

# **21<sup>st</sup> Century Rural Life at the End of the Oregon Trail:**

## ***Global Migration and Economic Change In Woodburn, Oregon***

by

**Edward Kissam**

**[ekissam@jbsinternational.com](mailto:ekissam@jbsinternational.com)**

with

**Lynn Stephen**

**Anna Garcia**

**October 8, 2006**

**Aguirre Division, JBS International  
555 Airport Blvd. – Suite 400, Burlingame, California 94010**

*This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture under Agreement No. 2001-36201-11286. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.*

## **Acknowledgments**

Over the 5 years we conducted the New Pluralism study in Woodburn, Oregon, a wide range of people supported the project in diverse ways—in planning this study, conducting research, and in commenting on interim reports. I would like first of all to thank the project research team for their tireless and dedicated work on the Woodburn Community Case Study.

Anna Garcia joined me in conducting the initial field research in Woodburn during the summer of 2002 and subsequently provided field research supervision survey activities throughout 2003, as well as ongoing field in-depth field research of her own.

Lynn Stephen of the University of Oregon was a marvelous collaborator and skilled field researcher. In addition to conducting a number of key interviews herself, she recruited and worked closely with us in supervising a skilled team of researchers drawn from her students at the University of Oregon. Rachel Hansen, from the graduate program in Anthropology at the University of Oregon was a real pioneer in the study, conducting our first interviews in Woodburn during the spring of 2003 under very challenging circumstances. Jessica Cole, Tami Hoag, and Danielle Robinson from the graduate program in Anthropology, and two undergraduate students, Gabriela Romero and Edwin Vega then worked skillfully and dedicatedly during three intense weeks of further community surveying in September, 2003.

Amparo Bustos-Navarro from our Aguirre Division, JBS International did an extraordinary job of coding survey data, capturing the richness of the extensive information the team had done so well in eliciting from survey respondents. Shannon Williams, now at the University of California, Santa Cruz, did statistical analysis of both survey responses and complex household data.

Special thanks are due to two people, Michael Dale, now with the Northwest Workers' Justice Project and Mark Wilk of the Oregon Law Center, who very graciously introduced us to Woodburn initially (during the course of an earlier study of transnational teenage migrant workers) and who later share valuable insights from their years of living and working in the community. provided crucial insights early on. Subsequently, Julie Samples and Santiago Ventura of The Oregon Law Center shared valuable information they were gathering on new migrants to the Willamette Valley.

Woodburn City Administrator, John Brown provided crucial assistance in agreeing to support our conducting the community survey and, subsequently, in reflecting about issues Woodburn faces and reviewing the study to correct factual errors, as well as contributing very thoughtful reflection on my initial analysis of several key issues. Pete McCallum, long the principal of Woodburn's High School, and a long-time member of the City Planning Commission, also provided crucial insights. Woodburn Mayor, Kathy Figley and several City Council members also were open and patient in educating us about the issues they faced and their thoughts about solutions.

A wide range of City staff, local business owners, educators, non-profit program staff, and other community leaders were also generous with their time and provided us valuable insights in a wide range of informal, non-formal, and formal interviews. More than 30 key informants and 160 community survey respondents to whom we promised anonymity did more than answer questions. They shared in-depth insights, personal experiences, and unique perspectives on life in Woodburn, as well as being personally hospitable to strangers who appeared at their door to take their time. I have tried to capture their diverse experiences and perspectives but, of course, the errors in this report are entirely my own.

<b>Table of Contents</b>	
<b>Genesis of the New Pluralism Project and the Current Monograph</b>	p. 1
<b>Overview of Woodburn</b>	p. 4
<b>Profile of Immigrants and Natives in Woodburn</b>	p. 16
<b>The Migration Networks Shaping Woodburn's Social Life</b>	p. 44
<b>Coming to the U.S. and Settling Into Woodburn</b>	p. 57
<b>Residential Patterns and Housing Arrangements</b>	p. 64
<b>Factors Affecting the Social Integration of Immigrants</b>	P 77
<b>Livelihoods in Woodburn</b>	p. 81
<b>Linguistic Profile of Woodburn</b>	p. 86
<b>Support for Immigrant Integration</b>	p. 91
<b>Woodburn Residents' Assessment of Community Life</b>	p. 95
<b>Woodburn Residents' Civic Concerns</b>	p. 111
<b>Social Program Use and Utility</b>	p. 121
<b>Civic Dialogue in Woodburn: Sources of Information</b>	p. 126
<b>Civic Involvement in Woodburn</b>	p. 130
<b>Civic Engagement and Municipal Response to Community Change</b>	p. 136
<b>Community Responses to Current Challenges</b>	p. 150
<b>The Role of Immigrant Businesses in Community Life</b>	p. 163
<b>What Can We Learn from Woodburn's Experience</b>	p. 172
<b>Recommendations for Ongoing Social Integration Efforts in Woodburn</b>	p. 178
<b>Final Conclusion</b>	p. 184

## **Genesis of the New Pluralism Project and the Current Monograph**

In the fall of 2001, the US Department of Agriculture's Fund for Rural America announced an initiative to support in-depth research into the ways in which immigration was impacting rural American life. Our "New Pluralism" study, concluded in the fall of 2005, is one of five multi-year projects which USDA's Cooperative State Research and Extension Education Service (CSREES) funded.

The initiative's central goal was to generate practical guidance for rural communities, as well as for county, state, and federal planners and decision makers as to how sweeping demographic, technological, and economic change affected these communities, to describe "best practices" and identify promising strategies for nurturing healthy communities and improvements in the quality of rural life.

One of the proposed emphases for this research program was to better understand how to harness demographic change to increase rural opportunity. We designed our research in response to this charge, focusing on the social dynamics of interactions among immigrant and native-born residents of rural communities and how these might shape civic life.

In order to understand not only the overall macro-level patterns of change in rural communities in the U.S. but to also gain insight into the micro-level dynamics of community life, we decided to base our research on case studies of a diverse range of rural communities which were being impacted by immigration—two along the Eastern Seaboard (Adel, Georgia and Newton Grove, North Carolina), two in the Midwest (Marshall, Minnesota and Marshalltown, Iowa), and two along the Pacific Seaboard (Arvin, California and Woodburn, Oregon).

This monograph reports the findings from our field research over a period of 5 years in Woodburn, Oregon. The field research included observations during four stretches of research in Woodburn during this period, in-depth interviews with more than 30 key informants (city staff, non-profit managers and staff, immigrant and non-immigrant

residents), as well semi-structured interviews with a small sample of local immigrant entrepreneurs and non-immigrant business owners and managers, community. Special efforts were made to secure information from older Woodburn residents about the post-World War II period.

The centerpiece of the community case study was a community survey of a random sample of 160 households in Woodburn; this survey was conducted in two waves—the first during the spring of 2003, the second in September. The survey questionnaire included information on coming to Woodburn (for both immigrants and non-immigrants), personal background and life experiences, household composition, perspectives on community life, service utilization, and civic engagement.

### **Key Issues Addressed in This Monograph**

There are three key issues addressed in the overall study design and in this monograph on Woodburn, Oregon.

- What is the magnitude and nature of immigration to rural US communities?
- What are the impacts of immigration?
- How can communities respond to changes stemming from immigration?

The answers to the basic research questions are, in fact, important in terms of developing practical strategies for proactive responses to integrate immigrants into community social, economic, and civic life—because, in some cases, the “solutions” developed in the abstract process of policy and political debate make virtually no contribution to improvements in community life since they are not linked to day-to-day realities and, thus, can do little to guide improvements in service delivery systems, or the legal/regulatory frameworks developed to improve societal functioning.

## **Macro-Level Context of Rural Immigration to the Pacific Seaboard Region**

The contribution of immigration to demographic change in rural America is dramatic. In 23 rural states identified by Jeffrey Passel and Michael Fix as “new growth” states for immigrant settlement, the foreign-born population increased by more than 90% in the decade from 1990-2000.<sup>1</sup> Mexicans make up by far the largest group among these immigrants to rural states.

Oregon is one of these “new growth” states. Although California remains the major destination for Mexican immigrants to the United States, there is increasing dispersion of Mexican immigrants, as a result of “rural-rural” migration from Mexico to the U.S (Mines, Gabbard, and Samardick 1992; Card and Lewis 2005; Fox 2005). In this respect, our Woodburn community case study presents an opportunity to look at what will happen with increasing levels of secondary migration among Mexican migrants in the U.S. since for most in Woodburn, the road to Oregon was via California.<sup>2</sup>

Much, though not all, of immigration-driven demographic change in the rural United States results from the influx of Mexican migrants who come to the rural U.S. to work in agriculture.<sup>3</sup> A recent analysis (Kandel 2005) identifies 149 non-metro “high-growth Hispanic” counties where there was more than 150% growth in the Hispanic population over the decade; this analysis also identified another 230 “established Hispanic” counties which had a Hispanic population of at least 10% in 1990. Kandel notes that Hispanics made up only 5% of non-metro county population at the beginning of the decade but accounted for 25% of overall population growth in these counties during the decade.

---

<sup>1</sup> Presentation by Jeffrey Passel and Michael Fix at the Urban Institute/University of California-Davis “Changing Face of Rural California” conference in May, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Census data shows that although California’s share of the Mexican immigrants decreased from 58% in 1990 to 45% in 2000, it remains the major destination. .

<sup>3</sup> Guatemalan migrants are a significant proportion of the farm labor force in the Eastern Migrant Stream but not a very large group along the Pacific Seaboard

The two New Pluralism case study communities in the Pacific Seaboard region, Arvin, California and Woodburn, Oregon provide insights about two divergent types of agricultural production region. Arvin, at the southern end of California's San Joaquin Valley (the largest agribusiness production area in the U.S.) while Woodburn, in the northern part of Oregon's Willamette Valley, is an agricultural area with more traditional small farmers. Kern County, where Arvin is located ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the country in terms of labor-intensive crop production; Marion County, where Woodburn is located, ranks 29<sup>th</sup>. Both communities have long histories of immigration from Mexico.

## **Overview of Woodburn**

Woodburn is a fairly typical Willamette Valley farming community 30 miles south of Portland. It has a population of about 20,000 persons, making it the largest community in our New Pluralism study. Like rural communities throughout much of the United States, the central part of town has small, 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian-style houses, green lawns, and beautiful gardens. Like most rural U.S. communities, the outskirts of town, along the old business Highway 99 and at the exit from the newer I-5 interstate freeway have a proliferation of fast-food franchises, a Wal-Mart Super-Store, industrial "parks", small shopping centers. The northern edge of town has several very large senior housing complexes whose retired residents make up a significant proportion of the community's population.

Woodburn is in transition—transformed in part by immigration but, also, by macro-level forces as the urban Portland sphere of influence balloons outward and as U.S. agriculture struggles to hold its own in the global economy.<sup>4</sup> The commercial section of the charming downtown neighborhood of tree-lined streets, gardens and neighborhood now has primarily Mexican businesses—small restaurants, clothing stores, and several service firms.

---

<sup>4</sup> Because Woodburn is on a major north-south Interstate Highway I-5, a large outlet mall was developed across the freeway from the main part of town.

What was once the town movie theatre is now an appliance store catering primarily to Mexicans. On what was once “the wrong side of the tracks” a new Chemeketa community college campus affords easy access to both native-born and immigrant students. Only a block away, an old church has been transformed into headquarters for the Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), a local immigrant rights and labor organization which came to prominence in the late 1980’s helping Woodburn’s Mexican farmworker immigrants complete their immigration applications and start on the road toward citizenship.

### **The Transformation of Woodburn**

Immigrant farmworkers have now been settling in the Willamette Valley and Woodburn area for more than half a century—but, as is the case throughout rural America, Woodburn’s transformation as a community is not driven solely by immigration. Four simultaneous socioeconomic and demographic transitions are underway in Woodburn. All of them contribute to the community’s re-definition of its own identity, local political tensions, and community development agenda.

### ***Changes in the Economic Context of Woodburn***

The first of these changes stems from ongoing changes in Willamette Valley agribusiness and, thus, the local economy and labor market. There have been, over the past several decades, major shifts in the competitiveness of the leading local crops and, thus, in farm labor demand, the primary driver of immigration. The Woodburn Chamber of Commerce estimates that agriculture now accounts for slightly less than 20% of business payrolls in the local area. Although it remains the largest single employment sector locally, farm employment is now declining—in part as agricultural production shifts from traditional crops to nursery production. As in most rural areas of the U.S., as farm employment decreases, there is a trend toward increasing service industry and light manufacturing employment as companies relocate to rural areas in search of cheaper facilities and labor.

However, even with growth in non-agricultural sectors, economic problems persist in the area. The manufactured home industry, one of the growing industrial sectors in the Woodburn local area, accounting for an estimated 15% of business payrolls, had been adversely affected by lower interest rates (since standard housing became more affordable) in 2003 when we conducted our study. As in other rural communities, public agencies, the local schools, other educational institutions (the local community college operates a campus in Woodburn), and local government, have now become major employers. Historically, Woodburn is experiencing the same sea-change experienced by the rest of rural America in the years from World War II until the present.

### History of Agricultural Production in the Woodburn Area

The Willamette Valley region where Woodburn is located was recognized by the earliest pioneers as a promising and fertile area in the early 1800's. This was an accurate assessment. In 1990, although farmland in the Willamette Valley comprised 10% of the total agricultural acreage in the state it accounted for 43% of Oregon's total agricultural production. The Willamette Valley differs from other farming areas of the U.S. in that it has a much higher proportion of small farmers than other major agricultural states such as California. The average farm size in Marion County where Woodburn is located was 106 acres in 2002. This is quite small by current agribusiness standards; in contrast to the overall national trend, average farm size in Oregon actually fell slightly in the 5 years from 1997 through 2002.

Since the 1960's, the major agricultural activities in the Woodburn area have been production of nursery products (trees, ornamentals, and flowers)<sup>5</sup> and berries: strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, loganberries, and Marion berries. Other important crops include hops and vegetables such as squash. These are all labor-intensive crops and, thus, there has been strong farm labor demand for years. To a certain extent, nursery and berry farm labor demand are complementary but the area has long relied on migrant

---

<sup>5</sup> Oregon's nursery industry was established in the 1920's and is concentrated in the Northern Willamette Valley where Woodburn is located.

farmworkers for peak periods of work because of the extreme seasonality of its production. Christmas tree production also provides some winter employment, but unemployment remains highly seasonal.

As in most of the U.S., World War II was a watershed in rural life in Woodburn. An elderly farmer, Jeremy Hansen, born in 1921, remembers Woodburn as being a town of only 100 or so households in the 1930's when he was growing up. He recalls that when his parents married, his father's farm was 69 acres and his mother's farm was also 69 acres.<sup>6</sup> In this pre-Depression area people grew field crops such as oats and potatoes and worked their own land. He recalled,

*"In the 1920's things were tough. People here couldn't pay their taxes. They planted a field of oats to pay their taxes. They also planted potatoes. They had chickens, pigs, mil. Everyone had a few rows of berries and potatoes. We dug them by hand...at the time, 120 acres was considered large"*

Farming grew even more precarious during the Depression. But then, agricultural production grew rapidly in the late 1930's as farmers began to irrigate and canneries began to process strawberries, pears, prunes, and pole beans. This elderly farmer sold his last farm horse in 1946 (for \$25) and remembers that by the 1950's "Woodburn had come to be considered "The Berry Capital of the World".

#### Production Trends Affecting Immigration

Another local farmer, Steve Dolan, who grew up in farming and has detailed knowledge of changes in local production from the 1960's onward, has a slightly different recollection than Hansen. He believes that berry production didn't really take off until the 1970's.<sup>7</sup> He told us that in the 1970's most local producers grew vegetables for General Foods/Birdseye. As is currently the case in the more vertically-integrated agricultural

---

<sup>6</sup> A pseudonym. Lynn Stephen interview September 17, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> A pseudonym, Lynn Stephen interview on September 17, 2003.

production sub-sectors, farmers grew whatever the packing-shipping department told them to grow (e.g. broccoli, cauliflower).

Steve Dolan's remembrance is that major Willamette Valley producers (Tankersley, Townsend) began recruiting farmworkers in Oaxaca when there was a shift toward berries. This is consistent with the accounts of early Oaxacan migrants who worked for Tankersley themselves. Berry production has probably been the primary driver of migration to Woodburn and the entire northern Willamette Valley region—because the harvest season is short, only 3 months. Most of the Mexican farmworkers we interviewed first came to work in the strawberry harvest and many continue to do so —although production peaked in the 1990's and is now declining.

With labor costs accounting for 61% of strawberry production costs in 1991, cost pressures on producers have been extreme and, of course, these pressures then ripple down to farmworkers. Historically, Oregon strawberry producers had relied on local children as well as immigrant workers in efforts to minimize harvest costs as a way to control costs. In the 1980's, for example, strawberry producers petitioned the EPA for exemptions from pesticide regulations which limited 12 and 13 year-old children's work in strawberries. Ramon Ramirez estimates that in 1990, when his labor organizing organization, *Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN)* first looked carefully at the issue about 16% of the strawberry harvest workers were children under 14 years of age.<sup>8</sup>

The cost pressures on berry production have intensified in recent years. In the 5 year period from 1997 through 2002, Oregon strawberry and caneberry production contracted by about 30%.<sup>9</sup> California strawberry production, which has always dwarfed that of Oregon and all the rest of the U.S., has increasingly captured the lucrative fresh berry market, leaving Oregon producers to compete with Washington in the less economically

---

<sup>8</sup> Anna Garcia field notes, "Minors in Agriculture Study", 1999.

<sup>9</sup> 2002 Census of Agriculture, Table 37

attractive sector of processing strawberries.<sup>10</sup>

In 2001, a local newspaper, the Statesman-Journal, quoted Roy Malensky of Oregon Berry Farms in nearby Hillsboro as estimating strawberry production costs of 28 to 30 cents per pound in 2000 and selling prices as 30-40 cents per pound.<sup>11</sup> In 2001, a Woodburn berry producer we interviewed had received only 37 cents per pound in 2001, although the price had risen to 43 cents per pound by 2003. Piece rate wages for strawberry pickers in 2003 were 14-18 cents per pound; market pressure continues to depress piece rate-based real wages in strawberries. In 2005 we saw local flyers offering piece rate payment of only 20 cents a pound for strawberry picking.<sup>12</sup>

The overall linkages between agricultural production and processing and developments in the regional, national, and global markets have had major impacts on community economic life. In 2002, at the time of our first field research in Woodburn, Agri-Frozen's large packing-processing plant had just closed and displaced several hundred workers—about 300 year-round employees and 100 peak-season jobs.

The next year, the Smuckers processing plant closed—costing Woodburn another 59 jobs.<sup>13</sup> In 2003, Food Services of America, headquartered in Hillsboro, 30 miles to the northwest, moved into the vacant plant where Agri-Frozen had been located (which was in foreclosure) and had 400 applicants for the 5 new warehouse jobs at the facility. And,

---

<sup>10</sup> In the years since IRCA was passed, California's (1990-2004) California's strawberry production acre increased by 47% and by 80% in harvested tonnage. This contributes to the development of a migration circuit of strawberry pickers who work in both California and Oregon—but most of the work is in California. (See Don Villarejo, "Farm Labor Research Needs: How Do Workers Fare When Production Increases?", June, 2006)

<sup>11</sup> This includes other production costs such as labor contractors' fees, transporting produce to the processing plant, etc.

<sup>12</sup> Anna Garcia field research notes, "Minors in Agriculture" study, 1999

<sup>13</sup> Portland Business Journal, March 13, 2003.

in 2004, the closed Smuckers plant was acquired by a new food processing firm, Sabroso.<sup>14</sup>

Nursery production has been more robust—but it is less labor-intensive. Hansen remembers that it was in the 1960's when nursery production became a major local agricultural activity. The Oregon nursery industry has continued to flourish making the state the 5<sup>th</sup> largest producer in the U.S, with statewide revenues growing from \$16 million in 1960 to \$806 million in 2002. This trend in this sub-sector of agricultural production has clearly been away from small family farmers and toward agribusiness, with many nurseries being large corporate, often regional or national firms. This shift in Woodburn area agricultural production patterns is consistent with national trends where nursery production has grown substantially from 1997-2002. Along with other trends, growth in nursery production has the important impact of smoothing out the seasonal spikes and troughs in labor demand, improving current farmworkers' ability to secure enough hours of work during the year to subsist and possibly decreasing the “pull” forces in Mexico-U.S. migration (depending on how efficiently labor supply is utilized by agricultural producers).<sup>15</sup> Nursery production also provides a good mix of work for farmworkers including very heavy work such as digging and balling-up trees and lighter work in maintaining nursery stock, etc.

It is possible that, due to the difficult economic situation for small agricultural producers in the Woodburn area, as well as the increase in relatively stable nursery employment, the rapid influx of immigrants to the community (and the entire region) the town has experienced over the past decade may slow somewhat. However, as has often been noted in connection with analyses of regional and global migration, once migration patterns have been established, they tend to prevail for many years. Moreover, the boundaries of migration networks are not always clear and migration the Pacific Northwest is inevitably part of a Pacific Seaboard region which ties Washington, and Oregon, to

---

<sup>14</sup> Michelle Te, “2004: A Year in Review”, Woodburn Independent.

<sup>15</sup> Don Villarejo presentation, National Farmworker Research Agenda Group meeting, August 18, 2005.

California agriculture and, also, to labor-intensive agricultural production in Baja California and Sinaloa in northern Mexico.

In the specific case of Woodburn, the migration pathways which were first established as labor contractors brought California crews to Oregon now lead migrant farmworkers fleeing intense competition for limited farmwork in California to continue coming to Woodburn, even as its agricultural employment base weakens.

### *The Graying of America and the Suburbanization of Oregon's Willamette Valley*

The second of the fundamental changes affecting the community is Woodburn's transformation into a retirement community, sparked in part by the "graying of America" and housing developers' decisions to create several retirement communities at the northern edge of what was once a small farming town. Here too, the situation in Woodburn differs somewhat from that in other rural areas of the U.S. such as the Midwest, because the shift in the demographics of the population stems as much from an influx of older residents as from emigration of young locally-raised youth to urban areas. Senior Estates, built soon after the old north-south thoroughfare, Highway 99, was upgraded into Interstate Highway 5 in 1954, is a very large senior housing development consisting of 1,400 homes built around an 18-hole golf course. Scores of other smaller housing developments, including mobile home parks, apartment complexes, and continuing care facilities followed eventually—so that in 2003, we estimate that about 2,000 housing units were designated as, or at least marketed, as residences for retired or elderly.

One, largely unrecognized facet of immigration to Woodburn, is that the IRCA-era immigrants who settled in town are now aging also. Mexican immigrants remain, by and large, a "young" population. One-third of Woodburn's Mexican-born heads of household are 40+ years old.

### *Emergence of an Ex-Urban Bedroom Community*

The third change, the most recent of the ongoing transformations, is another market-driven one: construction of several upscale housing developments, targeted to middle and upper-middle class families seeking life in the ex-urban fringe of the Portland metro area—affordable “country living”. Because Woodburn is only half an hour by freeway from Portland and housing is much more affordable than in the city’s urban areas, this influx of professionals and managers, has begun to change the character of community social life. As part of trends which can be observed throughout contemporary America, where Woodburn’s community movie theatre was once the center of town life on the weekend, Internet access and DVD’s are now the entertainment centers for the affluent. The movie theater, under its faded marquee “Pix” is now a store selling primarily second-hand furniture and appliances to immigrants. “White flight” has been a virtual, not a geographic movement, as affluent families abandon public spaces in favor of consumerism in shopping malls (principally a cluster of “factory retail outlets” separated from the main part of Woodburn by Interstate Highway 5) and digital entertainment.

### *Immigration*

The fourth and final facet of Woodburn’s transformation is the demographic, cultural, and sociopolitical change driven by immigration. This is the central focus of our research in the New Pluralism Project. However, in Woodburn, as in the other rural communities in our study, it is crucial to recognize the dynamic way in which concurrent changes interact in defining the nature of political dialogue in the community and shaping the trajectory of community development. Like some other communities, Woodburn advertises itself as “The City of Unity”, reflecting a wise consensus to not only tolerate but, also, to celebrate ethnic and cultural diversity. But, of course, the reality underlying the civic rhetoric is more complex.

Woodburn does not have quite as long a history of migration as the other Pacific Seaboard community in our “New Pluralism” research initiative, Arvin, California. Yet

it shares with Arvin one important historical strand; it is one of the communities to which Texas-based “long-haul” migrant family crews traveled in the 1950’s. And it is one of the communities in which they began to settle—due to affordable housing and ample work—even before the viability of the long-haul migrant circuit was destroyed by mechanization of sugar beet production and cotton harvesting in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s.

Where Woodburn differs from many rural communities in labor-intensive agricultural areas is that the immigrant settlers include a wave of Russian refugees who settled in town in the late 1960’s and 1970’s just as the flow of Mexican immigrant farmworkers migrating to Willamette Valley berry and vegetable production began to increase. The refugees are of Russian origin, “Old Believers” who originally fled Russia in the 1920’s and settled in Turkey and China, and then, eventually, in Brazil and Argentina. Consequently, there are, in Woodburn, extraordinary linguistic and cultural interactions unique to the community. For example, the Korean proprietor of a small Asian food store in town credits his success primarily to his clientele of Russian families in which one or several family members grew up in China. In several Russian households we interviewed, household languages spoken include: Russian, Chinese, Portuguese, and English. And, Russian packing plant workers work efficiently side-by-side with Mexican workers because some had been born and grown up in Argentina and, thus, speak Spanish fluently. Because of their history as global migrants whose travels had taken them to South America, some of these Spanish-speaking Russian refugees moved rapidly from doing farmwork themselves, into farm labor contracting, and then into running farms themselves.

Adding to the diversity of migration flows bringing settlers to Woodburn, passage of IRCA permitted formerly unauthorized Mexican migrant farmworkers to adjust their legal status in the late 1980’s. Mixtec farmworkers from Oaxaca who had originally come to the Willamette Valley in the summer to harvest strawberries, berries, and cucumbers began to settle out of the migrant stream in the area (in the adjacent hamlets of Gervais

and Hubbard as well as Woodburn). They settled because—like the wave of Texas migrants a generation earlier—they found housing and ample work.

Yet, there was still more diversity within the migrant labor force settling in Woodburn—Purepecha-speaking migrants from the central highlands of Michoacan. By the mid-1990's, the diversity of Mexican indigenous migrants increased still more as Zapotec and Triqui migrants from the state of Oaxaca settled in the area. Our Woodburn Community Survey suggests that about 17% of Woodburn's immigrant head of households belong to an indigenous Mexican minority ethnic group. A survey of indigenous minority languages conducted by the Oregon Law Center the same year found that, in addition to these language minorities, the Willamette Valley migrant labor force includes speakers of Yucatec Maya, Nahuatl, Chinanteco, and Mixe.<sup>16</sup>

### ***A Demographic Awakening***

In 2000, Woodburn learned from decennial census data that it was now a pluralistic minority-majority community. The Census 2000 report showing that 50.1% of the town's residents were of Hispanic origin accelerated what had, for some years previously, been civic reflection, discussion, and debate about “community identity” –although the fundamental dimensions of diversity are not racial but, rather, ethnic—since the community's White population includes Russians in addition to the U.S.-born Anglo families originally from Midwestern and other Northwestern rural areas who settled in town over the past half century.

At the same time, there is great diversity within the Hispanic population—a tremendous language and cultural divide between the “Tejanos”—Mexican-American families from Texas and their 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation immigrant children and the “Mexicanos”, the 1<sup>st</sup> generation Mexican immigrants and their children. And even among the Mexicanos, there are deep cultural divisions between *mestizos* and indigenous-origin immigrants,

---

<sup>16</sup> Julie Sample and Santiago Ventura, personal communications, September 18, 2003.

between different indigenous populations, and between migrants from different sending villages.

The fact that Woodburn had become, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a “Latino majority” community was seen by many in town as more or less a historical milestone although the ethnic and cultural transformation of Woodburn’s demographic profile had been underway since at least the 1950’s—when Texas migrant farmworkers (referred to locally in some groups as the “pioneros”, the pioneers) began to settle in town. Although the growth of the town’s “Hispanic” population had been a recognized for many years and a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of Oregon-born Latinos from Tejano families had played a significant role in the mainstream of community life since, at least, the early 1980’s, the 2000 census report was seen, as it is in many communities, as a mirror for communities to recognize and, simultaneously, celebrate and rebel against their own identity.

Thus, the analysis of social dynamics in Woodburn must go beyond attention to two-way interactions between immigrant and native-born populations to examine also, interactions among distinct sub-groups of immigrants. The dimension of Woodburn’s diversity, that had not been very well reflected in census data on race and place of birth, but which had entered into civic dialogue, was the settlement in Woodburn, Gervais, Monitor, and surrounding hamlets of a significant population of “Old Believers”, ethnic Russians who had first began to settle in Woodburn in the 1960’s.<sup>17</sup> The interactions between the Russian refugees now settled in the Willamette Valley for close to three decades and the newer waves of Mexican immigrants are a case in point. Several middle-aged Russian refugees who we interviewed remember grueling agricultural work growing rice and beans in the Punto Grosso region of Brazil when their families had first settled there after fleeing China. It was not surprising, then, to hear that when they first came to Woodburn in 1967, they first worked in hops and berries as farmworkers.

---

<sup>17</sup> Will Hoyt, “A tale of four cities: Where Old Believers, Low Riders, Senior Estaters, and Anglos coexist by taking care of their own”, [date illegible on copy, publication not clear, c. 1978]. According to Hoyt, the first Russian refugees to settle in the area were Molokans who had settled in North Marion County since 1949. Hoyt reports that the Old Believers first heard about Woodburn from them and began migrating from Brazil where the Harbin and Sinkiang groups had gone after Maoists came to power in the early 1950’s.

It was also to be expected that, among the Russians who had, in the 1970's, worked in farmwork, there were some entrepreneurial former farmworkers who soon became farm labor contractors.<sup>18</sup> One well-know (and almost universally disliked contractor) known among Mexican migrant farmworkers as “El Ruso” (i.e. “the Russian”) probably began putting together Mexican work crews by the early 1990's. In many respects, the tensions in Woodburn are, thus, not racial tensions but, rather, socioeconomic ones. And the tensions between Russian farm labor contractors and Mexican immigrants are very similar to those between former Texas and former Mixtec migrant farmworkers who have become farm labor contractors and now make their living from markups on the labor of newly-arriving Mexican workers.

## **Profile of Immigrants and Natives in Woodburn**

A major weakness in the public dialogue on immigration policy is that it is so tenuously linked to empirical reality and so reductionistic in its analysis—framing social geography and policy issues in one-dimensional terms, e.g. as native-born vs. foreign-born “populations” who are poorly or well-educated. Woodburn is a paradigm case of the new pluralism in rural America because neither its U.S.-born nor its foreign-born residents fit neatly into large homogeneous categories.

During the lifetimes of the oldest generation of Woodburn residents, the town's population has increased by perhaps 5,000% (from perhaps 400 to 20,000 residents) and its economy and infrastructure have been transformed. What was close to a monolingual community in 1930 is now one where there are at least four languages commonly spoken and perhaps a total of fifteen languages overall.

Only one in five (19%) of Woodburn heads of household have actually been born and raised in Woodburn, reminding us that communities are not static, rigid, societal entities

---

<sup>18</sup> Cary McWilliams documents in **Factories in the Fields**, the classic study of California farm labor how Japanese immigrant farmworkers moved rapidly out of farmwork into labor contracting and then into agribusiness as producers and brokers, although many had their land confiscated in World War II.

but that they are epiphenomena, arising out of the interactions of people who come, in the course of their lives, to live together.<sup>19</sup>

Woodburn's diversity, its identity as part of the wave of "new pluralism" transforming rural America, is that each individual's history is so distinct—because so many of the town's residents, native-born and immigrant alike, were born and grew up elsewhere. As we describe below, like other rural communities where immigrants have settled, Woodburn is not simply one with of diverse types of neighborhoods but, also, incredible diversity within each household. The old concept of America as a "melting pot", conveying the notion of homogeneity as the outcome of diverse migration streams converging at a single place is misleading, because the actual outcome is not a bland, uniform mixture, but a potpourri of personal histories, accents, world-views, and life trajectories.

Our Woodburn community survey, conducted in the fall of 2003, provides rich details about the diversity of Woodburn's immigrant and native-born population. However, because Woodburn is such a large community and because residential patterns are so complex in terms of ethnicity, age, and household income, we cannot be certain that it is perfectly representative of the overall community population—in part because Census 2000 data, theoretically the "gold standard" for determining a community's profile, is not necessarily reliable as a benchmark for comparison.<sup>20</sup> We are confident, however, that our community survey data, together with ethnographic research data, provide unique insights on the household composition and civic dynamics of interaction between the main sub-groups within the community.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Q. 14 (Year Came to Town)

<sup>20</sup> Census 2000 data show that 35% of Woodburn's overall population is foreign-born while our Woodburn Community Survey shows that 51% of the overall population are foreign-born—a divergence of 16%. We believe that the decennial census data are skewed toward under-representation of foreign-born Woodburn residents while ours is skewed in the opposite direction. The actual native-born/immigrant ratio is, thus, likely to be a mid-point between these two estimates—perhaps 45% foreign-born.

<sup>21</sup> The study design (an in-town survey) led to under-representation of migrant farmworkers—since many live outside the city limits in on-farm housing or in nearby hamlets such as Gervais or Hubbard who visit and shop in Woodburn. The specific sampling design probably slightly under-represented U.S.-born senior

**Table 1** below reports the proportion of immigrants in Woodburn and their immigration status. The provisions of immigration policy have been kinder to some of the immigrants in Woodburn than to immigrants in some other rural U.S. communities, because many of the Russians were able to qualify for refugee status and because many of the Mexican farmworkers who had first begun to migrate to Oregon in the 1980's qualified for Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) status when IRCA became law in late 1986. Nonetheless, there are many (most notably the overwhelming majority of immigrants who have arrived in the past 20 years) who were not able to benefit from either of these status adjustment programs. Because of the provisions of the 1996 IIRIRA legislation, in many households where it might have been possible for family members to qualify for legal permanent resident status when heads of household finally achieved citizenship, there is currently no hope for status adjustment.<sup>22</sup>

<b>Table 1</b>			
<b>Origin and Immigration Status</b>			
<b>of Woodburn Heads of Households, Overall Population, and Minors: 2003</b>			
<b>Citizenship/Immigration Status</b>	<b>% of Heads of Household (N=128)</b>	<b>% of All Persons in Households<sup>23</sup> (N=524)</b>	<b>% of Minors 0-18 years of age (N=256)</b>
<b>U.S.-Born</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>72%</b>
US-born--2 <sup>nd</sup> –3 <sup>rd</sup> gen. immigrant	6%	33%	66%
US-born—non-immigrant family	32%	16%	6%
<b>Foreign-Born</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>29%</b>
Naturalized Citizen	5%	2%	---
Legal Permanent Resident	26%	21%	9%
PRUCOL/Qualified	---	---	---
Unauthorized	31%	28%	20%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 9 (Household Grid--weighted)*

---

citizens and affluent commuters living at the northern edge of Woodburn. For details, see **Appendix I** on study methodology.

<sup>22</sup> These are primarily the wives and U.S.-raised children of Mexican immigrants who qualified for status adjustment under IRCA but who only joined a “pioneer” migrant after he had found stable employment. These Mexican immigrant family members, dependents of men who arrived in Woodburn in the 1980's, have lived for more than two decades in Oregon but many are still in “unauthorized” status.

<sup>23</sup> Legal status could not be determined for 57 persons, 6% of the total household members in surveyed households.

**Table 1** shows that the impact of immigration on community composition and community life to be a complex multi-dimensional story—because of the ways in which immigration status cuts through households and because of the different provisions of immigration law which determine the legal status of distinct groups of immigrants. As can be seen in **Table 1**, although one-third of Woodburn heads of household are U.S.-born adults, only 6% of the children 18 years of age are unrelated to immigrants. The personal identity of the under-18 age cohort (and the future social and political identity of the community) is not well-captured by analysis in terms of nativity—since nine out of ten of these U.S.-born children live in immigrant-headed households.

As is the case in other rural communities with high concentrations of immigrants, the lives of virtually all residents in Woodburn are deeply impacted by current immigration and social program policy. The contrast between the legal status of Woodburn heads of households, almost one-third of whom are unauthorized immigrants, and their citizen-children is extreme. Most of the next generation of Woodburn immigrant leaders, civic activists, and workers will have grown up in a household in which one or both parents was not an officially-sanctioned immigrant. The social and economic tensions and conflicts which social policy must address, now and in the future, emerge as commonly within households as between households or neighborhoods.

The relatively small proportion of Woodburn heads of household who are 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation immigrants (6% of the households in town) inevitably find themselves playing a pivotal role in community dialogue and in facilitating community change, since they have linkages both to the community's past as a smaller, more homogeneous community and its future, as a growing pluralistic society. They have already, and will continue, to find themselves thrust into roles of informal and formal leadership. Their access to stores of “cultural capital” acquired by growing up in immigrant families and local rural U.S. neighborhoods and schools will assist them greatly in functioning effectively in addressing the responsibilities thrust on them and confronting the challenges of community development in an increasingly diverse town.

