

The Latinization of the Central Shenandoah Valley

Laura Zarrugh*

ABSTRACT

Virginia is among a number of southern states in the United States, such as North Carolina, Arkansas and Georgia, which have experienced a sudden growth in Latino immigration during the past decade. Not only is the volume of growth unprecedented, but many of the destinations are new and located in rural areas. Places that have not hosted immigrant populations for generations are quickly becoming multicultural. The small city of Harrisonburg (population 43,500 according to the 2005 estimate), which is located in the rural Central Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, is perhaps the premier example of this new pattern of change. While local advertising once promoted Harrisonburg for its “99.2% American-born and 93.7% white” population, the area today holds the distinction of hosting the most diverse public school enrollment in the state (in 2006-2007), with students from 64 countries who speak 44 languages. Among them are Spanish speakers from at least 14 different countries. Drawing on social network theory, the paper examines how social networks among Latino immigrants become activated in new settlement areas. It presents a case history of the historic process of “Latinization” involving the settlement of a number of diverse Latino populations (from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Cuba and Uruguay) in Harrisonburg and the surrounding Central Shenandoah Valley. The study demonstrates how a number of key institutions, including local agricultural industries (apples and poultry), a refugee resettlement office and churches recruited “pioneers” from these immigrant groups to the area and how “pioneers” subsequently engaged in further social network recruitment, thus creating multiple transnational “daughter communities” in the Harrisonburg area. The policy implications of this historical process are explored.

*Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Cross-Disciplinary Programs, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA.

Virginia, like many other southeastern states in the United States, is being transformed by a new and rapid influx of Latino immigrants (Torres 2000, Kochar, Suro and Tafoya 2005). Although Virginia has not incurred as dramatic an increase in its Latino population as some states farther south, most notably North Carolina (394 per cent) and Georgia (300 per cent) (Kochar, Suro and Tafoya 2005), the Commonwealth experienced a substantial 104 per cent growth in Latinos between 1990 and 2000 (Weldon Cooper Center n.d.). Bypassing traditional immigrant “gateway” states and cities, many of the newcomers are headed for rural destinations in areas of the country that have little or no experience with Latinos or immigrants. As scholars (e.g. Mohl 2002, 2005) and journalists begin to document this movement, a new term, “Latinization,” has emerged as a shorthand way of referring to the demographic and other changes that occur when Latinos (i.e. people of Latin American origin) settle in a particular locale. Although nowhere explicitly defined, the term “Latinization” implies not only demographic change, but other attendant changes, such as increasing demands for services, housing, education, new cultural interests (Rochin 1997) and the institutionalization of Spanish use in many areas of life (Castro 1997). While the term might also be construed to imply a movement of many different Latin American nationalities to an area (or toward pan-ethnic community formation), it is most often used to refer to Mexicans who make up the vast majority of the new immigrants.¹

In this paper, I use the term “Latinization” to refer to the dramatic growth in the diverse Latino populations of Harrisonburg, Virginia (estimated population 43,500 in 2005) over the past decade. Between 1990 and 2000 the Latino/Hispanic population in Harrisonburg, which includes people from at least 14 different Latin American countries, grew almost 400 per cent. While Mexicans constitute the largest group, there are also substantial numbers of immigrants from El Salvador, Honduras, Cuba and Uruguay. Their presence has brought about social and cultural changes similar to those documented for Latinos, and particularly Mexicans, in other rural areas of the South and Midwest (e.g. Arreola 2004, Gozdzik and Martin 2005, Millard and Chapa 2004 and Murphy, Blanchard and Hill 2001). However, in the growing literature on Latinos in the rural South, very little attention has been given to the issue of diversity among Latinos and the implications of this diversity for their integration in new areas of settlement. It may be that the small city of Harrisonburg represents a unique case, since diversity in immigrant populations is usually associated with much larger metropolitan areas. Focusing on the historic dimension of the process of “Latinization,” this paper examines the diversity among the Latino immigrants in the Harrisonburg area and how it came about.

In addressing the question of why Latinos from a number of different countries have come to Harrisonburg, a non-traditional immigrant destination, I give special emphasis to pre-existing social links and active recruitment by local institutions. Typically, attempts to explain why people leave home and move to particular destinations highlight either macro-level structural factors, such as economic globalization (e.g. world systems theory) or more micro-level “push” and “pull” factors (Lee 1966). Although Harrisonburg should be regarded as a case study in globalization as it is manifested at the local level, it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider the ultimate global causes of migration in detail. Instead, I focus on more proximal push and particular pull factors. According to this approach, immigrants are “pushed” out of their home communities and “pulled” toward particular destinations. Thus, much of the recent research on the South as a new immigrant destination in the United States examines the “structures of opportunity” created by economic restructuring in the region and the “pull” for immigrant labor of specific low-wage, non-unionized industries, such as poultry processing (see Griffith, 1995 and Kandel and Parrado, 2004). While these factors provide a context for decision-making, they do not explain how people actually decide where to go among various possible alternatives. A partial explanation is provided by research on the crucial role played by social networks in determining why people choose specific destinations. In other words, people go to places where they have prior social ties to relatives, friends or acquaintances. The problem with this explanation, as critics such as Light, et al (1990) suggest, is that social network theory explains only how migration to specific destinations is perpetuated once the flow has been initiated. It does not account for how the process begins. As Light notes, “Neither Massey nor other network theorists have shown how networks find, designate and target new migrant-supporting localities when existing destinations have been saturated” (1990:3). Virtually no attention has been given to the issue of how “pioneer” immigrants choose specific destinations. Historian Hasia Diner (2000) argues that historians of immigration have also failed to address this question. One exception is Repack’s (1995) analysis of the informal recruitment of Central American women by diplomatic families to work as domestics in the Washington, DC area. These small, individual actions initiated a movement that has resulted in one of the largest Salvadoran communities in the United States. Because the history of Latino immigration to Harrisonburg is still recent and the population relatively small, I have been able to trace a number of distinct social networks originating in specific towns and cities in Mexico and other Latin American countries back to the first individuals or “pioneers” to arrive in the area.

In this paper, I document the pre-existing links that existed between the “pioneers” and Harrisonburg as a result of active recruitment by local industries or other institutions, such as churches, and that have encouraged and facilitated

immigrant settlement. Most accounts of immigrant-receiving communities suggest that such communities are, at best, passive or, at worst, hostile recipients of immigrant populations and do not usually cope well with the resulting, often rapid population change. In considering the history of Latino immigration to Harrisonburg, I suggest that host communities may play a more active role in the immigration process than is usually considered. While it is well documented that the meat-processing industry recruits Latino and other immigrant labor to rural communities (Broadway and Stull, 2001; Fink 1998; Gouveia and Stull, 1997; Grey 1999; Stull 1990; and Stull, Broadway and Griffith, 1995), the meat-processing industry is by no means the only source of recruitment. I examine the role of other industries (i.e. apples) and local institutions, such as churches and refugee resettlement programs, as well as immigrants' own social networks in the "Latinization" of Harrisonburg and the surrounding area. In the first part of the paper, I consider Harrisonburg's unique history as an immigrant receiving community and in subsequent sections, I discuss the role of agricultural industries (i.e. apples and poultry), refugee resettlement programs, churches and other social networks in the recruitment of immigrants from a number of different Latin American countries. The paper concludes with policy implications of the research.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is based upon long-term ethnographic research during my 13 years of residence in Harrisonburg, as well as my active and continuing involvement in several local, grassroots organizations that focus on immigrant and refugee issues. In addition to long-term participant observation in local community life, I have conducted numerous formal and informal interviews within all relevant sectors of the community, including all of the nationality groups discussed here, service providers, employers, and pastors. Interviews were conducted in Spanish or English depending on the preference of the interviewees and all translations are my own. The study also draws on the growing multidisciplinary research literature (i.e. anthropology, sociology, history) on recent Latino immigration to the Southeast United States, as well as related research on Latin American refugee resettlement and local labor history. Additional information, particularly on the Marval plant strike, was gleaned from local newspaper accounts from the 1980s. With the exception of public figures, I have used pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the individuals interviewed and referenced in the paper.

HARRISONBURG AND ROCKINGHAM COUNTY AS NEW IMMIGRANT DESTINATIONS

Harrisonburg, which is located in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, is in the midst of a dramatic population and social change. For much of its history, the surrounding Blue Ridge and Allegheny mountains have sheltered and isolated the Valley from the rest of the world. During the colonial period, when the eastern part of Virginia was being settled by English Anglicans, many of the earliest settlers who came to the Central Shenandoah Valley and especially Rockingham County, of which Harrisonburg is the county seat, were German Mennonites and Dunkards (now called Church of the Brethren) who fled religious persecution in Europe for Pennsylvania, but finding land there increasingly scarce, took the Great Valley Road south to the Shenandoah Valley where their settlement was encouraged by the British who tolerated religious diversity in the Valley in the interest of expanding the colony of Virginia's western borders (Brehm, 2000). As in other areas of the Upland South, over time, the Shenandoah Valley developed an agricultural economy based on mixed farming of grains, fruit and livestock in contrast to the plantation system that dominated the lowlands of the Deep South. Associated with these contrasting agro-economic systems were contrasting social systems composed of yeoman farmers in the uplands as opposed to a planter gentry in the lowlands (Jordan-Bychkov, 2003). From the colonial period until the early 1900s, family farms-- many, if not most of which were owned by individuals of German Mennonite and Brethren origin-- formed the economic backbone of the Central Shenandoah Valley.

