Immigrants or Transnational Workers?

The Settlement Process Among Mexicans in Rural California

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Introduction

In 1990, the Mexican-origin population of the United States reached 13.4 million, largely through the sharp increase in immigration from Mexico that took place in the 1980s. Although people who claim a Mexican ancestry constitute just 5.4 percent of total U.S. population, they form large segments of the population in states such as California and Texas. In California in particular, the Mexican-origin population grew very rapidly; while total population in the state grew 26 percent between 1980 and 1990, the Mexican-origin population grew 68 percent. As a result, by 1990 one out of every five California residents traced their ancestry to Mexico.

The arrival of a large number of legal and unauthorized immigrants from Mexico has angered a large portion of California’s population, who fear illegal immigrants are taking jobs away from citizens and lawful residents. Similarly, the increased demand for public services has become the main concern for those who argue that California’s fiscal deficit is caused in part by the arrival of great number of immigrants who, in their view, are primarily public service consumers.

Indeed, in November of 1991, Governor Wilson blamed the state’s financial problems on the combination of the emigration of working taxpayers and the increasing demands for expensive government services by poor people and immigrants. The governor based his conclusions on a 1991 report issued by the California Department of Finance. The report stated that the imbalance between the number of tax payers and “tax receivers” was jeopardizing California’s ability to maintain funding levels for state programs. According to the report, much of the growth of the tax receiver group reflected an increase in the number of school-age children resulting from immigration and a recent surge in the birth rate. The report also notes a slowdown in the growth of the working population, reflecting low birth rates during the 1960s and the 1970s, and a net domestic out-migration in the high-earning 45- to 64-age group (California Department of Finance, 1991). Governor Wilson later proposed to deny citizenship status and public education to the children of undocumented immigrants, further fueling the anti-immigrant climate that has developed in California. Finally, Proposition 187, the “Save our State” initiative, was passed by an overwhelming majority of California voters in November of 1994. This proposition denies access to publicly funded social services to undocumented California residents through five measures regarding the provision of education, health care and other social services, law enforcement and the use of false immigration or citizenship documents.

A federal judge in Los Angeles barred the enforcement of Proposition 187’s measures regarding the provision of education and other social services. However, the success of this initiative reflects the consolidation of a new political landscape, in which political actors with a commitment to make undocumented immigration a priority electoral issue have taken advantage of negative public opinion concerning this problem.

In this context, it is worth examining the current migration patterns from Mexico. Although many Mexican nationals have settled permanently in the United States, the migration process from Mexico has had a strong temporary character. The proximity between the two
countries has allowed the development of a pattern in which males, usually young, work in the United States for a certain period of time, or seasonally for a few years, and then return to Mexico. However, several studies have suggested that since the 1980s, migration from Mexico has become more permanent and more heterogeneous in terms of settlement patterns, gender, legal status, and employment experience (Cornelius, 1992; Chavez, 1988).

Although this study will not address all of the following issues, it is important to consider the possible effects of more Mexican immigrants permanently settling in California: (1) a more permanent stay might accelerate the growth of rural communities and the repopulation of inner cities in California, given that new immigrants tend to settle in places where there are concentrations of immigrants; (2) since settlement implies the relocation of entire families, this movement might increase the demand for public services such as education and health care; (3) many rural communities in Mexico might lose population, becoming rest and recreation centers for families whose principal base will be in the United States; (4) money remittances to Mexico that subsidize agriculture and other businesses might decline as more settled immigrants begin to shift their investments to housing, education, and the formation of small businesses in the United States. Inner cities and rural communities in California might benefit from this shift in investments leading to a relative revitalization of local economies; (5) lastly, the arrival of more immigrants might boost the anti-immigrant sentiment that is already evident in California.

This paper examines the integration of Mexican immigrants in rural California. To this end, I examine the migration experience of a group of families that are originally from Chavinda, Michoacán in Mexico, and who live in Madera County in California’s San Joaquin Valley. These people belong to a transnational community, because they organize their lives around several places located in both Mexico and the United States (Rouse, 1992; Alarcón, 1992).

In this paper I address two sets of questions. First, I examine to what extent labor migration from Mexico has become more permanent as a result of the economic restructuring process that is taking place in rural California, and second, I analyze the social and economic mechanisms that accelerate settlement.

The paper presents the results of a field study conducted in 1992 in Madera County, which was a follow-up to research initially conducted in Chavinda in the early 1980s.¹ Field work consisted of ethnographic research and a survey of a random sample of families from Chavinda. Quantitative data (descriptive statistics) and qualitative information (case studies, interviews, participant observation) are compared in this study to yield results of greater validity than either an ethnography or a sample survey could provide alone. In order to draw a representative random sample, with the help of Chavindeños, I did a census of all Chavindeo households in Madera County. I found 153 households from which I randomly selected 30, in order to interview the heads-of-household (nearly 20 percent of the total). For the purpose of this study, a “household from Chavinda” is any household in which the head of household or the spouse is a person born in Chavinda. In most cases both persons were born in Chavinda. Data used to examine the demographic and economic trends in the region are from a variety of sources, such as the Bureau of the Census, the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Employment

¹ The results of this earlier study were included in the co-authored volume Return to Aztlán (see Massey et al, 1987).
Development Department, and Immigration and Naturalization Service.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first section offers a theoretical discussion of the concept of settlement. The second section traces the formation of the “transnational community” that links Madera County in California and Chavinda in Michoacán. This section includes an analysis of the most relevant demographic and economic trends that have taken place in Madera County in the last two decades. The third section, based primarily on field research, examines the settlement process of Chavindeños in Madera. Finally, the last section is used to discuss the main conclusions of the study.
Chapter One
The Settlement Process: A Theoretical Approach

The integration of migrant workers in receiving societies as a field of study has attracted a number of social scientists who have adopted different approaches to examining the process. These studies use terms such as assimilation, integration, and settlement to describe the transition of immigrants from "sojourners" to "settlers." Although these three concepts have been used interchangeably, assimilation carries a strong ideological connotation which implies that over time immigrants acquire the language, culture, political habits, and upward mobility patterns of the native population (Borjas, 1990). In the case of the United States, which is the country of destination for the largest number of immigrants, it has generally been assumed that immigrants sooner or later assimilate. However, recent studies conducted under different theoretical frameworks challenge this assumption. From a neoclassical perspective, Borjas (1990: 97-114) understands assimilation as the rate at which immigrant earnings catch up with those of natives of the United States as both groups age. This author contends that the Chiswick study (1978) that contrasted the earnings of immigrants to those of their native counterparts wrongly pictured the assimilation process of immigrants. This study formed the base of the current conventional wisdom that legal immigrants perform quite well in the U.S. economy and therefore assimilate "too well." Based on his own research, Borjas argues that the socioeconomic skills of immigrants (mainly education, English-language proficiency, etc.) have deteriorated significantly in the last two or three decades, and thus the actual wages of recent immigrants will remain far below that of natives throughout their entire working lives.

From a different viewpoint, Portes and Borjoces (1989) argue that the diversity of the modes of incorporation of contemporary immigrants in advanced countries reveals a plurality of settlement patterns. This diversity is in stark contrast to the widely held image of a uniform working class following a singular assimilation path. Variations in modes of incorporation result from the combination of three dimensions: conditions of exit, class origins, and contexts of reception. Mexican and Dominican immigrants to the United States generally are manual laborers who arrive in a handicapped context because they are unwelcome or discriminated against. For this reason they tend to be channeled into the secondary sector of the labor market, where workers are often hired according to racial and ethnic markers rather than according to their skills. On the other hand, the circulation of professionals within the European Community and the situation of British, Canadian, and other White foreign professionals in the United States, exemplify a neutral context of reception where individual merit and skills are the most important determinants of a successful adaptation. Finally, early Cuban refugees concentrated in South Florida represent the experience of immigrants in an advantaged context of reception. The combination of the refugee's professional-entrepreneurial backgrounds and a favorable context led to the emergence of a thriving ethnic economy in Miami.