The political implications of Woodburn’s diversity in terms of nativity and immigration status are dramatic and also provide a sense of the pace of sociopolitical change. Currently, less than half of the community’s heads of household (the 36% who are native-born and the 5% who are naturalized citizens) are eligible to vote. However, by about 2010 or 2015, if the immigrant heads of household who are currently legal permanent residents (one quarter of the heads of household in Woodburn) succeed in the naturalization process, the number of foreign-born and native-born adults eligible to vote will be roughly equal. Inevitably, by 2015, local political perspectives on immigrants and immigration will be determined less by voters’ nativity than by the trajectories of social integration of the U.S.-born children of immigrants. Given the demographic calculus, the current de facto pluralism of Woodburn will be a firmly-established sociopolitical reality. This underscores how important it will be for Woodburn and communities like it to strive unwaveringly and intentionally toward an inclusive, flexible, and tolerant pluralism.

**Migration Flows, Settlers and Sojourners**

**Table 2** below shows when foreign-born heads of household living in Woodburn first came to the United States. As can be seen, there are high levels of ongoing migration to Woodburn with one out of five Woodburn immigrant heads of household being a newcomer, i.e. someone who has been in the U.S. less than 6 years.

<b>Table 2</b>	
<b>Immigrant Heads of Household-Length of Time in U.S.</b>	
<b>(N=67)</b>	
<b>Newcomers: 0-5 years in US (21%)</b>	
<3 Years	9%
3-5 Years	12%
<b>Settlers: 6 or more years in US (79%)</b>	
6-10 Years	25%
11-15 Years	19%
16-20 Years	10%
21-65 Years	25%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 5 (Year Arrived in U.S.)*

Survey information on immigrants' year of arrival in the U.S. indicates that migration flows to Woodburn have, despite year-to-year fluctuations been fairly steady for several decades.<sup>24</sup> There was, however, an increase in post-IRCA settlement during the 5 year period from 1990-1995.

One particularly interesting complexity in the analysis of ways in which immigration has affected Woodburn is that the community's foreign-born population includes three major streams of Mexico-US migration: immigrants from central and Northeastern Mexico who eventually arrived in the Northwest via Texas, the immigrants who came directly from core migrant-sending areas of Mexico, and the newest wave of migration of indigenous migrant farmworkers from Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Michoacan. This puts the "1.5 generation" Woodburn "Tejano" residents who were born in Mexico but who grew up in Texas, along with 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Mexican-Americans who are the children of this same group of Texas migrant farmworkers, in a special role of leadership in the difficult process of Woodburn's transformation.<sup>25</sup>

### *Settlement of Texas Migrant Workers in Woodburn beginning in the 1950's*

Even before the World War II era Bracero program began to bring Mexican workers to the U.S. in 1942 there was already extensive migration of Mexican workers from northeastern Mexican states such as Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas into the Lower Rio Grande Valley. One important "pull factor" which began to draw workers after World War II (and during the post-1910 revolution period of instability in Mexico) was demand for agricultural labors to work in cotton production (McWilliams 1942). By the 1930's, citrus production in the lower Rio Grande Valley had also created demand for Mexican labor. Library of Congress archives of photographs from the Farm Security Administration have, for example, photographs from Weslaco, TX of crews of Mexican

---

<sup>24</sup> The Woodburn Community survey sample includes immigrant heads of household who arrived as long ago as 1970 and as recently as 2003.

<sup>25</sup> Much of this leadership is within informal and semi-formal affiliational networks but two of Woodburn's City Council members are part of the Tejano networks—one from the older generation of Texas migrants, one from the generation of children of Texas migrant farmworkers who grew up in Oregon.

workers being welcomed to Texas with huge banners reading, “Bienvenidos, trabajadores Mexicanos!” (“Welcome, Mexican Workers!”). The Bracero program amplified this ongoing process of regional migration while, at the same time, intensifying the work pattern of “follow the crop” migration.

After World War II, family crews of Mexican origin who had settled in the lower Rio Grande Valley, led by *troqueros* (crew leaders/labor contractors) had begun to travel the “long-haul” migrant circuit which provided them a long working year working in cotton, sugar beets, row crops, and orchard harvests throughout the country, including Oregon and Washington. However, by the mid-1960’s, mechanization of cotton harvesting and decrease in sugar beet demand, began to erode this stable pattern of migration and Texas migrants began to settle out in local areas around the historical Texas migrant circuit—in Florida, Michigan, and other Midwestern states, California, Oregon, and Washington (Griffith and Kissam 1995).

The migration experience of the first generation of Mexicans in Oregon, the Tejanos, is similar to that of migrant farmworkers throughout the country. And, in many respects, the experiences of migrants coming to Woodburn today echo some the experiences of those early migrants half a century ago. However, it is clear that settling in to a new community was easier for this first generation of migrants than it is now. Interviews with the earliest migrants to Woodburn provide us detailed picture of the historical roots of the current transformation of Woodburn into a diverse community of immigrants and native-born families.

One of the earliest of the Tejano migrants (referred to locally as the “pioneros”) to settle in the Woodburn area who we interviewed is Natividad Gonzalez. Natividad, born in 1931 was 72 years old when we interviewed him.<sup>26</sup> His father, Baltazar was born in Armadillo, San Luis Potosi in 1900, living through the Mexican revolution of 1910 as a

---

<sup>26</sup> Lynn Stephen interview with Natividad Gonzalez March 3, 2003.

child and the subsequent period of turbulence from 1910-1920. Natividad and his oldest siblings were born in Armadillo also.

Natividad's father first migrated to Texas in 1943, taking his oldest brother, Bernardino, with him. Natividad describes his father's migration as "simply disappearing" from home; for several years, Baltazar's wife and his children heard nothing from him. Finally, a letter came with some money to help support the family; Natividad thinks his father had sent 8 or 10 dollars in the letter. Five years later, in 1948, his father sent for Natividad, who was then 17 years old, and the rest of the family to come join him in Progreso, TX.

After they had spent 3 or 4 years working happily for a local rancher, the family was deported to Mexico as part of Operation Wetback in 1951, although their employer had begun the process of regularizing their immigration status. But then, finally, after two years back in Mexico (they had settled in Reynosa right on the border, about 30 miles from Progreso, not returning to their original hometown), their immigration papers were finally processed in 1953. This allowed them to migrate to the Pacific Northwest. They first worked in Washington, in the Yakima Valley where they worked in hops, near Toppenish but also traveled to Bellingham in coastal Washington to pick strawberries—following a migration loop which continues to the present. Having married and begun to raise a family in Progreso, Natividad finally decided to bring his wife and two young children with him and join his parents and siblings in Oregon in 1957. He thinks of 1958 as the year in which the cultural shift happened. He remembers it was then that there started to be Mexican movies in the theatres in the area. Having come on his own he lived on a different ranch, owned by John Moore, working in the summer on the ranch and in the winter at the Northview Nursery. Eventually, the nursery owner, "Don Bernardo Smith", helped him to find his own house to rent.

We learned more of this extended family's migration story from Natividad's older brother, Jose Honorio Gonzalez Tristan who was born in 1929 and his wife Matilde

Saldano de Gonzalez, who is two years younger than he is.<sup>27</sup> He explained how he and the family had first come to Gervais, Oregon (a hamlet about 5 miles from Woodburn). He came in 1955 as a migrant worker picking strawberries, a southward extension of the migration circuit which made it convenient to combine work in berries with work later in the season in hops (August) and apples (September-October).

This seems to have been a common strategy for residents of the Progreso *colonia*, many of whom were *Potosinos* (i.e. hailing from San Luis Potosi state and part of those village networks). Honorio's wife, Matilde, also came to Oregon at that time as a migrant with her family. Matilde and her family had come to Oregon with the same farm labor contractor who had originally brought Honorio's father to Washington--Porfirio Garcia. She remembers that in 1955 when her family had first come to Gervais, there were only two Mexican families in town. However, Honorio remembers that, in addition to the local American students who worked in strawberries, there were also many Mexican farmworkers. After settling in Oregon, however, her family had continued to migrate; she remembers going to Corcoran, on the west side of California's San Joaquin Valley to pick cotton.

Honorio and Matilde had first known each other because their families were friendly in Progreso, TX, and also because they were part of the small community of Texas migrants working in the fields from 1955 onward. They stayed in touch when the families returned to Texas and San Luis Potosi and finally married in 1958. She recalls that by 1957, there were already about 10-15 Mexican families in the Woodburn area but that it was in 1958 when Texas migrants really started coming in large numbers to St. Paul, Gervais, and Woodburn. Local growers, such as Fred Wishwell (who employed Honorio's and Matilde's families) would provide housing for the migrants and are generally spoken of in very positive terms by the migrant who formerly worked for them.

---

<sup>27</sup> Lynn Stephen interview with Jose Honorio Gonzalez Tristan and Matilde Saldano de Gonzalez, February 14, 2003.

Another of the growers who was said to have several farm labor recruiters/contractors was Joe Seers and his labor contractor “Chon”, Concepcion Olivera. However, according to Matilde other Tejano migrants began arriving in their own vehicles by the late 1950’s.

Another of the early Tejano migrants we interviewed, Silverio Zarate, was a “2<sup>nd</sup> generation” immigrant, the U.S.-born child of Mexican migrants to Texas. He was born in 1914 in Stockdale, TX (near the border town of Eagle Pass) and first migrated to Woodburn in 1961.<sup>28</sup>

After serving as a cook in the Army Corp of Engineers in Burma, and China, during World War II, Silverio returned to Texas where he operated a small farm and supplemented his meager farming income moving houses from rural areas into town. After his mother died in 1960, Silverio and his wife Luz (who had worked as a flagger as part of the house-moving business) migrated to Saint Paul, Oregon (about 10 miles from Woodburn) with a *troquero* (i.e. a migrant crew leader). Silverio, too, recalls that farm labor crews included both Mexican-Americans from Texas and Mexican workers. He recalled that social life was different when he first arrived in the area, “When we arrived, everyone helped everyone else”—an assessment we have heard from older settled Tejano migrants in other communities where they settled also.<sup>29</sup>

Silverio remembers several of the early *troqueros* who did farm labor contracting. From their nicknames, it is clear they were Mexicans or Tejanos: “El Punky”, “La Bigotona”, as well as Jose Villareal, with whom he had come. Many of them, like the growers, provided housing for their workers.<sup>30</sup> Silverio remembers that Jose Villareal had four or

---

<sup>28</sup> Anna Garcia interview, June 26, 2002

<sup>29</sup> A couple who were early Texas migrants to Arvin, CA, the other Pacific Seaboard case study community, Jesus and Adalia Luevanos, spoke about life when they first came to Arvin in strikingly similar terms.

<sup>30</sup> Many farm labor contractors and agricultural employers in the Willamette Valley continue to provide housing for their workers to this day. In 2000, as part of our study of teenage transnational farmworkers, we described many of the camps in the region (Kissam et al 2000). Many of them, for example, El Campo Azul, have long histories as migrant destinations as families return year after year to live in them and work in the berry harvest.

five labor camps where he housed workers. He also recalls Joe Seers, as one of the well-known local growers, for whom he picked blueberries and strawberries, as being a good employer. He says, “I had lots of friends I knew from farmwork days”. But he goes on to observe, that some of his friends from the early days no longer want to be reminded they once did farmwork, “They even get angry when you remind them [of the kind of work we did]”.

This first generation of Texas migrant farmworkers settling in Woodburn soon moved on to other employment—for employment stability, because they were aging, and because wages and working conditions in farmwork were stagnating or deteriorating. Honorio and Matilde, then in their 30’s, moved out of field work into nursery work in 1961. While they were earning 90 cents an hour in the fields, the nursery paid Matilde \$1.00 per hour and Honorio \$1.25 per hour. Honorio soon moved on to railroad work which then paid \$2.25 and provided benefits. Silverio, after quitting railroad work, moved on to work as a janitor. When Silverio went to work on the railroads Matilde returned to work with her original farm employer, Joe Seers where she eventually worked for 20 years—mostly in hops. Her brother-in-law, Natividad, also remained in nursery work. After he briefly left the nursery where he was working to earn more working at a brickyard, the nursery owner’s son asked him to return. He agreed—on the condition they’d increase his pay to \$2.75, the same amount he was earning at the brickyard. He remained at the nursery, moving upward in the business, getting vacation and sick pay, a company vehicle, and becoming a manager and working there until he retired in 1979.

What is sometimes overlooked in histories of Texas migrants is that cross-border social networks were then (and remain) strong along the Texas-Mexico border. Juana Montez, now a middle-aged woman, is more a *Tejana* than a *Mexicana*, although she was born in Laredo, Nuevo Leon.<sup>31</sup> Juana came to the U.S. as a 12 year-old girl, when her Mexican-born mother grew tired to staying in Laredo while her U.S.-born father migrated to work around Texas. Juana, like so many of this generation, is a perfectly bilingual and bicultural individual, speaking both Spanish and English perfectly. She began to work in

---

<sup>31</sup> Interview #701 (Tami Hoag).

the fields as a 15 year-old and soon left Texas to come to Oregon as a teenage migrant farmworker with her aunt. She remembers farm labor conditions in the 1970's as terrible "like slavery", no sanitary facilities in the fields, no breaks. Eventually, she married a Mexican immigrant from Nayarit and they raised a family in Woodburn. She is now the mother of two teenagers and three primary school age children, all born in Oregon. Like so many of the migrant settlers from her generation, she settled into the community easily and loves life in Woodburn.

Juana's remembrance of the first years settling into Woodburn is that Mexican-Americans tended to discriminate more against Mexicanos than non-Mexicans but that settling in was easy because farmworkers were in the habit of helping each other. These experiences shaped her values and approach to community life to this day. She talks informally with friends and neighbors a good deal about civic issues, volunteers in a bilingual kindergarten, supports church activities, but believes that informal community support systems are more useful and valuable than government programs. While she herself participated in a GED program, attended a farmworker employment training program, community college, and a few years of state college as a young woman, she still thinks informal neighborhood networks represent a better approach. She criticizes local Mexican-owned businesses for not contributing enough to community causes although their donations are seen by many Mexican immigrants as impressive evidence of community commitment.

### ***Settlement of Russian Refugees from the late 1960's***

The Russian refugees now settled in Woodburn are from social networks defined by their common identity as "Old Believers" who came to Woodburn from a range of intermediate migration destinations including: China, Turkey, Brazil, and Argentina.<sup>32</sup> They do not conform to the stereotype of the Russian refugees settling in the U.S.

---

<sup>32</sup> The group belongs to the Slavic Orthodox church, referred to as "the old religion", thus "Old Believers".

The Russian households we interviewed included older settlers who had grown up in China, Argentina, or Brazil as well as younger Russians who, while foreign-born grew up in Woodburn (i.e. “Generation 1.5 immigrants”).

We do not know the full story of Russian settlement in Woodburn, but local farmers began sponsoring Russian refugees, as early as the 1960’s and the farm labor force at the time was described as including Texans, Mexicans, and Russians. For example, a Russian woman who had come to Woodburn as a very young child remembers that her family’s sponsor, a farmer near Gervais, had sponsored many other Russian refugees. They maintained close social and economic relationships with him until his death even after the family members no longer worked on his farm.

The social networks within the “Old Believer” community are very tightly-linked transnational ones based on ethnic identity as part of a community of belief. The households we interviewed included couples where one spouse was born in China, the other in Brazil, where one spouse was from Turkey, the other Brazil, and extended families all of whom were from China. One couple described how much they enjoyed their social life in Woodburn because there was such a large “Brazilian” community in town; however, the primary language in this network continues to be Russian. There are, however, networks within networks and individuals we interviewed within the network of Old Believers from Brazil mentioned tensions between their group and those who had lived in Turkey and are described as “talking differently”.

The migration history of the Russians is atypical but, perhaps, a harbinger of future trends as the volume and complexity of global migration increases. One of the early Russian refugees to settle in was Sergei Baranov.<sup>33</sup> Now middle-aged, Sergei first came to Oregon in the late 1960’s as a young man. Born in China in 1948 where his family and many of the “Old Believers” had fled in the early 1930’s a result of religious persecution, Sergei grew up in China, moved to Brazil with his mother and siblings as a teenager (after his father was jailed in 1965 for his religious beliefs), and then came to Oregon as a young

---

<sup>33</sup> A pseudonym, (Jessica Cole) Interview #754

man.<sup>34</sup> Now separated from his wife and grown children, Sergei lives in an extended family household with his sister, his brother, his wife, and their teenage children.

Because the Old Believers were primarily peasants, Sergei only attended three years of school. Sergei began working as 10 year-old, joining his mother and siblings in rice cultivation (in both China and Brazil). Since he had little education and spoke no English when he arrived he said he found it very difficult settling in to Woodburn. His lack of education and the need to constantly make a living to support his family have made his worklife and personal life difficult. As a young adult he worked in a furniture factory in Portland. But the furniture factory closed and he drifted into cutting wood “as a way to survive”. After almost 15 years as a migrant wood-cutter, he returned to Oregon, and settled in Woodburn where he now works once again in furniture manufacturing.

Although the Old Believer network is well-established and tightly-knit, a theme which emerges in Sergei’s life story is that the Old Believer network, like other social networks among immigrants, can help new immigrants find jobs as it did for Sergei and extended family members can provide housing as they did—but they cannot assure that the jobs are good (as a middle-aged man, Sergei was in a stable job but only earning \$6.50 per hour).

Although he never had time to attend ESL classes, Sergei was taught English by his fellow workers and co-workers at the furniture factory where he first worked. He was young and learned English fairly well within a year; his English is now good. He informs himself about public affairs by watching network news on TV but he reads a Russian-language newspaper from New York. As in many immigrant households, the older generation of family members prefer to speak Russian while the younger generation prefer English.

Our interview with Olga Akhmana, a “Generation 1.5” Russian immigrant shows a different trajectory of immigrant settlement.<sup>35</sup> Born in Brazil, Olga came to the U.S. as

---

<sup>34</sup> Sergei’s grandmother had migrated on foot from Russia to China around 1932 with his mother who was probably then a child. They left China around 1965 to move to Brazil. They worked as hired farm laborers there but life was very difficult. Sergei’s mother then migrated to Oregon with Sergei and his siblings.

an infant and grew up in the Woodburn area. Although she had some problems in school because other children bullied her for “being different”, she is now married to another “Generation 1.5” Russian immigrant (whose family had lived in Turkey). Her life as a working mother of two school-aged children is not remarkably different from those of her neighbors—either U.S.-born Anglos or settled Mexicans. While Olga and her husband are fully bilingual, their children speak only a bit of Russian. Like other Woodburn residents she likes the community but is worried about crime (prostitution, teenage drinking and driving). Like many residents, her main civic interest relates to the schools. And like other residents she thinks the Woodburn schools are doing a good job of responding to ethnic, cultural, and language diversity.

While the closely-linked social networking in the Old Believer community supports language maintenance, there is, inevitably, cultural change within this group. In one Russian household with seven children (ranging in age from 9 to 21 years old), all were bilingual in Russian and English but their mother told us that her sister, who still lives in Brazil, is disturbed to hear the teenagers have meals at the houses of non-Russian friends and she is herself concerned about their “Americanization”. But the linguistic picture is complex; one of the Russian immigrants we interviewed felt more at home in Portuguese than in Russian (because she grew up in Ponto Grosso, Brazil) although she speaks both languages fluently. She also speaks English well and also knows some Spanish.

### *Direct Migration from Mexico in the 1970's and 1980's*

As the influx of Texas migrants dwindled, direct migration from Mexico increased. Some researchers writing about this cohort of Mexican immigrants refer to them as “migrantes de la crisis” (migrants of the crisis) referring to the economic difficulties experienced by Mexico beginning in 1982 which exerted “push” forces on migration. However, other researchers (such as Escobar Latapi 1993) points out that the economic crisis which finally hit urban Mexico in the early 1980's had initially begun to affect the rural-urban domestic migration patterns within Mexico in the mid-1970's.

---

<sup>35</sup> A pseudonym, (Rachel Hansen), Interview #765

During this era, there was not as much direct migration to Oregon as later, since most migrants first came to California and then subsequently migrated to Oregon. Our interviews with former farmworkers who first came to Oregon during this period make it clear that both “push” and “pull” factors were involved in the growing influx of Mexican farmworkers since Willamette Valley growers were actively recruiting in Mexico by at least the mid-1970’s.

Although the conventional wisdom is that several “core sending areas” of Mexico were, from the 1970’s through the 1980’s, the primary source of Mexican migrants, the migration history of Oregon shows there was direct migration from Oaxaca very early on. Therefore, the predominance of indigenous migrant networks in the Willamette Valley is simply, as in the case of other networks, a outcome of migration networks expanding as linkages in the network become increasingly dense and collectively migrants belonging to the network gradually accumulate stores of collective migration experience (e.g. trusted *coyotes* and information about the safest border-crossing strategies) and linkages to agricultural employers and their recruiters or labor contractors.

The story of Jose Robles, born in El Camalote, Jalisco, is fairly typical of the Mexican migrants of this era. As a young man he had first migrated within Mexico, going to the adjacent state of Nayarit to make a living. But three of his brothers had found their way to Woodburn, OR, in the early 1970’s. Jose, who was then trying to survive as a small farmer producing bananas, found his economic situation becoming more and more precarious. Because there were no marketing support systems, each season trying to sell bananas was a huge gamble—which sometimes turned out poorly. He began migrating to Oregon, made two or three trips as a shuttle migrant, returning home to Nayarit, but then, in 1977 he finally decided to settle in Woodburn.

Jose’s first work in Woodburn was at a nursery, digging up trees from where they were grown and putting them into sacks in a rootball (*boleando*). He liked the nursery work but would need to pick strawberries, blueberries, and train hops (the growing vines are trained onto guy wires) to make ends meet. He observes that work was better than

because it would take a week or so to harvest a strawberry field. He says, “Now, with a surplus of workers, the work is over in a day and half.” Consequently, each individual worker has less work during the season. When Jose first arrived in Woodburn, local growers still relied on local children sometimes as strawberry pickers. Laughingly, Jose tells the story of a woman who lived across the street from an elementary school and decided to let the Mexican migrant workers go and hire children instead. The local children picked a few crates of strawberries but then began to play, pulling up the plants and throwing them at each other. Jose, who was an observer, remembers the strawberry grower, after a period of time trying to keep the children on task, letting them all go and asking the Mexican workers to come back, saying to them, “Why did I ever decide to do this (hire the local children)?”

The accounts of Mexican migrants who arrived in Oregon in the 1970’s and 1980’s are consistent with the memories of Steve Dolan who has been a small farmer in the area since the early 1970’s. He remembers large berry producers such as the Tankersleys and the Townsends operating very large migrant labor camps in the 1970’s. Growing up in the area, he went to the parochial school in St. Paul in the early 1970’s and remembers there being “four or five Hispanic kids” in his class, although there were more in public school.

Lorenzo Lopez Gil, a former farmworker, is another Mexican migrant who first came to the Willamette Valley in the late 1970’s as a result of the Tankersley’s recruitment efforts.<sup>36</sup> Lorenzo is a Mixteco, born in Union Cardenas, in the Juxtlahuaca District of Oaxaca in 1936. He was a very good student and was sent away to secondary school in Huajuapam de Leon, a regional center (on the Pan-American highway). After graduating, he taught school for 3 years but then migrated to Mexico City where he worked in a tire factory for 4 years, hoping perhaps he could work and attend university also. He first came to the Willamette Valley in 1979, having been recruited by a recruiter

---

<sup>36</sup> Anna Garcia notes, June 5, 2000, “Conditions of Minors in Agriculture” study.

for Frank Tankersley in Gresham (about 30 miles north of Woodburn).<sup>37</sup> According to Lorenzo, Tankersley's mayordomo, Lorenzo Sanchez, recruited a crew of about 40 workers from Union Cardenas, as well as from the nearby village of Santa Maria Asuncion, and the nearby Triqui village of Agua Fria. Lorenzo's work history is probably typical of Mixtecos from that era and many current Mixtec migrants, including work in "North County" San Diego near Vista, work in Madera, and work throughout the agricultural areas of the Willamette Valley—Sandy, Cornelius, Gresham, Hillsboro, as well as Woodburn.

### ***Mexican Migration in the 1980's—SAWs Legalized under the Provisions of IRCA***

When the IRCA legislation was passed in 1986, it initiated significant changes in the patterns of Mexican farmworkers' migration to Oregon. How the provisions of this law played out in the real world are an important part of understanding the current influx of immigrants to Woodburn.

Although many of the farmworkers who had begun to migrate to Oregon in the 1970's and early 1980's had worked in both California and Oregon, it appears that they found it easier to legalize their status in Oregon than in California. This is probably because their Oregon employers were predominantly small farmers who had better-than-average relationships with their workers. We have heard from many now-legalized farmworkers, that, by and large, the Oregon employers were much more accommodating in providing the migrants who had worked with them the letters acknowledging their employment which were needed for status adjustment as a SAW.

---

<sup>37</sup> It is not clear when Tankersley began recruiting workers directly from Mexico. However, the operation (then known as "Tankersley Spanish-American Berry Farms") had been recruiting Texas migrants in the 1960's. The firm was successfully sued by a group of Texas migrants for breach of contract in *Moreno v. Tankersley* for maintaining a camp with sub-standard conditions—very similar to those we observed three decades later in visit to the same labor camp. For an informative summary of details of the case see Mary Ann Casas, "'The *Moreno v. Tankersley*' Class Action of 1969", Oregon History Seminar, University of Oregon, Fall Term 2005

Because IRCA provided legal status to farmworkers themselves but was less generous in allowing their spouses and children to legalize, shuttle migration increased, and newly-legalized farmworkers, by the early 1990's (when their final "green cards" were issued) could return to their home villages or, in the case of Mixtecos, to Baja California where many had settled in *colonias* which had grown up around San Quintin and other labor-intensive tomato production areas. The legalized residents could adopt a highly-effective transnational economic strategy by leaving their families in Mexico and shuttling back-and-forth to relatively well-paid farmwork in the U.S. without having to pay coyotes to bring them across the border clandestinely.

This strengthened the Pacific Seaboard migration networks noticeably. Migrant farmwork in Oregon provides farmworkers an almost-ideal complement of crop-tasks to allow them to mix mid-season work in California or Washington with early season work in Oregon and, thereby, manage to secure a reasonable number of days of employment each year. One version of this migration strategy is, for example to work during the early season (April-May) in California's Central Coast strawberries in Santa Maria or Oxnard, for example, travel next to the Willamette Valley for strawberries in June and July, caneberries in July and early August, and then return to Madera in the San Joaquin Valley for the grape harvest and end the year with the raisin harvest in Fresno County. Other alternative versions of the strategy can include August work in pears, and September-October work in Yakima Valley apples, or work in north coast California pears followed by work in the wine grape harvest late in the season.

Thus it is not at all surprising that the burgeoning networks of Mixtecs and Triquis who first moved from working in Sinaloa and Baja California in the early years of Mexican labor-intensive tomato production in the 1960's, and then into California farmwork, are now part of a dense network that includes Oregon's Willamette Valley, central Washington's Yakima Valley, and coastal Washington. We describe these migration networks in some detail subsequently. Where the current era of migration initiated by IRCA differs most from previous eras is that the migration circuits are so clearly shaped by agribusiness labor demand and the lives of migrants themselves are so clearly

transnational ones, with Woodburn being only one of several “neighborhoods” in a transnational community which is not clearly geographically bounded (Stephen 2006; Besserer 2001).

The history of Mauricio Roldan, a Mixtec immigrant from Santo Domingo Noltepec in the Juxtlahuaca District of Oaxaca state is fairly typical of the IRCA-era migrants who were fortunate enough to achieve legal status as a result of IRCA.<sup>38</sup> Mauricio, then a teenager, first came to the U.S. with his family, in 1986. While the family considers itself as being “from Oaxaca”, Mauricio and his family were based in Campo Walter, a Mixtec migrant labor camp near San Quintin, Baja California. The first work he did in the U.S. was in the Madera area grape harvest. He then joined his older brother, Fermin, in Arvin where they also worked in grapes. Finally, in 1997, Mauricio first came to Woodburn—to work in strawberries of course. He immediately decided to start looking for other kinds of work and found employment at a recycling company. He likes this work better than field work because it is not so exhausting.

The story of another Mixteco now living in Woodburn highlights the fact that the new influx of Oaxacan migrants into Oregon is historically linked to disruptions in patterns of domestic migration in Mexico. It also shows how the specific provisions of immigration law can give rise to inequities which arbitrarily allow some immigrant family members legal status while denying it to others. Teodoro Diaz, a Mixtec farmworker who is now 49 years old, was born in a small village near San Juan Mixtepec (center of a major migration network) in the Tlaxiaco area of the Sierra Mixteca of Oaxaca.<sup>39</sup> His work history, which might be thought of as an almost random series of travels, has actually been one in which has taken him through a series of work destinations pioneered by Mixtec migrants over the past century.

---

<sup>38</sup> A pseudonym (Anna Garcia) Discussions with MS and FS 2000-2003. San Juan Mixtepec is closely tied to Tlaxiaco because the road to that regional center of commerce is better than the road to Juxtlahuaca. However the municipio of San Juan Mixtepec is actually in the Juxtlahuaca District.

<sup>39</sup> Interview 716 (Lynn Stephen). Teodoro is a pseudonym.

After Teodoro's parents separated, he lived first with his mother, then with his grandparents, and finally from when he was 6 years old with his father in the village of Las Minas, near San Juan Mixtepec. Life was difficult in each of these households. He began working at the age of 6 as a goat herd. He left home about when he was 11 years old and first went to Tlaxiaco (a regional center about an hour from Las Minas) and then to Mexico, DF where, as he grew up, he became a helper in the produce market, and then moved upward to become a an itinerant vendor selling popsicles and shining shoes. For 5 years, he slept in doorways, in the garbage dump, and in abandoned houses. When he was 16 years old he went to Veracruz, where he worked in the fish market. When he was 19 or 20, he went home to his home village in search of his divided family. But it was a bitter disappointment. He remembers, "Things weren't the same. I was sad. I didn't have anyone. After a week I went to Culiacan with some of my paisanos from my village".

The next year Teodoro met his wife, got married, and returned to his hometown in Oaxaca. But the newly-married family couldn't make ends meet so they returned north to Ensenada, in Baja California. The next year, 1978, Teodoro began to migrate to work in northern San Diego County. He was one of the many migrants in this area who lived in an encampment on a hillside, in a sleeping area covered with cardboard which would fit two or three people. It too was difficult; he and his fellow migrants were frightened of the Border Patrol, and the local Mexican-American gang members (*cholos*) who would attack migrants and rob them because they knew they carried cash with them.

Although life was difficult, having worked in the U.S. early enough to qualify for status adjustment (before Spring 1986), Teodoro could cross the border, allowing him to work in San Diego County and save money to build a house in Baja California. He might have settled happily into life as a transnational migrant working in tomatoes in northern Mexico (Sinaloa, Sonora, Baja California), as well as in Florida, California, Washington, and Oregon. However, in 1993 a hurricane destroyed the home he had built in the Mixtec settlement of San Vicente, Baja California. He decided to bring his family with him to settle in the U.S. because, without insurance, it was not possible to rebuild the destroyed

dwelling. So, in 1996 he and his family moved to Madera, California, and then, subsequently, to Woodburn.

It was initially very difficult for Teodoro and his family to settle into Woodburn (the family slept in a car for a period of time after leaving a migrant camp operated by the labor contractor known as “El Ruso”). A fellow Oaxacan, a Zapotec car mechanic, finally let them park in his yard. Teodoro and his wife both worked at the Norpak cannery when we interviewed them and were happy with their settled lives in Woodburn but were unfortunate enough to work in one of the firms which was forced to close due to the ongoing deterioration of the strawberry industry.

Teodoro’s extended family household now includes his wife and himself, his married son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren, two teenage sons, a teenage daughter, and a younger son in elementary school.

Although Teodoro has no formal education, he is a good example of the way in which immigrants can bring other resources to a community—as he has a wealth of knowledge about medicinal plants and traditional Mixtec healing. He dreams of setting up a small business growing and selling specialty vegetables. Two of his three teenage children speak English, Spanish, and Mixtec fluently, although, unfortunately, his youngest son speaks only Spanish and English.

Teodoro’s and his family’s lives are typical of the growing numbers of Oaxacan transnational migrants who live in “network communities”, the social milieu of migration networks such as those of San Juan Mixtepec. Ironically, like many migrant farmworkers of the era, although Teodoro, whose English is limited and whose contacts with mainstream Woodburn life are minimal is now a legal permanent resident. His children, who speak English well and belong to the younger generation who will be part

of the “new pluralism” now emerging in Woodburn will not under current immigration law be eligible for legal status, much less for citizenship.<sup>40</sup>

### *“Circular” Migration and Settlement*

An important issue which has not generally been addressed in policy analyses of the impacts of immigration is that of return migration. This is particularly important, of course, in the case of Mexican migrants because the two countries are contiguous. The phenomenon of return migration is understood at a regional and national level as a result of research by Richard Mines, who describes this process in terms of its impact on migrant-sending communities which are, in some cases, becoming “rest and retirement” destinations for Mexican migrants who have spent their working lives in the U.S.

In terms of immigrant social integration policy in U.S. communities such as Woodburn, an important conclusion put forward by researcher Belinda Reyes is that length of time living in the U.S. increases the likelihood that an immigrant will settle there permanently.<sup>41</sup> Reyes provides an excellent summary of hypotheses about the factors determining migrants’ decision to settle in the U.S. or return to Mexico. Further insights emerge from the binational analyses of Mexico-US migration by Douglas Massey and his colleagues (Massey et al 1987) and very recent work by Rafael Alarcon, one of Massey’s original team, who is currently analyzing evolving migration patterns from Chavinda, Michoacan to California over a two decade span.

---

<sup>40</sup> In this case, as in others, the specific details of the family’s migration history led to the unfortunate outcome that Teodoro has legal status while his wife and children do not. The fact that his wife and children lived in Baja California from 1987-1993 (when they could have adjusted their status had they known how crucial this would be), and their subsequent move to the U.S. in 1996 (when passage of IIRIRA barred the legal adjustment of the status of wives and children who joined a male head of household who had regularized their status) makes it almost impossible for the rest of the family to achieve legal status. Teodoro could perhaps adjust their legal status if he could make it through the naturalization process but this too is difficult since he never attended school (having worked as a child) and never learned English.

<sup>41</sup> See Belinda Reyes, **Return Migration to Western Mexico**, California Public Policy Institute, 1997. Reyes’ **Table 2** shows that only 21.7% of Mexican migrants to the U.S. remain for 2-5 years and that 20% remain for more than 5 years.

We asked both Woodburn immigrants and native-born residents whether they thought they would remain in Woodburn—because an individual’s sense of permanency and community attachment both reflects and, subsequently, influences social interactions in the community and overall civic dynamics. Half (51%) of Woodburn immigrant heads of household said they planned to stay permanently in town. In this respect foreign-born immigrants to Woodburn are quite similar to domestic migrants since only slightly more native-born survey respondents than immigrants (55% vs. 51%) planned to stay permanently in Woodburn.<sup>42</sup>

As shown in **Table 2**, about four out of five Woodburn immigrants are “long-term settlers” having lived in Woodburn 6 years or more and one out of five are more recently-arrived. As predicted by Reyes’ analysis of the Mexican Migrant Database (MMD) dataset, length of time living in Woodburn is significantly related to head of households’ expected decision to stay in town—with long-term immigrants being much more likely to plan to stay.<sup>43</sup> One-third (35%) of the recently-arrived immigrants to Woodburn planned to return to their home country but only 10% of the long-term settled immigrants planned to do so. However, even among the recently-arrived immigrants who are the group least attached to life in Woodburn, (36%) plan to stay permanently in Woodburn, even though still more of the long-term immigrants living in town (55%) say they plan to remain in the community indefinitely. If legislation allowing these long-time settlers who work in agriculture legal status were enacted, some of those who now plan to remain in Woodburn indefinitely might actually move toward a shuttle migration strategy.

About one in ten (11%) of the Mexican immigrants surveyed said they would like (either soon or eventually) to move somewhere else in the U.S. Reasonably enough, a significant minority of both native-born and immigrant survey respondents (22% of the

---

<sup>42</sup> However, the Russian immigrants’ situation was somewhat different since, after two generations of global migration, they had no strong attachment to the communities in which they were born.

<sup>43</sup>  $P < .01$

immigrants, 29% of the native-born household heads) said they didn't know if they would stay in Woodburn, that their decision depended on a number of factors.

Being part of the Woodburn "community" is perhaps not a lifelong condition but there is, at least, a substantial level of permanency, even in an economic and social environment where transnational migration is commonplace. However, in contrast to the Mexican immigrants who are strongly but not definitively committed to living the rest of their lives in Oregon, the Russian immigrants are definitively settled in the Willamette Valley. Although they may move within this small settlement area (e.g. from Gervais to Woodburn or Monitor) they are committed to their lives in Woodburn, an area they refer to very positively—both in terms of social environment and natural beauty.

Family ties were the most commonly mentioned reason for staying in Woodburn, but the second most common reason for staying was simply that residents, both native-born and immigrant, liked the community. To be sure, among immigrants as among native-born community residents, there were a fair number of survey respondents who were unhappy with their lives in Woodburn. But these generally related to personal circumstances (e.g. a newly-married Mexican woman whose husband wouldn't let her learn to drive and who felt isolated in an unfamiliar community).

Overall, the main considerations related to moving or staying in Woodburn were, among older native-born residents, the possibility that age and failing health might make it necessary for them to move into a long-term care facility or assisted living situation, and among younger native-born and immigrant heads of households alike, the possibility of needing to move to remain employed, find better employment, or start a new business.

A small proportion of the Mexican immigrant heads of household (11%) expressed, in one form or another, ambivalence about life in either Mexico or the U.S. and were considering some sort of transnational solution such as spending part of the year in each country, going back to Mexico although their children would remain in the U.S., or moving to a border area. For some Mexican immigrant parents, the economic benefits of

living in Woodburn were offset by concerns about the ways in which U.S. life might negatively affect their children.