Due not only to economic constraints, but also to Mennonite and other churches' opposition to slavery, there were relatively few slaves in the Central Shenandoah Valley prior to the Civil War and the African American population has always been much smaller than in the rest of Virginia and the South. For example, in the 1840s, slaves comprised 11 per cent of the population of Rockingham County compared to 57 per cent of the population of the four adjacent counties east of the Blue Ridge Mountains (Wayland, 1912). Over the last century, the black population of the Harrisonburg area has decreased, so that in 2000, African Americans represented a little less than 6 per cent of city population and about 1 per cent of county population (U. S. Census, 2000). In contrast, the foreign-born population of the Harrisonburg area was a negligible fraction of 1 per cent for over a century and represented only about 2 per cent of the population as recently as 1990 (U.S. Census, 1990). A city directory described Harrisonburg in 1960 as "99.2% American-born and 93.7% white" (Hill Directory Company, 1960: xiii). From 1990 to 2000, the foreign-born population increased 404 per cent from 740 to 3,733 (JLARC, 2004). Latinos, most of whom are immigrants, make up the largest group of foreign-born in Harrisonburg, having grown 383

per cent between 1990 and 2000, while the total population grew 32 per cent. Although Latinos constituted less than 2 per cent of the population in 1990, they represented over 8 per cent of the population in 2000 (U.S. Census, 2000) and an estimated 12 per cent in 2005 (Weldon Cooper, n.d.). Local estimates suggest that the real figures may be double or even triple the official statistics. A more accurate measure of the size of the foreign-born population is reflected in ESL (English as a Second Language) enrollment figures from Harrisonburg public schools. In 2006-2007, Harrisonburg public schools hosted the most diverse student body in Virginia, with ESL students from 64 countries speaking 44 languages. In the same year, ESL students constituted 38 per cent of the total school enrollment. The largest group of ESL students, about 65 per cent, was Spanish speakers from 14 Latin American countries. Although concentrated in the city, Latinos have also increased in the county where they constituted about 3 per cent of the population in 2000, according to official statistics.

The native-born Euro-American or white population of the Central Shenandoah Valley consists of many individuals with family roots stretching back eight generations in the local area. In 1912, John Wayland, a local historian, estimated that about 70 per cent of the population of Rockingham County was of German descent (Wayland, 1912). While use of the German language faded faster in the Shenandoah Valley than in Pennsylvania, where German speakers were more densely concentrated, German was still spoken by some Mennonites in church and business until World War I, when they were pressured to shift to English. Today, according to the Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, there are an estimated 16,000 Mennonites and Brethren (approximately one in ten individuals) in the Central Shenandoah Valley, including about 800 Old Order Mennonites. Similar to the Old Order Amish, Old Order Mennonites maintain a distinctive dress and lifestyle that makes them visible but remote to outsiders (Clark, 2000).

Any attempt to understand Harrisonburg and the surrounding area as a host community to new immigrants must take into consideration the strong influence of the Mennonite Church and closely allied Church of the Brethren on local values and attitudes. Both churches are within the Anabaptist tradition (i.e. believe in adult baptism) and historically espoused “plain” ways of living and non-involvement in government and politics. Like the Quakers, the Mennonites and Church of the Brethren are “peace churches” that have been persecuted for their pacifism. World War II experience with alternative service and the presence of a “liberal” Mennonite college in Harrisonburg have contributed more recently to a subculture of community service and conflict resolution, as well as a disproportionate representation of local Mennonites in the helping professions. Both the Mennonite Church and Church of the Brethren also have long histories

of involvement in refugee and immigrant assistance within the US and in relief and development work overseas. As the pastor of one local Mennonite church explained, “Mennonites have been hounded from place to place and of all people, we should be empathetic to immigrants. We should but we aren’t always, but from our own history we should be. Mennonites, like current immigrants, also hoped to be able to provide a better living for their families”.

With a growth rate that has been at times the fastest of the state’s 15 largest cities, Harrisonburg has experienced a population boom in recent years. The total population of the area has grown as much in the past 20 years as in the previous eight decades, from 20,000 in 1980 to 42,200 in 2003 (Longley, 2003). This growth from small town into urban center was officially recognized in 2004, when the city and adjacent towns and parts of Rockingham County were designated a “metropolitan statistical area” due to their combined population of over 100,000 (Bolsinger, 2003). Local officials have attributed the growth primarily to the presence of a state university (James Madison University) with an ever-increasing student enrollment (currently 16,500) and the city’s location on Interstate 81, while saying nothing about the growing immigrant population. As a local newspaper reporter commented, “It’s the growth that few talk about, but everyone knows is there” (Bolsinger, 2001).

Harrisonburg’s population growth is directly due to an expanding economy and consistently low unemployment rate of less than 3 per cent during the last decade. Plentiful jobs, particularly in agro-related industries, have attracted many newcomers, in many cases, actively recruited to the area by local employers. Since its founding in 1790, Harrisonburg has been a county seat and principal commercial center for the Central Shenandoah Valley, as well as adjacent counties in what is now West Virginia. Although the contemporary city has a diversified economy that includes two universities, a regional hospital, manufacturing (including poultry processing), retail and a growing service sector devoted to tourism, the economy of the surrounding area continues to depend heavily on agriculture, particularly poultry and to a lessening extent apples. Considered by some to be the birthplace of the nation’s commercial turkey industry in the 1920s, Rockingham County by 1939 emerged as the self-described “Turkey Capital of the East”. Although no longer the largest turkey-producing county in the United States, Rockingham County still ranks in second place nationally (first is Sussex County, Delaware) (Bradshaw, 2002). The county also ranks first in the state in the production of chickens (broilers and layers). Approximately 950 farm families are engaged in growing turkeys or chickens for the five local poultry-processing plants that operate in the city and county with a combined workforce of approximately 8,000 (Bauhan, 2002). According to the Virginia Poultry Federation, for over 50 years, jobs created by the poultry industry constituted two-thirds of the local

economy, as “each poultry processing job supports seven more jobs outside the industry”. Commercial apple production also has a long history in the Shenandoah Valley, extending back to the 1870s. Although Rockingham County ranks fourth in Virginia in annual apple production (“County” DNR 4-8-05) the local apple industry, never as significant as in the northern part of the Valley, has declined during the last decade due in large part to competition from Washington state and China (Vaden, 2005). The decline has caused a decreased demand for labor, and land that once contained orchards is now being sold to real estate developers.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN IMMIGRANT RECRUITMENT

Both the local apple and poultry industries have played major roles in recruiting Mexicans, who constitute the largest Latino group, to the Valley. The first Latinos to come in appreciable numbers to the Central Shenandoah Valley were Mexican farm workers who passed through the Valley in the 1970s as part of an annual migrant circuit that began and ended in Florida, Texas or Mexico. Arriving in the fall to harvest peaches and apples, migrant workers would stay a couple of months before continuing north as far as New York. According to several apple growers, prior to World War II, growers were able to meet their labor needs locally, but due to labor shortages during the war, German POWs and Bahamians on work visas provided supplemental labor during the harvest. In the 1960s, no longer able to depend on local labor, growers sent busses “all over the South” to pick up black and white agricultural workers. According to one old-timer, even a few Puerto Ricans were recruited. Later, Jamaicans on work visas and a “handful of ‘legal-to-work’ Mexicans also came from Florida.” The history of agricultural labor importation from Puerto Rico and other areas of the Caribbean to the Eastern United States is well documented (see, for example, Griffith and Kissam, 1995 and Hahamovitch, 1997), but local accounts suggest that Puerto Ricans were not as widely recruited in the Valley as they were elsewhere. During the Carter administration, Haitian “boat people”, who were granted parole and temporary work permits, began to come particularly to the northern part of the Valley. But in Rockingham County in the 1970s and 1980s, the majority of migrant workers were Mexican. In the 1970s, most of the workers were young, single men, but there were also some young families whose numbers increased over time. According to Armando Fernandez who came to Harrisonburg from Puerto Rico in 1976, “Sometimes the growers sent a bus to the border to pick up the workers who came on special contracts. Sometimes the workers brought their families and they also lived in the bunkhouses with just a little curtain separating their area”.

In contrast to the 1960s and early 1970s, when most migrant laborers who came through Rockingham County were African American men from Florida, by the 1980s the migrant camps housed mainly Mexican families along with young, single Mexican men. Marjorie Smith, who worked for the federally-funded Migrant Education Program at that time, would go to the camps, which she described as “concrete houses scattered in the orchards”, to sign up the children who were eligible for services every fall. The Migrant Education program, which has operated in the Valley since 1965, began to see Mexican children in the early 1980s. The first family she served was the Garcia family who are recognized by many in the community as one of the first three Mexican families to settle locally. Carlos was the first one in the family to come to Harrisonburg in 1978 to work in the apple orchards, having previously worked in apple orchards in Oregon. When Marjorie met the Garcias, the parents were working in a poultry plant and the children had come directly from Mexico. She observed that although there were many adolescents in the camps, they were not in the Migrant Education program because compulsory education ended at age 16 at that time and “the older kids were here to work and didn’t go to school”. She added that the same children returned every year, so she got to know them. They “all knew each other, but arrived at different times and by different routes”.

Various service providers who worked with migrants during the 1970s and 1980s agreed that the same people tended to come back each fall and over time, more and more came. “They made good money so they called their cousins. After awhile everyone in National Coach (a trailer park) was Mexican”. According to another Migrant Education worker, “They were originally from Mexico, especially the state of Michoacán”. They would leave here in early November and return to Florida to pick oranges during the winter. Then they would pick their way back up the East Coast until they arrived here again in the fall to pick apples.

In the last few years, very few families have come to the area as migrant farm workers and growers have returned to hiring crew chiefs who recruit groups of single men. The reason for the return to the old system, in Marjorie’s opinion, is that the growers “didn’t like the hassle with families and federal regulations”. From 1982 to 1985, according to Marjorie, “there were a lot of INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] raids of the migrant camps, but everyone knew that anyone who was deported would be back in a couple of weeks. The kids would come to school and tell me that there had been a raid and once they said they covered their grandmother up by putting a paper bag over her head, but they never took the kids”.

Through her work in the Migrant Education Program, Marjorie saw many “settle outs”, farm workers who “settled out” of migrant labor for year-round jobs in

the local area. Although the children were eligible for services for several years after their parents left agriculture, regardless of the type of jobs they took, most of parents worked in the poultry-processing plants. They remained in the area because they liked the tranquility and pastoral scenery that reminded them of rural Mexico, but primarily because they could get permanent jobs in the poultry-processing plants. According to Lucía Mendez, her father decided to change from orchard work to poultry processing after he brought his family to the United States. He switched jobs so that his children would not have to keep changing schools, which would have been necessary if he had continued picking apples. He got a job in poultry, which by comparison, he felt was “good money”.

