

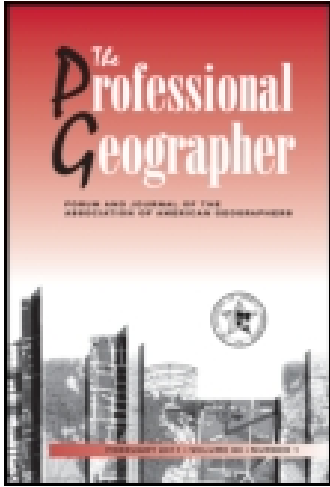
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### Heterolocalism, Networks of Ethnicity, and Refugee Communities in the Pacific Northwest: The Portland Story

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# Heterolocalism, Networks of Ethnicity, and Refugee Communities in the Pacific Northwest: The Portland Story\*

Susan W. Hardwick and James E. Meacham

*University of Oregon*

Geographic studies of refugee issues have emerged as salient topics of inquiry in the past decade. This spatial analysis of the migration experiences and heterolocal settlement patterns of refugees in an increasingly diverse part of the Pacific Northwest focuses on a place that the *Atlantic Monthly* recently called the last Caucasian bastion in the United States. Perceived as a region better known for its dense forests, progressive environmental policies, and rural ambience, the Portland metropolitan area and its hinterland in the Willamette Valley now resonate with ethnic and racial diversity. This article analyzes the spatial patterns and related networks of the three largest refugee groups in the region. Findings indicate that an overlapping and interrelated set of political, social, cultural, and economic networks are the most important factors in determining refugee residential patterns. **Key Words:** heterolocalism, networks of ethnicity, refugee, social networks.

## Introduction

With more than fifty million refugees living in various parts of the world today, perhaps no moment in history has been this critical for examining the geography of refugee settlement and survival. In response to this world crisis, studies of issues surrounding the lives and landscapes of new refugees have become increasingly salient topics of research for geographers and other scholars, policy makers, and social service providers (see, e.g., Boswell and Curtis 1984; Black 1991, 1994, 2002, 2003; Boswell 1993; Hardwick 1993, 2002, 2003; W. Wood 1994; Miyares 1996, 1998; Chimni 1998; Nicholson and Twomey 1999; Hyndman 2000; Brun 2001). To date, the majority of work by geographers has focused on refugee flows and destinations located outside the United States. A few notable exceptions to this include Desbarats's (1985) early work with Thai refugees in Los Angeles, Boswell and Curtis (1984) and McHugh, Miyares, and Skop (1997) work on Cubans, and J. Wood's (1997) and others' analyses of Vietnamese settlement patterns and evolving landscapes in U.S. cities and suburbs. Thus, while geographers have produced a plethora of publications on immigrants (those

who leave their homelands by choice or who travel to the United States without official "refugee status") over the years, limited work has thus far been done on refugees (migrants who are forced to leave their homeland because of political, religious, or other persecution) and the landscapes they create. Research reported in this article helps fill the gap in the literature on spatial studies of refugees and their settlement patterns in a relatively unstudied metropolitan area in the western United States.

During the past quarter century, new immigrants and refugees from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the former Soviet Union have relocated to the United States in increasingly large numbers. The vast majority settled in large metropolitan areas on the East Coast, in south Florida, in midwestern cities such as Chicago, and in California. A significant number of the most recent arrivals have also settled in smaller towns and cities located in unexpected places. For example, in the Pacific Northwest, the upper Great Lakes states, and northern New England (places long dominated by native-born European American populations), unexpected increases in foreign-born newcomers have been documented in recent census counts. Studies of these peripheral places (and the immigrants and

\*This article could not have been written without the generous support of Victoria Libov of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, the National Science Foundation Grant # BCS-0214467, and a start-up grant from the University of Oregon. We are also deeply indebted to the research assistance of Susan E. Hume, whose early and sustained insights contributed immensely to the evolution of these ideas. The cartographic expertise of Anika Juhn, Erin Aigner, Will Jensen, and Eric Strandhagen likewise proved invaluable in completing the manuscript.

refugees who reside in them) are few and far between. This article addresses this second major void in the literature by analyzing the dramatic demographic shift now underway in one of these unexpected places, the Portland, Oregon, metropolitan area. By 2005, this rapidly diversifying city, along with its quasi-rural hinterland in the Willamette Valley to the south and its twin city Vancouver, Washington, just across the Columbia River to the north, has emerged as one of the most diverse places in the Pacific Northwest. The steady and relatively large inflow of new refugees is one of the primary reasons for this region's increasingly complex demographic diversity.

Perceived by most outsiders as a region better known for its dense forests, progressive environmental policies, and rural ambience, parts of the Pacific Northwest, in fact, now resonate with ethnic and racial diversity. A map of U.S. *Census of Population* data for the year 2000 provides visual evidence of the Portland, Vancouver, and Willamette Valley's surprising new diversity (Figure 1). These data indicate that, as in many other rapidly changing places in the United States, the region discussed in this article has experienced dramatic and significant influxes of foreign-born residents from a variety of places during the past two decades. Most surprising, perhaps, is the large number of new residents who were born in the former Soviet Union. Although census counts reported only 21,522 Russians and 12,673 Ukrainians in 2000 (up from 7,842 Russians and 9,672 Ukrainians counted in the 1990 Census) due to undercounting of non-English-speaking groups and the large number of post-2000 arrivals, tallies of church membership lists and refugee resettlement agency file totals indicate that there are currently at least 60,000 Russians and Ukrainians living in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area. Even based on the more conservative figures listed in the 2000 Census, Oregon and Washington now rank as the top two most important destinations for new arrivals from the former USSR in the United States. The map shown in Figure 2 provides evidence that Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and all foreign-born residents of the region live primarily in the central and northern part of the Willamette Valley, especially in the Portland-Vancouver and Salem metropolitan areas.<sup>1</sup> Increases in the total foreign-born residents of the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area between 1990 and 2000 have been especially dramatic.

Refugees and immigrants settling in western Oregon, as in other places in the United States, face many unexpected challenges when they arrive. Today's Pacific Northwest is neither the economically vibrant or culturally homogeneous place earlier arrivals encountered. Of particular note is the constantly shifting and ever more diverse regional population reflected in the more than 200 percent increase in the number of new residents from Mexico now living in Portland and the Willamette Valley during the past ten years. These newcomers have been joined by large numbers of secondary and tertiary migrants from Southeast Asia who continue to relocate to the study area from California and elsewhere.

