la-

bor markets and consumption habits – have all influenced the growth of the Latino population in North Carolina and the construction of food industry labor forces. While the state was instrumental in providing seafood workers to North Carolina plants and legalizing large numbers of agricultural workers, capital and labor have joined to staff the poultry, pork, and pickle industries. Specifically, network recruitment, a practice familiar to international labor migrants (Massey et al., 1987), was critical to this process, with current workers recruiting family and friends and food companies offering incentives for workers to bring others into the processing plants.

The social construction of food industry labor forces has been accompanied by various practices designed to maintain power relationships in the food industry that keep wages low and working conditions and opportunities for advancement highly controlled. These include what Ann Kingsolver (2007) describes as 'strategic alterity', or the process where employers valorize their own productive work by devaluing the work of their employees, and the processes of stigmatization that Peter Benson (2008) describes in relation to the tobacco industry, where labor camps and other areas have become 'Mexican space' designed to confine Latino interactions to each other and to limited areas. Similarly, immigration researchers have outlined the process of 'segmented assimilation' (Portes and Zhou, 1993), in which immigrants are assimilated in different ways that have distinct economic consequences for themselves and for subsequent generations, with some emulating a white middle class, some persisting as an impoverished underclass, and some attempting to forge a new middle-class status by preserving their home country customs, values, and cultural practices.

Each of these positions represents the North Carolina case to some degree, yet one final note concerns the transformation of the Latino presence in North Carolina from predominantly single men and fewer women of productive age to an increasing number of families and households with complex legal status profiles. As in Iowa, Minnesota, and other so-called new destinations, this transformation seems to have taken place around seven to nine years after IRCA, when increasing numbers of women and children began joining their spouses in these destinations (Fennelly, 2008; Griffith, 2008). This development has resulted in people living in the same household representing a variety of legal statuses and thus having differential access to social and economic resources, manifesting a form of segmented assimilation within the same family rather than across ethnic groups or social classes. In the sections that follow, I compare three branches of North Carolina's food industry that, paralleling legal status diversity in households, have resulted in overlapping yet somewhat distinct relationships between Latinos and communities in North Carolina and Latin America.

Poultry, Pickles, Pork, and the People Who Process Them: Immigration into Southeastern North Carolina

Duplin, Sampson, and Pender Counties make up south-eastern North Carolina's poultry, pork, and pickle corridor, roughly following Interstate 40 between Raleigh and Wilmington and including the recently heavily Latinized small towns of Newton Grove, Clinton, Mt. Olive, Faison, Rose Hill, Wallace, and Burgaw. The largest of these towns has a population of around 8,500, but most are between 600 and 3,500. All three industries, in the past 20 years, have sifted immigrant labor into their operations, which are vertically integrated, with linked sectors for growing, servic-

ing/ feeding, and processing their primary product (turkeys or chickens, hogs, and cucumbers). As such, new immigrants, nearly all Latino, have found work in the cucumber fields, on hog and poultry farms, and, in the largest numbers, in the processing plants. A few have found work in companies that provide materials or services to agriculture and rural industry, such as a company that provides specialized products for building and maintaining the large 'hog hotels' (confinement barns) found on farms throughout the region.

While most of the Latino immigrants are from Mexico, the region has been attracting a growing number of Honduran refugees and immigrants since the devastation following Hurricane Mitch in 1998, as well as Salvadorans and Guatemalans. As noted earlier, the settlement and elaboration of the population – more women and children, more school and church attendance, more accessing health care, etc. – dates to the mid-1990s, although migrant farm-workers arrived earlier. In part to service the migrant farm-worker population, regional health and service network staff have developed language and cultural skills to deal with Latin American Spanish speakers. One of the most effective health centers in the region at dealing with new immigrant Latinos is in Sampson County, just outside of Newton Grove, where it sits on the same road as an Episcopal Church that provides Sunday services in Spanish and follows with food distributions, also advocating on behalf of farm-workers. A second neighboring organization, Telemon, is part of the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs and dedicates itself to placing farm-workers in more stable, less seasonal jobs. A large Catholic Church in Newton Grove has attracted large numbers of Latinos, in part due to its name (Our Lady of Guadalupe), which preceded Latino immigration by nearly 20 years.

