Changing demographics in Oregon, accompanied by a rising Latino population, serve to dispel myths that we live in homogeneous, monolithic communities. Migration studies indicate migration is reshaping communities, contributing to ethnic diversity thus challenging our notion of identity and culture. Through the medium of oral histories and ethnography, this study describes the composition of the Latino Community in Yamhill County, identifying migration, immigration, and sociohistorical processes that formed the community. This work explores ideas of ethnicity, identity, and community building and how it has shaped Latino context and experience in Yamhill County. The voices of the participants express how they interpret their context and ways in which they are shaping it to be their own.

This study also investigates the ways in which the participants interpret the American dream, essentially, what success means to them and what tensions inhibit full participation in the community. Like the pioneers on the Oregon Trail, they too came in search of freedom, of opportunity, of adventure. They tolerated discrimination and isolation along their journey—yet similar to the Oregon Trail pioneers, they pooled resources, they endured hardship, they persevered—to achieve their dreams. They counter the stereotypes of minorities expecting handouts or entitlements; rather, they have pursued their dreams and hopes in the face of obstacles those from the culture of power rarely even recognize. Their pioneering spirit adds a new dimension to the stories told about the Oregon country. Their stories tell us more about our country and more about ourselves.
An Ethnographic Crossing:
Voices from the Latino Community in Yamhill County, Oregon

by
Nan Gilmore Nicklous

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Nan G. Nicklous
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In appreciation to Juancito
for your love and support of my spirit.
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for their suggestions
and guidance.
CHAPTER I: An Introduction to the Latino Community in Yamhill County, Oregon

Much has been written about the Chicano / Latino experience (Rosaura Sánchez 1983; David Gutiérrez 1995; Renalto Rosaldo 1989; Guadalupe Valdés 1996; Leo Chavez 1992) in the Southwest and California, but considerably less about communities in the Pacific Northwest. In light of recent legislation and social discourse in California intolerant of immigrants, migrants, and minorities which reflects the dominant culture’s anxiety toward a Latino presence, my purpose in this work is to contribute to the dialogue of scholarship and represent a synchronic slice as well as a limited diachronic study of Yamhill County. Changing demographics in Oregon, accompanied by a rising Latino population, serve to dispel the myths that we live in homogeneous, monolithic communities. Rather, migration studies indicate migration is reshaping communities, contributing to increasing ethnic diversity thus challenging notions of identity and culture.

Through the medium of oral histories and ethnography, I intend not only to describe the composition of the Latino community in Yamhill County, Oregon, specifically McMinnville, but also to explore the sociohistorical processes that formed the Latino community and to examine the impact of the political environment on the lives of these people.

The primary focus of this work will be on Chicano residents and Mexican immigrants who now reside in Yamhill County. While fewer in numbers, the stories of the peoples from El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, Perú, and other Caribbean and Latin American nations are no less significant. Similar threads connect their histories. The diverse Latino population has been and will continue
to be a dynamic part of the economic, political, and social transformation of Yamhill County. The diverse communities of today underline a need for studies that consider how people organize their lives, what their dreams are, and how they interpret their world. This study will contribute to understanding how the participants in this study are active agents in their own history embedded in a context of hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Their stories add a vibrant chapter to the history of Yamhill County, Oregon.

This study offers an interpretive synthesis of multidisciplinary literatures. It draws large brush strokes in some cases, intending to make connections to global transformations as well as local linkages to processes occurring globally. The study is not gender specific. Much work could still be done comparing the roles of women and men within the migrant and immigrant experience, their access to health care, and cultural misunderstandings in the educational setting that contribute to high dropout rates.

My interest in studying the Latino community grew out of a teaching experience in workplace education with Chemeketa Community College. I taught E.S.L., Access to Community Resources, and Spanish literacy at Monrovia Nursery in connection with a one year pilot project for the State of Oregon. Modeled after a Skills Building Project for Oregon's food processing industry, the curriculum for the program focused on work-related language and interactions between a primarily Latino, Spanish-speaking workforce and the Anglo, English-speaking management. While teaching the Latino workers, I began to question whether literacy practices and programs maintain the status quo—that is, further marginalize those they claim to educate—or whether they allow individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds to negotiate and transform their reality through education. These questions and work with Latino community members led to my interest in an ethnographic study of the Latino population in McMinnville and an
evaluation of their vital human contribution, often undervalued, underrepresented, and underserved.

In the remainder of this chapter, the reader will encounter a discussion of ethnographic methods, then an introduction to the sociopolitical forces affecting the lives of participants, followed by thoughts about the notion of community. Chapter II draws connections between the historical forces generating migration and immigration, placing the stories of the informants in a context of both sociopolitical change and their personal framework of aspirations which motivated them to migrate to a new area. Chapter III explores the ideas of ethnicity, identity, and community building and how it has shaped Latino context and experience in Yamhill County. The voices of the participants express how they interpret that context and ways in which they are shaping it to be their own--what I call community building. In Chapter IV, I conclude by exploring how the concept of pioneering plays out in the everyday lives of the informants. What does success mean to them? What obstacles or tensions have they confronted and what strategies have they adopted to confront cultural domination? From my perspective, they are a pioneering group not unlike the pioneers on the Oregon Trail who ventured into unknown territory, seeking a better life.

When you set about trying to describe a community through oral histories, historical records, and ethnography, you invariably take the risk of converting dynamic, vibrant, stories to a somewhat flat, lifeless document. Lives recounted, experiences retold are, of course, subject to memory. The stories of the informants in this study give collective voice to the Latino community in Yamhill County, peoples often marginalized by the dominant Anglo population, yet whose voices are diverse, distinct. After grappling with how to represent multiple voices, I have opted to include sections of conversations unaltered, rather than interpret those voices through my Anglo middle class lens, so that the reader may draw her or his own conclusions thus allowing those voices to speak for themselves as
much as possible. I chose this option, mindful of testimonio, a literary form that gives voice to a previously ‘voiceless’ anonymous, collective popular-democratic subject, the pueblo or people (Beverly 1989: 12). Testimonio emphasizes the centrality of the direct participant, and, in recognition of this, my aim is not only to represent the dynamic, heterogeneous nature of the Latino community, but also to keep the community members’ voices central to my text, reflecting my efforts to hear and understand their stories.

I struggled with how to write a document based on oral histories knowing that history, often thought to be the truth, is now problematized as a constructed fiction. In contrast to classical ethnography written by a detached observer, describing a fixed society or culture, anthropologists today debate ethnographic authority—many preferring exploratory, experimental forms of writing culture. Along these lines, I defer to Ruth Behar:

In recent times, as postmodern capitalism has brought the partiality and packaging of truth to the attention of us all, many ethnographers, historians, journalists, and fiction writers have found that, like Cervantes, they, too, are purveyors of a range of ‘false documents.’ Whether written as social analysis or autobiography, recent telling of ethnographic tales rely on blurred or mixed genres that make it increasingly difficult to give a single label to a work... The texts we write today partake of the same crisscrossed genealogy and fluctuating value that characterizes all of our other commodities; they are as polyglot as the automobile parts stamped ‘Made in Brazil’ that are commissioned for a factory in Detroit but produced in a sweat shop in Los Angeles employing Latino and Asian migrants (1993:17).

Throughout this document, I have woven together narrative, corridos [ballads], poetry, excerpts from other narratives, and comments by the informants to illuminate certain points or to clarify meaning.

My choice to pursue an interdisciplinary degree and my experiences living in Latin America have provided a unique perspective and have greatly enhanced my ability to cross disciplines and genres. As James Clifford (1986: 2) explains,
"ethnography is actively situated between powerful systems of meaning. It poses its questions at the boundaries of civilizations, cultures, classes, races, and genders. Ethnography decodes and recodes, telling the grounds of collective order and diversity, inclusion and exclusion." The boundaries of cultures and classes especially interest me in the study of the Latino population in Yamhill County. I intend to explore how meaning is generated and regenerated in that space where cultures contact and intermingle.

Writing about Mexican culture, novelist Carlos Fuentes (1988:93) wrote about his homeland to assure himself that "[his] identity and [his] country were real." Encounter, or the contact between cultures as Fuentes defines it, became an empowering dialectic that was constantly re-creating culture. Encounter for the Latino community members in this study occurs in contact with an Anglo majority, with Mexican-Americans who have resided in Yamhill County since the 1940s, and with recién llegados [recent immigrants from Mexico or other countries in Latin America]. The narratives of these people may be considered counter-discourses, narrative techniques employed to contradict the dominant discourse; and as Kayla Garcia (1994:6) suggests, an alternative discourse, one which "deviates from the official discourse (discourse generated by the government) by creating a personal or collective story that affirms the vitality and creativity of the narrators and protagonists." The collective stories and lifeways of the Latino people living in Yamhill County become that empowering dialectic in contact with Anglo ways, constantly re-creating, redefining--asking us to take off the lens through which we have previously seen our culture, to examine that lens and see ourselves in a new light. In doing so, we expand human discourse and human possibility. Carlos Fuentes (1992:189) sums it up:

We will be able to embrace the Other, enlarging our human possibility. People and their cultures perish in isolation, but they are born or reborn in contact with other men and women, with men and women of another culture, another creed, another
race. If we do not recognize our humanity in others, we shall not recognize it in ourselves.

**Ethnographic Methods**

I conducted the research from March through December of 1998. Community members were selected for interviewing through an informal network. Pseudonyms have been chosen throughout the text to ensure anonymity of the informants. I did not target a specific segment of the population, rather, I began the research at the Yamhill County Historical Society and from there was led to speak to Miguel Rodriguez, the first informant interviewed. From conversations with Miguel, I contacted other community members and the network developed as such, by word of mouth. I also talked informally with Latino friends who suggested I speak to friends of theirs and the snowball sample enlarged again. I learned that the community is relatively tight knit and that participants tended to refer me to friends of the same social class, those in their circle of friends, at times those of a higher social standing. I attempted to enlarge and diversify the sample by contacting individuals or families who had moved to Yamhill County recently or who were not necessarily part of the "old timers." This expanded the sample to include Chicanos and their families (old timers), Mexicans, and Latinos from other Latin American countries.

I collected data about the Latino community through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and casual conversations. I participated in community events (Cinco de Mayo, Catholic mass, church events, Spanish reading hour at the local library) in an effort to observe interactions between members of the Latino community as well as interactions between the Anglo and Latino community in McMinnville, Amity, and Dayton. In regard to demographics, the informants ranged in age from 24 to 71. The interview sample reflected mixed genders--nine women and twelve men. The majority, today, would be considered middle class with perhaps 10 percent of the sample from a lower income bracket.
Thirty-seven percent had limited English proficiency, so I conducted the interviews in Spanish. The remainder were bilingual in Spanish and English and the majority of the interviews were conducted in English.

In recent years, ethnographic methods have been rightly questioned by anthropologists regarding researchers' subjective stance and their inability to be totally objective even while claiming the latter position. I find Alessandro Duranti's (1997:87) description of ethnography especially helpful to provide a framework for my research:

Writing ethnography implies the understanding of several, sometimes contradictory, sometimes complementary points of view. A successful ethnography, then, is not a method of writing in which the observer assumes one perspective--whether “distant” or “near”--, but a style in which the researcher establishes a dialogue between different viewpoints and voices, including those of the people studied, of the ethnographer, and of his disciplinary preferences.

From this angle, I acted as a co-participant in the construction of discourse with the informants of this study and therefore take responsibility for producing a cultural account. Akin to Duranti’s thought, an interpretive approach championed by Clifford Geertz (1973:14) also underscores that the ethnographer enters the conceptual world of those she or he is studying, mediates cultural experience, communicates with the subjects, and promotes dialogue, thereby expanding “the universe of human discourse.” As mentioned previously, I collected much of the data through interviewing community members. Charles Briggs (1986:10) challenges the notion that we truly “understand the nature of the interview as a communicative event and of the metacommunicative norms it presupposes.” Metacommunicative norms are ways of making meaning and generating understanding in a shared communicative event within a certain speech community. A metacommunicative impasse occurs in an interview context when, as researchers, we may belong to a different ethnic group or social class that possesses unique speech repertoires different from that of interviewees. As Briggs
asserts, my job as ethnographer was that of analyzing the "contextualization cues" that "provide interpretive frameworks for deciphering the meaning of other participants' signals and for shaping one's own contribution" (1986: 72). Acquiring metacommunicative competence requires practice and I became keenly aware that interviewing is a complex communicative event, requiring analysis of metacommunicative norms and critique of methodological interference.

Considering Geertz' (1973:14) comment then, metacommunicative norms may prevent researchers from completely entering into the conceptual world of those we study. Although I may not have been able to completely enter the conceptual world of the informants, participant observation, subsequent interviews, and networking facilitated the development of confianza-based relationships. The women seemed more at ease with me in the interviews, allowing us oftentimes to digress to topics about children and families, not necessarily within the focus of the study, but nevertheless enhancing the relationship and the trust between us. With all the informants, I developed rapport by talking about family, or things we had in common, before I moved to asking more structured questions. I made every attempt not to ask leading questions that might elicit a certain response. I used questions as a guide for the research, but often allowed participants to digress--aiding my attempts to understand their speech norms and to obtain information different from my communicative norm. Interviews, by nature, occur in a context that is impossible to recreate in a written document. Typed transcription of an interview is thought to represent only the skeleton of speech (McMahan 1989; Rommetveit 1974), void of gestures, body language, tone and inflection, pauses and facial expression (metacommunicative elements). In this document, I avoided "cleaning up" transcription excerpts relating to grammar, the use of the vernacular, or

---

1 Confianza, in this case, translates as trust and is significant in social interactions in the Latino community, providing an underlying base of reciprocity (Alvarez 1987: 57).
hesitations in thought. I did eliminate an occasional hesitation, and um’s, ah’s, and oh’s where it did not affect meaning or tone of the passage. My objective was to capture the colloquial nature of the vernacular as much as possible in contrast to standard written English or Spanish (both the English and Spanish transcriptions have colloquial features).

Census Data

McMinnville is situated among picturesque hillsides, 50 miles east of the Oregon coast, 36 miles southwest of Portland, and 25 miles north of the state capitol, Salem. The city is surrounded by agricultural farmland, a landscape ideal for grape vineyards and the cultivation of beans, nuts, and strawberries. Cascade Steel Rolling Mill, Evergreen International, and Monrovia Nursery employ the largest number of community members. McMinnville is home to Linfield College and a branch of Chemeketa Community College. Population numbered 22,880 in 1996. In Yamhill County, the population is predominantly Caucasian (94.8%) while the Hispanic community makes up 6.3% of the total population (Bolt 1996:78). According to 1993 Census Bureau statistics, Oregon’s Hispanic-origin population totaled 4.8% in comparison to 8.9% nationally. Current population projections predict increased diversity and a growing minority population statewide. The Hispanic population in Oregon increased 71.2% in the 1980s; in Yamhill County the increase was 125.5%. Census statistics reflect the current ethnic diversity (refer to the following tables). The term Hispanic refers to an ethnic classification applied to people who define themselves to be of Spanish origin. A person could therefore be counted as Caucasian or African-American, Native American, or Asian, and also be counted as being of Hispanic origin,
accounting for a total percentage greater than 100% (1990 U. S. Census Bureau). The majority of Hispanics in Yamhill County are of Mexican descent.  

TABLE 1: Yamhill County 1994 Estimated Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>72,800</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnic Distribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE 2: Yamhill County Total Hispanic Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Hispanic population:</th>
<th>4332 (6.3%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>McMinnville</td>
<td>1394 Mexican</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26 Cuban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>109 Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Classification is often problematic, reflective of official discourse, rather than an emic or self-identification. Among “peoples of Spanish origin,” “Chicano” or “La raza” has come to connote a political awareness and an ethnic pride often preferred by young people whereas “Mexican-American” or “Hispano” separates older individuals born in Texas or the southwest from the “Mexicanos.” Visual

2This information is now available because the U. S. Census Bureau has recently recognized the sub-grouping “Mexican origin” within the “Spanish origin” category.
artist Guillermo Gómez Peña (1988:128) contends that he cannot respond with just one word when asked for his nationality or ethnic identity, since [his] ‘identity’ possesses multiple repertoires: “I am Mexican but I am also Chicano and Latin American. At the border they call me chilango or mequillo; in Mexico City it’s pocho or norteno. The Anglos call me ‘Hispanic’ or ‘Latino’ . . . . [I] walk amid the rubble of the Tower of Babel of American post-modernity.” From Gómez’ perspective then, our polyglot, increasingly diverse nation resists forces aimed at reduction. Given the problems with classification and naming, I refer to the informants in this study as Latinos or by their country of origin. In chapter III, the reader will find a further discussion of language in relation to identity.