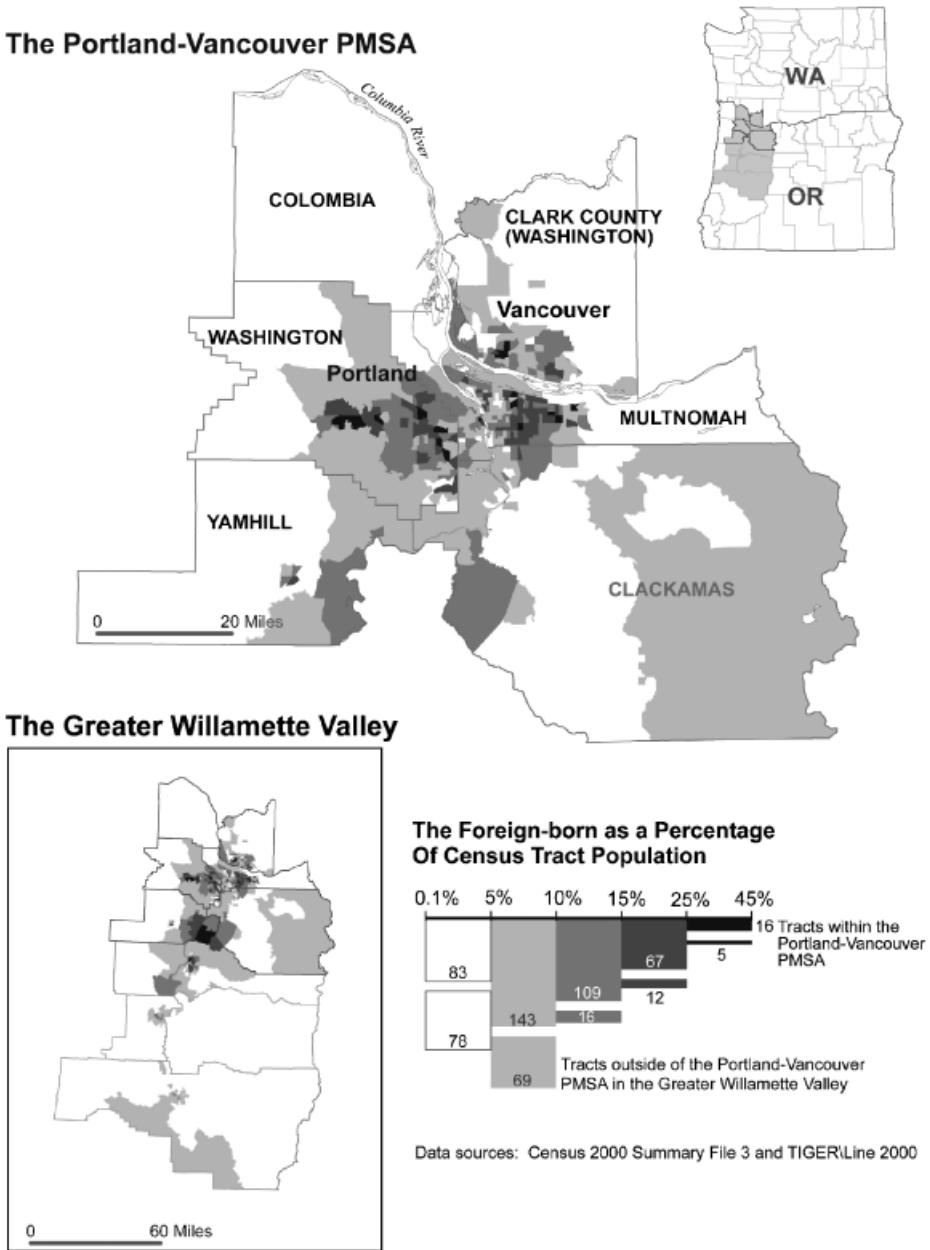
In the first decade of the twenty-first century, a variety of Latino and Asian groups, along with other new refugee arrivals from places such as Cuba, Bosnia, Ethiopia, and Somalia, contribute to creating a new sense of diversity in a place recently called "one of the last Caucasian bastions in the United States" by journalist David Kaplan in *The Atlantic Monthly* (1998). The arrival of newcomers who may not speak or write English, and who may have never lived in close proximity to neighbors with diverse ethnicities and races, along with the challenges of living in a place with severe economic problems bought on by the recent recession, make life difficult for many foreign-born newcomers to the region.

## Goals and Research Questions

Despite recent criticism that population and ethnic geographers remain too focused on spatial patterns and too little concerned with broader social theories, *settlement geography* still matters. Local tensions and subsequent political decisions affecting the lives of foreign-born residents of particular places, in fact, are often a response to residential concentration. Understanding their residential patterns requires that we seek answers to related questions about migration paths, time of arrival, cultural and economic niches, racialization, and the impact of whiteness in receiving societies, as well as the potential subordination by majority residents.

Thus, seeking information about the relationships between and among both internal and external social, economic, and political factors is critical to making sense out of spatial patterns (see Wright and Ellis 2000, 211). As Forrest and

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**Figure 1** Foreign-born settlement for all countries of origin: The Portland-Vancouver primary metropolitan statistical area (PMSA) and Greater Willamette Valley, 2000.

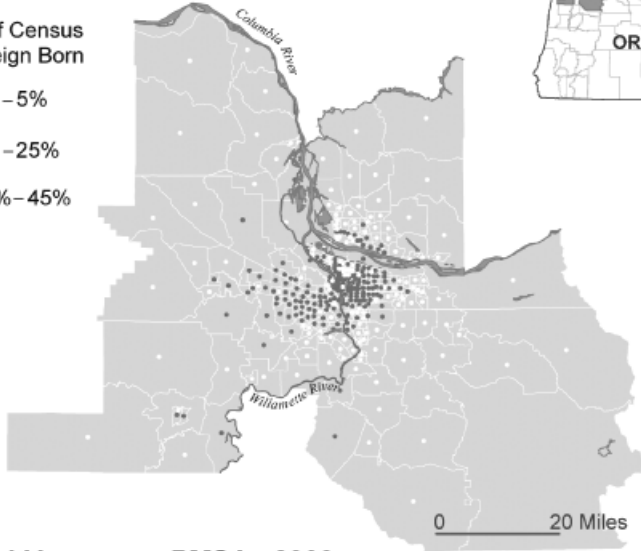
Johnston (2001, 42) recently reminded us, ethnic segregation remains a significant feature of the residential geography of many of the world's cities and a potential cause for unrest. Are the spatial patterns of foreign-born

residents of American cities similar to those identified and analyzed in past decades? Or is there a new *social geography of immigration* now underway? Do the tenets of the old melting pot versus the cultural pluralism perspective

**Portland-Vancouver CMSA - 1990**  
(Including Columbia County, OR)

Percent of Census Tract Foreign Born

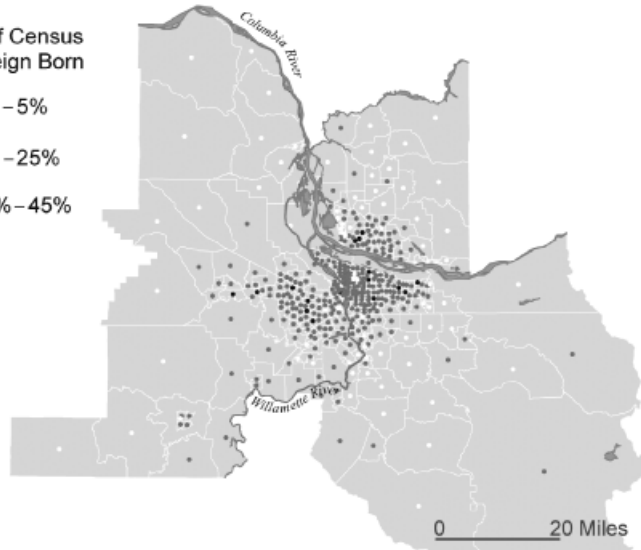
- 0.1% – 5%
- 5.1% – 25%
- 25.1% – 45%



**Portland-Vancouver PMSA - 2000**

Percent of Census Tract Foreign Born

- 0.1% – 5%
- 5.1% – 25%
- 25.1% – 45%



Data sources: Census 1990, Census 2000 Summary File 3, and TIGERLine 1990 and 2000

**Figure 2** Percent foreign-born population: Portland-Vancouver area, 1990 and 2000. PMSA = primary metropolitan statistical area; CMSA = consolidated metropolitan statistical area.

still hold sway in U.S. cities or is something completely new happening that demands further study?

To seek answers to these three overarching questions, the goals of this article are, first, to analyze refugee residential patterns and,

second, to discuss related political, economic, and social processes that are shaping the lives of refugees who now live in the Portland metropolitan area and the greater Willamette Valley region. We distinguish here between *refugees* who are part of a controlled network of migrants with support provided by the U.S. government, as opposed to *immigrants* who travel to America and then select settlement destinations on their own or with only the help of family and friends. Refugees are defined and selected to relocate to the United States according to the U.S. Refugee Act if they are “persons living outside their homeland who are unwilling or unable to return home because of a well-founded fear of persecution.”

