

“WE WERE THE FIRST ONES”

ORAL HISTORIES OF MEXICAN HERITAGE WOMEN PIONEERS

IN THE SCHOOLS OF RURAL SOUTHEAST GEORGIA, 1978 - 2002

by

SCOTT A.L. BECK

(Under the direction of Joel Taxel and Martha Alleksaht-Snider)

ABSTRACT

For most of the past two centuries, the rural South has been home to a population almost entirely composed of European and African Americans. However, during the last decades of the twentieth century a new population arrived as increasing numbers of Mexican heritage people found work and settled in the rural South. Many were drawn to rural southeast Georgia by migratory agricultural work in Vidalia onion production and subsequently settled in the area when they found year-round wage labor in the fields, chicken plants, and small industries of the region. With each year more Mexican heritage people have been drawn to and have settled in southeast Georgia. As a result, the demographics of the Vidalia area are dramatically changing. The Mexican heritage presence in the schools and communities of this region presents new challenges and opportunities for local educators and their students.

This dissertation examines the life stories of ten exceptional Mexican heritage women who were pioneers, twice-over, in the schools of the Vidalia onion region. The women were among the first Mexican heritage students in the local schools. Later, each of the women returned to the local schools to work as bilingual and bicultural educators, most often as paraprofessional teacher aides and tutors. Usually they were the only Latinos and only Spanish-speakers on the staff of the schools that employed them.

Through an interpretation of these women's longitudinal experiences as double pioneers in the schools of southeast Georgia this dissertation documents how their lives, identities, and work have been shaped by a number of significant and recurrent themes: the trials and gauntlets they faced in their pasts; particular turning points that allowed them to escape migrancy and become educators; the promise of their present lives; controversial issues regarding power, race, class, and gender; and ideas for a better future. Based upon these themes, this dissertation concludes with a number of recommendations for educational policy and practice and proposals for future research regarding Mexican heritage education in the rural South.

INDEX WORDS: Mexican, Mexican American, Women, Rural Education, Rural Georgia, Oral History, Paraprofessionals, School, Vidalia

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2003

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“We were the first ones...” – Guadalupe Flores, December 7, 1998

DEDICATION

Dedicated to

my wife Delores,

my daughters Annalycia Renée and Natasha Justice,

and all the schoolchildren of rural southeast Georgia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Unsurprisingly, the completion of this dissertation cannot be attributed to just me. Many other hands, hearts, eyes, and minds have influenced its evolution. I have done my best to remember all of those to whom I owe my gratitude. Please forgive me if I have forgotten to list your name here, but know that you have my gratitude just the same.

First and foremost, thank you to my ten participants and their families. Your time and your life stories are clearly crucial to this dissertation. Now, please feel free to tell me where I messed up. Thank you also to my other former co-workers in migrant education, particularly to James Phenis and Debra Lewis who helped facilitate my data collection.

Thank you to my committee members, Linda Harklau, Yolanda Majors, Betsy Rymes, and especially Ron Butchart, without whose mentoring for the last decade I would certainly not be where I am today. I owe an especially deep gratitude to my committee co-chairs, Joel Taxel and Martha Alleksaht-Snider for their friendship, patience, and honesty.

A number of other academics have influenced my work in substantial ways. JoBeth Allen, Victoria Maria-McDonald, Cinthia Salinas, Illiana Alanís, Sylvia Celedón, Delores Peña, and my uncle Charles Keely all provided models for the work I wanted to do. Ted Hamann, Enrique Murillo, Sofia Villenas, and Stanton Wortham all helped introduce me to new ways of thinking about Latinos in the South.

Thank you to my peers at the University of Georgia. In particular, Leslie Cook, George Font, Karen Hankins, Mariana Manning, Karla Möller, Jeffery Orr, and Annette Santana helped me make it through four very difficult years of studies, research, and writing.

My colleagues at Georgia Southern University contributed in myriad ways with critical readings of my writing, coverage for my classes, and understanding of the struggles of being pulled three ways between family, work, and studies. I look forward to continuing to work with you all: David Alley, Wendy Custer Chambers, Lucinda Chance, Donna Colson, Pauline deLaar, Lorraine Gilpin, Gary Gillory, Elaine Gore, Marlynn Griffin, Ming Fang He, Amy Heaston, Barbara Hendry, Alice Hosticka, Steve Mortenson, Jane Page, William Reynolds, Ronnie Sheppard, Robert Stevens, Raleigh Way, and Diane Zigo.

Thank you to my amazing transcriptionist, Beth Hopkins, without whom I would still be trying to transcribe 700 pages of interviews. Mil gracias to Mirlin Hernandez, whose double check of my translations was tremendously helpful.

Thank you to my long time friends, René Marquez and René Gonzalez-Llorens for your faith in me, your willingness to listen to my griping, and your intellectual contributions to my work.

Thank you to my in-laws, Sonja and Don Liston, my parents, Joan and Bill Beck, and sister, Christina Beck, for their material and emotional support through this process.

Finally, I must thank my wife, Delores Liston and our daughters Annalycia Renée and Natasha Justice Liston-Beck. Your love and patience have given me the incentive to put my nose to the grindstone repeatedly, when I would have rather walked away. Thank you. Now, let's go have some fun!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

The Story of Javier's Hand

Hispanics¹ accounted for nearly a third of Georgia workplace deaths last fiscal year, despite making up only 5.3 percent of the state's population. (Associated Press 2001)²

Tears came to Octavia Hinojosa's eyes as she pondered where she would get food to feed her 18-month-old daughter, Michelle, her next meal. Recently, the cupboards and refrigerator shelves of the single-wide mobile home they share with 12 other Hispanic migrants here were virtually bare. "It has been days since my daughter had milk or juice ... I haven't changed her diaper today because we ran out of diapers." (Augusta Chronicle 2001)

At least three children have been maimed since 1994 in packing houses in Georgia while waiting for their parents to finish the day's work. The latest occurred in August when a 5-year-old boy had his right leg crushed at a jalepeño pepper packing shed near Tifton. Last year, a 2-year-old boy lost his left hand in a conveyor belt at a packing shed in Toombs County. In 1994, a 3-year-old boy lost an arm at a south Georgia watermelon packing house. (Savannah Morning News 1997)³

I was there on the farm on May 17, 1996, when 2-year-old Javier Gutierrez lost his left hand to a conveyor belt in a sweet onion packing shed. I was working for Live Oak Migrant Education Agency (LOMEA) in southeast Georgia as a migrant education outreach specialist. I was making my usual rounds of the isolated labor camps that house thousands of Latino, mostly Mexican-heritage, migrant farmworkers during the spring Vidalia onion harvest.

My day had started out just as hundreds before. I was on my way to an isolated migrant farmworker camp in the Vidalia region. The route visit was circuitous, but I had driven the route many times before. I knew that my destination was one of the most difficult camps in the area – dirty, overcrowded, and temporary home to Mixtec immigrants from rural Mexico whose

children frequently were not enrolled in school. I drove down a quiet state highway and turned off the pavement and down a dirt road, passing between two large, flat fields of Vidalia sweet onions. After about one mile, I turned right onto another dirt road, alongside a stand of pine trees. This road twisted and turned until it gave rise to a third dirt road, smaller and more poorly maintained than the previous two, which disappeared into the trees. This third road dipped down, into, and back out of a small stream, turned a corner and placed me in front of a ramshackle two-story farmhouse with three mobile homes and a tent under a nearby tree – all well out of sight from the main roads.

