

Latino Small-Town Revitalization as “Blight”:
Woodburn, Oregon

by
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TERMINAL PROJECT ABSTRACT

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The recent population growth in emerging Latino destinations has revitalized many small and dying towns across the United States. In fact, from 2000 to 2005, 221 counties would have experienced overall population decline if not for Latino population growth. As Latinos continue to migrate from traditional immigrant gateways to newly emerging destinations (a trend fueled by the restructuring of the agricultural industry, mass immigration, natural increase, and increased employment opportunities) community development professionals will be challenged to create new models of democratic practice that address the conflicts of these transitioning towns. Emerging theories of democracy that challenge traditional power dynamics, such as cultural citizenship, can help further these efforts.

Through the case study of Woodburn, a small town in Oregon’s Willamette Valley that has experienced rapid Latino population growth over the last several decades, I detail why even though Latinos are investing and revitalizing economically depressed spaces, the historic downtown is still characterized as “blighted.” I draw from Community Capitals Framework (CCF) to contextualize how Latinos’ generative economic development practices are built upon various forms of capital. I analyze the cultural differences in the definition of “blight” between Latinos and whites in the town and uncover the racial conflicts around (1) small business investment and development and (2) historic preservation efforts. Drawing on 40 in-depth qualitative interviews, an analysis of U.S. Census data, and a spatial analysis of Latino small businesses, I examine the way in which the lack of Latino political representation in formal planning and governance institutions plays a role in how local institutions define Latino generative economic revitalization as “blight.” This case illustrates how formal community planning and development institutions create a discourse of disempowerment by contesting informal generative revitalization efforts within a racialized context.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The nation's growing Latino population, while still anchored in its traditional settlement areas, continues to disperse across the United States. In recent decades, for example, many metropolitan and rural communities in the Midwest, Southeast, and Northwest have experienced a rapid increase in their Latino immigrant populations (Pew Research Center 2013). For many communities, Latino population growth often makes the difference between growth and decline. In fact, between 2000 and 2005, an unprecedented 221 counties experienced population increases only because Latino gains offset the population decline of non-Latinos (Johnson and Lichter 2008). In the United States, this new Latino diaspora can be attributed to the restructuring of U.S. labor markets, including agriculture, construction and landscaping, assembly and manufacturing, and poultry and meat processing (Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Schmid 2003; Zuñiga and Hernández-Leon 2005; Trabalzi and Sandoval 2010). Murillo and Villenas (1997) first used the term "new Latino diaspora" in the late 1990s to describe how an increasing number of Latinos (many immigrant and others from elsewhere in the United States) are settling both temporarily and permanently in areas that have not traditionally been gateways for Latinos.

Oregon has also experienced this demographic shift and nowhere is it more clearly seen than in the City of Woodburn. Although Oregon is considered to be a new growth destination state for Latinos, this narrative often neglects the fact that Oregon territory shared a border with Mexico until 1848, and has a long history of Latino immigration

(Gonzalez-Berry and Mendoza 2010). In 1848, however, after the Mexican-American War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico was forced to cede over half of its territory to the United States (much of its California territory, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico). Beginning in the 1850s, after Mexico's new borders were established, Mexican immigrants in Oregon were primarily hired as cowboys. They were also hired as mule packers during the Rogue River War of 1855-56, an armed conflict between the U.S. Army, local militias, and volunteers, and Native American tribes in Southern Oregon (Gonzalez-Berry and Mendoza 2010). In the late 1860's, after Oregon became a U.S. state, Mexican cowboys were also commonly found driving herds of cattle from California to eastern Oregon.

During the first several decades of the 20th Century, the need for agricultural labor was the driving factor pulling Latino immigrants to the Willamette Valley. As Robert Bussel writes, in *Understanding the Immigration Experience in Oregon*, "it was the need for a farm labor force that established a pattern in which Mexicans were alternately greeted as desirable immigrants and denounced as undesirable intruders into America's social and economic life" (Bussel 2008, p. 47). The agricultural industry was taking off as sugar beet fields planted in the Portland area began to flourish. Railroads were also in huge demand, and needed a strong, cheap workforce. Mexican workers were contracted to work in these industries, as well as others, and some found enough work to settle permanently in the state. The 1910 census does not account for any Mexican or Latino residents, but Wang (2006) states that Oregon was estimated to have the 7th largest Mexican-born population living in the state at that time.

From 1942 to 1947, the Emergency Farm Labor Supply Program, or *Bracero* Program, recruited Mexican laborers to replace sugar beet farmers who either entered the U.S. armed forces during World War II or left farm labor altogether to work in other industries (Mendoza 2009). Starting in the 1950s, Texas-based “long-haul” migrant family crews also started settling in Woodburn because of the town’s affordable housing stock and ample work opportunities (Kissam 2007). As the influx of Texas migrants dwindled in the 1960’s, however, direct migration from Mexico increased again (Kissam et al. 2000). During the 1970s and 1980s, indigenous-origin immigrants from Oaxaca, Mexico were actively recruited by Willamette Valley growers to harvest strawberries, berries, and cucumbers. Eventually, they settled because, like the wave of Texas migrants a generation earlier, they found housing and ample work (Kissam 2007). Therefore, Woodburn is unique in that it has been a destination site for Latino immigrants dating back to the early 20th Century. Today, Woodburn continues to be a destination for Latino immigrants. According to the U.S. Census, Woodburn’s Latino population has increased from 18 percent in 1980 to approximately 60 percent in 2010.

Figure 1. Non-Latino vs. Latino Population in Woodburn, Oregon (in Percentages)