The analysis presented in this article addresses each of the following more specific questions: (1) What are the comparative residential patterns of refugees in the study area and how have these patterns evolved through time? (2) How do the present-day spatial patterns of refugees compare to the residential locations of foreign-born newcomers in 1990, and how do these changing patterns help inform our understanding of larger social processes? and (3) How does refugee participation in various types of local, regional, national, and global political, cultural, social, and economic networks affect their migration paths and residential choices in the Portland metropolitan area and its adjacent Willamette Valley hinterland?

### **Research Design, Methods, and Selection of Groups**

Methodologically, this project builds on the work of Bailey et al. (2002), Lawson (1999, 2000), Li (1998), and other geographers who have sounded the “multi-method call” for integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in migration studies during the past decade.<sup>2</sup> The first step in this analysis was defining the groups to be studied in an area with relatively large numbers of refugees from many parts of the world. To provide a significant number for analysis, the largest groups in the study area were selected—refugees from two nation states in the former USSR and refugees from Vietnam. The first group consists primarily of Russians and Ukrainians, white Protestants, who first began to leave their homeland after the breakup

of the former USSR in the early 1990s and continue to arrive in large numbers today. In contrast, the next largest group in the study area, refugees from Vietnam, who are Asian and Catholic or Buddhist, first arrived more than two decades ago during and after the war in Vietnam, with newer arrivals coming in ever-larger numbers from other places in the United States during the past two decades.

There are three sociospatial reasons for selecting these particular groups. First, they provide examples of refugees with different racial and religious identities who also have differing settlement histories. These groups thus provide comparative data on the settlement patterns, ethnic and nonethnic networks, and varying ethnic identities of very different ethnic, racial, religious, and cultural groups. This allows study of the impacts of race and place on immigrant residential choice, adaptation experiences, and identity. Second, these groups departed from their homeland in different time periods and under different circumstances. The majority of Russians and Ukrainians spent many years planning their departure to seek religious freedom in the West, while the Vietnamese left their homeland very suddenly with little prior planning since political turmoil, warfare, and environmental disasters at home forced them to seek asylum abroad. Finally, each group participates in varying types of networks (with Vietnamese migrants depending primarily upon family and kinship networks, while Russians and Ukrainians are tightly linked into a system of religious networks).

A suite of multiple methods was employed to study these comparative groups of refugees in the study area. To provide a locational foundation for the study, a cartographic analysis of the settlement patterns of Portland area refugees was completed based on census data by tract, Immigration and Naturalization Service data by zip code, and refugee resettlement file data by home address of all refugees who arrived legally in the region between 1989 and 2001. Information gathered from personal interviews and focus group discussions then was overlaid onto the spatial analysis to explain some of the reasons for settlement decision making. Interviews with refugee service providers and staff members from other local support groups, participant observation, and fieldwork also helped document refugee settlement and participation (or

lack thereof) in political, social, economic, and cultural networks. Throughout the process of gathering and analyzing data for this study, close collaboration with local resettlement agencies and “insider” refugee leaders in local organizations proved invaluable in gaining access to data and building the trust needed to conduct interviews and organize focus group conversations.

### Theoretical Underpinnings

The findings presented in this paper center on testing the relationship between two related strands of theory – Zelinsky and Lee’s (1998) theory of *heterolocalism* and Mitchell’s (2000) *networks of ethnicity* model. Heterolocalism suggests that transportation and communication innovations in recent decades have made it possible for certain racial and ethnic communities to maintain their distinctive identities through time, no matter how dispersed their residential patterns may become after initial settlement in North American cities. Despite the lack of spatial propinquity of some groups, ties may remain strong at the neighborhood, metropolitan, regional, national, and even international scales. In essence, then, heterolocalism offers both a critique and an alternative to traditional assimilationist versus cultural pluralism models depended upon throughout much of the twentieth century to analyze and explain the relationships between immigrant settlement patterns and their ethnic identity.

In a follow-up critique, Wright and Ellis (2000) suggested that despite the usefulness of this theory to help explain the residential settlement patterns and ethnic identity of certain groups, the model needed further testing. They argued that “contestations over integration. . . and how well immigrants fit into our society. . . are increasingly constructed at the *regional scale*” rather than at the metropolitan scale (Wright and Ellis 2000, 197). In Zelinsky’s subsequent book in which he further addressed heterolocalism (published in 2001), he clarified the varying spatial scales of analysis used to frame the original argument as follows:

- There is an immediate and prompt spatial dispersion of heterolocal immigrants within the host country.

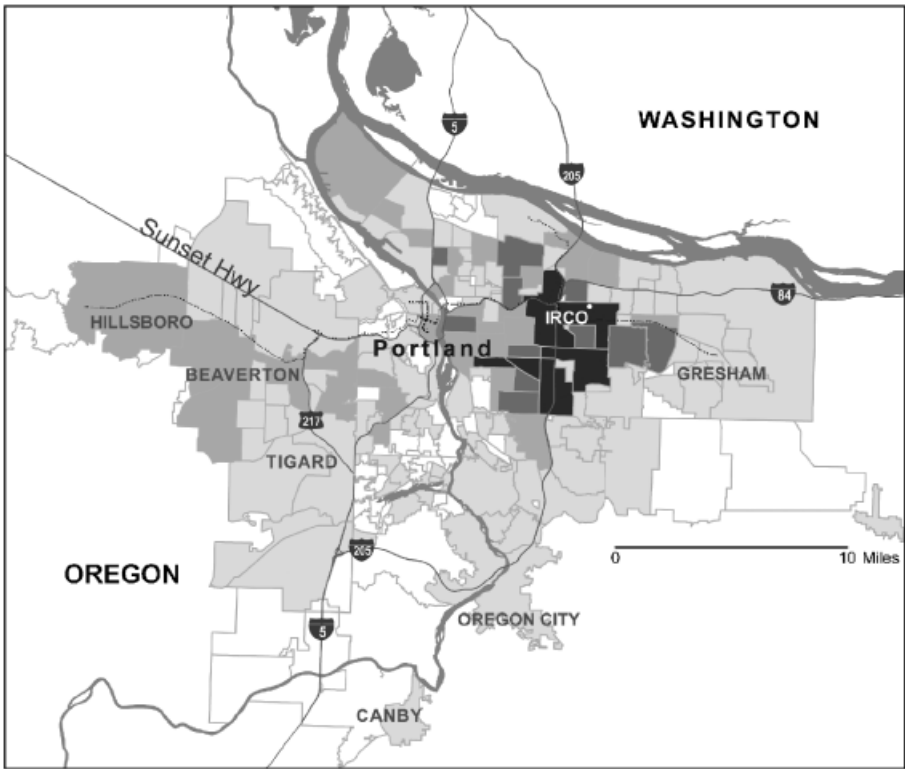
- Residence and workplace are usually widely separated, and, frequently, there is also a lack of spatial overlap between residence on the one hand and shopping districts and sites of social activity on the other.
- Despite the absence of spatial propinquity, strong ethnic community ties are maintained via telecommunications, visits, and other methods at the metropolitan, regional, national, and even international scale.
- Heterolocalism is a time-dependent phenomenon. Although we can detect some partial manifestations in earlier periods, its full development is conceivable only under the socioeconomic and technological conditions established in the late twentieth century.
- As in the case of other models, heterolocalism can exist in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan settings.
- In contrast to other models, heterolocalism has implications for sociospatial behavior at the transnational and even global scale.

Based on this list of criteria, and heeding Wright and Ellis’s reminders that scale, race, place, and context matter, this article investigates heterolocalism at a variety of scales of different racial, cultural, and religious groups who now reside in central-city, neighborhood, suburban, exurban, and rural places in the western United States. Of particular importance throughout is using information on various types of social, political, economic, and cultural networks to help explain these spatial patterns.