As observed by Portes and Borjoces, the immigration experience of many national groups challenges the melting-pot metaphor that describes the assimilation process. Research has shown that immigrants from Asia and Latin America differ in their patterns of assimilation from earlier groups, especially Europeans (Goldring, 1991). Although the general public and the media
portray immigration from Mexico to the United States as a one-way movement of people from poverty and unemployment to the “land of opportunities,” Mexican workers have consistently demonstrated a tendency to migrate on a temporary basis and to naturalize at very low rates (Bustamante, 1979; Portes and Bach, 1985; Massey et al, 1987; Goldring, 1991). However, Cornelius (1992:157) has argued that immigration from Mexico since the 1980s has become more permanent and heterogeneous due to four principal factors: (1) changes in the U.S. economy that have affected the nature and magnitude of the demand for Mexican immigrant labor, (2) the long-running economic crisis in Mexico, (3) the 1986 U.S. Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), and, (4) the maturation of transnational migrant networks to the United States. All these trends underscore the importance of examining the settlement process.

In his seminal work *Birds of Passage*, Piore (1979) defines settlement as the development of a permanent commitment on the part of the migrants to the receiving country. Settlement can be understood in terms of the success or failure of the migrants in the receiving country. The conventional view tends to see settlement as success: people who do well have incentive to stay. However, settlement can also be the product of failure, since migrants may stay when they fail to accumulate the money necessary for important projects at home.

A migration stream that starts out as temporary can develop over time into settlement. Although migration may initially be temporary, a nucleus of more or less permanent migrants inevitably begins to develop. In this view, the migration pattern evolves from the individual migrant as *homo economicus* to a stage in which a permanent community of immigrant families establishes stable linkages with the labor market in their demand for permanent jobs. In the first stage, immigrants view work as purely instrumental, a means to gather income to take back to the home community. However, as time passes, the need for community grows as immigrants begin to question their ability to maintain the ascetic existence they had originally planned. Eventually, they begin to bring their wives and children from home.

The work of Piore has inspired subsequent studies. Drawing from the experience of undocumented Mexicans in Chicago, Villar (1990) emphasizes the role that adverse economic circumstances play in prolonging migrants’ stays in the United States. Villar argues that the migrants’ return home is delayed by their inability to fulfill their initial economic goals, and their changing expectations due to low wages and high living costs. Massey (1986: 671-683) believes that data collected from migrants in four Mexican communities confirms the model postulated by Piore. Mexican immigrants become progressively enmeshed in a web of social connections in the United States as they build up time in this country, and they eventually settle in the United States. As migrants form friendships outside the group, and as family members begin traveling with them, they become more involved with public institutions and informal organizations. At the same time, migrants acquire more stable urban jobs, and the share of earnings sent home falls as they shift their focus from Mexico to the United States.

In this line of thought, in *Return to Aztlán* (Massey et al, 1987) settlement is defined as the result of the maturation of social networks whereby migrants build personal, social, and economic ties to the receiving society over time. However, settlement cannot be considered as a permanent status since many “settled” migrants eventually re-emigrate to their places of origin. In this study, ethnographic data and regression analysis show that time spent in the United States is the single most important variable in predicting settlement, and that this process is strongly influenced by urban origin, non-farm employment in the United States, and legal status.
As migrants make additional trips and stay longer in the United States, they accumulate experience that increases the likelihood of permanent settlement. As migration continues, a growing number of families settle down and form “daughter communities.” In turn, these communities greatly facilitate migration by providing a stable anchor in the receiving region. After ten years of migrant experience, 42 percent of rural migrants and 53 percent of urban migrants had settled, with the figures rising to 79 percent and 76 percent after twenty years.

In this study, a “settler” was defined as a migrant who has been in the United States for three continuous years. Determinants of the settlement process were studied through a logistic regression analysis of men’s migrant experience. The results showed that factors related to the household economic position were not very important. Among personal characteristics, settlement was considerably enhanced by a lack of children as well as age. Settlement then was most likely to occur at early stages of the family life cycle, just before or just after marriage. The most striking finding was that migrant experience ultimately overcomes the effects of other variables to render settlement virtually inevitable in the long run. As indicated before, possession of legal documents, but no children, and the status of being a non-farm worker from an urban background all substantially increased the probability of settlement early in the migrant career. As experience progresses, however, these variables matter less and less. In sum, the study concludes that the people most likely to settle are young, unmarried men from urban areas who possessed legal documents and have accumulated extensive experience in the United States.

Chávez (1988) argues that even for undocumented workers, the formation of a family begins a process that leads to eventual settlement. These families become binational with the arrival of children who are American citizens and therefore have the right to obtain social services and education that reinforce the links to the United States. Taking this further, Hondagneu (1990) has found that within the household, men and women express different preferences with respect to settlement. Men generally indicate a desire to return to Mexico while women express their intention of staying in the United States. This author believes that men dream of the ultimate return to Mexico, because settlement means for them loss of control over family resources, decisions, and privileges.

Rouse (1992) contends that migration in general has been analyzed in bipolar terms as a movement of people between essentially autonomous communities, and that people steadily shift their focus of attention and the locus of their principal social ties from one community to another. Contrary to this, he proposes that settlement has been accompanied by the emergence of a transnational circuit in which migrants have developed and maintained transnational involvements. In addition, Rouse argues that the attitudes and practices of migrants have been analyzed from a neofunctionalist perspective as forms of adaptation to a new environment. Since all settlers are subject to a wide array of disciplinary pressures in order to produce “good” proletarians, “good” citizens and “good” consumers, Rouse suggests that the responses of immigrants to these pressures should be analyzed within an agonistic framework marked by terms such as compliance, accommodation and resistance.

From a different perspective, Palerm (1991) argues that settlement of farm workers in four California counties (Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Ventura and Kern) has been encouraged by the new opportunities created by the proliferation and expansion of high-value fruit and vegetable specialty crops. This growth has led to an intensification and sophistication of farm work. The expansion of specialty crops has created opportunities for steadier and longer
periods of employment, which has encouraged a great number of Mexican migrant farm workers to settle in California since 1975. The settlement of these workers has led to the formation of Chicano and Mexican enclaves, that is, rural communities in California with substantial numbers of Chicanos and Mexican immigrants. According to Palerm, the eligibility of farm workers for the state unemployment insurance program since 1977 and the SAW program of IRCA have contributed to the settlement of farm workers.

This overview of some of the studies that have focused on the settlement process shows very interesting and useful insights, as well as limitations. First, as observed in the work of Piore (1979) and Massey (1986) and Massey et al. (1987), time spent in the United States seems to be the key factor that determines settlement: the more time a migrant spends in the United States, the more likely he or she will become a "settler." However, it is very limiting to define a "settler" as someone who has been in the United States for three continuous years (Massey et al. 1987). Although this definition is useful for a statistical analysis it lacks sociological meaning. For this reason it seems odd that, according to Return to Aztlan, the people most likely to settle are young urban men without children, who posses legal documents and have accumulated extensive experience in the United States. This image contradicts the powerful hypothesis which states that family immigration/formation leads to settlement.