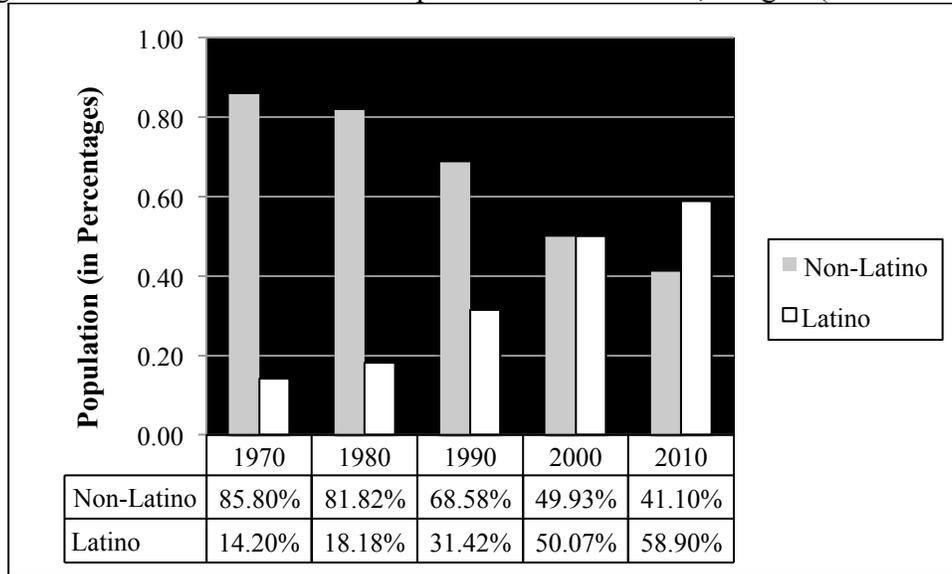
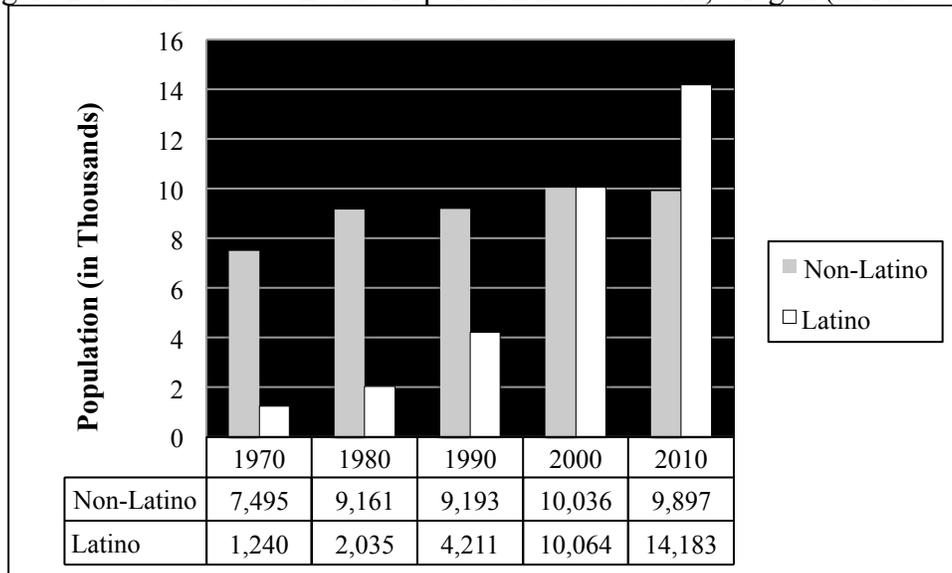


Figure 2. Non-Latino vs. Latino Population in Woodburn, Oregon (in Thousands)



Woodburn's recent transformation as a community, as is the case throughout rural America, has not been fueled solely by immigration. Latino settlement patterns in Oregon have changed over the last several decades as agricultural and forest industries have restructured and demanded less of a migratory labor force and Latinos have expanded to

work in low-wage service industries. These changes have led to both a higher demand for unauthorized Latino labor and a diversification of Latinos as more educated Latinos have come to Oregon to provide services for the high percentage of low-income Latinos throughout the state. According to the most recent 2007 Survey of Business Owners, the number of Latino-owned businesses increased 78 percent between 2002 and 2007.¹ This increase placed Oregon in the top ten states with the highest Latino business growth, at nearly double the national growth rate. Hence, Latinos are now settling more permanently in Oregon communities (such as Woodburn, Medford, Hillsboro, etc) and building a more permanent sense of community in their placemaking efforts for inclusion and acceptance in these communities. These placemaking efforts, however, have led to cultural and political conflicts because communities are beginning to struggle regarding the re-definition of their own identity and community development agendas. As Latinos continue to migrate from traditional immigrant gateways to newly emerging destinations, community development professionals will be challenged to create new models of democratic practice that address the conflicts of these transitioning towns.

Today, downtown Woodburn is home to a Latino business district that serves the needs of a diverse Latino population. Approximately 90 percent of the small businesses in the downtown are Latino-owned. Using a recent case study involving Latino generative economic development and placemaking in Woodburn, I detail why even though Latinos are revitalizing economically depressed spaces such as the historic downtown, their efforts are still characterized as “blighted.” Drawing on 40 in-depth qualitative interviews, an analysis of U.S. Census data, and a spatial analysis of Latino small businesses, I examine

¹ US Census Bureau, "2007 Survey of Business Owners: Statistics for All U.S. Firms by Industry, Ethnicity, and Receipts Size of Firm for the U.S. and States - Oregon."

the cultural differences in the definition of “blight” between the town’s Latino entrepreneurs who rely primarily on informal business methods and formal planners who develop economic redevelopment goals through regulative planning practices. The analysis of these different conceptualizations of “blight” helps explain the racial conflicts around (1) small business investment and development and (2) historic preservation efforts. To explore this issue, I draw upon a “community capitals” conceptual framework to contextualize how Latinos’ generative economic development practices are built upon various forms of capital.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how formal community planning and development institutions create a discourse of disempowerment by contesting informal generative revitalization efforts within a racialized context. Findings suggest that a lack of Latino political representation in planning and governance institutions plays a role in how local institutions define Latino generative economic revitalization as “blight.” Hence, the participation of marginalized populations is essential to limit the abuse of the “blight” concept, which is commonly utilized during urban renewal or economic development undertakings (Gold and Sagalyn 2010). Emerging theories of democracy that challenge traditional power dynamics, such as cultural citizenship, can help further these participation efforts.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In order to fully comprehend this study, it is essential to understand the history of urban renewal and the ways in which it negatively affected the most disadvantaged sectors of the American public. Thus, the first section of this chapter discusses how urban renewal contributed to institutional racism and the large-scale displacement of minority and low-income populations. Next, the second section of this literature review summarizes Douglas Uzzell's (1990) distinction between regulative planning and generative planning styles. He argues that regulative planning is commonly associated with formal sectors and generative planning is generally connected to informal sectors. Lastly, the final section discusses Community Capitals Framework (CCF), a valuable theoretical model that rural (and urban) communities can utilize to capitalize on their assets and improve neglected aspects of their environments. Flora and Flora (2013) identify seven capitals: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial, and built (infrastructure). They argue that communities that invest in all of these existing capitals are able to most successfully adapt to social and economic change.

Urban Renewal and Race

Major cities across the U.S. experienced decline during the post World War II era as suburbanization and economic restructuring caused aging downtowns to fall into disrepair (Beauregard 2001). From the 1950s through the early 1970s, urban renewal was

among one the most common responses by the federal government and urban elites to promote growth in urban areas. Local businesses and politicians used federally authorized urban renewal authority (in particular, eminent domain) and federal funding to “save” inner cities. They cleared large tracts of supposed slum land around central business districts (CBDs) to provide space for and to subsidize high-cost residential, industrial, commercial, and institutional development (Logan and Molotch 1987). But in many cases, federal housing act funds intended to ameliorate living conditions for the poor were instead spent to relocate poor persons away from their communities and potentially valuable inner city properties. Jolin et al. (1998) discuss that out of the estimated one million people displaced by urban renewal, more than half of whom were black, the majority were forced to move outside urban renewal areas. As a result, urban renewal projects displaced large populations of low-income individuals, especially African Americans, and in some cases destroyed entire neighborhoods and business communities (Mohl 1993). Valle and Torres (2000) also document how Asian and Latino communities were negatively impacted by urban renewal projects.