### Evolving Residential Patterns

The cartographic analysis for the project began by creating a series of maps showing the home addresses of all documented refugees arriving in Portland between 1989 and 2001. A composite map of all groups is shown in Figure 3. These maps are based on the boundaries of Portland’s ninety-five Neighborhood Associations. High-density concentrations of up to 230 refugee households per neighborhood were visible in affordable Eastside neighborhoods where large apartment complexes and small homes dominate the landscape. This map of all groups





**Refugee Households Per Neighborhood**

- 1–19
- 20–55
- 56–104
- 105–230

- Interstate or Highway
- Light Rail Line
- Neighborhood Boundary

Data sources: Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, Portland Metro GIS, and Census TIGER/Line 2000

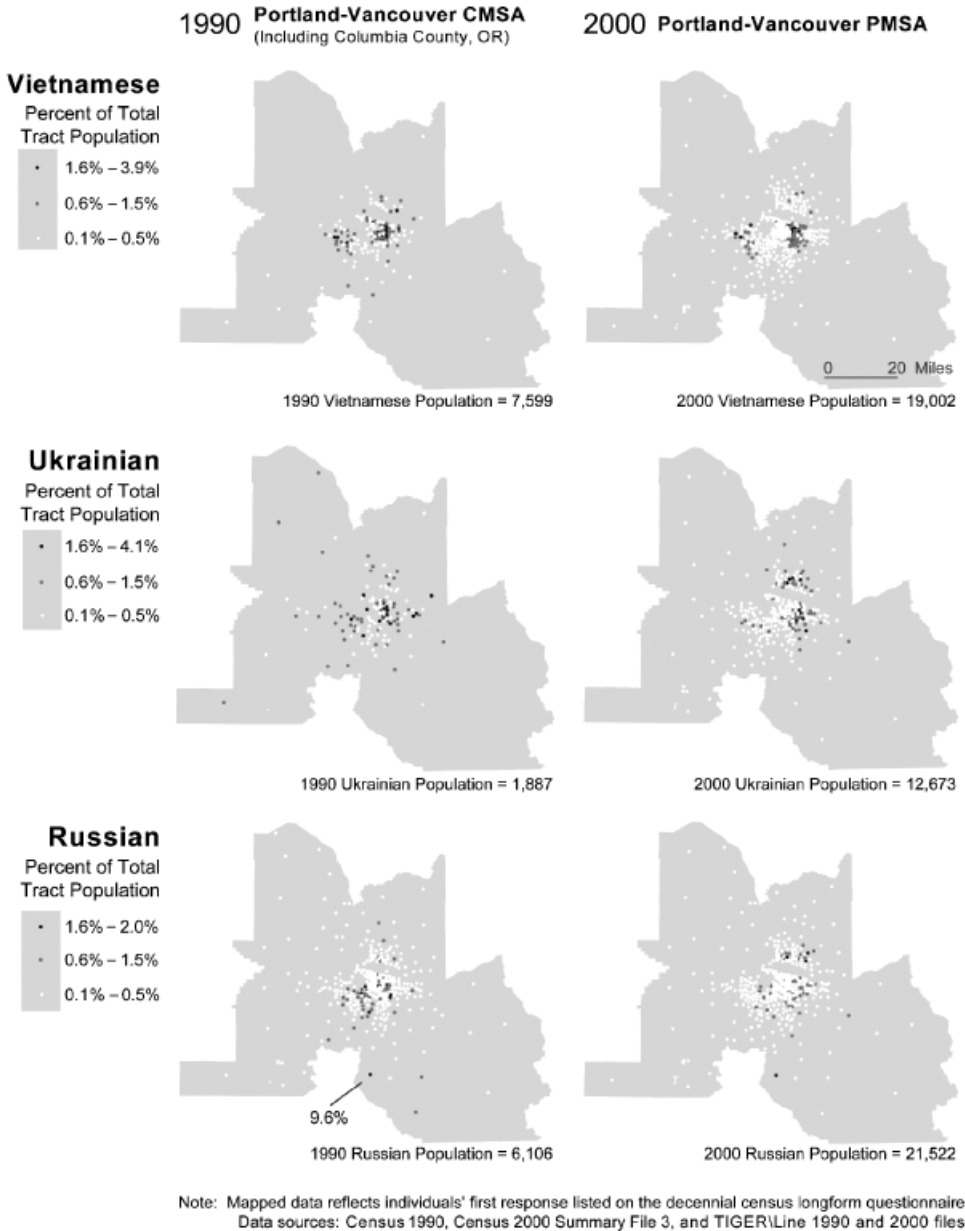
**Figure 3** Refugee households in the Portland Metropolitan Area: All refugees settled from 1989–2001. IRCO = Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization.

also shows secondary concentrations of refugees who live in the city’s more expensive West Hills suburbs.

The map shown in Figure 4 compares the distribution of Vietnamese and former USSR refugees to total foreign-born in the greater

Willamette Valley during this same time period. Strikingly different patterns emerge, with Russians and Ukrainians clustered in urban areas extending from the far southern part of the region to Portland’s Eastside neighborhoods and Vietnamese refugees distributed about equally

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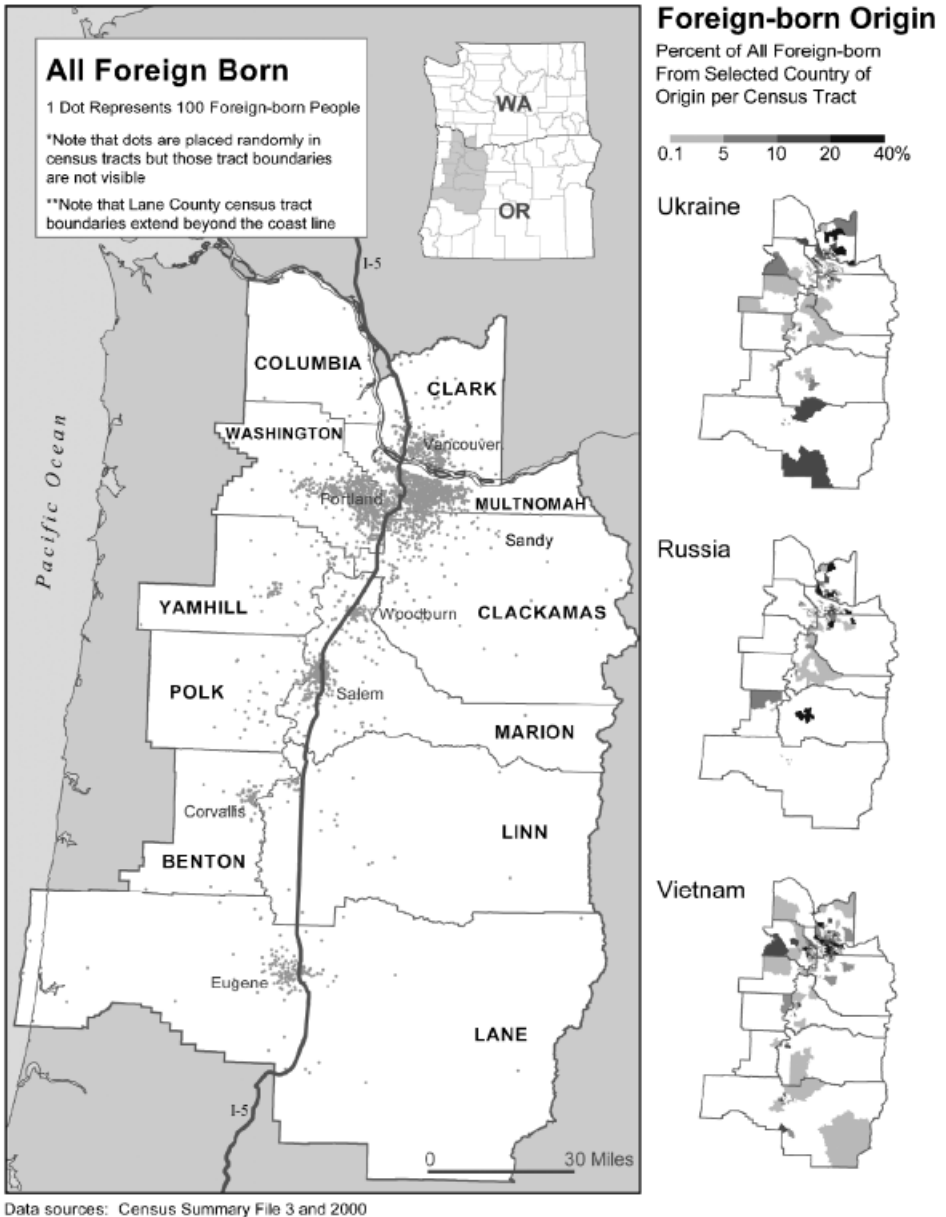


**Figure 4** Greater Willamette Valley foreign-born settlement: All foreign-born, and Ukrainian, Russian, and Vietnamese in 2000. PMSA = primary metropolitan statistical area; CMSA = consolidated metropolitan statistical area.

in eastern and western Portland with smaller numbers living in more suburban locations.