While not reflected in our Woodburn Community Survey data, another important dimension of local social dynamics in Woodburn is that the immigrant population in the area includes substantial numbers of migrant farmworkers living in labor camps. Most of these labor camp residents are short-term migrants who work in the Woodburn area only during the height of the berry season but their migration pattern is a stable one and many have returned to Oregon year after year for a decade or more. This is because the early summer season work in the Willamette Valley fits so neatly into a “migrant circuit” which takes them from very early season strawberry production and peach or apricot thinning in California, to strawberry and caneberry picking in the Woodburn area and, then, on to the central Washington apple harvest, or back to California for the raisin grape, gondola grape, or wine grape harvest in the late summer and fall.<sup>44</sup> The on-farm and labor contractors’ migrant labor camps now house primarily younger solo male migrants and only a few family migrants now live in these camps which are made up almost exclusively of transnational “circular” migrants.<sup>45</sup>

The accounts of Mexican farmworkers who had finally settled in Woodburn suggest that the transition from living in an on-farm labor camp to life in town is a difficult one and that such a move, indeed, implies a commitment to settle in the community.

### **How Immigration Status Affects Families and Community Life**

Immigration status profoundly affects individuals’ lives, families’ lives, and community functioning. The impacts are complex and include direct effects on individuals (difficulties in getting a drivers’ license, not being able to collect unemployment

---

<sup>44</sup> While the gondola grapes as well as “wine grapes” are both used for wine, the gondola grape harvest in Madera County is usually used for cheaper wines while the harvest in the wine grape areas of California is later in the year and the harvesting procedure is different.

insurance), indirect effects (a child's parents' reluctance to go to school meetings), and lagged effects with immediate implications (a high school student's inability to plan on going to college because he or she will not be eligible for college assistance).

The basic dynamics of the "immigration problem" at the community level is the disconnect between transnational migration of Mexican farmworkers into local agricultural employment and the unauthorized status of new post-IRCA immigrants without new legislation providing them a pathway to legal immigration status and citizenship.

**Table 3** on the next page shows the ways in which households as social, economic, and civic units are affected by immigration status. The one-third (35%) of Woodburn families in which the head of household is not legally authorized remain separate and unequal in terms of participation in community decision-making, recourse in cases where their legal rights have been violated (e.g. in wage disputes) and eligibility for publically-funded health and family support programs.

This result of federal immigration policy is that immigration status becomes, essentially a community-level problem, because although many have lived in Woodburn for decades and are, from a local perspective, citizens of the community their community involvement is constrained. The implications are many—since immigration status, as well as personal circumstances, affects the community's low-income immigrant residents' overall outlook on social and civic life, access to health care, college education, and occupational options.

---

<sup>45</sup> Ed Kissam and Anna Garcia, "No Longer Children: The Living and Working Conditions of the Youth Who Harvest America's Crops", Aguirre International, Final Report to Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, 2000.

<b>Table 3</b> <b>Citizenship/Immigration Status Profile of Woodburn Households: 2003</b> <b>(N=128)</b>	
Household members are all citizens	33%
Household members are all citizens or legal permanent residents	32%
“Mixed status”—some household members are citizens or legal permanent residents but others are unauthorized	27%
“Unauthorized”—all family members are unauthorized immigrants	8%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 9 Household Grid*

As was reported in **Table 1**, more than half (57%) of Woodburn heads of household are politically disenfranchised because they are not citizens. **Table 3** shows that within another one-third of the households, those which are classified as “mixed status” or “unauthorized”, ongoing dilemmas arise in seeking help from social programs for which some, but not other, family members are eligible.

Most problematic, and most tragic, is the situation of the foreign-born children in the “mixed immigration status” households. Because male migrants are typically “pioneers” and come to work in the U.S. for a number of years before bringing their wives and children to join them, an entire generation of parents with teenage children born in Mexico (after passage of IRCA and before the entire family settled into the U.S.) are moving through high school with few prospects of attending college since, despite being from low-income families, they are, as unauthorized immigrants not eligible for federal financial aid for college. Although, in recent years, more and more migrant farmworkers have been coming with to the U.S. with their wives and young children, there is yet another cohort of unauthorized immigrant children in elementary school whose ability to attend college is jeopardized by their immigration status. For a number of years, there have been bipartisan efforts in Congress to pass “The Dream Act” which would provide amnesty to these U.S.-raised English-speaking children and teenagers but the legislation has never achieved a majority.

A good example of how the disparity in legal status affects a family's prospects is the situation of the Roldans, a family of Mixtec farmworkers from San Mateo Tunuche, a village with a long history of sending migrants north to California and Oregon. Epifanio, is now in his mid-40's; he began working in the U.S. as a teenager in 1976 and, thus, achieved legal status as a "special agricultural worker" (SAW) when IRCA passed in 1986. By 2001, his wife and he decided they had been separated long enough as a family and she came north to join him, along with their four children: Antonio, then 13, Susi, then 10, Elena, who was 8, and Jasmin, who was then a baby. Because Epifanio's wife and children have now lived with him in Woodburn for several years without authorization, under current law they are all barred from being admitted to the U.S. legally as a result of a vindictive legal provision inserted into immigration law with passage of IIRIRA in 1996.<sup>46</sup>

## **The Migration Networks Shaping Woodburn's Social Life**

Woodburn is a "melting pot", not only for immigrants who are in the process of becoming integrated into U.S. social life but also for different Mexican village-based migration networks. The community is in a sense a "brave new world" where most residents are engaged in exploring new cultural and linguistic vistas and relationships. Woodburn is, itself, an "upstream node" in a transnational migration network where different flows of migrants converge but it is also linked to other major "upstream nodes" where feeder streams from distinct village-based networks bring diverse migrants together. These include labor-intensive agribusiness production areas in northern Mexico (Sinaloa, Sonora, and Baja California) as well as in California (Vista, Madera, Fresno). For migrants in these networked transnational communities, personal memories and topics of conversation include accounts of conversations in "El Parque de los Negros" in Madera, the Friday *tianguis* of San Juan Mixtepec, neighbors in *colonias* of San Quintin, Baja California, and relatives in Santa Maria, California. This transnational dimension of

---

<sup>46</sup> All names are pseudonyms (Interview 709, Lynn Stephen). The "vindictive legal provision" is the ban on entry into the U.S. by persons who have resided in the U.S. illegally for 6 months or longer. These provisions have particularly negative impacts on the wives and children of legal permanent residents.

the “new pluralism” emerging in U.S. rural communities must be recognized to be an important aspect of community life.

The Mexico-U.S. migration networks strongly modulate individual decisions and life strategies at different points in the life cycle—individual decisions to seek employment by migrating instead of remaining in one’s hometown, strategies for border-crossing, finding an employer in a migration destination, finding housing, seeking or providing help when a crisis erupts, or simply in what one does in their free time.

The most extensive migration networks in the Willamette Valley and Woodburn area are the Oaxacan ones, but there has also been extensive migration to Woodburn from Michoacan. Woodburn is interesting in that two distinct indigenous networks, those of Oaxacan Mixtecs and Purepecha from San Jeronimo Purenchecuario have been sending farmworkers north. The specific communities of origin of Oaxacans in Woodburn mostly from the Sierra Mixteca—but there are also Oaxacans from other areas of the state such as the Valley of Oaxaca. There are also a relatively high proportion of migrants from relatively urban areas of Mexico—including Mixtecs whose families had first migrated to Mexico, DF but subsequently joined friends or relatives from hometown village migration networks in traveling to U.S. farmwork. Both the Michoacan-based and Oaxacan networks were sending migrants north in the 1970’s and 1980’s—well before passage of IRCA. This is important because most of the pre-IRCA farmworkers secured legal status and, therefore, could settle in the community more easily than those without status.

The migration networks which brought the Oaxacan immigrants to Woodburn are very closely allied to well-established Mixtec networks in California—most of which converge in Madera, the staging point for many migrants to travel north to work in the Oregon berry harvest. We know, from research in Central California for example, that the San Juan Mixtepec-based village network which is so prominent in Arvin and Lamont in Kern County is very tightly linked to the Willamette Valley, as is the Santa Maria Tindu village network which is the dominant one in Madera, CA. The networks of the

adjacent villages of Santa Rosa Caxtlahuaca, Santiago Naranjas, San Miguel Cuevas immediately south of Juxtlahuaca which also send migrants to Selma, Parlier, Fresno, and Kerman in Fresno County, CA, send migrants to Woodburn. So do the Huajuapam de Leon networks which send migrants both to northern California and Oregon. The Oaxacan households surveyed also included some from the city of Oaxaca, another major migrant-sending village, Santa Maria Asuncion, and Triqui hamlets in the Sierra Mixteca. There are also some *mestizo* immigrants from Baja California who probably came north as a result of friendships with Oaxacan migrant workers who they met in Sinaloa or Baja California.

The survey data on Mexican immigrants to Woodburn shows how important it is to visualize migration patterns in terms of networks, not simply as “migrant circuits”. Although the prevailing traditional pattern in rural Mexico has been for young men to marry young women from their hometown village, almost half (43%) of the Mexican immigrant couples in Woodburn include husbands and wives from different regions of Mexico who met in one of the “upstream migrant nodes” to which migrants travel such as San Quintin, Baja California, the Culiacan Valley of Sinaloa, Vista, CA, or Madera, CA.<sup>47</sup> As migrant researcher Tamar Diane Wilson argues, the “weak” network linkages established by marriage greatly expands prospective migrants’ employment options. Therefore, many Mexican couples now settled in Woodburn came to join the wife’s siblings or parents, as well as the husband’s family.<sup>48</sup>

As we have found in other farmworker communities, households of solo migrant co-workers who share housing also establish cross-network friendships.<sup>49</sup> As Mexican

---

<sup>47</sup> This is based on interviews with 56 Mexican couples where at least one partner is a Mexican immigrant. A very low proportion of these married couples (5%) include a U.S.-born partner and their spouse.

<sup>48</sup> Diana Tamar Wilson 1998c "Weak ties, strong ties: network principles in Mexican migration." Human Organization 57: 394–403

<sup>49</sup> Because the Woodburn Community Survey was conducted only in town, not in migrant labor camps, there were few households of solo male migrants (4). Two of these included men from different migration/social networks. Virtually all of the on-farm or labor contractor-managed farm labor camps include migrants from different village networks, although in most cases there is one dominant village network.

society modernizes, there are also more migration options for women; our interviews included a few women who had migrated on their own, as female heads of household accompanied by their children or as young women who migrated with their sisters in search of work.

The survey sub-sample of Russian immigrants is small; the qualitative finding about the complexities of the transnational social/migration networks and ties are based more on network ties of religious affiliation than geography so they are not included in the table; however, this intersection of ethnicity, religious affiliation, and geography has, as noted previously unusual dimensions since many of the “Old Believers” of Russian ethnicity were born in Brazil or Argentina and have a range of weak linkages with Mexican migrants by virtue of their involvement in farm labor contracting and speaking a common language—Spanish.<sup>50</sup>

**Table 4** on the following page shows the diverse Mexican migration networks in Woodburn—using the birthplace of the head of household as a proxy for describing the co-existence of diverse networks (although there is, at the same time, intermarriage among these networks).

---

<sup>50</sup> The community survey included 8 non-Mexican immigrant households with heads of households who were: Russian (4), Salvadoran (2), Honduran (1), Malaysian (1), and British (1)—11% of the unweighted sample of 75 immigrant households. Although they are not included in **Table 4**, they are included in tabulations referring to immigrant households, unless otherwise noted.

<b>Table 4</b> <b>Mexico-Based Migration Networks in Woodburn</b>	
<i>State and Community of Origin of Mexican-Born HH Heads (N=67)</i>	<i>% Associated with Network</i>
<b>Oaxaca</b> —Sta. Maria Tindu, Cd. de Oaxaca, San Juan Mixtepec, San Mateo Tunuche, Ocotlan, Huajuapán, Sta. Maria Caxtlahuaca, Zaachila	<b>24%</b>
<b>Michoacan</b> —Morelia, Quiroga, Jaripo, San Jeronimo, Chupicuaro various smaller ranchos	<b>19%</b>
<b>Guanajuato</b> —Penjamo, Leon, Silao, Guanajuato, Romita	<b>13%</b>
<b>Guerrero</b> —Acapulco, Coyuca, Tecpan de Galeana, Ometepec	<b>6%</b>
<b>Mexico, D.F.</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Morelos</b> —Cuernavaca, Totolapan	<b>5%</b>
<b>Jalisco</b> —Rancho la Canada, ranchos	<b>5%</b>
<b>Veracruz</b> —Poza Rica, Coyuca	<b>5%</b>
<b>Puebla</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Sinaloa</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Nayarit</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Estado de Mexico</b>	<b>&lt;2%</b>
<b>San Luis Potosi</b>	<b>&lt;2%</b>
<b>Zacatecas</b>	<b>&lt;2%</b>
<b>Tamaulipas</b>	<b>&lt;2%</b>
<b>Durango</b>	<b>&lt;2%</b>
<b>Colima</b>	<b>&lt;2%</b>
<b>Tlaxcala</b>	<b>&lt;2%</b>

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. A (Where Born.)*

A number of Mixtec migrants had, during the 1980's, migrated within Mexico and gone to Mexico City, as well as to the state of Veracruz; the San Juan Mixtepec network, for example, became established in Abasolo in Veracruz state and now sends migrants north to Oregon agriculture.<sup>51</sup> Thus, there may be some migrants from Mixtec communities in sending states not usually thought of as Mixtec—including Veracruz, D.F., and Sinaloa in Woodburn although we did not encounter any of them in the community survey. Our field research also shows that there are also now significant numbers of Zapotecs working in farmwork in the area, as well as Triqui, Chatino-speaking and Mixe migrants; as they move out of migrant farmwork and settle in Oregon they will become part of

<sup>51</sup> Ed Kissam field research notes, "Minors in Agriculture" study ("El Campo de los Gatos"), July, 1999.

Woodburn community life. The most recent wave of indigenous-origin migrants are Maya from Chiapas.<sup>52</sup>

In comparison to the Oaxacan village/migration networks, the networks of *paisanos* from the major migrant-sending states of Guanajuato and Jalisco are not very well-established in Woodburn. It seems that this relates both to the size of the village migration networks and the nature of migrant-sending communities. While most Mexican migrants living and working in the rural United States are from rural sending communities in Mexico, Woodburn diverges from this norm in having a relatively high proportion of immigrants from urban areas of Mexico. These Mexican immigrants raised in Mexican urban centers generally have much higher levels of education than the rural immigrants as well as greater experience in social interactions outside an extended family or village-based social network. Consequently, these urban networks contribute significantly to the pool of talent among Mexican immigrant entrepreneurs in Woodburn and have played an important role in making Woodburn a regional service center for many of the Mexican migrants in the Willamette Valley.

Although the Woodburn Mexican population looks relatively homogenous to outsiders, from immigrants' own perspective, the village-based social networks are quite fragmented.<sup>53</sup> This has important implications for community life in that resources of "bonding" social capital are fairly sparse within the Woodburn immigrant community. There are both positive and negative outcomes stemming from this situation. On the one hand it makes it more difficult for Mexican immigrants in Woodburn to come together to address issues of common concern. On the other hand, the weakness of village-based social networks facilitates development of "bridging" social capital created when Mexican immigrants from diverse social networks develop relationships at work, as neighbors, or as fellow business owners.

---

<sup>52</sup> Personal communication, Santiago Ventura, Oregon Law Center Interpreters' Project, July, 2005.

<sup>53</sup> Immigrant residences are scattered throughout central Woodburn and much of the low-cost housing consists of apartment buildings. While some multi-family households consist of groups of fellow villagers there is not any neighborhood where migrants from any particular sending community are clustered. This also attenuates the social linkages which make up these networks.

A fairly limited number of very large and labor-intensive agricultural communities in the U.S.—perhaps 50-80 local labor markets--- can be identified as “upstream nodes” within these transnational Mexico-U.S. migration networks. Thus, the transnational “shape” of the farm labor market also affects the patterns of Mexico-U.S. migration because there are both direct linkages between rural Mexican sending villages and rural U.S. farm labor markets and indirect ones—because they are the first destination for newly-arriving migrants.

This adds to the diversity of immigrants’ lives in Woodburn there are so many variations in migration history. Some Mixtec migrants associated with Oaxacan village migration networks, for example, first lived in Mexico, DF, because the city was part of the rural-urban migration circuits within Mexico. Others lived in California first. These California stepping stones along the road to Oregon include major agricultural communities within the regional Mixtec migration circuit--Fresno, Madera, Farmersville, Livingston, Santa Maria, or Watsonville in Central California or Vista, San Marcos, San Luis Rey in northern San Diego County—but also urban California labor markets such as Los Angeles, Sacramento, and San Diego. Common initial destinations in Oregon included, in addition to Woodburn, small nearby communities such as Gervais, Hubbard, Molalla, Mount Angel, Saint Paul, Monitor, Canby, as well as larger Willamette Valley communities such as Gresham, Oregon City, Newburg, Salem, Hillsboro, or Portland.

Almost half (47%) of the Mexican immigrants who have settled in Woodburn first migrated to a California community and only later went to Woodburn—often because they had heard there might be less competition among immigrants for limited employment in Oregon than in the primary migrant destinations in California.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Woodburn has been a primary migration destination for the Russian immigrants (3 out of 4 households we interviewed had first come to Woodburn or Gervais) but all of the non-Mexican immigrants we interviewed in Woodburn had first come somewhere else—the two Salvadoran families first to Los Angeles, the Honduran household to Chicago, one Russian family to N.Y., one English immigrant to N.Y, and one Malaysian to Kentucky.

The Mexican immigrants who came to Woodburn as secondary destination in their village network's inventory of U.S. places to go were much more likely than the direct Mexico-Woodburn migrants (16% vs. 3%) to have come even they had no relatives in town--because they knew, at least, that there were others from their hometown community available to help orient them, help them find employment, or provide temporary housing.

Therefore, Woodburn appears not to be one of the primary "upstream migrant nodes" in the transnational networks which bring Mexican migrants to rural U.S. communities. It is more a particular lobe of a Pacific Seaboard network or migrant circuit which includes California, Oregon, and Washington.

### ***The San Jeronimo and Quiroga, Michoacan Network***

Victor Sanchez, a Purepecha migrant from San Jeronimo, Michoacan, first came to the U.S. in 1977 (to Vista in Northern San Diego County) but had found his way north and had settled in Woodburn by 1979.<sup>55</sup> While there were not yet many families from San Jeronimo in Woodburn, he did have a friend from his village who had already migrated to Woodburn. Like many other long-term settlers, Victor settled into a stable job in farmwork, working for the same nursery for 12 years until the owner died. Knowing the area well, he managed to find a job out of agriculture, in a recycling plant. He worked there until it closed. He has now returned to agricultural work, working at a local processing plant. His ability to stay in Woodburn, given the instability of employment in the low-skill occupations he can easily work in (with a 4<sup>th</sup> grade education and limited English) stems in part from his access to "social capital".

The migration experience of a very different migrant from San Jeronimo, Irene Paramo, shows another way in which migration networks replicate themselves. Irene, now 18 years old and a senior in high school, is the daughter of Fermin Paramo, and a legal

---

<sup>55</sup> Interview 758 (Anna Garcia)

resident although she only arrived 3 years ago—because her father had been a migrant farmworker well before passage of IRCA and achieved legal permanent resident status under the SAW program. This made it possible for him to eventually successfully petition for Irene, her brother, and her mother, who had remained in San Jeronimo the many years while he was migrating, to join him finally in Woodburn as legal permanent residents.<sup>56</sup> Although Irene had trouble making friends when she first went to school in Woodburn in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, the family was firmly established and she had no major problems settling in to local life—although her father continues to be a low-income farmworker. Irene’s situation provides a good reminder that personal decisions and aspirations are shaped by many factors, not only legal status. Although she is now a legal permanent resident and has learned English well in the 3 years she’s lived in the U.S., having grown up in Michoacan she wants to return there—to teach English.<sup>57</sup>

Migration theorists speculate that, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century transnational migration networks, sometimes conceptualized as “network communities” may come to be stronger than nation-states in terms of influences on social and economic life. There are, however, domains where the nation-state still reigns supreme as evidenced by the situation of another family from the mature network of San Jeronimo. Eliseo Cortez, a nursery worker, originally from San Jeronimo, first came to work in the U.S. in 1980 as a farmworker.<sup>58</sup> He now speaks English adequately, owns the house he lives in, and works in a steady job at a nursery. His wife and two daughters joined him in Woodburn in 1994—but they came before they had secured a family visa; therefore they are now banned from “entering” the U.S. and are “unauthorized” although they have lived in Woodburn for a decade and Eliseo’s Mexican-born sons are fully bilingual, having grown up in Woodburn. Eliseo’s youngest child, a daughter is U.S.-born.

---

<sup>56</sup> What is probably a key element in this family’s ability to successfully reunite as legal residents in Woodburn is that Irene, her siblings and her mother had continued to live in Mexico while the head of household, Fermin, worked as a shuttle migrant. Had they joined him in the U.S. before securing legal status, they would have been barred from entering the country for 10 years.

<sup>57</sup> Interview 752 (Jessica Cole).

<sup>58</sup> Interview 770 (Rachel Hansen)

### *The Santa Maria Tindu, Huajuapam de Leon District Migration Network*

The Santa Maria Tindu network of Mixtec migrants is an unusual network. Perhaps in part as a consequence of its long history as a migrant-sending community, relatively few of the Mixtecos from Santa Maria Tindu still speak Mixtec.<sup>59</sup> It is probably one of the villages in the Sierra Mixtec with the longest migration history. According to informants interviewed as part of the California Institute of Rural Studies (CIRS) survey of Oaxacan village networks, 50-60 men had migrated north more than half a century ago as part of the Bracero program (1942-1964). When the Bracero program ended, the villagers began migrating to Sinaloa and Baja California in the 1960's as the labor-intensive Mexican tomato industry took off as a result of newly-constructed dams and irrigation projects. At least one resident of Santa Maria Tindu migrated to Madera in the late 1960's or 1970s and soon became a very well-known farm labor contractor. According to CIRS' researchers' informants, migrants from Santa Maria Tindu began traveling to the Northwest as early as 1973.

The Calderon family, who lives in one of a cluster of four small houses in central Woodburn which serve as a de facto (well-known but unlicensed) labor camp is a fairly typical family among the Santa Maria Tindu households we interviewed.<sup>60</sup> Esteban Calderon, the 37 year-old head of the household began working in the fields of Baja California as a 7 year-old child (about in 1965). He then began working in U.S. farmwork as a 13 year-old farmworker traveling with his brother to Madera. Esteban met his wife, Rosa, on one of his periodic return to Vizcaino, Baja California. After they married they returned for a few months to Santa Maria Tindu but then began to migrate again. Both are illiterate—so they can't quite remember which year it was they settled in Oregon but it was probably about in 1990 since their eldest son, a 15 year-old was born in Baja California, and their second son was born in 1993 in Portland. The couple have continued to do year-round farmwork.

---

<sup>59</sup> Ed Kissam interview with Antonio Cortes Garcia, treasurer of the Santa Maria Tindu hometown association in Madera, CA, summer 2002.

<sup>60</sup> Interview 757 (Anna Garcia)

Perhaps because of the couple's illiteracy (Esteban went only to 1<sup>st</sup> grade and Rosa didn't attend school at all) or because they were elsewhere in their transnational circuit, they did not apply for legalization under IRCA although Esteban would clearly have been eligible for status adjustment. Consequently, Esteban, his wife, and their first son (who is bilingual in English and Spanish since he came to the U.S. as a pre-schooler) all lack legal status while the four youngest children in the family, two boys and two girls, are all U.S. citizens since they were born in Oregon. Neither parent speaks English although all of the five children speak English fluently.

Although the Santa Maria Tindu network is large and well-established, the Calderons weren't able to get much help through their network connections—only a place to stay for a few days when they first came from California for the berry season. And Esteban says, when he first arrived there weren't so many of his fellow villagers living in Woodburn as there are now. Unfortunately, the family has continued to struggle economically as a result of the seasonality of farmwork in Oregon, their lack of education and inability to speak English. Their current house is run down and even when they sought help from legal services and the Oregon Labor Bureau because the farm labor housing where “El Ruso” the farm labor contractor they worked for was sub-standard, no improvements were made. They don't know anything about affordable housing programs and would not qualify if they did—since they do not have legal status.

The case of a young man, Adalberto Mejia, from Huajuapam de Leon, shows how individual experiences can differ even within closely-linked area networks (Huajuapam is a fairly developed regional center with a population of about 40,000 persons about 30 kilometers from Santa Maria Tindu).<sup>61</sup> Adalberto is a fairly typical “solo male migrant”. Now 24 years old, he first worked in the U.S. as a 17 year-old—in San Diego County. Within two years of coming to the U.S. he found his way to Monitor (about 10 miles from Woodburn), to find winter work in the Christmas tree industry (a major Willamette Valley industry). Adolfo is the only one of his nine siblings to migrate to the U.S. and sends money back to Mexico regularly. While there are many of his *paisanos* in

---

<sup>61</sup> This is a pseudonym. Anna Garcia (Interview #611).

Woodburn, Adalberto chose to live in a household with a Salvadoran friend, Carlos, and Carlos' mother who is the owner of a small business. While Adalberto is quite well educated for a migrant, having gone to *secundaria* (8<sup>th</sup> grade, middle school), he was happily working as a dishwasher during most of the year and working in Christmas tree production in the winter. Although he's worked in the U.S. for 7 years, he still speaks no English and says he's lonely because there's no social life in town.

The situation of the Oaxacan immigrants from the Huajuapam de Leon district who we interviewed is a powerful reminder that migration networks are powerful, but not all-powerful. The social capital inherent in the networks of Santa Maria Tindu and Huajuapam de Leon have made it possible for villagers in the network to find farmwork in Central California and in the Willamette Valley. However, the nature of farmworker housing and workplaces as insular venues, small universes of their own, isolates the transnational migrants who rely on these network connections for work. Lack of education makes it difficult for the farmworkers from these networks to find real stability, although clearly some of their relatives and fellow villagers had settled in to life in Woodburn happily and stably. Lack of legal status and competition with fellow migrants makes life difficult and uncertain—both for families such as the Calderons who decided to settle in Woodburn and transnational shuttle migrants such as Adalberto who are on their own. The Oaxacan migration networks are very easily overcoming the geographical demarcation of the U.S.-Mexico border but not managing well in creating social and civic venues for migrants to pursue their human right to health and happiness.

At the same time, it is clear that although social networks play a significant role in determining individual outcomes, individual characteristics can also make a huge difference. While the lives of the Mixtec migrants we interviewed in the Huajuapam de Leon and Santa Maria Tindu village networks were difficult, although their networks are leading ones in Woodburn, the life of another solo male migrant from Oaxaca City, Efrain Salinas, was a stable and happy one.<sup>62</sup> Efrain had come only the year before we

---

<sup>62</sup> Interview 762 (Anna Garcia)

interviewed him, to “visit” (and to work with) his son who had settled in Woodburn. Although Efrain had spent only a year in town, had only gone to 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and spoke no English, his son had secured him employment in a light manufacturing establishment in a neighboring town so Efrain was happy with his life as a transnational migrant. Efrain found, on his own, a second job, washing dishes at a local restaurant. He shared an apartment with his son, a nephew, and a friend of theirs. The apartment, while sparsely furnished, was neat and clean. With four men sharing the rent, each only had to pay \$150 per month, making it possible to send money home regularly. Efrain had only good things to say about Woodburn—“People here are nice”, “It’s calm, one doesn’t worry”, “From what I hear, municipal government is doing a pretty good job of addressing the main problems they face”. Having earned a good deal of money due to his stable jobs and affordable living arrangements, Efrain planned to return soon to Oaxaca to rejoin his young second wife, his grown children from his first marriage, and his two young children by his second wife.

### ***The Evolution of Transnational Networks and Migration Trends***

While Woodburn is not yet as prominent a destination for Mexican farmworker migrants as communities such as Los Angeles, Fresno, Madera in California, or Immokalee, West Palm Beach, Plant City or other Florida communities which are centers of labor-intensive agricultural production, it appears to be growing in importance, judging by the proportion of migrants who first migrated there. The Willamette Valley appears to have been especially important in Mixtecs’ migration experience since it was, for example, recognized as an important “upstream” destination by Mixtec and Triqui migrants working in northern San Diego County early on.

Further evidence of the diversity of extended family and village networks in Woodburn and the town’s history as a migrant destination for Mexicanos comes from the Mexican immigrant head of households’ answers to our questioning as to whether there were others from their family or village already in town when they arrived. Almost two-thirds (64%) said there had been almost no one from their village or extended family when they

first arrived in town, or that they had come primarily to work, not to settle and didn't have any idea as to whether there were others from their village in town. While one out of five (20%) of the Mexican immigrants arriving in Woodburn already had relatives in the community, only 16% said there were "lots of others" from their village in Woodburn before them.

It should be noted that most of the immigrants in the Russian households interviewed in the community survey said that some family member had immigrated previously and confirmed that there was already an established community which helped them settle in, often through the efforts of the Slavic Orthodox church, when they arrived.

## **Coming to the U.S. and Settling Into Woodburn**

Almost half of the Mexican immigrant heads of household said they had come to the U.S. on their own (22%) or accompanied only by friends or traveling companions from their village (27%). This shows that there is a fairly high level of "pioneering" among the Mexican networks of migrants coming to Woodburn. A new phenomenon is that some young women are traveling north together.

At the same time there is also substantial nuclear family migration from Mexico to the U.S. Almost one-third (31%) of the Mexican immigrants had come to the U.S. with nuclear family members. One in seven (15%) of the immigrant heads of household had come to the U.S. as an adult with their spouse and/or children. One out of six (16%) had come as a child or teenager with their parents. The remaining 20% had come with relatives—migrating as part of an extended family network or in some cases, coming to the U.S. to rejoin a spouse or parent who had migrated earlier.

We asked the Mexican immigrant heads of household who had migrated to another U.S. community before coming to Woodburn about the circumstances of their coming to Woodburn. Two-thirds (68%) had come to Woodburn on their own or with friends, co-workers, or a farm labor contractor because they had heard there was lots of work in

town. Most of the rest had come with their wife and children or, in a few cases, with their adult children. A few had been sent for by a family member who had gone to Woodburn before them, with an in-law, or as a child brought by their parents.<sup>63</sup>

### **Help In Settling In To Woodburn—Immigrants and Native-Born Residents**

We asked both native-born and immigrant residents who had moved to Woodburn as adults what sorts of people had been particularly helpful to them when they first arrived. Many of the native-born (40%) but relatively few of the immigrants who came to Woodburn as adults could remember unrelated individuals who had been particularly helpful to them.<sup>64</sup> However, the majority of native-born and immigrant newcomers to town had received some sort of help as part of settling into the community.

**Table 5** on the next page shows the differences between these immigrants and native-born households with respect to the sorts of people who helped them out when they arrived in Woodburn.

---

<sup>63</sup> This tabulation refers only to adult heads of household. The analysis of the way in which all household members arrived in Woodburn would have been likely to show that many of the foreign-born children who now live in Woodburn came with their parents. It was not, however, feasible to secure this information for all household members.

<sup>64</sup> One out of eight (12%) of the native-born residents of Woodburn had been born in the community and, thus, had not moved into town. Another 10% had grown up in the community and, thus, did not answer this question either.

<b>Table 5</b>		
<b>Sources of Help for Newcomers Settling In Woodburn Who Received Help</b>		
<b>Source of Help</b>	<b>% of Native-Born (N=31)</b>	<b>% of Mexican Immigrants (N=67)</b>
Own nuclear family relatives (parents, children, siblings)	20%	30%
Own extended family (cousins, uncles, aunts)	13%	13%
In-laws (father/mother in-law or sister/brother in law)	7%	4%
Family friend, <i>paisano</i> from same village network	13%	26%
Local resident: co-ethnic	26%	12%
Local resident: not co-ethnic	---	3%
Community organization	6%	6%
Public institution or government program	7%	---
Church	7%	6%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 31*

There are some interesting similarities but, also, differences in the sources of help immigrants and native-born persons secure as they settle in to the community. Newly-arrived native-born families and Mexican immigrants are more or less equally likely to receive help from in-laws or extended family members, although Mexican immigrants get more help in settling into town from nuclear family members, often siblings.

The main difference here is that Mexicans more often find get help from friends or fellow villagers (*paisanos*). Mexican immigrants are twice as likely to get help from a friend or hometown acquaintance as the U.S.-born arrivals. This is largely due to the reasons which bring Mexican immigrants to Woodburn, with employment being a leading reason for coming to town and village network recruitment being a popular way for agricultural producers to recruit new farmworkers. In contrast to the new U.S. born arrivals to Woodburn, 29% of whom come to town to retire, only 3% of the immigrants) have come

to town to retire, e.g. aging parents joining a son or daughter. In Woodburn, as is the case throughout the U.S., most farmworker recruitment is based on social networks but in Woodburn, because agricultural producers are smaller, there is slightly less reliance on labor contractors than in other agribusiness areas.

Both native-born and immigrant newcomers to Woodburn are provided temporary housing by family and friends as a way of helping them settle into town—but the Mexican networks are sometimes frayed and over-committed, so relatives cannot really provide the sort of support that might traditionally be expected. Sometimes, help to new immigrants also comes from outside village networks as co-workers pitch in to help out when they find themselves in difficult circumstances. Andres Martinez, a 27 year old recent immigrant from Guerrero, came to Woodburn because his sister-in-law and her family lived in the area.<sup>65</sup> Now separated from his wife but sending remittances home to support his two children who live in his home village with their grandparents, he lives with a co-worker's family. He felt they were really helping him a lot—both financially and socially as he settled in to life in Woodburn.

Community institutions, churches, community organizations, and government programs play a secondary role in facilitating newcomers' initially settling in to community life. Overall, one in five native-born newcomers gets help from a formal social organization like this while only one in eight immigrants does. The notable difference is that government programs do not play major roles in immigrants' initial settlement, they may then subsequently play important roles in immigrants' as well as native-born families' accommodation to community life.

School system personnel play an important role in Mexican families' settlement process. Several families singled individuals working in the schools as being particularly helpful. This seems to support the family-oriented approach used in the Migrant Education to enhance immigrant farmworker children's educational success. For example, Ramon

---

<sup>65</sup> A pseudonym (Danielle Robinson) Interview #737

Garza was the first migrant from his village to come to Woodburn.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, there was no one to help him find housing or employment initially. However, Ramon, when asked about people who helped a lot pointed particularly to a Latina who worked in the school system who had helped his wife and him deal with the paperwork involved in enrolling their eight children in school. After getting to know the family she and her husband had gone still further in generally helping the family—giving them rides to the local health clinic, and in other ways.

The case of the family of Rocio Ortiz, a housewife with two grown children, two school-age children and a toddler shows both the constraints on help provided to newly-arriving immigrants and the different sorts of help provided by different individuals and groups.<sup>67</sup> When, after 8 years of separation, Rosa and her children rejoined her husband who had worked in the U.S. as a farmworker, the family lived with friends for two months but it was difficult after awhile to accommodate a couple who then had two school-age children. One of Rosa's first concerns was to learn English and PCUN was providing classes which she immediately began attending. But they were far from her house, the family did not own a car, and after being frightened by a man who ran up to her one night while she was walking home, she stopped going to class. But, because the family was part of a small but well-established social/migration network, a family friend helped her with things that were difficult for a non-English speaker (registering her sons in school), and gave her rides to the health clinic, and took her shopping.

### **Types of Problems Immigrants Encountered Settling In To Woodburn**

We asked immigrants about the biggest problems they faced in settling in to Woodburn. Although immigrants had received help from a range of people, most, but not all, of the immigrant newcomers to Woodburn experienced serious problems in moving into the community or in the course of migrating to the U.S.

---

<sup>66</sup> A pseudonym (Danielle Robinson) Interview #715

**Table 6** below tabulates immigrants’ unprompted responses about the “biggest problems” they experienced when they first came to Woodburn. The sorts of problems encountered differ depending on when an immigrant came to Woodburn, their social network affiliation, their gender, and the age at which they came to the U.S. and settled into Woodburn.

<b>Table 6</b> <b>Types of Problems Experienced by Immigrant Newcomers to Woodburn</b> (N=67)	
<b>Type of Problem</b>	<b>% Heads of Household Experiencing Problem</b>
Hard to get work	25%
Language/culture in U.S.	24%
Hard to get housing	25%
Miscellaneous other	5%
Border Patrol	1%
Transportation	3%
No problem at all	17%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 3*

Two leading problems faced by newly-arriving immigrants are: securing employment and securing affordable housing. These problems are not easily addressed by local organizations because both types of organizational assistance are usually funded via programs which conditions service delivery on legal immigration status. The third major problem faced by immigrants arriving in Woodburn is language. Chemeketa College, the local community college does play an important role in helping immigrants become integrated into the social life of Woodburn by teaching them English—but not all of the immigrants find their way to the ESL classes and some who are aware of them cannot find a way to combine employment, child-rearing, and class attendance.

---

<sup>67</sup> A pseudonym (Danielle Robinson) Interview #740

Probably because men are often the “pioneers” who migrate first to the U.S. they are more likely than women to report that “language and culture” were the biggest problem they faced (identified as one of their biggest problems by 29% of the men but only 17% of the women). Although immigration enforcement, i.e. “Border Patrol” is not listed as a major problem, it also was mentioned by more men than women.