Herbert Gans (1968) argues that the original goal of urban renewal, concerned with eliminating substandard housing, was altered to stimulate large-scale private rebuilding, add revenues to the dwindling tax base, revitalize downtowns, and halt the defection of middle-class whites from the inner city. The Housing Act of 1949, for example, provided federal funding to cities to acquire “blighted” areas and accomplish “their goals of housing modernization and area redevelopment” (Avila and Rose 2009, p. 338). During urban renewal, “blight” was understood as a condition of substandard housing, and eliminating blight meant providing decent homes for urban working families (Gordon 2004). The

author argues, however, that urban business leaders increasingly viewed urban redevelopment as a tool for “loosening the dirty collar” of substandard housing that surrounded most central business districts (316). These interests, however, had little patience with redevelopment plans that intended to repopulate cleared slums with working-class minorities who generally did not shop or work in the CBD (Gordon 2004). As a result, slum clearance ended up paving the way for CBD expansion and higher-end housing.

At the same time, state and local politicians were interested in both minimizing the costs of urban redevelopment and eager to reap its benefits. Therefore, they generally agreed with urban business leaders that low-income housing did not match the economic potential of large-scale private rebuilding projects. Gordon (2004) argues that at “the intersection of these private and public anxieties, urban redevelopment policies took a decisive turn” (317). In other words, the primary goal of clearing slums was not to build better housing, it was to provide local opportunities for economic development and growth. Decisions to target certain “slums” were based less on local need and more on the willingness of private interests to invest in redevelopment. Fogelson (2001) argues that redevelopment increasingly relied on an elastic definition of “blight,” which put the health of the CBD at the top of the urban renewal agenda.

As Gordon (2004) notes in his analysis of the term “blight,” blight continues to be rarely defined with any precision, and “courts have granted local interests almost carte blanche in their creative search for ‘blighted’ areas eligible for federal funds or local tax breaks” (305-06). Instead of defining blight, most states have elected to offer a “descriptive catalogue of blighted conditions often pasted verbatim from Progressive-era health or

safety statutes” (Gordon 2004, p. 312). In Missouri, for example, an area was considered blighted by:

the predominance of defective or inadequate street layout, unsanitary or unsafe conditions, deterioration of site improvements, improper subdivision or obsolete platting, the existence of conditions which endanger life or property by fire and other causes, or any combination of such factors, retards the provision of housing accommodations or constitutes an economic or social liability or a menace to the public health, safety, morals, or welfare in its present condition and use.²

Today, however, the criteria necessary for positive findings of blight are more liberal, vague, and ambiguous (Gold and Sagalyn 2010). With the collapse of urban renewal in 1974 and the profusion of state TIF laws, the definition of blight was expanded to non-residential properties (Gordon 2004). In 1975, for example, local officials in St. Louis expanded their definition of blight to include any condition conducive to “the inability to pay reasonable taxes” (Gordon 2004, p. 318). Accordingly, many local redevelopment authorities have added “economic development” clauses to their TIF laws, which essentially allows local governments to label slow economic growth or the threat of future economic decline as a blighted condition. Gold and Sagalyn (2010) argue that “the expansive use of the blight concept has blurred the line between proper use and abuse, especially when the power of condemnation is exercised for economic development purposes” (1173). The authors maintain that since the definition of blight continues to

² Mo. ANN. STAT. § 99.805 (West 1982) (amended 1986 and 1997).

grow, it needs serious alteration since urban renewal or economic redevelopment relies on this concept as a cornerstone for their eminent domain “takings.”

Regulative Planning vs. Generative Planning

In *Dissonance of Formal and Informal Planning Styles, Or Can Formal Planners Do Bricolage?*, Douglas Uzzell's (1990) regulative and generative planning paradigm provides a framework for analyzing the nature of relationships between the powerful and the unempowered. Throughout his article, Uzzell recognizes that regulative planning is frequently a coercive process always associated with legally constituted institutions, and that generative planning is engaged generally by the unempowered who “may or may not be associated with any institution at all” (1990, p. 116). In other words, “regulative planning” refers to the style employed by the government and “generative planning” refers to either informal planning strategies or the kind of planning used by informal sectors (Uzzell 1987). Uzzell (1990) makes it clear, however, that individuals who rely on generative planning practices and informal behavior to solve problems are not necessarily powerless.

Since generative planning is entrepreneurial in nature, it works most effectively when the environment is unstable and when the organization is relatively small or at least very nimble. Individuals who rely on generative planning strategies generally try something out in small, controlled settings rather than spending a lot of time formulating ideas, conducting a needs assessment, or conducting surveys to generate information. In other words, risk-taking and pilot-testing help to fundamentally define this approach because decisions are based on operational information. One Latina business owner

explains her highly entrepreneurial approach to opening a restaurant in downtown Woodburn, which was executed rapidly without much regard for gathering information during a pre-implementation period:

I had a little savings when I learned about this opportunity through my professional network...so I said, “okay, if we’re going to do it then we’re going to do it. And if not, then I guess we won’t.” Having a restaurant has been one of my dreams for a long time (Interviewee 2578, Spring 2012).

Regulative or formal planning, by contrast, is based on coercive power. While information also plays a crucial role in the implementation of plans, Uzzell (1990) argues that this information is “manufactured.” He states, “information purveyed by formal planners and most social science researchers is manufactured, not operational, and in terms of information theory, not information at all. Operational information is used to answer operational questions, such as: Can we do X? How can it be done? Is it working? The purpose of manufactured information is not to gain understanding or answer operational questions, but to produce explanation, and with the explanation, mystification and an illusion of control” (1990, p. 118). Uzzell (1990) argues that based on this viewpoint, formal planning is not an information-based enterprise, as it is commonly accepted. Instead, he maintains that “what passes for information in coercive planning is largely a covert instrument of elite domination through manipulation of reality” (Uzzell 1990, p. 118).

Figure 3. Regulative vs. Generative Planning Styles

Regulative Planning	Generative Planning
Primary reliance on power	Primary reliance on information
Creates new systems	Accommodates to existing systems, although small, harmonious innovations may generate major system changes
Implements plans on large scale	Implements plans by increments
Employs standardization and mass production	Allows for idiosyncratic, context-sensitive design
Treats actions as final	Treats actions as experimental
Filters out feedback	Incorporates feedback
Source: Uzzell, D. (1990) Dissonance of Formal and Informal Planning Styles, Or Can Formal Planners Do Bricolage?. <i>City & Society</i> , 4 (2), 114-130, p. 117	

The economic revitalization efforts of Latino entrepreneurs in downtown Woodburn are perfectly consistent with Uzzell’s generative planning concept. Although Latino business owners are operating within a socially and politically charged context (unstable environment), they feel that these major external challenges can be managed and overcome through ongoing organizational learning and modification. There is a strong emphasis on producing positive community benefits, learning by doing, trying it out, and letting it all hang out. While a significant number of Latino entrepreneurs are not nimble enough to keep up with a highly turbulent external environment and close their business, many do have sufficient organizational intelligence to learn everything that has to be learned about the complex and unpredictable environment in which their business operates.