Tightening down the scale of spatial analysis to include only the Portland-Vancouver

metropolitan area, Figure 5 maps all residents of the region who claimed Russian, Ukrainian, or Vietnamese ancestry in 1990 as compared to 2000. Because Portland urban-area census data are



**Figure 5** Vietnamese, Ukrainian, and Russian residential patterns in the Portland–Vancouver area, 1990–2000.

reported as part of the Portland–Vancouver, Washington, primary metropolitan statistical area (PMSA), and also because there are dense populations of both Slavic and Southeast Asian refugees living there, Clark County in Washington State,

located north of the Columbia River is also included on these maps.

In 1990, individuals with Russian and Ukrainian ancestries were heavily concentrated in rural tracts in Clackamas County, Oregon.

Approximately 7.2 percent of all individuals in the PMSA with Russian-speaking heritage were located in this tract. By the year 2000, the dispersion of people with Russian-speaking ancestry was apparent. In part, this is the result of increased numbers of people in the category due to a combination of in-migration from other parts of the United States, births, immigration, and the arrival of new refugees. Their dispersion is also a function of the group itself. Overall, in 2000, the largest percentages of Russian and Ukrainian people were now living in east and northeast Portland and in Vancouver.

Given their common migration paths and settlement nodes, the map shown in Figure 6 combines Russian and Ukrainian residents. Their settlement is focused in census tracts located in urbanized parts of the region and in selected rural tracts in the center of the Willamette Valley near the state capital of Salem. High densities of foreign-born refugees from the former USSR are located in tracts throughout this part of the study area—in the city center and suburbs, as well as in exurban places. These maps reflect a noncontiguous pattern of dispersal of ethnic clusters or *heterolocal nodes* that are particularly evident at the regional scale. Pockets of high-density settlement are apparent in both rural and urban areas—from southern Lane County in the south through urban areas adjacent to Interstate 5, north to Portland and throughout Clark County, Washington. At the PMSA scale, the highest densities of Russian-speaking immigrants and refugees are located in and around Vancouver and the east side of Portland.

Figure 7 illustrates the dramatic differences in Vietnamese settlement patterns as compared to Russian-speaking residents of the study area. The settlement patterns of this group are more urban and suburban, and are also more dispersed. No large tracts have populations of more than 0.9 percent Vietnamese foreign-born. Also, in contrast to the Russian-speaking groups, the Vietnamese foreign-born are concentrated in tracts located adjacent to or near the Portland-Vancouver urban center (although not in the central city) rather than in smaller towns and more rural parts of the Willamette Valley.

In sum, despite substantial growth of the Portland-Vancouver urban area in the 1990s, the patterns of settlement for Vietnamese residents changed little between 1990 and 2000.

The most apparent difference is the push outwards from their original settlement in the Portland city center to suburban communities located in both Westside and Eastside Portland. Smaller numbers have relocated across the Columbia River in Vancouver.

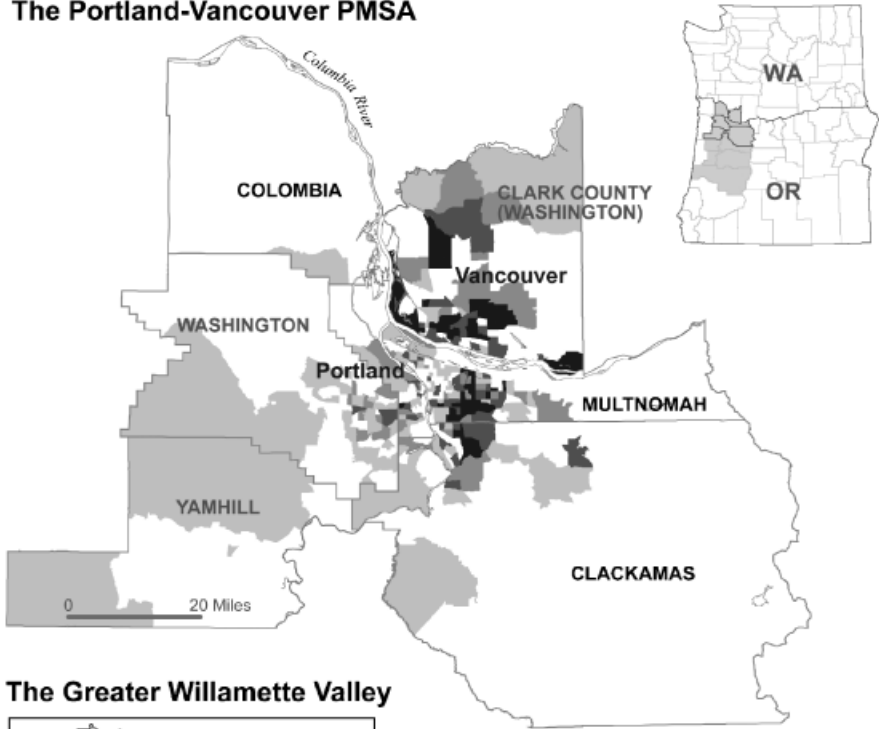
Despite common images of nonwhite racial groups being more segregated in American cities, these maps show that Vietnamese in the Portland urban area are more dispersed, while white refugees from the former USSR remain more clustered. Is it simply timing of arrival that makes the difference, as older models of assimilation would imply? That is, is locational distribution of migrants based on how long they have lived in a place (with long-term residency implying greater dispersal)? Or do other more complex factors constrain settlement decision making? The following discussion provides information on some of the more nuanced reasons for these observable patterns, especially those related to Mitchell's "networks of ethnicity."

## Russian and Ukrainian Refugees

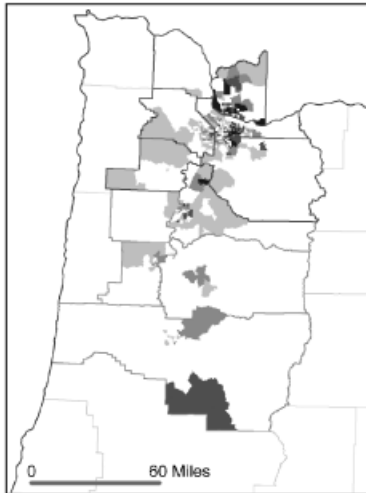
As documented in prior published work (Hardwick 1993, 2002, 2003), the large out-migration of people from the former Soviet Union was set in motion when Mikhail Gorbachev announced quite unexpectedly in late 1988 that certain religious minorities were free to leave the former USSR for the first time since the end of the Russian Revolution. Chief among those given permission to leave were Jews and evangelical Christian groups such as Baptists, Pentecostals, and Seventh Day Adventists who could claim refugee status with the American government based on religious persecution. After the breakup of the USSR in the early 1990s, emigration began in earnest. Jewish refugees most often relocated to New York and other East Coast cities, the San Francisco Bay Area, and Los Angeles, while the Sacramento Valley-to-Bellingham, Washington, migration stream has been dominated by Russian and Ukrainian evangelical Christians. Smaller numbers of Russian Jewish refugees also reside in this part of the western United States, primarily in Portland and Seattle.