Robert Moore (1992: 317) reminds us that “an integral part of any culture is its language. . . . language reflects that society’s attitudes and thinking. Language not only expresses ideas and concepts, it actually shapes thought.” Riggins (1997: 2) claims the Self tends to homogenize, stereotype, and distance itself from the Other in creating its own identity. Through this process of self-definition, we, as individuals, as communities, and as nations tend to set ourselves apart from Others through the use of language, frequently stereotyping others as different and uniform in nature while simultaneously maintaining our individual, or group identity. Although the negotiation of identities plays out through language often in relation to power and privilege, socially constructing both Self and the Other often reduces plurality to simplistic, homogeneous categorization. Naming, whether reflective of age, gender, or ethnicity, tends to degrade people and to diminish the polyphonic voices of diversity that produce difference. The Spanish language and certain cultural characteristics unify the Latino population in McMinnville; however, this study will reveal the multicultural nature of the community rather than its uniformity.
**Sociopolitical Forces / Government Policy**

This section is an overview; many of the issues discussed here will be dealt with in more detail in subsequent chapters in relation to the participant's stories. First, I will consider sociopolitical, historical forces influencing migratory change in a macro context, that is globally, then from a micro perspective, or specific to the northwest and Oregon. Several scholars (Harris 1995; Castles & Miller 1993; Gould & Findlay 1994) assert that international migration is reshaping societies and politics on a global level. Castles and Miller (1993:5) identify the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina as classical countries of immigration. Specific to the U.S., the most recent influx of immigrants have come from Asia, Mexico, and other countries of Latin America in the last two to three decades.

Despite the long history of immigration to the U.S., a suspicion of the latest immigrant group to arrive dates back to the days of Benjamin Franklin: “Why should the Palatine Boors [Germans] be suffered to swarm into our Settlements, and by herding together, establish their Language and Manners, to the Exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them?” (quoted in Conklin and Lourie 1983:69). Franklin clearly demonstrates an attitude of superiority while strikingly not conscious of his own attitude of exclusion. After World War I, Germans in the United States were mistrusted, and the existing bilingual German-English schools that originated in the colonial era were suddenly suspect and targets of nativist tendencies. Nativism, a “norm-oriented” collective behavior “envisions the restoration, protection, modification, or creation of social norms” (Tatalovich 1997:6).

Nativism has produced a number of distinct movements in the history of the United States--the American Protection Association of the 1890s, the Nativism of the 1930s, the Klu Klux Klan, and the English Only movement of the 1980s and
'90s. Nigel Harris (1995:89) poses the plea that "threats to the state raise the need to reinvent social homogeneity as an aid to maintaining loyalty." For many governments, loyalty, stability, and homogeneity create the very foundation of social order. In the United States, nativist tendencies and political sovereignty have historically been at odds with labor requirements and the ever diversifying social fabric of U. S. society.

To maintain a preconceived notion of social order, the U. S. Congress has often been divided in efforts to protect the American way of life and to meet the demand for labor while giving full political enfranchisement and civil rights to its minority populations. Immigration policy has played and continues to play a key role. The United States, historically, has focused on controlling the flow of immigration:

Uncontrolled immigration is one of the greatest threats to the future of this nation, to American values, traditions, institutions, to our public culture and to our way of life. . . we intend to clearly exercise the first and primary responsibility of a sovereign nation which is to control its borders (From the Simpson-Mazzoli bill, Immigration Reform and Control Act, 1982, reported in the Economist, 21 August 1982:32).

Official discourse such as this fuels fear, creating images of fragmentation, a disintegrating polity, and eroding American lifeways. Such fears wax and wane, often intensifying during periods of economic decline. Castles and Miller (1993: 13) explain how official discourse, continuing immigration, and increasing ethnic diversity are threatening to many:

One of the dominant images in the highly-developed countries today is that of masses of people flowing in from the poor South and the turbulent East, taking away jobs, pushing up housing prices and overloading social services. Migration and minorities are seen as a danger to living standards, lifestyles, and social cohesion. Extreme-right parties have grown and flourished through anti-immigration campaigns. Hostility to immigrant and ethnic minorities has become a major political issue in most countries of immigration.
Governmental policy which rejects pluralism tends to turn immigrants and
migrants into marginalized ethnic minorities. Immigration policy in the 20th
century has been characterized by periods of restrictive provisions, imposing
national origin quotas favoring Europeans, excluding certain groups of people
(Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Catholics) even deporting "undesirables." However,
when labor is in short supply, government policy is amended or contracts made
with foreign governments, leaving the door further ajar.

For example, during World War II and the postwar period, the United States
government contracted with the Mexican government to bring millions of Mexican
laborers to the United States, especially the southwest and northwest, where a
shortage of agricultural workers threatened great crop loss and financial ruin.
Railway corporations convinced the War Manpower Commission in 1942 to assign
braceros [interpreted as hired hands] to railway construction and maintenance. It
is estimated that 85,000 Mexican nationals worked on 24 railroads by the year 1946.
In the decade of 1950 to 1960 more than 3,300,000 Mexican Nationals, braceros,
worked on 275 crop areas throughout the nation (Galarza 1964). Although the
Bracero contract withheld 10% of wages in a Mexican bank to encourage
repatriation, scores of men stayed in the U. S. and eventually gained permanent
status or immigrated at a later date. Substantial numbers of former braceros,
many times accompanied by their families and friends, continued to migrate to
Oregon and Washington for seasonal work even after the U. S. and Mexican
governments terminated the Bracero contract in 1964. The current population of
Chicanos in the Pacific Northwest, as well as in many other parts of the nation, had
its genesis in the U.S.-conceived and sponsored Bracero program of World War II.
In this respect, the bracero functioned as a conduit of Mexican immigrants to many
Chicano communities throughout the United States (Gamboa 1990:131).

As will be detailed in chapter II, in addition to Mexican nationals, a stream
of Mexican-American migrant workers came to Oregon and the Willamette Valley
During the 1950s and ‘60s. During the national labor shortage crisis which led to the Bracero program, the government actively recruited workers from the U.S., including women and children, in both agriculture and railroad work. Chicanos migrated from Texas, Arizona and the southwest to Oregon and Washington to escape decrepit housing, and poor health conditions. Moreover, increased numbers of Mexican nationals immigrating to the border states seeking work saturated the agricultural labor market, driving north migrant workers born in the United States. Some Chicanos fled the discrimination in the southwestern states—repulsed by signs like “No Niggers, Dogs, or Mexicans Allowed” (Powell 1990:6). Current and Martinez Infante (1958:25) claim that the majority of migrant workers of Spanish heritage in the late ‘50s were U.S. citizens; the Spanish-Americans who came to the northwest were mostly from Texas (61%). This information is crucial in understanding that Mexicans and Mexican Americans are not new to Yamhill County, rather, they have been an integral part of its formation for decades.

While agricultural workers in the 1960s continued to migrate from the southwest and Mexico to Oregon and Washington, federal government policy in 1965 eliminated racial criteria from the immigration law and raised the ceilings for quota admissions, establishing a more egalitarian system. As a result, the bulk of immigration shifted from European nations to Asia and Latin America. The law established a preference system, so that legal immigrants and U.S. citizens could petition to bring family members from other countries to reunite families (quoted in Chavez 1992:15). Even though the U.S. and Mexico have been integrated for over a century through the flow of goods, people, and capital, increasing illegal immigration in the ‘80s, primarily from Mexico, motivated passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 which gave amnesty to millions of undocumented residents. Responding in part to a dependence on illegal workers for seasonal agricultural work, the 1986 ICRA provided limited amnesty for undocumented workers and may also have contributed to the increase in
Oregon's population and migration. Nearly two million seasonal workers applied for legal status nationwide in 1988; in Oregon they numbered 31,000 (Church 1995). The following table represents population growth from 1960 to 1990 in Yamhill County.³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Hispanic Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>70000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>60000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>50000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>40000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Currently, overall, of the million or more immigrants who come to the United States annually, 700,000 are legal permanent aliens, 200,000 to 300,000 are undocumented (Heppell and Torres 1995). The majority of legal and illegal immigrants are from Mexico, a key factor contributing to an ongoing political debate to control the border and which, in 1996, led to legislation tightening border enforcement and making asylum more difficult to obtain. As migration studies indicate, when the discrepancies in income levels and lifestyle between countries on either side of a border persist, people will continue to cross irrespective of policing and border control. Migration theories often refer to a “push-pull” concept: Push factors affecting movement from a country of origin often include: A decline in national resources, loss of employment, oppressive discriminatory

³ In 1960 and 1970, Hispanics classified themselves as “White.” No data available.
treatment, departure due to lack of personal opportunity, and retreat due to catastrophe (Sayers and Weaver 1976). Better opportunities for employment, improved wages, opportunities to obtain further education or training, preferable living conditions, and the lure of a new or different environment contribute to the "pull" factors which attract immigrants to a new country. Research predicts, in the 21st century, that states around the world will be increasingly affected by international migration. According to the push-pull model, large numbers of peoples will be impelled to seek better living standards, to seek political and economic stability, or to avoid ethnic strife. In addition, newly developed free trade areas encourage movements of labor.

Even while discourse to tighten border control is debated in Congress, the agricultural industry is promoting legislation to revive a version of the old Bracero program (therefore opening the border to specific workers)--called the agricultural guest worker program. Unlike the old Bracero program, the guest worker program doesn't provide housing for agricultural workers, only a sum of money which the opposition states is insufficient. Under the original program, medical insurance and worker's compensation were included and workers were paid wages comparable to domestic workers doing the same work; the new plan only provides worker's compensation and pays minimum wage. Latino leaders and civil rights activists in the United States organized a summit in September of this year to oppose the new legislation, asserting that "lo único que se pretende es abaratar aún más la mano de obra agrícola, perpetuar las pobres condiciones de vida de estos trabajadores y que resultará en un alza de la inmigración indocumentada" (Hastings 1998). The Clinton administration, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer of California, and the UFW oppose the program. Agricultural growers and producers support the program. Oregon’s nursery industry is lobbying for the

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4 the only thing it will do is to lower even more the value of agricultural work, perpetuating poor living conditions for the workers and it will result in an increase in undocumented immigration.
guest worker program to allow 10,000 to 30,000 undocumented migrant workers to obtain work permits. Gordon Smith proposed the bill and has gained support in Congress. HR 2377, introduced by Bob Smith, amends the Immigration and Nationality Act to establish a 24-month pilot program to allow temporary workers to enter the country, claiming that there is a shortage of labor (Walker 1998). In his testimony for the joint hearing before the Subcommittee on Risk Management and Specialty Crops of the Committee on Agriculture and the Subcommittee on Immigration in December of 1995, Senator Goldstein stated:

The H-2A growers in sugarcane, apples and tobacco are so addicted to foreign workers that they have also engaged in systematic campaigns to get rid of large groups of domestic workers who have applied for work to them. The agricultural industry would establish a massive new non-immigrant program that would eliminate the few protections that U.S. and foreign workers have against mistreatment. . . . There would be no effective test of the domestic labor market to determine whether there was a true labor shortage or whether employment terms would adversely affect the wages and working conditions of U.S. workers. . . . The proposal is cleverly designed to prevent any real government enforcement. . . . [and] would harm an already pressed U.S. labor market and would permit mistreatment of vulnerable foreign workers (U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Agriculture 1995).

Those who oppose the new guest worker proposal insist it will perpetuate migration patterns that encourage further legal and illegal migration. Several authors assert that increased migration is inevitable in an integrating world economy--thus capitalism and the global marketplace perpetuate the movement of workers from one country to another (Harris 1995). However, it is impossible to overlook the contradictions: The growers claim there is a shortage of domestic workers; the Bureau of Labor's data negates that statement. Latino leaders assert it will continue to degrade and exploit agricultural workers, adding foreign workers to the exploited. The new program will perpetuate a dependence on foreign workers rather than take responsible action to train and protect domestic workers.
Notions of Community

Around the world, the draw to economic opportunity, creates what Luin Goldring (1996) calls “transnational communities.” Recent research confirms that social networks play a key role in establishing migrant circuits of workers, perpetuating the notion of transnational communities regardless of governmental policy and immigration reform:

In many villages and small towns in Mexico, particularly in the rural west-central region, transnational migration has become institutionalized as a community tradition while, in many U. S. cities, large and well-developed Mexican settlements have been able to emerge. Moreover, given the emphasis on movement back and forth and the concomitant circulation of money, goods, and services, “transnational migrant circuits” have become increasingly important. Just as capitalists have responded to the new forms of economic internationalism by establishing transnational corporations, so Mexican workers have responded by creating transnational circuits (Rouse 1989:10).

This study confirms the existence of migrant circuits and social networks perpetuating migration to Oregon. Further study in Yamhill County is necessary to evaluate the extent of binational communities and the flow of money, goods, and services.

Migration studies today describe a web of interrelationships that constitute a migrant network, asserting that migration from Mexico to the U. S. is an inherently social enterprise (Massey 1986). Kinship social organization provides a secure foundation for relatives to aid and assist each other. In the United States, friends, neighbors, and relatives help each other find housing, often living together temporarily; they pool resources, loan money to each other, share job information, and care for each other's children as they adjust to a new community. Massey (1986:104) claims that “relations are not created by the migratory process, but molded to it . . . and paisanaje \( ^5 \) [is] woven into a social fabric that provides migrants with a valuable adaptive resource in a strange new environment.” The

\( ^5 \) country man; fellowship
diverse, transnational communities of today underline a need for studies that consider how people organize their lives, define their hopes and goals, and interpret their world.

With community studies becoming a subfield of urban anthropology, the notion of community is continually developing as scholars attempt to describe and redefine the concept in today's complex societies. Anderson (1983: 7) suggests communities are imagined as "a deep, horizontal comradeship." In his view, members are not limited by geographical space; they are able to imagine an interconnectedness, sharing equally in the membership of the community. Chavez (1994: 54) claims this notion allows for a redefinition of community where "immigrants can live in binational communities, extended communities, or transnational communities." Living on one side of a border does not necessarily preclude withdrawing from community life or membership on the other side. Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 9) query "what it means, at the end of the twentieth century, to speak of a 'native land.' What processes rather than essences are involved in present experiences of cultural identity?" Chavez (1994: 55) suggests the queries about discrete categories of community membership are a product of academic needs, rather than the ambiguous, changing, and pragmatic perceptions of migrants themselves.

No studies were conducted examining social networks of the migrant circuits of 1950's and '60s--of the migrant families who moved annually to follow the harvests from Texas into Arizona, California, Oregon, and Washington. Similar findings about communities may have been documented. Rather than transnational, the communities were "transregional." Many families left established homes and communities in Texas and the southwest to migrate to the northwest, creating new communities and social networks in Oregon. Many stayed permanently in Oregon, electing to return to their southwest communities only
occasionally. Those families have become an integral part of the community over the years and form the foundation of the Latino community in Yamhill County.

To recap, this study will contribute to understanding how the participants in this study are active agents in their own history and in the history of Yamhill County embedded in a context of hopes, dreams, and aspirations. The face of the population in Yamhill County is changing. Transculturation of the '90s asks us to redefine who we are as we become a more complex, multicultural diverse world in the 21st century. Throughout this document, the reader is invited to cross representational borders and boundaries thereby contributing to further generation of meaning and redefinition.
CHAPTER II

Early Migration and Immigration

This chapter draws connections between the historical forces generating migration and immigration, placing the stories of the informants in a context of both sociopolitical change and their personal context of hopes and aspirations which motivated them to settle down or immigrate to a new area.

Diaries of Spanish explorers and traders confirm the presence of Spanish-speaking people as early as the 17th century in Oregon. Several expeditions explored the Pacific Coast--the explorers surveyed, created maps, and named coastal sites such as Cape Blanco, Manzanita, Yaquina Bay, and Heceta Head (Beals 1995). Overland immigration to Oregon dates back to the 1800s, the well-worn Oregon Trail, and stories of adventurous pioneers seeking a better life. In 1869 the Board of Statistics, Immigration and Labor Exchange was formed in Portland to promote further settlement of the Oregon territory and to provide immigrants with employment. To increase the wealth of the state, by 1877, numerous descriptive pamphlets and maps, distributed by railroad companies in the east, enticed migrants to venture over the Rocky mountains into Oregon and Washington (Bancroft Works 1961).