Second, the sociological/anthropological approach (Chavez, 1988; Hondagneu, 1990; Rouse, 1992; and Palerm, 1991) is very useful to understand the settlement process. This view states that family formation, maturation of social networks, and women's decisions play a fundamental role in encouraging settlement in the United States. However, most of these studies are based only on ethnographic data, and therefore focus on the demographic characteristics, attitudes, opinions and practices of migrants without examining labor market conditions and the context of reception in general. The work of Palerm (1991) offers a different perspective that attempts to link the transformation of agriculture with the migration patterns of farm workers.

Third, the settlement process as proposed by Rouse (1992) should be examined in the context of the development of a "transnational social space." In this sense, Chavinda and Madera are part of the same socioeconomic unit in which there is a dynamic circulation of people, accompanied by flows of money, information and goods. From this perspective, Chavindeños form a transnational community that consists of a "parent" rural community in Mexico and one or more "daughter" communities in the United States that have been formed through the concentrated settlement of families. These communities have specialized in the production and reproduction of migrant workers, and therefore have developed strong social networks. The migration literature has shown that most of these communities are originally from several rural localities in Central Western Mexico, the traditional sending region (Alarcón, 1994). However, Smith (1994) has found a transnational community that circulates between Puebla and New York City, and Mixteco migrants are forming transnational communities very rapidly that connect California with Oaxaca (Zabin et al, 1993).

The present study examines the settlement process of Chavindeños in Madera County as the change to a more permanent stay that begins either with the immigration of wives and children of immigrants, or with the formation of new families in this country. I hypothesize that settlement is the result of two complementary forces requiring different levels of analysis: (1) changes in the labor markets in the receiving society, and; (2) changes in the immigrant
experience of workers.

On the first level, I examine the relationship between regional development and the emergence of a labor flow between sending and receiving regions; demographic changes in both regions, and the creation of “niches” in the labor market in the receiving region. At this level, I specifically examine the combination of the increasing labor demand in agriculture, the erosion of farm wages and working conditions, and the rapid growth of the non-farm industry that has occurred in the San Joaquin Valley in California. In the analysis of the immigrant experience, I examine the development of social networks, the participation of immigrants in the labor market, access to housing, and the role of legalization/naturalization, specifically the effects of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986\(^2\) (IRCA).

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\(^2\) In 1986, US Congress enacted IRCA, which contained three principal measures: (1) amnesty for undocumented workers, (2) sanctions against employers who knowingly hire undocumented workers, and (3) increased enforcement at U.S. borders. Amnesty was administered under two programs: the Section 245A program commonly known as the “general amnesty” program, which was intended for persons who had lived continuously in the United States since January 1, 1982, and the Special Agricultural Workers (SAW) program, which was designed for people who worked at least 90 days in U.S. perishable crop agriculture between May 1985 and May 1986.
Chapter Two

Chavinda, Michoacán - Madera, California: The Formation of a “Transnational Community.”

The Chavindeño presence in Madera can be traced back to the late 1930s when Joaquin Maciel, a migrant from Chavinda, went to this city to buy land with the money he was able to save over a period of many years working in different places in the United States. Maciel became the basis for further Chavindeño migration to the county, because as soon as he was able to work his land, he began hiring workers from Chavinda. This network expanded when one of Maciel’s sons became foreman at a farm, and therefore was able to offer employment to more people from the village. In the 1960s, opportunities for employment for Chavindeños expanded further when another immigrant from Chavinda became foreman at another large farm in the county.

The availability of jobs in Madera led to the rapid growth of the migration flow from Chavinda. Although most of the migrants were males who worked temporarily, a few families began to settle in Madera. The concentration of these families in Madera created the conditions for the emergence of a transnational community in which Madera and Chavinda became parts of the same migration circuit.

The Chavindeño population in Madera has grown rapidly. In 1992, there were approximately 153 Chavindeño households in Madera County. This represents a very high proportion of families from the town, since the 1982 survey of Chavinda showed that there were 1,735 occupied dwellings in that year (Massey et al., 1987: 17). The 1992 Madera survey of the sample of thirty Chavindeño families included 180 individuals. From this, it can be inferred that there were approximately 900 Chavindeños in Madera in 1992, which is 12 percent of total population in Chavinda in 1990.

This section describes the formation of the transnational community that circulates between Chavinda and Madera. The settlement process of Chavindeños will be analyzed in the next chapter.

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3 The 1982 survey in Chavinda included 200 households (10 percent of the total). In this survey, the head-of-household was interviewed and data was collected from all the members in the household. For more details see Chapter 2 in Massey et al. (1987).

4 The term “Chavindeño” includes people born in Chavinda, in other places in Mexico, or in the United States who are part of a “Chavindeño family.” Most of these Chavindeños were born in either Chavinda or Madera.
Chavinda: corn, strawberries, and emigrants

Chavinda is a fairly large town of more than seven thousand *mestizos*, located in the Bajo Zamorano, a rich agricultural area in the northwestern corner of the state of Michoacán. The regional economy centers around Zamora, a mid-size agricultural and commercial city. The demographic development of Chavinda shows evidence of the large emigration flows that have taken place. Between 1970 and 1990 the population of the town decreased 6 percent, falling from 7,920 to 7,437 inhabitants. In the same period, the state of Michoacán grew 34 percent. Since migration is still a male-dominated activity, the impact of migration has been uneven: while the number of males decreased 13 percent, the number of women fell by only 1 percent during that time.\(^5\)

During the *porfiriato* (1877 to 1910), *haciendas* and *ranchos* that relied on sharecroppers and day laborers grew corn, wheat and garbanzo for the market. In addition to these workers in agriculture, Chavinda also housed a variety of artisans and small merchants who produced and marketed goods and services for local and regional consumption.

At the turn of the century, a wave of modernization reached the Bajo Zamorano region, bringing with it a host of technological changes such as the railroad, electricity, the telegraph, and telephones (Verduzco, 1992). At about the same time several sections of the municipality's farmland were irrigated as the result of a government drive for water and flood control. Starting in the 1910s, in addition to these economic and technological changes, the Mexican revolution disrupted normal life in Chavinda. Thanks to an “open border” policy implemented by the United States in relation to Mexico, the first migrants left Chavinda to seek work in the United States at about that time. Most of these migrants went to work in the construction and maintenance of railroads, or as manufacturing workers in Texas and the Midwest region. Their concentration in these regions explains why prior to 1940, only 40 percent of migrants from Chavinda went to California (Massey et al, 1987, 153). From the beginning, migration from Chavinda was directed principally to the United States and not to Mexican cities. Although migration was mostly temporary during that period, a small group of families settled in Chicago, forming a small community that over time broke linkages with Chavinda (Alarcón, 1989).

The large estates in Chavinda were finally divided in the 1930s as a result of the agrarian movement supported by President Lazaro Cárdenas. Agrarian activism arose in the early 1920s on the initiative of a few sharecroppers, some of whom had become radicalized through proletarian experiences in the United States. In the 1930s, after taking possession of their allotments, the new *ejidatarios* were unable to cultivate their lands because they lacked animals, tools, seed, and money. *Ejidatarios* then turned to the small-property owners, merchants, and former hacienda administrators for financial assistance. In time these moneylenders became the new local bosses, who speculated and monopolized agricultural production.

The enactment of the Bracero Program in 1942 was very important for agricultural workers in Chavinda. For *ejidatarios*, it provided an important source of capital with which to finance agricultural production; for sharecroppers, it was a much needed supplement to the meager living that could be eked out by sharecropping; for day laborers, it provided wages

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\(^5\) Data from the 1990 General Census of Population and Housing of Mexico.
exceeding any that could be had locally. Seasonal work in the United States was therefore rapidly adopted. Between 1940 and 1964, older, married men with dependents predominated within the migrant population. Late in the period more women began to migrate, usually accompanying their husbands. California became the most important destination for migrants to the United States, because the state was the principal location of employers in the Bracero Program.