Community Capitals

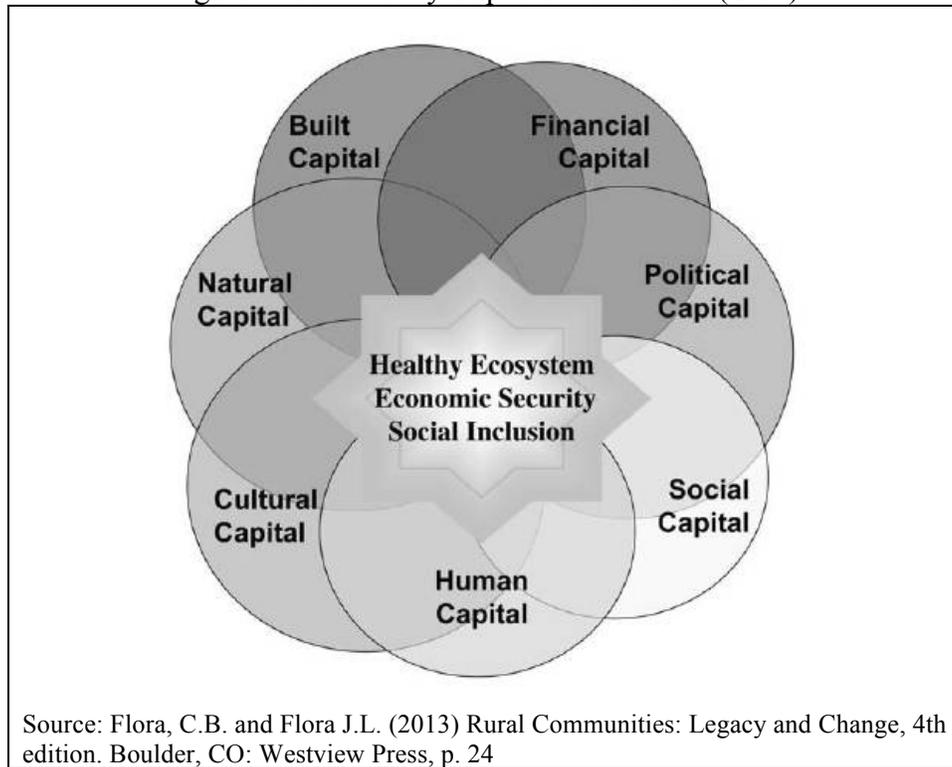
In *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*, Cornelia Flora and Jan Flora (2013) strengthen our understanding regarding how some rural communities have adapted to social and economic changes and why many others have not. Their theoretical framework, Community Capitals Framework (CCF), has been used by both rural and urban communities to focus their efforts, develop long-term plans, and foster interconnectedness to improve community and economic life. Community Capitals Framework (CCF) identifies seven type of capitals, or “assets,” a community can draw from: natural capital, cultural capital, human capital, social capital, political capital, financial capital, and built capital. They argue that creating a balance between all capitals is crucial for sustaining a healthy community. The authors define the seven community capitals as follows:

1. Natural capital refers to the natural resources, beauty, and amenities of a locale (i.e., landscape, climate, air, and water) on which all other capitals depend.
2. Cultural capital includes the heritages, values, generations, races, and ethnicities in a community. If cultural hegemony is present, it allows one social group to impose its symbols and reward system on other groups. Ultimately, it reflects what voices are heard and listened to. It is the way people know the world.
3. Human capital refers to the skills and abilities of individuals, including leadership capacity and ability to access resources. Both formal and informal education and experience create human capital.

4. Social capital, both bonding and bridging, is the social glue of a community. Social capital includes the networks, mutual trust, and norms of reciprocity that are key to community prosperity.
5. Political capital describes the ability of a group to influence the distribution of resources. It includes power, voice, connections, and organizations.
6. Financial capital is money that is used for investment in community capacity building rather than consumption, including government grants, contracts, investments, philanthropy, and reallocations.
7. Built capital includes infrastructure that supports the community such as housing, buildings, schools, utilities, road and transportation infrastructure, and telecommunications infrastructure.

Community Capitals Framework (CCF) offers a view of the whole community system and how the capitals interact. A key aspect of CCF is the interaction among the seven capitals and the way in which an investment in one capital can build assets in others (Flora and Flora 2013). The authors argue that when assets are invested to create new resources, especially ones that will serve the community over a long period of time, they become community capital. Emery and Flora (2006), for example, assessed a community and economic development program using CCF and discovered that it produced other capitals, and emerged as a significant factor in that community's transformation.

Figure 4. Community Capitals Framework (CCF)



Making sure that advocates for each capital are included in community development efforts is critical (Flora and Flora 2013). Community advocates or activists, for example, make sure certain issues become part of the public agenda in terms of convincing city governments appropriate solutions are needed to address them. In Woodburn, however, Latino-serving institutions have not sufficiently strengthened community relationships to the point where their combined efforts have a meaningful impact on the political agenda.

The following section describes the methods and procedures used for conducting this study. As stated previously, this study will analyze how the lack of formal political capital among Latino community members allows local institutions to define Latino

generative economic development in the downtown as “blight” and attempt to answer two main research questions:

1. Can urban renewal policies having a disproportionately negative impact on Latinos regarding their generative economic development and placemaking efforts?
2. And if so, is there an emerging model of community development that can challenge these traditional power dynamics?

CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION OF METHOD

The case study method was used as a basis for this study. In 2012, the researcher was involved in a University of Oregon graduate research project that explored both the contributions Latino business owners are making to downtown Woodburn and the challenges they face. The University of Oregon's Economic Development Administration University Center (through the Community Planning Workshop, or CPW) implemented the six-month project. Professor Gerardo Sandoval, from the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management, served as the project's faculty advisor. Community Planning Workshop (CPW) Staff, Robert Parker and Bethany Steiner, also provided technical assistance. The research team, which consisted of five graduate students and a CPW project manager, used the following methods to analyze this case study:

- Interviewed 40 individuals, including downtown business owners (Latino and non-Latino), national and statewide small business and non-profit organizations, Woodburn city staff, political officials, and community members;
- Conducted a quantitative analysis of U.S. census and economic data, and
- Conducted site visits. The research team spent extensive time in downtown Woodburn documenting observations and experiences.

Woodburn was chosen as a case study because of its majority Latino population and its historic downtown. To conduct this study, the research team asked interviewees

how Latino small businesses are contributing to the economic vitality of the downtown. Interview themes also included placemaking issues, community interaction among different ethnic and cultural groups, and politics and civic engagement (See Appendix A for a list of interview questions). During qualitative interviews, the research team also asked follow-up questions to tap into additional sources of knowledge. The ultimate goal of these interviews, however, was to identify strategies and opportunities that can build bridges between the varied philosophies and business practices of Latinos and Non-Latinos.