Little is documented about the early settlement of Latinos in Oregon, but Mexican superiority in the art of mule-skinning was widely acknowledged. Mexican sheepherders cared for the sheep that grazed in eastern Oregon during the latter quarter of the 19th century (Slatta 1976:328). Passages reflecting Spanish or Mexican influence exist about the “Oregon horseman who had a saddle, of the Spanish kind--a Spanish-bit bridle--a large Spanish spur with prods . . . . his horse was generally of Spanish or Indian stock, and [was] driven into the enclosure (or corral, as the Mexicans say)” but no histories have been recorded that compare to the heroic stories of Ewing Young, William T. Newby, and Jesse Applegate,
considered pioneers and leaders in the early days of Oregon’s history (Armstrong 1969: 41-2). Vaqueros brought their fine horsemanship to Oregon in the late 1800s; the vaquero tradition survives today and has influenced many generations of horsemen. Although recorded histories are few, corridos (ballads) do, however, tell the story of the thousands of immigrants who fled hunger, poverty, and political upheaval in Mexico:

**Corrido del Inmigrante**

*México, mi patria,*

*Donde nací Mexicano,*

*Dame la bendición*

*De tu poderosa mano,*

*Voy a Estados Unidos*

*Para ganar la vida;*

*Adiós, mi tierra querida,*

*Te llevo en mi corazón.*

*No me condenen*

*Por dejar así mi tierra;*

*La culpa es de la pobreza*

*Y la necesidad.*

*Adiós, lindo Guanajuato*

*Estado en que yo nací,*

*Voy a Estados Unidos,*

*Lejos, muy lejos de ti.*

—(Davis 1990:8)

History, religion, and art intertwine in Latin American culture and often disseminate via music and oral traditions. Written accounts about Latinos began to emerge after World War II with the need for labor in the northwest. As mentioned
in Chapter I, the migrant/immigrant story worldwide is inextricably connected to a need for labor in one region, people seeking a better livelihood, and those who long for political autonomy. Stephen Castles (1989: 1) reminds us that "the result has been the unplanned development of ethnic and racial minorities throughout the developed world. . . everywhere the trend towards ethnic diversity is challenging prevailing ideas on national identity and culture." For a broader understanding, it is imperative to place this transformation in its social and historical context. What social or political processes influenced people of Mexican or Latin American descent to move to Oregon? When did they arrive? Why did they choose McMinnville and Yamhill County? The remainder of this chapter will focus on why Latinos migrated or immigrated to Yamhill County and how sociohistorical processes influenced their move.

The 1940s - '60s / The Bracero Program / Labor Shortages

In response to critical labor shortages related to World War II, the U. S. government contracted with the Mexican government in 1942 to import workers to harvest crops and build railroads throughout the United States. Public Law 45, commonly known as the Bracero program or the Emergency Farm Labor Program, was to provide adequate housing, fair pay, and full-time employment for millions of Mexican workers who crossed the border between 1942 and 1964. Although the Pacific Northwest seemed remote in contrast to the southwest or eastern part of the United States, the Willamette Valley produced superior crops in a setting ideal for cultivation: temperate climate, fertile soil, and abundant rain. Between 1942 and 1947, Mexican workers "made the difference between lost production and harvested crops in the Pacific Northwest states of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington" (Gamboa 1990: xi). In Yamhill County alone in the summer of 1945, Mexican nationals harvested 110 acres of beans, 1600 acres of corn, 200 acres of peaches, 36 acres of pears, and 2200 acres of plums (Telephone Register 1945). The Mexican
workers also provided indispensable help haying, hoeing and training hops, picking berries, onions, peas, and cherries: “One Yamhill County farmer in expressing appreciation for the harvest help he had been supplied with from the Dayton center [Eola Village], declared that the camp had practically changed the agricultural economy of the region during the war years by providing farmers with needed labor for important war crops” (Telephone Register 1945). Again, the corridos tell the story of the *bracero* laborers:

**DESDE MORELIA**

*Desde Morelia vine enganchado*  
*Ganar los dólares fue mi ilusión;*  
*Compré zapatos, compré sombrero*  
*Y hasta me puse pantalón.*

**FROM MORELIA**

*From Morelia I came as a *bracero,**  
*To earn dollars was my illusion.*  
*I bought shoes, I bought a sombrero,*  
*And even put on new pants.*

*Y ahora me encuentro*  
*Ya sin resuello,*  
*Soy zapatero de profesión*  
*Pero aquí dicen que soy camello*  
*Y a puro palo y a puro azadón.*

And now I find myself  
Breathless,  
I'm a shoemaker by profession  
But here they say I'm a camel  
And I work with just a shovel and a hoe.

Jorge Ortega signed on as a *bracero* from his home town in Unión, Jalisco, Mexico in the mid-1940s. According to his son, Diego Ortega, who now lives in McMinnville, Jorge's contract took him to Encenitas, California, near San Diego. He worked in the agricultural program, moving from San Isidro to Calexico following the harvests. At the end of his contract, he returned to Mexico to reunite with his family. Following a request from the farm owner--his previous boss--he came back to California with his family in 1970. His son retells his story, recalling how he, too, worked long hours in the fields as a migrant laborer alongside his father. Several of the informants spoke of the numbers of *braceros* who worked the fields in Texas, Arizona, and California. According to Diego, fewer *braceros* were contracted to work in Oregon than in the southwest. Diego moved to McMinnville independent of his family in 1996. His father, Jorge, now resides in
Tijuana, Mexico. Even though Jorge Ortega did not become part of the conduit influencing migration to Oregon, he is representative of the many men who worked as braceros and who returned later with their families at the request of growers.

Although Miguel Rodriguez did not come to Oregon as a bracero, he claims he was the first Mexican resident in McMinnville. Like many other young Mexicans, he was swept up by an appeal from the Roosevelt administration to help in the war effort. He was born in Mexico City and initially came to the United States to visit a cousin who was living in New York in the 1940s. Miguel was just finishing medical school in Mexico City at the age of 23 when he decided to travel through several eastern states and into California. On that trip, he investigated job opportunities in various hospitals as an assistant because he was not licensed as an M.D. in the United States. Influenced by Roosevelt’s plea, he returned to California and eventually migrated to Oregon in 1945. He fell in love with a young woman of German descent from McMinnville, eventually married her, and moved to McMinnville.

He was surprised to see doctors’ children picking strawberries and working in the fields: “To us in the city in Mexico, only the peasants picked crops.” He had been taught a contempt for “gringos” by his family, but had begun to question the beliefs of his family and what he viewed as discrimination between the “haves and have-nots” in Mexico. He realized the flaws in his family’s attitudes and that they had just as many “hang-ups” as people from other countries. During war time in Oregon he recalls seeing the people helping one another: “I saw the empathy, I didn’t see the prejudice. I found that there were people that were just as human as my people, as my relatives. You don’t have to look too far to find those who have kindness, understanding, sincerity, fairness, and who allowed you the opportunity to be yourself” (Interview 1: 4/10/98).
The majority of field workers in the 1940s and '50s were part of a migrant stream of Mexican-Americans and the Mexican nationals contracted by the Bracero program who came to Oregon and the Willamette Valley. Current and Martinez Infante (1959:25) estimate that the majority of migrant workers of Spanish heritage were U. S. citizens; thirteen percent were citizens of Mexico. The migrant stream was characterized by poverty, inequity, and abusive camps. Miguel's vision was to help the migrants out of poverty, help them to be self-sufficient, so they could control their own destiny. In his advocacy work, he was instrumental in initiating a state survey of farm labor camps. The Dayton labor camp, more commonly known as Eola Village, was the only permanent camp in the area, serving as a headquarters for the other mobile camps in Oregon, even allowing 75 to 100 Mexican nationals to remain in the county through the winters of 1943 to 1945 for badly needed farm help (Telephone Register 1945).

During the late '60s and early '70s, Miguel became an advocate for other Spanish-speaking community members in Yamhill County and was the assistant area director of the Valley Migrant League (VML): "Most of the people who came to us were in need, not [necessarily] the Mexican, not the farmworker, the people in need" (Interview 1: 4/10/98). The Valley Migrant League operated under a federal grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity as part of the federal government's war-on-poverty program. The project provided child care centers, summer schools, vocational and college education, housing assistance, and medical consulting services for low-income seasonal farmworkers and their families in seven counties of the lower Willamette valley (Kenyon 1969). Migrant opportunity centers located in Woodburn, Independence, Eola Village, and North Plains functioned as a locus for the program and its many services. In the mid-'40s, according to Miguel, farmworkers earned $.75 an hour in agriculture. Tractor work paid a dollar an hour. For a period of time, Miguel worked as a farm labor contractor, negotiating contracts with growers. He translated for migrant workers
so that they could make their own deal with the farmers. "I went with the people to translate for them and helped make the deal so they both understood where they were." (Interview 1: 4/10/98).

Miguel advocated a credo of opportunity and self-sufficiency. He believed education was the key out of subsistence living and found teachers to teach classes at Eola Village and at the Opportunity Center located on Grand Island, south of Dayton and McMinnville. For several decades over the span of the ‘60s into the late ‘80s, Miguel served on Governor McCall’s Commission on Youth, on the State Manpower Commission, as the chairman of the Yamhill County Farmworkers Association, and as a Hispanic liaison officer for the Yamhill County Community Action Agency (Parkinson 1987). Today Miguel is retired, and holds a respected place in the community for his commitment to civil rights and his pioneering support of the Latino population in Yamhill County.

**The 1960s - ‘70s / Agricultural Work and Migration**

Migration is the failure of roots. Displaced men are ecological victims. Between them and the sustaining earth a wedge has been driven. Eviction by droughts or dispossession by landlords, the impoverishment of the soil or conquest by arms - nature and man, separately or together, lay down the choice; move or die. Those who are able to break away do so, leaving a hostile world behind to face an uncertain one ahead (Galarza 1964: 17).

A migratory farm worker earns his primary income from temporary employment, often moving from one geographical location to another, following crop harvests and eventually returning to his original place of residence in the late fall after leaving home in the early spring. It is commonly referred to as the migrant cycle. The work is unsteady, lasting often only during the harvest season, subject to weather and crop failures. Many Oregonians are not aware of the valuable contributions migratory workers make to the state’s economy. In 1993,
crops that required seasonal workers—potatoes, beans, onions, fruits and nuts—constituted more than a quarter of the state’s $3 billion farm and ranch revenue (Church 1995). Agribusiness in Oregon generates more than $5 billion annually through productions, processing, and services. Oregon is one of the leading producers in the nation of fruits, vegetables, and horticultural products (Oregon Department of Agriculture 1994 n.d.: 3, 13). The thousands of migrant workers who migrated during the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s filled the deficit for needed farm labor. The seasonal workers migrated to Oregon as a result of active recruitment by the Oregon State Farm Placement Service, word of mouth from relatives, past contact with growers, or as a response to newspaper advertisements placed in other states (Balmer 1958). Their presence was and still is vital to successful cultivation, harvesting, and processing of Oregon’s crops. They are a vital link in the chain that brings food to our tables.

Six informants who had migrated to McMinnville and Yamhill County in the 1960s, all from Texas, tell of a distinct era in Oregon’s history. Their memories relate life in labor camps and the struggle out of poverty.

An old truck with the same sunburned skin as the hotels drove slowly down the street. The truck had a long bed full of migrants and a railing; the people looked as if they were surrounded by a fence. They were colored in sweat, shiny and smooth, and their smell mingled with the shadows and the onions they picked. Early evening air and summer onions. The boy wanted to know, wanted to be the sweat and the smells, wanted to be the deep blue in the sky that would be turning pink and orange in a matter of minutes, wanted to be the magic. “¡Cebolleros!” 6 his father yelled as the truck drove past them.

(Alire Saénz 1992)

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6Onion pickers
In connection with the Bracero program, Eola Village, a labor camp, was established eight miles from McMinnville, on the highway between Dayton and Amity:

Eola Village had 40 permanent homes that were two to four bedroom facilities, sort of like a military base. The Manpower Commission gave it to the State, the State gave it to the county, and it eventually became Eola Village for farmworkers and agriculture. There was a rec hall, and a store. About 240 shelters for agricultural workers were built afterwards” (Interview 1: 4/10/98).

Alejandro Martinez recalls the homes: “The buildings were homes—concrete steps, roofs, two-bedrooms with a little kitchen, and a washboard to wash clothes. It was decent” (Interview 5: 4/28/98).

The Martinez family came to Oregon from Texas in the 1960s. Cristina and Antonio met in San Ramón (now Bayview), Texas. He was from Mexico, she from Brownsville, Texas. Antonio worked in farm labor over the years in Texas as they raised their family, but work began to diminish with new technology and the invention of cotton picking machines. Cristina worked in a general store until she gave birth to their first child in 1947. Their oldest son, César, as a teenager, worked for three summers in California. When he announced that he wasn’t coming back to Texas because there was no work for him, the family decided to join him. Cristina recounts her son and husband working in the fields: “My son César could irrigate like an adult. My husband taught him. Irrigation is like a science. My husband was a hard, hard worker. I never heard him say, I’m tired, I don’t want to go to work today” (Interview 2: 4/13/98). Cristina and Antonio Martinez and their nine children migrated first to California looking for work, then to Yakima Valley to work in the asparagus harvest, ultimately moving permanently to Oregon in 1967.

It was a Friday afternoon at 5:00. I had everything all ready. I prided myself that my children never missed a day of school with all the moves. I made a big batch of tortillas and a big pan of
meat. I had this all ready for the kids for the trip. It was 5:00 in
the morning when we arrived. I never dreamed this would be
where we’d settle and where my husband would spend his last
days” (Interview 2: 4/13/98).

Cristina described picking asparagus as very hard. “The asparagus had to
be cut everyday. They gave my husband 7 acres. He had to cut the entire amount
in one day.” Juan and Amado helped their father for an hour in the morning, “then
they’d rush home, take a shower, and go to school, then help their dad after school”
(Interview 2: 4/13/98). In the spirit of the Oregon Trail pioneers, field workers like
Antonio carry on the legacy of sacrifice and hard work.

I’ve heard it said
hard work ennobles
the spirit--
If that is the case
the road to heaven
must be crowded
beyond belief.

----Luis Omar Salinas (In Ferriss
and Sandoval 1997)

The Martinez family earned $.40/hour in 1962--the same pay as in Texas.
They lived in the “shacks” in the labor camp on Grand Island before moving to the
Eola Village labor camp:

There were 50 houses with a shower and a little living room.
There were [also] about 20 cabins. We moved there in 1967, in
one of the homes. They charged us $50 a month rent. We stayed
there from 1967 to 1970. We wouldn’t accept welfare. You have
to know how to handle money. You spend little if you have little
(Interview 2: 4/13/98).

Her husband and children picked cucumbers, walnuts, and filberts during those
years. Cristina worked alongside her husband picking crops, noting the way
women in Oregon worked in the fields with their husbands. She remarked: “Back
in Texas, the women had maids and their fingernails were all shiny; you wouldn’t
see a farmer’s wife working out in the fields” (Interview 2: 4/13/98). Eventually, Antonio took a job laying drain tile in the fields for $1.25/hour and Cristina thought “they were going to kill him” after making $.40/hr. She assumed the increase in pay meant he would have to work that much harder. Soto reminds us of the hardworking men and women who work the fields:

Heaven must be crowded with farmworkers, shoulder to shoulder with men and women who worked the crops. Perhaps they are holding their grape knives, hoes, or pruning shears, their eyes stinging with dust but clearly seeing that what they did with their lives was to provide for others (Soto in Ferriss and Sandoval 1997:xvi)

In the 1960s, for personal advancement, Cristina took advantage of the opportunity to attend a winter day school located at Eola Village, sponsored by the Valley Migrant League. She received a stipend to attend classes and to be an ambassador for the educational program. As an ambassador, she traveled to Dayton, Eugene, and surrounding communities to recruit other students and to work in the VML office. She subsequently obtained a GED and a teaching certificate from Western Oregon State College (now WOU). The educational programs sponsored by the federal government and administered through the Valley Migrant League provided a means for Cristina and her family to improve their economic and social status. Cristina taught for ten years in the Woodburn school district and recently retired from the Amity School District.