During the 1950s agriculture in Chavinda underwent modernization, with a growing use of machinery and industrial inputs, a shift from subsistence to cash crops, and the predominance of salaried work over unpaid family labor and sharecropping arrangements. The shift to cash crops was especially important. Irrigated lands that previously had been cultivated with wheat were taken over by linseed, sorghum, and strawberries. At the same time, the cultivation of sorghum took over many hectares of dry land that once were cultivated with corn. In this context, large agribusinesses and rich farmers from the city of Zamora began to dominate in the region with the introduction of cash crops for export to the United States. As a result of the introduction of machinery, a large part of the male labor force became unemployed while job opportunities expanded, especially for women in the production of strawberries. During the same period of time, Chavinda declined further in importance as a center of retail trade and craft production, both of which shifted to Zamora along with an important portion of the population.

The end of the Bracero Program in 1964 did not bring an end to migration. On the contrary, migration increased in volume. Most men simply migrated without documents, but those with prior contacts used their connections to obtain legal residency in the United States. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, newly legalized families began to settle in places like Madera County. As a result, Chavindeño migration to the United States became an institutionalized social process. Large numbers of Chavindeño workers began to respond to the availability of urban and rural job opportunities, especially in California, and took advantage of the social networks that were developing. In 1982, most of these migrants (68 percent) indicated that they had migrated to the United States illegally on their last trip north.

Evidence of the maturation of social networks between Chavinda and the United States emerges in the pattern of the spatial distribution of Chavindeños. Migrants from this village concentrate in four “daughter communities” in California that have been formed by the settlement of families. In order of importance, these receiving areas are Madera, Salinas, the San Francisco Bay Area, and downtown Los Angeles. Although Los Angeles and Salinas remain important poles of attraction, the other two regions have come to dominate the outflow of immigrants. Since 1970 Madera County has been the primary destination area for Chavindeños. Between 1960 and 1983, Chavindeños working in Madera County and the San Francisco Bay Area accounted for at least 55 percent of all out-migrants from the village (Massey et al, 1987: 160-161).

Table 1 illustrates the extent of the transnationalization of Chavinda in 1982. Besides the disproportion in the migration flow by gender, this table shows that Madera contained the largest concentration of working-age men residing outside Chavinda in that year.
Table 1
Place of Residence of People Born in Chavinda, Ages 15 to 64 years. 1982. (n = 763)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chavinda</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other place in Michoacán</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other place in Mexico</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madera &amp; S. Joaquin Valley</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Francisco Bay Area</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Area</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salinas Valley</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other place in California</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other place in the U.S.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although the development of social networks has made migration to the United States increasingly accessible to all classes from Chavinda, the flow is mainly composed of jornaleros (day laborers) and campesinos (peasants). Between 1980 and 1982, the majority of those who went to the United States were jornaleros (57 percent), followed by campesinos (25 percent), nonmanual workers (13 percent), and manual workers and farmers (5 percent) (Massey et al., 1987).

Madera County: grapes, wineries, and immigrants.

At the other end of the circuit, lies Madera County in the San Joaquin Valley, a region where agriculture forms the economic backbone. Saragoza (1983) found that the valley has evolved from an isolated region to one of the richest agricultural areas in the world. According to Cohen and Garcia (1994), the Central Valley, which includes the San Joaquin Valley, has its

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6 This region extends from the Tehachapis in the south to the Sacramento River in the north. The Coast Range forms the western boundary of the region while the Sierra Nevada mountains form the eastern boundary. The counties located in the region are Merced, Madera, Fresno, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Kings, Tulare, and Kern.
economic base in agriculture with over half of the state’s agricultural jobs (167,000) and 80 percent of jobs in the food processing industry (40,500). They also point out that the valley is growing rapidly, in part through “spillover” growth of jobs and housing from the San Francisco Bay Area.

Historically, Madera County’s economic expansion has resulted from exploitation of the area’s natural resources, such as its crop and grazing land, timber, minerals, and rivers. In recent years the county has been the focus of large-scale, intensive agriculture concentrated on the production of nuts and fruits, especially grapes. In turn, the industrialization of the region’s agricultural products and the relocation of manufacturing plants from other places in California have expanded the number of non-farm jobs.

Demographic Change and Immigration from Mexico.

In 1993, Madera became the second fastest growing county in California when its population reached 102,900, a 5.7 percent increase over 1992 (California Department of Finance, 1993). Since the 1970s Madera’s population has grown at higher rates than that of California. Between 1970 and 1980 the county grew at an annual rate of 4.3 percent, while California only grew 1.7 percent. During the 1980s Madera’s population growth rate was 3.4 percent, compared to California’s rate of 2.3 percent (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Population Growth in Madera County and California, 1900-1990.

7 According to the 1990 population census, Madera County had 88,090 inhabitants (50.2 percent male and 49.8 percent female).
Both internal and international migration have accelerated population growth in Madera. Farm production has been the driving force that attracted workers from other regions in the United States and all over the world. From the turn of the century to the 1920s, large colonies of Armenians and Italians arrived and settled in Madera. In the 1930s, Madera saw the arrival of White workers from “Dust Bowl” states such as Oklahoma. As a result, one section of the city is still called “Okie Town.” Although a few had arrived earlier, Black immigrants from the South began arriving in large numbers after World War II to work in the cotton fields. Employment in agriculture also attracted large numbers of Mexican-origin people born in Southern Texas.

Mexican immigrants began to arrive in small numbers at the turn of the century, settling mainly in a section of the city that had been previously inhabited by Italian immigrants. Between the 1940s and 1960s, thanks to the Bracero Program, more Mexicans came to work in the rapidly expanding agricultural sector. Although most of the Mexicans who have migrated to Madera work only temporarily, a large number of them settle there.

Most of these immigrants originally came from Central Western Mexico, which is considered the traditional sending region of the country. Chavindeños form one of the largest communities of migrants from western Mexico residing in Madera, but there are also concentrations of people from Jalisco and Zacatecas. During the 1980s immigration to Madera underwent a significant change. In addition to the immigrants coming from the traditional sending region, indigenous Mixteco people from the southern highlands of the state of Oaxaca began arriving in unprecedented numbers (Zabin et al, 1993; Kearney and Nagengast, 1990; Bade, 1993). These Mixteco immigrants are becoming an important source of farm labor in Madera, as the town is one of the principal destinations of Mixteco farm workers entering the United States. Although most of these immigrants are temporary workers, there is a growing Mixteco settlement in the county.

The migration of indigenous people from Mexico is adding to the complexity of ethnic and race relations in Madera. In terms of race in 1990, the population of Madera was predominantly White (72 percent), a proportion slightly higher than that for California as a whole (69 percent). Besides the large number of Whites which includes many Hispanics, there are a small number of Blacks, American Indians and Asian/Pacific Islanders residing in the county (see Table 2). Since the Mexican-origin population can be classified under any race, many are divided among the racial categories or counted under the classification “other race.”

Table 2 shows that between 1980 and 1990, Madera County experienced a

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8 Central Western Mexico comprises the states of Aguascalientes, Colima, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, and Nayarit.