Survey respondents’ specific comments show how some of these problems interact. Since there is minimal public transportation, transportation-related problems include not only getting the money to buy a car but, also, learning to drive, securing a driver’s license (even in the era before there were restrictions on access to licenses), and the time spent in driving to work. Although the high cost of being transported to work by a day-haul “raitero” is a common farmworker complaint in California (since the \$5 charge may amount to as much as 10% of daily earnings), the transportation problem is even worse in Oregon since there are no raiteros who provide daily transportation for a fee.

Among the “miscellaneous other” problems are comments from respondents who had come to Woodburn as children or teenagers who mentioned very specific social adjustment problems such as being bullied at school, difficulties in making friends, and brothers restricting a teenage girl’s going out with friends or to their houses. Some of the adult immigrants mentioned other problems related to several factors—being alone at home and afraid to go out (when Border Patrol units were in the area), childcare, or not having friends in town.

It is interesting to compare these responses to those of immigrants in our Arvin New Pluralism community case study in California. The same proportion of immigrants in Arvin and Woodburn mentioned housing, the Border Patrol, or transportation as a problem, but finding work has been a much more serious problem in Woodburn (although many came because they had heard there was “more work” in Oregon) as has dealing with U.S. language and culture. This is understandable since Woodburn has

relatively less immigrants and is a somewhat newer migration destination.<sup>68</sup> Also, Oregon does not have as many farm labor contractors as California does nor does it have a thriving street corner labor market as communities such as Immokalee in Florida have. From this perspective, that of the newly-arrived migrant, the farm labor contractors' role as labor market intermediaries falls into the category of "services" available to newly-arriving migrants although accepting these services can, at the same time, entail coercion and exploitation.

Overall, immigrants' unprompted responses to our question about the biggest problems they faced in coming to Woodburn appear to underestimate the difficulty of finding housing. We asked both native-born heads of household and immigrants who had moved to Woodburn specifically about finding housing when they arrived. More than three times as many immigrants as native-born heads of household (46% vs. 14%) said it had been "very hard" at first to find a place to live. The difficulties experienced by Mexican immigrants in search of housing have also become more serious over the years since small farmers in the Willamette Valley who had traditionally provided arriving migrants with on-farm housing have, in recent years, been less willing to do so. Even if a "pioneering" male migrant may not consider housing a serious problem when he arrives on his own, he still faces serious problems when he later sends for his wife and children.

## **Residential Patterns and Housing Arrangements**

Residential patterns in Woodburn are complex, relating as much to the community's rapid growth in general as to immigration in particular. Like many other contemporary rural communities in agricultural production areas, the current map of Woodburn reflects its history—with an older central area and a variety of newer neighborhoods and developments surrounding the original pre-World War II town.

---

<sup>68</sup> While 62% of the Woodburn heads of household are immigrants, 82% of the Arvin heads of household are immigrants. Woodburn's history of Mexican migration is also about 20 years shorter, as the Tejanos first began to arrive in Woodburn in the 1950's while there had been a few Mexican, Yemeni, and Filipino migrants in Arvin in the 1930's.

Although some areas of town have a distinct ethnic character (Anglo or Latino), other neighborhoods are ethnically very mixed. Surely, these residential patterns affect political dynamics in the community but the texture of ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and history of each neighborhood makes the community diverse and varied in terms of social interactions among neighbors.

The older, central part of Woodburn lies in a wedge-shaped downtown of older homes and business buildings bordered by railroad tracks running diagonally through town from the northeast to the southwest. To the east of the railroad tracks, to the Highway 99 (which parallels the railroad tracks), the main highway through town before Interstate Highway 5 was built, are older, slightly poorer residential neighborhoods which even extend a few blocks east of Highway 99. Toward the west, older, more affluent homes extend a few blocks west of Settlemeir Road, which runs into Highway 99 at the southern edge of town.

Northwest of the central part of town, there is a neighborhood which is very socioeconomically mixed—with a few apartment complexes, a few new relatively small housing developments, and several continuing care facilities. This quadrant of the community is ethnically mixed. Still further to the northwest, there is a fairly large neighborhood which is isolated from the rest of Woodburn by Interstate Highway 5. It is a lower middle class neighborhood with a mixture of well-kept single-family homes and mobile homes. Southwest of the central area of Woodburn lies a newer suburban neighborhood which is predominantly Anglo but which also includes some middle-class Latino families.

The north-central and north-eastern part of town, north of the Hillsboro-Silverton Highway has very few immigrant households—but the predominantly Anglo population in this area is socioeconomically mixed. This northern part of town includes large mobile home parks where older, retired families with limited means live, a more middle-class housing development, Senior Estates, and, to the northeast, several quite new housing developments (e.g. Ironwood Terrace, Tukwila, Heritage Park) marketed to more affluent

families, predominantly commuters to Portland. Senior Estates (dating from 1961) is a very large development with about 1,500 single-family homes built around a golf course, but there are also apartment complexes in this neighborhood and they are ethnically mixed.

### **Diverse Housing Accommodations**

Woodburn differs from many other rural communities in the U.S. with high concentrations of immigrants in that there are a number of apartment complexes. The Chamber of Commerce lists 23 apartment complexes and our community mapping shows several additional ones. Woodburn's housing stock also differs from many of the agricultural communities in states such as California and Florida in that there are mobile home parks with predominantly Anglo families, as well as the predominantly Mexican and mixed-ethnicity trailer parks which are found in the other agricultural communities.

**Table 7** on the next page shows the differences in immigrant and native-born families housing. As can be seen in this tabulation, access to affordable apartment units is an important element in immigrant settlement in Woodburn. However, because most of the apartments are one or two bedroom units they are often crowded—because those living there include extended family units and nuclear families with quite a few children. The mean household size for immigrants living in apartments is, for example, 5.13 persons.

<b>Table 7</b> <b>Immigrant and Native-born Families' Housing</b> <sup>69</sup> (N=128)		
<b>Type of Housing</b>	<b>% of Native-Born</b>	<b>% of Immigrants</b>
Single Family Home	79%	53%
Apartment or Duplex	10%	43%
Trailer	10%	2%
Federally-subsidized housing	1%	2%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey Section A (Cover Page)*

**Table 8** below reports patterns of financial arrangements for housing for immigrants and native-born residents of Woodburn.

<b>Table 8</b> <b>Immigrant and Native-born Families' Payments for Shelter</b> (N=128)		
<b>Type of Payment</b>	<b>% of Native-Born</b>	<b>% of Immigrants</b>
Make payments on house they own	44%	29%
Own house free and clear	25%	9%
Rent	24%	58%
Live in house relative owns	5%	4%
Live free—housesitting, other	2%	---

*Source: Q. 13, Woodburn Community Survey*

The rate of home ownership among native-born households (69%) is much higher than among immigrants (where it is 38%). The disparities among immigrant and native-born

<sup>69</sup> Differences in type of housing lived in by immigrants and native-born Arvin residents are statistically insignificant.

homeowners are striking—since the immigrants who do own their own homes and make payments on them pay, on the average, \$1,169 per month in housing-related payments while the native-born homeowners only pay \$717 per month. This is because some of the native-born heads of household have grown up in town and because, on the average, all have lived in town longer (16 years for native-born heads of household vs. 9 years for immigrant heads of household). For the same reason, the proportion of native-born households who own a home without having to make mortgage payments is dramatically higher (in part due to the differing demographics of the two groups). Conversely, more of the immigrant households are renters than native-born ones.

One of the macro-level trends which has tremendous impact on immigrant and native-born households in rural U.S. communities alike, particularly those such as Woodburn which are close to a major urban metro area like Portland, is that the cost of housing—either renting or owning one’s home—is escalating rapidly. Thus, persons who have lived in town longer pay much less for housing than more recent arrivals. Housing cost is not specifically related to immigrant status—but because immigrant families have, on the average, arrived more recently than native-born families, they pay more for housing.

### **Diverse Household Types and Living Arrangements**

As is the case in most immigrant neighborhoods throughout the U.S., the poorest among the immigrants make ends meet by sharing housing—not only with extended family members but also with unrelated individuals. Sharing crowded housing provides immigrants to Woodburn a way to survive as low-wage workers in an economic environment where housing costs are a burden even to middle-class native-born workers. Even so, the amount immigrant families pay to rent housing is significantly more than the amount paid by native-born families—an average of \$581 per month vs. \$331 for native-born families.

One out of five immigrant families in Woodburn live in a “complex” household in which a housing unit is shared by unrelated families and/or individuals.<sup>70</sup> Sometimes the individuals sharing housing are quite different and have only casual or, perhaps, strained relationships. For example, an older woman, once a farmworker, makes ends meet by renting out a room to a young man who appears to be supporting himself by selling drugs. However, in other complex households relationships are convivial and even unrelated household members support each other and share in family life.

Generally, sociologists and anthropologists studying Mexican farmworkers in the U.S. have categorized households as nuclear family households (couples with or without children), extended family households (family units with other blood relatives in addition to a primary family unit), complex households (i.e. ones with several family sub-units), and households of solo male migrants (typically households where farmworkers live with male relatives or friends). However, in these Woodburn neighborhoods and within this social universe, traditional definitions of “family” and “household” do not adequately reflect the reality of a social environment and networks in which there is a wide spectrum of weak to strong social ties and where even economic relationships are complex, making efforts to define a household as “an economic unit” very difficult since there are quite diverse arrangements for sharing household costs and diverse ways in which shared housing translates into social relationships.

The spectrum of household living arrangements in Woodburn is so broad that some of these living arrangements are not easily categorized into any simple taxonomy of household types. For example, although solo male households are typically composed of “sojourners”, the typical distinctions between “settlers” and “sojourners” blur in Woodburn, in part because many men working on their own in the U.S. as shuttle migrants are uncertain if they will be able to bring their families to live with them and think they may someday either make enough money to set up a small business in Mexico

---

<sup>70</sup> This includes the 16% of the immigrant households straightforwardly categorized as “complex” and 3% of the households categorized as being a “solo male household”, in which, technically, each of the men sharing a housing unit is a one-person family.

or that, perhaps, family strains will make it necessary for them to return even if it is possible to make more money in the U.S. The uncertainty about housing arrangements also arises, in part because of uncertainty among medium-term immigrants in the community about their future plans due to a recognition that availability of work, immigration policy, and differences in children's and parents' rate of integration into social life may mean that a couple may not "be able" to move once their children are settled into the community.

**Table 9** on the next page shows how household living arrangements vary in Woodburn. The tabulation shows very striking differences in the composition of immigrant and native-born households, due, in part, to demographic differences between the native-born and immigrant populations, but also due to economic considerations, and cultural factors.

<b>Table 9</b>				
<b>Immigrant and Native-born Household Living Arrangements<sup>71</sup></b>				
<b>(N=128)</b>				
<b>Living Arrangements</b>	<b>% of Native-Born</b>	<b>Mean HH Size Native-born</b>	<b>% of Immigrants</b>	<b>Mean HH Size Immigrants</b>
Lives on own	25%	1	1%	1
Couple without children	33%	2	8%	2
Single parent with school-age children	8%	3.9	3%	6.0
Nuclear family with school-age children	21%	5.4	49%	5.3
Extended family with multiple generations (e.g. adult couple and parents)	8%	7.9	8%	6.1
Extended family lateral kin only (e.g. couple with brother-in-law and sister)	---	---	4%	8.4
Extended family with multi generations and lateral kin	4%	6.3	8%	9.6
Complex household – unrelated families in HH	---	---	16%	5.7
Solo migrants (male-only HH sharing with co-workers, friends)	---	---	3%	7.8
<b>Mean Size-All Households: 5.1 persons</b>		<b>3.3</b>		<b>6.5</b>

Source: Woodburn Community Survey HH Grid \* Mean size not computed for cells with <4 households

<sup>71</sup> Households are classified as “immigrant” or “native-born” based on birthplace of head of household.

As can be seen in **Table 9**, all of these types of living arrangements result in more persons per household than in typical U.S. communities. About one out of four immigrant households in Woodburn has more than six persons in the housing unit. As shown earlier in **Table 7**, close to half of the immigrants in Woodburn (43%) live in an apartment. It is for this reason that the mean size of immigrant households is not even larger. However, Woodburn also has many, older, Victorian-style homes. Many of these homes are occupied by well-off native-born homeowners but others have become boarding houses with many of their rooms rented out to Mexican migrant workers.

As can be seen in the variations in household size among different types of households, the Mexican immigrant households are often, but not always, crowded and there is a wide variety of household living arrangements. In many cases, these housing arrangements grow from pre-existing social network relationships which partially shape social life in Woodburn even when they are not households consisting of a single family but sharing living quarters in the complex households provides a locus for establishing new relationships.

To be sure, the “typical” Mexican immigrant household is a fairly traditional nuclear or extended family household. But the prevalence of shared housing and the exigencies of transnational family life, as well as the stresses of living in poverty mean that many men and women are living on their own without a spouse. These include solo male migrants (who may be single or married men supporting families in Mexico) and female heads of household (who are generally living in Woodburn with their children).

### ***Households where Solo Male Migrants Live***

About 40% of the Mexican immigrant farmworkers in the Western U.S. are “solo males”, men who migrate on their own to find agricultural employment in the U.S.—directly from Mexico, or within the U.S. also. Generally, solo male migrants are the Mexican immigrants with least attachment to the community. Throughout the rural U.S. most of these households, but not all, consist of young men in their teens or early 20’s.

Immigrant life in the town of Woodburn is atypical because most of the solo migrant farmworkers in the area live in on-farm labor camps or in rural labor camps maintained by farm labor contractors.

Some of the men living without their wives and children in Woodburn, are indeed young men working in agriculture, but there actually more of the shuttle migrants in Woodburn are older men living on their own. One who we interviewed is Julian Sandoval. He had grown up in Huajuapán de León where he who had worked in his family's fields from the age of 10 through his teenage years.<sup>72</sup> As a young man in his mid-20's he came to Madera, CA, where he began doing farmwork including local grape harvesting. After spending 2 years there, he began migrating to Sunnyside, Washington (to work in apples and asparagus), and Woodburn where he picks berries, works in a tree nursery *boleando* (digging up trees and packing them into burlap-bagged root balls), and prunes grapes in the winter. Now 39 years old, Julian has migrated between Oaxaca, California, and Oregon and Washington for 12 years now. He regularly sends money home to support his wife and two teenage children, a son who works in the fields and a daughter who has stayed in school. Although he has four brothers and a sister in Woodburn, he lives on his own and is not involved in community life. He knows he has no chance of regularizing his legal status. "Entre muy tarde" he says ("I got here very late") and hopes he can someday return to stay in Mexico. His primary concern about community life is that he hopes Woodburn will soon start cracking down on local gangs of teenagers.

There many differing household arrangements even among the back-and-forth migrants. Another of the older shuttle migrant males we interviewed is a migrant farmworker named Efrain Munoz.<sup>73</sup> Efrain, who has only a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade education, first began migrating to the U.S. in 1998 so as to support his wife and children who continue to live in their home village of La Perla, Veracruz. He lives with his brother and sister-in-law. Efrain's brother had come to the U.S. at the same point that he had and, after 5 years of migration

---

<sup>72</sup> Interview 714 (Anna Garcia)

<sup>73</sup> This is a pseudonym. Anna Garcia (Interview #713)

and building his familiarity, he married a younger woman from their village and has settled in Woodburn with her. The two brothers brought their 66 year-old father to work with them, the year before they were interviewed (i.e. in 2002). Because their village does not have an established social network in Woodburn; Efrain's brother and his sister-in-law are isolated socially even within the Mexican community. Efrain is lonely and would like to bring his family to join him (his wife and 10 children ranging from 8 months to 16 years of age) but cannot do that unless there is some way to adjust his immigration status since the cost of crossing the border with so many children is prohibitive.<sup>74</sup>

Efrain says he doesn't know much about local community affairs because the farm labor contractor he works for (generally considered one of the worse in the area) doesn't tell him or other workers anything much about local life. Efrain has never used any community services so he has no idea as to whether they are doing a good job. However, he does think that wages and working conditions are deteriorating and that federal labor law enforcement should include more actual observations of work sites, not just talking to farmers and their field supervisors (mayordomos). He focuses on this because he knows he has sometimes been paid less than the minimum wage.

Another type of household with unaccompanied male migrants is that where Jaime Ramirez, a 20 year-old Zapotec born in Oaxaca City, lives.<sup>75</sup> Unlike many of the young Mexican men who migrate north to improve his earnings, Jaime grew up in Mexico, DF, is quite well educated, and has little attachment to agriculture. As a teenager he made a living in Mexico as a musician. In Woodburn, he is now working in a bakery. The household he shares with 11 other Oaxacans is a crowded complex one. It includes several young Mixtec friends of Jaime's, and a related couple with three children. The Mixtecs in the household include workers from two distinct village networks (Huajuapán de León and Juxtlahuaca) in addition to Jaime and another slightly older friend who is

---

<sup>74</sup> Families with very young children also recognize that the crossing is particularly dangerous for children.

<sup>75</sup> This is a pseudonym. Gabriela Romero (Interview #706)

also originally from Oaxaca City. The household is also diverse in terms of sorts of work that people in the household do: in addition to Jaime's bakery work, people are employed as follows: one retail clerk, two nursery workers, a processing plant worker, two construction workers, and a recycling worker.

Jaime is grateful for having a network of friends to live with and he, for example, plays soccer with some of them so there is something of a social life for him. However, he doesn't know much about Woodburn because he has lived in town for only 10 months and "doesn't go out much" (except to work).

Transnational family life does not always lead to strong family relationships. Although his parents live in nearby Gervais, Jaime lives in Woodburn on his own,. His father did help him find work in Woodburn but it seems Jaime is not very close with his parents because he grew up on his own in Mexico and went to elementary and secondary school in Mexico, D.F. Although his parents sent him remittances regularly, he was not really part of their Oregon household where they are raising his two younger siblings. Jaime's social networks have helped him establish himself in Woodburn but are not the typical closely-knit kinship ones. Not surprisingly, given his education, Jaime was quick to attend Chemeketa College as a way to start learning English and he uses the downtown library a great deal—both to borrow Spanish-language books and music materials. Jaime is an urbane young migrant and, although he is fairly happy in Woodburn he wants to find out about other places in the U.S. and probably, eventually, return to Mexico.

### ***Female-headed immigrant households***

Traditionally, Mexican women from rural villages did not migrate to the U.S. on their own. But times are changing as more and more Mexican women enter the labor force and employment opportunities are increasingly thought of in binational terms. Also, the proportion of marriages which break up seem to be increasing ; thus, some women who came to the U.S. as part of a nuclear family find themselves on their own. In our Woodburn community interviews we found a small but significant number of female-

headed households. The women who headed these family units sometimes live with their children on their own or sometimes in complex households.

Amalia Vasquez is a 32 year-old single mother with a daughter in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.<sup>76</sup> She was born in a Ocotlan, a Zapotec village in Oaxaca state about 50 kilometers south of Oaxaca City. Like other local children, she began to help out in her family's *milpa* as a child. Her mother died when she was a child and she left school to take care of housework and then; as a teenager; went to Oaxaca City to make and sell popsicles. While several of her brothers and sisters finished their education and went on to professional jobs in Oaxaca City she migrated as a young woman to Los Angeles and found work as a child care worker. Her daughter, Anita, was born in Los Angeles; Amalia and Anita might have remained there but Amalia's father died and she returned home with her toddler daughter. After 5 years living at home in Oaxaca she decided to come back to the U.S. and found her way to Woodburn because her cousin, who had come earlier, had told her how it was fairly easy to find work in the local "cannerias" (i.e. packing-processing plants). So Amalia now combines processing-packing work with farmwork picking berries. Two quite personal factors entered into her decision to migrate as a single mother—she wanted to live *en otro ambiente* (another [social] environment than her hometown) and wanted her daughter to have better education opportunities than she would have had in Ocotlan. Anita's migration and life trajectory shows how individual circumstances affect migration, reminding us that macro-level models are inadequate to explain the full circumstances of migration decisions.

Although she misses her brothers and sisters in Mexico, Amalia thinks of herself and is very independent. Alluding to her status as a unwed mother, she says of her family, "They live their life and I live mine". She now lives in a household with a large extended family from Durango (Simon and Elena and their young teenage daughter, and Simon's sister and her three children who are now in elementary school). Although Amalia never finished school and is now a farmworker, she is indeed independent, self-reliant, and self-confident. She is studying English at Chemeketa College and making good progress and

---

<sup>76</sup> A pseudonym (Danielle Robinson) Interview #739

loves, in her instants of spare time, to read. As a young woman in Oaxaca Amalia was active in politics (opposing the locally-dominant PRI party because of its corruption) and as migrant she traveled on her own to northern Sonora and linked up with other border-crossers on her own. She says she does not live for her work (saying “it’s a distraction” from her life which revolves around raising her daughter) but she is, at the same time, committed to being a working mother as she disapproves of mothers who lie to get welfare, although, for example, she did briefly get food coupons from WIC when she was pregnant with her daughter.

Not all single mothers are so independent. Marina is a 34 year old mother with five children. She left school after 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and began working as a 13 year-old in the fields of Sinaloa, had her first child as a 20 year-old in Nayarit state and then came to Woodburn with her brother to do farmwork, as the mother of a 3 year-old daughter. During her time in Oregon, she has subsequently had four more children. She stopped doing farmwork soon after settling in Woodburn and now lives on her own in a small, cluttered apartment with her five children. While TANF support, WIC, and Food Stamps help the family survive, Marina is clearly having difficulty as a parent despite her stating her occupation as “home maker”. She has enjoyed going to ESL classes but is not making much progress in actually speaking English.

As can be seen from these contrasting accounts of the lives of two female heads of household, individual and family outcomes cannot be fully explained by contextual, sociological factors since Elena, even with somewhat better family support than Amalia is not doing very well and Amalia’s living arrangements and current lifestyle, while non-traditional, allow her a stable and happy life.

## **Factors Affecting Social Integration of Immigrants**

There is a broad spectrum of outcomes for immigrants settling in Woodburn. Where immigrants are in their life cycle when they migrate to the U.S. and to Woodburn, as well as the specific migration network connections which facilitate their coming to the

community, are important factors in determining outcomes. The process through which they become integrated into community life, the problems they face in the transition from their former lives to their current life situation, and, their ultimate decision to settle in town or not are all affect the context in which they have lived as a young child, a school-age child, a teenager, a young adult worker, a parent, and as a mature head of household.

### **Generation 1.5 Immigrants—Born Abroad and Raised in the U.S.**

The prospects seem particularly promising for immigrants who came to Woodburn as children. For example, Marisol Mendoza, a 23 year-old young woman of Purepecha origin came to Woodburn with her farmworker parents in 1990 when she was 10 years old.<sup>77</sup> She is trilingual, speaking English and Spanish perfectly, as well as “a bit” of Purepecha. Her father, who had been working for many years in Oregon farmwork had easily achieved legal status as a SAW and sent for his wife and children when his living situation became stable and when he could petition for them to join him under the family unity program. Marisol remembers that her family was one of only two Mexican families in Farmertown when she arrived. It was difficult learning English but she found her schoolmates friendly (“no discriminaron”).

Marisol now lives in an extended family household with her husband, Santiago, and their two children, aged 2 and 4. Marisol’s husband, Santiago, also came to Oregon, as a child. He is from the same village network as Marisol (Paracuaro) and is, also, of Purepecha origin. The couple share a house with Santiago’s parents, both of whom are farmworkers, and his brother. Santiago has legal status, and works in a mainstream blue collar job. The house they live in is a 3 bedroom manufactured home (many of which are fabricated in Woodburn) which the family owns. Marisol is a working mother. She worked the previous winter and spring at a local nursery but now has a job as a cashier at a local gas station (a job available to her since she has a green card). Life is good for the family and they plan to stay in Woodburn indefinitely.

---

<sup>77</sup> Interview 723 (Lynn Stephen)

Another “Generation 1.5” Mexican immigrant we interviewed is Pedro Alcala.<sup>78</sup> He is now 40 years old and has now lived in the U.S. most of his life—since he first came to Los Angeles as a 10 year old child in 1970 with his mother. He is fluent in English and Spanish and is married to a U.S.-born Anglo woman who works, as he does, in the electronics industry. Although his wife speaks only English, their sons speak a bit of Spanish. Pedro and his wife share their home with his parents, both of whom continue to work in a local packing plant, although they are both 75 years old now. Pedro’s sister, now separated from a husband who is in jail on drug charges, is temporarily living with the family, along with her two children, a young teenager and a son who is a young adult. Pedro, who grew up with Mexican, Anglo, and Russian children enjoys the diversity of Woodburn and is happy with life in town, although he is hopeful that the police will crack down on gangs and drug deals who sell methedrene in the downtown plaza. Pedro’s teenage years were spent in Los Angeles and, like many Mexican-American students, he dropped out of high school in 11<sup>th</sup> grade. However, after coming to Woodburn as a young 20 year-old adult, he got a GED from Chemeketa College, the local community college, and went on to vocational training. Pedro is, in every sense bicultural; he reads the Oregonian and the Statesman-Journal newspapers in English but watches news in Spanish.

### **Community Integration as an Ongoing Process of Change**

Much of the research and policy analysis on immigrant social integration tacitly assumes that there is a “host” community which is relatively static, a matrix of social and civic life into which immigrants—be they sojourners or settlers—must accommodate themselves.<sup>79</sup> However, the concept of rural communities as static, unchanging ones is not evident in Woodburn, nor in our other New Pluralism study communities. The United States has, in general, high levels of mobility—but mobility is even higher in the rural communities

---

<sup>78</sup> This is a pseudonym. Lynn Stephen (Interview #719)

<sup>79</sup> However, Robert Bach, a leading immigration researcher insightfully wrote about “mutual accommodation” between immigrant and native-born groups in Changing Relations: Newcomers and Established Residents in U.S. Communities, the 1993 report of the multi-site Changing Relations research project to the Ford Foundation.

impacted by immigration. The community is more a standing wave, a constantly-changing aggregation of local residents than a firmly-established societal entity. It would be wrong to think of the town's current confrontation with the challenge of defining its social identity as something unique or as a sudden "crisis" because, in truth, its social identity has constantly been in flux.

But perhaps the pace of community transformation is faster than it has been in the past. Contemporary Woodburn social and civic life is shaped by very high levels of influxes of both U.S.-born and foreign-born residents. One-third (34%) of the immigrant heads of household had only come to live in Woodburn during the previous 5 years but one-quarter (24%) of the town's U.S.-born residents had only moved there during this short period of time also. Only one out of five (19%) of the Woodburn heads of households had grown up in town. There is turnover, among both immigrant families in the community and U.S.-born families but, in-flows are higher than outflows and, consequently, the community's population grew at an annual rate of 4.1% per year during the 1990's and continues to increase rapidly.<sup>80</sup>

Native-born Woodburn heads of household had, on the average, lived in town 16 years while immigrant heads of household had lived in town for 9 years on the average. Thus, most of the current residents of Woodburn, native-born and immigrant alike, are relative "newcomers". There are more immigrant heads of household than natives who have arrived in Woodburn very recently, i.e. in the past 5 years, and also more medium-term immigrant settlers (53% of all immigrant heads of households) than native-born town residents (28% of all native-born heads of households) who arrived in the 15 years from 1982-1998.

While demographic factors currently skew the balance of political power in Woodburn toward older, U.S.-born residents (both those who grew up in Woodburn and those who

---

<sup>80</sup> This gross rate of growth exceeds that of many developing countries. While much of the growth is from immigration, due to the relatively young Mexican immigrant population nativity is high also.

settled there as part of retirement), the demographic composition of the community means that the social, civic, and political environment of Woodburn will be determined by the teenagers and children of immigrants who are now growing up in Woodburn. Whether this shift in the social context of Woodburn community life happens over the course of 5 years, or a decade, or 15 years is not as important as the recognition that this change is inevitable and that, in one form or another, Woodburn will become a “new pluralism”, that is a community which is not simply ethnically and linguistically diverse but, also, diverse in terms of personal outlook, social affinities, life experience, education, career aspirations, and lifestyle. While the general course of this evolution is inevitable, the dialogue, decisions, and actions of local community leaders can play a huge role in determining the texture and quality of life for the new generation and succeeding ones.

## **Livelihoods in Woodburn**

**Table 10** on the next page shows the occupational profile of immigrant and native-born heads of household. This occupational profile includes, in addition to employment, the primary activities of Woodburn heads of household who are not currently in the labor force.<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> We include in “occupational” response codes for the community survey, a range of major activities other than employment. Some of these (such as being a student) are employment-related while others—disability, retirement, and being a home maker are not, although they preclude employment.

<b>Table 10 Livelihoods in Woodburn</b>		
<b>Head of Household's Occupation</b>	<b>Native-Born</b>	<b>Immigrants</b>
<b><i>Agricultural Employment</i></b>	---	<b>43%</b>
Farmwork/fieldwork, including pre-harvest, harvest, and post-harvest tasks	---	27%
Semi-skilled, e.g. tractor driver, irrigator	---	2%
Agricultural processing/packing, semi-skilled (e.g. forklift) and unskilled	---	10%
Other agricultural labor (e.g. work in nurseries, forestry, landscaping)	---	4%
<b><i>Non-Ag Employment</i></b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>44%</b>
Merchants, Professionals, Managers, Technical Occupations	15%	---
Other White Collar—Retail, supervisor, self-employed	20%	2%
Skilled Labor	1%	2%
Semi-Skilled Labor	---	2%
Unskilled Labor—Service and Manufacturing	7%	38%
<b><i>Not Currently in Labor Force</i></b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>13%</b>
Retired	37%	6%
Disabled	6%	2%
Homemaker	5%	3%
Student	4%	1%
Unemployed	3%	1%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 4 (Occupation.)*

*\*"Professional" includes both public and private sector*

**Table 10** provides important insights into the dynamics of community life in Woodburn. There is some basis for the stereotype of the immigrant population of Woodburn being employed in agriculture since almost half of the heads of household (43%) are. By the same token, there is a basis for the characterization of the native-born population in

Woodburn as being “senior citizens” since about half (43%) are retired, disabled, or the spouses of people who are retired.

This represents a dramatic divergence in terms of primary economic activities of the U.S.-born and foreign-born heads of household vis-à-vis involvement in agriculture. There is also tremendous divergence in non-agricultural employment since the native-born workers are concentrated in technical, professional, and managerial occupations while the immigrant workers are concentrated in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs.

What is most striking in terms of immigrants’ experiences in the Woodburn labor market is that, although almost all immigrants came to Woodburn as farmworkers or the children of farmworkers, farmwork is indeed a “gateway” occupation. As the Mexican migrants who came to Woodburn as farmworkers age, they are steadily moving into more settled, year-round agricultural work in nurseries and also into blue-collar occupations, including food processing/packing. The blue-collar unskilled and semi-skilled non-agricultural jobs where Mexican immigrants now work include food service work in fast-food chains such as McDonalds, Burger King, and Subway but also small Mexican-owned businesses as bakery workers, tortilla-makers, cooks, and waitresses.<sup>82</sup> As in other areas of the country, other former farmworkers have moved into construction, recycling plants, furniture manufacturing, and wood products fabrication, and car detailing. The few former farmworkers who have moved upward into steady, adequately-paid employment are those who have learned some English. Home-country educational attainment appears to be related to occupational mobility primarily because the immigrants with more schooling find it easier to learn English fairly rapidly.

The fragility of the agricultural production which generates product for processing and packing is a particular threat to immigrant economic stability, not as much due to loss of employment in farmwork as from the likelihood of plant closings. For example, in late

---

<sup>82</sup> While food manufacturing employment in Oregon has decreased slightly in recent years, employment in tortillerias has increased by 38% from 2001-2004 (Oregon Employment Department Labor Statistics, February 2006).

2000, two of the five largest businesses in Woodburn were Agrifrozen and Conroy Packing. At this point the processing-packing economic sector was reported to employ about 1,700 people. By 2002, when we began our research in Woodburn, Agrifrozen had closed resulting in a job loss of about 400 jobs and in December, 2003 the Smucker's processing plant closed with a job loss of 82 persons.<sup>83</sup> But the hardest-hit were middle-aged workers who had moved up into processing plant work where often husbands and wife both worked.<sup>84</sup> Given their low levels of education and age, finding new employment was difficult (although the displaced worker program seemed exemplary) and many were depressed. The processing plant work, at hourly earning of \$8.75 per hour for regular workers and more for forklift drivers (\$12 per hour) and supervisors, had provided many of these workers (which included older Tejanos and Tejanas and Russian immigrants, as well as more recent Mexican immigrants) a fair measure economic stability. According to a counselor working in the displaced worker program seeking to find employment for the Agrifrozen employees who had lost their jobs, some of the settled workers with good social networks managed to find nursery employment. Others returned to farmwork, for example, Fidel Espinoza, a Oaxacan migrant who had grown up in Baja California and come to the US as a young farmworker and worked at Agric-Pac for 5 years went back to the berry harvest.<sup>85</sup> After the Agrifrozen plant closed, Food Service of America, a large food distribution took over the facility to operate a distribution center. When they first moved into the facility, they were inundated with job applicants, mostly Mexican immigrant job-seekers from Woodburn but also from surrounding communities. They received about 400 applications for the 5 positions they were filling.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Governmental Affairs Office, Northwestern Food Processors' Association, WARN List. The tabulation of 851 Agrifrozen job losses seems to include jobs outside of Woodburn since our interviews with displaced worker program staff referred to losses of 300 permanent and 100 seasonal jobs but the employment impact was, nonetheless, severe.

<sup>84</sup> Ed Kissam interview with VL, June, 2002.

<sup>85</sup> A pseudonym (Jessica Cole) Interview #748

<sup>86</sup> Lynn Stephen, interview with Randy Irvine, Branch President, Food Services of America on October 7, 2003.

We did not ask Woodburn survey respondents about either personal earnings or family income—but the occupational profile of the immigrant community has clear-cut and worrisome implications for community life. Immigrant families' earnings are clearly marginal, given their occupational distribution and, looking at the native-born population as a whole, native-born head of household's participation in the labor force is extremely low. While the employment outlooks for the bilingual children of immigrants who grew up in Woodburn are as good as those for youth from non-immigrant families (or perhaps better as a result of the growing demand for bilingual personnel), employment options for the foreign-born immigrants, Mexicans, but also the Russians, are extremely limited.

The broad national pattern in which the tax payments and other paycheck deductions of a younger population of immigrant workers provides the fiscal support for a social service/retirement safety net which excludes all the immigrants who are not legally authorized is a concrete reality in Woodburn.<sup>87</sup> The emerging issue is whether, given immigrants' slow earnings growth and social security contributions linked to earnings will be adequate to sustain a retirement system for older native-born cohorts or for themselves. There are also implications for local government planning, since low incomes may become problematic as sources of municipal tax revenue if there is a shift from property tax to other sources of revenue such as sales tax.

In interpreting the Woodburn Community Survey findings, it is important to recognize that due to the residential patterns in the Woodburn area, the survey does not represent farm owners and managers (most of whom are small farmers and live on their own farms outside the city limits). Most, if not all, are native-born, although some of the Russian immigrants own substantial farming operations. Our survey sample also fails to represent the immigrant entrepreneurs who are relatively few in numbers but who play such an important role in the community life of Woodburn. However, we conducted semi-

---

<sup>87</sup> One of the major categories of non-tax contributions by non-legal immigrant workers to support of the native-born population is in the realm of Unemployment Insurance. While UI is paid by employers, it is reasonable to expect to see this employment-related labor cost being bundled as part of the wage package received by immigrant workers. The most important component of immigrants' contributions to the tax base to fund services they cannot receive consists of FICA/OASDI.

structured interviews with a number of these immigrant entrepreneurs and these provide fairly detailed insights into their important role in the local labor market.<sup>88</sup>

## Linguistic Profile of Woodburn

Woodburn's immigrant population is not homogeneous. **Table 11** on the next page shows the linguistic diversity of Woodburn and the steady inter-generational shift toward bilingualism. In Woodburn the most dramatic finding is the extent of linguistic diversity within households.

---

<sup>88</sup> This includes X in-depth interviews with local immigrant entrepreneurs, professionals, elected officials, and civic activists conducted by Lynn Stephen, Anna Garcia, and Ed Kissam.

**Table 11**  
**Language Profile of Woodburn Heads of Households,**  
**Overall Population, and Minors: 2003**

<b>Language Profile</b>	<b>% of All Heads of Household (N=)</b>	<b>% of All Persons in Households (N=)</b>	<b>% of Minors 0-18 years of age (N=)</b>
<b>English-Dominant</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>21%</b>
Primary Language-English (limited or no other language)	31%	19%	8%
Bilingual-English preferred	2%	6%	13%
<b><i>Spanish-Dominant</i></b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>69%</b>
Primary Language-Spanish (limited or no English)	30%	37%	29%
Bilingual-Spanish preferred (Spanish-English)	17%	24%	40%
<b><i>Mixtec-Dominant</i></b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>
Primary Language-Mixtec (limited or no Spanish)	7%	3%	<1%
Bilingual-Mixtec preferred (Mixtec-Spanish)	1%	1%	>1%
Trilingual--Mixtec with Spanish-English	2%	2%	<2%
<b><i>Other Language Dominant</i></b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Bilingual Russian preferred	2%	2%	2%
Trilingual (Other+Russian+ English or Other+Spanish+English)	8%	5%	4%
Other (Portuguese, Malay, Triqui) with limited or no English	1%	1%	---

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey Q. 8(Language), Q.9 (Household Grid)*

The differences between the language distribution of heads of household, all members of the household, and minor children 18 or younger provides a means to examine overall community trends vis-à-vis language. **Table 11** highlights how sensitive prevailing community language and culture are to both demographic change and migration flows.