Guadalupe Quiñones and her brother Ricardo also migrated from Texas with their family to Oregon in 1958. They have lived in the McMinnville community thirty-five years. Guadalupe and her brother were born in Lubbock, Texas. Their mother was from Rodeo, Durango, Mexico; their father from San Antonio, Texas. Guadalupe recalls attending first grade in Arizona where her family picked cotton, onions, chives, and grapefruits. When she was seven years old, her family settled outside of McMinnville and began looking for work as migrant laborers. Her family purchased a 17 acre farm next to Eola Village labor
camp in 1959. She recollects the camp: “The migrant workers came mostly from June through September to make money for the winter. The camp was almost vacated the rest of the year. In the ‘50s and ‘60s many migrant workers came from Texas” (Interview 9: 7/14/89). Ricardo tells of his earliest memories:

We made our first entry in this area in 1959. I worked at that time as a teenager on a place that used to be called Alderman farms. It was between Dayton and Salem. It was right in front of [where] Monrovia is now. Actually, Carlton nursery is on the property that used to be Alderman farms. That’s where we came the first year. Our first stop was in St. Paul to pick strawberries. Since we were born and raised in Texas, we followed the migrant crops from Texas year after year. There were eleven of us: my dad, my mom, five boys, and four girls. All of us live in Oregon today except one brother who lives in Idaho. Everything has changed in the last few years. At that time, [1959] there were a lot of people migrating from state to state, doing farm work. We had our chance to do that all the time; finally we stayed. My dad bought a place between Dayton and Amity. In 1960, my mom stayed there for the winter. It was a farm next to Eola Village (Interview 9: 7/14/98).

The Quiñones family all worked in the fields together, but the stream of workers started to diminish after child labor laws were passed in the early 1970s, making it illegal for children to work in the fields unless accompanied by their parents.

Many families stopped coming to Oregon from Texas because if their children who were part of their means of support couldn’t work, why would they come here? I remember Eola Village having as high as almost 2400 people [living] there at once. It was like a little city during the summer. Some people stayed during the winter, but very few (Interview 9: 7/14/98).

Guadalupe noted that the boycotts against crops organized by César Chavez and others also reduced the number of workers in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. Both Ricardo and Guadalupe supported Chavez’ efforts to address poverty and poor living conditions for the seasonal workers:

The only problem was the farmers were not ready to cope with some situations. They were having their own struggles to make ends meet. One year, I think it was 1960 or 1961, they lost their
crops because of too much rain and different things. But for the people who work for minimum wage, at the low end of the totem pole, the rent is still as high as the guy at the top of the totem pole. The gas and milk are the same. They don’t change the prices if you go in the store and say I work for minimum wage. All we’re looking for is equality. Somebody has to do the work. That’s a struggle that’s going to be here forever (Interview 9:7/14/98).

Under the leadership of César Chavez in the 1960s and ‘70s, Mexican American farmworkers united in California and Oregon to demand better living and working conditions for seasonal migrant workers. El Movimiento, the Chicano civil rights movement, ushered in a unique era in Oregon’s Hispanic history, serving to raise cultural consciousness of the issues confronting migrant workers. PCUN (Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste / Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United) continues the struggle for a state farmworker collective bargaining law, and for improved wages, working and living conditions among Mexican and Mexican descent farmworkers: “PCUN seeks to change the fundamental power dynamic between growers and workers, to counteract worker isolation and break the cycle of intimidation and turnover that undermine workplace organizing, and to improve the working and living conditions for farmworkers” (Dash 1996:16).

Automation and external factors have affected agribusiness in recent decades. Today, Ricardo considers competition from California, Canada, and Mexico as a key factor in the reduction of the berry production in Oregon. Pole beans are a thing of the past; farmers grow bush beans and pick with machines. Even though a distinct era that influenced social patterns and political change has given way to new means of production and economic organization, seasonal workers in Oregon continue to confront social and economic concerns such as low pay, no overtime pay, six-day work weeks, no medical insurance or retirements benefits, and the threat of layoffs, making PCUN’s presence essential yet often in tension with Oregon’s agribusiness and political objectives.
As a minister, Ricardo tended to the workers at Eola Village, and continues today to provide spiritual and communal support for Latino families. Guadalupe is a bilingual receptionist for the Yamhill County Health Department, providing a vital link in the network of Latino health care.

Julia Perón’s first recall of Oregon was in 1961 when her family migrated from Corpus Christi, Texas. She was in her teens and recalls picking beans in Independence with her parents:

One of my uncles heard about Eola Village, that there were better opportunities in the McMinnville area to have work every day because sometimes in Independence we might only work a couple of hours and then we’d be back home and we needed to work every day and all day. We wound up at Eola Village and picked beans there for the season. Then we went back to Idaho to pick potatoes.

Julia describes the migrant cycle:

You start out from your home base which is usually your home in Texas. You start out with the employment that begins the earliest and then you go to what comes next. We left in the spring and when we returned back home it was usually in the late fall after the last harvest. It would begin all over again the next spring. We came to Oregon for the strawberry and bean harvests. Winter was usually a down time for the children to go to school (Interview 8: 6/8/98).

Reflecting on the labor camp near McMinnville, Julia recalls: “Eola Village was one of the first labor camps to have actual houses, we referred to them as las casas grandes [the big houses]. They were two or three bedroom homes with running water and a kitchen which was a real luxury. And next to them were the cabinas, one room cabins with a little fire stove. You all had a common shower and bathroom facility that was right in the center. There used to be a tiendita [little store]. We didn’t spend a winter at Eola Village. We wintered in different houses in McMinnville when we did stay for the winter” (Interview 8: 6/8/98).

Julia expressed regret for the treatment the migrant workers received by Anglo community members:
The migrants were welcome as workers, but if they overstayed their welcome, the town was closed to them. “We welcome you with open arms as long as you are picking the crops.” We probably had a more positive experience growing up in MAC [McMinnville] because of programs like VML. It was a support system for families. They [VML] were constantly on the fighting line with agencies (Interview 8: 6/8/98).

Julia spoke confidently about the Valley Migrant League and its connection to John F. Kennedy’s vision of a “Great Society.” After Kennedy’s death, Lyndon Johnson continued many of the programs initiated by the Kennedy Administration. According to Julia,

the Office of Equal Opportunity opened all these programs through Congress. They had appropriated all these dollars to bring about more equity so that these dollars would provide training and educational opportunity, housing, and child care. It was quite a movement. I think it came into law in 1965. It was tied to the 14th Amendment when civil rights became law. As part of that the VML was established—which is dear to my heart. The League offered comprehensive services, with specialists for each area, including GEDs (Interview 8: 6/8/98).

The VML educational programs for migrant workers and their families allowed Julia to obtain her GED at the age of 20. She went on to study in the university and to complete a Master’s degree in Education and Administration. Today Julia directs the Migrant Education program for the Salem Public School district. She lives in Salem and is very involved in educational issues affecting Latino youth and their families.

To reiterate, Chicano families formed the early foundation of the Latino community in Yamhill County, especially in McMinnville, Dayton, and Amity.

The 1980s - ‘90s / Internationalization

As mentioned in Chapter I, an integrating world economy and the global marketplace perpetuate the movement of workers from one country to another. Castles (1989:106) counters the idea that migrations are simply responses to wage differentials. He asserts that departures
occur when capitalist penetration and the transformation of pre-capitalist societies has already begun: as the development of a money economy and competition from more advanced areas upsets existing forms of production and distribution, people lose their livelihoods, and are forced to seek entry into the modern sector of the economy" whether it be in a modern city in their country or whether they migrate to a more industrial nation.

As a result of downturns and capitalist penetration in Mexico, the economic crisis has brought into the migration stream many rural communities as well as urban centers that had not been traditional labor-exporters to the United States (Cornelius 1986). In relation to Mexican migration to the U. S., short-term cyclical migration has shifted considerably to permanent settlement in the 1980's and '90s. Braceros were young single males who returned to their villages or who immigrated at a later date; Mexican American migrants from Texas often moved together as a family. In the 1980s and '90s more women, children and families migrated to Oregon. Influenced by pre-established social networks and stories of opportunity, a continuing flow came from Mexico; an increasing number migrated from California as well as from Central and South America--those driven north by violence, discrimination, and war. The immigrant population today in Oregon, in many cases, is a socially heterogeneous, year-round, urban-dwelling entity.

Consistent with the literature, one informant who has lived in Yamhill County for over twenty years sees a change in Oregon agricultural business over the last five to ten years. He told of migrant workers who were staying, buying homes, and becoming part of the community. In his view, Monrovia Nursery has filled a gap--in that work is now available year round for 300 to 400 workers--encouraging men to stay and to bring their families to Oregon. The Amnesty legislation mentioned in Chapter I also played a role in providing a means for immigrant families to gain residency and settle permanently in Oregon. Alejandro Martinez worked for Chemeketa Community College in the 1980s for a program
which helped immigrants gain legal status during a period when a high number of immigrants came to the U. S. illegally seeking work:

It was part of the Amnesty law. It was a two-pronged program: the SAW program, Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, where a person who had been here a year prior could apply to be a legal resident and be authorized to work. The other part was if a person had been here for five or more years they could submit their documents and receive amnesty (Interview 5: 4/98).

The following stories confirm current research and validate the comments of these participants. Eight informants moved to Oregon in the late 1970s, '80s and '90s. Rather than move to follow the migrant farmworker stream, these people came to Oregon seeking a better livelihood and, in some cases, motivated by a desire to leave a large, sprawling urban environment in favor of a smaller, quieter, community.

Isabel Ovares works as a medical assistant at the Yamhill County health department. Isabel came from Cuidad Guzman located in the state of Jalisco, Mexico. Her father crossed the border in the 1970s to work in a sewing factory in California and eventually moved north to work in agriculture in Oregon. As do many workers, her father went back and forth from Ciudad Guzman to California and Oregon over the years. In 1979, the entire family settled in Oregon. Isabel's parents currently work on a dairy farm; she is thirty-one and has lived in McMinnville since she was twelve years old.

Tomas and Elena Rivera work for a local horticulture nursery and have lived in McMinnville since 1988. Like many immigrant stories, Tomas came to the area in 1986 for a vacation and to investigate the opportunities for work. He learned of work by word of mouth through amigos [friends]. He returned to their home in Mexicali, Mexico and returned two months later with the older children to work at Monrovia Nursery. He and the older boys worked for one year and made the decision to stay. In the beginning, they had temporary work Visas and eventually applied to the INS for resident status. Under the 1986 Amnesty
legislation, Tomas received permission to bring Elena and the four youngest children to Oregon two years later. The Riveras and their seven children all live in the northwest today. Tomas relates his perception of migration to Yamhill County, which correlates with current research:


The Riveras immigrated from the borderlands; the Vallejos ventured from further into the interior of Mexico--from Mexico City. Consistent with the push-pull concept, the Vallejo family came to Oregon seeking preferable living conditions. Luis Vallejo worked for one month in Washington before coming to Amity, Oregon in 1988. Unlike the social networks that help migrants and immigrants settle in a new community, Luis didn’t know anyone in Amity, nor did he speak English. Relatives lived in California, but it seemed too much like Mexico City, so Luis chose Amity for its tranquilidad [tranquility]. He initially found work cutting Christmas trees but due to the seasonal nature, he was eventually forced to work a series of temporary jobs in a cannery, a nursery, and in a dairy. He now builds cabinets for a shop near Amity. Luis had been a waiter in a restaurant for nineteen years and says that he has learned many new skills since he moved to Oregon. In contrast to working late nights and weekends in the restaurant industry, he prefers having weekends and evenings free to spend with his family and to be active in his church.

7 Here in Oregon it seems to me many people are coming here from California. It’s growing a lot. I think that the people come here because in California life is more difficult. There are many fights, many gangs, a lot of laziness, crime. And here, this town is very peaceful. They’re coming here, they’re buying houses, looking for work. The town is growing a lot.
Six months after his arrival, Luis' wife and two children moved from Mexico City to Oregon to join him in 1989. He and his wife, Marcela, are originally from Techoman, Colina. Luis describes their lives in Mexico City and their reasons for immigrating:

* Cuando nosotros vinimos aquí, nosotros estábamos viviendo en Mexico Distrito Federal. Allá vivimos por 19 años. Allá nacieron nuestros hijos. Pues como todas personas, vinimos, queríamos venir a trabajar para un mejor futuro. Para mejor futuro para nuestra familia. Yo tenía un buen trabajo o sea, vivíamos normalmente bien o sea que no andaba en el campo. Los últimos nueve años trabajé como mesero y ganaba más o menos bien. Pero ese dinero no nos alcanzaba para vivir como vivimos aquí. Es muy diferente claro. Hay menos comodidades. Allá en México hay menos. No hubiera podido tener un carro y ahora, gracias a Dios, mis hijos, tenemos dos hijos, cada quien tiene su carrito, yo tengo mi carro, mi esposa tiene su carro y en México no hubieramos podido*  

*When we came here, we were living in Mexico City. We lived there for 19 years. Our children were born there. Like most people, we came, we wanted to come to work for a better future. For a better future for our family. I had a good job, that is to say, we lived fairly well; we didn't work in the fields. The last nine years I worked as a waiter and I made a good salary, more or less. But that money didn't allow us to live how we live here. It's very different, of course. There are less comforts. In Mexico there is less. I couldn't of had a car and now, thanks to God, my children, I have two children, each one has his and her own car. I have my car, my wife has her car. In Mexico, we couldn't have had them.*

When Marcela first arrived she spent most of her time at home. In Mexico, she had been taking care of the children and did not work outside her home. After her arrival in Oregon, she occasionally helped Luis at the dairy, but the boss didn't pay her. She helped because she was bored at home and the children were in school. If she helped Luis, he could leave work earlier. He worked from 10:00pm until 3:30am, and then again from 6:30am until 12:00pm. Marcela continued to help Luis even though she didn't receive any wages. After two months, the boss realized that she was helping Luis often and started to pay her a small amount. When they worked together, they could get more done in a day and they earned a higher wage. Today, Marcela sews drapes for an international company.
Immigrant women’s experience often remains distinct from that of men. They continue to form the lowest segment in a labor market divided according to ethnicity and gender. Women seek work in domestic service, in garment and textile industries, agriculture, and canneries (Gabaccia 1994). Immigrant women many times provide unpaid labor in ethnic small businesses, providing a competitive edge that makes survival possible. In Marcela’s case, she may have provided a competitive edge for the dairy farmer, but she primarily worked unpaid to shorten Luis’ day, so that they could spend more time together as a family. Their family ties had already been stretched across national boundaries prior to her arrival with the children: “Yo quería que él regresara. Pero él no quiso, dice que voy a estar acá y vamos a esperar un tiempo. Y por eso, me vine. Quería venir pero pues... lo pensaba mucho. Dejar toda mi familia”¹ (Interview 10: 6/24/98).

In 1988, Luis received a temporary work visa which he then extended for another year. Subsequently the INS gave him a ten-year “green card.” He and Marcela can both apply for U.S. citizenship in one year. They are discussing the possibility of dual-citizenship with the Mexican consulate.

**Migration from California to Oregon**

The growth in the Latino population in Oregon has been attributed to geographic proximity to California and to social networks, both factors which bear out in this study as well. Six informants migrated from California to Oregon in the 1990s. Men are often the first to leave their home town seeking work. Reports of opportunity make their way back to family or friends via social networks. Friends and relatives are more likely to migrate if a network is in place. Newly arriving migrants often rely on their friends and family to help them adjust to the new

¹ I wanted him to return, but he didn’t want to. He said, I am going to be here and we’ll wait awhile. And so, I came. I wanted to come, but I had to think about it a lot to leave my whole family.
locality and to find employment. Through these networks, migration flows are sustained and reinforced.

David and Carmen Mirandé came from the Pasadena, Glendale area of California two and a half years ago. David came to the U.S. with his father in 1974, seeking political asylum from Cuba. Along with her mother, brother, and sister, Carmen immigrated to California from Mexico in 1974. She and David met in the '70s at the church they both attended in Glendale. They had been raising their four children in southern California until recently, when they decided to seek opportunity in Oregon because California's economy had been in recession for several years. David's work in real estate had not been as lucrative as they had hoped; the lack of opportunity and increasing gang-related problems in the Los Angeles area motivated Carmen and David to venture into new territory. David started a business in Yamhill County in 1996 as a real estate and mortgage broker, initially working out of a garage--returning to see his family in Glendale only on weekends. Eventually, Carmen and the children joined him: "We sold our home and put all our money in this home [in Dayton]. We had some friends that had moved here from L.A. about four years prior so we heard stories about the area" (Interview 14: 10/19/98).