Although most of the region is rural, the nearby city of Wilmington and its surrounding metropolitan area, on the Lower Cape Fear River, is one of the fastest growing regions of the United States, with between 250 000 and 300 000 residents. Its booming construction industry draws many immigrants out of meat-packing and farm-work, and it is home to a handful of agencies and organizations that serve the Latino population in some capacity. In nearby Brunswick County, just south of Wilmington, the Mexican consulate has established a *Plaza Comunitarias* at Brunswick Community College; the *Plaza* provides a variety of services to new immigrants oriented toward attracting them into the state community college system. Finally, the development of several golf-courses and gated communities between Wilmington and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, a relatively well-known golf and beach resort area, has drawn immigration labor into land development (e.g. draining swamps, clearing forests), golf-course maintenance and landscaping, and the hospitality industry.

The character of the food processing sector and the regional economy, combined with a growing social service network with bilingual staff and a growing Latino entrepreneurial class, has made it relatively easy for new immigrant Latinos to settle into the region. One principal driver of this process has been the many components of the food processing sector – from farms to factories with several intermediate and support services, such as transportation and feed milling – and the many food companies operating in the region. Even if undocumented, immigrants can find work in one or more of the sector's components and can move among these components or among different food companies in cases where they are fired for not having papers or for other reasons, similar to Grey's (1999) observations regarding meat-packing workers in Iowa who migrate among meat-packing plants and other economic re-

sponsibilities. Latino businesses provide some cushion against economic fluctuations as well, at times offering credit to Latinos out of work and benefiting from the food industry for providing employment and disposable income for their customers and for members of business owners' families.

Magdalena Rodriguez,[2] for example, is a young woman from Veracruz who came to North Carolina with her parents at the age of 14 and, after graduating from high school, landed a job in a large turkey processing plant. Having spent several years in school while living in a Spanish-speaking household, she was completely bilingual and soon promoted to the personnel department to facilitate Latino hiring, a practice common in the food processing plants (Griffith, 1995a). In 2004, her parents opened a *taquería* (restaurant specializing in tacos) and in 2009 a small convenience store, both on a route between the large turkey processing plant and a large predominantly Latino trailer park that houses workers at the plant. The taquería has since become popular among Anglos as well as Latinos. Shortly after her parents founded the store, Magdalena lost her job in the plant during a renewed wave of document checking following Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) work-place raids elsewhere in the United States and North Carolina. After leaving the plant, she began managing her parents' convenience store, hoping to work until the food plants in the region begin hiring undocumented immigrants again.[3]

In a second case, the Honduran owner of a small Latino convenience store in medium-sized town in Duplin County offered a young woman a job after she was orphaned following a work-place raid that resulted in both of her parents being deported. While the parents worked on crossing the border a second time, accumulating money and connections, the shopkeeper paid the young woman enough to stay in the family's dwelling and purchase food. Although the shopkeeper didn't need the teen's labor, he was a friend of the family and felt responsible for her.

Latino entrepreneurs in the poultry–pickle–pork corridor provide several other functions that enable and enhance Latino settlement. Acting as cultural gate-keepers and conduits for information, they inform newly arriving immigrants of bilingual health care providers and others offering services of interest, create safe and comfortable spaces for the undocumented, sell Latin American foods and other nostalgia products, and assist in the replication of home country traditions such as *quinceañeras* (fifteenth birthday celebrations similar to debutante balls). In one of the heavily Latinized communities of the corridor, for example, a woman provides a service of customizing dresses with lace, ribbons, and other adornments for various celebrations. She is tied into a network of other Latino business people who alter dresses, bake cakes, and provide related services out of their homes, and her shop serves as the central location where her clients learn of the range of celebration-related services available. As an added service, she insists that those to whom she refers clients offer them fair prices and provide quality service; if she hears differently, she stops referring clients to them. Finally, at least two entrepreneurs in the region have founded media outlets – radio, newspapers, and television programs – to interview local leaders and educate immigrants regarding programs of interest, human and worker rights issues, and provide general information to the Latino community.