There I found half a dozen marginally supervised pre-school children running about the camp. Even for this camp, this was an unusual and disturbing situation. Although there is a Migrant Head Start program in this county, like most, its federal funding, capacity, and limited schedule are inadequate to match the demand for child care during the height of the multi-million dollar harvest of onions that “won’t make you shed a tear.”

One little girl, approximately three years old, was continually crying for her mother. I found an adult who knew me and he explained “*Algo se ocurrió. No se permiten niños en la bodega ya.*”ⁱ He added that the children’s parents were in a neighboring field. Wondering what could have happened to drive the workers’ children from the packing shed, I drove to the field to search for a crewleader and further information. I did not find the answer to my question there, but instead I saw two school-aged children, 11 and 12 years-old, harvesting green beans alongside their parents. The parents claimed to be just passing through on their way from Florida to Colorado. They said they had stopped to visit relatives and did not want to enroll their children in school here. Normally in such a situation, I would be able to obtain the parents’ cooperation by gently reminding their crewleader or farmer of the legal necessity to keep

children out of the fields. However, with no such authority in sight, it seemed to be time to try to find out what was happening from another source.

I found part of the answer to my puzzle five miles away at Toombs Central Elementary School where the children from the camp should have been enrolled. The farmer's wife worked there as a teacher and the school staff informed me that earlier in the day she had left school suddenly because of an accident at the farm. The next day's newspaper explained the details:

Javier's parents brought the child to the shed Sunday but kept the toddler in a box, away from the machinery. On Monday, the boy was sitting by his mother when he stuck his hand into a small hole on the machine. ... The child's hand was cut off about an inch above the wrist. (Savannah Morning News 1996)

Javier had been evacuated by helicopter to the state medical college in Augusta where an attempt was made to reattach his hand, an attempt that failed.

As I have detailed elsewhere (Beck forthcoming), it seemed at first that the front-page publicity prompted by Javier's injury might result in legal and regulatory action that could change the conditions that had led to the loss of his limb. However, it was not long before I learned how inadequate the enforcement system was. The array of rules and regulations, so onerous from the farmer's perspective, had gaps as big as a two year-old's outstretched left hand. Because Javier was too young to help in the work of sorting onions, the United States Department of Labor (U.S. DOL) would not pursue the issue of this child being in the packing shed. Thus, there would be no fine arising directly from the accident. Instead, U.S. DOL could only look for other violations such as child labor in the fields. But, there was only one Spanish-speaking U.S. DOL investigator in the region. She was responsible for tens of thousands of migrant farmworkers spread across hundreds of miles. And for each complaint that she could properly investigate, she regularly received dozens of others that she could not look into. Thus,

ⁱ "Something has happened. They won't let the children in the shed any more."

despite the horrible and very public nature of this accident, it could not become her priority case. In the end, despite a recommendation by the investigator for penalties of \$6800, no civil money penalties were levied by U.S. DOL against the farmer. In fact, despite four U.S. DOL investigations since 1994 all showing repeated violations and infractions, civil money penalties have yet to be assessed against the farm (U.S. Department of Labor 2002).

A couple years later I saw Javier again at a different migrant camp in the same county. He would soon be entering kindergarten in the Toombs County Schools - a school district that retains Latinos at disproportionately high rates while graduating Latinos at disproportionately low rates - a school district that, after over a decade of substantial Latino enrollment, had only just begun an ESOL program to serve its English language learning (ELL) students and only because of long-overdue regulatory action.⁴

Javier and his parents still moved with each season, forced by grinding poverty to seek work wherever they could find it. Meanwhile, the farm that had taken his hand was still in operation and the camp where I had seen children in the fields was still overcrowded and substandard. Seemingly little had changed in the economy and processes of local onion production or even in Javier's life – except that he would grow up with a stump where a hand was supposed to be.

How I Came to this Study

Although the tale of Javier may be one of the most horrific from my years in migrant education, it is not an isolated case. Social service providers working among migrant farmworkers learn to expect, although not accept, routine violations of a myriad of labor laws, workplace safety rules, and housing regulations by farmers and crewleaders (Chepesiuk 1992).

These patterns are repeated in the schools that serve migrant farmworkers' children. Migrant educators regularly work in school districts that ignore constitutional and judicial mandates (i.e.: *Lau v. Nichols*) regarding the provision of equitable educational services to immigrants, migrants and English language learners. Well-intentioned rules and laws are useless unless vigorously enforced, and when it comes to the rights of migrants, there are too few voices calling for enforcement to balance the power of those who benefit from the flouting of the law. Thus, migrant advocates are usually left to putting band-aids upon open wounds and attempting to fix with duct tape and baling wire an intricate social, economic, and educational system that is fundamentally flawed, with power relationships that often work to recreate rather than challenge tragedies such as Javier's.

When I was hired by LOMEA in 1994, I was told by my boss' boss that my role was not to be an advocate on behalf of migrant families and children. Rather, my role was to facilitate the needs of the local schools, administrators, and teachers. I was hired to assure that the arrival of migrants had as little impact as possible upon the routines of the local schools. These constraints on my role were the result of the hierarchy that oversees the funding of the regional migrant education office that employed me. Like all migrant education offices, LOMEA's funding originates at the federal level and passes through the Georgia Department of Education (GA DOE). Thus, migrant education programs are always beholden to national and state-level politics and educational policies. In addition, LOMEA was and is administered by a regional educational service agency (RESA), which is controlled by local school superintendents, who, in turn answer to local school boards with strong ties to the local elite, particularly local farmers. Thus, my paycheck and continued access to migrant children in the schools depended upon my

willingness to avoid “stepping on the toes” of the farming families and school boards of the region.

I left migrant education in the summer of 1999 to pursue a doctoral degree and an academic career in large part because of my desire to work as a well-informed and politicized advocate for change in ways disallowed by my entanglement in the local educational power structure (Beck forthcoming). Since then, I have spent the past four years working toward a doctorate in education so that I might sustain my opportunity to write, speak, and act openly regarding all I have seen. In this process I have realized that my research has become a personal search for meaning, an effort to understand the experiences of frustration and joy that typified my work in the schools of this region. Thus, I come to this study with a wide variety of personal, professional, political, and academic interests and questions. My motives and questions have matured during my past few years of study at the University of Georgia. In the end though, my original desire to be an agent for positive change in the schools of the Vidalia onion region continues to be the driving force behind my research, teaching, and service.

I believe that with a greater understanding of what has gone before in rural southeast Georgia that I can become a more effective advocate for change than I was ever able to be in my previous work. As a faculty member at Georgia Southern University, in the largest teacher education program in southeast Georgia, I believe that I am well situated to incorporate my understanding of the local Mexican-heritage experience into the preparation of this region’s next generation of teachers. In addition, I hope that my dissertation will have the potential to influence others to make better informed and more progressive decisions regarding the future of education in the rural South.