While apple orchards still exist in Rockingham County, the number is dwindling every year and in the last few years, the Migrant Education Program has registered very few children in the migrant camps. In contrast, poultry growing appears to have eclipsed apples in economic importance in Rockingham County and produced a greater demand for labor than apple harvesting. Poultry and particularly turkey growing and processing have been part of the local economy since the 1920s when many small feed mills and “produce” (processing) plants dotted the landscape. Through a complicated series of acquisitions and consolidations over several decades, two local families emerged as owners of fully vertically integrated operations and as the dominant players in the local industry during the 1970s and 1980s. Having achieved greater control over live production by the early 1970s, local plants, which had previously operated about six months of the year, began to operate on a year-round basis. Prior to that time, processing plants operated seasonally due to the seasonal nature of turkeys and because they “couldn’t get enough chickens to run the plant for the rest of the year”, according to one industry old-timer. At the same time, the turkey industry expanded production as a result of increased consumer demand, the introduction of new convenience products (e.g. lunch meat) and increased exports. Expansion of production necessitated increasing the size of the labor force in the plants especially since poultry processing is a labor-intensive industry due to the many steps in the process that, despite automation, must still be performed by hand. Automation has also been more difficult to achieve in turkey- than in chicken-processing plants because birds of varying weight are still processed (Gangwer, 2000:14).

Prior to the 1970s, most of the labor in the poultry plants, as in other areas of the South (see Griffith, 1995), was provided by poor white locals and particularly women who also worked in local “sewing” (garment) factories. According to Patsy Russell whose family owned a poultry plant, “During the 1950s-1960s, before the immigrants”, they hired mostly locals, especially from the mountain “hollows,” places like Hopkins Gap and the Peak. Some locals describe this

mountainous part of Rockingham County as “a rough area where people made money off of moonshining”. According to sociologist Peggy Schifflett, who has written a book about growing up in Hopkins Gap, “the moonshine industry was replaced by the poultry industry” in the 1950s. The men raised the poultry at home and the women worked in the poultry-processing plants or sewing factories in Harrisonburg” (Shifflett, 2004:149). As she explained, “A major economic opportunity came to Hopkins Gap with the poultry industry. Many families built poultry houses to raise chickens to meet the increasing demand for processed chicken and the growth of the processing plants in Harrisonburg”. According to Patsy, people also came across the mountains from West Virginia since there was very little industry in Franklin and no industry in Brandywine. For the women of Hopkins Gap, working in the poultry-processing plants became a “tradition” when they finished high school or dropped out of school to go to work and brought about major changes in the community (Shifflett, 2004:323). There is considerable agreement among long-time residents that there were more women than men working in the poultry processing plants, especially on the eviscerating line. Men predominated only in operations requiring heavy labor. With the income from their work, the women, who initially shared rides to work because there were few cars in the community, were able to buy their own cars and remodel their homes, installing new kitchens and indoor bathrooms (Shifflett, 2004:324). They were also able to buy fashionable clothes for their children so that they would not stand out as “gappers,” still a pejorative label, in the schools that they attended with residents of the Valley. By the 1970s, the community produced “many high school graduates, several college graduates and a few with higher degrees” (Shifflett, 327), and work in the plants became less of a community necessity.

Unlike other areas of the South, such as the Delmarva Peninsula (which includes Delaware and parts of Maryland and Virginia), African Americans were never a significant part of the workforce in the local poultry plants. After the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s, the Hinton plant tried to hire African Americans, but, according to Patsy, “there weren’t very many locally and they didn’t want to work in poultry.” She recalled asking an African American woman who lived on the Peak if she would like to come to work, but the woman told her that she thought it would be too hard since she would be the only African American. According to Patsy, “One day a van of blacks came to the plant asking for work and they were hired, but they never came back”. She did not know where they came from, but she did not think they were locals. She thought, “It was just a test” (to see if they would hire African Americans). She concluded, “There still aren’t any in the plant”. Although some members of Harrisonburg’s small African American community worked in the poultry-processing plant that was located in the city, they generally did not work in the plants in the county, according to other informants.

Armando Fernandez traces the beginnings of what he calls “the Hispanic explosion” to 1978-1979. “Workers who were disenchanted with apples, went to work for Rocco, which had ample jobs and you didn’t have to have any skills. It paid good money, six to seven dollars an hour. Word spread like wildfire. The floodgates opened and many Mexicans came. They are the largest group. Then the Salvadorans came and the latest group is the Hondurans”. Other old-timers in the local poultry industry affirm that Mexicans came to work in the processing plants by way of the apple orchards. According to one industry old-timer, “We grew beyond the capacity of local labor and other industries came in that were cleaner, such as sewing factories, and had better working conditions and better pay...For a long time it was hard to keep all the labor we needed. We continued trying to recruit labor. In the beginning the plants paid a low wage, although now the wages are more comparable to other industries”.² At first migrant workers who came through the area to harvest apples would show up at the plant in pickup trucks looking for seasonal work, usually during September to January. “We started hiring them (Mexican migrants) for the hardest jobs that no one would do.” I asked what the hardest jobs were and he replied “live hanging”, which involved moving the birds from the coops to the line, and “the blood tunnel”, in which they did the killing. “Now we couldn’t operate without them”.

In the mid-1980s two events converged that also facilitated the movement of Mexicans from seasonal migrant labor to permanent settlement in the Central Shenandoah Valley. One of these events was the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986, which granted amnesty to undocumented immigrant workers (Edwards, 1995). Although the federal law contained a provision for sanctioning employers who hired “illegals”, many immigrants were able to legalize their status through the federal amnesty program and found that having a “green card” made it easier to get jobs in the poultry plants. However, their movement from apple harvesting to poultry processing in the local area began prior to 1986. Several industry old-timers agreed that many of the migrants who came looking for work were probably “illegal,” but they had no way of knowing if they were legal or not.³ Patsy recalled that the sheriff at that time used to call to tell them they were coming to round up the immigrants. She chuckled about that, adding that when they came, “half of the employees would run down the creek” and those that didn’t run would be caught, but “in three weeks they would be back.” In the mid-1980s, one of the poultry plants opened a new section for deboning turkeys and another plant also expanded. When Luis Vega came from Uruguay and started working in one of the plants in 1986, there were already some Mexicans working there more or less permanently. One of the men he worked with was from Mexico. He worked in the plant seasonally, returning to the area every year, sometimes working in apples and sometimes in poultry. Because he did not have papers, he would get picked up in the INS raids

on the plant. He used to joke that he was known by name and when the plant was raided, they would tell him “Jose, it’s time to go home”. But Jose would always be back in a few weeks. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, Latinos, who at that time were mostly Mexican, made up no more than 15-20 per cent of the plant’s workforce.

Although Mexicans began showing up at the doors of the poultry-processing plants in the 1970s, they were also actively recruited. At least one turkey-processing plant recruited workers from outside of the area as early as 1972. Leopoldo Cruz, who is the son of Mexican immigrants, was one of the first Latinos to work in the local poultry plants. Almost 35 years ago, he was living in El Paso, Texas when he saw a “want ad” for 35 couples to come to the Valley to work for Marval, a turkey-processing plant in Rockingham County. He decided to go and because his sister wanted him to take her husband, the three of them ended up traveling to the Valley together. Having been given \$20 by the poultry company for their expenses, they took a Greyhound Bus to Dayton, Virginia where they arrived on 1 April 1972. The company, which has since been sold twice, treated them “like royalty” and sent their “best cars” to pick them up. They received help finding lodging and were invited to attend church. However, Leopoldo also recalled that people looked at them as though they were “something really exotic” and it was hard to find food they were used to eating. For example, Leopoldo’s sister could not find jalapenos (hot chili peppers) anywhere, so she had them shipped to her by United Parcel Service. Although the company wanted 35 couples, they actually brought only 25 people and of those, only four or five stayed. “They got homesick and disappeared. It was a fiasco”. They did not sign a contract, but it was expected that they would at least stay for some time. Leopoldo stayed for three years and because he was bilingual, he became an unofficial “welcomer” for those who came afterward. He believed that when he was hired, workers had to be “legal”; that is, have a passport or citizenship. But after the El Paso experiment, the company started bringing “illegals” from Colorado; they were brought to the area by a “coyote” (smuggler) who received US\$ 500 for each person. After that, people started to come from Florida; they tended to be individuals who had come to the area previously to work seasonally as apple-pickers. According to Leopoldo, eventually workers started showing up, “three or four at the door of the plant on any morning and the poultry plants had all the help that they needed”.

Other Mexicans arriving in the area in the 1970s-1980s found work in a poultry-related “spin-off” business started by Don Carlos Ortega, who everyone knows as the first Mexican to have settled in the area. Don Carlos and his brother came to Harrisonburg to look for work in 1971. It was Don Carlos’s first trip to the United States, although his brother and brother-in-law had previously worked in the apple orchards. They sought work at a local poultry plant and were hired.

One of the employees, who spoke a little Spanish, having lived in the Panama Canal Zone for a few years, was very helpful. He found them a place to stay and took them across the street from the plant to the store where he asked what they needed to eat and signed for the food. Despite the helpfulness of this individual, Don Carlos found it very hard being one of only two Mexicans in town. Nevertheless, he stayed and two years later started his own business buying and reselling turkey feathers. The business involved buying the feathers on contract from one of the processing plants, drying them in a warehouse and then transporting them to Chicago or New York from where they were shipped overseas for further processing as fill for pillows and jackets. According Felipe Garcia, who came to Harrisonburg in 1981, Don Carlos was “the key” to a job for many because he gave them work in his business.