The typical pattern in most U.S. communities where immigrants settle is for 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrants to gradually acquire English and for their “Generation 1.5 children” raised in the U.S. and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation children to grow up with English as their

dominant language. However, in Woodburn, the overall prevalence of English as a community language is decreasing in the short-term as a result of the community demographic shift from an aging native-born population and a younger population of Mexican immigrants. The “minority” languages spoken in town—Mixtec, Zapotec, Triqui, Purepecha, Russian, Portuguese—are also rapidly dissipating and, in this regard, Woodburn is indeed a melting pot. In many of the households of indigenous Mexican immigrants, but also in the Russian-speaking households, the younger generation are learning a bit of a minority language, but English is their primary tongue.

Despite the rapid increase of Spanish-speaking households and the decrease of English-speaking households, Woodburn is not becoming a Spanish-only community; it is becoming a bilingual community—as can be seen by the decreasing proportion of monolingual Spanish-speaking minors and the increasing proportion of bilinguals. For example, 40% of the children in the households where the predominant language is Spanish are bilingual but slightly favor Spanish over English; another 16% are bilingual but, in fact, speak English better than Spanish. All in all, the majority of children in the Spanish-speaking households speak English well. The reason there are only slight declines in the proportions of monolingual Spanish speakers is due to the influx of newly-arriving migrants. Contrary to nativist assumptions, efforts to “save” English as a community language would be facilitated by proactive efforts to encourage settlement of Mexican immigrants rather than efforts to deter settlement (e.g. guest worker programs).

Experience to date in areas such as the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas where a combination of factors served to welcome Mexican immigrants is that settlement always nurtures bilingualism and bilingualism eventually tends toward English dominance. The patterns of community language use in Woodburn contrast with those in our community case study in Arvin where, precisely because of the high levels of immigrant settlement, bilingualism and English are increasing among immigrant children and youth and, more slowly, among their parents

It should also be noted that 15% of the children under 18 in Woodburn are infants and toddlers whose language dominance is not clear. If their families settle in Woodburn and they go to local schools, it is likely they will grow up bilingual (although we do not yet know which language will be their preferred one).

It should also be noted that, in fact, most of Woodburn's younger generation (53%) are now bilingual. While most survey respondents stated that Spanish is their preferred language, experience in other communities impacted by Mexican immigration is that English becomes the language of choice for the younger generation.<sup>89</sup> Thus, in a very few years (i.e. between 2006 and 2010), it is likely that Woodburn will achieve a form of pluralistic language equilibrium where perhaps two-thirds of the generation coming of age in 2010 will be bilingual—even if Mexican migration to Woodburn continues at current levels.

The linguistic diversity within households in Woodburn is also an issue to be addressed within a rational language policy framework—because about one out of five households in Woodburn is one with internal linguistic barriers, that is, a household in which some household members (typically school-age children) have difficulty in communicating with some other household member (typically their mother or a grandparent). Diverse modalities of adult learning to assist 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrant parents in learning English will, in both the short run and the long-term, result in a range of benefits, starting with enhanced parental involvement in their children's education.

## **Educational Attainment of Woodburn Residents**

**Table 12** on the next page summarizes the educational attainment of immigrant and native-born heads of households in Woodburn. Not surprisingly, there are dramatic

---

<sup>89</sup> We have conducted extensive radio audience research in California regarding bilingual Spanish-English programming strategies. In typical rural agricultural communities with high concentrations of Mexican immigrants, the bilingual Chicano/a population is English-Spanish bilingual and strongly oriented toward a new bicultural social identity and culture (Kissam, Intili, and Garcia 2003; Kissam 2001).

differences between immigrants and native-born residents in terms of educational attainment.

<b>Table 12</b>		
<b>Immigrant and Native-born Head of Household's Educational Attainment</b>		
<b>(N=122 )</b>		
<b>Head of Household's Highest Grade Level Achieved</b>	<b>% of Native-Born</b>	<b>% of Immigrants</b>
6 years or less	7%	59%
7-11 years	16%	26%
Completed Secondary School	16%	13%
Some college	24%	2%
Completed college	22%	1%
Graduate study	14%	---
Mean educational attainment	13.5 yrs.	6.2 yrs.

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 9 (HH Grid)*

While the educational attainment of Mexican farmworkers has continued to increase over the past two decades, there are strong economic and social pressures in migrant-sending villages for children to drop out of school and, in the more remote areas of Mexico secondary schools are not available.

Although the adult immigrants seldom continue their education, many had gone to Chemeketa College to take an ESL course. Most of the immigrant heads of household we interviewed were, despite their low levels of education, interested in civic affairs and watched television to inform themselves about news developments (in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world). However, some said quite straightforwardly that they did not really have an opinion on the civic issues we asked them about because they didn't really understand the roles of different government agencies or have enough information about how they worked or how they were doing.

## Support for Immigrant Integration

### Help in Learning English

One out of five Woodburn immigrants (22%) had gotten help in learning English—usually from the community college or another community organization—but sometimes from family members. Most, but not all (i.e. 59%) of those who were helped in the process of learning English, felt the help they got was very useful.

Analysis of the age immigrants were when they first came to the U.S. shows why so few got help; many did not much need help. One-third (35%) of the Woodburn immigrant heads of household we interviewed had arrived in the U.S. as a child or as a school-age teenager and, therefore, had needed no help or, at least, less help with English than immigrants who had arrived as adults.<sup>90</sup> Thus, the comments about sources of help for learning English include some K-12 programs for migrant students. HEP was also mentioned, as were fellow students, as sources of help in learning English. However, these younger immigrants also sought structured assistance, for example, from Chemeteka College in learning English as did older immigrants.

Schools, inevitably, are on the leading edge of communities' adaptation to immigration. Their responsiveness stems not only from the day to day challenges of interacting with immigrant students but, also, from the fact that schools' planning is strongly driven by data analysis. The Woodburn School District Superintendent, for example, recognized the clear-cut implications of the fact that 70% of his student enrollment consisted of children classified as "English-language learners", that enrollment was increasing by 5% per year, and that 90% came from low-income households, as indicated by School Lunch

---

<sup>90</sup> We know from asking survey respondents about the circumstances of their settling in Woodburn that 16% had come as children or teenagers with their parents and that 8% had been sent for by a close relative who had arrived earlier. Thus, the remaining 11% of the immigrant heads who came as children or teenagers came under a variety of circumstances—as solo migrants, as a married teenager, or as a relatively distant relative "invited" to join an extended family member.

Program eligibility data.<sup>91</sup> The Woodburn School District has been responding to these demographic shifts for more than a decade now and has in place a well-developed bilingual program. The District's strategic decision to implement two models of dual-language immersion seems particularly promising as a response to the reality of ongoing immigration.

### **Help in Status Adjustment and Naturalization**

An early step in immigrant civic integration after settling in a U.S. community is, of course, immigration status adjustment.<sup>92</sup> Unfortunately, as shown in **Table 1**, half of the immigrants to Woodburn are not eligible for immigration status adjustment. The post-1986 Mexican immigrants who are ineligible to apply for legal permanent status understand this is a federal policy decision not a local one. However, their unequal legal status is considered by many to be evidence of "injustice" and is interpreted as and referred to as "racism". As such it conditions their overall perspective on life in the U.S. While the federal policy debate carefully steers away from the volatile issue of institutionalized racism, Woodburn immigrant families have no qualms in pointing to and reflecting about the ethnic undercurrents hiding beneath the rhetoric of due process, "fairness", and "waiting in line". What is unfortunate is that institutionalized inequality based on immigration status biases local immigrant residents to see conflicts with government institutions or agencies as having overtones of racism even when the conflict is not related to race or ethnicity.

Virtually all of the immigrants who were eligible to seek status adjustment had, in fact, sought to adjust their status, i.e. "get their papers in order". Of the immigrants who did seek to adjust their status, only one out of five (21%) reported they were able to deal with

---

<sup>91</sup> Ed Kissam interview with Walt Blomberg, Woodburn Superintendent of Schools, September 18, 2003.

<sup>92</sup> We did not seek in the research to distinguish between those who entered the US illegally (known as EWI's) and subsequently sought and were granted legal status under IRCA or prior provisions of the immigration law, those who were authorized entrants who had been petitioned for by a relative, and those who physically entered the U.S. as EWI's but subsequently were able to adjust their status without re-entering the U.S. as a result of Section 245(i) of the immigration code.

the paperwork on their own. One-third of those who did get help (35%) had been assisted by a local organization—usually the Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), or by the local community college.<sup>93</sup> Other sources of help mentioned included: a lawyer (26%), relatives (21%), a *notario* (10%), or an immigrant’s employer (8%). Virtually all of those who did seek assistance rated the help they got as being very good or excellent—although those who had been assisted by a lawyer were somewhat less satisfied, perhaps because their cases were usually more complex.

Woodburn is unusual in terms of level of support provided the IRCA-era legalization applicants in the process. Those who had been helped by PCUN were particularly grateful for the help they had received. Perhaps in part because assistance was provided primarily by motivated, concerned volunteers, the immigrants who had gotten this help from PCUN often spoke warmly of the personal attention they had received.

The second step in immigrant civic integration is to secure citizenship. Almost all of the immigrants we interviewed who said they had applied for citizenship had, in fact, been approved. More than half (56%) of those seeking citizenship had passed the citizenship exam requirements (English language and knowledge of history and government). Another one-third (33%) had been naturalized without examination because they were minors when a parent successfully naturalized and, thus, secured “derivative” citizenship on the basis of their parent’s naturalization. Thus, only 12% of the naturalization applicants in Woodburn had actually been denied.

However, only a minority (33%) of the legal permanent residents (LPR’s) in Woodburn who were eligible to naturalization had applied for citizenship. About one out of four of the LPR’s had failed to apply for citizenship because they felt they couldn’t make it through the process—usually because they did not think they could meet the English-language requirements. Another half said they “planned to” apply; a few of those who

---

<sup>93</sup> PCUN, now a nationally-recognized immigrant and farmworker advocacy organization, initially came into existence in large measure to provide assistance to SAW’s who were legalizing under IRCA provisions. Chemeketa Community College appears to have early on been proactively involved in extending services, most importantly in the context of legalization, ESL, to immigrants.

plan to apply but who have not yet done are not yet able to apply because there is a 5 year waiting period before an LPR can seek to naturalize. Others feel they are unlikely to make it through the process because they have heard about the demanding English-language proficiency requirements.

It appears that the proactive approach to integrating immigrants into the community taken by local organizations in Woodburn during the post-IRCA period (i.e. from 1987 onward), in addition to facilitating their initial integration into community life, may have also facilitated the second stage of civic integration as they sought citizenship. Nonetheless, the substantial numbers of LPR's who still feel they cannot get through the naturalization process suggests that a campaign promoting naturalization and offering help in the process would be extremely useful.

### **Support for Immigrant Integration— Learning About Local Life and “Rules of the Game”**

Few of the Woodburn immigrants had gotten any particular help in learning about the local community and life in the U.S. (14%) or in learning about paperwork issues such as taxes (19%). But those who had gotten help generally felt it was very useful. Almost all of the help newly-arriving Mexican immigrants received in learning about local community life came from family and friends but a Russian respondent mentioned that their sponsor had indeed helped orient them. Organizational sources of orientation information about “rules of the game” in U.S. life, i.e. immigration issues, paying taxes, local laws included AARP, volunteers at St. Luke's Catholic Church, PCUN, Oregon Legal Services, a GED teacher, and, in a few cases, lawyers or *notarios*.

Native-born and immigrants alike believed it would be very useful to have structured programs or classes to help orient newcomers to live in Woodburn.<sup>94</sup> They also felt structured efforts to build immigrant civic participation would be worthwhile.<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> Of the native-born respondents 90% said it would be a good idea to have this sort of classes and 86% of the immigrants said this would be useful.

## **Woodburn Residents' Assessment of Community Life**

A central issue in understanding how immigration impacts rural communities in the U.S. is that of subjective perceptions of community life. Surely, political leaders, civic institutions, and a range of special interest groups play important roles in articulating “how things are going” but individual opinion is still the gold standard for assessing collective quality of life. In Woodburn, as in the other New Pluralism study communities, we gave special attention as to whether native-born and immigrant households assessed community life similarly and whether they saw local trends similarly or whether there were divergences in their perspectives.

### **Overall Assessment of Woodburn Community Life by Town Residents**

A general indicator of the extent to which communities have been successful in responding to the challenges of mutual adaptation has to do with whether U.S.-born or foreign-born residents say they are pleased with their lives in the community coupled with their assessment of local organizations and institutions in addressing the challenges of demographic and social change.

**Table 13** on the next page reports Woodburn residents' overall assessment of community life. Woodburn seems to be doing quite well as a place to live since about three-quarters of people in the community say they like living in Woodburn “a lot” or at least “quite well”. Immigrants and native-born heads of household rate their satisfaction with life in Woodburn very similarly. This is a very positive indicator showing there is not actually much likelihood of “white flight” as a result of immigration and, at the same time, suggesting that immigrants generally feel, at least, accepted by others in the community. While some of the Mexican immigrants said they had experienced incidents of racism in Woodburn, these were isolated and, in fact, some immigrants who had first come to

---

<sup>95</sup> Of the native-born respondents, 81% thought this sort of initiative would be worthwhile and 89% of the immigrants said it would be useful. This suggests that most native-born residents welcome immigrants civic participation and that only a very small minority of Woodburn native-born residents have misgivings about an “immigrant takeover” of their community.

California contrasted their experience in Oregon as involving less “discrimination” than in California.

<i>Q. 15 Would you say you like living here in Woodburn a lot, quite well, somewhat, not very much, or not at all?</i>	<b>% of Native-Born</b>	<b>% of Immigrants</b>
A lot	24%	26%
Quite well	48%	50%
Not very much	26%	21%
Not at all	3%	3%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 15*

We examined a number of overall factors which might be expected to have shaped immigrants’ overall assessment of living in Woodburn, e.g. age at immigration, length of time in town, speaking English in the household. None were statistically significant; thus, satisfaction with community life seems to relate more to very specific individual life situation and experience than to aspects of community life per se. As was the case for native-born heads of household, immigrants’ overall perception of community life and trends (e.g. housing becoming more difficult to secure or better, streets being repaired or falling apart, police “doing their job” or not being responsive) reflected personal circumstances and experiences while, even when survey respondents were attempting to provide an “objective” or, at least, fair assessment.

We followed up on our question about survey respondents’ with queries about specific areas of community life which might enter into their overall assessment of the quality community life. Interviewers summarized these open ended answers about survey respondents’ reasons for rating their life in Woodburn positively or negatively.

**Table 14** on the next page shows the specific areas of community life which seem to local residents to be positive and those which are generally seen as negative. As can be seen there are differences of opinion among both immigrants and native-born heads of household as well as between the two groups. There is broad consensus across both groups about the best and worst aspects of life in Woodburn. Yet, at the same time, there are differences in perceptions and priorities between immigrants and the native-born. Native-born and immigrants' shared concerns about the "bad" aspects of life in Woodburn (e.g. "crime"—prostitution, drug dealing, incipient gangs, too much traffic) may well eventually provide common ground as much as their shared appreciation of the positive aspects of the town's life (e.g. good housing, calm environment, good schools).

**Table 14 -Pros and Cons of Specific Aspects of Woodburn Community Life:  
Immigrants and Native-Born Heads of Households' Perspectives (N=128)**

Specific Facets of Community Life	Seen as POSITIVE Aspect of Woodburn Life		Seen as NEGATIVE Aspect of Woodburn Life	
	% Native-Born Mentioning	% Immigrants Mentioning	% Native Born Mentioning	% Immigrants Mentioning
<b>PREDOMINANTLY POSITIVE</b>				
Shopping	69%	89%	31%	11%
Family, Friends	64%	49%	5%	13%
Community/Social Environment	52%	85%	34%	15%
Recreation	73%	56%	27%	38%
<b>DIVIDED OPINION</b>				
Transportation	58%	32%	42%	68%
Work Opportunities	26%	49%	30%	30%
<b>ONLY WEAK POSITIVE OR NEUTRAL</b>				
Housing Quality or Affordability	27%	31%	16%	29%
Infrastructure (e.g. streets, police, health care facilities)	33%	43%	25%	15%

*\* Respondents were prompted about each of the pre-defined “domains” of community life and their responses were summarized into several broad post-coded categories of positive or negative response—e.g. “housing affordable”, “parks good”, “housing hard to find”, “not much to do for fun”. Up to three “other” responses were possible and these were then post-coded wherever feasible into one of the eight primary categories.*

## *Shopping*

Although native-born and immigrants survey respondents in Woodburn see the community as positive in terms of shopping opportunities it is interesting that immigrants are much more positive than the native-born. This reflects, in part, the burgeoning number of small immigrant entrepreneurs catering to the needs and interests of Mexican immigrants to Woodburn. Interestingly, the fact that the immigrant businesses are almost all small ones means that they are more part of “community life” in town than those which cater to the mainstream native-born population—which are typically parts of larger regional or national restaurant chains, franchises, or suppliers. Because immigrant households are generally lower-income than native-born ones, none complained about the local Wal-Mart’s image as a “big box” chain store and a good number specifically mentioned it as a good part of the community.

Ironically, in the realm of commercial interactions, the civic space of Woodburn is permeated with more anomie for native-born community residents than for immigrant newcomers. If one likes Mexican food, there is a wide range of choices in Woodburn; if one does not, the only alternatives are a few coffee shops and supermarkets. If one wants to buy CD’s in Spanish, a small local entrepreneur offers a large range and has even expanded his business from being a local shop to a regional distributorship serving several central Oregon communities. There is no such “mainstream” store. Not surprisingly, almost all the immigrant heads of household also felt that the shopping and commercial climate in Woodburn was improving.

There are driving schools offering driving classes in Spanish (and even renting the cars to take the driver examination in since so few of the Mexican immigrants own cars). If one wants to buy a home, often a difficult endeavor for the typical low-income immigrant family, there are Spanish-speaking real estate brokers with specialized expertise in helping Mexican immigrant families qualify for mortgages. Immigrant businesses are revitalizing the local community in Woodburn but, of course, their strength is in

marketing to immigrants not to natives, so this too, as well as demographic change is having a great impact on Woodburn's sense of itself as a community.

### ***Family and Friends***

Native-born and immigrant survey respondents alike saw Woodburn in positive terms because of having family and friends living nearby. But, although immigrant extended families are, indeed, an important resource for newcomers, it deserves note that less immigrant than native-born survey respondents highlighted family as a positive aspect of community life in Woodburn. This reflects Woodburn's shorter history as a migration destination for Mexican immigrants and the fact that the Mixteco networks only became established in the community about 15 years ago. It reflects also the fraying of immigrants' extended family networks where mutual reciprocity is desirable but not feasible. Specific responses allude also to family divisions which led to migration or which stemmed from the stresses of living in poverty, or from conflicts related to identity and personal values.

The high proportion of native-born survey respondents mentioning friends and family as positive aspects of the community also reflects the fact that the decisions of some of the older, retired newcomers to settle in Woodburn were to be near children and the fact that the families of those who had grown up in town were, as in many rural agricultural areas, rather closely-knit.

### ***Community/Social Environment***

There is a significant divergence in native-born and immigrant residents' perception of the general social environment in Woodburn. Immigrants, predominantly Mexicans, feel strongly positive about the social environment while native-born survey respondents were much less positive. Maria, a Mexican immigrant housewife in her early 30's who has now lived in Woodburn for 8 years and has four children in Woodburn's schools, confesses "there really aren't very many Americans here". All of Maria's siblings live in

Woodburn and they have a close family life which probably contributes to her positive take on Woodburn's social environment but she also says, "It's a safe place to live, I like the tree-lined streets, and calmness here". Maria and her husband (who is from Mexico, DF) say they miss Mexico but that it's a poor country. She would like it if there were movie theatres or other places to go out in Woodburn but there is always nearby Salem, the state capital.

Several Mexican (and also Russian) immigrant head of households' positive assessment of the community social environment reflected their recognition that their children have now become assimilated into U.S. life and that the social environment is good for their families even if they personally miss their home country.

Almost all of the negative assessments of the community/social environment, put forward by immigrant and native-born households alike referred to men hanging around in the downtown square. Complaints included disapproval of public drinking, "vagrants", "gangs", and drug-dealing. Mexicans more easily recognized than non-Mexicans that most of these idle men were not really criminals but seasonally unemployed or underemployed workers with nothing to do to fill their day. Non-Mexicans were more likely to see these small groups of men as "gangs". However, a substantial number of both immigrants and native-born survey respondents disapproved of this aspect of the downtown square—although Mexicans' disapproval was tempered by their enjoyment of the many family-oriented, friendly Mexican retail stores, restaurants, bakery stores, and bakeries in the downtown.

Native-born respondents were much more likely to point to community/social environment as a negative facet of community life. This underscores the fact that there are real social tensions in Woodburn which arise as a result of immigration—although, to the credit of community residents, local institutions, local community organizations, municipal government, community leaders, and churches, these social tensions have not been "translated" into political conflict. As part of efforts to integrate a downtown which is becoming increasingly oriented toward Mexican customers, the City of Woodburn has

encouraged a local weekend farmers' market which, in principle might cater to both native-born and immigrant families but which actually draws more non-Mexican customers. The small farmers selling there are gamely continuing with their sales although many of the Anglo families now more or less bypass the downtown, going straight to Wal-Mart on the outskirts of town or the shopping mall across the freeway for their shopping.

Woodburn's proactive and solution-oriented approach to defusing ethnic tensions is exemplary. For example, the community, in early 2002, hired a local resident who is, however, a Mexican-born, well-educated lawyer, as liaison between the Mexican and Anglo communities. His first task was to develop a video to orient Mexicans to the city's new noise ordinance (which had arisen out of complaints among native-born residents about Mexican parties and celebrations with loud music). While the noise ordinance may not actually address the top priority civic problems Woodburn faces, or even address the immigrant-native social tensions effectively, it is, nonetheless, a very good example of an approach to improving immigrant-native community relations by focusing on a concrete real-world problem and seeking to resolve it in a positive fashion. An ongoing challenge is that the typical individual neighbor-to-neighbor conflicts (a homeowner calling the police about loud music at a birthday party, a landlord not allowing his tenant to plant roses, a neighbor child bullying another child) sometimes takes on racial undertones due to difficulties in communication, or misunderstandings in "reading" neighbors' lifestyle.

### ***Employment Opportunities***

Divergences in opinion between native-born and immigrant survey respondent as to whether Woodburn is good in terms of employment opportunities appears to really be a situation of looking at whether "the glass is half full or empty". Immigrant residents of Woodburn, with a heavy concentration of agricultural workers used to seasonality, were slightly more positive than the native-born about local work opportunities. In particular, despite the seasonality of employment, many who had previously worked in California

said that, just as they had heard, there was more employment in Oregon than in California.

But the same proportion of immigrant and native-born survey respondents said that employment was a negative facet of community life in Woodburn. This reflects the reality of regional employment trends as processing plants have closed and county and regional economic development agencies struggle with the challenges of improving employment for workers with low to moderate levels of education. Woodburn is unusual in that Chemeketa College, the local campus of a Willamette Valley area community college district is located in the center of town—making it easily accessible on foot to most community residents. The college operates an employment training system “One Stop Center” but these services seem more oriented toward English-speaking clients than word limited-English clients despite the fact that the college also operates a robust ESL program.

The community survey reveals very little evidence of competition between immigrants and native-born workers for employment in the Woodburn area—even in the low-skill low-wage sectors of the labor market. There is, instead, a dual labor market. Even at the businesses which employ both immigrants and native-born workers, the U.S.-born workers have access to supervisory and management jobs which immigrants cannot secure due to their limited English and lower levels of education.

### **Perceptions of Local Institutions’ Responses to Community Issues**

**Table 15** on the next page reports native-born and immigrant head of households’ assessment of local government’s efforts to addressing the challenges it faces—including the impacts of immigration. The differences between native-born and immigrants’ perspectives are interesting in that those immigrants who felt they could assess local efforts were more divided in their opinions than native-born residents. However, the proportion who said local government was doing “very well” is greater than among the native-born respondents. At the same time, understandably, one-quarter of the immigrant

survey respondents felt they couldn't really say how well local government was doing (since they didn't know enough about what it was doing).

<b>Table 15</b> <b>Immigrant and Native-born Head of Households' Assessment</b> <b>of How Well Local Government in Woodburn is Doing</b> (N=128)		
<i>Q. 19 How well would you say that local government here in Woodburn has done in addressing the issues the community faces?</i>	<b>% of Native-Born</b>	<b>% of Immigrants</b>
Very well	3%	13%
Pretty well	28%	19%
OK	49%	25%
Not so well	2%	7%
Not at all well	5%	10%
Can't say	12%	26%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 19.*

Followup questions about the reasons for respondents' individual assessment of how well local government was doing show that one-third of immigrant and native-born heads of household alike consider local municipal government to be generally responsive to community residents. However more native-born respondents than immigrant respondents (23% vs. 11%) said that local government was generally unresponsive.

Very few (<5%) of either native-born or immigrant respondents mentioned an inadequate or negative interaction with local government. Similarly, there were few complaints about city programs (5% of the immigrants and none of the native-born had a negative comment) or about city services (where 5% of the native-born and 1% of the immigrants) had a negative comment. A significant minority of the native-born respondents (14%) and a few immigrant respondents said that racial relations in Woodburn were good in part because of local government's efforts.

There are not, to our knowledge, very good benchmarks for comparison as so little is known in general about local residents' "customer ratings" of local community institutions. However, within the context of our New Pluralism research, Woodburn stands out, as does Marshalltown, Iowa, as one of the communities which is doing a better than average job in general and, specifically, in terms of responding to the challenges of immigration-driven social change.

### **Perspectives on How Local Institutions and Service Delivery Systems are Doing**

Because community life is multi-dimensional, consisting of interactions between local residents and a wide range of local institutions, organizations, and service delivery systems, we asked (as we had regarding overall impressions of community life) about the institutions which local people thought were doing a particularly good or a particularly bad job.

The institutions which are rated most favorably by both native-born and immigrant residents of Woodburn are the town library and the various churches. This is consistent with our observations and assessment as outsiders.

Positive comments about the Woodburn library included many recognizing the library's utility for children and teenagers, as well as a number mentioning specific features of services: the availability of computers, the availability of books in Spanish, reading programs for young children, and responsiveness to special needs (e.g. large print books, signs in different languages), and summer programs. A Mexican respondent specifically mentioned how useful Spanish-language help was in finding books.

The profusion of small churches, especially the evangelical protestant churches, catering to Mexican immigrants is striking. A number of positive comments on church responsiveness to community needs mentioned charitable help (food and clothing) but some mentioned other contributions such as St. Luke's Catholic Church organizing street cleanups, youth programs and counseling.

**Table 16** on the next page provides a more detailed tabulation of immigrants' and native-born head of households' assessment of how well different programs, local agencies, and institutions were doing—with a focus on those considered to be doing a particularly good job.

There is a good deal of consistency in how native-born and immigrant heads of household rate these efforts. The major divergences in immigrant and native-born perspectives had to do with the role of churches (where immigrants were even more positive than native-born respondents) and the schools (where similar proportions of native-born and immigrant respondents expressed positive opinions but where a much higher proportion of native-born heads of household expressed a negative opinion). Overall, more native-born than immigrant respondents expressed a strong opinion (either positive or negative). This may well reflect the fact that some immigrants feel they do not know enough about these institutions to form an opinion.

**Table 16 –Are Local Institutions/Agencies Doing a Good or Bad Job?  
Immigrants and Native-Born Heads of Households’ Perspectives**

<b>Local Institutions/Agencies</b>	<i>Q. 40 An important role of government, churches, and community organizations is to make communities and peoples’ lives better Are there any programs or organizations here in Woodburn which you think are doing a particularly good job or a particularly bad job?</i>			
	<b>% Who Say Doing a Particularly Good Job</b>		<b>% Who Say Doing a Particularly Bad Job</b>	
	<b>% Native-Born</b>	<b>% Immigrants</b>	<b>% Native Born</b>	<b>% Immigrants</b>
Library	73%	73%	4%	---
Churches	54%	64%	4%	1%
Parks and Recreation	54%	46%	17%	11%
Elementary Schools	49%	55%	18%	3%
Police	52%	44%	30%	22%
Health Clinics	38%	40%	8%	12%
High School	38%	37%	36%	9%
Housing Agencies	31%	27%	12%	8%

The tabulation in **Table 16** gives Woodburn institutions a good “report card” in terms of local institutional responsiveness to the dramatic demographic, linguistic, and cultural change resulting from high levels of immigration. The ratio of positive to negative opinion among immigrants is very good for all local institutions except for the police (which have the highest negative rating among immigrants of any of the institutions rated).

### *Differing Perspectives On School System Performance*

**Table 16** suggests that the school system is perceived as doing a very good job in serving immigrants. In addition to their “official” role as institutions to convey knowledge and build skills, public schools are important socializing institutions. It is noteworthy that very few immigrants feel the schools are doing a bad job. Several (11%) of the immigrant heads of household who saw the schools as doing a particularly good job, pointed to the bilingual program; one respondent also specifically mentioned a good Russian immersion program.

The Woodburn school system’s proactive response to the changing demographics of its student population suggests that there is a substantive basis for immigrants’ positive opinions about the school system. For example, while many school systems incorrectly assume that need for ESL and bilingual instruction is confined to the early grades (when actually recently-arrived middle and high school students’ needs are the most extreme) the Woodburn high school is teaching some subjects in Spanish to accommodate newcomers. And the school system developed its own bilingual program curriculum, a curriculum which has received statewide recognition.

One of the impressive features of the Woodburn schools’ strategy is that the approaches being used in language instruction are dual immersion approaches likely to contribute not only to bilingualism but to social integration.<sup>96</sup> School system administrators are also trying to engage immigrant parents in their children’s education and reaching out by

---

<sup>96</sup> Oregon School Boards Association, “Breaking Barriers to Close the Gap”, at [www.osba.org/hottopics](http://www.osba.org/hottopics)

having meetings in the community meeting room of the farmworker housing project, Nuevo Amanecer.

However, although Woodburn's schools are working energetically and thoughtfully to respond to immigrant children, reports of analyses of standardized testing data for 2001-2004 shows that there remains a gap between the immigrant and native-born children in terms of educational outcomes. Within the state's framework, the District has not achieved benchmarks for progress in improving limited-English students' performance in English/Language Arts, in Mathematics. While the gap in language arts is large as is the graduation rate, the limited-English students are fairly close to the expected standard in math (33% meeting the standard vs. the 39% goal).<sup>97</sup>

The vast majority of specific comments about schools are positive and seem to be a strong indication that the community at large thinks the school system is doing a good job in serving both immigrant and native-born children.<sup>98</sup>

Nonetheless, it is cause for concern that the native-born Woodburn residents are generally less positive about the schools than immigrants and that native-born heads of household are equally divided about whether the high school is doing a very good or a very bad job. An additional issues which arises in a detailed review of these patterns is that the sub-group of immigrant parents with reservations about the quality of local education are typically those who have lived in town longer, speak English better, and who have teenage children. This, in turn, suggests that perspectives may relate to type and level of expectations and that the attitudes of these immigrant families seem to be approximating those of the native-born households as they become socially integrated. In

---

<sup>97</sup> The debate about the appropriateness of standardized testing as an indicator of school success or even as a valid indicator of individual students' academic performance is beyond the scope of this monograph. It must be observed, however, that these are not necessarily valid or reliable indicators of the education system's contribution to students' overall success (e.g. in pursuing a career, in life). Tracking sub-groups outcomes is clearly merited but interpretation of the findings is much less straightforward.

<sup>98</sup> However, two native-born survey respondents commented negatively on bilingual education or services to "illegals".

short, it would seem that they have higher expectations than others among the immigrant parents. However, it is possible also that their perspectives relate as much to the overall process of their children's pathway of assimilation as to education outcomes per se—but additional attention needs to be given to the basis for positive and negative perspectives about the high school's performance.

Another specific issue to explore is that since so many of the native-born heads of household are older retired people whose children have not been in school for many years, their opinions may not necessarily refer to the current status of the school system but to some prior period. It is unclear the extent to which their attitudes are shaped by actual information about the school system's performance or indirectly by more general concerns about societal trends.

There were some very positive comments from both immigrant and native-born parents about the high school's efforts to accommodate diversity and the bilingual program; in the comments on the high school system, several native-born survey respondents mentioned they thought the schools were doing a good job of teaching Mexican students English or bringing students from different ethnic backgrounds together. Negative comments about the high school system sometimes seemed to reflect perspectives on "youth problems" in general (e.g. teenage pregnancy, teen behavior) more than bona fide education system problems. Nonetheless, there were several comments that did focus on bona fide education issues—e.g. complaints that special education students were not being well served, that test scores were low, that students were unprepared for the workplace, and that limited funds for school programs constrained students' activities.

A Woodburn High School senior, Dolores, who we talked to provided some insights about what schooling means to an immigrant teenager in the course of reflecting about her own aspirations and experiences.<sup>99</sup> Dolores is a college-bound student and member of the school-based community service/political organization, MeCHA (Mexicano/as y Chicano/as de Aztlan). She is clear about her career aspirations (to become a counselor)

---

<sup>99</sup> A pseudonym, Ed Kissam interview September 15, 2003.

and her educational strategy (first community college and then transfer to Oregon State University) but she feels the main challenges she confronts are to navigate the social universe of adolescent life. She says “I find ways to go in my direction...but I have to find ways to work around my dad’s moral views”. She goes on to note that there are lots of cliques in the school and that she had to learn to overcome the divisions among the Mexican-origin students. Being a Michoacana, although not part of one of the dominant village networks, she notes that she actually managed to become friendly with some of the Oaxacan students. At the same time, she is very conscious that Mexican-origin teenagers are often seen as “gangs” by non-Mexicans, in part because she is herself involved in the church (teaching catechism) as well as in MeCHA and is, by no stretch of the imagination affiliated with gang life.

### *Opinions About Police Services*

Another area where opinions diverge slightly relates to police services. There were more positive than negative comments about the Police Department from immigrant and native-born survey respondents alike. However, native-born respondents held more emphatic views; more thought that the police department was doing a particularly good job but, also more thought there were problems—with 82% of the native-born respondents expressing a strong opinion while only 62% of the immigrants did. A few of the Mexican immigrants (6%) had had an experience with the police which led them to see some members of the Department as racist; surprisingly, this view was shared by a few of the native-born survey respondents.

## **Woodburn Residents’ Civic Concerns**

Civic engagement is modulated by the specific sorts of concerns individuals have and whether there are opportunities to join with others in addressing those concerns. Typically, it is seldom the case that an individual’s societal concerns dovetail neatly with those of others in the community in which they live. Friends’, neighbors’, co-workers’,

even family members', social and political interests may include concerns which are not one's own and vice-versa.

In general, linguistic, cultural, and social homogeneity can probably be expected to facilitate civic collaboration and decision-making. But, at the same time, diversity contributes greatly to the intellectual resources available to the community and may, presumably, contribute to a community's ability to find innovative or creative solutions to endemic problems. From a theoretical perspective, these are fundamental trade-offs and the challenge facing theorists, as well as practical planners interested in social capital as an element in community well-being is to better understand the factors which make it possible to effectively deploy social capital resources to address civic needs.<sup>100</sup>

We asked survey respondents to identify the three main challenges Woodburn faced as a community, what they would themselves focus on "getting done" or do in order to respond to community residents' service needs. We found the answers to this questioning to be very thoughtful. Challenging areas identified by survey respondents included: social environment, race relations, recreation, policing, public safety, traffic, business development, and affordable housing. Looking at immigrant and native-born head of households' responses it appears there is a good deal of common ground in terms of shared concerns and areas for possible collaboration here, as well as a similar overall assessment of local institutions' efforts.

---

<sup>100</sup> Edward Kissam, "Here To Stay: Case Studies of Mexican Civic Involvement in Central Valley Communities", Research report submitted to The James Irvine Foundation, July, 2003. In Chapter 2 of this report, I argue that the basic challenge in rural communities impacted by immigration is to "translate" the potential social capital inherent in the dense social networks of immigrants into actual social capital which can be deployed in efforts to improve the quality of community life. Diversity within the immigrant community gives rise to challenges in "drawing down" on social capital and transforming it into "civic capital" as do language and cultural barriers between immigrants and native-born community residents. In both cases, proactive strategies for civic improvement require careful attention to strengthening both "bonding" and "bridging" social capital.

### ***Social Environment, Race Relations, Recreation***

Almost half (43%) of the native-born heads of household and more than one third of the immigrant heads of household (36%) mentioned an issue relating generally to social relations. Concerns in this area related to general issues cutting across ethnic lines such as recreational opportunities, youth programs, and teen pregnancy.

Challenges identified by survey respondents also included issues of race relations, inter-ethnic communication, and efforts to integrate immigrants into the community. Concerns related to relations between immigrant and native-born residents are definitely not the leading concern of Woodburn residents but they are an important concern. In their comments, 10% of the native-born heads of households conveyed a negative attitude toward immigrants, for example, referring to “the migrant worker problem” and, conversely, 7% of the immigrants identified “racism” as a problem. However, most of the immigrant and native-born survey respondents concerned about the ethnic relations challenge framed their comments in a positive way, alluding, for example, to the need for “community unity”, “better communication”, or “orienting immigrants” to community life. However, there is a substantial level of community concern about the changing nature of Woodburn—expressed via “code words” relating to community problems related, if not to immigrants as a group, to a highly visible sub-group of immigrants, namely, young men congregating around Woodburn’s central plaza.