The Selection and Significance of the Participants

This dissertation provides an examination of the educational significance of the rapid growth of the Vidalia region's Mexican heritage population during the past quarter century. The central perspectives presented in this dissertation will be those of ten exceptional Mexican-heritage women who have been pioneers in the region's schools as both students and educators. By providing a vehicle for the perspectives of these women to be heard, this dissertation will address a number of important themes in contemporary educational research. This section will explain the significance of these women's experiences and how they were selected as participants.

Convenience

There are relatively few Mexican heritage educators in the Vidalia onion region. In 1994, when I began my work with LOMEA in rural southeast Georgia, there were only six Mexican heritage educators in the entire Vidalia region. All six were women. By the time I left LOMEA in 1999, this number had grown to eighteen. During these years, my work on behalf of the interests of Mexican heritage children allowed me to build a broad network of connections with the Mexican heritage community of the region and particularly with these Mexican heritage educators. Thus, it was to my former colleagues that I turned as I sought a deeper understanding of Mexican heritage education in the rural South. In this way, the ten participants in this dissertation can be characterized as a "convenience sample" (Fraenkel and Wallen 1996). However, as will be developed in the following sections, I do not believe that this fact of convenience diminishes the significance of what can be learned from their life stories.

Paradox of Marginality and Centrality

I believe that the life stories of the participants in this study are important to building an understanding of the influx of Mexican heritage, migrant-background children into the schools of the rural South because of an interesting paradox in their positioning: they are at once both marginal and central to this phenomenon. This paradoxical argument for the significance of their experience can be justified through my postpositivist realist theoretical frame (Mohanty 1997, Moya 2000) as complemented by Critical Race Theory (Delgado and Stefancic 2001), Standpoint Feminism (Harding 1987), and the work of other scholars, particularly bell hooks (1984). These scholars and others argue for the centrality of marginalized peoples to any truly significant understanding of the functioning of the world.

My participants can be understood as at least doubly marginal, standing as they do, on the edges of the Mexican heritage and the educational communities of the Vidalia region. The Mexican heritage community of the Vidalia region is largely comprised of impoverished, poorly educated, “labor migrants” (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Only a few Mexican heritage families in the Vidalia region have achieved a modicum of status as field crewleaders, entrepreneurs, educators, or clerical and retail staff in local public services and businesses. As compared with most Mexican heritage people in the area, my participants are relatively well-educated and many of their family members are relatively successful entrepreneurs, crewleaders, or middle managers.

A clarification is necessary here though. Even among the most economically successful of the Vidalia region’s Mexican heritage individuals, few earn much more than the federal poverty guideline for a family of four: \$18,400 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). This includes most of my participants whose jobs as migrant education paraprofessionals

generally pay between seven and nine dollars an hour. Despite these low wages, a job as a migrant education paraprofessional, with its regular hours, reliability, relative prestige, and health benefits, compares very favorably with the conditions of work for migrant farmworkers. Migrant farmworkers average \$6,500 per year in income (Rothenberg 1998, xii). They often earn less than the minimum wage during their erratic and usually unreliable periods of work. Their jobs provide no benefits and little social status. Given this contrast between the economic fortunes of the study participants and the status of most migrants, I feel that it is accurate to characterize them as relatively successful, even exceptional, and thus marginal to the mainstream of the Mexican heritage community in the Vidalia region.

In addition, my participants are also marginal to the local community of educators with whom they work. Most certified educators in this region are locally born and raised, ethnically white, monolingual women. In contrast, nearly all the participants in this study have roots in Texas or Mexico and have worked in the schools as the only bilingual, bicultural Latino staff member.

Thus, the participants' marginalization can be conceived as two-fold, living and working as they do within, yet on the edges of, both the local Mexican heritage community and the local community of educators. This contemporary positioning, when combined with their historic role as early pioneers in a dramatic and ongoing demographic change, makes their experiences central to the any understanding of how these changes have played out in the local schools. They have occupied and continue to occupy crucially medial positions between local traditions and newly arrived ways of being, between past experiences and future possibilities.

Feminization of Teaching

The unique position of the participants in my study also serves to highlight the political and economic consequences of the feminization of teaching (Apple 1986; Grumet 1988). As will be developed in Chapter 6, the cultural expectations of the Mexican heritage community in this region regarding work and gender do not generally encourage males to consider or pursue work in the schools. Additionally, the teaching force of Georgia and the Vidalia region is particularly dominated by women.⁵ This study will display how the traditional gender expectations of both local rural Southerners and the region's Mexican heritage community combine to make work in the schools by Mexican heritage people almost exclusively women's work.

As these expectations have played out in their lives, my participants are clearly both beneficiaries and victims of "traditional" gender roles. They benefit from these gender roles in that they have been able to move out of the fields and into physically comfortable jobs with stable pay and benefits. They are constrained by gender roles in that their opportunities in the schools often replicate traditional expectations for women to work with children for low pay. Further, these positions have very limited "career ladders" and very little influence or voice regarding educational policy. Their vulnerability as non-white women within the schools, exacerbated by their limited education, places constraints on the study participants' ability to advocate for Mexican heritage students. Even those few who have the confidence to speak up for their communities and students are often dismissed for their lack of credentials.

Pioneer Students as Children and Pioneer Educators as Adults

When my participants arrived in rural southeast Georgia, they each enrolled in the schools as one of the first (if not the first) Mexican heritage students. As such, their individual processes of identity building took on a significance beyond themselves. Their actions and choices, the reactions they received from the local community, and their responses to the community meant more than the struggles of an individual to define herself in a new environment. Because of her pioneer status, each of these participants negotiated with the consciousness of the local community regarding what it meant to be a Mexican heritage migrant child. Although they may not have wanted such responsibility, in light of subsequent history, their positioning as a prototype was inescapable. Thus, their experiences as some of the first Mexican heritage children in the local schools helped define the roles available to the rapidly growing number of migrant children who followed in their footsteps.

In their more recent roles as pioneer Mexican heritage educators the importance and centrality of their experience become even clearer. By conceptualizing their positioning as pioneer educators it becomes clear that my participants have much to teach us from their “dual-frames of reference” (Suarez-Orozco 2001) and their linguistic and cultural (and political) brokerage (Weiss 1994).

*Dual-Frames of Reference*⁶

According to Marcelo Suarez-Orozco (2001), some immigrants tend to be able to maintain “dual-frames of reference” whereby they favorably compare their current lives in their new home with the relatively difficult conditions in their homeland that originally prompted them to emigrate. This allows them to sustain an attitude of optimism regarding their lives in

their new land, despite the realities of slow incremental change, systemic inequities, and outright prejudice. This double consciousness has informed their choices regarding when and how to acculturate to the local culture and language versus when and how to preserve their heritage.

In contrast, some immigrants either do not have such vibrant memories of lives that were left behind or they have not found the economic promised land that they were looking for. Thus, some immigrants cannot set aside the oppressions of incrementalism, inequities, and prejudice. They tend to unfavorably compare their lot to the status of mainstream, largely middle-class white Americans leading to a very different patterns of assimilation such as alienation, cynicism, resistance, and radicalism. In my participants' narratives, I have found evidence to support the application of these concepts to their experiences and those of their contemporary students.

Mediation and Brokerage

Not only are my participants part of the first generation of Mexican heritage residents in the Vidalia region, but they also play a central role in mediating the interactions between the local culture and people and the next generation of Mexican heritage residents, my participants' current students. It is in this role that their own processes of individual acculturation and identity building have become more complicated and also more influential. When my participants became educators and found themselves in between the institutions and personnel of local schooling and the rapidly growing Mexican heritage populace, their personal identity choices took on an institutional and political significance.