9 According to the Census Bureau, persons reporting in the “other race” category and providing write-in entries such as multiracial, multietnic, mixed, interracial or a Spanish/Hispanic origin group (such as Mexican, Cuban, or Puerto Rican) are included here.
disproportionate growth of the Mexican-origin population as compared to California as a whole, while the White, Black, and American Indian share of the population declined, and the Asian share grew slightly.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Persons</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>69.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Persons</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Origin (of any race)</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>34.5</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rican</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Hispanic</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not of Hispanic Origin</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These categories include the Hispanic population.

According to Census data, the Mexican-origin population in Madera grew from 15,593 to 28,310 people between 1980 and 1990. This net increase of more than 12,000 people, the highest growth in absolute numbers among the different groups, is mainly the result of immigration from Mexico.

Measuring immigration from Mexico is a difficult task, because historically the Mexican population has been undercounted by the census. This undercount is due in part to the number of undocumented immigrants, and in part to the mobility of the migrating population. Gabbard and her associates (1993: 61) state that the magnitude of the cumulative census undercount of farm
workers at the national level is about 60 percent.\textsuperscript{10} According to them, the census profile of farm workers is skewed toward those who speak better English and those who are "settlers" rather than "sojourners." This calls into question the official number of Mexican residents in Madera County and the number of farm workers in the area.

\textit{The Diversification of the Labor Market.}

Between the 1940s and 1980s, California became a model for economic growth, due to the combination of high levels of population growth and low unemployment rates (Teitz and Shapira, 1989). During the same period of time, Madera County experienced a profound transformation as its economic base became more diversified. While agriculture continues to be the primary component of the county's economy, this sector has allowed the emergence of other industries, primarily manufacturing. The rapid urbanization of Fresno, located 15 miles from Madera, has added to the expansion of job opportunities for many of the county's residents.

Employment in Madera has experienced two different trends in the last two decades: a very strong diversification accompanied by rapid expansion in the 1970s, and slower growth in the 1980s. Between 1969 and 1979, total employment in the county grew 68.4 percent, surpassing by far the state's employment growth (38.6 percent). Between 1979 and 1989 however, Madera's employment grew much more slowly (28.1 percent), while California's employment rose 32.8 percent (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 1969-1989).

During the 1970s, Madera's economic base underwent a remarkable diversification with the expansion of several non-farm industries (See Figure 2). Construction experienced the highest growth rate in the county (299.4 percent), reflecting the rapid process of urbanization fueled by the great numbers of immigrants who arrived during that decade. Similarly, industries such as manufacturing, wholesale trade, and financial services grew rapidly during that period. At the same time, the county's farm sector grew at much lower pace (10.2 percent) than the state as a whole (15.8 percent). The 1980s were a period of slow or negative growth in employment for many industries in Madera County, particularly the farm industry, which experienced a growth of -3.7 percent. This trend also occurred at the state level, but at a much higher rate (-7.5 percent) (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 1969-1989).

\textsuperscript{10} Gabbard et al. (1993) contend that the large undercount of farm workers is the result of four components: (1) migration out of the U.S. of large numbers of transnational migrants who may seldom be in the U.S. in March or April but who are U.S. residents; (2) total household omission correlated with poverty, residence, race, housing accommodations, respondent language, and residential mobility, etc.; (3) omission of some household members who are likely to be transient boarders or recently-arrived undocumented workers, among others; (4) occupational mis-identification that stems from difficulties from SIC (and Census) industrial and occupational classifications.
In relation with the apparent reduction in the number of workers in the farm industry, it is important to mention that data on farm employment used by the Bureau of Economic Analysis underestimate true agricultural employment. While farm employment refers to workers directly hired by farm operators, agricultural employment includes all the workers who are directly involved in the production of an agricultural commodity for sale. For this reason, farm labor contractors, farm management services, crop harvesting and other on-farm activities are normally excluded from farm employment figures. In recent years, farmers have shifted from direct hire to labor contractors. Thus, while data on farm employment from the Bureau of Economic Analysis in 1989 includes 4,933 workers, using the proper method to compute agricultural employment yields a number of 7,672 workers the same year.

As a result of the trends of the last two decades, Madera now has a more diversified labor market. Although the 1990 census shows that most people in Madera County were employed in services and agriculture (37 percent and 16 percent respectively), manufacturing employed an additional 13 percent of persons 16 years old and over. Data from County Business Patterns (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992) show that in 1990 there were 3,982 manufacturing workers in Madera County. One third of them (33 percent) worked in the food and kindred products industry. Another 23 percent were employed in the production of stone, clay, and glass products. The industrial machinery and equipment industry employed 20 percent, and 8 percent were in the lumber and wood products industry. The rest (16 percent) were distributed among the following industries: printing and publishing, fabricated metals, rubber and miscellaneous plastics, transportation equipment, and paper and allied products.

In 1986 there were approximately 50 manufacturing plants in the city. The major employers in this group were wineries, followed by a glass bottle manufacturer, food processing
plants, farm equipment manufacturers, and mechanical and construction material manufacturers. Table 3 lists the largest manufacturing employers in the area along with the estimated number of workers they employed in 1986 (City of Madera Planning Commission, 1986: 7-8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Number Employee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heublein Wines</td>
<td>600+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oberti Olive Company</td>
<td>300 - 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMC Corporation</td>
<td>300 - 350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madera Glass Company</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore AirCoil</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisceglia Wine Company</td>
<td>50 - 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKG Industries</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Pacific Corporation</td>
<td>50 - 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papagni Wine Company</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Masson Sherry Cellars</td>
<td>30 - 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson &amp; Gill, Inc.</td>
<td>40 - 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Drainage System</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Cal Rubber, Inc.</td>
<td>20 - 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steel Structures, Inc.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Madera District Chamber of Commerce
Cited in City of Madera Planning Commission (1986: 8).

In terms of regional development, it is interesting to see that despite the transformation of Madera’s economy during the last two decades, agriculture continues to be its backbone. According to data series on personal income for the year 1987, farming and agricultural services appear to be the sectors with the highest location quotients (See Table 4). Similarly, glass production and food processing (which includes wine production, a farm-related industry) also have high location quotients. A location quotient is the ratio of county income generated by an industry to total county income divided by the ratio of income in the United States in that industry to total income in the United States. The location quotient is used to identify export-based activities from local areas and as a measure of concentration of economic activities (Kroll et al, 1990).
Table 4
Five Industries in Madera County with the Highest Location Quotients, 1987.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Location Quotient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Farm</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agricultural Services</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Stone, Clay, and Glass Products</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Food and kindred Products</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. General Building Contractors</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Transformation of Agricultural Production.

The decline in farm employment during the 1980s did not translate into a decline in agricultural production in Madera County. The most important trend in agriculture between 1970 and 1989 was the use of agricultural land in a more profitable way, driving lower valued crops (wheat and cotton) out of production and diverting the land to the production of higher valued crops (fruits and nuts). Fruit and nut crop acreage bloomed, growing from 49,397 to 151,658 acres. This increase in fruit and nut production occurred at the expense of vegetables, field crops, pasture, and range (Kroll et al, 1990).

The expansion in the fruit and nut production has had important consequences for the demand for farm labor. These products require large numbers of workers because their production is labor-intensive. A similar process was observed by Palerm (1991) in the California counties he studied. According to a 1991 agricultural report, raisin grapes were the most valued products in Madera, followed in order of importance by almonds, wine grapes, cotton, milk, hay, turkeys, cattle, pistachios, and vegetables (Madera County Dept. of Agriculture, 1991). In 1989, grapes were the most extended staple in the county, cultivated on nearly one-third of all irrigated land. Between 1970 and 1989, while the harvested area for raisin grapes grew 50.7 percent (from 27,595 to 41,603 acres), the harvested area for wine grapes grew nearly five times (from 7,073 to 37,565 acres).