Adjustment was difficult in the beginning for Carmen and David. David struggled for nearly two years to build up a clientele for his business. He started serving only Hispanic clients, but because their jobs often don't pay well and they have poor credit, his business grew very slowly. Today the clientele is a combination of Latino and Anglo and steadily growing. Carmen didn't want to leave her family and friends in L. A.--many claimed the Mirandés wouldn't be happy in a farming community after living in an urban setting. The LDS church played a key role in their adaptation to a new community:

They open up, they support you. There were times when we were just barely making it. There were times when people would just come and bring us bags of groceries. Not only
financially, but emotionally, they helped us a lot. It's the most wonderful thing about our church. No matter where we move, we know we'll have a family there. And that has helped us remarkably. If I had to go out and work, I know I could call a sister and say, 'Could you take care of my children?' and I know they would be taken care of. That is a great blessing" (Interview 14: 10/19/98).

The Anglo and Latino families of the LDS church help each other in times of need. The young Latino couples who had moved to Oregon from Glendale related their experiences to friends and family in California; in a short time, Ernesto and Gloria Gonzales came to Yamhill County. They lived with David and Carmen for two months when they first arrived until they found work and housing. Another family recently arrived from California and were living with David and Carmen until they got settled. Referring to the new families moving from California, Carmen says, “So far we have five families who have come, all young couples who want to start a family and who don’t want to deal with having children growing up in Los Angeles. We’re all from different areas, but we knew each other from church” (Interview 14: 10/19/98). Newly arriving migrants to Yamhill County have, indeed, found financial, social, and spiritual support among their friends and church members, providing a crucial link in their adjustment to a new locality.

Gloria and Ernesto Gonzales are friends from the church--one of the Latino families who came to McMinnville after hearing about la tranquilidad [the tranquility] from David and Carmen.

Gloria Gonzales met her husband, Ernesto, in Los Angeles three years ago while visiting her sister. Gloria and Ernesto were born in Mexico. They have two young children. She has a licenciatura (similar to a Bachelors degree) in Chemistry from la Universidad Autónoma de Puebla but works part-time as a secretary/receptionist in McMinnville. Ernesto worked for the feed and supply store in McMinnville for several years and now works for Safeway. They moved to McMinnville from Glendale, California in 1996. Gloria "prefers to feel part of a
community" so they came to McMinnville in search of a small, quiet setting. L. A. was too big, plagued with crime, gangs, and inner city problems. She didn't feel safe, motivating her to migrate from an urban to a rural environment.

Once socioeconomic factors propel people to migrate or immigrate to a new locale or society, their journey takes them into a new context, marked by crossing a national or international border. Chapter III explores the ideas of ethnicity, identity, community building and how it has shaped Latino context and experience in Yamhill County. As I state in the introduction, the voices of the participants express how they interpret that context and ways in which they are shaping it to be their own.
CHAPTER III

Ethnicity / Identity / Community

Ethnicity, as a concept, often arises when two or more groups make contact. Thus, ethnic awareness and self-identification emerges in the context of conquest, when colonizers collide with indigenous populations, or when diverse populations come in contact due to migration or immigration. Mary Louise Pratt (1992:4) identifies contact zones as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism [or] slavery.” In the aftermath of the 1848 treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, thousands of Mexicans suddenly became legal citizens of the United States, obtaining full rights under the Constitution. In a newly created contact zone, the Mexicans were considered inferior by ethnocentric Anglo immigrants who migrated into the homeland of thousands of Mexicans. The influx of Anglo American immigrants into Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and California eventually changed the social fabric, placing Mexican Americans on a lower class rung subject to prejudice and discrimination. As a result of interethnic contact, Gutiérrez (1197: 28) asserts that “American prejudices and discriminatory practices helped lay the foundation for the gradual emergence and development of new forms of ethnic awareness among the Spanish-speaking population of the Southwest.” External discriminatory practices served as a catalyst in forging a new identity, causing the Mexican American populace (Spanish-speaking elite and working class mestizo) to reconstruct an ethnic identity, a shared feeling of peoplehood, taking into consideration their common cultural heritage and their new political status as American citizens.

The contact between peoples of different ethnicity in the late 19th century marked the beginning of an ethnic awareness, the concept of a larger panethnic community, *La Raza* (the people), and the Chicano movement. Gutiérrez (1997:36)
explains Griswold del Castillo's description of the term *La Raza*: "In general the use of "La Raza" implied membership in a cultural tradition that was separate from the *norteamericanos*. The terms *La Raza, La Raza Mexicana* or *La Raza Latina* served an instrumental purpose, in this case as an oppositional strategy, to counter the common discrimination and to create a unified voice for Spanish-speaking peoples. Scholars in the late 20th century debate the issue of panethnicity, a common Latin American origin, suggesting that panethnicity implies homogenization—an obvious negation of the diverse political, linguistic, historical, and religious experiences that make up the countries of Mexico and Latin America. Jones-Correa and Leal (1996:218) view Latino panethnicity as a complex phenomenon; people do not primarily identify as members of a Hispanic or Latino community, rather, many prefer to identify with their nationality:

One needs to think about panethnicity as part of a constellation of individuals' multiple identifications and that individuals may manage these identities in very different ways. . . . People who choose a panethnic identifier [Hispanic or Latino] seem to do so in general, regardless of the specific circumstances and apart from any strategic consideration. Nor is it a feeling of solidarity with the political interest of other Latin American-origin groups. Panethnicity seems to have more to do with a general approach to politics, in which panethnic identification lies latent but surfaces on particular issues.

Scholars will continue to ask questions, ferreting out new perspectives regarding the complexity of ethnic identification. Some of the data suggests that Latino identity is largely constructed in the United States, rather than in their home countries by migrants or immigrants themselves. The informants in this study in Yamhill County, as Jones-Correa and Leal suggest, often refer to themselves and others by place of origin:

Regarding the immigrant population in McMinnville, some are from Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Argentina. The vast majority are from Mexico. Even among them, there's differences. The people from Michoacan are different from Colina, from Guanajuato, from D. F., they're also different from the rest of the population. And the people from the border states, Baja,
California, Chihuahua. They're different from the people inland. It's kinda like someone growing up in Oregon and someone growing up in Massachusetts. There's cultural differences even though they speak the same language. Someone from California or from Alabama. Same thing about people from Mexico. People from Oaxaca, Spanish is their second language because their first language is an indigenous language. (Interview 3: 4/98).

I educated them [the growers and Anglo community] to the fact that they were not "Mexicans," they were from Ecuador, from Peru, from Bolivia, from Paraguay, from Argentina, from Mexico, from Chile, from you name it-sixteen nations. But they all look alike. I said, well, yeah, ignorance is a fact. We all see a guy with a feather and we call him an Indian (Interview 1: 4/98).

There are Mexican-Americans and Mexicans. There are many of us, especially Texans who came along with the state when the United States took Texas. Some of our ancestors have been there forever. I grew up in Texas. Texas has aristocratic families who came straight from Spain and settled there. My kids are fifth generation Americans on my husband's side, third generation Americans on my side, we've been here forever. One of the things that the people say, "Why don't these Mexicans go back where they came from?" Well, we don't have very far to go. We came from Texas or Arizona or California. Some of us never crossed any border. That's just the way it is (Interview 4:4/24/98).

Defining ethnic identity and ethnicity is often as complex and contradictory as the increasingly diverse, multicultural world in which we live. Since a high percentage of Latinos in Yamhill County are either from Mexico or of Mexican-American origin, much of this chapter examines issues of identity and ethnicity through their stories, but common threads run throughout the experience of those from other Latin American countries.

**Legal Alien**

Bi-lingual, Bi-cultural,
able to slip from "How's life?"
to "Me'stan volviendo loca"
able to sit in a paneled office
drafting memos in smooth English,
able to order in fluent Spanish
at a Mexican restaurant,
American but hyphenated,
viewed by Anglos as perhaps exotic,
perhaps inferior, definitely different,
viewed by Mexicans as alien,
(their eyes say, "you may speak
Spanish but you're not like me")
an American to Mexicans
a Mexican to Americans
a handy token
sliding back and forth
between the fringes of both worlds
by smiling
by masking the discomfort
of being pre-judged
Bi-laterally

----Pat Mora (In Infinite Divisions 1993)

As Pat Mora suggests, she “slides back and forth” and is judged as different by both Anglo and Mexican culture. How does she define her self-identity and where she belongs? Social scientists today generally agree that ethnic identity is a process and is constructed through social, historical and cultural forces. During this process of self-definition and self-construction, we as individuals, as communities, and as nations tend to set ourselves apart from Others through the use of language (“you may speak Spanish, but you're not like me”), frequently stereotyping others as different and uniform in nature while simultaneously maintaining our individual or group identity. Citing Hall, in regard to discourse, Riggins (1997: 4) reiterates that production of self-identity is an on-going process, never complete: “For a person to develop a self-identity, he or she must generate discourses of both difference and similarity and must reject and embrace specific identities. . . . the Self is continually negotiating several identities simultaneously.” Although the negotiation of identities often plays out through language in relation to power and privilege, socially constructing both Self and the Other is subject to reducing plurality to simplistic, homogeneous categorization.
Is the process of American identity-building by nature reductive and schizophrenic for those who don't fit a Eurocentric norm? Is rejecting familial roots to assimilate necessarily part of negotiating identity? Alicia Gaspar de Alba (1993:289) explains her experience:

As you can see, cultural schizophrenia set in early. At home I was *pura Mejicana*. At school I was an American citizen. Neither place validated the idea of the Mexican-American. Actually, I grew up believing that the Mexican-Americans, or *Pochos*, as my family preferred to call them, were stupid. Not only could they not even speak their own language correctly (meaning Spanish), but their dark coloring denounced them as ignorant. Apart from being strict, Mexican, and Catholic, my family was also under the delusion that, since our ancestors were made in Madrid, our fair coloring made us better than common Mexicans. If we maintained the purity of *la lengua Castellana*, and didn't associate with *Prietos* or *Pochos*, our superiority over that low breed of people would always be clear.

For Gaspar de Alba, defining self amidst the coexistence of disparate or antagonistic characteristics (skin color) and identities (class and nationality) meant trying to grasp her family's attitude of superiority over "common Mexicans" yet not finding a cultural space for being Mexican-American either. In forging her identity, Gaspar de Alba tried to constitute a coherent Self, albeit among conflicting forces that defined the Other. The protagonist of Sandra Cisneros' book contemplates how she might change her identity by changing her name:

At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish, my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister's name--Magdalena--which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza. I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do (Cisneros 1984:11).

Considering the expressions we use to describe ourselves and others, Jeff Yang (1994) argues that "names are chains. They conscribe us, compress our identities into a few rude syllables . . . they provide an artificial reference point for
familiarity, and they shackle us to family, ancestry, history.” He claims names can also be levers. Many immigrants in the U.S. change their name to gain citizenship, “reformatting themselves” as Americans. The idea of reformatting tends to reinforce a mechanistic view that parts can be rearranged to fit into a larger whole, i.e., assimilation. On the other hand, names also ground us, perhaps even reflect our personality. Seen in all their complexity, names can either separate us from the Other, or identify us with the Other. Names can either connect us to Self, or alienate us from the Self, all of which may contribute to what some scholars refer to as identity schizophrenia. At bottom, identity formation is a dynamic, evolving process requiring individual choice.

Gutiérrez (1997: 6) asserts that in the southwest part of the United States, the continuing influx of Mexican immigrants into Mexican-American communities has “forced Mexican Americans to come to daily decisions about who they are—politically, socially, and culturally—in comparison to more recent immigrants from Mexico.” He chose the title Walls and Mirrors for his book about Mexican-Americans, Mexican immigrants, and the politics of ethnicity to characterize the relationship between the two groups, to explore the common bond, and to make sense of the differences that fractured them. The walls symbolize barriers that divide according to class, skin color, or economic status, further reinforcing negative cultural stereotypes while the mirrors serve to reflect the mutual cultural and linguistic characteristics and kinship ties. From my perspective, the long-time Latino residents of Yamhill County, primarily Chicanos, are confronting a similar dynamic—that of recognizing a common bond with recién llegados [recent immigrants] through language and cultural traditions, yet finding that they are occasionally stereotyped as “one of the Mexican workers.” These comments force Chicanos to define who they are—to formulate their own discourse, creating multiple interpretations that vary from aligning with the newer immigrants to maintaining distance and indifference.
Throughout this identity-building process, language plays a key role. Sociolinguistic forces are constantly reconstructing language as society is mediated through language and language creates social relations. Riggins (1997: 2) cautions that "discourses do not faithfully reflect reality like mirrors. . . Instead, they are artifacts of language through which the very reality they purport to reflect is constructed." In the following excerpts, the informants construct their own discourse, an alternative discourse, countering a commonly held stereotype that they comprise a homogeneous community with concordant values and experiences. In conversation, they refer to Self and Other as *Hispano,* Latino, Hispanic, *Mexicano,* Chicana, Guatemalan, Salvadorian, *Cubano,* Tex-Mex, White, Anglo or Anglo American.

We mostly had Arkies and Okies, Hispanics, Texans, Californians and Arizonans at that time at Eola Village. It was a different generation of people. Still in this community are people that are well-to-do now, who are business people, who were Okies, who came and worked harvesting the crops. That was the name that we gave them, just like they would call us [Hispanic]. It was a unique time. They followed the crops just like we did, they worked here then they went to California to pick prunes [plums], and peaches, and grapes. Every year the same thing. Finally some of them settled. We were neighborly, we were really good friends because I think they understood more our culture, and they were kind of in the same realm as far as economics. So even when we went to the public school, they tended to hang around us more than the people in the community. We were kind of the same in that way (Interview 9: 7/14/98).

You know they see a Hispanic and they’re busted for drugs. Immediately, they say "*Los Hispanos,* los *Mexicanos,* miralos." ¹⁰ The people think you’re doing it too. Unless the person knows you--[they] stereotype. Like my children growing up, some of the Hispanic community would not accept them because they were involved more with the Anglos. Why? They were not accepted because they thought they were betraying their culture, but at the same time, be realistic, they live in a different culture, not only that, some of those children were involved in

¹⁰The Hispanics, the Mexicans, look at them.
things that they knew that we wouldn't approve of. That's always going to be there (Interview 3: 4/17/98).

The parents are supposed to sit down and teach their kids. Come on, speak Spanish to them. My little grandkids that live in Portland, my oldest granddaughter watches the soap-operas in Spanish which I'm happy about, and she listens to Spanish music. The younger ones, I talk to them in Spanish and say "Speak Spanish, you're Mexican." And then my oldest grandson, I talk to him in Spanish and he says, "What Grandma?" And I say "Estos Mexicanos prietos que no saben el español." That's a problem that I see (Interview 2: 4/13/98).

People say "Mexicans, Mexicans this and Mexicans that." I'm always correcting them. I say, well they're not Mexicans. They say "Well they look like Mexicans." [I say] Well, they can be from Central America, or be from South America. [People say] "Well, they're all the same." And so sometimes I find myself defending my own (Interview 14: 10/19/98).

My husband was real light skinned. Everyone thought he was an Anglo. A lot of people put the Mexican from Mexico together, we Mexicans from the United States, we're Tex-Mex, and then people from El Salvador, the north and the south, the people from over there. They think we have the same culture or the same beliefs and everything. Huh uh, it's very different, it's very different. What does a guy from El Salvador know about what a guy from Mexico is or a Mexican from Texas is? There is a difference in our beliefs. Our relatives in Guadalajara have different customs than we do.

What is culture? We all get acculturated. I don't want to live the same way I did 30 years ago. It's like your cooking, the way you do things, you hear of a simpler way to clean the furniture, or vacuum. You find something new that is simpler. So you use it. You're modernizing, you're changing. My cooking, I change it. If I find something, even though it's my Mexican cooking, I add or take away. Our culture is always changing. There was a program on TV teaching dancing to kids so they wouldn't forget their culture. I thought, what the heck. Just because they see someone dancing there and jumping around they're not going to forget their culture. Many of these modern day kids could care less (Interview 2: 4/13/98).

These dark-skinned Mexicans that don't know Spanish.
Character and identity building do not occur in a vacuum, moreover; the continual influx of immigrants or migrants of Spanish heritage from Mexico, Latin America, or the southwest rekindle cultural traditions and relationships. The immigrants revitalize second generation language use, yet immigration also subjects people to fragmented family life, fewer role models, and generational change. Alex M. Saragoza (1990: 33) claims that “the social common ground among Chicanos has lessened substantially. Class differences have been compounded by generational change, cultural variations, attitudinal diversity, and differing notions of ethnic ideology.” This diminishing common ground in the Chicano community occurs in the context of a prevailing American ideology rife with patterns of discrimination and historical exclusion of minority groups. In an educational setting, Maria Eugenia Matute-Bianchi (1989: 90) found that

> Mexican-descent students have multiple identities in which symbols, stereotypes, and styles assume great significance. Among these students, maintaining separate identities as “Mexican,” “Mexican American,” “Chicano,” or “cholo” appears to be important in their lives at school. These labels are emblems that carry meaning both to those who so name themselves and to outside observers.