In their position as the only bilingual and bicultural staff members in their schools, my participants continually fulfill a role of brokerage that places them at the center of myriad conflicts and frictions between Mexican heritage students, their parents, and the expectations and

power of the predominantly white, middle class school staff and teachers. From this central position, my participants play a crucial role in defining the nature of contemporary Mexican heritage schooling in this region and thereby influence the identity formation of the next generation of Mexican heritage residents.

Hamann (1996) and Weiss (1994) have characterized the role of Latino paraprofessionals in situations such as these as consisting of a role of cultural and linguistic brokerage. However, I believe that this type of brokerage or mediation needs to be explicitly labeled as form of a political action also. I assert that this role extends beyond questions of culture and language and into what is commonly understood as issues of power. And, although many academic writers on questions of culture and language clearly understand that power and politics are entwined in any and all questions of culture and language, I wish to make explicit this aspect of my participants' experiences, for I am concerned that to label their brokerage as primarily a process of building understanding across linguistic and cultural gaps has the potential to obscure the fact that most of the issues, and certainly nearly all the significant and difficult ones, that they broker or arbitrate on a daily basis are problematic because of inequities in power and the need for political and economic solutions, rather than simply linguistic translation or cross-cultural understanding.

Thus, although my participants' central positions are ones of influence and agency, they are also tightly constrained by the realities and politics of power and the paycheck. Just as I had to weigh my options when Javier lost his hand, knowing that to speak my mind loudly and clearly would likely lead to the loss of my job, my participants have had to, on a daily basis, consider their options with an eye toward the fact that their jobs lay in the balance. However, my participants had the additional challenge of negotiating these difficult choices from a much

weaker position. Race, language, class, and gender roles have made them much more vulnerable to administrative action than I will likely ever be.

As an example of how these politics of employment constrain my participants, I will later demonstrate the marked increase in explicit criticism of the local schools offered by two of the participants in their follow-up interviews, interviews conducted after both had left the employ of the local schools. For the rest of my participants though, I believe that the interviews demonstrate a continual process of brokerage that is not just linguistic and cultural, but also political. Their medial positions at work and in the community require that they engage in a continual process of unspoken “horse trading” and selective “battle picking” wherein they weigh the potential costs and benefits, the strength of their allies and enemies in deciding whether to speak up and resist, ameliorate, or just go with the flow.

How the Life Stories of these Participants Address my Objectives and Contribute to the Field

During the past quarter century, Mexican Americans in the rural South have grown from a small number of isolated new arrivals to a substantial minority population with a growing number of second generation, southern-born children. Nonetheless, their experiences have been documented in only a small number of studies. This study will map, through the experiences of Mexican-heritage educators and cultural mediators, how the schools of the rural South, as exemplified by the Vidalia onion region, have responded to this rapidly-growing population of Mexican Americans, and, in turn, how some exceptional Mexican-heritage women have responded to the rural South.

The interaction of the South’s historical tradition of unequal, gendered, racialized, and class-based schooling and a previously-unknown and fast growing population of Latinos has

created a new social milieu and a new set of public and personal struggles over identity and educational issues. Sketching this situation from the perspectives of this study's Mexican heritage participants provides a means for their voices and understandings to be heard and incorporated into the emergent academic and popular discourse regarding the meaning and significance of Latinos in the Deep South. My participants' life stories serve both to challenge and extend our understandings of how the schools of this region have responded to Latinos. Equally important, their stories map the ways in which they have achieved what most women of their backgrounds have not been able to do: break out of the intergenerational cycle of labor migrancy by asserting a new identity and role as an educator. As stated by Galindo and Escamilla (1995),

Case studies of educationally successful Latinos are urgently needed since there are relatively few Latinos working as [educators] who can use their own lives as examples and who can share their own narratives or educational success with non-minority colleagues in schools. (2)

This paucity of studies and narratives is even more notable with regard to former migrant children who have been successful in school.

This is not a purely celebratory dissertation though. This study will examine the choices that the women who participated have made and the consequences of their choices, particularly vis-à-vis the growing Mexican heritage community around them. Because of my participants' paradoxical positioning both between and on the edges of the local communities of educators and Mexican heritage residents, they face difficult choices regarding issues of identity and prejudice. However, they also have a wider range of options than most local Mexican heritage people. Thus, the participants' narratives will reveal how on a case-by-case basis, they have had to choose when to support, resist, or keep silent regarding the often problematic actions and attitudes of local students and school staff members. In these choices they have negotiated both

their own identities and, by extension, the position of Mexican heritage students in the local schools. Through the examination of these choices, this dissertation can contribute to studies that have highlighted the crucial roles of bilingual educators as cultural brokers in our schools. Moreover, by bringing to voice the experiences of this small group of exceptional women, I have begun to outline a much more complex and challenging understanding of contemporary Mexican heritage education in the rural South.

Finally, my participants' longitudinal experiences as both students and educators, and their position between the Mexican American and the schooling communities of this region allows them to articulate new perspectives and future ideals for their schools, particularly in regard to the question of how to support other Mexican heritage people who seek to move from the fields and into the classroom. Thus, this dissertation will present these ten women's visions for the Vidalia region's schools. This effort to openly examine their hopes, dreams, and fears of the future will better prepare myself and others to serve as advocates for progressive change in the schools of the Vidalia onion region – changes that would challenge historically rooted inequities while bringing greater numbers of Mexican-heritage educators into the schools. The acute needs of local schools and students in this region demand that empirical research and theory building connect to educational policy and classroom instruction. Therefore, this dissertation, I hope, will serve as a resource for policymakers and practitioners, advocates and activists by concluding with specific educational recommendations based upon or supported by the participants' life stories and visions for the future.

Research Questions of this Study

In order to address my motives and objectives for this study while limiting my data to the life stories of my ten primary participants, I have structured my study around the following research questions. As with any qualitative study, the foci of these research questions have evolved as I have collected, transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted my data. Nonetheless, this dissertation addresses each of these questions and provides a starting point for further investigations and extensions of each question through future research.

As expressed through co-constructed oral history narratives, how have a small number of exceptional Mexican-heritage women in the Vidalia onion region, as students and later as educators...

... understood the impositions of historical contexts and socio-cultural structures upon their lives? In particular, how have they made sense of their position and expressed their identities vis-à-vis the historically unequal class-based, black – white context of Southern schooling?

... broken out of the intergenerational cycle of labor migrancy?

... asserted their agency as educators in the public schools?

In the process of moving from labor migrancy to educators, what do these women think they have gained and lost? How have their new roles as educators impacted their relationships with the Mexican-heritage community?

How have they envisioned a better educational future for Mexican-heritage children and potentially for all children in the Vidalia onion region? What initiatives do these women see as useful in an effort to bring more Mexican-heritage educators into the local schools?

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 provides a historical and recent contextualization of the study by looking at the political economy of rural southern education, particularly as expressed in the experiences of African Americans, and emphasizing rural southeast Georgia's Vidalia onion region. Chapter 3 examines the various preconceived notions and discourses that many, including myself, have brought to the study of Mexican American experience in the rural South. Chapter 4 presents the theoretical framework for this dissertation and details the research methods I have employed.