The other development of the 1980s that probably facilitated the entry of Latinos into the poultry plants was a poultry workers’ strike. There is fairly wide agreement among locals that Mexicans did not displace local workers in the poultry plants, but rather, that the plants, as a result of expanded production needed more workers than were available locally (Tilson, 1995). However, that picture is complicated by the long-forgotten ouster of the labor unions from local poultry-processing plants in a process reflective of national developments in meat processing during that period (Ollinger, MacDonald and Madison, 2000). In 1982, approximately half of all workers in meat and poultry processing in the United States were unionized and earning US\$ 10.69 an hour under United Food and Commercial Worker (UFCW) contracts, but “many meat processors demanded that the UFCW agree to a cut in wages to the \$8.25 an hour that many non-union plants paid” (“Meat and Migrants,” 2005).⁴ Between 1983 and 1986 there were 158 strikes over wage cutbacks and by 1987, “unions represented only 20 per cent of meat processing workers” with “fewer differences between wages between large and small plants and between plants in different regions” (Meat and Migrants, Rural Migration News).

Although there is no evidence that immigrants were used locally as strike breakers, it is well documented (e.g. Grey, Griffith, Stull) that meat-processing companies over time recruited and replaced unionized native-born workers with non-unionized immigrant workers. A similar process appears to have occurred in the poultry-processing plants in the Harrisonburg area during the mid-1980s. On 2 June 1984, 450 workers, 70 per cent of them women, walked out on strike at Marval, described in company literature (Marval Poultry Company, Inc., 1984) as the “largest turkey processing plant in the United States”.⁵ The strike, which lasted for five months, ended with the decertification of the union. Although the plant had been unionized for 23 years without a strike under a previous owner, problems developed after the plant was sold to Rocco in 1981, beginning with

a 20 per cent reduction of the workforce (Dulan, 1984).⁶ In the dispute over a new contract that precipitated the strike, 30 issues were raised, half of them by the union and the other half by the company. The union's complaints focused primarily on harsh working conditions (e.g. bathroom break policy and line speed) and "union busting" efforts by the company. Among the company's demands were that workers be permitted to quit the union at any time, rather than just during an annual fifteen-day window. While given less attention in the local newspaper at the time, there were also money and benefit issues. According to company literature, Marval's wages for hourly workers in 1984 ranged from US\$ 5.20 to US\$ 9.10 an hour and their average rate was "\$1.12 per hour above the turkey industry average in the southeastern United States" (Marvel Poultry Company, Inc., 1984). While the union sought a one dollar an hour increase in wages for three years (Dulan, 6-23-1984), the company offered a 10-cent an hour increase in the first year, rising to 25 cents an hour in the second year and 35 cents an hour in the third year. Negotiations stalled.

Within the first week of the strike, according to newspaper accounts, the company began "aggressively recruiting" new workers and warned strikers that they would be permanently replaced if they did not return to work. They also offered bonuses to employees who recommended new hires. By the end of the first month of the strike, the company received 1,000 applications from "within a 35-mile radius" and hired 250 workers to replace those who remained on strike (Reinke, 6-29-1984). Although the company announced that they would not rehire any strikers who had been replaced, that statement was later retracted and a new statement issued that the company would rehire workers as jobs became available and would keep their names on a waiting list for a year (Dulan, 7-13-84).⁷ Describing the new workers to a reporter, the personnel director commented, "If there is anything that I've been most pleased about it's the quality of the people we've hired. The quality and attitudes of the new workers surpassed my wildest imagination. Absenteeism is lower than we've ever seen it for the entire plant" (Reinke, 6-29-84). Newspaper accounts of the strike give no hint about who the new hires were, but because there were increasing numbers of Mexican immigrants already working in the poultry plants in the 1980s, it seems very likely that there were Mexicans among the new hires.

As the strike continued into its fifth month, a "decertification committee" at the plant organized a petition campaign that garnered enough workers' signatures to oust the union (Shetterley, 9-8-84). During roughly the same time, another local poultry plant, Shenandoah Valley Poultry Processors, also succeeded in ridding itself of union representation. According to a union official, by closing the plant, which had changed ownership in July of 1984, the new owner, Perdue, "legally relieved (company officials) of any obligation to recognize the union" when the

plant reopened a short time later (Murphey, 7-21-1984:13). By the late 1980s, when local unemployment was about 4 per cent, an estimate offered in a much later report commissioned by the Housing Authority suggests that “probably no more than 5.0 % of the hourly workers” in the poultry plants were immigrants (RER Consultants, 2000:16). According to the same report, the dependence on immigrants increased during “the rapid expansion of the industry in the mid-1990’s as unemployment dropped below 3.0%” and “the outflow of young Shenandoah Valley natives continued,” so that by 2000, 80-85 per cent of new poultry plant applicants were immigrants (RER Consultants, 2000:16).

With local unemployment rates hovering at or below 2 per cent for much of the past decade, poultry-processing companies have continued to actively recruit workers from out of state and even used a labor contract agency to import Puerto Rican workers on a weekly basis (Edwards, 2001). In 1995, 400 of Rocco’s 1,350 employees were Hispanic (Tilson, 1995). Current estimates of the proportion of immigrants working in the poultry plants, most of whom are Latino, range from 60 per cent at one plant and 70-75 per cent at a second, to as much as 100 per cent for second shift workers at any plant. In 2005, none of the poultry-processing plants in the local area were unionized and the vast majority of workers were immigrants. As a company official explained, “Locals don’t want to do the jobs. The rooms they work in are cold, 50 degrees due to the USDA regs. They stand all day. It’s knife work. It’s hard work”.

Until recently, the poultry plants served as the main point of entry into the local job market for many immigrants and refugees regardless of their education, occupational history or knowledge of English. Even today, the ranks of poultry production workers include not only the unschooled and unskilled, but also those who were once doctors, teachers and engineers in their pre-migration lives. At least in the past, some immigrants and refugees felt that they were confined to poultry work because no one else would hire them. For example, when Pablo Cuevas, a Cuban who had been granted political asylum, arrived in the area in 1961 for a second time, he went to work in a poultry plant for a year, earning US\$ 1.20 an hour and, as he noted, “making dog food with a college education”. Although he applied for a number of jobs, no one else would hire him. He commented, “Hispanics, blacks and foreigners didn’t get easy jobs. They thought all foreigners were bad. They weren’t exposed to foreigners. It hurt. It was lonely. Those knocks drove my life. ‘Making it’ became my life”. When he retired recently, he owned 40 per cent of the stock at a local engineering company and for the last 15 years, he has served as a member and president of the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors. Similarly, David Puerto, who now owns his own small business, recounted how, when he first came to Harrisonburg in 1996, he suffered a series of job rejections from a variety of local employers despite his

college degree from El Salvador. He commented, “At first, they wouldn’t accept Hispanics in construction. They drew a closed circle. They think all Hispanics are illiterate, ignorant and they won’t give us an opportunity. It’s not true that all of us Hispanics have no education”. Unable to find another job, he went to work in a poultry plant. According to David, at that time about 20 per cent of the production workers were Hispanic, but the line leaders were all Americans. However, six months after he started working in the plant, there were three Hispanic line leaders. Speaking about the current situation in the plants, he added that “now the workers are 90 per cent Hispanic for all shifts, but the people in the higher positions-- the executives, the managers-- are still all American. They wouldn’t give the Hispanics an opportunity for the higher positions. Most Americans think that if you haven’t studied in the United States, you don’t know anything. It doesn’t matter what you studied, but if you have the paper from here, you are a genius”. Other Latino business-owners have recounted similar barriers to job mobility in the poultry plants (see Zarrugh, 2003), leading them to start their own businesses.

Stepped up security measures along the US-Mexican border have also inadvertently contributed to the heightened influx of Mexican immigrants and their permanent settlement in the community (see Massey, 2005). According to poultry plant officials, in the 1980s and the early 1990s, most Mexican workers were men who, having left their families in Mexico, would leave the plants to visit home in December and return one or two months later. But in recent years fewer workers have left work to return to Mexico in December, at least in part, because of the increased difficulty and expense of crossing the border. At the same time, the continuous increase in enrollment of ESL students in the public schools suggests that men are bringing their wives and children to the area instead of returning home to Mexico on a yearly basis. As families become established in the local community, permanent return to Mexico becomes more unlikely.

THE ROLE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN IMMIGRANT RECRUITMENT

In addition to serving as a not-so-new “gateway destination” for Mexican immigrants who have been coming to the area for over 30 years, the Harrisonburg area also has a long history of involvement in refugee resettlement that predates the establishment of the current federal Refugee Resettlement Program in 1980 (Duchon and Murphy, 2001).⁸

The first refugees, a Dutch Indonesian family, were resettled in the local area almost 50 years ago. They were sponsored by members of the Bridgewater Church of the Brethren in 1957 as part of the denomination’s refugee resettlement

program (coordinated through New Windsor, Maryland), which began in 1949 with a national conference that called upon congregations to resettle 1,000 refugees displaced by World War II. Between 1961 and 1962, the Church of the Brethren also participated in the Virginia Council of Churches' resettlement of 40-60 Cubans who were among the scores of professionals and businesspeople fleeing the revolution in Cuba. Although no one seems to be certain, at least one of this first group of Cubans may have been settled in the Harrisonburg area as part of that effort.

In 1961, Pablo Cuevas, who is arguably the first Latino immigrant to settle in the area, was granted political asylum after returning to Cuba for Christmas vacation while attending college in Dayton, a small town just south of Harrisonburg. "I knew I couldn't go back". He returned to Harrisonburg in 1961, having first come to the Valley in 1958 to attend a small college that was affiliated with the United Evangelical Church. (The college later merged with the Methodist Church and moved from Dayton to Winchester where it became known as Shenandoah University.) It was one of many church-affiliated colleges that were recruiting students in Cuba during that time. Pablo's father made contact with a broker who "got a per cent of the tuition to get you enrolled". The choice of college was arbitrary. As Pablo explained, Cubans were just anxious to get their children out of the country during the unrest preceding Castro's takeover of the government. "By 1958 there were killings on the streets and sabotage of the electricity, so people with the means got their kids out temporarily so they wouldn't be involved in the conflict. They were waiting to see what was going to happen with the new government". Pablo was one of eight Cuban students, "two girls and six guys," who enrolled in the college in Dayton, along with a couple of students from Korea and Thailand. Although he initially suffered culture shock, particularly upon encountering segregated public facilities, among the positive things he remembered from that time was foreign student night. As he noted, "The churches invited 14 to 16 students and we got a free meal. It was a neat thing".