At the core of many Latino businesses and celebrations is food. Latinos dominate food sales at rural flea markets, selling prepared and cooked foods and fresh fruits and vegetables. Many of those selling food are tied into regional food distribution networks that include people who travel around as pin-hookers – independent merchants who buy ripe fruit directly from farmers after the main harvesting crews have

passed through the fields, selling the fruit in venues like flea markets or directly to restaurants (Griffith et al., 1995). Most Latino *tiendas* (stores) have sections devoted to fresh produce that include cactus, tomatillos, and other highly desired fruits and vegetables; home country snacks; tortillas that are often made in local *tortillerías* (tortilla factories) with home country recipes; dry and packaged goods; and a variety of dried chilies, spices, sauces, and other cooking ingredients. Many of these products are purchased in bulk at Sam's Club or Walmart and then repackaged for sale in more culturally comfortable settings and convenient locations.

Among the more valuable services that Latino convenience stores across North Carolina provide are wire transfer services for sending remittances to families in Latin America, their ubiquity a testament to continued connections between U.S. and Latin American communities among those settled here. As long as those connections exist, Latino communities across the poultry–pickle–pork corridor remain at least partially transnational. Data from a survey conducted as part of a 2002–2005 study of the region (Griffith, 2005) found that attachments to the region were split along three lines, with 27% saying they planned on staying in the region permanently, 42% saying they would stay if economic and political developments remained favorable, and around 30% reporting that they would not stay permanently in the region. These data indicate the presence in south-eastern North Carolina of a partially settled, partially transnational population.

It is, however, a population that that has been gradually becoming more and more attached to the region, particularly as a second generation with full citizenship rights and few attachments to Latin America beyond their parents emerges. Elementary school enrollments indicate that such a generation is emerging, with some rural elementary schools boasting Latino enrollments of over 50% and many in the 30–40% range. Across North Carolina, Latino enrollment in the all public schools rose from 0.7% to 10.7% from the 1989–1990 to 2008–2009 school years; in some Eastern North Carolina counties, 2009 Latino public-school enrollments, for all grades, were between 30% and 40% (Department of Public Instruction, 2009). In addition, households visited in the 2002–2005 study were most commonly comprised of people representing multiple legal statuses – with some members U.S. citizens, some undocumented, and others possessing various kinds of work authorization or legal residence in the state. Such household profiles contrast markedly with most of those who come to the state to process seafood or who travel through the state as migrant farm-workers.

Temporary Foreign Labor in North Carolina Seafood

Beginning in 1988, Mid-Atlantic seafood plants began importing workers from Mexico to work in blue crab and shrimp processing on temporary contracts, drawing on communities near the coasts of Sinaloa and Tabasco, where fishing and seafood processing were part of local economic landscapes. Most of the Sinaloa workers came (and still come, although in fewer numbers) from an area of industrialized agriculture combined with small fishing and farming communities between the urban marketing centers of Guasave and Los Mochis – a corridor that parallels the Pan-American Highway. Workers were primarily women carrying H-2B visas who were brought in to work from March or April through November or December, returning home during the winter months. Beginning in 2009, Ricardo Contreras and I began interviewing women working in a single crab plant in Eastern North Carolina, col-

lecting life- and work-histories from 20 of the women initially and subsequently visiting them and others in Mexico in early 2010 and 2011. This work built on over 20 years of research on the region's fishing and seafood processing industry – research begun before the transition from African-American to Mexican labor and continuing through the growth of the industry through the 1990s due to the availability of immigrant labor and into the more recent twenty-first century decline in production largely due to competition from imported seafood (Griffith, 1987, 1999, 2006).