Transnational religious networks are the primary reason why such large numbers of funda-

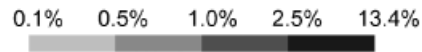
**The Portland-Vancouver PMSA**



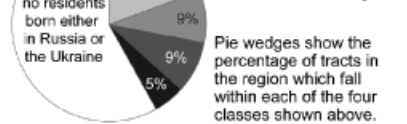
**The Greater Willamette Valley**



**Russian or Ukrainian Foreign-born as a Percentage Of Total Census Tract Population**



**Percent of Census Tracts in the Greater Willamette Valley**



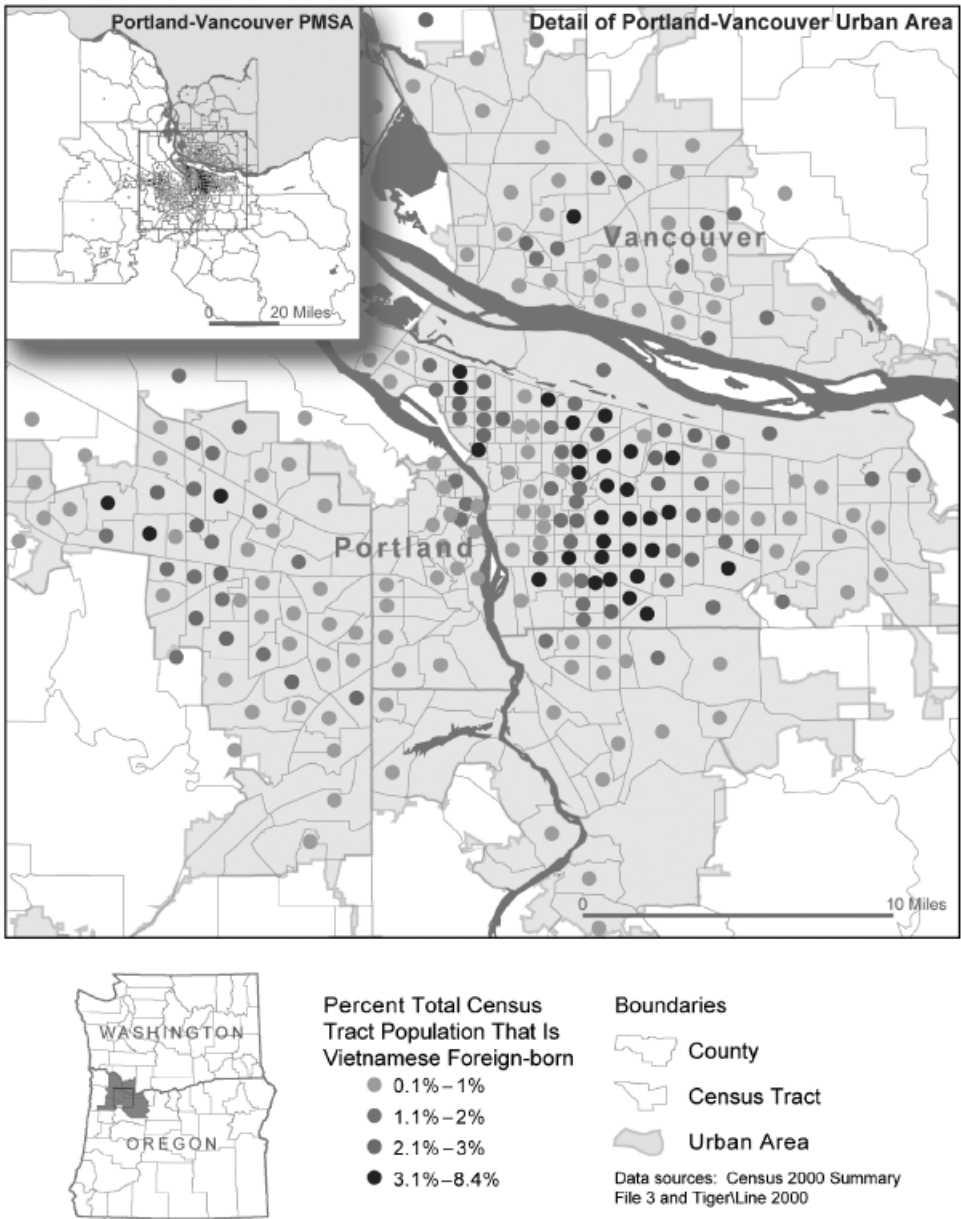
Data sources: Census 2000 Summary File 3 and TIGER/Line 2000

**Figure 6** Foreign-born Russian and Ukrainian Residents, 2000: The Portland–Vancouver primary metropolitan statistical area (PMSA) and Greater Willamette Valley.

mentalist Christian migrants from Russian and Ukraine now call the Portland–Vancouver metropolitan area and the Willamette Valley home. The majority first began to settle in the area after listening to Russian-language radio

broadcasts, reading church newsletters, or talking with antecedent migrants already living in the Pacific Northwest. From evidence gathered through more than 300 long-term interviews with Ukrainian and Russian migrants over the

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**Figure 7** Vietnamese foreign-born residential settlement, 2000: Portland–Vancouver primary metropolitan statistical area (PMSA) and Portland-Vancouver Urban Area.

course of the past decade and a half and ongoing conversations with church leaders and resettlement agency staff, it is clear that these groups were drawn to the area because of continuing connections to religious networks.

In the Russian and Ukrainian case study, then, migration streams and the settlement decisions of migrants are shaped by shared *networks of ethnicity*. These networks are held together by the glue of religious beliefs and membership

in church congregations in predeparture towns and cities. These well-defined transnational networks are maintained by participants in the network as well as by leaders of local, regional, and international church congregations and missionary organizations. These linkages have resulted in the arrival of large numbers of newcomers who participated either in a primary migration stream directly from Russia and Ukraine or arrived as secondary migrants after living briefly in other states (primarily California). As a result, Portland-area residents, born in the former USSR, often find themselves living in the same apartment building or next door to friends from their hometown. These regional ethnic networks help explain the distinctly nonheterolocal patterns of clustering shown on the maps of Russian and Ukrainian residential patterns in the region.

Interestingly, however, in a pattern that differs from that of earlier arrivals in American cities, a large number of the myriad Russian businesses and churches in the area are often located far from residential districts (see Figure 8). More than 400 commercial establishments owned and operated by Slavic entrepreneurs are located in the Portland area. Since transportation connections in the well-planned study area are easily accessible to people living in almost every part of the region, refugees are able to patronize co-ethnic stores and restaurants at a considerable distance from their place of residence. Likewise, easy access to multiple means of transportation has permitted employment and church location patterns to spread far afield from Slavic residential space. According to refugee resettlement agency reports, Russians and Ukrainians, along with many other refugees living in the study area, work in small businesses and industries and in service occupations located at some distance from their homes. The majority practice their religious beliefs in similarly dispersed places.

### **Refugees from Vietnam**

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The in-migration of Vietnamese people to the Portland area occurred in a number of distinctive waves. The first began in the spring of 1975, when the United States, evacuated more than 140,000 Vietnamese in airlifts after the fall of

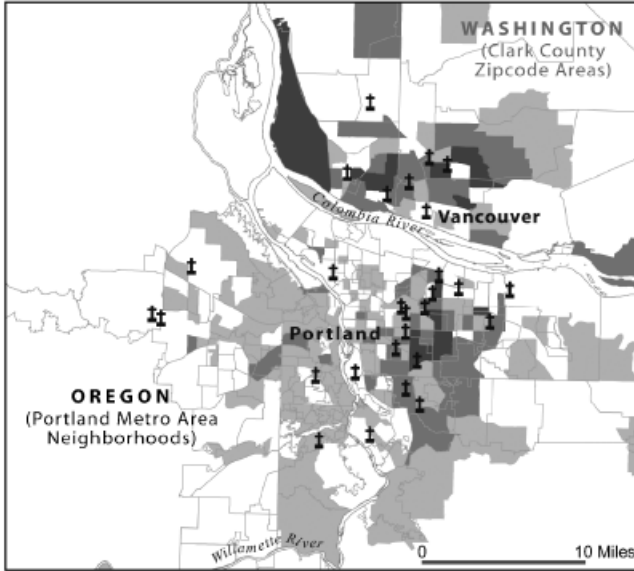
Saigon (J. Wood 1997). Only a small number of these first-wave refugees settled in Oregon. Most found their way to Portland as part of the second wave of settlement that began in 1978 after a renewed exodus of desperate people fled from their politically unstable homeland in small boats, with most residing temporarily in refugee camps in Thailand and Hong Kong. These "boat people," as they came to be called, continued to be resettled in Portland and other parts of the United States throughout the early 1980s (see Duke and Marshall 1995; Gold 1997; Robinson 1998; Cargill and Huynh 2000; Jackiewicz and Pfeifer 2000).