Over time the Bridgewater Church of the Brethren became more involved in the refugee resettlement program and eventually purchased a building containing two apartments to house refugees. Over the last 30 years the congregation has sponsored about 40 families, although relatively few of them have been from Latin America. Other Church of the Brethren congregations, as well as several Mennonite churches in the area also sponsored refugees before a Refugee Resettlement Office was established in Harrisonburg in 1987.

The Refugee Resettlement Office in Harrisonburg, which is one of about 400 mostly religious-based affiliates of the federal program (Patrick, 2000), is operated by the Virginia Council of Churches under the auspices of Church World Services. Duchon and Murphy (2001) suggest that since the 1970s the State Department

has targeted the South for refugee resettlement because of its strong economic growth. Harrisonburg is considered a desirable site for refugee resettlement because of the availability of church sponsors, low-skill jobs requiring little English and the relatively lower cost of living compared to larger metropolitan areas. Since opening, the Refugee Resettlement Office has resettled refugees of many nationalities, but the largest number have been religious refugees from the former Soviet Union and more recently, Bosnians, Iraqi Kurds and Meshketian Turks. Nationally, the refugee resettlement program has offered resettlement to far fewer refugees from Latin America (86,000) over the past 25-30 years than any other region of the world and Cubans (50,000) constitute the majority of Latin Americans accepted for refugee resettlement (US Department of State, 2002). Prior to the opening of the Refugee Resettlement Office, Harrisonburg did receive some Cubans from the Mariel boatlift of 1980, but they did not come through an organized resettlement program. Instead, they came on their own after spending time in refugee camps in the United States. According Christina Solano, a more recent Cuban newcomer, "Fidel opened the coasts and people left on anything that would float". About 10 to 12 Marielitos came to Harrisonburg during the 1980s and some of them are still in the area. "They were probably going to New York and stayed here because they didn't have enough money or they found jobs".

The Refugee Resettlement Office began resettling Cuban refugees in the area in the mid-1990s and Colombian refugees in 2003, since Colombians were not eligible for resettlement prior to that date. Both the Cubans and Colombians who qualify for resettlement as political refugees (as opposed to immigrants or asylees) have personal histories of persecution, imprisonment and torture.⁹ As of 2005, seven Colombians have come to Harrisonburg through the resettlement program. The first Cubans, a family of five and two single women, arrived in 1995.

The Refugee Resettlement Office also resettles Cubans in Harrisonburg who have come to the United States through the Cuban-Haitian Program, which involves individuals who have parole rather than refugee status. As part of the joint US-Cuban Migration Accords of 1994, the program allows 20,000 Cubans a year entry into the United States through a special lottery that is separate from the worldwide immigration diversity lottery. Church World Service is one of two national voluntary agencies or VOLAGs (Catholic Conference is the other) that have had federal contracts since 1998 to resettle Cubans from this program. As one of seven offices nationally involved in the program, the Harrisonburg office has a contract to settle a quota of five to eight individuals a month. Unlike the "Marielitos," the Cuban-Haitian Program entrants come as families and are eligible for immigrant visas obtained through a lottery system. And unlike refugees, the Cubans in the Cuban-Haitian Program have no church

sponsors because of the short notice involved before they arrive. As a resettlement worker explained, “Cubans are known as ‘out-migrators’ who move to Miami” regardless of where they are initially settled. Therefore, in order to discourage them from staying in Miami where jobs are scarce, “there is an intensive effort to get them out of Miami in 48 hours.” As one participant explained, upon their arrival in Miami, individuals are given a list of locales and asked to choose one. With virtually no prior knowledge of any of the places on the list, new arrivals generally “just put their finger” on one. As of 2005, close to 200 Cubans have settled in Harrisonburg through the Cuban-Haitian Program.

Over the last two decades, other refugees from Latin America have resettled themselves. With or without official sponsorship, Central Americans from Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua began coming to the Harrisonburg area in the 1980s when much of Central America was engulfed in civil wars. In contrast to Mexican immigrants, Central Americans’ motives for coming to the United States tended to be more political (i.e. to escape the violence) rather than economic (Chavez, 1992). Although Nicaraguans were usually granted refugee status, few Guatemalans or Salvadorans were officially recognized as refugees (Hamilton and Chinchilla, 1997). According to one estimate, fewer than 3 per cent of Salvadorans were granted political asylum compared to 35 per cent of Poles and 60 per cent of Iranians who applied for asylum during the 1980s (Repack, 1995:17). As a result, there was no federal government program to resettle the Salvadorans and Guatemalans who nevertheless attempted to enter the United States as “illegals” during the 1980s. Their plight generated considerable sympathy among American churches and synagogues and particularly those opposed to US military intervention in Central America. Initiated by a couple of churches in Tucson, Arizona in 1980, the Sanctuary Movement, which offered Salvadorans and Guatemalans in the United States various kinds of support and assistance, spread to “400 sanctuary churches and 2,000 support congregations” across the country (Gibson, 1990:2).¹⁰ In Harrisonburg, there was at least one public demonstration against US military involvement in Central America, as well as a 1985 conference sponsored by a group called the Virginia Central American Network. The conference, which was held at Eastern Mennonite College (now Eastern Mennonite University), which is located in Harrisonburg, was titled “Can There Be Justice for Central America?” and was endorsed by almost three dozen local and state organizations. It included workshops on the “pledge of resistance” and “developing Sanctuary Refugee Programs”.

Although no local churches appear to have been “sanctuary churches” (i.e. offered shelter within their sanctuary), individual members of several churches were involved in organized efforts to help Salvadorans in the United States and Central America. A number of EMC graduates worked for Mennonite Central

Committee in El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua during the 1980s and 1990s. One of these individuals recalled that there were some Salvadorans in Harrisonburg when he left for Central America in 1983. He guessed that they “probably began coming into the area in 1981-1982 when things began heating up in El Salvador”. Others remembered that there were local Mennonites and Brethren working in the Sanctuary Movement who transported Salvadorans on an “underground railroad” for at least part of their journey from the Mexican border to the Canadian border. One Mennonite congregation in Harrisonburg, which was known for sponsoring Laotian and Vietnamese refugees during the Vietnam War, informally sponsored a Salvadoran man, who had been a baker, and even helped him open a bakery in Harrisonburg. However, the business venture did not work out and the man apparently “became disappointed and moved away”.

Ana Herrera and her husband came to Harrisonburg from Guatemala in 1989 after being detained by Immigration authorities for three months on the Texas border. Ana recounted how she and her husband were “taken from” detention by the Church of the Brethren in New Windsor, Maryland and stayed there for six months until the Church arranged for them to get work permits. The church gave them food and a place to stay. According to Ana, “the Church felt compassion for those who were persecuted and couldn’t return”. When I asked if it is correct to say that she and her husband came as refugees, though without official sanction, she replied, “It is correct. We came as refugees”. Asked how they came to Harrisonburg, she said the Church workers asked them where they wanted to go and since Ana knew two Nicaraguan refugees who were already in Harrisonburg, that is where they went. Upon their arrival in Harrisonburg, the Church of the Brethren found them a place to stay and when Ana, who was pregnant, gave birth, the Church paid the \$2,000 hospital bill. The Church also got them jobs at one of the poultry plants. Ana has since owned two small businesses and brought many of her family here from Guatemala.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCHES IN IMMIGRANT RECRUITMENT

Religion, which has been an important feature of life in the Shenandoah Valley since the first European settlement in the 1700s, continues to play a vital role in the lives of both native-born residents and newcomers to the area today. There are at least 230 churches in the city and county (Office on Youth, 2003). Although individual churches of various denominations have sponsored refugees, Mennonite and Church of the Brethren congregations have been particularly active in refugee resettlement efforts for many years. A much larger number of churches have been involved with immigrants in other ways that, even if not constituting active recruitment, have created a welcoming environment for settlement.

One of the principal ways that churches have been involved with Latino immigrants has been through the creation of special ministries catering to their needs. While it has been suggested that migrant farm workers do not interact with the institutions or members of the surrounding society (Chavez, 1992), this has not been the case in the Valley. When the first Mexicans arrived in the Valley to work in the apple orchards, churches from Harrisonburg and nearby Timberville established “migrant ministries” to assist them materially and spiritually. Marjorie Smith, who worked in the Migrant Education program in the early 1980s, recalled that there were many outreach programs operated by local churches in the camps. “Churches in the Timberville area did Bible study and brought stuff”. Marjorie herself used to take children from the camps roller-skating and on fieldtrips. She also took them for vaccinations and school physicals and to buy shoes and eye glasses, using money from the school’s “shoe fund”. She explained that living conditions in the camps were bad and the children were barefoot. “The kids only had summer clothes, so we had to get them coats”. Because some of the mothers were sick, she also became involved in getting them help.

Many of the individuals who were involved in migrant ministries were either Latino themselves or local Euro-Americans who had missionary experience in Latin America. For example, Armando Fernandez, who was originally from Puerto Rico, came to Harrisonburg in 1976 and became involved in a migrant ministry while attending Harrisonburg Baptist Church. With other volunteers from the church and JMU students who were studying Spanish, he would go out to the migrant camps, taking cakes and other food, to play soccer or basketball and hold religious services with the migrant workers. Similarly, Angela Diaz, who is from Guatemala, came to Harrisonburg in 1986 with her husband who was from the Valley. They met while both were working for Mennonite Central Committee in Guatemala. Soon after coming to Harrisonburg, Angela began going to the apple orchards as a volunteer with her husband and others from Grace Covenant Church. “We went to talk to the people... We invited them to church and had activities. Sometimes I took food. We went to see what the needs are.” One of the needs was interpreting so Angela, along with two other women, one Latina and the other a Euro-American missionary, volunteered as interpreters, taking families to doctors’ appointments and to enroll their children in school. In recent years other mainstream Protestant churches (e.g. Presbyterian, Methodist, Nazarene and Mormon) have initiated “Hispanic ministries” that combine religious and “social ministry” components. For example, the Mormon Church in Harrisonburg, through the efforts of a member who was a missionary in Latin America, initiated a Spanish branch in the summer of 2004 that now has about 100 members. According to a church outreach worker, “The Harrisonburg program offers Hispanics more than scripture. Others in the church help their brethren with such transitional tasks as obtaining housing and jobs” (Mitchell, 2005:8).