While our questions were developed to help us create strategies the larger community can implement to support Latino business development in the downtown area, we continually discovered that our discussions revolved around the racialized context of community affairs. The following “case study findings” section highlights that Woodburn’s regulative planning practices regarding economic redevelopment and historic preservation are highly racialized. And by relying on manufactured information within a racialized context, these formal planning practices create disempowerment across the Latino community.

For this paper, I utilize Douglas Uzzell’s theoretical framework regarding the coercive nature of formal institutions to analyze and critique Woodburn’s urban renewal policies. By designating downtown Woodburn an Urban Renewal Area (URA), city officials, by definition, have labeled the economic revitalization efforts of Latino small businesses as “blighted.” Woodburn’s formal planning institutions, in other words, are not acknowledging the generative aspects and contributions Latino community members have

been making to the downtown. I will also analyze why historic preservation issues are closely tied to formal revitalization strategies.

When determining whether or not urban renewal policies in Woodburn have the potential to have a disproportionately negative impact on Latinos, I asked myself two simple questions: 1) Can regulative planning practices potentially displace Latino business owners who have generatively revitalized the downtown? 2) Does the racialized landscape of the town help manufacture information formal planners use to produce a historic preservation agenda that is mainly concerned with the social history of white residents? In other words, when preservation issues and goals are discussed in the community, are these comments tied to events or community workshops that were attended primarily by white residents?

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

Despite the progress Latino business owners have made in revitalizing downtown Woodburn, the local government has passed enabling legislation—in this case sweeping urban redevelopment laws—to encourage private investment that will help realize “the full potential for downtown revitalization” (2).³ The city’s newly formed Urban Renewal Agency (URA) can also apply for state and federal loans to support redevelopment in the Historic Old Town. The 2010 Downtown Development Plan Update, for example, states:

“Downtown revitalization programs and activities are typically funded by a multitude of sources. The funding needed for these public and private projects usually exceeds available revenue. However, neither the City of Woodburn nor the urban renewal agency can or should fund all of the necessary projects alone. By pursuing additional funding sources for projects, Woodburn can leverage its limited funding capacity to increase the overall impact on Downtown” (Appendix C).

By establishing an Urban Renewal Agency, which will provide suggestions on how to address specific opportunity sites, the city has created a quasi-public redevelopment corporation that has the power of eminent domain to clear and prepare “blighted areas” for redevelopment by private interests. Gordon (2004) argues that state TIF laws dating back

³ 2010 Downtown Development Plan Update

to the 1970s are responsible for the way the definition of blight was expanded to non-residential properties. Many local redevelopment authorities, for example, added “economic development” clauses to their TIF laws, which essentially allowed local governments to label slow economic growth or the threat of future economic decline as a blighted condition.

While the worst practices of urban renewal were eliminated nearly forty years ago, regulative planning practices are still contributing to the racialization of blight because “findings of blight” are now based on more liberal interpretations. The redefinition of blight, for example, can be used to characterize Latino generative economic development practices in Woodburn as contributing to slow economic growth or “future blight.” Excessively broad definitions of blight helps explain why a Latino business district that serves the needs of a diverse Latino population is characterized as “run down.” Ultimately, by contesting Latinos’ generative revitalization efforts, community planning and development institutions can have the same damaging effects on Woodburn’s healthy Latino business district that urban renewal policies had on minorities who lived in neighborhoods that provided local opportunities for economic development and growth.

So why is the downtown conceptualized as “blighted,” even though many Latinos in the community view Latino businesses as contributing to the area’s healthy business district? In short, the lack of formal political capital among Latinos in Woodburn is responsible for this characterization. While more than half of the people who live in the town are Latino, hardly any have ever been elected to public office. Today, for example, the Woodburn City Council does not have any Latino elected officials. And without formal political representation, Latinos in Woodburn do not have the necessary political capital

needed to change the discourse regarding their generative redevelopment efforts. Therefore, formal planning and government institutions face little opposition when they define Latino generative economic development strategies as contributing to slow economic growth or “future blight.”

The community’s racialized landscape, fueled by tensions related to placemaking, has also played an important role in conceptualizing the downtown as “blighted.” While there is a real desire for diverse community members to work together, the different visions regarding downtown Woodburn’s potential economic growth helps explain why historic preservation issues are closely tied to formal revitalization strategies. After analyzing the 2010 Downtown Development Plan Update, I determined that the emphasis on how “new development should respect and contribute to the historic character of the City” refers to the cultural landscape of whites (7).⁴ The Plan has established certain preconditions of growth by encouraging redevelopment that preserves the historic character of the community. Since the Plan has established what the downtown can and should be, it has essentially labeled existing conditions as “blighted,” which in turn validates the size and scope of its redevelopment district. Gold and Sagalyn (2010) argue that “the desire to include developable areas, together with ones capable of showing blight, not only leads towards larger areas, but also leads to strangely shaped districts, shapes which Colin Gordon refers to appropriately as ‘gerrymandered’” (1166).

Woodburn’s “project downtown area” revitalization boundaries are virtually the same exact boundaries my CPW colleagues and I set during our Latino small business research project. The purpose of our CPW research project was to explore both the

⁴ I will discuss this in further detail later in the chapter.

cultural clashes in the community. The following table highlights certain generative efforts Latinos are relying on to revitalize downtown Woodburn:

Figure 6. Latinos' Generative Efforts to Revitalizing Downtown Woodburn⁵

Generative Aspects of Latino Revitalization Efforts	
Latino businesses base decisions on operational information	Informal financial resources (Latino entrepreneurs rely on family loans to start and expand businesses)
Latino entrepreneurs open businesses without developing formal business plans	Latino entrepreneurs rely on limited financial documentation skills
Latino business owners have previous experience in a cash-only informal economy	Latino business owners occasionally close store during scheduled open hours to run family errands, take children to doctor appointments, etc.
Latino business owners extend credit to customers who have not established a credit history in the U.S. (credit lines are recorded in paperback notebooks)	Latino businesses post handwritten signs (mainly in Spanish) on doors, windows, and shelves

These generative approaches to economic development can sometimes be misconstrued as being ineffective and contributing to blight. To the casual observer they seem chaotic and out of place, especially in a business environment that generally requires structure to overcome an unpredictable external environment. It is important to note, however, that without Latinos' informal approach to business development, the downtown would be a long way from what it is today. One City Council member in Woodburn

⁵ A large majority of the Latino small businesses in downtown Woodburn rely on these generative economic development practices. They are not representative, however, of the entire group of Latino small businesses.

acknowledged the transformation and contributions being made by Latino entrepreneurs in the downtown stating:

If Latino businesses hadn't moved in, the downtown would be vacant
(Interviewee 2591, Spring 2012).