From the mid-1980s up to the present time, new refugees from Vietnam (most by way of refugee camps in Thailand) were permitted by the American government to rejoin relatives who sponsored them. Along with this most recent group have come Amer-Asian children who are the children of American servicemen and Vietnamese mothers left behind at the end of the war. The Vietnamese maps in this article show the combined spatial patterns of all these widely varying groups. Information gathered through personal interviews, focus group discussions, and conversations with resettlement workers verified that family and kin networks (rather than religious networks) have helped shape the distribution patterns of recently arriving Vietnamese in Portland.

Private, nonprofit, voluntary resettlement agencies also play a major role in residential patterns and the resettlement process along with familial/kin networks for Vietnamese refugees and religious networks for Russian and Ukrainian refugees. Groups such as Church World Services, the Lutheran Family and Social Services, and the United Catholic Conference, with support from donations and the U.S. government, help sponsor and resettle area refugees. Sponsors are required to provide food, clothing, and orientation upon arrival and housing for newly arriving refugees. Therefore, sponsors working within these political and social networks play critical roles in determining where refugees first settle (since they are required by the government to provide newcomers with up to eight months rent for housing in Oregon and ten months support in the state of Washington).

In the Portland metropolitan area, as in many other cities in the United States, the earliest

**Russian and Ukrainian Churches**



**Percent Census Tract Russian Speaking**

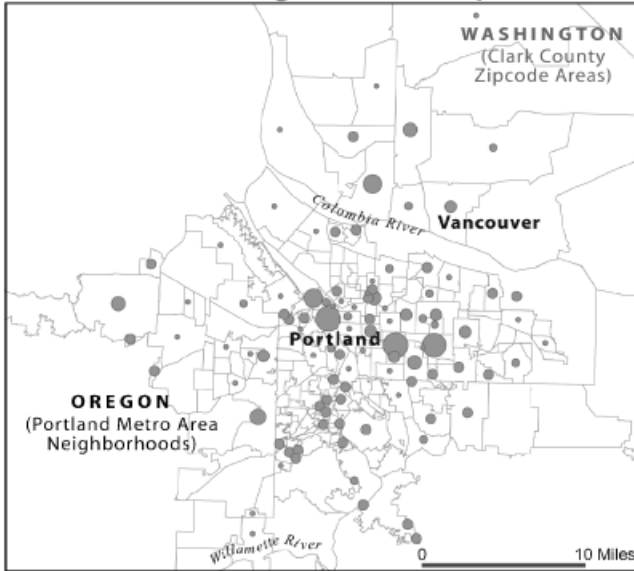
(Includes Russian or Ukrainian Ancestry or Country of Origin)

- 0% - 1.7%
- 1.8% - 4.6%
- 4.7% - 10.0%
- 10.1% - 31.2%

Neighborhood Boundary in Portland, OR  
Zip-code Boundary in Clark County, WA

† Russian or Ukrainian Church

**Businesses Catering to Russian-Speakers**



**Businesses Per Zone**

(Neighborhoods in Portland and Zip Code Areas in Vancouver)

- 1 Business
- 5 Businesses
- 13 Businesses

Neighborhood Boundary in Portland, OR  
Zip-code Boundary in Clark County, WA



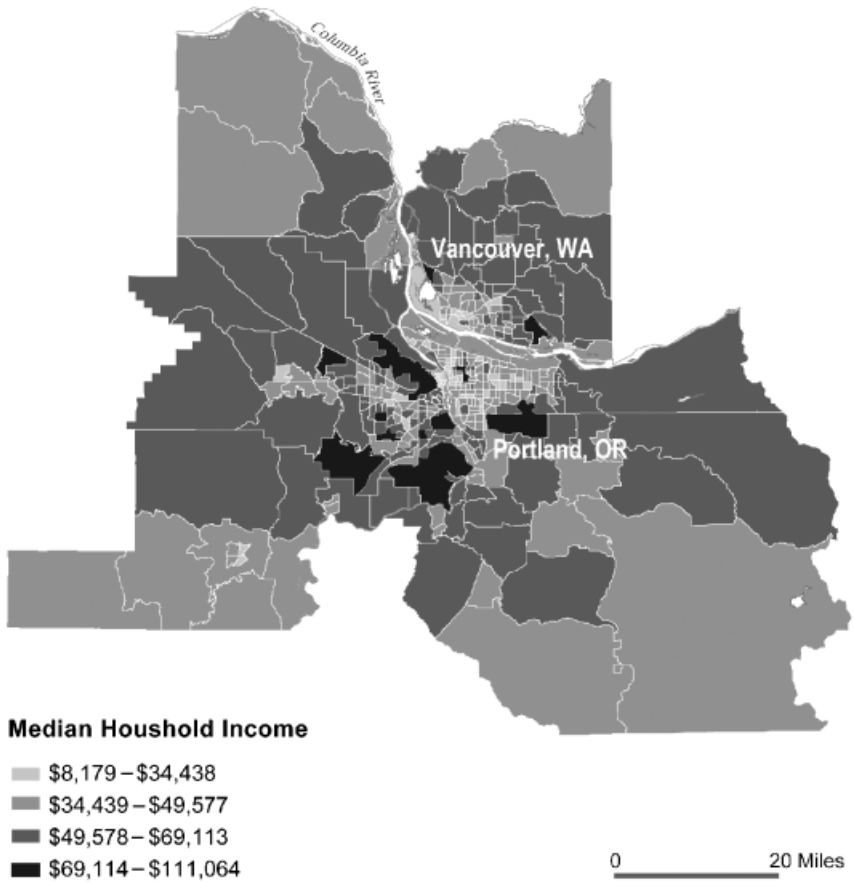
Data sources: Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization, Census 2000 Summary File 3, and Census TIGER/Line 2000

**Figure 8** Portland-Vancouver area churches and businesses serving Russian-speaking residents.

clusters of refugee settlement were often the result of decisions made by nonethnic networks overseen by political and social service decision makers. They most often selected apartments and small rental homes in neighborhoods that

were affordable and where residences were large enough to accommodate extended families. They also usually selected residences near affordable public transportation and local social service providers needed to help support the