Of all of the churches with migrant or Hispanic ministries, the Catholic Church has had the most extensive program.¹¹ Compared to the various Protestant denominations represented in Harrisonburg by multiple church congregations, there is only one Catholic Church in the city (and an additional one in the town of Elkton). The Catholic Church in Harrisonburg began its Hispanic Ministry in the 1970s when a priest came from Richmond to hold a Spanish Mass for the migrant workers in the apple orchards. Thirty or so people would attend Mass and afterward they would hold a dinner prepared by volunteers from the church followed by soccer games. Having discovered that the migrant workers lacked blankets and cooking and eating utensils, the volunteers brought them needed items. On more than one occasion, the volunteers found the INS waiting to pick up the “illegals” as they emerged from Mass. Because the migrant camps were raided at least three times by the INS after Mass during the 1980s, the Spanish Mass, although still held once or twice a year, was moved to the church where it was conducted by the parish priest who spoke some Spanish. Efforts by church volunteers to help the migrant workers also continued and became more organized with the arrival of more Spanish-speaking professionals (primarily from South American countries) over time. One of the most important free services they provided was interpretation in doctors’ offices, the police station and court. A doctor, who was himself an immigrant from Colombia, also treated migrant workers without charge.

One of the most important individuals in this effort was a woman known to Spanish and English speakers alike as Señora Martina de Mendoza, because of her insistence on the Spanish formal term of address. Señora de Mendoza was originally from Chile, but had lived elsewhere in the United States before coming to Harrisonburg in 1985 because of her husband’s professional position in the local poultry industry. When she first arrived in town she met a woman who was married to a Colombian physician. The woman invited Señora de Mendoza to join a group of women who, from the early 1970s, met in each other’s homes regularly to practice speaking Spanish. Although the membership changed over the years, the group included mainly native speakers from Latin American countries and Spain who were connected to the local universities and Euro-Americans with missionary experience in various Central or South American countries. The same woman also invited Señora de Mendoza to attend Spanish Mass and dinner at the Catholic Church where she had a chance to talk to the priest. When he heard that Señora de Mendoza had experience teaching English as a second language, he asked her to volunteer to teach the migrant workers survival English. The following year Señora de Mendoza started teaching beginning level Spanish classes at JMU and recruited her students to help teach survival English classes at the Lutheran Church in Timberville. She found the classes disappointing because there were always new people and they were always starting over, since most

of the migrant workers picked apples between August and November and then left the area. Nevertheless, they offered the classes into the 1990s. They also continued to visit the camps to give the migrants “basic necessities, blankets, pots and pans”. When the parish priest was transferred, the new priest, who did not speak Spanish, hired Señora de Mendoza to head the Hispanic Ministry and act as a liaison between the Latino and Euro-American communities. After the passage of IRCA in 1986, referred to by many immigrants as “la amnistía” (the amnesty), Señora de Mendoza, at the new priest’s request, received training to help people apply for the amnesty and permanent residence. Señora de Mendoza estimated that there were only “a handful” of Latinos working in the poultry plants at that time, while the rest worked in the apple orchards and only a few stayed in the area all year. They would go home to Mexico in November and return in February. There were also some families from Puerto Rico in the community who spoke English and worked in the poultry plants. She estimated that she and her assistants helped “arrange papers” for about 180 people through the amnesty program. According to Señora de Mendoza, “As soon as people got their papers, they started working in the poultry plants and stopped working in the orchards. There were no more migrants. The community started to grow in 1987”. However, only a few men brought their families until the 1990s. However, by 2005, attendance at the Catholic Church’s weekly Spanish Mass had grown to about 800 people. Much of the Church’s growth over the past two decades has been due to the influx of Latino families. Church membership more than doubled, from 560 to 1,200 households, between 1980 and 1990, with most of the growth among Spanish-speaking parishioners. In 2007, Church membership had grown to 4,875, almost equally divided between 2,036 Latinos and 2,839 non-Latinos.

At the same time that local churches were establishing links with the growing Mexican population, other church efforts brought the first Uruguayans to the area. Uruguayans began arriving in Harrisonburg in 1980. They came from two separate communities in Uruguay for unrelated reasons, only one of which was church-related. The first group has its origin in a couple of friends who, through previous contact with the friend of the Italian owner of a local pizzeria, came to Harrisonburg to work in the restaurant in 1980. The second group has its origin in a Mennonite church in Uruguay that had links to Harrisonburg. The pastor of the Uruguayan church had attended seminary at Eastern Mennonite College and returned to Harrisonburg in 1985 in order to establish a “Spanish” church under Mennonite sponsorship. The pastor and his wife, who were from wealthy families, brought 17 adopted children with them. Two brothers, Luis and Enrique Vega, who were not adopted, but who had lived with the pastor in Uruguay also joined the group in Harrisonburg. Although the pastor returned to Uruguay without establishing a “Spanish” church, some of his adopted children and both

brothers remained behind in the local area. One of the brothers began working with a retired Mennonite minister, who had previously “opened” churches in Mexico, to establish a “Spanish” church locally. They began visiting the apple orchards on a weekly basis with a guitar and a Bible. The minister also took migrant workers to arrange their “papers” and helped them with employment forms. At the same time, he began to evangelize the people he helped. Eventually, “things clicked” with the men they were visiting in the orchards and the “Spanish” church was inaugurated with one or two families and some single men. Luis Vega commented, “People saw how they were treated and respected and showed up during the week”. Many people came to the church because of the help they received from the minister. “There were several brothers attending the church. They brought their families and the families brought more people, so the church grew”. Currently, the congregation, now called “Pacto de Gracia”, has 300 members of 17 nationalities, including many Uruguayans, and is part of Grace Covenant Church, a non-denominational church that has a total membership of about 1,000 individuals.

At the same time that Luis was working to help establish a “Spanish” Protestant church in Harrisonburg, he also attended the Spanish Mass at the Catholic Church where he met and socialized with other members of the fledgling Latino community. According to Luis, “The Catholic Church attracted everyone and Father Kyle tried to give sermons in Spanish”. Luis estimated that there were perhaps 200-300 Spanish speakers in Rockingham County in 1985 and probably no more than 400 Spanish speakers in the entire Shenandoah Valley from Winchester to Staunton. In addition to Mexicans, there were some Puerto Ricans. The Latino population was small enough at that time so that many of the Spanish speakers sought out and knew each other regardless of their national origins.

Since the 1980s local Mennonite congregations have also been interested in “planting a Hispanic church”. However, finding insufficient interest because “immigrants tend to settle relatively easily within church families that already exist,” (Oswald, 2003), they shifted their effort to help meet basic needs through an immigrant resource center. New Bridges, which opened in Harrisonburg in 2000, was developed by Mennonite Central Committee to assist immigrants with such issues as language, jobs, childcare, financial training and finding and using social services, medical and educational resources. The center is supported by the Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions and a half dozen Mennonite congregations in Harrisonburg. According to the director, “The congregations—striving to live out Mennonite Church USA’s priority of becoming missional at home and around the world—believe that New Bridges brings missions to their backyard” (Oswald, 2003).

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN IMMIGRANT RECRUITMENT

Although the poultry plants and churches have played significant roles in initiating and facilitating migration to Harrisonburg, it is social networks that have perpetuated the flows and created a series of transnational “daughter communities” (Chavez, 1992) in the local area. Once settled, it is rare that newcomers do not try to convince friends and family to join them. Some individuals bring only their immediate family, but others are known within their communities for bringing or “inviting” large numbers of family and friends to the area. After hearing many people use the word “invited” to refer to how they came to the Valley, I asked Ricardo Ramos, who is from Mexico, to explain what precisely was meant by the term. He thought for a moment and responded that “to invite” someone to migrate implies providing them with initial help. More precisely, it means providing the person with a place to stay, something to eat and help finding a job. He added that sometimes these arrangements end due to “conflicts”. The invitee often stays with the family for a long time before they find their own place and that sometimes creates friction. Or the person making the invitation might be a *mayordomo* (supervisor) in a poultry plant, which “gives him influence and makes him think he is rich and has power”. “He may make the invitee work more, so they separate over this”. When Ricardo came to Harrisonburg, his brothers were already here, staying with an aunt. Since there was no room for him, they couldn’t “invite” him and Ricardo had to find his own apartment.

Among the Salvadorans, Susana Alvarez, who is a successful business-owner, is known for bringing many of her relatives to Harrisonburg. After listing all of the relatives that Susana has brought, Susana’s friend Catarina commented that she likes the way they all get together to make “fiestas”. She would also love to bring all of her family. Catarina convinced one of her sisters to move here from California and has tried to get another sister to move here, too, but the sister says she is not interested because Harrisonburg “is very boring”. Catarina also noted that when she lived briefly in the Washington, DC area before moving to Harrisonburg, other Salvadorans would ask her if she was from Chirilagua or Intipucá because there are a couple of apartment complexes in the suburbs that have only residents from those two towns. “It started with a few people who helped others with their rent and food and now there is a large community”. Affirming Catarina’s observation, Repack, in her study of Central Americans in Washington, DC, estimates that half of the population of Chirilagua has relocated to a northern Virginia suburb and notes that the town of Intipucá in El Salvador has renamed one of its main avenues “Washington Street” in recognition of its large expatriate population residing in the Washington area (Repack, 1995:83). Like Susana, Pablo Cuevas, as one of the first in his family to leave Cuba, also brought many relatives to the United States. “It took me 18 years to get 27 relatives out...”. Although he brought members of his family to the Harrisonburg area,

they stayed for only a short time before moving to Miami. According to Pablo, “They couldn’t wait to get out of here because there were no black beans and rice”. When asked to explain, he responded that there were actually a number of reasons. The first was language. When he first started bringing his relatives to the area in the early 1970s, they could not speak English and “there weren’t too many Spanish-speaking people to talk to. Second, was the food. There was no food they were used to. You couldn’t just go to Food Lion. They had to go to the international food stores to find the food they liked. There was one in Charlottesville... They couldn’t watch TV. There was no satellite TV. That goes for the culture part. Then there was the weather, working in 30-degree weather. They were used to seeing the sun and 80 degrees”.