Chapter 5 introduces the ten primary participants of this study. I provide brief summaries of their life experiences and their interrelationships with both myself and each other. I also describe the contexts of the actual interviews and characterize the types of interactions that occurred during each interview. Chapter 6 presents the oral history data by moving chronologically and thematically from the participants' pasts to their ideas for the future. Chapter 7 builds upon these life stories by developing an explicit analysis and interpretation regarding critical questions that emerged from the data. This concluding chapter explores new lessons learned from the participants' stories that add to the small body of research on Mexican-heritage experiences in the rural South. Finally, the last chapter seeks to draw conclusions that can be applied to both current questions of educational policy and future efforts in educational research. In addition, further topics for further research are outlined. Following this chapter, appendices and a bibliography are provided.

Endnotes for Chapter 1

¹ See the appendix for a description of my use of labels regarding Latino and Mexican heritage people.

² In order to protect the privacy of the innocent, these quotes from regional newspapers have been edited slightly. In addition, all names in this dissertation, excepting my own, are pseudonyms.

³ Later in this dissertation, I will introduce the life story of the mother of the third child referred to in this newspaper report, the 3-year-old who lost his arm in a watermelon shed.

There are no definitive national statistics regarding injuries and fatalities among children on farms. However, farming is the second most dangerous profession in the U.S. and the only dangerous workplace where children regularly accompany their parents. A recent study of death certificates in rural Colorado and Kentucky shows that the sons of farmers are three times more likely to die than other boys and that they die at a higher rate than adult miners working in the most dangerous profession in the U.S. (P.R.I. Marketplace 2003).

⁴ These and other facts about the educational status of Mexican heritage children in the Vidalia onion region will be detailed in Chapter 2.

⁵ Nationally, 73% of teachers are women (Snyder et al. 1999). In Georgia, this figure is 82% and in the eight focal counties of this study (defined in Chapter 2) 83% of the teachers are women, with the numbers averaging even higher at the elementary level where most of the participants work (Georgia Department of Education 2002).

⁶ Before applying the concept of “dual-frames of reference,” a term developed to describe the experiences of immigrants, to my study, it is necessary that I justify the application of this concept to the experiences of my mixed pool of participants, half of whom were born in the United States and thus would not necessarily fall under the label “immigrant.” Immigration is more than the simple crossing of a national boundary. It is a cultural and personal experience of displacement, disorientation, and adaptation. I assert that comparable experiences can be caused by movement and relocation even within a single nation, especially within a nation as large and diverse as the United States. Thus, although I would not seek to apply the well-defined term “immigrant” to my participants who were born in the U.S., I do find it reasonable and useful to extend concepts regarding immigration, such as “dual-frame of reference” (Suarez-Orozco 1987) to build an understanding of my participants’ lives. The arrival of my participants challenged longstanding local and regional racial, cultural, and linguistic norms that had no well-defined space for the presence of Latinos. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 6, even those who arrived as American citizens and speaking fluent English often found themselves in a social limbo between their own migrant Mexican heritages and the local black and white worlds of the post-desegregation rural South. The sense of cultural isolation and disorientation upon arrival in this region that many of the participants recall is clearly comparable to the feelings of many immigrant children. Thus, I believe that my participants’ responses to their new milieu can be fruitfully compared to that of traditional immigrants whose crossing of a national border often prompts parallel experiences.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL AND RECENT CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The growing population of Mexican heritage people in the schools and communities of the rural southeast is a new and understudied phenomenon. Thus, it challenges all concerned to find precedents and contemporary data that can help us understand such a dramatic demographic change. This chapter provides a historical and contemporary context for understanding of the significance of the arrival of Mexican heritage people in rural southeast Georgia.

Mexicans and Mexican Americans as the New Laborers of the Rural South

For most of the past four centuries, the basis of the economy of the rural South, including rural southeast Georgia, has been agriculture. During most of that time, the primary mode of production was based upon labor that was either enslaved or held in debt bondage. African Americans provided most of that labor, with impoverished whites making up the balance. From a long-term, historical perspective the most remarkable fact regarding the new Mexican heritage population in this region is that for the first time in centuries, the rural South's largely African American no wage and low wage labor force is being replaced. Mexican heritage people rapidly coming to dominate the bottom of the labor market. Thus, from the perspective of the history of political economy in the rural South, the most relevant precedent for understanding the education of today's Mexican Americans must be found among the education of African Americans and

poor whites who preceded them in the fields of this region. The following discussion will use the transformative events of the Civil War and Reconstruction as a starting point.

Historical Context of the Political Economy of Education for Laborers in the Rural South

Until the Civil War, anti-literacy laws and the oppression of slaveholders suppressed most attempts at systematic education among the vast majority of enslaved African Americans in the rural South. Small, but vital communities of relatively literate and independent African American freemen existed in some cities, particularly New Orleans and Charleston. Nonetheless, they had neither the political or economic capital to effect any broad-scale change in the educational status of their enslaved brethren. In addition, until the Civil War, the educational standing of southern whites in general and poor whites in particular was well behind the national average (Margo 1990, 13-15).

The situation changed with the Civil War and Emancipation, as the thoroughly Yankee ideal of the common school was exported to the South, where it received a mixed reception. In explaining political economy of the post war emergence of universal schooling in the South, James Anderson and others have written of a seeming lack of enthusiasm for mass education among poor southern whites during the mid-1800s (Anderson 1988, 26). In contrast, during this same period a concerted drive toward literacy and education gripped southern Blacks. Suddenly, many African American freemen (Anderson 1988) and Northern white Protestant missionaries (Butchart 1980) established segregated schools in the South for black freedmen, who had been denied education and literacy through generations of slavery.¹ Thus, according to Anderson, by the 1870s some southern white educators became concerned that the premises of white

supremacy could soon be challenged by educated Blacks outstripping the status of many impoverished whites.

Surrounded by planters who were hostile to public education, middle-class professionals who allied themselves with planter interests, and lower-class whites who were largely alienated from mass education, ex-slaves were the only native group to forge ahead to commit the South to a system of universal schooling in the immediate post-war years. ... The ex-slaves' initiative in establishing and supporting a system of secular and Sunday schools and in demanding universal public education for all children presented a new challenge to the dominant-class whites - the possibility of an emerging literate black working class in the midst of a largely illiterate poor white class. This constituted a frontal assault on the racist myth of black inferiority, which was crucial to the maintenance of the South's racial caste system. (1988, 26-27)

As documented by Anderson, because of this threat to white supremacy, the ideal of universal schooling was promoted among southern whites, prompting the gradual implementation of the South's segregated version of common schooling. Facing an apparent choice between segregated schooling and no schooling at all, and limited in their economic and political capital, many blacks in the South did not press to learn alongside whites, despite the social stigma of segregation and the inferior resources provided for black schooling (Foner 1988, 322, 367). With the end of Reconstruction and the rise of *de jure* Jim Crow segregation after 1876, black education in the South was kept separate from, and inferior to, education for Southern whites.