In agreement with Castillo and Gutiérrez, for Matute-Bianchi (1989), self-definition involves an oppositional process or strategy whereby Mexican-descent students must choose between “doing well in school or being a Chicano [or cholo].” An obvious tension exists when a member of an ethnic group has to choose between assimilation and maintenance of her or his language, history, and culture. The informants in the study describe their experiences this way:

> You got a Mexican who sees a Mexican American who doesn’t know how to speak Spanish to down them. “Oh they’re just a pocho.” You have folks in that country downing you. You have folks in this country that don’t look like you downing you. So you don’t feel like you fit anywhere. I didn’t speak fluent Spanish. It was broken Spanish. There’s a lot of Spanglish. People criticize you for not speaking correctly.
We go back to the developmental process of identity. You come to crossroads. It's an accumulation of experiences and events over a period of time that make you say this is who you are. I am mid-30s now and I can say I like who I am. I'm a pretty goddammm good guy. When you're a kid you don't know how to do that.

You realize it's not over. You keep building, you keep giving. We just need to keep working on this stuff. A person in my shoes goes through a process--they don't accept who they are. I've seen this in the African-American, Native American communities as well, and Japanese-Americans. The assimilation concept. You want to be accepted by the dominant culture. Now that's a really messed up idea. It's something that every minority has to go through. You know how you want to be liked? Ya know, when you want to be liked by the white culture you're really screwed up. If you don't work through it--you don't worry about them liking you--you worry about you liking you. But when you're brown . . . (Interview 5: 4/28/98).

There are some people who are ashamed of who they are. It is generated by the Anglo culture. Nobody wants to be a down below person. My dad taught us something that's been valuable to me. He says you don't bow to any other races. You're equal to any other individual. The principal that he taught has helped us to be proud of who we are (Interview 9: 7/14/98).

Alfredo, originally from Texas, has lived in McMinnville for 27 years and works for the state as a printer. He wants to return to Texas in three years to retire. Alfredo calls himself Tejano and says he was more comfortable in Texas: "You know the Mexicanos are different from the Hispanos. I like different music and food than the Mexicanos" (Interview 14: 6/24/98). Speaking in Spanish, Alfredo expressed a resentment towards stigmatization or discrimination, emphasizing that there are Hispanos who are from Los Estados who may have been stereotyped as "one of those Mexican workers."

Victor Villanueva, writer and scholar, asserts that "immigrants enter the U.S. and minorities are entered upon (1993: 39). To him, biculturalism means internal tensions will exist--it is impossible to deny the old or the new. He claims Latinos who espouse assimilation are still "chile pepper[s] in the pot, like it or not."
Keefe and Padilla (1987:191), studying the way ethnicity is constructed among Mexican immigrants and the Chicano population in California, reject a model of acculturation and assimilation (a dual process that occurs at some given point in the future), or an internal colony paradigm (complete acculturation but continued segregation and domination). They favor a pluralistic model because it identifies cultural, social, and structural continuums--continuums which accommodate change occurring at different rates and in different life spheres. Their data calls for a neo-pluralistic model that can integrate concurrent states of change and continuity, integration and pluralism, in ethnicity. The most important trend they note is the obvious and gradual decline in awareness of Mexican culture from generation to generation, compared to the greater tenacity of ethnic identity. In Keefe and Padilla's study, ethnic identification with Mexican culture and people proved to be an enduring quality.

Although quantitative analysis is beyond the scope of this study, my qualitative findings concur with their conclusion. Diversity and pluralism are messy. Given the class, regional, and cultural diversity of the Latino residents in McMinnville situated amidst a dominant Anglo population, cleavages and tensions regarding ethnic self-identification will undoubtedly continue to exist. However, mutually held perceptions and attitudes such as pioneering, giving to others, and community building stand out as a vital theme among the participants in this study.

Community Building

Keefe and Padilla (1987:7) claim that Latino contact with Anglos occurs primarily in the "context of work, school, and public life, while more intimate social life within the home and family tends to be ethnically enclosed." Their study confirmed strongly entrenched and pervasive ethnic group boundaries with Anglos and Chicanos interacting mostly with friends, neighbors, and coworkers of their own ethnic group, despite the fact that they tend to live and work in ethnically
mixed places. Gamboa (1995: 47) notes that although Hispanics settled permanently in Oregon after WWII and created "formal and informal benevolent or cultural organizations and celebrations, these efforts brought a certain amount of satisfaction, but in many Oregon towns, Mexican Americans experienced de facto segregation and still did not feel accepted after 15 to 20 years of permanent residency." Consistent with Gamboa's comments, the Latino community members in McMinnville still experience de facto segregation, attitudes of superiority, and nonacceptance:

The U. S. born Hispanic has similar feelings as Caucasian Americans in that this is my country, you're invading, there's too many of you [Latino immigrants], you're taking away jobs. Yet at the same time we have understanding and compassion for them. I asked myself: "Am I American first because that's all I've ever known, or am I Hispanic first because I'm bilingual bicultural. I came to the conclusion that I'm first Hispanic and then second American. Even though I am American, Anglo Americans don't look at me as an equal, they look at me as not a true American because I don't have the same skin color. But in the Hispanic community because I have the same skin color and because I speak the language, I'm accepted immediately with no question and reservation. I've run across and encountered these pockets of nonacceptance and it hurts. You know I wouldn't say it doesn't, but I don't dwell on it, I just go on you know (Interview 3: 4/13/98).

Socially opening the gates needs to be done in the community. The Anglo and Latino community continue to be the same--separate. The excuse is that "you don't speak English, and you don't speak Spanish." Do you know your neighbor? It's not the style. People just don't [associate with others]. It creates the guts of the community, of who we are.

It becomes a way of life. I've been a stranger and nobody bothered me. And I walk down the street and I don't talk to anybody and so nobody knows me, and nobody cares. And somebody says, "Well aren't you the guy who went by last week?" "Yeah, I go by every morning." "Oh, well, I noticed you one time before," he said. And so this is the thing. We don't associate with others because of fear of others (Interview 1: 4/10/98).
Stereotypical beliefs of European-American superiority and beliefs of Latino, Black, and Indian inferiority are deeply embedded in American thought. Since the inception of our society, race as a world view has categorized peoples by skin color, distorting our view of human differences and group behavior. Racial ideology functions to maintain privilege and power for select groups while others are assigned to perpetual low status (AAA Statement on Race, Anthropology Newsletter 1998). To counter this ideology, many social scientists in the late 20th century posit that cultural behavior and language are learned, behavior is constructed through social, historical, and economic patterns. Although this knowledge is common among anthropologists, societal attitudes change very slowly. Diego Ortega relates his experience:

[There is] a resistance to change, a fear of newcomers. You know, this is our town, our community. I have a sense that it’s very clannish. This is our community. We are the ones who built it. I’ve seen it change after I’ve been here for awhile. One of the things I question a lot is that with all of these farmers, if they employ the Hispanics or Latinos for cheap labor, it’s OK to have them [Latinos] work for them. I hear complaints about all different companies that it’s abusive at times, it’s pathetic, it’s inhumane at times. Yet they can have them [Latinos] there, but [the feeling is] don’t come to our town. It has been an interesting thing to see happening. I have seen changes, yes, I have (Interview 6: 5/22/98).

Community building is a dynamic social enterprise undertaken by newcomers and old time residents alike. From sojourners to settlers, Latinos in Yamhill County take an active role in organizing their lives, defining their hopes and dreams, some maintaining social linkages and economic ties to communities in Oregon and to communities in their country or state of origin. Many relate a sense of belonging to the area and go about helping each other and reaching out to others despite discrimination and de facto segregation. The stories of the Latino informants in this study imply that the contact with Anglos in McMinnville may occur primarily in the context of work, school, and public life, while home and family activities tend to be ethnically enclosed as Keefe and Padilla suggest.
Despite the de facto segregation, many Latino community members in McMinnville and Dayton, through internal church events and community outreach projects bridge the gap between the cultures:

At the parish, we've pushed really hard to bring the two [Anglo/Latino] communities together. We brought speakers from Berkeley who had family roots in this parish. It was just amazing to see the transition from some people who were sensitive enough to have openness, to have a broad understanding of the Hispanic culture. It was very fruitful. There are still things we need to work on (Interview 6: 5/98).

As members of the church [primarily Anglo, LDS], no matter if we move to China or Russia, we know we would have a family there. They're just great. They open up, they're your friends. They support you. There were times when we were just barely making it. . . . There were times when people [church members] would bring us bags of groceries. . . . Not only financially, but emotionally they've helped us a lot (Interview 14: 10/19/98).

Even though the contact with Anglos in McMinnville, Dayton, and Amity may occur primarily in the context of public life, these Latino community members acknowledge the work in progress being done in the community to celebrate diversity and bring people together.

At this juncture it is worth mentioning the relationship between the Catholic and LDS churches in Dayton and McMinnville. Catholicism is the predominant religion in Mexico and Latin America. The Mormon church, however, has gained increasing popularity in recent decades. Carmen Mirandé says that she came from a strong Catholic background--her grandmother, her mother were Catholic; even her uncle was a priest. She was quite involved in the church as a young woman, yet when she was 16 years old, she decided to convert to the Mormon church. She asserts that today “we don’t criticize [other churches, other beliefs], we work together” (Interview 14: 1/19/99). She and her family attend the LDS church in Dayton. All of the churches in Dayton collaborated to organize youth activities in their respective churches every Wednesday. Even the local
school observes this day and avoids planning sport or academic activities on Wednesday, according to Carmen. She relates that some are staunch Catholics such as her grandmother: "I was born Catholic and I'll die Catholic" (Interview 14: 1/19/99).

Lucia Arenas is a devoted Catholic and attends the St. James church in McMinnville. Much like Carmen's comments, she claims: "Respetamos lo que cree cada persona. No juzgamos, no creamos divisiones. Respetamos las ideas [de otros]. El Papa dice que no debe ser diferencias porque todos son hijos de Dios" (Interview 18: 1/19/99). Some of the members of the Catholic and LDS churches know each other, and evidently respect each other's right to worship; from conversations with the informants, there does not appear to be any friction between them.

Celebrations / Festivals

The church of Latter Day Saints held a gathering they called "International Night" to celebrate the many countries represented in their congregation. A mixture of Latinos and Anglos gathered at the church. In the background, música latina was playing as people arrived. Children of all ages, from infants to teenagers, played together or helped parents carry food and arrange tables. The atmosphere was very festive—the walls were decorated with articles from various countries of the world: from Perú, Alpaca wall hangings, dolls, and tapestries; from Mexico, a sombrero, a woman's dress bordered with multi-colored ribbon used for folk dances, a Mexican flag, and a sarape. David Mirandé, acting as announcer, welcomed everyone as they entered a large hall nearly the size of a basketball court. Emphasis seemed to be on just being there rather than on the dancing.

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12 We respect the beliefs of each person. We don't judge, we don't create divisions. The Pope said that there shouldn't be any differences because we are all sons of God.
events or the enticing ethnic foods. The event was obviously oriented toward the Latino culture, perhaps in an effort to recognize the diversity of the church members.

People lined up to sample food typical of each region represented—Cuba, Mexico, El Salvador, Perú, and the United States. All delicacies were sampled, including enchiladas, *arroz con frijoles* from Mexico, *empanandas, ensalada de frutas* [fruit salad] from El Salvador, and black beans and rice from Cuba. Lines snaked around the room as people waited patiently to taste the rich variety. Time seemed fluid. Children were allowed to meander and church members, Anglo or Latino alike, held, cuddled, and played with any child who wandered by. Dancers performed the Mexican Hat Dance (Jalisco region), traditional folk dances from Columbia, and a Mexican courting song. As in most community gatherings, people milled around eating, talking, or sitting along the perimeter, young and old mingling, until the dancing started. Between dance performances, individuals and couples, mostly Latino, danced to a delightful mixture of *ranchera, salsa, música tropical*, and *merengue*. During this evening out, a western perspective may have expected more action, perhaps a crescendo to a climactic event. To reiterate, time seemed fluid with a focus on being in the present rather than a movement toward a future point or juncture in the night that signaled a culmination. The events of the evening progressed gradually more like the continual background action in a theatre performance. If a purpose were intended, it was to socialize, to build community.

Pioneering spirits and community building resonate back to the days of the 19th and early 20th century in Oregon. More recently, in the 1970s, Slatta cites the many Latino organizations, presence of the media, and presentation of cultural events as clear evidence of the desire of the Chicano community to perpetuate its unique cultural heritage: "In Oregon, *La raza* is maintaining its distinctive blend of
language, music, social and family customs, civic and religious holidays, and foods, in an overwhelmingly Anglo-American environment” (1976:335).

Twenty years later, my findings are the same. At this writing, the Latino community encompasses immigrants not only from Mexico but also people from Cuba, Central and South American, and Puerto Rico as well as the Chicano population. Folk arts, be they songs, stories, dance or foods, are the cultural expressions that give meaning to everyday life. The rich cultural expressions of the Latino peoples in Yamhill County enrich the social fabric of the community, reflecting the complexity of ethnicity among the Latinos and in the larger context of the U. S today. *Mariachi, banda,* and traditional indigenous music are gaining in popularity in the area and can be heard at local concerts, at the fairgrounds, or at celebrations such as the *Cinco de Mayo* (the fifth of May). Latino celebrations transmit new cultural expressions into Anglo American culture and provide occasions to strengthen Latino identity, reinforcing ethnic pride in distinct cultural traditions. They function to build bridges between the cultures.

Although the *Cinco de Mayo* celebration has flourished more in the U. S. than in Mexico, many Mexicans do consider it a time to remember their history, honor their homeland, and as a time to come together and socialize. The holiday celebrates the date Mexican military forces expelled the French army from Puebla, contributing to the eventual overthrow of French political intervention in Mexico. The celebration varies in different regions of Mexico. In some regions, no special significance is given to the day, in others the people parade from the schools to the town center to salute the flag and sing the *himno nacional* [national anthem] in memory of the deceased soldiers. According to several informants, the day is celebrated in the U. S. with a more spectacular public display than in Mexico and is thought, mistakenly by some, to be Mexico's independence day which actually falls on September 16th. The *Cinco de Mayo* celebration in Yamhill County did provide the opportunity to reinforce Latino identity and presence in the community.
Both McMinnville and Dayton held a Cinco de Mayo celebration in 1998. Dayton is eight miles northeast of McMinnville. Located in the center of town, the town square in Dayton comes alive with weekend community activities or provides a respite for passersby to sit and contemplate. Lined by restaurants, cafes, a bank, city hall, and other small shops, the town square resembles the plaza or zócalo in Latin American culture. It served as a perfect location for the event. People began to gather in the early afternoon for Dayton's Cinco de Mayo celebration. Many wandered between puestos [eateries] serving traditional Mexican or Latin American fare such as enchiladas, tamales, tacos, tostadas, and coctel de frutas [fruit cocktail] or others serving hot dogs, apple pie, popcorn and strawberry shortcake. In a fashion very common in small outdoor eateries in Mexico, the Latina cocineras [cooks] called out to passersby: “Tostadas, tacos, tamales!” One large family from Michoacan, Mexico prepared enchiladas con salsa de tomate, pollo, lechuga and queso or tamales soaked in salsa roja. Estel, “la madre de todo” supervised as her children joined in on the food preparation.

For several hours, banda and ranchera music played from a sound system near the center of the plaza until later in the afternoon when a DJ from the Dominican Republic energized the crowd with merengue, salsa, and cumbia music. The event, attended by a mixture of Latino and Anglo community members, seemed like a large outdoor picnic. Some relaxed on blankets spread out on the grass or sat at picnic tables, others congregated around a tree, while still others meandered among the crowd. Young boys of mixed ethnicity played basketball together; smaller children played on the swing set and merry-go-round or wandered around the square sharing cotton candy or chicharrones. Along one side of the plaza, small booths sold plants or food. A line of children trailed from one booth waiting to have their faces painted. Similar to the international night at the LDS church, the flow of the afternoon progressed gradually with an
emphasis on socializing and building community. For all who attended, it was a unique look into the lifeways and traditions of the Latino population in Dayton.