Through such invitations or sponsorship, certain individuals initiate and perpetuate migration chains involving overlapping networks of relatives, friends and acquaintances usually from the same home community. Over time these social networks, originating in one or more villages, towns or cities in various Latin American countries, have coalesced into multiple small communities in Harrisonburg. While the pattern of linkages between hometown and immigrant communities is well established in the literature, the focus is usually on the ties between one destination and one specific sending community. For example, writing on the connection between Mexican immigration and meatpacking in Marshalltown, Iowa, Grey (2002) refers to the town of Villachuato, Michoacan as Marshalltown’s “unofficial sister city” because it is the source of as many as half of Marshalltown’s immigrants and one third of the local meatpacking plant’s workforce (Grey, 2000). In contrast to Marshalltown, Harrisonburg could be said to have a number of identifiable “unofficial sister cities” in at least six Latin American countries.

In Harrisonburg, I have been able to identify what I prefer to call multiple “daughter communities” rather than “sister cities,” since the latter term suggests parallel status, chambers of commerce and business connections, while the former evokes an expansion of roots into a new environment, as well as the deeper interdependence of a parent and child. These “daughter communities” have their origins in multiple, specific hometowns in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Cuba and Uruguay, as well as in the efforts of specific “pioneers,” or first individuals, to arrive in the Valley from these small towns or cities. For example, many Mexicans in the local area know that the Garcia brothers, who were among the first Mexicans to settle in Harrisonburg, “invited” family and friends from their hometown (population 30,000) in the state of Jalisco, so that over a period of almost thirty years, they have now created a community of anywhere from 300 to 500 people, depending on the individual making the estimate. In the past, many lived in the same trailer park in Harrisonburg. Although the Garcia family organizes “fiestas,” mainly at Christmas, for the whole group,

it is becoming difficult to find a place large enough to hold everyone since no one has a big enough house. No formal “hometown association” exists yet despite some interest in starting one. On the other hand, other members of this community do maintain an Internet website, including a chat room, for the use of community members who are living both in Mexico and several locales in the United States.

Similarly, Ramon Mendez was one of the first individuals from his hometown in the Mexican state of Guanajuato to come to Harrisonburg in the 1980s and there are now over 200 people from the same small town and surrounding “ranchos” (smaller settlements) living in the Harrisonburg area. According to Ramon’s niece Lucía, many came here thinking that their stay would be temporary. Her own parents were very reluctant to stay. They originally planned to remain in the United States only long enough to earn some money to fix up their house in Mexico, but they have been here 14 years and bought a house in the Harrisonburg area instead. As a result of everyone leaving, Lucía says that their hometown in Mexico “is a ghost town”. She explained that they want to close the school because there are so few students. “There aren’t many people there now who live there permanently. Mostly they are elderly or some women and children whose husbands haven’t brought them here”. At least three other small communities in Harrisonburg have been formed by immigrants from specific towns in the Mexican states of Zacatecas, Queretero and Oaxaca. For example, there are an estimated 500 Mixteco speakers (an indigenous group in Mexico) from the same town in Oaxaca living in Harrisonburg. According to a Migrant Education worker who has worked with the Mixtecos, “They have parties all the time and many still return home each year at Christmas”.

The phenomenon of transnational community building is not limited to Mexican immigrants. As a Latina service provider commented, “the (Latino) population is growing more and more. It’s amazing. People come here from all over. It’s like in stages. In one year people come from one place and the next year from somewhere else. Normally, two or three get here for any reason and start bringing cousins, their moms and friends. If they are good friends, they help them”. Her analysis is apt, since the local influx of various Latin American nationality groups can be divided into overlapping stages, beginning in each case with a few individual “pioneers”, who initiated the migration of entire or large segments of social networks through chains of interlocking relationships. In the case of the Guatemalans, Ana Herrera was the first to come to Harrisonburg in the 1980s. Since then, she has run a boarding house where many of the Guatemalans eat meals and, as one of her friends remarked, “She made everyone feel that she was their mother”. Today, many of the Guatemalans in Harrisonburg are from Ana’s hometown area near the border with Mexico. She estimated that there are perhaps 300 Guatemalans in Harrisonburg from that area alone. In contrast,

Rosa Luna, who was another of the first Guatemalans in Harrisonburg, is from a different town, and, as a friend of both of the women remarked, “she has not brought a group of people here like Ana has”.

Although the Refugee Resettlement Office estimates the number of Cubans in Harrisonburg at 200, the number is actually closer to 300 because not all of the Cubans have come under the auspices of the Refugee Resettlement Office, according to Christina Solano, a member of the local Cuban community. “Those who came through the office brought others including relatives from Miami. Miami is the American Dream, but there is little opportunity there, so little by little people have been moving here. They are all from the same town... which is located in the western-most part of Cuba. They are not refugees, but economic refugees”. She explained that Cubans have a special arrangement with the US government by which “any Cuban who sets foot on American soil can stay no matter how they entered. If they put one foot on American soil, they have guaranteed residence. It’s easier to get legal status as a Cuban than for other immigrants. Residents can then bring their kids and if they become citizens, they can bring everyone”. Although many of Cubans in Harrisonburg claim to have university degrees, none of them has been able to resume their former career because of language and credentialing problems and have ended up working in the poultry-processing plants. Christina concluded that although everyone wants to go to Miami because of their problems with English, it is difficult to move because of the lack of jobs and the higher cost of living in a big city.

Uruguayans in Harrisonburg, according to Paula Alvarado, really belong to “two branches” from two different small cities. For a number of years, Uruguayan migration to the United States was facilitated by the fact that Uruguayans were able to legally enter the United States without visas. The first three Uruguayans came to Harrisonburg together from New York in 1980 after receiving information from a friend about restaurant jobs. The three friends had traveled to the United States together from the same town in Uruguay where they had been members of the same rugby team. However, only one of the three, Lorenzo Guevara, has brought other Uruguayans to the area. According to several more recent arrivals, Lorenzo “has brought his whole family here”. The other two friends stayed for only a short time and returned to Uruguay, but one of them subsequently married and returned with his wife and children to Harrisonburg in 2000. Many Uruguayans came to Harrisonburg at about the same time in 2000-2001. Paula remarked that she really does not know the people from the other Uruguayan town who have come to Harrisonburg, but she does know that they are a group of related people, many of whom belong to the same church and that one of the Vega brothers, who was a founding member of the church, brought many people here. When Paula came in 2001, economic conditions in Uruguay “were bad and many people had gotten into debt”. She estimated that there were 40-

60 Uruguayan families in Harrisonburg in 2001, but there has been “a lot of coming and going since then”. Other Uruguayans’ estimates range from 70 to 175 families in 2005.

Hondurans are the newest Latino immigrant group to come to Harrisonburg. They began arriving in the Valley in the mid-1990s, many after Hurricane Mitch caused considerable damage in Honduras (and Nicaragua) in 1998. Most of them are from locales in the department of Olancho. Regardless of their initial legal status, Hondurans (and Nicaraguans) have benefited from being granted (and having repeatedly renewed) Temporary Protected Status by the federal government, which allows them to live and work legally in the United States. Santiago Flores, who was one of the first Hondurans to settle in Harrisonburg, came via New York City. About the many Hondurans in New York, he explained that they tend to settle in “colonias” (neighborhoods) based on the department and district they come from in Honduras. He estimated that there are about 3,000 Hondurans in the Harrisonburg area and most have come in the last five years. When he came to Harrisonburg in 1995, there were only 25-30 Hondurans in the area and they all used to get together to celebrate birthdays. According to Santiago, they came to Harrisonburg because of the availability of work and way of life. “It is a tranquil life without commotion and in some ways it is similar to the countries we come from. It’s not a fast pace like New York”.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Harrisonburg, like other new immigrant destinations in the South, is experiencing the arrival and settlement of a growing number of Latinos, but the origins of this growth are neither random, new nor comprehensible as a phenomenon separate from the town itself. The process of “Latinization” in Harrisonburg has a history that now extends back over 30 years and three generations in some of the “pioneer” families and that owes as much to the actions of locally-based institutions and individuals as it does to the actions of immigrants who have come to the area to make it home.

Although the primary purpose of this paper has been to illustrate a distinctive case of “Latinization” in a non-traditional destination, there are policy implications that can be drawn from examining this historical process. The first involves the need for more attention to be paid to the diversity of immigrant populations in non-traditional and particularly smaller urban destinations. Although the body of research on Latinos in new destinations in the South and Midwest is growing, most of it focuses on Mexican immigrants, suggesting that Mexicans are the only Latino/ Hispanic or for that matter immigrant population that is migrating to rural and small urban areas and that the only reason for the flow is labor migration.

More importantly, use of such terms as “Latino” or “Hispanic” to encompass these groups may suggest more homogeneity of experience and circumstances than actually exists. As the paper has shown, there are clearly differences in US immigration policy and law that impact various Latin American immigrant groups differently, benefiting some groups with legal status and assistance, while penalizing others.

This diversity among Latino immigrants also needs to be taken into consideration in policies that impact the provision of services. Nationality and immigration status differences as well as other dimensions of diversity among Latinos, such as rural versus urban origins, indigenous or minority status in the home country and socioeconomic class and educational background, suggest that a “one-size-fits-all” approach to the provision of services may be less effective. At minimum, programs should incorporate sensitivity to these differences. For example, a single approach to designing programs for teaching English as a second language to adult learners will not be as effective as programs that take into account the varying levels of first language literacy among various groups of Latinos. Similarly, the existence of multiple “daughter communities” originating in towns in at least a half dozen different countries has exacerbated the problem of identifying community leaders when service providers and other interested parties attempt to find those individuals who can speak for a single presumed “Hispanic community” in Harrisonburg.