Since at least the 1970s, labor demand for the production of grapes has been met by Mexican immigrant workers. These labor requirements are mostly seasonal, since the grape harvest falls between July and September. During the summer whole immigrant families, like those from Chavinda, work in the fields picking grapes along with other migrant farm workers

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11 According to a similar report published in 1993 (Madera County Dept. of Agriculture, 1993), grapes, almonds, cotton, and milk continue to be the leading commodities in Madera County with the following respective crop values: $172,150,000; $108,423,000; $45,503,000, and $43,878,000.
who come to the county for the harvest. Most of the seasonal workers are Mixtecos, coming from Oaxaca, Mexico. These workers stay in the county for a few months and then go back to Mexico or further north to work in Oregon and Washington (Zabin et al, 1993). The monthly labor requirements in agriculture, recorded by the Employment Development Department based on their estimation of wage and salary workers, illustrate this process for 1989, 1990, and 1991 (See Figure 3).

**Figure 3. Employment in Agriculture by Month. Madera County, 1989 - 90 - 91.**

![Graph showing employment in agriculture by month](source: Employment Development Department)

This section has shown that the lives of many people from Chavinda take place in a transnational social space that links Chavinda, Madera and other places in California. It is clear that the social and economic ties that people in Chavinda maintain with places in the United States are stronger than similar linkages with large Mexican urban centers like Mexico City and Guadalajara.

The presence of 900 Chavindeños in Madera shows that a large portion of this community is settling in California. This process seems to reflect the transformation of labor markets in Mexico and California: While the economic conditions in Mexico since the early 1980s have encouraged emigration, job opportunities have expanded in Madera County since the 1970s due to the growth of non-farm industry and the increase in the production of grapes and other fruits and nuts. How are Chavindeños entering these labor markets and how are they experiencing life in the United States? These issues will be addressed in the next section.
Chapter Three
The Immigrant Experience: The Settlement Process and Incorporation into the Labor Market.

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RUBEN is a CHAVINDEÑO who was born in CALIFORNIA “by accident” when his parents were working in the fields in the early 1950s. After he was born, the family returned to Chavinda where Ruben spent his first 15 years. In 1968 he decided to come back to California, and for five years he worked as a farm worker in Richmond and as a restaurant employee in Berkeley. In 1973, after he married his wife Elena, they both moved to Madera for farm work. Realizing that this job would not lead him anywhere, he began taking courses in welding. In 1980, Ruben got his first job as a welder, an occupation he still holds while Elena baby-sits children at home.

Ruben now has three teenage daughters, and although he owns his house in Madera and has a permanent job there, he told me that he was considering moving to San Diego because his oldest daughter had been accepted as an undergraduate student by the University of California, San Diego. He told me: “the most important thing for me is my family. After all, as a welder I can find a job anywhere.”

*****

I interviewed Alberto in Madera while he was literally packing to go back to Chavinda. Alberto is 30 years old and is married to Maria. They both were born in Chavinda and have two young children. They live in a trailer owned by the farm where Alberto has worked as a tractor driver since 1979. He learned to drive a tractor as a teenager when he worked with his father on family land in Chavinda. Maria works in the almond harvest every year.

Although Alberto and Maria became legal residents thanks to IRCA, Alberto told me that they were in the process of going back to Chavinda, where he plans to work with his father on his father’s land. Alberto told me that he already has a house in Chavinda and that he has saved some money. He wants to go back to Chavinda because he feels that he has lived as a slave in the United States.

*****

12 Fictitious name. All the names of people from Chavinda have been changed.
Roberto and Juana have seven children, all born in Chavinda. Although Roberto began working in Madera in 1969 as an undocumented seasonal farm worker, he did not decide to bring his family to live with him until 1980, when he got a permanent year-round job as a farm irrigator. In 1988, the ten members of his family applied for legalization under the “general amnesty” provision of IRCA, and were granted legal status. Currently, while Roberto continues to work at the same farm, Juana has a job in a packing house in the summer, two of the grown children work at other farms, three more in grocery stores, and the two younger children go to school. A daughter who is married is a teacher’s aid.

By pooling the savings of all the family members, they have been able to buy two houses: one in Madera and the other one in Chavinda. Roberto acknowledges that the family will not return to Chavinda: he in particular enjoys living in the United States. However, he does not plan to apply for naturalization because of the English proficiency requirement.

*****

The first day I went to Madera to do field work, while I was having a conversation with a group of Chavindeños, one teenager in particular seemed to stand out from the group. He was blond, blue-eyed and short like many other Chavindeños, and although he spoke Spanish with an English accent, he used the same “regionalisms” as the Chavindeños (swear words included). As I was talking to him, I began to think that he was a Chavindeño born in the United States. Later, to my surprise, my friends told me that Jeff was American, the son of farm workers who originally came from West Virginia. Jeff was able to speak Spanish because he was raised among Chavindeño children in Madera. I realized that, to the dismay of many, acculturation can go both ways.

*****

These vignettes show that concepts such as integration, assimilation and settlement are difficult to use even within small immigrant communities. Although most of the Chavindeños have similar socioeconomic characteristics and are concentrated in a particular segment of the labor market, they reveal different immigration experiences.

An Immigrant Community in Madera

The Chavindeño community in Madera County consisted of 153 households in 1992. Most of the 30 households in the sample were nuclear families (63 percent). Of the rest, 20 percent were extended family households in which other relatives lived in the same house. Seventeen percent were nuclear families with married children living elsewhere. The large number of nuclear families can be explained in part by the fact that those who live in farm-provided housing are not allowed to have other relatives live with them.

This Chavindeño community in Madera consists mostly of immigrants and the young; 61
percent of the sample was born in Mexico, and the population’s mean age is 22 years. However, immigrants tend to be significantly older than those born in the United States: While the mean age of persons born in Chavinda is 29, the mean age of Chavindeños born in Madera is 9.

The Chavindeño’s general lack of education, the most critical labor market resource, explains in part their concentration in agricultural jobs. In California in 1990, 24 percent of the population 25 years and over had not completed high school. In Madera County the corresponding figure is much higher, 36 percent for the population as a whole and 92 percent for Chavindeños. On average, Chavindeños in Madera have only 4.9 years of schooling. Despite this situation, there is a general concern among Chavindeños to promote education among their children. Parents constantly tell their children that they need to get an education in order to get better jobs outside of agriculture. This attitude towards agricultural jobs and the increasing availability of non-farm jobs seems to make farm work an occupation for only one generation of migrants. In a different context, Palerm (1991: 89) found that the transformation of agriculture in Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, Ventura and Kern counties has led to the stabilization and professionalization of the agricultural labor force. In these counties, the fact that settled working families place young workers in agricultural employment shows that the domestic farm labor force is beginning to reproduce locally.

Even before the enactment of IRCA in 1986, the majority of people in the sample were residing legally in the United States (57 percent). This suggests that for a long time Chavindeños have formed a relatively settled community in the U.S. However, IRCA has reinforced the integration of this population in the United States through the extension of legalization. In 1992, 85 percent of people in the sample were already or in the process of becoming legal residents.

As a result of legalization brought about by IRCA, the legal status of migrant families has become very complex. In 24 families of the sample (80 percent), there were not any undocumented persons in 1992. In all of these families, there were different combinations of U.S. citizens, “green-card” holders, and “Rodinos”, that is, people who became legal residents as a result of IRCA, also called the “Simpson-Rodino bill.” In 5 families (17 percent) there were combinations of U.S. citizens, “green-card” holders, “Rodinos” and undocumented persons. Finally, there was only one “undocumented family” (3 percent) where all of the members were undocumented.