The economics of agricultural production drove much of the structure of rural Southern black and poor white schooling. This dimension of the political economy was often expressed through the power of wealthy farmers over rural school boards (Montejano 1987, 191; Counts 1927). Black schools never attained *Plessy v. Ferguson*'s 1895 mandate of "separate but equal" status. Black teachers were paid less and provided with inadequate and out-of-date materials and facilities for teaching (Anderson 1988). African Americans and poor whites were often directed toward vocational studies. Also, compulsory attendance and child labor laws were frequently

ignored in rural areas of the southeast, especially when the labor of poor black and white children benefited local farmers. Thus, education of poor whites and blacks served to prepare most of them for a life of field labor.² Despite the movement toward publicly-funded schooling for all southern children, as Robert Margo has commented, "Around 1890 the public schools of the southern states could be charitably described as backward" (1990, 20). Using Census data from this era, Margo documents that "for both black and white males, average educational attainment was far lower in the South than elsewhere in the country" (1990, 15).

By the turn of the century, the rhetoric of New South boosterism and progress through industrialization drew in many white southern middle-class business people and professionals, particularly in the small towns and growing cities of the region (Cobb 1984). The progressives' rhetoric claimed that the education of poor whites and blacks was the key to the economic rebirth of the entire region (Kousser 1980, 169). However, this same era saw the institutionalization of racialized and class-based barriers to the rights of full citizenship in the still predominantly rural South (Kousser 1974). The re-imposition of white supremacist power across the South through violence, intimidation, and the Supreme Court's transformation of equal protection into a "derisive taunt" (Anderson 1988, 192) prompted historian Rayford Logan to label this era as the "nadir" of American race relations (1954). In this whirlwind of disenfranchisement, many poor whites also saw their political voices reduced by poll taxes and onerous registration requirements, although not to the same extent as the South's blacks (Kousser 1974).

In this nexus is to be found a pattern documented in multiple regions of the South (Kousser 1980; Margo 1990; Harris 1985). As the Progressive movement encouraged increases in education spending in the South, the costs and benefits of those increases were not distributed in a "progressive" manner. Rather, as blacks and many poor whites lost their right to vote and

the power of their vote through the various machinations of turn-of-the-century disenfranchisement and the establishment of the one-party system (Kousser 1974), the effect of progressive reform on education was actually quite regressive. Blacks and poor whites, particularly those living in poorer, more rural areas, saw their share of the tax burden for public education rise while the relative funding of their schools, as compared to middle-class white schools, declined. This regressive trend impacted blacks the most, but it hurt poorer whites as well. "Disenfranchisement led not only to a gap between white and black per pupil expenditures, but to greater inequality among whites as well" (Margo, 1990, 37). The political constrained the educational, which in turn constrained the economic fortunes of poor whites and blacks in the South, particularly the rural South. "Increasing inequality in [educational] services, then, inevitably spawned increasing inequality in income and wealth - a peculiar definition of progress," a progressivism only for "middle-class whites" in the South (Kousser 1980, 190).

By the advent of the desegregation era, poor whites and blacks in the South continued to display a pattern of educational attainment below the national average. Poor whites continued to exceed African Americans in the South on most measures, but by much smaller margins than during the post-war era (Margo, 1990).

This long-standing pattern of Southern, particularly Southern rural, under-education of poor whites and blacks persists to this day. In an edited 1998 volume, economist Robert Gibbs and his contributors set out to debunk the "myth" that rural America is more poorly educated and has fewer skills as compared with the rest of the nation. The volume presents a strong case for the value and quality of rural education in our nation excepting for one important caveat: repeatedly the contributors to the volume demonstrate that the rural southern whites and blacks lag behind the rest of rural America in a wide variety of educational standards. For example,

contributors Greenberg, Swaim and Teixeira state with regard to 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey scores: “The real metro-non-metro gap is in the South, where non-metro residents score 21 points lower than their metro counterparts” (1998, 81). In fact, the gap between the rural South and the rest of rural America on some educational measures is so large that once the South is removed from the national calculus, non-southern rural America can nearly match or even outperform the rest of the nation (Greenberg and Teixeira 1998, 35). For example, Ballou and Podgursky state, “from the teachers' point of view, rural schools *outside of the South* provide a very attractive learning and teaching environment” (1998, 16, emphasis added). Similarly, Rowley and Freshwater note, “achievement scores for students in the rural South continue to lag national, rural, and urban South averages, as do measure of adult literacy and educational attainment” (1998, 30).

Poor, rural Southern whites and blacks alike have not historically received an equitable share of the educational resources of this region. Thus, a strong tradition of under-education of poor laborers, no matter their racial background, has persisted to this day across the rural South, as will be documented later in this chapter.

Geographic Context of this Study

In the late 1920s, a Vidalia area farmer, Mose Coleman, discovered that winter-season onions grown in the sandy, high-sulfur soil of the region were unusually sweet (Vidalia Centennial 1990, 5; Peterson, n.d.).³ The crop “made the big time nationally in the late 1970s when Georgia-boy-turned President Jimmy Carter started sending them out as gifts” (Jaffe 1998, A1) was followed by a successful push for national distribution in grocery stores (Vidalia Advance Progress 1996). As the onions became an increasingly popular and profitable crop, the

Georgia State Legislature passed the Vidalia Onion Act in 1986,⁴ defining a twenty county region within which official Vidalia onions could be grown (Vidalia Onion Committee 1998). This region is centered on Vidalia, Toombs County, Georgia and takes in much of rural southeastern Georgia. In 1989, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and local farmers agreed to a marketing order that established federal protection of the Vidalia onion trademark. During the 1990s, the introduction of controlled atmosphere storage of Vidalia onions allowed the extension of the marketing season through half the year and made it profitable to produce even larger crops of onions each winter (Vidalia Advance Progress 1996).