### ***Community Safety/Police Services***

As is currently the case in most U.S. communities, Woodburn residents are concerned about public safety and crime, with a particular set of preoccupations about drugs, drinking, and youth gangs. One-third (34%) of immigrant heads of household and a similar proportion of native-born heads of household (31%) mentioned a concern relating to public safety as a priority issue that needed to be addressed.

There appears to be a subtle difference in expressed concerns about crime; more native-born than immigrant respondents mentioned this as their primary concern, while more immigrants listed it as a secondary concern. We know from the ethnographic research and detailed notes on interviews that this relates in part to demographics (because some of the older residents were generally more apprehensive about their personal safety/security).

Unfortunately, as is the case in connection with some of the expressed general concerns about “social environment”, there are ethnic dimensions to community concerns about crime in particular. The central plaza of Woodburn is, objectively, an area of small businesses (specialty grocery stores, restaurants, clothing stores) revitalized by the increase in Woodburn’s immigrant population. However, this causes discomfort among some portions of the Anglo population of Woodburn. Some of these Woodburn residents say that downtown is no longer “safe” because the downtown does, in fact, have a strong Mexican cultural presence. There are, in fact, a fair number of young Mexicanos who spend time in the downtown plaza when there is no work and there has, for some years, been sales of falsified identity documents, as well as some drinking and drug dealing. But there is, at the same time, a good deal of family-oriented activity in the plaza. Concerns about the “safety” of the downtown area are more psychological than physical; they are, nonetheless, real in terms of collective community experience.

As a means of addressing this problem, city government and local leaders concerned about social relations between Mexican immigrants and older, Anglo residents of Woodburn have, wisely, focused on developing the downtown as an increasingly attractive area for shopping and relaxation—with support for projects to restore historic buildings as well as organization of a farmer’s market in which predominantly Anglo small farmers sell local produce. At the time of our last visit to Woodburn (September, 2006) the project to refurbish the downtown plaza had been completed. The construction process itself had interrupted the drinking, drug-dealing, and selling of ID documents in the plaza; whether or not the new fountain, lawn, park benches and increased use of the

plaza for family recreation diminishes the other competing “underground” uses of the plaza remains to be seen but the prospects seem promising.

### ***Infrastructure—Traffic, Business Development, Transportation***

Woodburn residents’ concern about the community’s physical infrastructure are traditional ones. They center on traffic, the condition of the city’s streets, street lighting, and the consequences of the freeway cutting across the western edge of town. About one out of four Woodburn residents cited traffic, streets, stop signs, or street lighting as a priority issue. Native-born residents were more concerned than immigrants about this sort of problem but many survey respondents from each group mentioned specific issues in this area which they considered a priority.

Woodburn municipal government’s redevelopment of the central plaza, replacing a parking lot with an attractive small town park was seen by immigrants and native-born residents alike as a useful and necessary initiative. A middle-aged Mexican immigrant we interviewed also pointed to city workers removing graffiti which had appeared on the walls of some downtown buildings as specific evidence of the city “doing its job”. This relatively inexpensive investment in infrastructure development was, at once, part of the strategy to decrease loitering in the downtown plaza, business development, and a way to restore to the downtown the traditional “family friendly” feel of a small rural town.

Business development issues fell into two categories—concerns about locally limited shopping opportunities, specifically including residents of the northern area of Woodburn wanting more local shops in their neighborhood (since the downtown is about 1 mile away), Transportation was also considered an issue by a small minority of the native-born residents but not many immigrants.

The general concern less directly expressed among the native-born population was the obvious economic health of businesses oriented toward Mexican immigrants—the (excellent) downtown restaurants, grocery stores, clothing, and music stores, a range of

specialized services for Woodburn’s Mexican residents (e.g. driving schools, real estate agencies), and car parts stores advertising in Spanish—and the more faltering health of businesses oriented toward serving the town’s Anglo population. Survey respondents quite correctly did not identify this as an “issue” since it is not really part of the public sphere as much as part of an overall social transformation. It is nonetheless, a preoccupation which underlies some of the tensions which, subsequently, emerge in civic life and community political dialogue. For example, we heard a complaint from an Anglo town resident that Woodburn’s 16 de Septiembre Mexican Independence Day celebration should not have been scheduled on the weekend when Woodburn’s October Fest had been held in past years—without any apparent recognition that the Mexican national celebration, like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, fell on a particular day.

### ***Other Issues—Education and Housing***

Other clusters of issues on the minds of Woodburn residents included education and housing. These were mentioned as a civic concern by a fairly small minority (<10%) of survey respondents. There were no clear-cut differences between immigrant and native-born survey respondents but there were a few immigrants who mentioned adult education, and learning English as issues while native-born residents’ concerns focused on K-12 schooling. Assessment of local response to problems of affordable housing were mixed—with some feeling the community should work harder to develop more affordable housing while others felt the community was growing too rapidly. Not surprisingly, more immigrants considered affordable housing to be a pressing need.

### **Issues That Local Residents Feel that Community Institutions Are Neglecting**

To follow up on survey respondents’ panoramic assessment of challenges Woodburn faces as a community, we asked specifically about issues which community residents felt were not being addressed adequately or at all. **Table 17** below shows the issue areas identified by immigrant and native-born household heads as being ones which “fell through the cracks”. These reflect the same general pattern of concerns expressed by

Woodburn residents about “challenges” facing the community taking into account the extent to which survey respondents felt that local agencies and organizations were already dealing successfully with them. There are significant differences between the opinions of immigrant and native-born Woodburn residents in this area.

<b>Table 17</b> <b>Woodburn Head of Households’ Identification</b> <b>of Issues Which No Agency is Addressing</b> (N=128)		
<i>Q. 23 Are there any issues which no city, county, state, or federal agency or local organization is dealing with? What are those issues which “fall through the cracks”?</i>	<b>% of Native-Born</b>	<b>% of Immigrants</b>
Crime	16%	18%
Business climate, shopping, jobs	1%	12%
City infrastructure-streets, public buildings	11%	4%
Social Services, family support	16%	5%
Education	17%	2%
Health services	3%	---
Housing	1%	---
Recreation	2%	---
Other	7%	18%
None—all issues being addressed	26%	42%

Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 23

The similarity in immigrant and native-born residents’ perspectives that crime (with “drugs” being a leading concern) is an issue which has fallen through the cracks is important. However, some of the native-born residents see “crime” as an immigrant problem.<sup>101</sup> And, quite specifically, despite the perception among U.S.-born residents

<sup>101</sup> In a sense, crime is an immigrant problem—but more because of demographics than nativity or immigration status—since there are few elderly criminals and the native-born population is so demographically skewed.

that drugs is an “immigrant problem” the Woodburn police chief observes that the primary drug traffic in town is in methedrene and cuts across all ethnic groups.<sup>102</sup> Shared concerns about the problem of crime is an area of common ground in which there is a good deal of community consensus, i.e. that crime is a significant but not serious problem and that the police are doing a fairly good job of dealing with it. Individual comments suggest that the police services are not seen by anyone as being exemplary but that the department is doing well under the circumstances (e.g. with a limited budget or in comparison to the county Sheriff’s Department).

Differences of opinion between native-born and immigrant households about Woodburn’s schools’ response to educational issues which “fall through the cracks” are consistent with their overall opinions of the schools and highlight the fact that the difference between these groups stem mainly from those who are dissatisfied with school system performance. Similar proportions of immigrant and native-born heads of household feel the schools are doing a good job but more native-born residents are disappointed in the schools. This may reflect background experience and expectations with immigrants comparing Woodburn’s schools to the schools they attended and seeing them as providing more “educational opportunities” for children and youth than do the native-born residents.

### **Woodburn Residents’ Assessment of Changes in Quality of Community Life**

The previous analyses focus on community assessment of current aspects of community life. We also inquired about Woodburn residents’ sense of trends because perceptions of trends are in themselves an important indicator of community well-being and because this is an area where there might, as a result of the impact of immigration, be differences of opinion between immigrants and native-born community members. **Table 18** on the next page details survey respondents’ assessment of changes in community quality of life during their time living in the town.

---

<sup>102</sup> Lynn Stephen interview with Scott Russell, Chief of Police, City of Woodburn, September 15, 2003.

<p align="center"><b>Table 18</b>  <b>Immigrant and Native-born Head of Household's Assessment</b>  <b>of Changes in Quality of Community Life in Woodburn</b>  (N=128)</p>		
<i>Q. 15 Would you say that Woodburn has gotten much better, a little better, stayed about the same, gotten a little worse, or a lot worse since you first came here (or grew up here)?</i>	<b>% of Native-Born</b>	<b>% of Immigrants</b>
Much better	15%	13%
A little better	21%	39%
Stayed about the same	34%	27%
Gotten a little worse	20%	19%
Gotten a lot worse	10%	2%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 15*

*\*Differences between native-born and immigrant respondents' perception of the trend in quality of community life is statistically significant  $P < .001$*

**Table 18** is consistent with the previous analyses in showing immigrants to be generally more positive about Woodburn life and current community changes than native-born residents. Almost one-third of native-born household heads think that Woodburn has gotten at least “a little worse” and a small, but significant, minority (10%) think that town life has gotten “a lot worse” while only one-third (36%) think that the community has gotten better. In contrast, more than half of the immigrants (52%) think community life has gotten at least a little better and only one-fifth (21%) think it has gotten worse.

The good news is that there is not a dramatic anti-immigrant backlash in Woodburn. This leads us to believe that, in Woodburn, as in other rural communities, the idea of increasing community polarization along ethnic lines or immigrant/native-born divides is in large measure a construct developed by demagogues as a strategy to gain political advantage. To be sure there are community tensions between native-born and immigrant groups but, in Woodburn, there appears to be a broad consensus that the correct civic response is to overcome those tensions, not to exacerbate them.

The social and political ecology of Woodburn is not a two-dimensional interplay between native-born and immigrant families but a more complex set of interactions where different generation cohorts play different and crucial roles. The efforts of Generation 1.5 and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Mexican immigrants, the Tejanos and Tejanas who first settled out of the migrant circuit in Woodburn from the 1950's onward and their Oregon-born and raised children play a crucial role as cultural intermediaries and problem-solvers who can see both sides of many civic issues. In particular, a crucial role has been that filled by a middle-aged Tejana, Elida Sifuentez, and a younger Oregon-raised Mexican-American son of Texas migrant farmworkers, Anthony Velez. Their work as elected officials (both were on the City Council during the period we conducted the study) has been to catalyze this ongoing process of efforts to harmonize community tensions. At the same time, native-born civic leaders, City Council members, community business leaders, school administrators have also been clear in their commitment to a strategy of efforts to accommodate community diversity.

It should also be recognized that one aspect of participatory democracy which contributes to overall community commitment to addressing difficult issues is controversy and advocacy. While the mainstream of community leaders did not focus much on the role of community advocacy groups, an offshoot of PCUN, Voz Hispana in fact made contributions to community life by providing an organizational framework for community organizers such as Juan Argumuedo and Larry Kleinman, and gadflies like Leonardo and Teo Parra to question whether the school system was doing enough for Latino children, to engage in sustained advocacy for affordable housing and generally offset the influence of groups arguing for continuation of the status quo. Second-generation immigrants, Tejanos and Tejanas and "Generation 1.5" immigrants, the children of Mexican migrant farmworkers who grew up in Oregon are at the center of this advocacy also.

### **Summary of Immigrant and Native-born Perspectives on Community Life**

Review of immigrant and native-born residents' opinions about the current quality of community life and trends over the course of the time they have lived in Woodburn

suggests that there are, indeed, tensions as a result of high levels of immigration but not serious conflict. This distinction between conflict and divergent perspectives, concerns, and priorities is important—because the former implies struggle and a zero-sum game while the latter implies negotiation, and collaborative problem-solving. The patterns to be observed in Woodburn highlight the need for proactive community efforts to defuse these strains in social relations but, at the same time, they suggest that the community sees things in a fairly positive light and that there are not major rifts in the community.

Exploration of specific issue areas (e.g. crime, employment, education) related to community life and civic issues show that there are very broad swathes of common ground where immigrants and native-born community residents can come together. Our Woodburn findings are quite consistent with national survey data showing Hispanic immigrant to be quite optimistic despite poverty and underemployment.<sup>103</sup>

To be sure, there is, among both immigrant and native-born heads of household a significant minority, perhaps one in ten, who have a fairly extreme perspective and believe that the community has serious, underlying structural, perhaps irresolvable, problems but the overwhelming majority hold more moderate views. This is a valuable reminder that the national political debate about immigration policy is actually one in which extremists are exacerbating tensions in community life in order to further their own political agendas rather than demonstrating leadership oriented toward resolving those tensions.<sup>104</sup>

## **Social Program Use and Utility**

Local government has responsibility for managing social and economic relations among community residents, maintaining community infrastructure, and providing basic

---

<sup>103</sup> Gabriel Escobar, “The Optimistic Immigrant”, Pew Hispanic Center, May 30, 2006 reports that 50% of 1<sup>st</sup> generation Hispanic immigrants believe their children will be better off than they are now.

<sup>104</sup> The findings of a national survey conducted by The Pew Research Center (“America’s Immigration Quandry”, April 4, 2006) reports that there were only pockets of concern about immigrants with 21% of the survey respondents agreeing that immigration was “a big problem”.

municipal services such as water, sewer, and garbage pickup. However, another local government role is to provide social program services. While the broad guidelines for most social programs are defined by the federal government and, to some extent, modulated by state government, actual services are typically delivered by local agencies—typically local or regional national non-profit organizations or local offices of county or state programs. Thus, to some degree, there is an element of local strategy in shaping social program services, although program design and administrative guidelines are largely shaped in the state capitol or Washington, DC.

An important policy-related facet of our exploration of the “new pluralism” emerging in rural communities throughout the U.S. was to ask heads of household about their own and their family members’ use of public services and how well they thought that specific social programs and public service entities were doing in responding to their needs. Here we focused on actual service use (as opposed to community-wide opinion—from a distance so to speak) and sought opinions only from survey respondents who had first-hand experience or whose family members had first hand experience with a particular program or service delivery system.

There were significant differences between immigrants’ and native-born populations’ use of some services. There were also some differences in immigrant and native-born respondents’ assessment of the utility of the services they had received from different agencies.

**Table 20** below details the extent to which native-born and immigrant households use various services while **Table 21** on the following page shows how those who had used the services rated them.

**Table 20**  
**Native-Born and Immigrant Households' Use**  
**Of Education, Social Program, Health, and Other Services<sup>105</sup>**

<b>Social Program/Service</b>	<b>% of Native-Born Headed Households Who Participated</b>	<b>% of Immigrant-Headed Households Who Participated</b>
<b>Education</b>		
Oregon State University System	<b>20%</b>	<b>4%</b>
Community College System	32%	37%
K-12: Adult Education	10%	18%
K-12: Migrant Education	<b>6%</b>	<b>32%</b>
K-12: School Sports	39%	27%
Head Start or other Early Childhood	14%	29%
<b>Family Support/Public Health</b>		
Welfare/TANF	15%	28%
Medic-Care, Medic-Aid	<b>24%</b>	<b>59%</b>
Healthy Families or Oregon Health Plan	2%	8%
Food Stamps	29%	37%
WIC	43%	64%
<b>Work-Related</b>		
Job Service-UI	22%	31%
Job Service-Job Search Assistance	17%	14%
Employment Training	16%	3%
<b>Other</b>		
Affordable Housing	18%	20%
Legal Services	10%	13%
Police/Sheriff Assistance	<b>55%</b>	<b>34%</b>

*Source: Woodburn Community-Q. 41 Tabulations are for persons in the household (the respondent or family members) who have ever used services, i.e. cumulative family service use, not current use.*

*\* Programs where the differences between native-born and immigrant households' use of program services and rating of service are statistically significant are in boldface.*

One of the most striking patterns which emerges from **Table 20** is the extent to which immigrant heads of household have used the community college system. Many of the immigrants who attended a program at the local Chemeketa College campus went to learn English but native-born and immigrant heads of household had both attended classes there to get their GED or for vocational training. This reflects, in part, the advantage of adult learning service delivery systems which are based on a “one stop

<sup>105</sup> This analysis is not statistically significant for foreign-born respondents other than Mexicans, because there are too few respondents from each of the smaller foreign-born groups surveyed.

service” design. Chemeketa College’s ability to provide easily accessible and effective service to both immigrant and native-born residents of Woodburn reflects good planning within the college’s system, good instruction, and close collaboration with the Marion County employment training system (which makes it possible for there to be career counseling and other support services for adult learning/skills development as well as a wider range of vocational training than might otherwise be possible).

It is not surprising that many more immigrant than native-born households had benefited from the Migrant Education program in the Woodburn schools. Only a miniscule proportion of the U.S. or the Oregon farm labor force consists of native-born farmworkers and, thus, it is children in immigrant-headed households who qualify for migrant education services although many of the children and youth who benefit are, themselves, U.S.-born.

**Table 20** provides important insights into rhetorical debates about the extent to which immigrants use publicly-funded services. Immigrant families’ use of welfare (TANF) is only slightly higher than that of native-born families. However, immigrant families’ reliance on public health programs providing reduced-cost or free services (particularly for maternal-child health) is much higher than native-born households’, primarily because of the differing demographic and socioeconomic profile of the two groups. Immigrant families’ use of WIC and Food Stamps is also slightly higher than native-born families—because of their demographic profile, i.e. more couples of child-bearing age. But, as is the case with TANF, immigrant families’ use of WIC and Food Stamps is statistically indistinguishable from that of native-born families.

The other striking pattern evident in the **Table 20** analyses is the extent to which immigrants rely on unemployment insurance—due to their concentration in agricultural employment which is inevitably seasonal and where there is extensive under-employment even when there is work. However, only about one in seven immigrant or native heads of household have used the Job Service for job search assistance.<sup>106</sup>

**Table 21** below shows service beneficiaries’ “customer rating” of the services they or household members have used. It is gratifying to see that in almost all cases the majority of Woodburn residents using the service considered it to be very useful.

<b>Table 21</b>		
<b>Utility of Social Program Services As Rated by Those Who Use Them<sup>107</sup></b>		
<b>Social Program/Service</b>	<b>% of Native-Born Household Respondents Who Consider It Very Useful</b>	<b>% of Immigrant Household Respondents Who Consider It Very Useful</b>
<b>Education</b>		
Oregon State University System	93%	100%
Community College System	71%	59%
K-12: Adult Education	100%	45%
K-12: Migrant Education	100%	89%
K-12: School Sports	87%	70%
Head Start or other Early Childhood	83%	87%
<b>Family Support/Public Health</b>		
Welfare/TANF	100%	94%
Medic-Care, Medic-Aid	32%	85%
Healthy Families or Oregon Health Plan	---	---
Food Stamps	64%	86%
WIC	85%	90%
<b>Other</b>		
Job Service-UI	76%	73%
Job Service-Job Search Assistance	29%	63%
Employment Training	65%	50%
Affordable Housing	93%	63%
Legal Services	76%	82%
Police/Sheriff Assistance	51%	61%

*Source: Woodburn Community-Q. 41 Service ratings are for households where the survey respondent or a family member had sought service or used the service.*

Overall, the least useful of the services for immigrants seem to be those related to adult learning—adult education, employment training, and community college courses. This may well reflect their unfamiliarity with structured learning programs, the quality of

<sup>106</sup> While only a miniscule number of respondents said they had made use of employment training services, it is likely that this is a classification issue since some of the vocational training courses at Chemeketa College are funded with federal WIA funding from the U.S. Department of Labor.

<sup>107</sup> The % reported as considering a program “very useful” is expressed as % of those who use it.

teaching, or contextual factors; learning English is, for example, not easy for farmworkers who are working long hours, who have little education and, thus, little classroom experience. There are other significant barriers to provision of adult learning services to limited-English adults with little schooling. Chemeketa College, for example, provides employment assistance in the form of vocational training, career counseling, and assistance in resume preparation for job-seekers. However, even highly motivated immigrants cannot really benefit from these programs until they have reached a fairly high level of English proficiency and awareness of the U.S. job market.

## **Civic Dialogue in Woodburn: Sources of Information**

A central issue in contemporary society is how a community recognizes itself as a community. Individual, social, and civic identity is not shaped only by personal contacts. In contemporary society, mass media, and individual networks for getting and sharing information play an important role in defining their identity; in turn, that identity, which reflects distinctive interests, concerns, and preferences shapes their civic activities. An obvious challenge in the context of a “new pluralism” is to consider how increasing cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and educational diversity affect information flow in community life and what can be done to facilitate healthy communication. To better understand this facet of community life in Woodburn we asked survey respondents how they learn about “what is going on in the community”.

**Table 22** on the next page profiles ways in which immigrant and native-born heads of households access information—via personal social contacts, local information resources, and via mass media outlets. **Table 22** underscores the extent to which media access mediates civic participation in Woodburn. In part because of their lower levels of educational attainment, but also because of language, Woodburn’s immigrant households rely more heavily on electronic media than on print media for information on public issues. Woodburn immigrant households’ reliance on print media is much lower than native-born households (because the local newspaper in Woodburn is published in English as is the regional metro newspaper from Portland). Also their access to

information on local community affairs is highly constrained because the locally-available Spanish-language radio and television outlets are parts of large networks with syndicated national programming and minimal, if any, local content.<sup>108</sup>

A further constraint on both native-born and immigrant household's reliance on electronic media for information about what's going on in the community is that Woodburn is part of a large Portland metro market where perhaps 20 smaller communities in the area compete with urban Portland for air time—the usual outcome being that the only news about the local community which is widely disseminated is news about crime, scandal, or disaster.

A particular consideration here is that the overwhelming majority of electronic media content—in English and in Spanish, in television and in radio—is programming developed nationally. The traditional concept of radio and television stations being responsive to the public agenda of the communities in which they are located no longer is applicable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century except in the context of a relatively fragile “community media” movement among media activists and community organizations.

To address this barrier, PCUN and the Prometheus Project is building a low-power bilingual radio station in Woodburn which will be on the air in November, 2006. It is a very strategic initiative for a local community organizing group to undertake and has the promise of both engaging more Mexican immigrant farmworker constituents in the group's labor organizing activities but, just as importantly, increasing the civic participation of Mexican immigrants in Woodburn by providing them a “virtual agora” for learning about community affairs, discussing issues, and sharing concerns and opinions.

---

<sup>108</sup> To address this barrier, PCUN and the Prometheus Project is building a low-power bilingual radio station in Woodburn which will be on the air in November, 2006. It is a very strategic initiative for a local community organizing group to undertake.

<b>Table 22</b>		
<b>Sources of Information About What's Going on in the Community</b>		
<b>Source: Woodburn Community Survey- Q. 46</b>	<b>% of Native-Born Household Respondents Mentioning</b>	<b>% of Immigrant Household Respondents Mentioning</b>
<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>45%</b>
English-language paper only	74%	21%
Non-English language paper only	---	11%
Both English and non-English	---	---
Language not specified	5%	13%
<b>Radio</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>43%</b>
English-language only	18%	6%
Non-English language only	---	23%
Both English and non-English	---	---
Language not specified	---	14%
<b>Television</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>92%</b>
English-language only	82%	9%
Non-English language only	---	55%
Both English and non-English	2%	8%
Language not specified	2%	20%
<b>Friends and Family</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>22%</b>
Converse in English only	57%	---
Only in language other than English	---	3%
Both English and non-English	---	---
Language not specified	---	19%
<b>Library</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>43%</b>
English-language materials only	46%	5%
Non-English language materials only	---	2%
Both English and non-English	---	---
Language not specified	3%	36%

*\* Totals do not sum to 100% because many respondents listed multiple sources of information*

As in the rest of the U.S., television is Woodburn residents' primary mode of informing themselves. Radio is important but not to the extent that TV is. It is surprising and somewhat disappointing to see that even among friends and family there is little conversation about public issues in immigrant households. However, this reflects, in part, the difficulty that so few adults in immigrant households consider themselves informed enough to discuss issues, given that the context of reflecting and debating about "community issues" is English.

The reports tabulated here which show that immigrant households use the library almost as much as native-born echo our observations of high levels of library use and its high ratings among local users—in part as a result of the library’s acquisition of materials in Spanish and in Russian.

It is worthwhile to note that cable television makes a significant difference in media use patterns since more than half the Mexican immigrant heads of household watched news Spanish-language news programming from either Univision or Telemundo which are carried on local cable. A few also had satellite TV dishes to access a broader range of news and information programming from Mexico. For these households, television is likely to be the primary mode not only for language and cultural maintenance but for fostering a sense of binational social and political identity. Some immigrant household heads also watch English-language television but language clearly is a barrier to their becoming regular viewers of news or public affairs shows..

In general, the constraints on Woodburn immigrants’ access to information about community issues make it likely that most immigrants (like many native-born community members) have only a very general idea of what community issues might be, what entity is responsible for what aspect of community life, and who one might talk to in order to find out more information if one wanted.

The relatively fragmented array of immigrant social networks and limited amounts of free time for immigrant families in Woodburn further constrains informal discussion and exchange of information. The result is that, for them, the universe of “public affairs”, particularly as related to “political issues” consists, as for most immigrants, of the “hot-button” topics which make the national news, e.g. the Sensenbrenner anti-immigrant legislation, the issue of drivers’ licenses, and the National Guard on the U.S.-Mexico border. The smaller, more local issues, where individual involvement might make a contribution and difference are invisible--a part of public affairs dialogue which is “below the waterline”

## Civic Involvement in Woodburn

Community well-being is significantly affected by levels of individual and organizational civic involvement. Many analyses of civic involvement are implicitly based on a model of the “average” American town and an analysis of general social trends which cut across all groups in society.<sup>109</sup> Clearly, these conceptualizations are not optimal for the New Pluralism communities because there is a pressing concern not simply to determine whether community residents can “get along together” but also to consider what will be required for them to work effectively together to address community issues and make the town they live in a better place.

Research shows that, in addition to the role played by media in shaping public perspectives on community and how community members are and should be involved, much civic involvement is mediated by affiliational networks) including both formal organizational membership and a broad spectrum of other social linkages.<sup>110</sup> Civic researchers have, however, generally used a fairly narrow definition of affiliational networks in their research by focusing on formal affiliations (because they are easier to study than informal ones). However, our own research in the San Joaquin Valley has shown that one of the distinctive aspects of immigrant civic involvement is that much of it is mediated by less-formal affiliational networks—since the standard formal organizations such as the Lions, the Kiwanis, the local Chambers of Commerce, which were, for a brief period the mainstay of rural civic life in the U.S. do not play a major role in the immigrant-impacted communities. There are a number of reasons for this, including the basic issue of linguistic barriers standing between immigrants and many traditional American institutions.

---

<sup>109</sup> See Robert D. Putnam, **Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community**, Simon and Schuster, 2000. Putnam acknowledges the diversity of American communities but his analysis makes only tangential reference to immigration and the growing diversity of communities impacted by immigration.

<sup>110</sup> Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady, **Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics**, Harvard University Press, 1995. Verba and his co-authors focus on political participation and, therefore, their analysis does not focus on discussion in other contexts and on the important role played by the media in facilitating (and shaping) civic involvement.

There are also multiple modalities for civic involvement. The New Pluralism research design did not allow us to explore these in as much depth as we would have ideally wished but, nonetheless, we asked Woodburn residents several questions designed to understand the nature of civic life in the community.

As a follow to our inquiries to survey respondents about what community issues they would want to address if they were “in charge”, we asked survey respondents to assess their own level of community involvement and to then describe their involvement in volunteer activities, how they were involved and the kinds of activities they engaged in (e.g. as an organizer or simply as a volunteer, and in activities such as bake sales, charitable events such as feeding the homeless, etc.).

We also asked respondents if they belonged to a church or any other formally-organized civic organization. Finally, we asked immigrants if they were involved in helping out people in their community of origin.

**Table 23** on the next page examines the level of civic involvement of native-born and immigrant heads of household—in relation to several different generally-accepted indicators which reflect both level and type of civic involvement.

<b>Table 23</b>		
<b>Level of Self-Assessed Civic Involvement: Immigrant and Native-Born Heads of Household in Woodburn</b>		
Source	% of Native-Born Households	% of Immigrant Households
<b>Involvement in Community Issues: Discussion and/or Collective Action</b>		
Very Involved	15%	2%
Somewhat involved	25%	10%
Not Very Involved	22%	31%
Not at all Involved	39%	57%
<b>Community Volunteering: Regular Involvement or Special Events</b>		
Very Involved	10%	6%
Somewhat involved	14%	16%
Not Very Involved	36%	9%
Not at all Involved	41%	69%
<b>Donations to Charitable Causes or Organizational Activities</b>		
Cash contributions	60%	38%
In-kind donations	19%	14%
Both cash and in-kind	4%	7%
<b>Church or Organizational Membership</b>		
Church	66%	69%
Not involved at all	34%	31%

*Source: Woodburn Community Survey, Q. 50, 51, 52*

**Table 23** shows that Woodburn’s immigrant heads of household are less civically involved than native-born heads of household but, that there is, nonetheless, substantial civic involvement. The lower level of civic participation among immigrants appears to be related to two different sets of factors identified in the Civic Voluntarism Model developed by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady: socioeconomic factors (i.e. lower family income, less available time, child-rearing responsibilities) and the availability of “civic recruitment networks” which provide immigrants with opportunities for civic involvement as well as facilitating such involvement (e.g. via meetings, letter-writing campaigns). As discussed above, language barriers also impede the first stages of immigrants’ civic involvement on local affairs—knowing what’s going on, discussing

issues with family and friends, and thereby being “recruited”, i.e. becoming motivated to get involved.

While immigrant families’ involvement in civic activities, volunteering and campaigns is quite low it is important to recognize that more than half (59%) of the immigrant households make cash or in-kind contributions to charitable causes.

### *Involvement in Community Discussion of Civic Issues*

It should be no surprise that immigrant heads of household are less involved in discussing community issues than native-born heads of household. Discussing “community issues” presumes that an individual knows what they are as articulated in one or various issue inventories presented in media coverage, friends, neighbors’ and co-workers’ casual conversation, or civic organizations. The research by Verba et al. shows how closely civic engagement is linked to “opportunities” for engagement which are, typically, facilitated by formal organizational affiliational networks (e.g. service clubs, issue-oriented organizations) or by semi-formal social networks (e.g. ad hoc neighbors’ groups).

Given the extent to which Woodburn immigrant households are employed in low-wage occupations involving long working hours, the high proportions of immigrant families with school age children, low levels of educational attainment, and uncertainty as to whether their civic participation is welcomed or not, it is remarkable that even 12% of immigrant households are at all engaged in discussing community issues. The immigrants we interviewed who were not involved were straightforward in saying that their lack of knowledge, their lack of time, and uncertainty about whether they understood issues adequately constrained their involvement in issue-oriented discussions and advocacy..

As noted in the previous section, electronic media do little to catalyze or even facilitate community discussion of civic issues and the local newspaper is in English. Thus, for limited-English immigrants, there are few opportunities to become informed as to what

“issues” are being discussed in the community and what the complexities of these issues might be. As part of a proactive response to this problem, Woodburn Municipal Government began in 2003 a newsletter in Spanish (produced by the Community Liaison Officer) to address this issue. The newsletter includes an effort to build immigrant awareness of civic issues by including a short article on the some aspect or another of “how government works” in each issue.

### ***Volunteer and Charitable Involvement***

Levels of volunteering in Woodburn are not very high—with slightly less than one out of four households being “somewhat” or “very” involved either as regular volunteers or as volunteers at special events or civic celebrations.<sup>111</sup> Interestingly, although the older, more affluent native-born households have more disposable time, they do not have significantly higher levels of involvement.

Although native-born and immigrant heads of households’ levels of involvement in volunteer activities, non-political organizations, and churches are similar, their roles are not. While half of the native-born survey respondents who were civically active said they were involved as “leaders”, none of the immigrants did.

There is also a divergence between native-born and immigrant households in terms of organizational affiliation and, thus, types of volunteer activity and charitable causes. For both groups, churches provide the primary venue for volunteer activity. But there are distinctly “American” community organizations, such as Goodwill, the American Legion, and distinctly immigrant-oriented ones—such as PCUN and Mujeres Luchadoras Progresistas (an immigrant women’s group). Both Mexican and Mexican-American households reported that teenagers in the household were involved in the school-based

---

<sup>111</sup> Actually 40% of the native-born heads of households and 29% of the immigrant-headed households reported some kind of volunteer involvement—although only 24% and 22% reported they were “somewhat” or “very involved” as volunteers. This discrepancy is likely to reflect the fact that some survey respondents who said they were not very involved, nonetheless, mentioned some kind of volunteer involvement.

MeCHA organization. Some immigrant heads of household volunteered or provided donations to quite mainstream organizations such as Dress for Success, the Red Cross, and the Fire Department. Native-born and immigrant, mostly Mexican, heads of household were both quite involved with their children's schools—but Mexican parents were more likely to be coaching a soccer team or involved some other way in school sports while the native-born parents were more likely to be helping out in the classroom.

Two of the native-born heads of household, a significant minority of the random sample of survey respondents, are unpaid elected officials, one of them a City Council member, the other a School Board member. One of the immigrant heads of household in the survey, a long-term resident of Woodburn is actively involved as a community organizer and immigrant advocate but does not serve as an appointed or elected member of any official body.

### ***Church Membership***

There is a high level of church affiliation in Woodburn with more than two-thirds of both US-born and immigrant heads of household reporting that they or someone in their family was affiliated with a church.<sup>112</sup> There are, as in some of the other New Pluralism case study communities, a surprisingly large range of churches with significant membership in Woodburn.

Churches mentioned by native-born heads of household included: the Seventh Day Adventists, the Assembly of God, the Elliot Prairies Church, the Faith Christian Fellowship, the Latter Day Saints, the Living Enrichment congregation (a non-denominational group), St. Luke's Catholic Church, the United Methodist Church and the Mount Angel Parish, as well as the Pharma Rain Zen Center.

---

<sup>112</sup> Verba et al report that 52% of Americans attend church every week. While slightly more Woodburn households report they are affiliated with a church it is unlikely they all go to church each week and we did not ask about frequency of church attendance. Woodburn is probably close to the national norm in this respect.

As in our other study communities, evangelical Christian churches have very substantial numbers of Mexican members. Mexican immigrants reported belonging to the following churches in addition to the local Catholic church, St. Luke's: The Christian Center, El Nazareno, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Pentacostal Church, and Puerta de Fe. Almost one in five Mexican households (18% of the total) belong to these non-Catholic congregations. The Russian immigrants belong to the Slavic Orthodox Church.

## **Civic Engagement and Local Government Response to Community Change**

As in many rural communities throughout the U.S., there is relatively little sustained active involvement in local political life in Woodburn. Locally elected and appointed officials and committee members in municipal government, unpaid volunteers in Woodburn as in most rural communities, work diligently to address a range of substantive and technical issues typical of any organizational entity the size of Woodburn's city government. Discussion is oriented toward balancing competing concerns, compromise, and demonstrating responsiveness to diverse concerns. As in most communities, there are long-term underlying tensions. In Woodburn the most notable one is the tension between a large bloc of older, retired residents who are fiscally conservative, and the "mainstream" of the community which is more oriented toward community development, amenities, and efforts to enhance quality of life.

What is striking in Woodburn is that a number of prominent native-born individuals who are generally acknowledged and respected as "community leaders" recognized quite early on the growing diversity of Woodburn and moved forward proactively to seek ways in which community institutions could respond to rapid change. This level of commitment to the general goal of immigrant social and civic integration into community life provides a solid foundation for subsequent problem-solving and ongoing refinement of strategies to improve community life. Municipal government has played an important role in this but it is important to recognize that local educational institutions and the Woodburn business community have also played positive and important roles. There will,

inevitably, need to be ongoing refinement of strategies for addressing the issues related to community change but the reality is that the commitment to solutions rather than to identifying “wedge issues” is a crucial element in success—since there is the civic will to keep on trying to “get it right”.

Woodburn municipal government is led by a City Council which includes both Anglo and Mexican-American council members, most of whom are active in other areas of community life in addition to serving on the City Council. We discussed community issues and municipal government’s role in addressing them with four of the current City Council members and one former City Council member, as well as with the City Administrator.

There is an unspoken but pervasive orientation toward low-key collaborative problem-solving. Municipal government’s strategic agenda has no particularly high-profile grand initiatives but, instead, features multiple strands of coordinated common-sense initiatives (described in detail later in this report). A range of informed community observers and activists, representing different interest groups and perspectives, were remarkably consistent in characterizing the City Council and City Administrator’s work as focusing on systematic, steady progress to address “diversity issues”.

In describing city government’s efforts to respond to change, Mayor Kathy Figley reflected on her experience as a City Council member for more than a decade saying, “I’m amazed at how little controversy there’s been... We’ve not denied our problems”. She goes on to say, “We need decent streets and a safe community, we can agree on that”. A former Mayor, while noting that there was sometimes controversy about municipal government issues noted, “It takes time, it takes conflict. But we need to get beyond shoving...”

Our observation of a City Council meeting suggested Woodburn is quite typical of rural communities. There were 25 people, both young and old in the audience at this particular City Council meeting (June 24, 2002), but the majority were elderly—as the hearing is

about an application for a variance for a long-term care facility and the primary concern is traffic and a multitude of details about facility design. There are many opportunities for public input in this meeting and in all of the regular City Council meetings—but relatively few community residents have the time or energy to take advantage of them.

The most notable successes of municipal government have been in the areas of developing affordable housing and working toward residential integration, in downtown redevelopment, in initiating efforts to mediate social tensions between immigrants and native-born householders, and in supporting the library in its response to community diversity.