Antonio Minda was instrumental in organizing the Cinco de Mayo celebration in McMinnville. This was the first year for the celebration. He noted some apathy among the Latino residents in helping organize the event, causing him to enlist Latino and Anglo community members to kick off the event. A city block near the main street was roped off for the occasion. Lupita's restaurant, located ideally inside the perimeter of the roped off area, served tamales, tacos, quesadillas, and other Mexican fare. A mariachi band, and a local folk guitarist from Mexico provided the musical backdrop to the event. Mariachi is said to derive from French for wedding (mirage), reminiscent of the musicians hired to perform at social functions during the reign of Maximilian in the 1860s (McCarl, Mulcahy, and Castellanoz 1992). Tables and chairs were arranged so that participants could partake of the cuisine while enjoying the music and dancing.

After a substantial number of people had arrived, Antonio Minda and another community member read excerpts, in Spanish and in English, about the history of the Mexican battle of Puebla against the French forces. Anglo and Latino families wandered around the setting or congregated in small groups at tables or along the street. The Latino children frequently danced to the music of the folk guitarist, entertaining all who had gathered for the festivities. A troupe of folk dancers, comprised of men, women and children, from the LDS and Catholic churches dressed in a variety of colorful dresses and costumes brought the celebration to a close. Although the dancers were from Mexico, they performed several traditional folk dances from different regions of Mexico and South America. Carmen Mirandé and her son, and Gloria and Antonio Gonzales dance with the troupe. Traditions inform us about our relationship to others and our relationship to the past and future generations. Carmen asserts, "I am teaching my children well. My ancestors will be proud to see that I am teaching their culture. No
matter what, they will always have our blood, our culture. We need to teach our children. They may never go to Cuba or Mexico” (Interview 14: 10/19/98).

The cultural expressions of the Latino community perpetuate and revitalize the Latino culture in Yamhill County, but their lifeways also enliven and enhance the Anglo society, creating a richly woven community. McMinnville and Dayton are to be counted among surrounding communities such as Cornelius, Woodburn, and Mt. Angel whose Latino celebrations feature folk music, dance, food, and religious ceremonies. As Buan and Gamboa (1995: 95) assert, “Hispanic artists carry on folk traditions from their homelands and regardless of the messages they bring or the forms they take, these expressions of culture add vibrancy and meaning to all our lives.”

As settlers, the Latinos in Yamhill County are taking an active role in organizing their lives, and interpreting their new cultural context. Opportunity, hard work, and pioneering are key words in their discourse. Many relate a sense of belonging to the area and go about helping each other, often reaching out to others as they define their dreams. In the concluding chapter, I explore what success means to the participants in this study and how the concept of pioneering plays out in their everyday lives.
CHAPTER IV

Pioneering

We were pioneers because we came here with just a vision. That's all. We had no money.

---Carmen Mirandé

The pioneers who came west in the 1840s and '50s left poverty in search of a new life, encountering numerous Indian tribes with lifeways considerably different than their own. When people leave a homeland in search of a better life, as mentioned throughout this study, they invariably confront disparate languages, social and economic systems, family values and kinship ties; they may even encounter dissimilar concepts of respect and worth. The confrontation occurs when individuals or families move within the same country—in the case of the Oregon Trail pioneers and in the case of this study—those who emigrated from Texas or Arizona. And the confrontation occurs when people move between countries, such as those who immigrated from Mexico or Latin American countries. Some of the participants in this study refer to themselves as pioneers; others more humble, just relate their hopes and dreams for a better life. Like the pioneers on the Oregon Trail, they too came in search of freedom, of opportunity, of adventure. Many of the women came to reunite their families or to be with their husbands. A belief in the American dream—economic opportunity, individual freedom, realization of human potential—permeates our society and has enticed numerous generations of emigrants and immigrants to break family and national ties in search of a better future.

The belief in the American dream often represents a universal dream, obscuring class, gender, ethnicity and who really has access to economic security and freedom. Camille Guerin-Gonzales (1994: 3) problematizes the definition of the American dream:
The economic and social expectations of a brown Mexican field worker in the United States are very different from those of a white American farm owner, and these differing expectations inform the way the individuals within these two social categories understand freedom and how it should be protected and preserved.

As it does to many individuals in the United States, freedom to the farmworker means being able to take advantage of economic opportunity, to achieve social mobility, to gain more education, and to engage in family and community. Growers undoubtedly desire much of the same, yet they reject restrictions (related to wages and working conditions) that inhibit their ability to make a profit, restrictions that encroach on their perception of freedom. The participants in this study may not have turned wagons into rafts, forded streams and rivers, or endured long days walking in the hot sun on the open prairie, but many did work long hours in the hot sun; they lived with poor sanitation, pitiful housing, and confronted the threat of disease in the labor camps. They tolerated discrimination and isolation along their journey—yet similar to the Oregon Trail pioneers, they pooled resources, they endured hardship, they persevered—to achieve their dreams. They have been trailblazers, breaking their own ground in Oregon territory. What interests me in this section is how the concept of pioneering plays out in the everyday lives of the informants. What does success mean to them? What obstacles or tensions have they confronted and what strategies have they adopted to confront cultural domination? Essentially, how does their pioneering add to the rich complexity of Oregon’s history? Once we begin to seek out the stories of the people who lived our history, we find a fascinating chapter left out of textbooks and tales.

Many of the participants in this study realize in today’s society that education and technical skills are invaluable for material success and mejorándose [improving oneself]. Some of the parents had prior education, varying from high school to college, and expected the same of their children. Many more didn’t have the opportunity to attend school in their country or in the United States, so have
sacrificed--often going to great lengths--to provide opportunities for their children, albeit confronting tensions between family unity, ethnic identity and mainstream pressure to acculturate and assimilate.

From a middle class Anglo perspective, making it, or succeeding in a society, is often considered to directly correlate with education level, family values which encourage striving for higher goals, and social support systems to help mediate cultural adjustment. Scholars such as Guadalupe Valdés (1996), Mike Rose (1989), and Lisa Delpit (1995), question those notions, claiming they fail to address class differences or cultural mores and lifeways that differ from the dominant population--offering only a mainstream view of what constitutes success and failure.

The literature suggests an increasing number of Latinos (with little education) are moving out of agricultural work into manufacturing production, or into entry level positions in various companies. Others who have more education or have had greater opportunities are starting their own businesses, or are working in social services such as health care and education. The Hispanic labor force is changing as the population increases:

Latinos are becoming increasingly aware of the employment opportunities available in this state. The number of Latino-owned businesses and establishments catering to the Hispanic community have grown, providing another avenue of opportunity for new residents. Social and cultural services are also increasing to meet demand, making Oregon a welcoming environment" (State of Oregon Employment Department Labor Trends, October 1998).

Even so, a recent census bureau report stated that Latinos are disproportionately represented among the nation's poor: 29% of the nation's 22.1 million residents of Hispanic origin live below the poverty line, a figure which reflects only residents, not undocumented workers in the U.S. Only 9% of non-Hispanics live below the poverty line. National statistics, cited by Mittelstadt, state that the Hispanic share
of the nation’s total income is also disproportionately small—only 5% of the country’s pay (1993).

Many overlook the irony—Latino workers put the majority of the food on the table for most Americans, yet continue to be under-represented and under-served. A *La Raza* study concluded that lack of education has forced more Latinos than ever into lower-skilled jobs. It also found that as lucrative manufacturing positions disappeared in the last decade, Latinos moved in greater numbers to low-paying service jobs that provide few or no benefits. In the recession of the ‘80s, Hispanics were one of the few groups who didn’t recover (Mittelstadt 1993). Fifty-three percent of Latinos have a high school diploma compared to 83% of the white population. The Latino high school dropout rate remains high in Oregon: 12.5% to 17.9% in the 1990-1991 school year. Statistics illustrate the discrepancies that exist in relation to education levels, median earnings, and unemployment between Latinos and whites.

Statistics represent only one slice of the picture, however, rarely reflecting the depth of the human experience. To reiterate, an adventurous spirit, a pioneering sense, a desire to help others like themselves, and deep-felt perseverance to improve their social and economic situation were key ingredients motivating the dreams and hopes of the informants in this study. Each family expressed their own interpretation of the “good life”—not necessarily defining it how the dominant culture might—but often filtered through the dominant cultural assumptions that surrounded them. Many had known hard work, long hours working in the hot sun or chilling rain alongside their parents or in low-paying service work. They want a better life for their children. Rather than large leaps or bounds, many perceive change in smaller steps—getting a better paying job, having the security of regular employment, the opportunity to attend classes and after many years obtain a high school diploma or attend college. They want to find a job that matches their education or training, even to buy a house or a car.
Viviendo la gran vida [living the good life] to most means finding ways of making an honest living, raising conscientious, hardworking children, maintaining family unity, and giving to the community. The informants played and continue to play a leading role in the development of the Latino community. The following stories give the reader insight into how these families define their hopes and dreams, what factors aided their evolution, what forces inhibit full participation in the community, and what strategies they have adopted as active agents to secure a meaningful life for themselves and their children.

Cultures at Odds: Language Proficiency

Linguistic competency in English is a pivotal factor in both defining success and in achieving it for most of the participants in this study. It becomes an obstacle for many. Julia Perón, the director of Migrant Education for the Salem-Keizer school district, has lived in Yamhill County since 1961. She valued her Spanish language and her Chicano heritage while in pursuit of her dreams. She spoke Spanish at home and learned English at school and in the public arena. Her mother “nagged” her to obtain her GED once the family settled down and Julia could attend regular classes. Julia did, and attributes much of her achievement to her love for reading and a strong sense of self-esteem nurtured by her parents. Julia asserts that she has never been ashamed of herself or her language as a Chicana. When she speculates, although, about the rejections and problems her parents experienced as migrant workers in the ‘60s, she says:

It must have been just really, really, hard as parents trying to support the children and the family. They spoke little English and they didn’t share [the problems, rejections] with us. Some of them [other migrant families] lost their Spanish language and even though their parents spoke little English, they were part of the immigration mentality that you see nowadays within this last decade where parents want their children to succeed so badly they’re willing to sacrifice the language and even the culture to a certain extent. I think that’s what happened with some of those families. Now what they’re trying to do is recapture that--
recently. Like with some of the families, we were quite surprised that the parents spoke limited English, but that the children spoke almost no Spanish. You find that. It’s common (Interview 8: 6/8/98).

Julia and her family retained their Spanish language and cultural ways in the Anglo dominant setting, but couldn’t ignore the generational language loss, the sacrifices other families made in an attempt to assimilate to improve their social status.

Language proficiency was a concern for Cristina Ovares as well. Her first six children didn’t speak English until they were seven or eight years old (when they entered school). In the ‘60s, a friend suggested that she speak only English to the children, but she rejected the idea, asserting “What for? My husband only speaks Spanish. I don’t want them talking over his head.” All of her children speak Spanish today but she laments that some of her grandchildren don’t speak or understand Spanish:

I think it’s sad that children aren’t learning Spanish because then they can’t communicate with the family and grandparents when they go back to Mexico or Central America. Some of my grandchildren don’t know Spanish because some of the grandparents are Anglos and the parents just don’t teach them. The parents have a responsibility. My grandson said, “Everyone speaks Spanish in this family except me.” My daughter told me to teach him Spanish. I said, ‘No, you teach him.” It’s a problem (Interview 2: 4/13/98).

Transmitting Spanish proficiency through the generations is important to Cristina, reflecting her sense of ethnic identity and commitment to her roots.

In contrast to Julia and Cristina, Miguel Rodriguez came to Yamhill County in 1945 when the notion of assimilation was prevalent in the United States. Miguel and his wife experienced a different epoch and reality than Latinos who have moved to Yamhill County in more recent decades. Miguel learned German, French, and Latin in Mexico, but didn’t speak English when he first arrived in the United States. He took classes in California and improved his English proficiency
over time, married to an English-speaking wife. He asserts that English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in the community should give people the skills to communicate with English-speaking neighbors, to share experiences, ultimately with the goal of bridging cultural distance. He elected not to teach his children Spanish, stating: “I was an alien. They are not. If they want to learn a language they have the same opportunities that I did, more so. There was no need. We didn’t have many Spanish-speaking people in the area then” (Interview 1:4/10/98).

Since 1960, the numbers of Latino immigrants and Chicano migrants in Yamhill County have continued to rise.

Competency in both English or Spanish is apparently an on-going dialogue among the informants. Carmen Mirande felt somewhat stigmatized by speaking only Spanish when she first arrived in the '70s in California; today, she considers being bilingual an asset. She claims that it has opened doors for both her and her husband David, yet she acknowledges their children are not speaking Spanish as well as she thinks they could. Although both are bilingual in English and Spanish, David often speaks to their children in English, while Carmen speaks to them in Spanish. The oldest boy speaks, reads, writes, and understands Spanish very well. The two middle children understand Spanish very well, but don't speak it as well. The older children speak to the youngest child, 16 months, in English. Carmen doesn't seem concerned, stating “As they get older they can take Spanish classes. It will come back. They are around it so much.” Limited English proficiency proves to be a barrier to full participation in the community, yet statistics increasingly suggest individuals who are bilingual in Spanish and English may be more employable in Oregon. Carmen talks about the different perspectives she and her friends have regarding language acquisition and proficiency:

I have a friend from Chile. She's going through the same thing I did. She doesn't want to speak Spanish. She wants everyone to speak English to her and her children so they can improve. She doesn't want her children to go to school not knowing English. She's going through a transition now where she's not sure if she
wants to teach her children [her] culture, and the Spanish language. At times, Gloria [another friend] says, “She should teach her children Spanish because they will only learn it from her.”

We have talks like that. Our children are speaking English and Spanish. If they go to school only speaking Spanish, they’re in the same position we were when we came to the U.S. And so some people say I want to teach my children English so they won’t fall behind. But they don’t realize how quickly children learn [English] and they forget Spanish quickly if you don’t speak it to them. Some parents are concerned that their children will be at a disadvantage (Interview 14: 10/19/98).

Carmen and Gloria embrace their native Spanish language, albeit acknowledging the importance of English competency. Their Chilean friend is less proficient in English and is striving to achieve proficiency for herself and her child. Although bilingualism and multilingualism are gaining acceptance in our multicultural world, the discourse continues among families, compelling parents and children to make individual choices regarding linguistic competence. Their discourse is often reflective of the interpretations they bring from their home country and the tensions which exist in confronting cultural differences. In Gloria’s case, she would like to work in the field of Chemistry to use her degree, but she relates that “it took me three years to speak English. I am still learning. I studied English first. Then I’ll look for a job” (Interview 12: 4/17/98). Gloria speaks limited English and continues to improve her linguistic competency daily. She took ESL classes in Glendale, California for 18 months in order to communicate in her community and carry out activities of everyday life prior to coming to Oregon. She considers her bilingual skills advantageous in the office where she is a receptionist. Romero (1979) cites the “underutilization of Chicano human resources” as a significant loss in the labor market and as a “critical problem facing our country today.” Although Gloria is not Chicano, but Mexican, the statement is still pertinent. She is not able to take full advantage of her degree as a chemist until she can communicate adequately in a professional setting. In their home, she and
her husband speak to their children in Spanish, knowing that they will learn English in school.

Lisa Delpit insists that individuals and parents outside the “culture of power” [dominant culture] often want more for their children. “They want to ensure that the school provides their children with discourse patterns, interactional styles, spoken and written language codes that will allow them success in the larger society” (1995:29). Many of the parents in this study are very aware of both linguistic and social disadvantage and how it can perpetuate through generations. However, Carmen problematizes comments claiming all immigrants should learn to speak English:

I encouraged my mother to study English. But people work so hard and get home so tired. People here say, “They’ve been in the U.S. for a long time. They should speak English.” But most don’t realize that some of them have to work two to three jobs to make it. And most of the people send large amounts of money back home to Mexico (Interview 14: 10/19/98).

Tomas and Elena Rivera validate Carmen’s opinion. They came to Yamhill County in the mid ‘80s from Mexicali, Mexico. They manage to take care of shopping or business in town easier now that more businesses employ bilingual employees, yet Tomas admits he hasn’t learned much English:


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13 When I arrived here it was difficult for me [to communicate] and even today it’s difficult because I don’t speak English. Only a little, a little, no more. I work a lot. I haven’t studied at all. It doesn’t help me. I can’t concentrate. I say it is because of my age that I don’t learn anything. There are almost all Mexicans at Monrovia [his workplace]. The few Americans who work in the offices, many of them speak Spanish too. More and more the American workers learn Spanish.
Marco Pérez agrees with Carmen. He came to McMinnville from Mexico in the ’90s. He is studying ESL at the McMinnville Branch of Chemeketa and laments that his progress is so slow: “I work all day in the field [on a Christmas tree farm] and on the ranch too. When I get home I have to cook my food, wash my clothes. Then I am too tired [to study]” (Interview 17: 10/27/98).