Economic Revitalization: Dissonance Between the Two Planning Styles

While many Latino entrepreneurs believe that they have successfully revitalized downtown Woodburn, they also believe that their continued efforts can increasingly contribute to the area's economic vitality. In one interview, a Latino business owner spoke about his vision for the downtown. As a leader who is involved with the Woodburn Downtown Association (WDA), he explains how higher levels of collaboration between Latinos and Non-Latinos can help downtown Woodburn become even more of a regional draw:

My vision for downtown Woodburn? That it's filled with lots of tourists. We're giving it a shot with the WDA, even though we're not receiving lots of support. But we're going to try our best. I want our streets to be filled with tourists. I want people to say, "Let's go to Woodburn! Let's go have a good time and enjoy ourselves!" The obstacle we have is that we don't have experience. I wish we had another meeting with the police department about how we could organize an event without bringing vandalism to the community. As police officers, they can give us advice about what to avoid,

what to do and not do. Unfortunately, we haven't had the opportunity to discuss this theme. But the WDA, for example, is in its infancy stages. We're registered with the State of Oregon as an organization, but we still don't even have a contract with the City of Woodburn to organize events (Interviewee 2579, Spring 2012).

Several Latino entrepreneurs believe that events designed to celebrate Woodburn's Latino culture can help further their economic development efforts, especially in the downtown since approximately 90 percent of small businesses are Latino-owned. Another Latino business owner, who is also involved with the WDA, said that he has collaborated with city officials in the past to organize the Woodburn *Fiesta Mexicana* festival (which celebrated its 50th anniversary this year) because it's a great way to promote Woodburn and help increase tourism. As one of the area's key Latino business leaders, he also attended UNIDOS⁶ board meetings for approximately a year to help organize community events. He stopped attending, however, because he felt the group lacked incentive to work hard. He explained:

A lot of retired, Historic Woodburn Neighborhood Association (HWNA) residents were involved in this group, and they have a different idea of how things should be run. They're also accustomed to working at a different pace. I wanted to be a part of something that moved a little faster because as

⁶ UNIDOS is a community association of volunteers interested in promoting downtown economic redevelopment. According to Latino business owners, a large majority of its members are white residents. Many of its volunteers are also members of the Historic Woodburn Neighborhood Association.

a business owner I've struggled over the last few years. I don't have the luxury to just sit around with my arms and hands crossed waiting for people to visit Woodburn. We have to "move," and promote events and games. With the WDA, however, I feel that we can promote Woodburn and help increase tourism. That's our goal. And we're headed in the right direction. We're actually seeing changes now. We're planning a Mother's Day event in May. So I think we're walking a lot faster than UNIDOS (Interviewee 2576, Spring 2012).

UNIDOS, or Downtown Woodburn *Unidos*, has close ties to the city. In fact, the organization's contact person, Robyn Stowers, is the City of Woodburn's Urban Renewal Manager. UNIDOS also works closely with the Woodburn Area Chamber of Commerce. As someone who relies on generative planning skills, interviewee 2576 does not share the same general philosophy the leaders of this organization rely on to inform their decisions. In his opinion, the organization is too highly bureaucratized—in which change occurs slowly and with considerable deliberation. And since both sides could not agree on the appropriate steps the organization needed to take to organize downtown events, interviewee 2576 decided to no longer attend their meetings. According to Uzzell (1990), the notion of control tends to be an obstacle to "building and maintaining a relationship of inter-sectoral brokerage" (128). Uzzell (1990) argues that if formal assistance to either individuals who rely on informal planning strategies or to informal sector actors is to be anything more than a ritual reinforcement of the existing system of structured inequality, it must involve the empowerment of these individuals. Interviewee 2576, however, claims that UNIDOS board members discriminated against him on the basis of his race, which

suggests that he was never allowed to exercise his power as a Latino minority and that his presence only served to reinforce “the existing system of inequality.” He stated:

When I used to attend UNIDOS meetings, they would try to embarrass or ridicule me. They would discriminate against me. They would ask me why I didn't speak proper English, especially since I had been in the U.S. for so long. I didn't understand why they were saying these things because isn't this suppose to be a free country? I felt bad, so I decided I would show them that I could organize something with my own people. And faster, too
(Interviewee 2576, Spring 2012).

Latino business owners have also had a difficult time working with city officials. The WDA, a newly formed association of Latino business owners, decided to organize a Mother's Day event in May 2012. The WDA applied for a music permit, but city officials only approved the music permit until 7:00 pm, even though city code allows public music until 9:00 pm. The WDA appealed the decision, and eventually the city council ruled in their favor. Uzzell (1990) contends, “In the dialectical development of informal institutions, formal-sector action has always followed informal-sector initiative and has always been followed in turn by informal-sector responses” (123). Uzzell's quote perfectly encapsulates the power struggle that transpired between the WDA and the city, as each group sought to control an important part of the event. This incident created a strong backlash against city officials and highlighted much of the tension WDA committee members associate with formal institutions. Interviewee 2576, who I view as one of the community's informal leaders, discussed the frustration he shares with his colleagues:

The city needs to respect its own laws and regulations. For example, the city will pass a law, but then decide not to give us a permit even though our requests lie within these laws and regulations. So they're not adhering to their own laws. We want to help increase tourism. So we would like for them not to close down doors or deny us when we make requests for permits. Their favoritism is geared towards the Historic Woodburn Neighborhood Association. The city reacts and responds to whatever the Historic Woodburn Neighborhood Association says. And what's disturbing is that as Latino business owners, we're providing support because we're paying taxes and the Historic Woodburn Neighborhood Association is only receiving funds from the government. So the situation is unbalanced (Interviewee 2576, Spring 2012).

The tension that develops between formal planners and Latino business owners who rely on informal decision-making processes can be traced to the complex issue of control (Uzzell 1990). In Woodburn, planners involved in formal attempts to replace Latino generative economic development strategies believe that power-based plans are the best option for producing positive outcomes. Latino business owners, who have actually revitalized the downtown over the last two decades and have more experience successfully operating in a complex and unpredictable environment, disagree with their position. Also, when conflict concerning either control or power manifests itself in a racialized landscape such as Woodburn (Nelson 2008), it tends to lead to the exclusion and avoidance of out-

groups⁷ (Fiske 2002). In Woodburn, this is represented by the outspoken members of the Historic Downtown Neighborhood Association (HDNA), who persistently critique Latino's use of space and the events they promote to spur economic revitalization. While many Latino immigrants are hesitant to speak up and disagree because of fears related to recent deportation policy and local law enforcement practices, Latinos business owners understand that creating a sense of place can contribute to downtown's economic and social vitality.