While the seafood industry has been responsible for familiarizing these women with Eastern North Carolina, most seafood workers have had more of an impact on their home communities, where their families remain, than on North Carolina communities. Women arrive as individual workers, traveling without family members except in cases where they are related to other women and the few men working in North Carolina seafood. In most cases, seafood plants are located in small coastal communities that are far from major metropolitan centers. The women are housed in dormitory-like conditions, transported to and from work in company buses (unless the dorms are within walking distance of the plant), and tend to have limited interaction with either native North Carolinians or the growing Latino population in the state. Part of the reason for their lack of interaction with others outside of their work environment has to do with their amounts of work. When the volumes of crab, shrimp, or other types of seafood are high, women can work as many as 20 hours per day and typically work 12 to 16 hour days six to seven days per week, although the supplies of seafood vary through the season, from week to week, and from day to day. Such work-loads prevent them from interacting with anyone other than fellow workers, supervisors, and plant owners. Outside of work they have opportunities to interact with others on regular trips to Walmart and other shopping venues, but these excursions are also highly controlled in that they are taken there and back by busses driven by plant supervisors (usually Mexican labor contractors).

Despite these restrictions, interactions between seafood workers and other community members – Anglos and Latinos alike – are possible as conditions of work and living change over the course of the season or from season to season. For example, during the 2009 season, the supply of seafood to the plant Contreras and I were familiar with was low; women there were working an hour or two per week, leaving many days completely idle. During idle times, women often seek work in other sectors of the local economy, which is technically illegal but supported by plant owners and labor contractors. In 2009, for example, most of the women we met had spent time working on local blue-berry farms, picking blue-berries; one woman visited a friend in a nearby community – a woman who had formerly been a seafood processing worker but had dropped out of the program – and together they traveled to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, to work with a painting crew. From such experiences, women learn more and more about the opportunities available in the local economy and increase their general knowledge about transportation routes, housing options, community resources, and so forth. During these idle times, as well, they are more likely to form relationships with local Latino and Anglo men or other members of local communities.

In Belhaven, I met a young local fisherman who had married a former seafood worker and, with her, opened a Latino store to serve the seasonal seafood processing population. He described his good fortune by saying that suddenly every summer Belhaven would come alive with over one hundred young Mexican women with whom he couldn't communicate. 'Here I was', he said, 'surrounded by all these

young pretty women, and I didn't even know how to say "hey" to them. So I got some Spanish tapes and pretty soon was saying "buenos dias" and "que pasa" and before long I had a wife.' In New Bern, two women who left a seafood plant because of an abusive foreman met Latina chambermaids at a local hotel and secured work as chambermaids, staying in rooms provided by the hotel until they found their own accommodations. Working along the Gulf of Mexico coast, Rebecca Crosthwait (2009) found that workers with temporary H-2B visas working in the shipbuilding industry call their visas 'Visa Libres' because they can use them to acquire drivers licenses and other official documents and then seek work in the general economy.

Using similar mechanisms, former seafood workers have dropped out of contract labor agreements and settled in Eastern North Carolina, in some cases founding businesses that have remained viable for several years after their participation in the seafood. Among the more successful is a woman we call Sonia Rodriguez, who worked for two different seafood processing plants over the course of three years in the mid-1990s. At the first plant, while still in her early twenties, she made an effort to practice English, some of which she learned in Mexico, and completed much of the paper-work involved with getting visas and arranging international transportation. When the owners learned of this, they told her that if she filed tax forms for the workers they could get refunds. 'I spoke English', she said, 'but I had to get a big, big dictionary, because the words on the forms and in the instructions didn't look like they were in English.' The owners and managers at this plant, she said, were exceptional, stocking refrigerators in their dorms for their arrival, fitting their beds with fresh mattresses and bed-clothes, and repainting the rooms at the beginning of every season. Unfortunately, the plant went out of business after her second season, and she began working at a different seafood plant.

At the second plant, Sonia was less fortunate. Not only did they not recognize her expertise with the workers' taxes, conditions in the dorm and at work were far inferior to the first plant. After a few weeks there, she slipped away and found work at a local textile factory. Eventually befriending a woman from Michoacán who had worked at a local tax preparation company, they decided to found an income tax service that catered to Latinos. Working at first with little more than two desks, a lap-top, credit card debt, and offices in their homes, they established the business and now operate out of a large office in a small shopping center in one of Eastern North Carolina's larger metropolitan areas. While cases such as this are rare, I have encountered a number of other small business owners who began as seafood workers with H-2B visas, as well as other women who have married locals and remained in the area, enhancing its Latino presence.