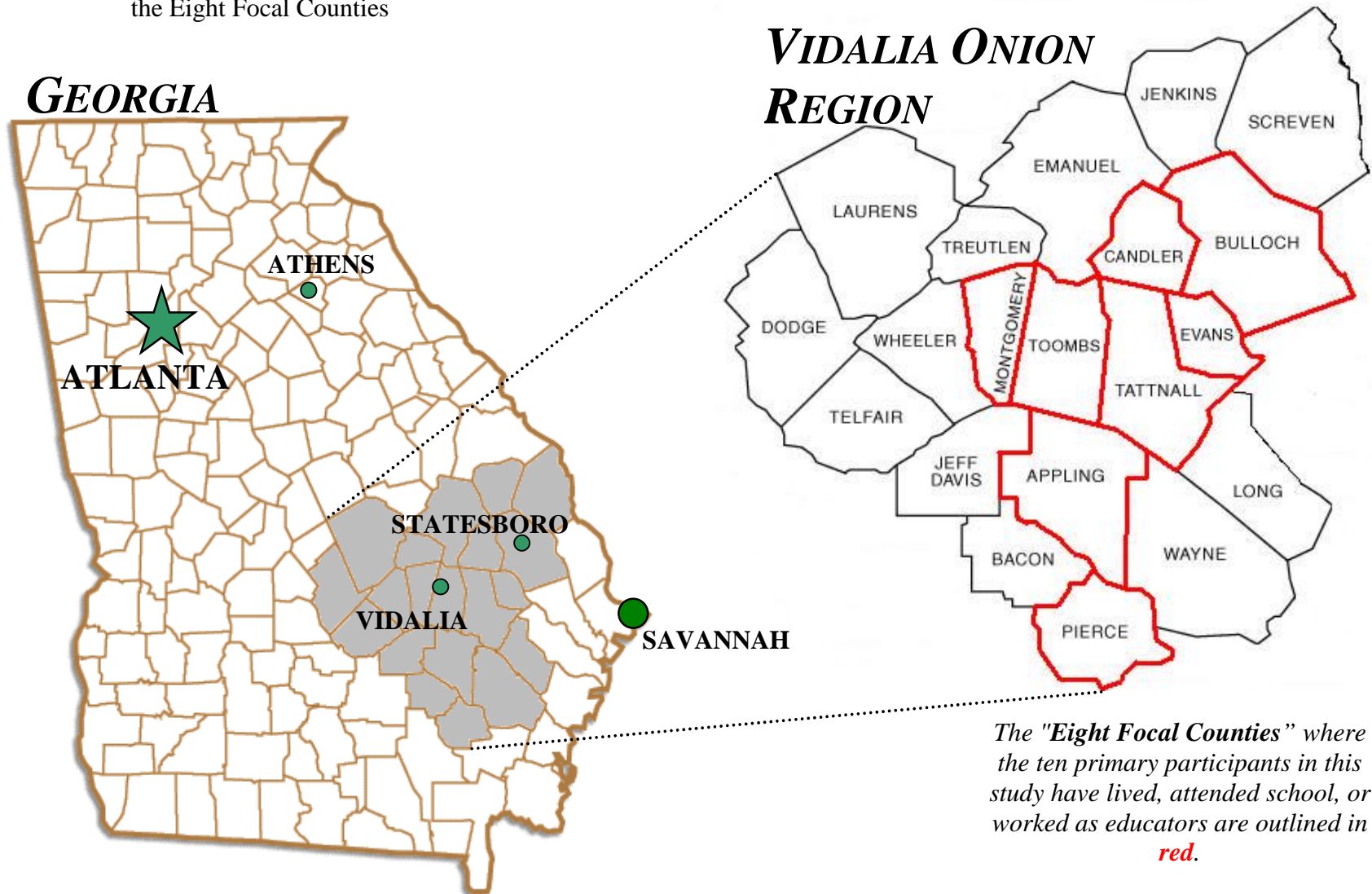
As displayed on the map in Figure 1, the ten primary participants in this study have lived, attended school, or worked in eight of the twenty Vidalia onion producing counties (Appling, Bulloch, Candler, Evans, Montgomery, Pierce, Tattnall, and Toombs) since arriving in southeast Georgia during the past quarter century. Here forward, these eight counties will be referred to as the “focal counties.”

The eight focal counties include the heart of the Vidalia onion region, accounting for over 85% of the 2001 Vidalia onion harvest total “farm gate value” of over \$82,000,000. Tattnall and Toombs counties alone combined for 65% of this harvest (Kriesel 2002). Most of the participants (6 of the 10) have lived and/or worked in either Tattnall or Toombs county.

Recent Demographic and Economic Context

The eight focal counties are part of the Black Belt of the South.⁵ As such, each of the eight counties has been dominated demographically by two racialized populations, whites and blacks.

Figure 1:
Map of the Vidalia Onion Region and
the Eight Focal Counties



As can be seen in Figure 2, the racial profile of these counties is approximately 25% black, 70% white, paralleling the entire state of Georgia.

Figure 2: Black & White Population Growth - Eight Focal Counties & Georgia, 1990-2000

COUNTY	Population in 2000		Population Growth 1990-2000		
	Black ⁶	White	Overall	Black	White
Appling	20%	77%	11%	4%	8%
Bulloch	29%	69%	30%	43%	22%
Candler	27%	65%	24%	8%	20%
Evans	33%	62%	20%	17%	15%
Montgomery	27%	70%	12%	11%	15%
Pierce	11%	87%	17%	9%	16%
Tattnall	31%	61%	26%	35%	12%
Toombs	24%	69%	8%	12%	2%
GEORGIA	28%	69%	23%	37%	16%

(Kriesel 2002)

Unlike the rest of the state though, where black population growth has far outstripped white population growth (37% to 16%), in the focal counties both groups have grown at about the same rate (17% and 14%) during the past decade.

Like most of Georgia, the eight focal counties have all experienced steady population growth during the past three decades as the Sunbelt⁷ economy has brought new jobs to the state. Nonetheless, most of these counties have not approached the exceptionally high growth rate (178%) of the entire state, with all but two counties (Bulloch and Pierce) growing at a rate under 150% from 1970-2000 (Kriesel 2002).

Like most of southeast Georgia, the eight focal counties are predominantly rural and when compared with the rest of the state, disproportionately impoverished, especially with regards to the number of children living in economic poverty. Across the eight counties, per capita income runs \$7,000-9,500 below the state-wide average (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Rurality, Poverty, and Income - Eight Focal Counties & Georgia

COUNTY	Rural Population (1990)	*Persons in Poverty (1999)	Children in Poverty (1997)	Free/ Reduced Lunch Eligible (1999-2000)	*Per Capita Money Income (1999)
Appling	76%	19%	29%	57%	\$15,044
Bulloch	63%	25%	28%	52%	\$16,080
Candler	52%	26%	35%	65%	\$12,958
Evans	100%	27%	37%	69%	\$12,758
Montgomery	99%	20%	33%	63%	\$14,182
Pierce	74%	18%	30%	56%	\$14,230
Tattnall	79%	24%	37%	64%	\$13,439
Toombs	36%	24%	36%	65%	\$14,252
GEORGIA	37%	13%	28%	54%	\$21,154

(Kriesel 2002; *U.S. Census 2002a)

However, the economy of the region has generally improved since the early to mid-1980s. Even when adjusted for inflation, per capita income in the focal counties has risen steadily from \$6,300 to \$9,500 (Kriesel 2002). In addition, there has been a steady rise in total employment from 52,000 to 79,000 (Kriesel 2002).