Luis Vallejo, who moved to Oregon in 1988 from Mexico City, admits he understands about seventy-five percent of what is said to him in English, but is only able to communicate in English clearly half the time. When he arrived in Oregon, he recalls how he worried about finding an interpreter so he could find his way to work and communicate with his boss. He studied English as a Second Language for three months at Chemeketa and has gradually improved his language skills in English. He doesn’t consider the language barrier a significant problem now. He is understood at work and understands enough to do his job.

Several informants in this study who have come to Oregon in recent years lamented that their inability to speak English and adequately communicate with neighbors, co-workers, or with service providers has limited their community involvement and access to services. They are more often subject to housing and wage discrimination because they are unfamiliar with current values or unable to barter for a reasonable amount. They are more vulnerable to misunderstanding or misinterpretation in procuring health care, child care, and educational services—perpetuating isolation and discrimination. Several informants spoke of difficulty making transactions in the bank, in the grocery store, and at health clinics with limited English proficiency. Rosita Sanchez says the community “has come a long way. Almost every agency in town now has at least one bilingual employee” to help Spanish-speakers (Interview 4: 4/24.98). Julia Perón claims service providers have been forced to hire bilingual personnel: “They’re smart enough to see the economic necessity—you need people that can communicate with the clientele that you’re trying to serve” (Interview 8: 6/8/98).
It is a mistaken impression that non-English speaking people do not want to learn English in an attempt to provide for the welfare of their families and engage in their community. Social networks tend to act both as a catalyst for learning English (companionship in attending classes, and word of mouth of a higher paying job with improved linguistic competency) and as an impediment (Spanish-speaking home and working environments). At the McMinnville Branch of Chemeketa Community College in 1997, approximately 400 adult Latino residents registered for ESL classes. Those numbers do not take into account the many private individual classes that are held in people's homes, at churches, community centers, and workplaces in the county. Several informants were frustrated with their ability to communicate in English even though they had taken ESL classes. Although their strategy to improve communication is beneficial, in many cases, their co-workers are primarily Spanish-speaking Latinos (as in Tomas' case), so they often speak Spanish during their work day and at home, providing little opportunity to practice English. Elena Rivera, who came to Yamhill County in the late '80s, lamented that even the "Americans hablan español con los hispanos" [Americans speak Spanish with the Hispanics] (Interview 7:5/24/98). She also works at Monrovia Nursery where workplace education classes teach ESL, Spanish, and Mathematics. Some of the office workers and foremen are learning Spanish in order to communicate with the Spanish-speaking employees.

The discourse about language proficiency and bilingualism continues among Latino families and individuals--discourse reflective of the experiences and interpretations they bring from their home country or region of the United States. Clearly, these parents who understand what it means to be outside the "culture of power" are aware of both linguistic and social disadvantage and want more for their children. Like the pioneers on the Oregon Trail, they know the value of hard work and sacrifice. Many take a proactive stance to encourage their children to attain their goals and dreams. From that stance, education is pivotal.
**Education--Básica para Adelantarse**

The majority of the families in this study considered education *básica para adelantarse* [basic for improving yourself]. Julia Perón and Cristina Ovares both give credit to the Valley Migrant League (VML) for the educational assistance it offered them and their friends in the 1960s and '70s. In Texas, Cristina always dreamed of finishing high school, but the family moved too often as migrant workers. Once settled in Oregon, Cristina took advantage of all the VML sponsored classes located at Eola Village: “Dr. Cisneros set up classes at Eola Village, where we still lived. We took Psychology, English and Spanish. We met three nights a week for three hours in the chapel” (Interview 2: 4/13/98). In 1968, Cristina passed the GED exam. With nine children at home, attending night classes was no easy task for Cristina. For three summers and winters she attended Linfield College and received her B. A. in Education in 1972. Cristina ventured into unknown territory, seeking a way out of seasonal work. She succeeded in obtaining an education, serving as a very effective example for her peers and her children. One of her sons claimed “she was a ‘hellavu’ role model. I have a Mom who respects education” (Interview 5:4/28/98). Cristina speaks proudly of the accomplishments of her children: Two older boys are university professors, one daughter and one son work for large, successful international companies, another younger son works at Oregon State University helping young migrants and immigrants obtain greater access to higher education.

Achievement came in small increments for the Ovares; Cristina was pleased when the family was able to buy a home in McMinnville and move out of the labor camp. Success to Cristina is the opportunity to obtain an education, to buy her own home, and to give her children that same opportunity. She understands from personal experience the social and linguistic barriers low-income families face; she devoted much of her life to serving others in the community as a teacher and mentor.
Carmen and David Mirandé know from personal experience that obtaining an education is a critical factor for economic and political opportunity today. Carmen was motivated to finish high school and go to college in Glendale “to get my mom out of this mess.” Her mother, a single parent, would leave home before the sun came up to catch a bus to downtown Los Angeles to work as a seamstress, then returned home in the evening after a long day. Carmen’s dreams and hopes at the time were modest. Success to her meant being able to obtain an education so she could work to help her mother:

I cleaned floors. I had to do all of that stuff because my mother was illegal. My counselor in high school told me I had good grades and I could get a scholarship, but I couldn’t because I was illegal. You either had to be a son of a U.S. citizen or a resident. It took ten years. I was crushed. All these years that I wanted an education, I couldn’t [obtain it]. Some suggested I get a false green card. I was very frustrated because I couldn’t work and couldn’t get an education. I had been here [in the U.S.] seven years (Interview 14: 10/19/98).

Recalling how David’s father worked for many years on a sugar plantation in Cuba without pay to gain legal passage to the U.S. and how Carmen’s mother worked long, tedious hours at minimum wage labor, they have established both a college fund and a church mission fund so that their children will have more opportunity. Carmen relates a time when she took her children to pick strawberries and beans near Dayton. The experience was so moving, she cried watching her children picking because she saw what they could have been doing in Los Angeles. She wanted more for her children. Carmen asserts:

They already know that we are expecting them to go to college. I tell them my stories. I say to my oldest son, honey, I didn’t get algebra until I was in the 11th grade. You are so smart. You’re going through algebra in 8th grade. We have made the funds available [for college]. We do encourage our children to get a better education (Interview 14:10/19/98).

Despite her loyalty to her mother, and the fact that her mother’s sacrifice had given her more opportunity, Carmen admits not feeling proud of her culture in
high school: "When I first came to the US, I was embarrassed of my culture. In high school, I didn’t want to dance in the folklórico dance, I didn’t want to participate in any of the Spanish-speaking clubs, I wanted to be American. I think we all go through stages like that" (Interview 14:10/19/98). Carmen subordinated her Mexican ways to assimilate and achieve success in the way that she defined it at that time in her life. Now she honors her culture, dances in the Mexican dance troupe, and counsels her children to take pride in their ethnicity:

I always tell my children you be the best that you can be whether you are American or whether you are Mexican, whatever it is, because people will see that. We want to make a difference. My son Jason doesn’t look Hispanic because of his height, of his color, he is very light. I remember one time they were talking at school about Hispanics. He said, “Well, I’m Hispanic.” He was not ashamed of being Hispanic. I didn’t know the language and I wanted to fit in. My children have known the language since day one, and so they fit in with their own friends. My little Anna [6 year old daughter] said, “Guess what Mom, I translated for my teacher today because she doesn’t know Spanish and I do” (Interview 14: 10/98).

Family support is a crucial link today in how successful young people are in an educational setting. Pioneering to several participants also involves nurturing a sense of self-esteem, connectedness, and pride in ethnic identity. These ingredients made all the difference to many, motivating them to pass on that legacy to their children. Parents or mentors displayed courage, provided essential psychological support, frequently in the face of discrimination or segregation. Luis and Marcela Vallejo left Mexico in search of a better future as mentioned in Chapter II. Their children are now bilingual after living in Yamhill County since 1989; as Carmen and David do, they consider education a key to material success and have worked hard to provide opportunity for their children:

_Educación es importantísima, es básica porque podemos tener mejores oportunidades de trabajo. Siempre nosotros estamos diciendo [a sus hijos] que tienen que estudiar si ellos quieren tener las mejores oportunidades aquí--mejores trabajos. Que no tengan que andar ellos [sus hijos] en el campo y que siempre nosotros estamos apoyándolos. Y vamos a apoyarlos. Gracias_
The Vallejo’s daughter is a student at Oregon State University. Their son just graduated from high school in McMinnville and plans to study at Portland State University. In the eyes of the parents, the children are achieving their dreams, thereby validating the sacrifices the parents have made moving to Oregon.

Although many Latino families are intact and have two parents who provide a sense of family and who are committed to giving their children educational and economic opportunity, a significant number are not intact, forcing individuals to live with relatives or with other acquaintances. They lack familial support, are not literate in their native language, Spanish; they speak limited English, struggle to understand the cultural differences that surround them, and they often have to work several minimum wage jobs—inhibiting their ability to learn English, let alone procure a better education. Much the same as the Oregon Trail pioneers who had left family and possessions behind, the Latinos in Yamhill County have had to forge a new cultural space. For many, their search for a sense of belonging draws them to the church:

One-fourth of the parish is Latino. We need to give each group a chance to just be. Every group has their bad apples. Just because we are a migrating group, a pioneering group, it doesn't mean that everyone that comes is bad. We have a youth group, dominated by single males who have come from Mexico. They're the farm workers, the line workers, the stable workers, the lumberjacks. They are very committed to their work. And they're very faithful, they're very humble. It melts my heart to see how much they're craving to have a sense of belonging, to have a place where they can be.

My heart aches for the high school students [Mexicans who have migrated]. I see myself in them when I was their age. If

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14 Education is very important, it’s fundamental to have better opportunities for work. We are always saying [to our children] that they have to study if they want to have more opportunities here---better jobs. And so they won’t have to work in the fields. We are always supporting them and we are going to support them. Thankfully they know to take advantage of [help] when someone is helping and they want to improve themselves. We are working very hard for them.
you don't have a strong family, and a mentor, or if you do not allow someone to journey with you, you will easily fall through the cracks and not reach graduation and begin to work. It's one of the typical patterns. I hope I'm wrong.

Just by seeing the relationship with parents and what I went through, it is like a rewind of what I went through. The lack of understanding the relationship with parents and "you're old-fashioned, and I want my freedom." They begin to lose some of their family ties. Being so far from the borderlands, it's really hard for them to keep their roots and traditions (Interview 6: 5/22/98).

With more time in Oregon and increasing connections to friends through the church or work setting, some of the informants began to feel part of the community. However, others have lived in Yamhill County several years and still feel ambivalent about belonging, reflecting the complexity of achieving social mobility and developing a new meaningful sense of community.

An ESL teacher in the community commenting on Latino families stated:

We have some kids whose parents are successful around the community. They own businesses. Coming from an affluent family, they tend to do better in school; they work harder. It's not necessarily money. It seems to be the work ethic although the other people have just as strong a work ethic but it's the fact that the parents say education is so important. And usually it's parents who have more education. Some of our students go home to a two bedroom apartment with many people living there. There isn't any space or a quiet place to do their homework. (Interview 17: 5/4/98).

Guadalupe Valdés (1996:5) poses an alternative interpretation for behaviors that school personnel often perceive as indifference. She argues that Mexican working-class parents bring to the United States goals, life plans, and experiences that do not help them make sense of what schools expect of their children. Schools expect a "standard" family while parents from Mexico have little understanding about other ways of looking at the world, other notions of achievement. Mainstream "Leave it to Beaver" social blueprints don't work for Latino families or individuals. Those models were socially constructed in a different time and space and were not representative of migrant worklife and
minimum wage earners. The struggle to adjust to a new culture is often exacerbated by individualistic notions of success in the U.S., loss of cultural identity, and a school system representative of the Anglo middle class. Their home environments reinforce Mexican or Latin American cultural and language patterns, oftentimes in conflict with "standard" assumptions in the dominant population.

From conversations with parents and children in this study, I came to understand that some parents had attended school in their home country only a few years. If their child finishes nine or ten years of school in Oregon, they consider that an improvement. Working class Latino children often work to contribute to the family income or to send money to relatives in their home country. Many families do live together in small homes or apartments, helping each other financially, so that a space or time to study at home is not available nor considered a priority. Due to limited English proficiency and lack of confidence, Spanish speaking parents attend few school activities or are able to understand notes that are sent home with their children. These obstacles generate isolation, inhibiting personal actualization and full participation in the community.

Diego Ortega understands many of these issues firsthand and has been a mentor for Latino youth most of his working life in an effort to fight the social isolation and low self-esteem experienced by so many young Latinos living in the United States. Meaning to him is helping others in the Latino community. As mentioned in Chapter II, Diego migrated to the United States in the early 1970s with his family. His father initially worked in California as a bracero; the family returned to the U.S. at the request of the farm grower with whom he worked. They followed the crops as migrant workers and eventually settled in Orange County, California. Diego recounts:
I didn't finish my high school like any normal kid. I had to work in the fields with my Dad, planting tomatoes, sweating, getting up really early. I wanted to go to school, but because of the financial situation and because we were trying to settle down, it was really hard. But once we were able to settle down, I took my GED and transferred to a four-year institution. But I had someone to mentor me. My parents supported me and a good friend journeyed with me (Interview 6: 5/22/98).

Diego studied Theology, Bilingual Studies, and Child Development at San Diego State University. Later, he entered the seminary in San Francisco and began a Master's program part-time at Merimount College in Los Angeles. Over the years he founded a child-development program, trained counselors at the YMCA, worked with the local school district's migrant program and church-based youth groups. He has not only personal experience as an immigrant and migrant worker adjusting to a new culture, language, and social norms; he also has considerable experience working with migrant families and their children. Diego considers himself a pioneer; he is committed to community building in McMinnville as the director of Hispanic Ministry for the St. James Catholic church. He regrets the weakening of family unity and the loss of culture he encounters:

The bonding and family values are not as strong as they once were. Latino family values are eroding related to instability and lack of strong role models. Some of the kids I worked with in L.A. were just craving for attention. . . . Being raised by brothers or aunts, they didn't have the closeness of family ties. It is hard when you don't have a strong self-esteem. Your parents are telling you, "Go to school and do what the teachers tell you to do," but what the teacher is telling you to do has nothing to do with your values at home. So, it's a conflict in forming the character (Interview 6: 5/22/98).

Diego's work resonates with that of Guadalupe Valdés. The young people confront not only family instability, but also parenting styles that differ from the standard Anglo family model. As Valdés posits, the immigrant working-class Latino family may not discuss school events or understand deadlines. Many work long hours and cannot provide books or supplies; the parents may not know how to read. Their
parenting styles represent a composite of their cultural experiences in Mexico. This disparity sets up a conflict and may erode the self-esteem so essential for self-determination. Diego plays a leading role in providing crucial spiritual and social support for the young Latin American immigrants and their families.

Final Thoughts

The stories of the informants demonstrate how pioneering has played out in their lives not just in clearing the way for others to follow, but also in roles of advocacy and community building. Diego is only one example. Miguel Rodriguez' advocacy work for the State Manpower Commission, as a Hispanic liaison officer for the Yamhill County Community Action Agency and as director for VML affected many lives. Julia Perón's and Ricardo Quiñones' pioneering efforts led them into migrant education and pastoral work to help those less fortunate than themselves. They both joined César Chavez' trailblazing efforts to establish fair living and working conditions for seasonal workers in the 1960s and '70s. Alejandro Martinez helps provide ways for migrant workers to attend community college and four-year universities through the College Assistance Migrant Program. Antonio Minda continues to address community issues as a member of the city council and as a voice for the Latino population in Yamhill County.

We tend to romanticize the past and embellish the stories of early settlers, their hardships, their losses, their accomplishments. Ultimately, we have to tell stories that help us live in a modern, complex world and that help us to shape a better world. The participants in this study have accepted the American dream, molding it, shaping it--taking advantage of economic opportunity to gain more education and social mobility. They reach out to each other, endure economic hardship, struggle to communicate, yet celebrate family and ethnic identity, and strive to build community--to create their own meaningful context. They counter
the stereotypes of minorities expecting handouts or entitlements; rather, they have pursued their dreams and hopes in the face of obstacles those from the culture of power rarely even recognize. Their pioneering spirit adds a new dimension to the stories told about the Oregon country. Their stories tell us more about our country and more about ourselves.
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