Historic Preservation Policy: Manufactured Information

After suffering a long period of disinvestment and abandonment, downtown Woodburn has been adopted by Latinos as a place to do business, socialize, and participate in community life. Latino's placemaking efforts, however, are also threatening the cultural stability, familiarity, and comfort of local white residents who live in the "Old Town." Therefore, white residents have mobilized, calling for the preservation of the architectural and historical character of Woodburn. Beginning in 2006, the city's 1998 Urban Renewal Plan was updated with the help from an Oregon Transportation Growth Management Program grant. This process activated the Historic Downtown Neighborhood Association (HDNA) because members believed that their input during the plan's outreach process would help them address some of their downtown concerns. As a result, HDNA members, planning commissioners, and city council members were involved in heated discussions

⁷ Fiske argues people typically seek other people who are similar to themselves because they feel comfortable around individuals they perceive as members of their own in-group. This comfort, however, can lead to hostility towards out-groups who are perceived as threatening the in-group.

during the development of the plan update. In the end, many of the neighborhood residents' concerns were addressed and included in the urban renewal plan update.

The 2010 Downtown Development Plan Update, for example, states that preserving the historic character of Woodburn's downtown is a "priority expressed by city leaders and the general public" (46). The plan also documents how business and property owners are "emotionally invested in making Historic Old Town a success once again" (45).

Photographs taken during community workshops illustrate that an overwhelming majority of participants were white, which explains why many of the goals in the plan are also shared by white residents who feel threatened by the influx of Latino immigrants.

Figure 7. Community Workshop Participants



Figure 8. Community Workshop Participants



A Woodburn leader who is involved with the Woodburn Independent, a weekly newspaper, explained how the community’s overt and covert racialized context contributes to placemaking conflict:

There is an undercurrent of racism every time you talk about downtown. It is hard to get over it. You've got people who envision a nice downtown and what they really mean is to see a “white” downtown. Some of these people would rather see these buildings empty, but pretty. They don’t see that there is a successful Latino business in them. Woodburn Independent newspaper does not thrive on empty storefronts. A healthy downtown cannot be made up of empty buildings, no matter how attractive they are” (Interviewee 2585, Spring 2012).

Growing tensions between new immigrants and established community residents often rise to the surface when the established group's sense of place and cultural heritage is threatened by the new immigrants (Hazel 2004). One interview with a community resident highlights this point:

I would say Latino businesses started showing themselves pretty vibrantly in the mid to late 1990s, and that kind of caused an undercurrent of resentment among Non-Latinos. Our little PIX Theater became a furniture store with placards all over the front. You know, that's a piece of our own little history. We want to go see movies. Well, the theater ran for a while but just Mexican movies. Then it closed down and became a furniture store. That in itself was kind of a focal point for a lot of the Non-Latinos. Then [Non-Latinos] started waking up and seeing that this migration's taking place and they're going 'Oh my God,' and that's where we've been going ever since (Interviewee 2587, Spring 2012).

Race becomes an important component of economic revitalization and historic preservation policy when we explore the tendency of public policy to disproportionately recognize the history of whites (Jacobson 1998; Lipsitz 2006; Roediger 2007). In Woodburn, HDNA members and white community residents, many of whom feel threatened by the influx of Latino immigrants, played an important role in this process because their involvement in community workshops and stakeholder interviews helped establish future economic redevelopment goals. In other words, the racialized landscape of the town manufactured information and created a historic preservation agenda that is

mainly concerned with the social history of white residents. Uzzell (1990) argues, “what passes for information in coercive planning is largely a covert instrument of elite domination through manipulation of reality” (118). Hence, the Woodburn case highlights an important challenge minority business communities can potentially face. Since institutional processes tend to recognize structures and sites that reflect the history of white communities (Jacobson 1998; Lipsitz 2006; Roediger 2007), regulative planning practices can potentially supersede or transform the generative economic development efforts of minorities if they do not support the cultural values of the dominant racial group.

When Latino business owners were asked if they could identify potential opportunities for downtown revitalization, they never discussed that preserving the community’s historic buildings and character should be a priority for economic development. In fact, one Latina small business owner, views historic preservationists as obstructing revitalization:

They want to preserve all the buildings in the downtown, so they don’t allow us to make any upgrades to building facades. They don’t want Spanish advertising. They also don’t allow large advertisements and signs. In their eyes, large signs interrupt the natural scenery. They have different concepts. They want to preserve their ideas, but we can’t continue going down that same “idea” road. We have to adapt to the times, to new technology. They want to preserve their museum, for example, which has a bunch of old metal pieces. Who’s going to really visit that type of museum? (Interviewee 2571, Spring 2012).

The lack of Latino public participation during the Plan’s community outreach process (i.e., workshops and stakeholder interviews that helped identify key design and development themes to improve downtown Woodburn), indicates current redevelopment goals are not representative of the community’s diverse needs and interests. Preservation issues and goals, for example, were developed through formal channels and tied to events or community workshops that were attended primarily by white residents. Consequently, urban renewal policies will have a disproportionately negative impact on Latinos because their generative economic development and placemaking efforts have been determined as contributing to “blight.”

One way to overcome these institutional forces and challenge the racialization of blight, however, is through community participation. In that sense, the concept of “Community Capitals” is also crucial to understand for this study. The next chapter highlights Cornelia and Jan Flora’s concept of “Community Capitals” and frames their theory in terms of the role it plays in fostering community development that addresses the needs of diverse populations.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Over the last decade, Latino business owners have made a significant contribution to the regeneration of downtown Woodburn. During the latter part of the 20th Century, the downtown saw a period of disinvestment and high vacancy after the completion of Highway 99 and Interstate 5. This auto-centric, suburban-type sprawl affected the course of local development, which negatively impacted the economic vitality of the downtown. This pattern of disinvestment, however, began to change in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a period that saw a dramatic increase in the Latino population. After years of disinvestment, the area's low property values attracted many Latino immigrants who saw an opportunity to invest and start businesses.

Today, increased occupancy and a desire by Latinos to reinvigorate the downtown has spurred additional investments by other downtown stakeholders. From capital improvements by the city (i.e. enhancing Front Street streetscapes) to pursuing Main Street programs by Historic Woodburn Neighborhood Association (HWNA) members, multiple groups have come to the table with their own voice, history, cultural viewpoint, and planning style. While all parties are interested in the same goal, the process for getting there is often different. These conflicting viewpoints have stymied regeneration efforts. Specifically, the concept of place has become a divisive point within the community.

For Latinos, their lack of political representation, or formal political capital, has further polarized the community's placemaking issue, which ultimately leads to higher

levels of social and cultural conflict. Kissam (2006) explains that the diversity among Latinos in Woodburn, in terms of nativity and immigration, contributes to the slow pace of sociopolitical change since many Latino immigrants have few ways of impacting the political agenda. As a result, formal planning and government institutions face little opposition when they define Latino generative economic revitalization as “blight.” Although Latinos lack formal political capital, they are beginning to challenge this discourse of disempowerment through other forms of community capital or “assets.”