Data source: Census and TIGER\Line 2000 data

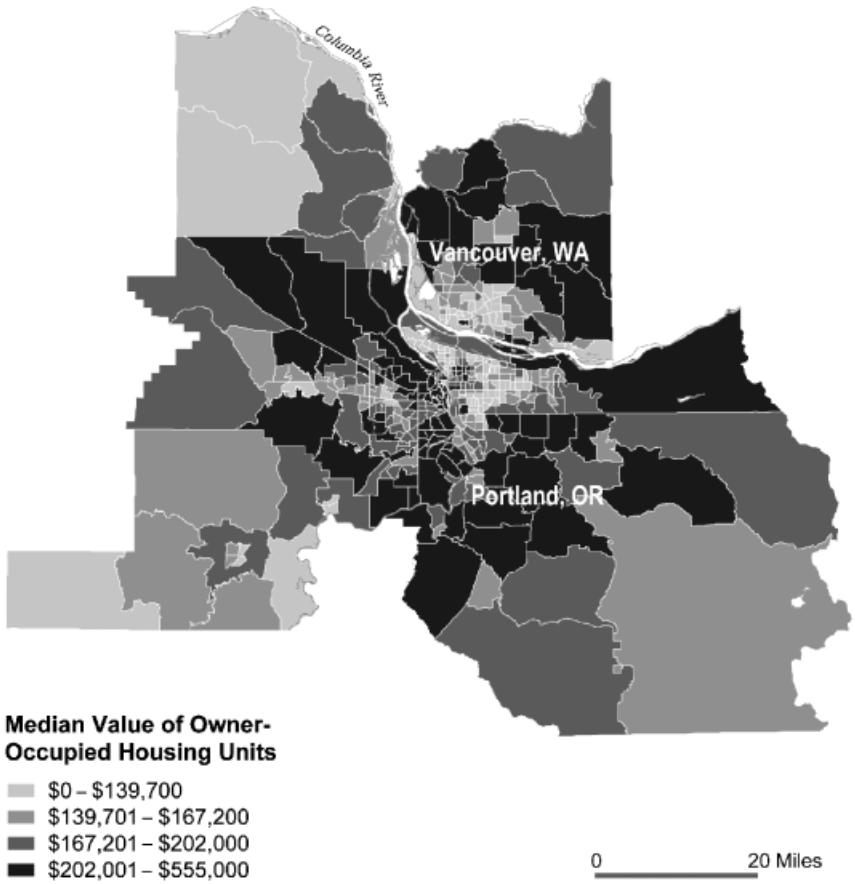
**Figure 9** *Income by census tract, 2000: Portland–Vancouver primary metropolitan statistical area.*

medical, educational, and social service needs of new refugees. Another goal mentioned frequently in interviews with resettlement agency staff was keeping groups together, especially in their earliest months after arrival, to assist newcomers in adjusting to a foreign culture after the shock of relocation.

A comparison of the patterns shown on the maps of income and housing costs (Figures 9 and 10) in Portland with the map of refugee residential patterns (Figure 5) provides evidence of the role of these resettlement agency decision makers in the earliest years of refugee settlement. These comparative maps illustrate the relationship between income, affordable housing, and refugee residents of the study area. In

the Portland–Vancouver–Willamette Valley region, a host of external networks influence refugee residential decision making. For Russians, Ukrainians, and Vietnamese, as for other refugee groups in the study area, chief among the external networks supporting new arrivals (and of great importance in encouraging newcomers to stay in the area once they arrive) is the regional Immigration and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) located in Portland. This large agency was formed more than twenty-five years ago when two Southeast Asian social service organizations merged to provide support for refugees in the area. IRCO and four other volunteer agencies active in sponsoring refugees in Oregon and

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Data source: Census and TIGER/Line 2000 data

**Figure 10** *Housing values by census tract, 2000: Portland–Vancouver, 2000.*

Washington operate invaluable networks of support as well as encourage the ongoing settlement of new migrants. The importance of these agencies is reflected in the fact that more than 90 percent of newly arriving refugees choose to stay in the area primarily because of the network of support provided by IRCO. In addition, and equally important, is the social support provided by co-ethnic religious, family, and clan networks.

### Conclusions

Evidence provided by the experiences of comparative racial and religious groups of refugees in the Portland urban area illustrates that a set of

overlapping and complimentary political, social, cultural, and economic networks influence refugee residential patterns. They also help stabilize new arrivals socially and culturally in place in the earliest years of settlement. Refugees studied in this analysis, regardless of their race, religion, or migration histories, are influenced initially by the network of support provided by sponsors and voluntary resettlement agencies. In addition, especially for fundamentalist refugees from the former Soviet Union, shared religious beliefs, moral values, and regular participation in church services and religious activities provide new Russian and Ukrainian Oregonians with opportunities to gain confidence and support from insider compatriots and to discuss ways of penetrating the

norms of a confusing culture and of enduring employment challenges.

Some Vietnamese refugees and their children who have lived in the United States for a longer period of time also remain connected to ethnic networks of support via activities sponsored by Vietnamese Catholic churches and Buddhist temples and by social service agencies such as IRCO's Asian Family Center, located in east Portland. More depend on family and clan support. However, as with other Southeast refugees in other cities in the United States, residential choices are only minimally constrained by participation in ethnic networks. This study has also illustrated that there is often a lack of spatial overlap between residence on the one hand and shopping districts and sites of social activity on the other.

This analysis has established that unlike earlier models of immigrant settlement, white Protestant groups in Portland are more clustered in particular parts of the metropolitan area than are Asians, primarily because of the importance of religious, economic, and social networks in determining and maintaining their settlement decision making. Religious ties are particularly important for Russians and Ukrainians who were classified as refugees by the U.S. government due to their persecution for religious beliefs during the Soviet era. Their nodal heterolocal patterns thus are a reflection of their desire to live near other believers and family members. Affordability is also an important factor in determining their choice of residence in less expensive north and northeast Portland and across the Columbia River in Vancouver, Washington.

Vietnamese residents of the study area, on the other hand, are more heterolocal with no large tracts having more than 0.9 percent Vietnamese living in them. This Asian group primarily resides in neighborhoods located closer to the downtown and in the West Hills. This is in comparison with Russians and Ukrainians, who are clustered in the flat north and northeast districts where houses are not only more affordable but are also larger to accommodate their larger families.

Of particular significance throughout this migration story has been the examination of networks and settlement patterns at different scales. At the local level, neighborhoods located in the most ethnically and racially diverse places in the urban area (in the inner suburbs of northeast and northwest Portland) are now home to

large numbers of foreign-born residents. In addition, particularly during their early years of settlement, a set of regional linkages helps hold newcomers in Oregon together no matter where they may live. At this larger scale of analysis, refugees and other migrants, united by cohesive ethnic, cultural, and social networks, travel from one community to another on interstate highways to shop at ethnic groceries, eat in ethnic restaurants, and attend regional church conferences and retreats, social events, and family gatherings.

At the transnational scale, ethnic networks are organized and maintained by e-mail and cell and satellite phones connecting residents of even the most remote refugee camps in Thailand and the smallest villages in Siberia with Portland and other places in the outside world. These personal connections, along with contacts with religious leaders and newsletters and radio and television broadcasts from the United States, play powerful, pivotal roles in migration and settlement decision making. The vast majority of refugees from the former USSR initially make the decision to emigrate from their homeland because of contact with religiously defined networks of ethnicity. However, without the changing post-Cold War political climate in the USSR, few would have ever found their way to the United States. In sum, whether refugee settlement is examined at the census tract, neighborhood, urban, suburban, or transnational scales of analysis, the influences of overlapping types of networks are integral to maintaining the ongoing flow of refugees and other migrants into the Pacific Northwest. These networks, and the opportunities they provide for newcomers, shape not only settlement decisions but also their evolving identification with new belief systems, new lifestyles, and new landscapes. ■

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> These two series of choropleth maps display the percent composition of census tracts in the Greater Willamette Valley (including Clark County, Washington) and all of the Portland-Vancouver primary metropolitan statistical area (PMSA). Tract data were classified using quartiles. This method creates classes in which there are an equal number of observations. Since this cartographic scheme is not based on the actual *percentage* of foreign-born in a tract, the width of classes varies significantly. When consider-

ed together, the class widths provide an indication of the shape of the data.

<sup>2</sup> Despite recent urgings in geography papers and publications, the use of multimethods of analysis by geographers is nothing new. Since the earliest days of Sauer's studies of the cultural landscape, and the postpositivist, humanistic work of scholars such as Ann Buttner, Yi-Fu Tuan, David Ley, and Nicholas Entrikin, beginning in the mid-1970s and extending up to the present day, many human geographers have depended on a long list of data sources to substantiate their findings on people and places.

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