### ***The Pivotal Role of 2nd and 3rd Generation “Immigrants”***

In Woodburn, in line with the overall patterns of civic engagement reported in **Table 21**, we saw very little evidence of active involvement by 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrants in local political life. However, Generation 1.5 immigrants (Woodburn residents who were born abroad but raised in the U.S.) and 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation immigrants—Tejanos and immigrants who have grown up in Oregon have become active in local politics.

Elida Sifuentez, a middle-aged Tejana who is employed in the criminal justice system working with juvenile delinquents, was the first Latina to serve on the City Council. She grew up in Asherton, TX and moved to Woodburn as a young girl after her family migrated to Oregon, following the footsteps of extended family members who had arrived in 1955. Her father was a farm labor contractor in the era when Texas “troqueros” (literally, “truckers”) were primarily “crewleaders”, labor intermediaries concerned about “their people”, since crews typically consisted primarily of extended family members and neighbors (Nodin Valdes 1991 Griffith and Kissam 1995). Her mother was a community activist who, for example, was taking Hispanics to the polls while the family was still in Texas in the early 1960’s. Although she was working and raising her children, Elida got involved in community politics after a local policeman shot a Hispanic in 1984. She was appointed to the City Council in 1985 and then ran for the

seat two years later and since then has represented the same district. She stresses the collaborative efforts and long-term vision of the City Council saying, “We have a great team. We focus completely on the future....We’ve been on track for 15 years”.

Elida sees herself as a role model and, in fact, was one of the people who encouraged, Tony Veliz, a younger locally-born son of Texas farmworkers, to run for a City Council seat (which he won). She strongly supports efforts to involve youth of Mexican origin in politics and sees school involvement as a training ground for civic engagement. She points to MeCHA as a resource in this regard and was, when we talked in 2003, very excited that a Latino youth had been elected student body president at Woodburn High School. Immigrants and native-born residents of Woodburn see Elida as a cultural broker, very much in the middle of the road on most issues and, thus, in a position to work out compromises. This is a perspective she herself shares in a sense. She concluded our discussion with an eloquent summary of the underlying principle of mutual accommodation saying, “A community thrives when different groups recognize their interdependence”.

Tony Veliz, who was the second Latino City Council member during the period of this study, grew up in Oregon but is from a Tejano migrant family.<sup>113</sup> He is a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation “immigrant” whose family’s migration circuit included the vegetable harvest in south Florida and Michigan cherries. An important element in his civic activism is his father’s influence. His father, after finally getting a GED, went on to college and became a teacher and taught in one of the schools that emerged out of a period of Chicano activism in the late 1960’s and 1970’s. This school, the Colegio Cesar Chavez, was begun in Mt. Angel (about 15 miles from Woodburn) and, like many similar efforts to develop popular education programs, survived for a few years but then was forced to close.<sup>114</sup> Anthony followed in his father’s footsteps educationally, going first to Chemeketa College in

---

<sup>113</sup> He is no longer on the City Council or the School Board.

<sup>114</sup> These popular education initiatives very strongly emphasized a Chicano re-creation of Mexican tradition (which is, in many respects, more accurate than the prevailing one in Mexico). Some of these educational institutions were defined as *calmecacs*, emphasizing indigenous traditions. These institutions strongly

Salem and then to Portland State University where he graduated with a degree in marketing. With his new degree he moved into the Community Relations department of Nike; but then returned to education, working as an administrator at Chemeketa College on a program to improve access to higher education. In addition to being on the City Council in 2003 when we interviewed him, he served on the Woodburn School Board. Like Elida Sifuentez, Veliz is oriented toward collaboration, not toward confrontation as well as toward long-term strategies to build Latino civic engagement. For Veliz, priorities in this area include leadership programs, support for organizations such as MeCHA which build civic engagement among high school students, and overall improvements in access to education.

The civic involvement of another local Tejano family, and particularly, Teo Parra, one of ten siblings provides a vivid contrast to the civic strategies and personal style of Elida Sifuentez and Anthony Veliz. The Parra brothers and sisters grew up in a migrant farmworker family which eventually settled in the Willamette Valley. Teo Parra, who works for the Oregon Fish and Game Department is a community activist involved in education issues and her brother, Leonardo Parra, owner of a barber shop and hair salon is the treasurer of La Voz Hispana, a grassroots community organization engaged in a range of advocacy efforts.

The Parra family is originally from Hualahuises, Nuevo Leon, near Monterrey. Like many Tejano families of this era (and, in fact, some contemporary Mexican immigrant families), the family's life was somewhat transnational. Teo, for example, was born in Mexico although her sister was born in Arizona. The siblings we have talked to are exquisitely bilingual—although many Tejanos find themselves limited to familiar range of day to day topics when speaking Spanish. Teo remembers growing up and working in the fields as a child in California, Idaho, and Washington, traditional destinations for Texan family crews on the northwestern migrant circuit, but, also, Nevada and Arizona.

---

emphasized the development of community leadership and were, in fact, the venue where many middle-aged contemporary civic leaders first developed leadership/activist skills (Kissam 2002).

Teo is a career woman in her late '40's who is juggling a demanding schedule as a state real estate specialist, running a private real estate business specializing in helping Mexican-origin families purchase homes, and raising a teenage daughter, as well as pursuing a strategic process of advocacy to pressure the Woodburn school system to do a better job of serving Latino students. Unlike Sifuentez and Veliz, she is confrontational. Reflecting on her work on educational equity issues when we talked to her in 2002 she said, "I was a kitten for 5 years, I showed my claws in November [when she got involved in the education issues she was then addressing]".

While Veliz, as a school board member, in talking about the status of education focused on the considerable successes the District has had, Parra focused on the distance still to go. Referring to student performance in relation to state guidelines Teo told us "We have a 42% failure rate...what are we getting for our money?" Having gone to law school, and dropping out to earn a living working as an Internal Revenue Service auditor, she is a formidable opponent to school administrators, given her facility in reviewing planning documents, reports, and management memos, the stuff of nitty-gritty political activism. For example, for a presentation she made to the school board in Spring, 2002, called "A Parent's View" she researched school documents to find each administrators' salary and included this information in a handout calling for school accountability. As part of her advocacy for bilingual education, she notes the need to understand the global economy and prepare students to compete successfully in an increasingly complex, multi-cultural business environment.

Teo has a clear view of how her personal civic involvement fits into the overall scheme of things in Woodburn; she told us, "It's a duty for all of us who are bilingual to speak up! When you know how to play the game, you need to". She goes on to talk about her informal social interactions with some of the Mexicanas in the neighborhood, urging them to assert themselves with their husbands, since now women as well as men work to support their families. While she is critical of traditional Mexicanos in terms of gender relations, she is also critical of those among her fellow Tejanos and Tejanas who refuse to acknowledge their cultural heritage, for example, those who refer to Mexican immigrants

as “mojos” (“wets” although the correct term would be *mojados*). Her view is that a top priority for Latino activists in the community is to overcome internal divisions and advocate as a unified group to assure adequate public sector responses to their needs. While community activists themselves feel strongly about the pros and cons of different modes of civic involvement, the reality is that healthy dialogue and progress benefit from both controversy and collaboration, from recognition of successes and criticism of failures to move forward faster or more effectively. The pivotal role of the Tejanas and Tejanos in Woodburn and other rural communities where Texas migrant farmworkers settled out is that their personal experience bridges two cultures, providing them with extraordinarily rich stores of “bridging social capital” stemming from their facility in navigating within the frame of reference of two disparate cultures, from their communication skills, and from their personal social networks.

### ***PCUN--From Labor Organizing to Latino Political Participation***

Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) is a nationally-recognized local labor organizing group.<sup>115</sup> Begun in 1985 as a service-oriented organization to help farmworkers deal with immigration issues, it has steadily grown in size, influence, and sophistication. It is now the largest Latino organization in Oregon with about 4,500 members. PCUN is one of a new generation of labor and community organizing groups which is versatile in using a wide range of tactics to pursue its objectives. Rather than engaging in purely adversarial interactions, for example, PCUN has worked cooperatively with the Oregon Bureau of Labor (BOLI) to identify illegal working conditions, document them, and change them. While its central focus remains farmworker well-being, it is now a multi-issue advocacy group addressing a range of policy and political issues of importance to Latino immigrants in Oregon—most importantly immigration reform. In Woodburn, as in other rural immigrant communities some of the key “hot button” issues are ones relating to immigration status (e.g. passage of the DREAM Act, AgJobs or other immigration reform legislation which provide a

---

<sup>115</sup> See **Pursuing Democracy’s Promise: Newcomer Civic Participation in America**, Grantmakers Concerned About Immigrants and Refugees, 2005.

pathway to citizenship), wage related-issues determined at the state level (e.g. minimum wage legislation) or social program issues under federal-state-county jurisdiction (e.g. Migrant Education, bilingual education, Food Stamps, WIC). Located in a large church two blocks from Woodburn's central plaza, PCUN is now a major community institution. During several of our visits to Woodburn, a large movie-style marquee (similar to those used now by many churches) focused attention on the national Immigrant Freedom Rides, a national campaign for immigration reform.

Ramon Ramirez, a Mexican-American who is PCUN's President, is recognized nationally as an immigrant rights activist and is now a significant force in state politics. He is an effective advocate for farmworkers despite the fact that PCUN has only had modest successes in increasing farmworkers' earnings over the years—in large measure because of the precarious economic situation of local agriculture, particularly strawberry and cane berry producers. Nonetheless, in an era when labor union membership has been in steady decline, even PCUN's modest victories, the most notable being success in a labor dispute with NORPAC, has been impressive.

Although PCUN provides a strong organizational framework for sociopolitical engagement and, in fact, has established a robust affiliational network, its primary orientation is not toward local community issues but, rather, toward overall advocacy regarding farmworkers' and Mexican immigrants' rights. This reflects the priorities of Mexican immigrants in Woodburn. As we have discovered in our research on immigrant civic engagement in California's Central Valley (Kissam and Jeter, 2000; Kissam 2002), the often-cited maxim that "All politics is local" does not necessarily apply to immigrants—because so many critical issues that affect their lives are determined at the federal or state level. In Woodburn, as in other rural immigrant communities, the "hot button" issues are ones relating to immigrant status (e.g. passage of the DREAM Act, AgJobs or other immigration reform legislation), wage-related issues determined at the state level (e.g. minimum wage legislation) or social program issues under federal-state-county jurisdiction (e.g. Migrant Education, bilingual education, Food Stamps, WIC).

What the PCUN work does accomplish in terms of contributions to immigrant civic engagement is build self-confidence that activism can make a difference—providing the “Si se puede!” element of community organizing work. How exactly these efforts will play out in the future is not yet certain but the eventual impact of farm labor organizing on immigrant civic engagement is likely to be dramatic. For example, a Triqui farmworker, Calixto Lopez Morales, who first become involved with PCUN as a young teenager, is now one of a medium-size group of union activists. As a young adult, he now is moving toward binational civic engagement, participating both in advocacy/political campaigns of MULT (Movimiento Unido de Liberacion Triqui) in Oaxaca and in PCUN’s labor organizing in Oregon. Calixto is studying English and, whenever he has a chance, tries to practice his English with local residents (who he laughingly says are sometimes taken aback when he goes up to talk to them). While his focus in Oregon is on efforts to gain amnesty for migrants (so many of whom are of indigenous origin) his civic involvement in Mexico includes a focus on access to education for students from remote rural areas such as his hometown, Metates.

There is also a local Latino organization oriented toward addressing civic issues, Voz Hispana (which was founded by PCUN members). It has been involved episodically in issues where it has achieved a high civic profile but it has not yet established a stable organizational presence among Woodburn’s Mexican immigrants.

However, although progress has been slow, Voz Hispana is continuing to work systematically to build immigrant civic engagement. Community organizer, Larry Kleinman, told us when we interviewed him in 2002 that there had that year been 26 home meetings with about 75 participants all in all. Community activist, Juan Argumedo, who has been involved with Voz Hispana since its inception in 1997, is teaching both a Spanish-language literacy course and an English language/civics course for interested immigrants affiliated with PCUN or Voz Hispana. Voz Hispana also has a “Comite de Estudio y Sugerencias” (Study and Recommendations Committee) which is the locus for issue-oriented advocacy. Voz Hispana also has a “Comité de Estudio y Sugerencias”

(Study and Recommendations Committee) which is the locus for issue-oriented advocacy on local issues.

Not surprisingly, the most serious local public controversy (or at least the most visible one) in recent years emerged in the context of naming a new school. Mexican-American activists wanted to name at least one of two new proposed middle schools in Woodburn “Cesar Chavez” school in recognition of Chavez’s role as an icon of Mexican-American civil rights while traditionalists (particularly Russian immigrants who, presumably, felt slighted by attention to only one of several groups in the community) felt this name would be “inflammatory”. After heated controversy, the traditionalists won this battle. The school board, ironically, then named one of the two schools “Heritage” and the other “Valor”.<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately, this public attention to iconography didn’t address any substantive issue about education.

However, another education-related controversy, pitting the Voz Hispana organization against the school board did relate to substantive issues. The initial issue which gave rise to the conflict stemmed from disparity in pay between bilingual instructional aides who bore most of the brunt of dealing with classroom issues involved in integrating limited-English newly-arriving students into the U.S. school system and the predominantly English-speaking teachers. However, this conflict subsequently expanded further to address issues of instructional quality and the District’s spending on administrative staff and instructional staff.

### ***Migrant Service Providers and Emerging Civic Action Networks among Mexican Indigenous immigrants***

The migration networks based in the Sierra Mixteca of Oaxaca—primarily in Mixtec villages, but also in adjacent Triqui communities, and other migrant-sending areas of Oaxaca such as the predominantly Zapotec Ejutla district which send migrant workers farmwork circuits along the Pacific Seaboard have led to growth of regionally-based

---

<sup>116</sup> As a compromise, one of the school libraries was named after Chavez.

indigenous community organizing. Although these indigenous ethnic groups experience a range of ethnic and economic tensions in their home communities, their collective experience as migrant farmworkers has forged new “bridging” linkages and a growing sense of collective identity as “indigenous peoples” and as residents of far-flung networks where individual local physical communities of residence seem more like neighborhoods than distinct venues of social and civic life.

What is unusual about the configuration of this social universe and the organizational initiatives undertaken in response to it is that the relationships between two formal, established non-profit legal services programs (California Rural Legal Assistance and Oregon Law Center) serving migrant farmworkers played a significant role in nurturing the development of the indigenous organizations in Woodburn and the Willamette Valley. At the same time, the Mixtec villages which send migrants to Woodburn have a long history of migration to Baja California where, in the 1980’s, several outstanding grassroots labor organizers emerged and influenced a generation of migrant farmworkers.<sup>117</sup>

### ***Oregon Law Center—An Incubator for Community Organization***

Within the legal services community there has been, over the past two decades, intense debate about the role and proper scope of activities for programs providing legal services to low-income persons. Based on strategic and practical considerations, many programs providing legal services to migrant farmworkers have typically seen their organizational role as being one which transcends legal representation and which necessarily involves “system change” including efforts to nurture the growth of affiliational networks and community-based organizations which will facilitate low-income community members’ advocating for themselves. Oregon Law Center, which shares this community-building perspective has been active in nurturing the development of immigrant activism and community-based organizations in Woodburn.

---

<sup>117</sup> One of the best-known and influential of these community organizers and activists, Moises Cruz, was assassinated in 2006 in his home state of Oaxaca.

The Oregon Law Center recognized, early on in the early 1990's, as had PCUN, that an increasing number of migrant farmworkers coming to the area were from Oaxacan indigenous community and that comprehensive services to this farmworker population would need to include attention to the ethnic and linguistic minorities among Mexican immigrants. The result of several years of discussion, including discussion with management and community workers involved in CRLA's California Indigenous Legal Services Project and the Frente Indigena Oaxaqueno Binacional's court interpreter program was the Oregon Law Center's Indigenous Project. An extraordinary accomplishment is that the Oregon Law Center approached a local Native American indigenous group and secured, based on a recognition of commonalities between local North American indigenous tribes and the Mexican indigenous communities, a substantial commitment of funding from the local tribal organization.

The Oregon Law Center's Indigenous Farmworker Project located in Woodburn provides community education to Oregon's indigenous farmworkers by visiting labor camps, presenting information at workshops for workers, and presenting information through radio announcements (in Spanish, Mixteco Alto, Mixteco Bajo, and Triqui) and call-in shows, and by distributing information about farmworkers' legal rights in employment through cassettes in Spanish, Mixteco Alto, Mixteco Bajo, Triqui (Copala and Itunyoso), and Zapoteco (San Juan Coatecas Altas-Ejutla de Crespo). Staff have spoken with almost 10,000 indigenous farmworkers in Oregon over Begun in 2002, by 2005 the project had three Mixteco community outreach workers , a coordinator of the Sexual Harassment Project , and coordinator of the Indigenous Farmworker Project, and attorney. The Woodburn office where it is based, serves as a community center of sorts, where indigenous workers call to ask for community referrals, as well as stop by to pick up the latest edition of El Oaxaqueño, a newspaper published in California.

The project has also engaged in path-breaking work to break the communication barrier so many indigenous farmworkers encounter in dealing with the many institutions they have to interact with on a regular basis such as schools, hospitals, doctors' and dentists' offices, at social service agencies, and in courts. In collaboration with the

Oregon Judicial Department, Indigenous Farmworker Project staff and staff of the Oregon Judicial Department provide interpreter trainings to indigenous speakers. So far, they have provided interpreter training to over thirty people who speak Akateco, Kanjobal, Q' uiche, and Mam (Maya languages spoken by Guatemalan indigenous farmworkers) as well as indigenous languages of Mexico including Mixteco Alto (a variety of communities), Mixteco Bajo (a variety of communities), Nahuatl, Poqochi, P' urepecha, Triqui (Copala and Itunyonso), and Zapoteco (Ocotlan de Morelos). Over one-third have interpreted in Oregon's courts and in 2006 trainings for medical translation began. Indigenous Farmworker Project staff also provide cultural competency trainings to service providers (including medical clinics, social service and governmental agencies, coalitions, and other non-profit groups) so that these groups can provide more effective services to indigenous populations.

In 2004, the Indigenous Farmworker Project of the Oregon Law Center partnered with PCUN and SALUD Medical Center in Woodburn, Oregon (additional partners include Portland State University, and the Farmworker Justice Fund, Inc) to develop a project to address the occupational safety and health needs of indigenous farmworkers in Oregon. The goal of this four-year project is to develop innovative and greatly needed methods to improve the capacity of indigenous migrant farmworkers to understand the hazards associated with agricultural work and increase their access to economic, health and social services. To address a challenging issue that has gone long neglected in Oregon and many other states, the Indigenous Farmworker Project received a grant to start a project to address sexual harassment and assault at the workplace. The Sexual Harassment program of the Indigenous Farmworker Project (*El Proyecto en Contra del Acoso Sexual en el Campo*) began in June 2005. This project addresses the issues of sexual harassment and sexual assault farmworkers face in order to obtain employment, retain employment, and/or receive a better wage in agricultural work.

### ***OCIMO—An Emerging Network***

In 2004, the basis for ethnically-based organizing of indigenous Mexican migrants in Oregon was broadened with the formation of Organización de Comunidades Indígenas Migrantes Oaxaqueños (OCIMO, Organization of Oaxacan Indigenous Migrant Communities). OCIMO identifies itself as a coalition of organizations and individuals from the state of Oaxaca that focuses on the problems encountered by indigenous migrants in the state of Oregon. In September of 2004, OCIMO opened up an office in Salem in a ceremony attended by more than 150 people from a wide range of organizations. PCUN has been supportive of OCIMO and maintains a close relationship with its Board of Directors. The leadership of OCIMO includes two Mixtec women, one of whom works with PCUN. As of 2005, OCIMO's program was focused primarily on indigenous rights and promoting indigenous women's participation at cultural events. Its active volunteer base included thirty to forty men and women from primarily Mixtec communities such as Santa Maria Tindú, San Juan Cahuayaxi, Tlaxiaco, Santa Rosa Caxtlahuaca, and San Juan Mixtepec.

### **Local Business Involvement in Woodburn Civic Life**

Almost two-thirds (60%) of the Woodburn Community Survey respondents knew of businesses "helping out" in the community in one way or another. However, many more native-born heads of household (86%) than immigrant heads of household (44%) had an idea about the kinds of businesses involved in civic life and what their contributions were. We are not aware of good benchmarks regarding reasonable expectations in communities such as Woodburn—but the level of business involvement in Woodburn community life is much higher, for example, than in our California community case study where less than one out of five residents knew of businesses doing anything to help the community.

Wal-Mart and Safeway were the local businesses with the highest profile with respect to community involvement but a range of small businesses, managed by native-born

residents (e.g. Abbey's Pizza, the local bank) or by immigrants (e.g. Salvador's Market, Mexico Lindo) were also recognized for their civic involvement. Interestingly, Mexican immigrants were aware of the charitable activities of both mainstream local businesses and immigrant-owned ones but native-born residents were not generally aware of the community contributions made by the leading Mexican businesses such as Salvador's Market.

## **Community Responses to Current Challenges**

To understand community responses to change, including the impacts of immigration but, also, a range of other developments it is necessary to remember that “community strategies” consist of a mix of actions by formal organizational entities, semi-formal ones, as well as informal changes in interactions among groups, and individuals.

The strengths in Woodburn's response to immigration stem, in large measure, from a willingness to look at the human dimensions of larger social phenomena. In this section we review formal responses by local institutions and organizations—municipal government, the public school system, the community college system, and churches---but also highlight some of the individual responses to “community needs”. A good example of Woodburn's responsiveness and the role of individual community leaders is the following. An elderly woman, an immigrant from Michoacan, Dona Teresa, who had formerly worked in farmwork, began to support herself by selling tamales in the local square.<sup>118</sup> Her tamale cart was very popular so it was eventually and inevitably noticed that she was engaged in conducting a small business without a business license. The Woodburn City Manager directed his staff to help her individually with the process of submitting a small business license application and a local retailer, the manager of “Linda's Furniture”, also on the square, donated the \$100 license fee. Quickly and smoothly, the process went forward and the elderly woman was, to her delight, presented with an official business permit.

---

<sup>118</sup> Pseudonym, Anna Garcia—multiple conversations, 2002-2004.

Woodburn's City Administrator's alternative response to strict adherence to by-the-book enforcement of ordinances had several positive impacts. One was that Dona Teresa (who was probably not likely to be eligible for Social Security since farmworkers were usually paid in cash until the 1970's and whose earnings records were usually garbled due to use of "borrowed" social security numbers) supports herself; the other, of course, is that she provides a service greatly appreciated by the community.

### **Noteworthy Community Initiatives**

Our Woodburn community case study revealed several successful initiatives in Woodburn which have made significant contributions to addressing the ongoing challenge of managing the impacts of immigration. As is usual in such cases, virtually all these efforts involved multiple groups and individuals and accounts vary as to which group's efforts make the greatest contribution. Some of these have been long-term and expensive (e.g. building farmworker housing), others short-term and expensive (e.g. developing the downtown plaza) and other not at all expensive (e.g. changes in administrative procedure to allow farmworkers to pay tickets on an installment plan).

#### ***Construction of Affordable Housing for Farmworkers***

One of the long-term trends which has significantly changed the nature of rural communities with high levels of immigration is that since the 1970's, most agricultural producers have ceased to provide housing for farmworkers. The practice of providing housing for farmworkers has traditionally been one element in agricultural producers' worker recruitment strategies—especially in "upstream migrant areas" such as Woodburn where migrants may work only 2-3 months. While, in fact, some local Woodburn farmers and labor contractors continue to provide housing for farmworkers, there is less

and less willingness to house family crews and the quality of on-farm housing varies greatly.<sup>119</sup>

While, from time to time, local or state government has invested in building public housing for farmworkers, most farmworker housing is now built by non-profit housing groups and on-farm employer-owned housing for farmworkers meets only a small fraction of housing needs. Consequently, agribusiness demand for seasonal labor consistently leads to crowded, sub-standard housing.

More than a decade ago (in 1990), an offshoot of PCUN became the Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC). In 1992, the group began efforts to build farmworker housing in Woodburn. Where the Woodburn story diverges from that of other communities is that the City of Woodburn, despite a measure of local opposition, eventually encouraged the project and provided a significant amount of local funding. The group's initial "Nuevo Amanecer" low-income rental housing project consisted of 50 single-family homes, completed in 1994. In 1997, a smaller development of 12 housing units, La Esperanza, located in downtown Woodburn where most immigrants are concentrated, was completed. Then in 1999, another 43 units of housing were completed at the Nuevo Amanecer site. In 2002, the Villa del Sol housing project of housing for sale to low-income homeowners was completed. These projects have won numerous awards

The approach taken by FHDC is exemplary in that the effort has been to develop projects which go beyond provision of housing to address multiple issues in an integrated way. FHDC, for example, is sponsoring tenant leadership classes as part of efforts to assure participation in managing the La Esperanza housing and classes to certify child-care

---

<sup>119</sup> Although agricultural employers in the Pacific Northwest traditionally provided on-farm housing for migrant workers (because this is an "upstream area" where workers had not settled in the past), the 2003-2004 National Agricultural Worker Survey data shows that only 8% of the seasonal agricultural worker in the Northwest receive free housing from their employer (usually on-farm) and that another 5% receives on-housing from their employer for which they pay rent.

providers. In 2003, the group completed a community center, the Cipriano Ferrell Center, located at the La Esperanza housing site. The Center is available for community meetings, adult education classes, and celebrations. It also provides two classrooms for day care, Head Start, and after-school programs. The availability of this sort of facility is important as part of overall efforts to nurture community dialogue. During our 2003 field research in Woodburn, for example, we saw notices in Spanish announcing a meeting for parents, school officials, and police to talk together about collaborative efforts against drug-dealing and drug use. We also observed children in the after-school program actively engaged in (and enjoying) the program's combination of school work and recreational activity.

FHDC's Executive Director, Roberto Franco, explained that one of the essentials for success is coalition building. The former Woodburn mayor, Richard Jennings, had been brought on board as a supporter and the City of Woodburn helped secure at least \$600,000 in funding. Where, in many communities, local civic groups routinely oppose farmworker housing with a variety of NIMBY "not in my backyard" arguments, La Esperanza supporters included the local Chamber of Commerce, a local bank president, Don Judson, and volunteers included a current City Council member and other business leaders. A local realtor who had been active in civic affairs, not the sort of person usually in support of farmworker housing, observed that there had indeed been some opposition to the La Esperanza project but that, in fact, the opposition was from "outsiders", not from people living in Woodburn. Whether or not this was actually the case, the important recognition is that, as a community, diverse groups in Woodburn worked actively to advance an effort to address a typical challenge associated with immigration and that the community consensus is to support this sort of project as a strategic strand in efforts toward social integration of immigrants into community life.

### ***Liaison Services to Improve Immigrant-Native-Born Relations***

In May, 2002, Woodburn created a new position for a "Community Relations Officer" to serve as a liaison between immigrants and native-born Woodburn residents. The position

was filled by a Mexican immigrant, a lawyer by training, who had lived for more than a decade in Woodburn, Javier Meza-Perfecto. When we first talked with him, a month after he had begun his job, he was engaged in his first assignment, developing a videotape to explain to Mexican immigrants a new city noise ordinance that had been developed in response to neighbors complaints about loud (Mexican) parties. He was, at that point, also charged with helping Mexican immigrants who came to Municipal Court understand the charges against them. Over time, his job has expanded to include a growing range of efforts to support social integration, including work with the local Downtown Association toward improving the area around the square (probably the primary source of social tension in the town), and, then publication of a quarterly bilingual newsletter, which is explicitly designed to provide Mexican immigrants with civic orientation. A recent issue (July-September, 2004), for example, explained how the city Police Department worked, how to start a small business, and how the Municipal Court system works. The format also includes a profile of a bilingual City worker and announcements of some upcoming events. Publication costs are supported in part by local retailers' advertising.

It is not clear if Meza-Perfecto was involved or whether the initiative was that of City Administrator, John Brown, but within a year, the City of Woodburn had come up with a minor, but extraordinarily culturally responsive solution to the common problem of Mexican immigrants not paying fine for traffic tickets issued by the Police Department. The City simply decided to negotiate arrangements with farmworker who had received a ticket to pay the ticket on an installment basis, making it possible to get together the cash to pay the fine. A city clerk in the Traffic Department explained that this is a "win-win" situation since the City had not, in fact, usually been able to secure payment of tickets in the past and that, with the new provisions, drivers who received tickets were able to avoid escalation in their fines and eventual problems with their driving records.

### *Proactive Efforts to Recruit Bilingual/ Bicultural Police Officers*

Because local police departments are inevitably involved in a range of highly stressful situations, including responses to domestic violence, traffic accidents, public drunkenness, as well as other law enforcement responsibilities, communication skills and cultural competence are key issues.

Woodburn's proactive effort to change the face of its Police Department to "mirror the community" is an important one. This response is, of course, not an innovation, but simply good organizational management as part of efforts to serve one's "customers". What is extraordinary in Woodburn is the degree of organizational commitment to the goal. Scott Russell, who had recently become the Chief of Police in Woodburn after having moved to Woodburn and joined the department in 1988 stressed his personal commitment to a strategy which had been articulated by the City Council and City Administrator-- moving forward to assure that the composition of the Police Department mirrors the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of the community.

One-third of the police force in 2003 was Hispanic and the City of Woodburn was then seeking to hire three additional Hispanic police officers. The City is offering an additional 7% in pay to bilingual officers in recognition of their language skills, but Russell also believes that in addition to changing the composition of the police force, an important complementary strategy is to conduct extensive outreach into the community to strengthen community policing efforts and build community recognition of the Department's willingness to be responsive.<sup>120</sup> Four of the Anglo police officers speak at least some Spanish and two speak Russian. This is not yet quite "a mirror" of the community but it represents good progress.

Because it has Spanish-speaking personnel, the Department can also hold frequent neighborhood meetings in Spanish—in the Nuevo Amanecer and La Esperanza projects

---

<sup>120</sup> Lynn Stephen interview, September 15, 2003.

and other locales such as some local apartment complexes where immigrants are concentrated. A bilingual officer also holds orientation classes at the Woodburn High School about how police in Woodburn function.

The Police Department also focused proactively on avoiding the development of local gangs, although in the early 1990's one family who had arrived in Woodburn tried to start a local chapter of the LA "Hobbs 13" gang. Around this time, another family attempted to start a local chapter of the "18<sup>th</sup> Street" gang. Targeted detective work, appears to have kept these gangs from getting a foothold in the community.

A final facet of the Police Department's commitment to cultural responsiveness is that it does not get involved in responding to local complaints about immigrants using phony documents—seeing that area of enforcement as a responsibility of the USCIS. Police Chief, Russell also notes that the Marion County District Attorney's office will not prosecute for this and that even the BCIS focused primarily on vendors selling large numbers of fraudulent documents. Giving low priority to the victimless crime of trafficking in documents allows the police to focus instead on drug dealing, with top priority being to crack down on methedrene sales (which the Police Chief observes is the primary driver behind property crime). Woodburn has essentially reached a consensus in this area too that immigration is not a community problem but that drug-related crime, property crime, and violence are problems which affect immigrants and native-born populations alike.

### ***Embracing Multi-Lingualism***

Diverse local institutions in Woodburn are clearly embracing multi-lingualism. This recognition, acceptance, and response to change facilitates the community's adaptation to the wide range of changes associated with the new pluralism in rural life in the Willamette Valley.

## The Woodburn Public Library

The Woodburn Public Library has clearly been a community leader in embracing multilingualism. The library was the community institution most often mentioned by both native-born and immigrant town residents as doing a good job; at the same time, there were virtually no complaints about it.

The library has devoted large sections of its facility to materials in Spanish and Russian. Materials include, in addition to practical “how-to” books and manuals likely to have wide appeal, books and publications for children and youth. The library recognizes and acknowledges the fact that the Mexican immigrant population in town, despite their characteristically low levels of schooling, are engaged in keeping up with news and public affairs—in their home country and in the U.S. Materials include a good selection of periodicals: several newspapers and magazines. Despite its considerable success in this area, the library’s top priority is to further expand its collections of materials in Spanish.

An important element in embracing multilingualism is general openness and accessibility. The fact that the library is located diagonally across the street from Woodburn’s central plaza is important. Mexican immigrants, many of whom do not have a car, can get to the library easily. This is especially important for women with children who can walk to the library. The library’s Assistant Director explained its philosophy as “trying to make the library an experience where people don’t have to jump through hoops”. A number of local residents, both immigrants and native-born residents, spoke enthusiastically about the library’s orientation program to computer use. Unfortunately, despite strong demand there are not currently funds (or space) to expand this program. Like other libraries, the Woodburn Public Library has story programs for young children; one in Spanish and two in English.

## The Woodburn Unified School District

The local school district is confronted on a daily basis with the challenges of responding to immigration. The Superintendent estimated enrollment growth, stemming primarily from the shifting demographics of the community, as about 5% per year—a very high rate of growth. The school system classifies about 70% of its students as “English-language learners”.

The extent to which the Woodburn K-12 school system has embraced bilingual education might not be surprising—but in the context of California’s ill-advised adoption of a voter initiative, Proposition 227, banning bilingual education it is necessary to highlight the obvious need for bilingual education as a tool for integrating immigrant children into U.S. social, economic, and political life. The Woodburn schools rely both on transitional English and native-language instructional methods. Reportedly, the school is recognized within the state of Oregon as a leader and source of expertise in efforts to respond to the needs of immigrant children. It has, for example, developed its own curriculum framework—partially in response to the service needs of immigrant children.

The school district’s adoption of dual immersion instruction as the primary mode of language-learning has important practical implications in the short-run and for the future. The dual immersion model has many benefits, among them that it encourages children to help each other in language-learning and builds recognition among native-born English-speaking children about the difficulties of learning a foreign language. At the same time that this approach contributes to the emergence of a multi-lingual pluralistic society in the local community it lays the foundation for future civic collaboration. It is an excellent example of a practical way in which a school system such as Woodburn’s which recognizes its civic role as well as its educational role can contribute to all facets of community life.

The school system has recognized one of the very important factors in developing effective responses to the influx of immigrant newcomers—that the largest influx of

English-language learners is at the middle school level. Thus, the standard approach used in many schools in which it is assumed the children of immigrants may enter school with limited or no English but then progress step-by-step through their primary is not appropriate—since the most critical challenge is to help the newly-arrived older children (since the younger U.S.-born children in immigrant households have usually begun to acquire English even before they enter school).

The school has responded well to this challenge and been proactive in developing its own approach.. For example, in some classes, high school subjects are taught in Spanish. However, Walt Blomberg, the Superintendent, acknowledges the difficulties the schools are having in finding enough bilingual staff. Under the provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act, he notes that he sometimes has to tell parents their children’s teachers are not “highly qualified” in bilingual instruction. While the school system is aware of the influx of Oaxacan immigrants, they do not have any resources for addressing the needs of Mixtec, Triqui, Zapotec or other children from indigenous communities who may be limited in Spanish.

The school system is now working to increase immigrant parents’ involvement. This can be seen as an effort analogous to the library’s openness and, at the same time, as a practical priority for nurturing student achievement. The school district been wise in recruiting a community outreach worker/parent liaison who was himself a civically-engaged parent. Where Woodburn is unusual is that it is working particularly closely with community-based groups, FHDC at Nuevo Amanecer, PCUN, and its offshoot, Voz Hispana. One important element in the school system’s efforts to increase immigrant parents’ involvement in their children’s schooling is a plan to have school board meetings include simultaneous interpretation.

From the Superintendent’s perspective, poverty is as big a challenge as limited English in terms of the school system’s efforts to serve its students. About 90% of the District’s children qualify for the free-reduced price lunch program, making the Woodburn school population one of the most educationally disadvantaged in the state.

## The Community College System: Chemeketa College—Woodburn Campus

One of the advantages of Woodburn’s compact downtown is that the local community college campus is very easily accessible to students who do not have cars. Located on the east side of the train tracks which are the main north-south axis of Woodburn, the campus is new multi-story building offering a wide range of adult learning opportunities (facilitated by the fact that in Oregon adult education programs are operated by the community college system rather than by the K-12 school system).<sup>121</sup> This very positive (and unusual) development stems from the fact that the community college system conducted community forums in 1996 and found strong public support for a downtown campus and subsequently passed a \$14 million bond measure to fund construction of the new facility.

Chemeketa College—Woodburn offers four levels of ESL instruction. The Director estimates they serve about 2,500 students a year.<sup>122</sup> This estimate is consistent with the findings of our community survey which showed that one-third (34%) of the immigrant heads of household had gone to a community college course. This is an extraordinary level of support for learning English. The Director feels the program is improving as they gain more experience. For example, he noted that there is better student retention through successive levels of ESL and, thus, ESL enrollment is less of a “pyramid” than it was in the past.<sup>123</sup>

As part of its partnership with the Mid-Willamette Valley Workforce Network, Chemeketa College’s course offerings in basic computer literacy training. The college

---

<sup>121</sup> In most states, primary responsibility for adult education is delegated to local school districts. However, community college operation of adult education programs tends to improve the linkages between basic skills development and subsequent vocational training.

<sup>122</sup> We assume that the overall universe of need for ESL is about 8,000-9,000 persons since about two out of five local heads of household is limited in English.

<sup>123</sup> Student attrition is a serious problem affecting the efficiency of most adult education programs, especially ESL. Discouraged students drop out and seldom return. In California, for example, student attrition rates are close to 50%.

also receives funding as a “community technology center”. Reportedly, it has had success in developing computer literacy even for limited-English students.