Table 5 reveals some interesting features regarding the legal status of Chavindeños. First, a surprisingly low number of people have naturalized (1 percent). The Chavindeños who decided to naturalize did so in order to speed the process of legalization of their spouses. Chavindeños in general do not see many advantages in becoming U.S. citizens beyond the legalization of relatives. The view that naturalization means a betrayal to Mexico is still prevalent. Some Chavindeños believe that Mexicans have to step on the Mexican flag during the naturalization ceremony to show their commitment to the United States. When I asked heads of household about their plans to become U.S. citizens, only 23 percent of them expressed interest in naturalizing.

Although most of the Chavindeños hold agricultural jobs, the majority decided to apply for legalization under the “general amnesty” program. The number legalized under this program is three times higher than the number legalized under the SAW program. This suggests that the majority of Chavindeños were able to prove that they had entered the United States prior to 1982.
Table 5
Legal Status of Sample Household Members from Chavinda Residing in Madera County, 1992.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Citizen</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalized Citizen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Resident</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Amnesty</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAW</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undocumented</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>180</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although there have been Chavindeños in Madera since at least the 1940s, the arrival and settlement of families did not become important until the early 1970s. An analysis of the year of arrival of Chavindeño families shows that the largest share of the families formed in Chavinda arrived in Madera in the early 1970s. In most cases the husband arrived first, and then spouse and children followed after a period of time (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. Year of Arrival of Families from Chamitlan to Madera County. (N = 22).
Figure 4 shows that many families from Chavinda were part of the wave of immigrants who arrived in Madera in large numbers during the early 1970s. As discussed earlier, this was a period of rapid demographic and economic growth in the county. In the 1980s the migration of families from Chavinda slowed, and population in Madera also grew at a lower rate. However the enactment of IRCA in 1986 once again provoked a surge in the arrival of families from Chavinda. This is particularly revealing since no family had arrived since 1983. This rise in migration to Madera suggests that IRCA aroused many expectations about legalization of all family members.\footnote{For this analysis, I am only considering the 22 families formed in Chavinda; the rest were formed in the United States. The year of arrival is when the whole family moved to Madera. In the cases in which the husband/father arrived first, the year of arrival of the family was when the spouse and children arrived in Madera.}

Despite the original wave of migration brought about by IRCA, it seems that fewer Chavindeños are currently migrating to Madera. However, this does not necessarily mean that emigration from Chavinda is declining. Further research should explore whether more Chavindeños are settling in the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles, or Salinas. What is certain is that the general perception among Chavindeños is that Madera is not a good place to work, since wages in agriculture are very low. Data from the 1992 survey show that the median hourly wage for Chavindeños working in agriculture is $5.53, while Chavindeños working in non-farm industries earn twice as much, $10.42. For this reason, Chavindeños often refer to Madera as “El Valle de los Miserables.” In addition, informants assert that many Chavindeños have moved to Salinas or the Bay Area. Similarly, the wage differential between farm and non-farm jobs encourages young Chavindeños to try to get work outside of agriculture. It is generally accepted among Chavindeños that Madera cannot compete with Salinas and other agricultural areas in terms of wages.

Experience in the Labor Market and Settlement

Despite labor market diversification, the majority of male Chavindeños (55 percent of those 16 years and over) and a large proportion of women the same age (39 percent) have agricultural jobs in Madera County. Nineteen percent of the men hold non-agricultural jobs, mainly in construction, and the rest (26 percent) are not in the labor force.

There is one important distinction to make: male Chavindeños are heavily concentrated in the best jobs in the area’s agricultural industry, since most of them have permanent year-round positions as foremen, farm employees, tractor drivers, and irrigators. Many of these workers live on the farms in houses provided by employers. Of the household heads from the survey, 67 percent have this kind of job, while 20 percent have non-farm jobs, 10 percent are seasonal farm workers, and 3 percent are retired. Foremen or mayordomos are chosen from the best and most responsible workers to be in charge of the farm’s operations. They live in the best houses on the farm and enjoy a certain degree of independence. They occupy a very high status in the Chavindeño community because they have the power to hire workers. In a sense, they are the
cornerstones of migratory social networks. **Farm employees** are full-time workers who also live in houses owned by the farm. They know how to operate the farm machinery and should be willing to perform any task demanded, whether driving a tractor or picking grapes. Many of the farm employees are irrigators, whose work demands 24-hour-a-day attention. Although these workers have permanent year-round jobs, housing, and better salaries, they complain about being called to work at any time. **Tractor drivers** are also full-time workers, though not many of them receive housing on the farms. The large number of tractor drivers among Chavindeños is the result of Chavinda being located in a dynamic commercial agricultural area in Mexico where many of the farm workers drive tractors.

As defined by the Department of Agriculture, seasonal farm workers are people working in the production of the vast majority of nursery products, cash grains, field crops, and all fruits and vegetables (U.S. Department of Labor, 1993). In Madera, these workers face difficult labor conditions, such as seasonal and temporary employment, low salaries and no benefits. These laborers typically work during the harvest season. During the 1980s, seasonal farm workers were increasingly hired by labor contractors, as is the case with the growing number of Mixteco farm workers in Madera (Zabin et al. 1993, Villarejo, 1989).

Chavindeños have gradually replaced White and other workers from the better agricultural jobs in Madera. The case of one of the most important milk-producing farms illustrates this trend. In the late 1970s, most of the stable, full-time operators who lived in houses belonging to the farm were White; Chavindeños working there assisted these White machine operators. By 1992 all of the White workers had left, and Chavindeños had taken over the operator jobs and housing. At another farm that specializes in the production of grapes and cotton, Chavindeños have also been replacing White and Mexican American workers. In 1992, there were seven full-time workers: one irrigator and four tractor drivers from Chavinda, and another tractor driver from Zamora, Michoacán who happened to be a good friend of one of the Chavindeños. There was only one White worker who lived with his family on the farm. When the farmer needs temporary workers, he usually hires other Chavindeños.

Among the Chavindeños not employed in agriculture, many find jobs in the construction industry, most working as roofers. One Chavindeño couple in the sample had embarked in the formation of a small business, a taquería located in one of the commercial districts of the city. “Taquería Chavinda” carries in itself the long tradition and prestige of “La Ultima Cena” (The Last Supper) a famous chain of taquerías in Chavinda and Zamora.

An examination of the occupation of women reveals that in 1992, the majority of them who were 16 years and over were employed (57 percent) or went to school (18 percent). The rest were housewives with no other occupation outside the home (18 percent), or were disabled (6 percent). Two out of every three working women were employed in agriculture, the majority of them as seasonal farm workers. These women usually work in the summer picking grapes with their families or in packing houses. Among Chavindeñas this is considered a good job, because Mexican-American women principally work in these places. Working only in the summer enables women to collect unemployment insurance checks for a short period of time. The women who have non-agricultural jobs usually have some formal education that grants them access to jobs such as forewomen in manufacturing plants, teacher's aides, and bilingual receptionists.

Access to full-time, year-round jobs has been the key factor in the settlement process of
Chavindeños. Year-round employment ended the seasonal pattern of migration for many of them. Table 6 shows the first and current occupation of the 30 heads of household from the sample, and demonstrates that a relative upward labor mobility has occurred. Although most of the 30 heads of household got their first job in seasonal farm work, in 1992 many of them were working as tractor drivers, farm employees, or outside of agriculture. The fact that many of the Chavindeños entered the Madera labor market as farm employees shows that these jobs have been available to them for a long time, thanks to strong connections with employers.