Yet after over 20 years of Mexican seafood workers coming into Eastern North Carolina, the cyclical migration has had far more profound impacts on sending communities and families than in North Carolina. Uniformly, women we interviewed expressed disappointment with economic alternatives in Sinaloa and pride at being able to provide for family with these higher paying jobs. According to Ms. Jimenez, a 58-year-old woman in her nineteenth season in seafood processing, she decided to come to North Carolina 'because the work we do there [in Sinaloa] doesn't help too much. It is barely enough to eat and buy clothes. Working here [in North Carolina] allows me to buy a truck when back at home, to fix the house, all things I cannot do if working there'. Most women who have worked in North Carolina seafood plants have managed to expand their homes, purchase appliances or vehicles, and gener-

ally improve their material quality of life, suggesting that the migration was instrumental in the formation of a new, primarily female middle class in Sinaloa.

This is further supported by how much they value the education of their children, usually saying that they want their children to work in jobs superior to seafood processing, making an effort, in the abstract, to resist reproducing working class positions. Again, Ms. Jimenez:

> 'If I didn't come, I would not have been able to educate my child, allowing him to succeed. Now he is about finishing his higher education. He would not be able to do that if I stayed there. And he understands that, he understands that is the reason I am coming to the United States. People respect him now (because of his higher education degree).'

These successes, unfortunately, often come at great cost. Separation from family for long periods of time year after year strains family relationships and often leads to divorce, drug-abuse, and, in the case of single mothers, problems with the surrogate parents who care for their children during the months they spend abroad. The view of Ms. Luna, a 44-year-old woman who has been participating in the program for eight seasons, and whose children are 20, 23, and 28, is representative:

> 'I wanted to work so that my children would have a career, so that they wouldn't have to suffer as I did working in the fields, or that they didn't have to live away from home. I wanted my children to have good jobs when married. That was my desire, but I didn't accomplish it. Out of the three, only the youngest one is studying, she has a career in Political Science and Administration, but she has also suffered… My other son consumed drugs. He was using crystal… For months I don't know where he is, I am always looking for a phone to try to find him, calling other people to see if they have seen him… The one in California, he also takes drugs. He has no plans for his life, he sells his shoes, pants, shirts – all things that give him – things that I buy when I find sales here (in North Carolina).'

One final note about this migration concerns the role of agribusiness in Sinaloa in the development of North Carolina's seafood labor supply. The coastal Sinaloa corridor that follows the Pan-American Highway has been highly developed as a center of sophisticated agribusiness, where several U.S. and Mexican companies have established vast irrigated farms of tomatoes (the region's signature crop), corn, oranges, mangoes, and other crops as well as seafood processing plants, experiment stations, and green-houses. As an indication of the corridor's sophistication, well known and, in the view of many, infamous companies like Monsanto have been pushing for an expansion of genetically modified (GM) corn in Sinaloa, and were recently granted permission to experiment with GM corn in nearby Tamaulipus, which is 'home to 16 of the 59 remaining strains of native corn' (Acedo, 2011).

Agribusiness has been responsible in creating a working class for the farms and food factories of the area, and all the women in our study had had experience working in agribusiness – usually in agriculture and seafood processing both but always in seafood processing – before coming to North Carolina. In addition, the seafood plants in Mexico have stricter standards of hygiene than U.S. plants – primarily because most of the Mexican seafood is exported to the United States, like much of the farm produce – and thus the women are more highly trained in Mexico than required in North Carolina, giving North Carolina producers a ready, disciplined,

and largely captive labor force. Agribusiness in Florida provides a similar service for North Carolina farms.