Community Capitals Framework (CCF) provides an excellent framework for planners and policymakers to understand why Latino generative economic revitalization in Woodburn has been successful, even though formal institutions are challenging the role these businesses play in community development. The importance of Community Capitals Framework (CCF) lies in simply understanding how Latino generative redevelopment practices are built upon various forms of capital. Flora and Flora (2013) argue that “every community, however rural, isolated, or poor, has resources within it. When those resources are invested to create new resources, they become capital” (17). Case study interviews revealed, for example, that many Latino business owners asked family members and friends (i.e., relied on social capital) for loans to either open or expand their business. In turn, these capital investments helped to build other community assets such as cultural capital since downtown Woodburn is now home to a Latino business district that serves the needs of a diverse Latino population. No two stores are alike, and each offers a particular niche of goods and services. Some restaurants serve El Salvadoran and Chinese food, while each Mexican restaurant offers flavors and dishes from different regions of that country. There are leather goods and dress shops, as well as sports clothes and vintage

clothing shops. Shoppers can buy gold jewelry or furniture, get their taxes done, hair styled, mail a letter, cash a check, or even get their car fixed. The mix may be non-traditional in the sense that it is not the mix that non-Latinos usually recognize, but for the Latino customer there is a store for almost all of his or her needs. In short, Latinos in Woodburn have slowly been developing “capital” over several decades. And because of this, they now have enough resources and experience to participate in economic development practices that historically belonged exclusively to white residents.

It is also important to recognize, however, that white residents who have strong beliefs about the significance of the community’s rural and agrarian heritage, Western orientation, and pioneering spirit also align with CCF literature on cultural capital, which is defined as the community’s values, traditions, heritage recognition, and worldview (Flora and Flora 2013). Historic Woodburn Neighborhood Association (HWNA) members, for instance, argue that they are simply trying to preserve the things in life that provide an anchor of stability, familiarity, and comfort. The major distinction between white cultural capital and Latino cultural capital, of course, is that the former is employed to impact political discourse and affect the course public policy.

So how can community development professionals, who are interested in fostering interconnectedness, help transitioning towns such as Woodburn address conflict? First, by helping planners and policymakers realize that the economic and social inequities disenfranchised communities face are increasingly expressed in cultural terms. Next, by explaining that new and diverse claims for cultural rights are helping people create social change because they are defining solutions that work for them. Flores (2003) states that the theory of “cultural citizenship has been developed to refer to the various processes by

which groups define themselves, form a community, and claim space and social right” (89). It helps explain how “a shift in discourse around questions of rights and entitlements” builds community and produces notable social changes (Flores and Benmayor 1997, p. 197). A key aspect of the concept explains that marginalized populations often feel free expressing themselves even though they may be operating within a framework of a larger society that promotes inequality (Flores and Benmayor 1997; Flores 2003). Generally, however, the organizing impetus does not come spontaneously from within these populations (Flores and Benmayor 1997). The authors state that community advocates or activists, for instance, are generally responsible for helping people recognize the value and importance of becoming visible and vocal about important community issues.

Flores and Benmayor (1997) define cultural citizenship as “the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, or native language) with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one’s right to belong” (57). However, in order to obtain space, keep it, and be free to use it as they see fit, marginal groups are often required to organize themselves and make demands on society (Flores 2003). For example, the WDA’s determination to overturn the city’s decision regarding their Mother’s Day celebration music permit illustrates that their collective cultural values gave them power to negotiate as a group. Casey Hagerman, a CPW colleague, and I were invited by WDA members to attend a special meeting they scheduled with city officials regarding their music permit. As passive participants, we observed this act of political protest firsthand. City officials entered the meeting willing to negotiate and add an additional hour to their music permit, from 7:00 PM to 8:00 PM. But WDA committee members demanded that their permit be extended until 9:00 PM because city code allows public events to host

music entertainment until 9:00 PM. The WDA was motivated to act because they felt the city's initial response was a "direct attack on their identity, character, and social contribution" as Latino business owners (Flores and Benmayor 1997, p. 192). They understood the conflict as being race-driven in which they were being deprived of their cultural rights. In this case, organizing a Mother's Day celebration was an issue of cultural citizenship, of the "right to have cultural rights and the right to contribute to society through cultural strength" (Flores and Benmayor 1997, p. 194).

This discussion about building community and engaging in collective action—in other words, asserting cultural citizenship—on the part of Latino business owners has important implication for organizing efforts. It highlights the importance of having organizations that give individuals an opportunity to assert their rights, which in turn can help expand their frames of political reference (Flores and Benmayor 1997). Also, it implies that cultural citizenship, which "allows people themselves to define their issues in accordance with their own analysis of needs," is a stronger catalyst for community participation than typical forms of mass dissent such as pickets and demonstrations (Flores and Benmayor 1997, p. 196).

Ultimately, cultural citizenship expands the concept and practice of democracy beyond liberalism⁸ because it addresses the right for cultural inclusion and equity, and challenges us to move "beyond a purely pragmatic approach to social problems and to look within communities for creative joint ventures" (Flores and Benmayor 1997, p. 208). It is essential for planners and policymakers, for example, to recognize that minorities can

⁸ Political philosophy or worldview founded on ideas of liberty and equality. Generally supports ideas such as free and fair elections, civil rights, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, free trade, and private property.

utilize cultural capital to enhance social mobility without having formal political power. While the capitals identified in Community Capitals Framework (CCF) do create a valuable framework for understanding how communities adapt to social and economic changes, the main lesson that cultural citizenship teaches is that people imagine communities differently and are willing and able to put their cultural assets to work for social change.

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APPENDIX A

Background:

- How long have you lived in Woodburn?
- What projects are you currently working on?

Placemaking:

- What are your thoughts on the mural issue?
- Regarding the mural issue, what have communities expressed in support and opposition?
- What is the perception of the aesthetic character of downtown?
- What is your ideal vision for downtown?
- What is the history of the funding, design, and construction of both the plaza and street improvements?
- What was the public process/input for the design?
- How is it being used today? (farmer's market, fiesta, miqueros etc.) Is it successful? Challenges? How has the public responded to them?
- What plans are in the works for the area (re: DT Dev. Plan Revision)?
- What do you feel the impact of Latino businesses have been on downtown? (Storefronts, signage, types of people and businesses currently downtown, the atmosphere)
- When did the downtown really emerge as a Latino center?
- How has the character of the Latino presence downtown changed in recent decades?
- How has the Latino demographic changed in Woodburn?
- How has the Urban Renewal project affected downtown business activity?
- What would you consider major turning points in Woodburn's history?
- Where is Woodburn now in participating in the Main Street program? What are the next steps going forward?

Community Interaction:

- How would you describe the general interactions and relationship between the Latino and non-Latino communities in Woodburn?

Politics & Civic Engagement:

- How have Latinos played a role in city politics? (Elected members, etc.)
- Are Latinos civically engaged? How are Latinos involved civically?
- What are the main barriers to this involvement?
- Who has the political power in Woodburn?

Closing:

- Is there anything else you would like to talk about that we haven't yet discussed?