Another policy implication of the research involves the need for more attention to be given to the role of various “stakeholder” groups within the host community in actively recruiting and facilitating the settlement of immigrant populations. While it is widely recognized that specific industries (e.g. food processing) have a long history of immigrant recruitment, it is less often acknowledged that other groups, and specifically those associated with faith communities, may also play a role in recruitment. On the other hand, such “stakeholders,” as illustrated in the paper, can also be very effective at the local level in the provision of services and support to immigrants, thus shifting some of the cost and burden from public agencies. As the Harrisonburg case shows, it is not just large cities that have the capability and resources for dealing with influxes of new immigrants. Without comparable data it is difficult to say how unique the Harrisonburg area is in its access to such resources, but the strong Mennonite emphasis on community service and conflict resolution, as well as the presence of two universities, one of which is Mennonite, have undoubtedly created a more international orientation locally than would be expected in other rural areas. In particular, the presence of many individuals, whether Latino or Euro-American, with Spanish language skills and experience living in Latin America, may be distinctive or even unique to Harrisonburg considering its status as a small city in a rural location. Formal policies for recruiting bilingual, bicultural service providers and for creating

mentoring programs for potential cultural mediators and service providers among the second generation would benefit other small towns and cities dealing with new immigrant populations.

Finally, the paper illustrates how the process of migration is initiated and proceeds at the micro-level of individual decisions and actions (albeit within the context of structural changes associated with economic globalization). While decision-making at this level may be idiosyncratic, the net result of a multitude of such decisions within social networks over time is the formation of “daughter communities” in areas of settlement that are made up of individuals with ties to the same places of origin. The presence of these “daughter communities” and the phenomenon of transnational migration, in which individuals and groups live their lives in more than one geographic locale, suggest often-neglected aspects of immigration that need to be understood in developing policy. Although other studies have documented the existence of such “daughter communities”, researchers usually focus on links to a single place of origin (e.g. Grey, 2002) rather than the multiple links to multiple places of origin uncovered in Harrisonburg. If, as in Harrisonburg, other new immigrant destinations contain myriad “daughter communities”, consideration should be given to how various stakeholder groups can harness the “sister city” potential inherent in these communities for the economic and social benefit of both immigrant-sending and receiving communities. A Latino business owner suggested one example of how this might be done. He mused about holding a trade fair in Harrisonburg that would showcase the handicrafts for which his hometown in Mexico is famous and that could facilitate the development of commercial and tourist ties between the town and Harrisonburg. His idea could easily be extended to encompass all of Harrisonburg’s unofficial “sister cities”.

Predicting the future is always a dangerous venture, but at least in the short-term, it appears likely that many Latino immigrants in Harrisonburg will continue to be oriented largely toward their own social networks originating from specific hometowns. It is also likely that they will continue to resent it when locals refer to them as “Mexican” regardless of where they are actually from. In the long-term, it may be that the mingling of immigrants of diverse origins within the local community in work, school, churches and recreation (e.g. soccer leagues), as well as the fact that they are persistently viewed and treated by non-Latinos as an undifferentiated racial group may eventually bring greater saliency to a pan-ethnic/racial identity and with it a further “Latinization” of the community.

NOTES

- 1 I have chosen to use the term “Latino” to refer to immigrants from Latin American countries, recognizing that the term “Hispanic” is often used to refer to the same population. Both terms are used locally.
- 2 The expansion of turkey processing locally was spurred in part by an increase in consumer demand. The average per capita consumption of turkey has increased from three pounds in the 1930s-1940s to 18 pounds in 1999 and 17.7 pounds in 2002, owing to a shift from seasonal to year-round consumption and the introduction of turkey luncheon meats in recent years. Since the 1970s, expansion of the poultry industry has also been spurred by significant increases in poultry exports from less than 5 per cent of total production in 1975 to 18 per cent by 1998. Approximately 15 per cent of the chicken and 9 per cent of the turkey products from the local area are currently exported. (Wright, Dan, “More Nations Ban Imports of U.S. Birds,” DNR 2-25-04:1,5).
- 3 Before 1986 workers were not required to show identification, such as a Social Security card, in order to prove their legal status and thus, work eligibility in the United States. See Chavez, 1992:147.
- 4 Compared to the national average poultry processing wage of \$10.13/hr. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics), the local starting wage was about \$8.35/hr. in 2005.
- 5 My thanks to Bruce Busching for making available his records on the UFCW Local 400 strike against Marval.
- 6 In 1984, Marval had 843 hourly workers, 600 of whom were union members. See Reinke, 6-2--84.
- 7 Marval claimed that 240 workers had returned to work by 11 December 1984 and 12 workers were on “a preferential list for available openings”. See Marval Poultry Company, Inc., 1984.
- 8 The US federal government operates separate programs for asylum seekers and resettled refugees. According to Patrick (2004: 2), most asylum seekers are individuals who have “transported themselves to the country in which they are seeking asylum”, while refugees are more likely to have fled “en masse” and once accepted by the country of resettlement generally do not undergo an additional adjudication process after their arrival to determine if they have a “well founded fear of persecution”, which is the legal definition used for determining refugee status. As the largest of ten traditional resettlement countries, the United States tends to resettle refugees by country of origin and “the urgency of the individual situation”. See Patrick, 2004:1.
- 9 The number of Cubans who could legally enter the United States and the criteria for granting them refugee status became more restricted after passage of the Refugee Resettlement Act of 1980. After 1980, Cubans had to apply for admission like other immigrants and, in order to obtain refugee status, individuals had to prove that they would be persecuted for their religious or political beliefs if they returned to Cuba. See Olson and Olson, 1995: 88.
- 10 According to Repack (2000:152), “...countless parishioners in Washington churches sheltered immigrants from El Salvador during the war years until they could find housing and jobs on their own”.

- 11 According to one estimate, on the national level, 10-15 per cent of the Catholic Church's budget for charitable works is spent on aiding immigrants and refugees. See Freemantle, 2005.

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LA LATINISATION DE LA VALLÉE CENTRALE DE SHENANDOAH

Au même titre que la Caroline du Nord, l'Arkansas et la Georgie, la Virginie est l'un de ces Etats du sud des Etats-Unis qui ont été témoins d'une poussée soudaine de l'immigration latino-américaine au cours de la dernière décennie. Non seulement il s'agit d'un rythme de croissance sans précédent, mais bon nombre de destinations choisies sont nouvelles et situées en zone rurale. Des lieux qui n'avaient pas accueilli de population immigrée depuis des générations prennent brusquement un caractère multiculturel. La petite ville de Harrisonburg (43 500 habitants selon un décompte approximatif de 2005), qui est située dans la vallée centrale de Shenandoah, en Virginie, est peut-être le principal exemple de cette nouvelle évolution. Alors qu'elle se vantait autrefois d'être composée d'Américains de souche à hauteur de 99,2 % et d'être blanche à 93,7 %, cette ville se distingue aujourd'hui par la plus grande diversité d'origine des enfants scolarisés à l'échelle de l'Etat (pour la période 2006-2007), puisqu'on y dénombre 64 nationalités parlant 44 langues. On y trouve notamment des hispanophones originaires d'au moins 14 pays différents. A partir de la théorie des réseaux sociaux, l'auteur examine comment ces réseaux se sont activés chez les immigrants latino-américains dans les nouvelles zones d'installation. Il présente un historique du processus de "latinisation", en citant notamment l'installation de populations latino-américaines diverses (originaires du Mexique, du Guatemala, d'El Salvador, du Honduras, de Cuba et d'Uruguay) à Harrisonburg et dans la vallée centrale Shenandoah entourant cette ville. L'auteur montre comment un certain nombre d'institutions clés, et notamment les industries agricoles locales (pommeraies et élevages de poulets), un bureau de réinstallation de réfugiés et des églises ont recruté des "pionniers" au sein de ces groupes d'immigrants, et comment ces "pionniers" ont par la suite poursuivi cette action de recrutement à l'aide de réseaux sociaux, créant ainsi de multiples "communautés affiliées" transnationales dans la région de Harrisonburg. L'étude examine aussi les implications politiques de ce processus historique.

LA LATINIZACIÓN DEL VALLE CENTRAL SHENANDOAH

Virginia es uno de los estados sureños de los Estados Unidos, al igual que Carolina del Norte, Arkansas y Georgia, que ha experimentado un incremento repentino de la inmigración latina durante el último decenio. No sólo se trata de un incremento sin precedentes, si no que además los destinos son nuevos y localizados en zonas rurales. Estos lugares que no han albergado a poblaciones inmigrantes durante generaciones se están convirtiendo rápidamente en entornos multiculturales. La pequeña ciudad de Harrisonburg (con 43.500 habitantes según el censo de 2005), está localizada en el valle rural central de Shenandoah en Virginia, y es quizás el primer ejemplo de este nuevo patrón de cambio. Si bien la publicidad local promocionaba a Harrisonburg porque sus habitantes eran “99,2 por ciento nacidos en América y 93,7 por ciento blancos” hoy en día se destaca por albergar la población más diversa inscrita en los colegios públicos del Estado (entre 2006 y 2007), con estudiantes provenientes de 64 países que hablan 44 idiomas. Entre ellos están estudiantes de habla hispana provenientes de por lo menos 14 países distintos. Sobre la base de la teoría de redes sociales, este artículo examina redes sociales entre los inmigrantes latinos que se activan en nuevas zonas de asentamiento. Se presenta un estudio por caso de un proceso histórico de “latinización” que implica el asentamiento de toda una variedad de poblaciones latinas de “México, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Cuba y Uruguay” en Harrisonburg y el valle central aledaño de Shenandoah. El estudio demuestra cómo una serie de instituciones clave, - incluidas las industrias agrícolas locales (manzanos y avicultura), una oficina de reasentamiento de refugiados y las iglesias - reclutaron a los “pioneros” de estos grupos de inmigrantes en la región y cómo esos “pioneros” entablaron ulteriormente el reclutamiento a nivel de su red social, creando “comunidades hermanas” transnacionales y múltiples en la región de Harrisonburg.

También se examinan las repercusiones políticas de este proceso histórico.

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