Immigration into North Carolina Agriculture

In an earlier section, I traced the transition from African-American to Latino labor in east-coast agriculture, a process that was underway by IRCA and nearly complete by the mid-1990s. In their search for work, Latinos early targeted counties producing tobacco, pickling cucumbers, berries, apples, Douglas firs (for Christmas trees), and sweet potatoes. From the mid-1980s through the early 1990s, as Latinos continued increasing the share of the state's migrant agricultural workers and food processing companies began recruiting Latinos to meet the rising demands for packing house labor, undermining the labor supply to agriculture (Griffith, 1993; Fink, 2001; Striffler, 2005), a variety of recruitment strategies emerged. The three most important recruiting strategies are: 1. continued reliance on Florida-based migrant crews, usually brought into the state by labor contractors; 2. the direct hiring of Latinos by farmers; and 3. the use of temporary foreign workers carrying H-2A visas. A small number of workers are local residents – some Latino, some African-American or white – who work on farms sporadically, combining farm-work with other jobs or other forms of economic support.

Briefly, labor contractors often bring crews into the state and either house them in labor camps that they own or assist them in finding local housing, transport them from housing to work in buses, supervise them in the fields and packing houses, and often buy food and cook for them, deducting some of the expenses of these services from their pay. Farmers who hire Latinos directly often have long-term relationships with crews who work in Florida agriculture or elsewhere part of the year and seasonally in North Carolina – crews that have been coming to their farms season after season. Most of the blue-berry growers around White Lake, North Carolina, for example, depend on crews of workers based for much of the year in Okeechobee, Florida. In some cases, these farms have had Latino foremen for many years who work year-round on the farm or who spend part of the year in North Carolina and part in Florida. Finally, H-2A workers – guest workers similar to those in the seafood processing industry – have been a part of the North Carolina agricultural landscape since 1989, primarily working in tobacco and cucumbers. From 168 H-2A workers brought in for the 1989 season, the program rose to import over 10 000 workers in the early twenty-first century and now imports between 6,000 and 8,000 workers annually (North Carolina Employment Security Commission, 2007). The vast majority of these workers are brought into the state through the North Carolina Growers Association, processed in a central location, and then placed in small groups on farms across the state. Their contracts and conditions of employment are similar to Mexican seafood workers, except that they receive free housing and more worker protections such as guaranteed amounts of work, wage-rates that exceed minimum wage, and free transportation.

With the exception of those crews that are composed of families and those who drop out of agriculture to work in food processing, construction, golf course maintenance, or other economic sectors, most North Carolina farm-workers remain migrants and thus continue to cycle through the region, having limited impacts on local North Carolina communities. Most neither bring nor form families in North Carolina, tend not to purchase houses or other real estate, and remain in the state

on a temporary basis. Due to the high turn-over in agriculture, they may work in agriculture only a few seasons, and thus in many cases it is not even the same individuals returning to the state. Of course, as a class, migrant farm-workers support an industry – North Carolina agriculture – that is critical to rural identities and ways of life, and their collective support of agriculture may be viewed as a significant impact.

And in small ways, they have an impact on the Latino community. Many Latino entrepreneurs depend on this seasonal population to boost food sales, the client bases of bars, restaurants, and game rooms, and the fees associated with wiring money, but as a whole the farm-worker population is temporary. Their impacts on Florida communities tend to be greater, because many use inland southern Florida communities like Okeechobee, Immokalee, and Belle Glade as home bases, leaving spouses, children, and other relatives behind as they migrate north. Still others – especially the H-2A workers – return to Mexican and Central American communities regularly or periodically, usually putting their earnings to use adding to houses or meeting household consumption and education needs. Agriculture continues to play a critical role in helping new Latinos become familiar with the state, but it is in the interests of farmers, labor contractors, and the growers association to keep the migrant labor force flexible, ready to work wherever and whenever they are needed yet disposable when the work ends (Hackenberg et al., 1993; Smith and Winders, 2007). Combined with dormitory-style housing in labor camps or on individual farms, these conditions select for single young workers, usually male, and against families, inhibiting settlement and encouraging physical (if not occupational) mobility.

Conclusion

Labor recruitment practices in agribusiness have been responsible for much of the immigration into North Carolina and other new immigrant destinations in the United States, initially through agriculture and subsequently through food processing. While some overlap exists among the agricultural, poultry–pork–pickle processing, and seafood processing labor recruiting practices, the three sectors exhibit subtle differences that have distinct impacts on migrant sending and receiving communities. Briefly, the processing of poultry, pickles, and pork have contributed to the development and elaboration of Latino communities across Eastern North Carolina by providing year-round jobs to people in rural areas, including farm-workers, while the seafood and agricultural sectors have played smaller, if at times significant roles in the development of Eastern North Carolina's Latino neighborhoods, having greater impacts on sending communities in Latin America and Florida.