Table 6
First and Current Occupation of Household Heads from Chavinda in Madera County, 1992.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Occupation</th>
<th>Current Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Farm</td>
<td>Tractor Driver</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Farm</td>
<td>Irrigator</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Farm</td>
<td>Farm Employee</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Farm</td>
<td>Seasonal Farm Worker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Farm</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Farm</td>
<td>Roofer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Farm</td>
<td>Welder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tractor Driver</td>
<td>Tractor Driver</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigator</td>
<td>Tractor Driver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigator</td>
<td>Seasonal Farm Worker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Employee</td>
<td>Foreman</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Employee</td>
<td>Farm Employee</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Employee</td>
<td>Proprietor Small Business</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Employee</td>
<td>Constr. Machine Operator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck Driver</td>
<td>Truck Driver</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Madera Household Survey 1992

An analysis of the length of time that passes between the husband/father’s arrival in Madera and that of the wife/mother, underscores the importance of permanent year-round jobs. Surprisingly, this period of time is very short: In nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of the families formed in Chavinda, the period of separation was one year or less. Overall, the average separation time was 2.3 years. It seems that in general, men decide to get married or bring their
families up from Chavinda after they land a permanent job.

Legal status does not seem to play an important role in promoting settlement. In observing the families from the sample in which the husband/father had a permanent job and both parents were legal immigrants in 1992, one can observe that it takes the husband an average of 1.8 years from arrival in Madera to land a permanent job, and 1.9 years to bring the family from Chavinda. On the other hand, it takes an average of 7.1 and 8.1 years from the arrival of the husband in Madera, for the husband and wife respectively to become legal residents.

In addition to entry, permanent employment and legalization, home ownership has also been a key element in the settlement process of Chavindeños. A high percentage of families have been able to buy houses in Madera; 53 percent of the households in the sample have been able to do so. Most of these families have bought their houses through programs for low income people. In 1988, a subdivision for low-income people was built in the city, and nearly 20 percent of the houses were acquired by Chavindeños.

To summarize the analysis of the settlement process, Table 7 compares demographic characteristics of Chavindeños 16 years and over working in agriculture with Mixteco farm workers working on the West Coast, farm workers in the San Joaquin Valley (including Madera), and seasonal farm workers in California.14

Table 7
Demographic Characteristics of Chavindeños 16 Years and over Working in Agriculture Compared to Other Farm workers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (mean)</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Education</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years, since first came to U.S. (mean)</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>12**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undocumented</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAW</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>59.1</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documented through other programs</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Madera Household Survey; Mixteco Survey (Zabin et al., 1993); EDD Survey (Alvarado et al. 1990); Seasonal Agricultural Services Workers Survey in California (U.S. Department of Labor, 1993).

* Median ** Mexican Born only.

The survey of Mixteco farm workers is the result of interviews with 131 Mixteco workers in three regions of the West Coast in 1990 and 1991 (See: Zabin et al, 1993). The survey of 347 farm workers in the San Joaquin Valley was conducted in 1989 by the California Employment Development Department. The survey was conducted in Fresno, Kern, Tulare and Madera (See: Alvarado et al. 1990). Data on seasonal farm workers in California come from a survey of 1,844 randomly selected agricultural workers in perishable crops during 1990 and 1991 (See: U.S. Department of Labor, 1993).
Chavindeños appear to comprise a more settled population of immigrants in comparison with other farm workers, having a higher proportion of documented people. In general Chavindeños seem to have made their first trip to the United States earlier than the other groups, with the exception of farm workers from the San Joaquin Valley. Chavindeños also have the lowest share of persons legalized under the SAW program, showing that individuals in this group were more likely to have a longer stay in the United States. In contrast, Mixtecos appear to have the weakest integration, since they have the highest percentage of undocumented persons and the most recent mean year of arrival.
Final Considerations

This study has shown that settlement of immigrant families in this country is primarily the result of migrant’s access to full-time, year-round employment. This process is further reinforced by women’s entrance into the labor market, legalization and home ownership. In addition, the growing “Latinization” of places like Madera also encourages and facilitates a more permanent stay. It is more likely that Mexicans feel more at home in Madera in the 1990s than in the 1970s, because there is now a large Mexican population, Spanish is widely spoken and the cultural environment is more Latino. As a result of all these processes, transnational communities, like the one formed by Chavindeños, are able to recreate in California the social life of their original locations in Mexico.

The experience of Chavindeños in Madera County indicates that they are in the process of becoming “settlers” rather than “sojourners.” This reflects the maturation of the social process of migration. The new labor requirements of the San Joaquin Valley’s regional economy including the production of high-value crops and an increasing non-farm sector also encourage permanent settlement. Although Chavindeños have achieved a certain degree of upward mobility under these new labor market conditions, in reality they are still the “working poor.” Many of these farm workers work full-time but do not have benefits such as health insurance, and must rely on Medi-Cal and other government programs.

Chavindeños’ access to the best jobs in agriculture is the result of ethnic replacement. This concept was used by Zabin et al. (1993) to describe the process by which agricultural employers in California have relied on the sequential entry of groups of foreign workers for most of the last one hundred years. In general, a more settled group of farm workers is replaced by a new group that is willing to accept lower pay and poorer working conditions. California farm workers have been successively Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Southern Black, and Mexican. Only during the Great Depression did non-immigrant, non-minority “Okies” and “Arkies” form an important part of the harvest labor force.

Chavindeños are taking jobs in the best segment of the farm labor market which were previously held by other workers, especially White. Further research is needed to examine what has happened to these workers and to their children. Are they employed in other industries due to upward mobility? Have they moved elsewhere? Currently, the replacement process is also occurring within the Mexican immigrant group, since Mixtecos are replacing mestizo Mexican farm workers by taking the jobs they have left. As an example, Mixtecos in Madera are taking the jobs Chavindeños used to hold in the grape harvest. Even though Chavindeños and Mixtecos in general are located in different segments of the labor market, Chavindeños view them as a threat, in the same way that Chavindeños were viewed by White and Black workers in the past. Chavindeños blame Mixtecos for the worsening of working conditions that has occurred in Madera in the 1980s. For many mestizo farm workers, the negative attitude towards Mixtecos is also the result of imported racism from Mexico, where indigenous people are considered inferior.

The increasing transformation of Chavindeños into “settlers” calls into question the use of the transnational community approach. This concept seems to better describe the social organization of localities whose migrants have a seasonal, Bracero-type pattern of migration. As
exemplified by Chavindeños, it seems that as migrants spend time in the United States, they develop stronger ties with the receiving region, and as a consequence weaken their links with the sending region. Fewer people go back and forth between the various points on the transnational circuit as people find more stable employment in one location in the United States. Similarly, money remittances to the sending localities decrease as people invest in housing, education, and the formation of small businesses in the United States. However, integration in the United States does not mean a complete rupture with the sending community, and in this sense the concept of transnationalism is still valid and useful, as long as one takes into account that settlement has changed the role of places on the transnational circuit: for Chavindeños in Madera this location has become more important than Chavinda. Although a net loss of population is occurring in places like Chavinda, it is unlikely that these localities will become “ghost towns,” since another population replacement process is occurring. Immigrants to the United States are generally replaced by people living in smaller surrounding rural communities who move to “transnational towns” to work in the jobs left behind by migrants to the United States, and to take advantage of urban services.

The migration experience depicted here defies established social science concepts, public policy prescriptions, and a single interpretation of the American dream. For many Mexicans the American dream is a short stay in the United States, for the purpose of saving money to start a small business in Mexico. This dream is being frustrated by the economic crisis in Mexico, the new labor demands of the U.S. economy, and by the inexorable maturation of the migration process.
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