We interviewed a former community college student, Margarita, who is now part of the staff at the college’s One Stop Resource Center. As a former farmworker and English-language learner she is an ideal staff person to make services accessible to Mexican immigrants. She has now been in Woodburn for 20 years. In 1986, five years after she arrived in Woodburn, she enrolled in ESL<sup>124</sup>. She says she learned English in one year. Whether or not she was actually fully proficient in English at that point, her English is now excellent. Her current job as a One-Stop staffer is to help clients learn to use computers, access the Internet, assess their own job skills and develop skills development plans, and prepare their resumes. Margarita is a good example of the importance of involving immigrants themselves in providing services to newcomers. She explains to her Mexican immigrant clients that bilingualism gives them real advantages in the labor market. She observes, for example, that nurseries (the fastest growing segment of local agricultural production) are particularly interested in potential employees’ English-language ability.

Margarita’s involvement goes well beyond her formal job description. For example, she regularly urges immigrants to get civically involved, telling them, “If someone doesn’t speak up, God doesn’t hear them”. Although she is herself a mestiza from Guadalajara, she urges newly-arriving indigenous migrants (she mentions Mixtecos and “Tarascos”—Purepecha speakers) to be sure to try to preserve their culture.

---

<sup>124</sup> The legalization provisions of IRCA required immigrants who were adjusting their status under Section 245 (“pre-1982” legalization applicants) to demonstrate satisfactory progress in learning English. While SAW’s (“Seasonal Agricultural Workers” legalizing under Section 210) were exempt from this requirement, the ramp-up in 1987 to offer ESL classes throughout the country spurred extensive enrollment. This provision of the legislation, thus, represented a crude but useful proactive effort toward facilitating the social integration of immigrants.

## Downtown Revitalization—The Woodburn Plaza

As discussed previously, the state of Woodburn's central plaza had emerged in the late 1990's as a civic issue due to the fact that the plaza had, on the one hand, a number of thriving small businesses catering to Mexican immigrant families but, also, large numbers of young Mexican immigrant men congregating to visit and drink coffee and a good deal of dealing in counterfeited immigration documents, drugs, and, from time to time, public drunkenness. Some native-born local residents saw the plaza as evidence of the negative consequences of immigration while even immigrants saw it as a place where women and families might feel uncomfortable. Some in the community, immigrants, native-born families, and community leaders such as the local priest believed that the plaza was a gathering-place for prostitutes; however, over several years of observations we did not see this.<sup>125</sup>

Because the character of the plaza was a concern of both native-born and immigrant Woodburn residents, resulted in ongoing pressure on the Police Department to make arrests—although it appeared that this would do little to stop the problems. Given the potential divisiveness in addressing this problem, it is remarkable that a broad coalition developed an innovative solution—to redevelop the central area, eliminating the parking lot, installing a gazebo to make the area a more attractive family-oriented area, and sponsoring more community events in the plaza so that it would evolve into a welcoming public space, instead of being an eyesore. The coalition of supporters for the downtown plaza redevelopment project was broad, including the City Administrator, the Police Chief, Mark Wilk, a leading immigrant advocate, Pete McCallum, a long-time community leader and former high school principal, and a newly-developed Downtown Association of businesses including immigrant and native-born business owners. Plaza redevelopment began after our community survey and was completed in 2006. What was formerly a dilapidated parking lot is now an immaculately clean and convivial open space.

## The Role of Immigrant Businesses in Community Life

A final element in our analysis of the ways in which immigration is changing Woodburn relates to immigrant entrepreneurs' role in revitalizing the community's business environment. There exists a substantial body of econometric research on the roles played by entrepreneurs in community life in general and a similarly impressive body of research on immigrant entrepreneurs in urban areas. There is, in contrast, very little research on immigrant entrepreneurs in small rural communities such as Woodburn.

It is clear from even a single visit to Woodburn that the community has a booming immigrant business sector and that these generally small immigrant businesses are contributing to both community economic and social well-being. We identified at least 53 immigrant businesses in Woodburn and there are, without a doubt, still more which we could not easily observe, including farm labor contractors, rental housing businesses, home-based tax preparers, and child care providers. The mix of immigrant businesses reflects the overall diversification of the business environment in U.S. rural communities as the overall economy comes to have more employment in service industries—particularly in rural areas such as Woodburn adjacent to rapidly growing urban metro areas such as Portland to the north and Salem to the south.

The overall flow of Mexican immigration to Woodburn includes migrants arriving directly from Mexico as well as secondary migration as migrant farmworkers who came first to California move to Oregon. However, it is striking that almost all of Woodburn's immigrant business owners have lived and worked in other parts of the U.S.—usually in an urban area—for a number of years before they set up business in Woodburn. The business owners surveyed had lived and worked in: Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose, Salem, and Portland.

---

<sup>125</sup> There is, inevitably, prostitution where there are concentrations of unaccompanied male workers---but not in the Woodburn plaza. Prostitutes are taken to various on-farm migrant labor camps and also work on Business Highway 99.

Woodburn's community response of immigrant entrepreneurs is mixed. In some regards, the "community", most evidently the municipal agencies involved in regulating businesses, have done a remarkably good job. We heard no complaints from immigrant entrepreneurs about their interactions with the authorities and several stories of very responsive help (e.g. agency staff explaining English-language forms in Spanish, explaining bureaucratic procedures patiently). One of the ten immigrant business owners we talked with had gotten technical assistance from Chemeketa College's small business development staff and had found it very helpful. Another had been contacted by a representative of the National Federation of Business and asked to join so he could get their services; he did join and seems happy with it.

In other respects, the Woodburn "community" has been less welcoming. None of the immigrant entrepreneurs who we interviewed, all of whom had, in fact, been successful, had been able to secure a bank loan to buy their business or to help them deal with the ups and downs of cash flow which are inevitable in a town where the primary industry is seasonal agriculture. This significantly constrains the kinds of businesses they can enter into, as well as limiting their ability to expand.

As a local banker (who does seek to be supportive of new local business development) explained to us, a multitude of federal regulations successfully discourage banks from assuming significant financial risks, particularly in loans to small businesses whose owners do not have substantial financial resources. Consequently, Woodburn's burgeoning immigrant businesses are entirely financed from within the immigrant community. A typical arrangement is for the previous owner to allow the buyer of a business to make payments on an installment plan. In some cases, the arrangements even are flexible, given the universal recognition that the new owner may well have one or two bad months—since there are such extreme seasonal fluctuations in customers.<sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>126</sup> Increasing border enforcement, which has in the past four years greatly increased the cost of undocumented migration, may well ease the strains that seasonal ups and downs place on local businesses since it appears that some migrants who would, in the past, have returned home to Mexico for the holidays

**Table 23** below tabulates the types of immigrant businesses observed in Woodburn.

<b>Table 23</b>		
<b>Immigrant Businesses in Woodburn</b>		
<b>Type of Business</b>	<b># of Immigrant Businesses Observed</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>Retail</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>60%</b>
Restaurants, taquerias, combined grocery and prepared food	15	29%
Food and sundries	4	7%
Records, party supplies, miscellaneous	3	6%
Clothing, miscellaneous	5	10%
Auto-related: cars, car parts, tires	2	4%
Other-miscellaneous (night club, sports equipment, furniture/appliance store)	3	4%
<b>Services</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>40%</b>
Multi-service: remittances, phone calls to Mexico, transportation	2	4%
Free-standing—financial services only (remittances, loans)	3	6%
Beauty salons, barbers	6	12%
Farm Labor Contractors	1	2%
Real estate	3	6%
Educational/orientation	1	2%
Professional services-tax preparation, medical, dental, legal. Curandero/as	4	8%

*Source: Field Researcher observations 2002-2003*

The particular mix of small immigrant-owned and operated businesses is not surprising, given the nature of immigrants' lives in Woodburn. The very high proportion of restaurants, taquerias, and stores with a mixture of grocery items and fast food is understandable since immigrants to Woodburn work long hours, often in exhausting work

---

each winter are remaining in Woodburn (since they can't afford to return if they go home). However, they

such as farmwork or processing plants. The stores specializing in CD's by Mexican recording artists, beauty salons, and clothes stores specializing in "dress up" clothes (including cowboy boots, cowboy hats, bridal outfits) reflect, essentially, immigrants' needs, like those of any social group, for products and services which reflect their identity, including types of entertainment, and clothes which are "fashionable". These niches are open and accessible to immigrant entrepreneurs because these businesses require relatively little capital and allow business proprietors to draw down on their "cultural capital". The presence of Wal-Mart in town means that there is little rationale for immigrant entrepreneurs to compete in the realm of providing the practical necessities of life. Where they can distinguish themselves is in marketing products or services which have a particular culturally-defined identity.

While anti-immigrant policy analysts decry the falling levels of "immigrant quality" as measured by educational attainment, these macro-level policy analyses, uninformed by attention to the micro-level dynamics of community life fail to accurately assess the extent to which immigrant family networks deploy human capital to assure success. What becomes clear in talking to immigrant entrepreneurs in Woodburn is that the successful transition from being an employee into becoming a business owner is related in part to immigrants with sound basic "foundation skills" working for some years in a particular sort of business, learning the "tricks of the trade" and then starting their own business, relying on their personal work experience and the skills of immediate or extended family members in operating their own business.

A good example is Salvador, the manager of a family-owned taqueria, "The Cactus Grill" located in a shopping mall along the Pacific Highway, the north-south thoroughfare on the eastern edge of town which parallels the railroad tracks and Front Street, the original main street of Woodburn. Salvador is from a large family of restaurant proprietors. His sister and he have always worked in the food industry, both in meat markets and restaurants. Salvador, a Jalisciense, first worked in urban Los Angeles and then moved to Oregon in 2002 to open his current restaurant with his sister. While he has only an 8<sup>th</sup>

---

may encounter serious difficulties in finding winter work.

grade education, Salvador brings to the management of his own small business more than a decade of experience in the restaurant industry. He reported he had no problems in dealing with local health and sanitation code requirements and his sister has experience as a bookkeeper. His brother-in-law, who has been in the Woodburn area longer than he has, is available to provide him advice when he is uncertain about “the rules of the game” in Oregon. A long-time friend, who came with him from Los Angeles is the lead cook and so Salvador feels confident that the food will be well-prepared.

Six months after it opened its doors, the restaurant, which provides employment for two full-time workers and three part-time workers is impeccably clean, the food is delicious, and apparently profitable; he opened a second outlet about two years after the first. Salvador has a very good sense of the diverse sorts of customers who eat at his restaurant (some “gringos”, extended families, and young unmarried couples). He caters to each group in subtle ways—moderate amounts of chile for the gringos, jukebox music to the taste of the young couples, and friendly, prompt service for the large extended families with lots of children. He is thinking of expanding his menu to include more seafood (a big favorite for all three sub-groups of customers and a high-margin menu item) but says part of his strategy is to move slowly to make sure he can be sure that the quality of his food remains better than that of his competitors. Salvador likes Woodburn because it is calmer than Los Angeles and has less crime, although he thinks perhaps that the Woodburn police should crack down on property crime.

Salvador maintains informal relationships with a few of the other downtown retailers, including Martin Ochoa, a leader in the Downtown Business Association, but he says his relationships with other small business people is primarily social.

Not surprisingly, access to capital is a major constraint on new immigrant entrepreneurs. Martin Ochoa, who has now been in business for 7 years in Woodburn and is very evidently successful in his restaurant, “Lupita’s Taqueria” first came to Chicago about 20 years ago. He eventually moved to Hillsboro and spent a period of time looking for a small business to buy. He bought his restaurant from Salvador, one of the first Mexican

businessmen in town and currently the owner of three businesses. An important factor in Martin's success starting up the restaurant was that Salvador agreed to carry the note. Martin observes that even though immigrant entrepreneurs may charge their paisanos a higher interest rate than a bank would, the reality is that banks won't risk their money lending to immigrant business men. Martin says, "Banks simply have too much paperwork". His recent experience with one local bank has been negative. As a result of inadvertently overdrawing his account briefly, the bank closed his account (although he was an established, successful, and locally well-known businessman). He took his business to another bank.

Like Salvador, Martin comes from a family of restauranteurs. Two of his brothers are co-owners of a restaurant in Hillsboro (about 30 miles away) and Martin had worked in restaurants for years before opening "Lupita's". Most of the employees in the restaurant are family members (Martin's wife and four children); one of the waitresses is not a family member. One of the challenges in the business is the extent of seasonal ups and downs—but Martin says business is much better than when he first opened the restaurant, despite increased competition.

New businesses are constantly being started. An immigrant-owned and managed business which provides a particularly good example as to how "cultural capital" can become a resource for successful business operation is a newly-established store, La Guelaguetza, which had been set up in the summer of 2003, three months before we interviewed the owners, a Oaxacan couple (the husband a Zapotec from Ocotlan, the wife a Mixtec from San Miguel). As was the case with the restaurant owners—Salvador and Martin—described above, they have previous experience with small businesses, having run a small store in their hometown of Ocotlan. La Guelaguetza carries a wide range of Oaxacan products, some of them purchased from Los Angeles (where there is a major concentration of both Zapotec and Mixtec migrants from Oaxaca); but other products, e.g. embroidered Oaxacan dresses, are sent directly from Zaachila, Oaxaca.

La Guelaguetza's owners, Maria and Abram, are a middle-aged couple. They started the store as a way to get out of agricultural work. Before coming to Woodburn, they had been working in a processing plant in Medford, OR and they had gone the year before to Alaska to work in the fisheries. They have lived in the U.S., in California, then in Oregon, for many years, Adrian since 1969, Maria since 1980.

Adrian and Maria had wanted to start a Oaxacan restaurant but knew they did not have the capital to get it started, so they decided on opening a small store instead, anticipating that it would be popular among the many Oaxacans in Woodburn. They have discovered that their customers, indeed, include Oaxacans but that their merchandise is also popular among a wide range of Mexican immigrants. For example, during the interview, a couple came in to ask for "the big tortillas" (*clayudas*) although they didn't know what they were called. Maria told the family they were made by hand and explained to the shoppers how to successfully reheat them, winning several new, enthusiastic customers.

Another good example of how immigrant entrepreneurs can use "insider" knowledge to find a niche where they can be competitive by designing a product designed specifically for immigrant customers is the Lara Driving School. This small business provides driving instruction in Spanish. A unique service it provides, tailored to the needs of Mexican immigrants is that the school offers a package deal (at a cost of \$85) for students which includes rental of a car which is in good condition for them to take the driver's examination in. This is very attractive both to driver's license applicants who do not own a car and to those who do have a car which, however, would not meet the DMV requirements of having all equipment such as turn signals, headlights, etc. operational. The business has now been operating for 6 years and there are branches in Hillsboro and Eugene also.

Because Woodburn has a long history of migration, some of the local businesses established by earlier waves of immigrants are developing into regional ones. For example, the Discoteca Arcoiris, a thriving store which sells CD's is reportedly opening a branch in Springfield, an urban community more than 100 miles to the south of

Woodburn. The store owner, Artemio Fregoso, is well-known in the local area because in the 1970's he was a musician with a bar in St. Paul (about 10 miles from Woodburn. This bar, known as "La Cantina de Jose Ramirez" was the only Mexican bar around and was one of the places where most new immigrant first went to in those days). He went on from being a local musician to music entrepreneur while two of the young women in the band, known by contemporaries simply as "Los Fregoso" have gone on to become part of a now popular group "Grupo Modelo" who now have many CD's out.

The most commonly mentioned problem was that local immigrants who are store customers are not doing well themselves, economically. For example, the owner of a store which sells furniture and appliances to Mexican immigrants (mainly farmworkers in the area) has a competitive advantage in that he can explain the installment purchase agreement (a legal requirement for installment sales in Oregon as in other states) which is in English to his customers in Spanish, since they neither read nor understand English. He'd like to see the agreements made available in Spanish but Oregon has not done this yet. Like the other immigrant entrepreneurs we interviewed, his getting into his business had been facilitated by the previous owner, who sold him the store's inventory on an installment plan and who coached him with some "tips for success". Like other entrepreneurs he had learned the business by working in it, having worked previously in another furniture store. He has found a good business niche—but his customers cannot even afford the economy appliances and second-hand appliances he sells and sometimes default on their payments.

Several of the business owners who have been in town longer noted that the rapid growth of Mexican-owned and operated businesses has made competition a bigger concern to them. One of the established restaurants, begun when there were few other Mexican restaurants, has noticed a drop-off in their sales. However, it appears they may have found a competitive niche for themselves by catering to non-Mexican as well as Mexican customers since they mentioned that lots of "Americans" and Russians also often came to their restaurant. But this restaurant was not doing well; the family made ends meet by

doing all the work themselves and, thus, avoiding the cost of paying employees, but they estimated they worked almost 80 hours a week (11 hours a day, 7 days a week).

The decision by the City of Woodburn to restore the plaza which is at the center of the older, historical part of town represents a valuable recognition of the key role played by immigrant business in re-vitalizing the town's economy and a recognition that these businesses will play an ongoing role in Woodburn's transformation from a small, town of small family farmers of European origins into a pluralistic community of Mexican mestizos, indigenous Mexicans, Anglo-Americans, Russians, and a scattering of immigrants from other countries (e.g. Malaysia, Brazil, Korea). Support and hard work from a diverse group of non-immigrant community leaders, including legal services lawyers, financial industry representatives, realtors, city council members, and others has had some success in transforming the Downtown Business Association into an organization whose membership now mirrors the demographic profile of the community. There is, however, much still to do to develop a comprehensive approach to nurturing immigrant businesses and collaborating with small business owners to discover the best way they can, in turn, give back to the community by nurturing community development.

At the same time, as immigrant businesses are growing, there is a need to support non-immigrant small entrepreneurs also. Woodburn began in the summer of 2003 to invite small retailers of farm produce to set up stands in the downtown area and re-integrate non-immigrants into the life of the downtown area. This was another wise move. But here too, there are still "rough edges" in blending disparate small businesses into a pluralistic business context. The all-American small farm products such as berry jam, apple butter, and such are unfamiliar to the Mexican families who come to the plaza to shop. At the same time, American shoppers appear uneasy to buy similar Mexican products, such as the delicious *tamales*, *champurado*, *mantelitos*, which the older Michoacana, Dona Teresa, sells from her cart. A few non-Mexicans have sampled the large range of bakery products from Love's Bakery, located on the south side of the town plaza, but we have not heard of them buying any of the piñatas which make the small shop a sea of color, nor have they ordered any of the cakes that Jesus Lovato and Blanca

Velasquez are willing to make to order for any celebration. Woodburn has a long road to travel in discovering the virtues of moving from “tolerance” toward embracing and appreciating the benefits of diversity. However, now that efforts are initiated, the slow process of building different groups’ familiarity with the products of the other cultures can proceed.

## **What Can We Learn from Woodburn’s Experience?**

Our nation is now in the midst of a far-ranging political controversy about immigration policy. Although some individuals among the local residents in the hundreds of rural U.S. communities with concentrations of immigrants may be engaged in these debates, what may be even more pressing than the national debate about immigration policy for the future is the need for ongoing local dialogue about immigrant social integration right now. While immigration policy issues at the national level are contentious and framed in broad generalizations, at the local level, the issues are more concrete and, in many senses more pressing, in that the question is not simply what to do in the future but what to do today and tomorrow as well. At the same time, dialogue on how to integrate immigrants into local life is informed by personal experience and practical thinking about a multitude of practical realities of day-to-day life. Woodburn provides an important example first, and foremost, in its collective commitment to seek solutions and to be proactive in this effort.

Woodburn, like other rural communities, is severely constrained in its efforts to promote immigrant social integration and to re-shape community services and civic life to facilitate mutual adaptation among native-born and immigrant residents. Ironically, while Woodburn is well-prepared to confront the challenges of community transformation, the fiscal, administrative, and programmatic resources available to it are limited due to the federal locus of control in major social programs. Given the vacuum in federal programmatic leadership in recent years, it will be necessary for local jurisdictions to advocate forcefully for the latitude to explore and assess innovative responses to program design in order to respond to the needs of their service population.

Woodburn's experience reminds us that local communities—municipal government, local public institutions such as schools and libraries, and non-profit community organizations--- now need to be entrepreneurial and innovative in securing the financial resources to respond to their community's needs and the authority to approach problem-solving in innovative ways.

We have learned that local initiatives to integrate immigrants into local community life cannot stem from any single source. Efforts by a wide range of individuals, organizations, and institutions contribute to progress. Few communities discover immediately how to work most effectively in responding to “the new pluralism”. One step forward leads to another. Informal interactions among neighbors and co-workers, as well as a multitude of never-recorded discussions among community leaders, immigrant advocates, teachers, small business people, and members of civic organizations make almost always lie beneath the more-visible formal actions of elected officials, local institutions, municipal government employees, and community organizations. Community responses work best when formal decision-making is responsive to informal input and when formal decisions are made with a firm commitment to fostering community unity amid diversity.

Some over-arching themes emerge from our interviews with community residents, community leaders, and immigrant business owners and examining at Woodburn's collective experience as a rural community where immigrants are setting,.

### ***Community Change Is Usually More Gradual Than It Seems***

However rapid demographic and social change may seem, most social and economic transformations have been underway for years or for decades before they are recognized and accurately understood. Woodburn's demographic and social transformation began in the aftermath of World War II, more than half a century before the community “looked in the mirror” and recognized, fairly suddenly, it was now socially, culturally, and linguistically a “new pluralism” and that the original town population of white settlers

who had come to farm was now a minority. In Woodburn and communities like it, social program interventions need to be conceptualized in within a multi-generational frame of reference—looking not only at the current situation and well-being of individuals and families but designing interventions which will have an impact on successive generations. The evidence has been accumulating for some time that the story of immigration to the U.S. is not always one which conforms to 1<sup>st</sup> generation immigrants’ expectations and dreams. Both “Generation 1.5” and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation children face unique problems—some of which presumably have a genesis in the context of the households in which they grew up. While we have learned that community change is gradual, we have also learned that the direction of change is not always one of steady progress. More attention to long-term consequences of short-term social program interventions will be required.

#### National and Global Change Transform Community Life As Much As Immigration

Immigration is an important part of changing community life but changes in agricultural production, overall population growth, rural-urban migration of young adults, new highways and communication infrastructure, changes in fiscal policy which eroded the tax base and legal authority and responsibilities of local municipalities, also had a major impact in changing the nature of community life. No single component of change can be adequately understood in isolation.

Rural communities’ sense that the local business environment is difficult or “out of their control” is correct in the case of Woodburn and in many other rural communities. Local job losses in agricultural production, food processing, and other resource-based industries stem from regional, national, and global change . The immigrant entrepreneurs in Woodburn do play an important role in changing the local business environment. Their contribution to community economics is that they are experts in establishing small businesses with little or no capital. None of them had ever had recourse to the formal credit system (bank loans or government programs) but when welcomed by city authorities willing to explain to them new and unfamiliar regulations and approach

municipal code enforcement with the goal of resolving problems rather than punishing violators they can establish and grow viable businesses.

### Woodburn's Immigrant Social Networks Are Diverse and Fragmented

While immigrant social networks based on extended family and village ties play an important role in Woodburn, there are diverse and distinct networks sending Mexican migrants north to the Willamette Valley in general and to Woodburn specifically. Like other immigrant-receiving communities, the town's specific history as an area for Russian refugees to settle has determined the specific dynamics of community life. Because of the Russian religious network's previous community history of migration, there emerged unusual interactions between them and Mexican immigrants.

Although extended family and village networks facilitate migration to the U.S., secondary migration of Mexicans from California to Woodburn, and farmworkers' finding jobs, and settling into the community, they are frayed networks and cannot provide the level of support for fellow immigrants they might wish to provide. Theorists have correctly focused on the ways in which the social capital inherent in the dense networks of immigrants can facilitate individual, family, and community well-being but further attention will be required to understanding the constraints on deployment of social capital and, thereby, develop effective designs to overcome these constraints so that social capital can be more effectively deployed as a resource for community development and service delivery.

While hometown village associations (*clubes de oriundos*) play an important role in Mexican immigrants' social life in urban communities, they are not a significant factor in the lives of Woodburn Mexican immigrants. The weakness of the hometown networks has probably contributed to the strength of PCUN since as a membership organization its role has been to build "bridging social capital" by bringing together immigrants from diverse village networks to address issues they face in common as farmworkers and as immigrants.

### *Diversity Within Households Is As Great As Between Neighborhoods*

There is as great diversity within Woodburn households as in the community at large. What is clear in looking at the fine-grained texture of social life in rural communities is that the majority of families in Woodburn are of “mixed” immigration status, including U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, and unauthorized immigrants. The national policy image of sending unauthorized immigrants back to their country of origin makes no sense in the real life of rural communities because immigration status cuts across ties of kinship and friendship.

To be sure, there are cultural tensions in Woodburn—but these include tensions between computer-savvy English-speaking children of immigrants who have grown up in town and a parent who grew up in a rural hamlet working in subsistence agriculture as well as ethnic tensions between families and neighbors. The tensions in Woodburn’s civic life are as likely to stem from demographics (older retired couples vs. younger families with children) as from immigration status or ethnicity. At the community level there is still much work to be done to harmonize different languages and cultural perspectives—but this work is beginning and going on at home, within the walls of each household.

### *Children Are The Future*

Our interviews in Woodburn allowed us to “look into the past” by talking with older local residents and “look into the future” by talking with younger heads of household and, sometimes, with their teenage children. The life stories of those immigrants who were born abroad and grew up in the local community make it clear that many of these “Generation 1.5” immigrants are well-poised to take on the responsibility of bridging divides in the community. Their personal experiences have given them a sound foundation for bringing new immigrants and native-born families together. But the key to success in bringing community groups together is their sociocultural agility, being genuinely bilingual and bicultural, allowing them to function as bona fide cultural brokers.

Ironically, efforts to “preserve English” or “save our culture” run directly counter to what is needed. In Woodburn, English is alive and well. Russian, Mixteco, and Purepecha are endangered languages; what is urgently needed are efforts to preserve cultural resources, and the flexibility to happily and easily function in the pluralistic society of the future where pace of social change may accelerate still further. Contrary to the commonsense but mistaken folk theories of nativists, multi-culturalism fosters appreciation of both home country and new country culture and values and cultural agility is a tangible resource—for community problem-solving but, also, for personal life and for entrepreneurial business planning.

In Woodburn and the other economically stressed but socially stable communities of the Willamette Valley, children’s perspectives are strongly shaped by their peers and their experiences growing up. The children of immigrant parents will, almost inevitably, be integrated into U.S. cultural perspectives and learn English. What is less certain is whether the immigrant integration process will provide them with the skills to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy, whether cultural stresses will separate them from their parents’ generation, and whether institutionalized inequities will alienate them from mainstream society. Woodburn educators are, inevitably, the front-line facilitators of community change. Educators’ role is crucial—in preparing the children of immigrants and native-born parents to work together effectively in the future and, in the context of adult learning programs, helping immigrants learn English and learn about U.S. life.

### ***Opportunities and Social Resources in Rural Communities***

Woodburn’s experience shows that small traditional farming communities have resources of cultural and social capital which can be deployed in responding to the challenges of the new pluralism. Immigrants’ accounts of settling into Woodburn have more accounts of positive welcoming interactions with local native-born individuals than negative ones. The predominance of small farmers in the region meant that many established personal, long-lasting relationships with immigrants—both in the cases of Russians who were sponsored as refugees by local farmers and in the cases of Mexican immigrants who

ended up working for a family farmer for decades. Local farmers have, for example, gone to Mexico to visit the villages their work crews come from—as part of a worker recruitment strategy but the social and business relationships which developed are bona fide ones. These personal cross-ethnic relationships and small community size seem to have contributed to the efforts of local community leaders who moved in the direction of improving community life for everyone who lives in Woodburn—without giving primary attention to their immigration status. While social capital theorists have focused understandably on the resources of “bonding” social capital in extended family networks, our case study of Woodburn suggests factors in the social context which facilitate the development of “bridging” social capital. The small size of local agricultural producers and the fragmented landscape of Mexican migrant networks in Woodburn which are liabilities in some contexts seem to yield benefits in other respects—precisely because they foster openness and adaptability.

To be sure, there are accounts of unscrupulous landlords renting sub-standard housing at exorbitant rates, of exploitative farm labor contractors who routinely violate a range of labor laws, and there are, indeed, some immigrants who took advantage of the opportunities of restrictive immigration laws to fabricate and sell immigration documents, the passports to employment for Mexican immigrants. Woodburn has had and will continue to have its fair share of community problems and some of them will revolve around interactions between immigrants and native-born individuals, but the fundamental story is one of successful mutual adaptation.

### **Recommendations for Ongoing Social Integration Efforts in Woodburn**

Woodburn’s approach to immigrant social integration is very promising—in part because the community is committed to ongoing day-to-day efforts to work things out without succumbing to the temptation of grand, unworkable policy solutions spun out of politicians’ never-ending dance of re-positioning themselves for comparative advantage. What Woodburn has gotten completely right as a community is to move steadily forward, fine-tuning solutions along the way.

Here we present summary recommendations based on “lessons learned” so far in Woodburn. These are not definitive; they are the foundation for further discussion, reflections, and imaginative but practical “visioning” of new ways to bring diverse constituents together. These recommendations build on the notable successes to date; in our recommendations to other rural communities we urge many to try out approaches Woodburn has already shown to be workable. The challenge for Woodburn now is simply to “push the envelope” and try to do still more and to do better—especially in the absence of federal legislative action to provide immigrants with an official pathway to citizenship.

These recommendations are clustered into several arenas for local government and institutional action.

### ***In the Policy Arena***

*1. Woodburn municipal government and local community institutions should continue to pursue an even-handed overall policy of “customer-oriented” responsiveness to diverse needs in the community.*

Customer-oriented flexibility and responsiveness can provide opportunities to underscore and acknowledge that immigrants and native-born residents have similar stakes in community life. Woodburn’s approach to downtown revitalization, community policing, affordable housing, dealing with diverse local residents’ in carrying out city business such as paying bills, complying with building code regulations, business permits, etc. has been even-handed, responding to both non-immigrant and immigrant constituents’ needs.

Woodburn library’s response to community change more than a decade ago, by beginning, to build its holdings of books in Russian and Spanish as part of its response to increasing immigration, was far-sighted. Ideally, the library might further expand its role as cultural broker by beginning the challenging task of securing Mixtec, Zapotec, and Purepecha reading materials given the large influx of indigenous-origin migrants. The

library's success to date provides a strong foundation but better funding and a commitment to expanding its services in some key areas (e.g. instruction in using computers and the Internet, family literacy programs) would build on its strength.

This is an area where binational collaboration might be fairly easy and very productive—since Mexico has a well-developed printing industry and produces a wide range of low-cost books. If support and assistance in dealing with bureaucracy were available from the Mexican foreign affairs department (Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores) it might be possible to supplement the collections of libraries such as Woodburn's. In the past, the Mexican consulates have sponsored adult-learning programs but the Mexican federal government's commitment to migrants abroad varies fairly unpredictably. Alternatively Mexican state agencies might, if they expanded the scope of their Comisiones de Atencion a Los Migrantes (Migrant Commissions) to address cultural maintenance issues as well as provision of basic information and help in resolving legal issues and crises might be a resource.

*2. Local government officials (in Marion County as well as in Woodburn) and local program administrators should actively advocate with state and federal program policy-makers and planners on behalf of their immigrant constituents.*

Local communities have a tremendous stake in eliminating the dividing lines of immigration status which separate some local residents from others. These barriers make it difficult for communities to make full use of the potential human resources available to them (as leaders or as workers), disrupt family life by making some family members eligible for basic human services while others are not, and make local government agencies' and non-profit community organizations' work more difficult and costly.

PCUN is extensively involved in advocacy on immigration policy issues at the national level. Woodburn municipal government and local institutions might make a significant contribution to the overall immigration reform debate by working within the professional associations to which they belong (e.g.. National Association of Counties, Mayor's

Conference) and joining with representatives from similarly-situated rural communities to build political support for immigration reform which responds to rural communities' need to move forward proactively with social integration. This locally-based advocacy on the state and federal level should also include opposition to proposals specifically designed to disadvantage immigrants, such as efforts to deny unauthorized immigrants drivers' licenses. The consequences of the harshest sorts of "immigration reform" policy which entailed deportation of unauthorized immigrants, for example, would be disastrous, disrupting local economic and social stability.

A particular concern in Woodburn relates to unauthorized immigrant students' access to higher education. About one out of five students in the Woodburn school system is of unauthorized immigration status. Since lack of legal status makes it impossible for these youth to receive federal financial aid for college, few are able to move on into professional careers. The community at large, not just individual students, lose out. The return on Woodburn's investment in providing quality K-12 education for immigrant as well as native-born students is compromised by the difficulties the unauthorized immigrants face in continuing their education. Local, county, and state education agencies could, in principle, play a valuable role by assuming more proactive stances in advocating for immigrant social policy which incorporates fundamental tenets of educational philosophy—specifically the importance of achieving each learner to fulfill their full potential.

*3. Woodburn should go beyond its current exemplary efforts in outreach to its immigrant residents and expand concepts of civic participation by initiating efforts to involve immigrants, including non-citizens, on local advisory bodies in areas where there is a high level of shared interest, e.g. Park and Recreation Boards, the school board*

It is not clear that Woodburn's current modest initiative to build immigrants' civic skills via a Spanish-language newsletter with basic information on how government works is adequate. One conceptual element which is important is the recognition that "outreach"

to immigrants should not simply be informational but should also seek to mobilize resources.

Woodburn clearly recognizes this as evidenced by school system and police department efforts to build community involvement in their mission. These efforts could be expanded further and include some specially promising bodies such as the Community Livability Committee, library advisory committees or governing board.. Immigrants' civic engagement and participation is constrained by the understandable feeling they are not invited or "not supposed to" participate in local decision-making. Woodburn is beginning to promote immigrant involvement in local civic decisions by announcing meetings via cable television and through public service announcements on Spanish-language television stations. These are positive steps but the current "outreach" effort needs to be broadened and deepened to become a full-fledged "civic recruitment" campaign. Efforts to nurture immigrant civic involvement can be expected to bring both short-term benefits and, in the long-run, contribute to building strong community leadership for the future.

### ***Fostering Effective Communication and Positive Social Interactions***

*1. Woodburn should build on its current successes in recruiting bilingual and bicultural staff for city departments and local programs and move toward broader ethnic diversity in its personnel—with a particular emphasis on increased staffing to respond to the indigenous Mexican-origin immigrant families.*

Woodburn municipal government, public schools, and local service providers have clearly recognized that immigrants themselves are, themselves, important resources in responding to other immigrants' needs. However, they have not yet fully recognized the diversity among Mexican immigrants or developed innovative strategies to recruit and train trilingual, tri-cultural staff. The Oregon Law Center has now managed, for more than three years, a targeted effort to provide legal services and information for indigenous farmworkers and families in the Willamette Valley. It may be a valuable resource for

municipal government and local institutions which seek to undertake the next phase of the challenge of fully mirroring the diversity of the community.

*2. Woodburn's public and non-profit institutions should work still more collaboratively, pooling resources, to provide multiple educational alternatives to assist immigrants in learning English and how "the system" works locally and in the U.S..*

Chemeketa Community College has done an impressive job of making ESL classes easily available to immigrants. This is, as in other areas, an opportunity for Woodburn to build on a good track record to initiate more and more innovative efforts. However, the current schedule of ESL classes is fairly traditional. It would be desirable, for example, to develop and test ESL classes which consist of intensive weekend workshops to allow better access by immigrants who are working long hours during the week or who have child care problems during the week.

Other models for ESL instruction that deserve to be tested, for example, by farmworker housing groups such as FHDC include learner circles, family literacy, or self-directed learning using video-based or audiocassette materials. The Woodburn High School might, for example, make use of the extraordinary resources it has in its bilingual students by engaging them in community service programs to provide ESL instruction and tutoring to adults seeking to learn English. Expanding its current dual immersion programs in bilingual education into an area in which its bilingual students develop leadership skills by functioning as informal teachers.

Adult learning opportunities designed to orient adult immigrants who want to learn about how government works in the U.S., about human service delivery systems, about the educational system, or about their rights and responsibilities as community residents would be a simple but valuable initiative to implement. It is likely that only a minority of immigrants would take advantage of such opportunities but those who did have the motivation to do so and who spent some time in such a program would be very likely to

be able to better manage their families' lives in an unfamiliar social and legal context and contribute more to community life and civic efforts in the future.

*2. Woodburn's mainstream institutions and civic organizations and immigrant advocacy organizations should explore ways in which they can work more effectively together to accelerate immigrant social integration.*

Working relationships between mainstream institutions and immigrant advocacy groups in Woodburn are better than in many communities but they can still be further improved. As researchers and observers we were consistently struck by the existence of separate “parallel universes” of organizational activity and focus. This is an inevitable facet of organizational culture, not a problem which is unique to Woodburn.

However, as community diversity continues to increase, there will increasingly be a need for mainstream and advocacy groups both to understand each others' perspectives and priorities better, to learn how to better trust each other, and to work together—if not as permanent partnerships at least as pragmatic allies. Schools feel that civic integration is not part of their mission although they do see its relevance to their students' lives. Immigrant advocacy organizations see that education is relevant for their constituents but need to understand the challenges “the system” faces in trying to provide quality education for a range of students with diverse backgrounds. Churches feel that their parishioners' spiritual lives deserve attention but they have not been proactive in addressing the many ways in which full, or even slightly improved, participation in the community dialogue and civic action efforts in Woodburn might support spiritual development.

## **Final Conclusion**

There is in Woodburn a record of collaboration on some crucial issues such as affordable housing, downtown revitalization, and involving immigrant parents in their children's education. It shows that teamwork is possible and rewarding.

It is now time to move to a new phase of more comprehensive, and, ideally, more sustainable collaboration.