At the same time that food production has facilitated both Latino settlement and continued Latino migration, food consumption has also played a role in the character of Eastern North Carolina's Latino community. On the one hand, many Latinos have been forced to alter their eating habits as they negotiate the supermarket and fast-food nutritional landscapes of Eastern North Carolina, experiencing weight-gain and associated problems of high blood pressure, diabetes, and musculoskeletal disorders (McEwen et al., 2007; Arps et al., 2009). Farm-workers may have little to no control over the foods they eat, having food prepared for them by labor camp cooks, and isolated seafood workers may have few opportunities to acquire preferred foods in the small coastal towns where they work or at the supermarkets they visit weekly.

Settled Latinos, however, as well as those farm-workers and seafood workers lucky enough to live near established Latino neighborhoods, now have several shopping and food consumption alternatives available across North Carolina, in Latino tiendas, at rural flea markets, and in several authentic restaurants that cater to Latinos primarily or exclusively. As noted earlier, the consumption of traditional foods and their availability from Spanish-speaking merchants have been two of the more highly visible components of Latino settlement, tied to growing numbers of Latino celebrations, both public and private, in the state. Demand for Mexican and Central American foods has provided economic incentives for enterprising Latinos to move into direct food preparation, sales, and distribution. In addition to adaptations like pin-hookers, mentioned earlier, many Latinos work part-time preparing foods in traditional ways in their homes to sell by word of mouth or by arrangement with the owner of a Latino tienda. Some of these efforts are similar to current community-based programs to eat local foods, slow foods, organic foods, and healthier foods that by-pass large-scale agribusiness. Opportunities for gardening, raising livestock, and other food production on a small scale, in yards or on idle land, have been somewhat slower in materializing, but I have encountered several cases of families entering domestic production venues to feed their own families and to sell or gift small amounts of food surpluses (e.g. chicken eggs or fresh produce) to neighbors or others.

These efforts, too, signal a rejection of the current political economy of food production and a move toward a moral economy of food production, one based on shared sentiments regarding the right to a healthy diet not too dissimilar from the eighteenth century English crowd that E.P. Thompson (1971) described as demanding high-quality bread to perform high-quality work. If we consider a moral economy as one in which there is popular consensus about the proper economic roles of community members, the emphasis that Latinos place on high-quality, traditional home country foods signals an informal social movement to encourage 'proper' consumption habits among Latino families. Several initiatives, originating both within and outside of the Latino community, currently stress good nutrition and access to low-cost fresh fruits and vegetables, including a local Latino television station, research and outreach initiatives at East Carolina University's Center for Health Disparities Research Center, and efforts on behalf of a grass-roots organization called the Association of Mexicans in North Carolina (AMEXCAN) (Arps et al., 2009; personal communication, Luis Guzman, 12 July 2011; <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-cas/anth/nuevosouth>). Such efforts are likely to result in a work-force made healthier and more productive with more fresh fruits and vegetables, leaner protein sources like seafood and beans, and reduced consumption of fast food. Ironically, in North Carolina, the labor that immigrant workers seek to replenish with nutritious foods is directed, more often than not, toward producing food that enriches agribusiness.

Notes

1. In this article, the 'impacts' I describe are largely qualitative in nature, having to do with processes of family formation and settlement, for example, or communication between Latinos and Anglos outside of work sites. Because they return to their home communities annually and remain fairly isolated, without family members, while in NorthCarolina, I consider the impacts they have on North Carolina less than Latino immigrants who settle, enroll children in school, and remain all year for many years.
2. All names of immigrants used in this article are pseudonyms.

3. Work-place raids tend to have this kind of impact, forcing companies to check documents and lay off workers for a time until their personnel departments believe ICE has shifted from work-place raids to other strategies, such as serving on inter-agency, anti-terrorist task forces.

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