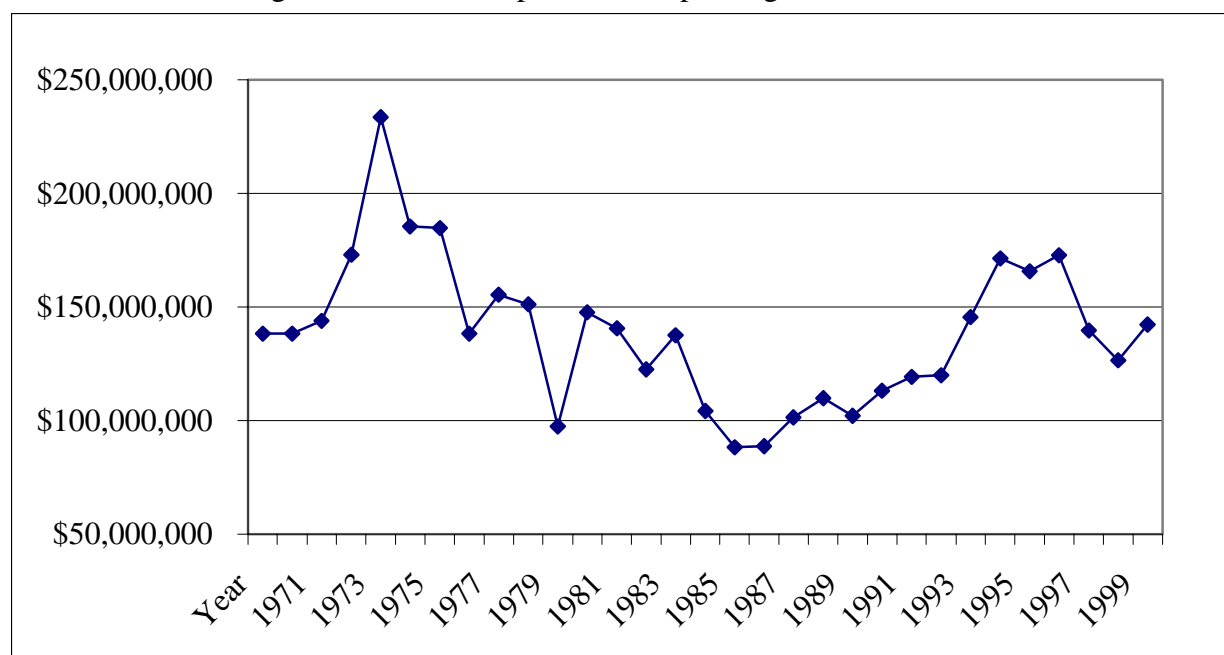
Recent Agricultural Context

Much of this growth came from an expansion in agricultural production and processing in the region. For example, from 1986 to 2000, total employment in Evans County grew from 3700 to 6000 as the county's largest employer, Claxton Poultry, expanded production while hiring increasing numbers of Mexican-heritage laborers (Kriesel 2002; Savannah Morning News 2002).

Significantly for this dissertation, a substantial portion of the region's economic and employment growth can also be directly linked to the expansion of the Vidalia onion crop. During the decade (1986-1996) following the official designation of the Vidalia onion region, the number of acres of Vidalia Onions increased eight-fold from 2,000 to 16,000 acres. (United States International Trade Commission 1998; cited in Davis 1999) This expansion has been

highly profitable. As the Wall Street Journal noted, “Thanks to the onion, farmers here sport Rolexes and drive new Mercedes-Benz sedans” (Jaffe 1998, A8).

Figure 4: Farm Receipts from Crops - Eight Focal Counties



(Kriesel 2002)

As Figure 4 reflects, inflation-adjusted farm receipts in the eight focal counties were in a general decline from the early 1970s until the mid 1980s. (Note that due to the vagaries of weather, farm production statistics are much more volatile from year to year than any of the other statistics presented in this chapter). But, starting in the mid 1980s, with the expansion of the onion crop, farm receipts rose steadily until the recent multi-year drought in the Southeast.

One of the most remarkable results of the economic growth brought by the expansion of Vidalia onion cultivation is found in the number of farms in the region. From 1974 to 1987, the number of farms in the region was in a steady and long-term decline, as was the case across the state and the nation. However, after the official designation of the Vidalia onion region (the last decade for which data is available, 1987-1997), six of the eight focal counties (all but Appling and Bulloch) experienced an average *increase of 8.7%* in their number of farms. The

significance of these increases becomes even clearer when contrasted with national and state-wide trends during the last measured decade. From 1987 to 1997, the number of farms across the nation *decreased by -8.4%*, while the number of farms in Georgia *decreased by -7.3%* (USDA 1999). During this same period, six of the nine counties in Georgia with the largest increase in their number of farms were in the Vidalia onion region. Clearly the cultivation of Vidalia onions has been a profitable venture for many local farmers.

The Arrival of Mexican Heritage Farm Laborers

None of this would be possible without the labor of predominantly Mexican heritage, migrant farm laborers. Premium-priced onions like Vidalias are a labor-intensive crop, with each onion requiring careful, individual handling, especially during the harvest. Any bumps, cuts, or bruises can cause rapid deterioration in the onion and a reduction in market value.

Three decades ago, when Vidalias were a small crop marketed at road-side stands, they could be harvested by a combination of local seasonal farmworkers and schoolchildren. But, during the 1980s, the expansion of the onion crop soon outstripped the shrinking local farm labor supply. Rural sociologist David Griffith has explained the shrinking of the rural South's low-wage, low-skill agricultural labor pool as caused by the combination of multiple elements:

The Civil Rights Movement, increased educational opportunities, welfare reforms, and other features associated with Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs constricted labor supplies ... while decreasing worker tolerance for authoritarian labor control. Second, southern chambers of commerce were, by this time, well into their drives for industrial recruitment based on cheap, docile, non-unionized labor. ... [Also,] The southern flight of large portions of the U.S. population encouraged suburban development, a boom in house building and infrastructure construction, and the growth of motel, hotels, and restaurants. (Griffith 1995, 131)

Unable to find enough local workers willing to harvest the crop for what they were willing to pay, tentatively at first, and then with enthusiasm, local onion farmers hired

crewleaders to bring in Latino migrants. The farmers found that the largely Mexican-heritage migrants would work long, hard hours for low pay. Long-time Bulloch county farmer Dee Strickland⁸ explained this dynamic in an interview with the local newspaper:

“Parents seem to have gone away from wanting their teen-agers to work on the farm,” said Dee. “This has always been a very traditional way of them earning money. But, it has gone by the way. ... So our work force diminished. It became hard for us to find people locally who want to do this kind of labor.”

Enter the Mexican migrant worker.

“The migrant people work very hard. ... If you are going to eat vegetables, we are going to have to have someone who is willing to do the work and these people are willing to do it.” (Hutcheson 1995, 7)

Now, nearly all the approximately 1,000,000,000 onion plants (Stepzinski 2003, 5B) that are grown each year in the Vidalia region are planted and harvested individually by Mexican heritage hands. Remarking on the central role of Mexican-heritage migrants in the local farm economy, one of this region’s largest and most successful Vidalia onion farmers, R.T. Stanley, stated, “You could close down the Vidalia onion industry without them” (White 1995, 9A).

Moreover, in addition to the onion crop, this region supports the production of a number of other agricultural products that allow year-round agricultural activity, as shown in Figure 10. As will be reflected in the life stories of the study participants, this wide variety of crops and nearly continual schedule of agricultural processing activities, combined with the fact that much of the local fieldwork is during the winter months (particularly onion planting and harvesting) when there is little other fieldwork available to migrant farm workers on the East Coast, creates an attractive locale for migrant laborers to settle down and minimize or eliminate their annual travels from Florida to North Carolina to Michigan and New York, among other destinations. Few other locations on the east coast provide such an attractive combination of nearly continuous fieldwork.

Figure 5: Annual Calendar of Fieldwork and Agricultural Labor - Eight Focal Counties

January	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	October	Nov.	Dec.
Cabbage/Greens Harvest								Cabbage/Greens Harvest			
	Onion Harvest									Onion Planting	
			Tobacco Planting, Topping, Suckering, Harvest								
				Blueberry Harvest							
				Squash Harvest							
				Cucumber Harvest							
					Watermelon Harvest						
								Pecan Harvest			
Pine Straw	Peak Season			Pine Straw							
Chicken Processing											
Dairy Farming											

List of major crops and their harvest schedules in the eight focal counties derived from participant interviews, questionnaires, and Kriesel 2002.

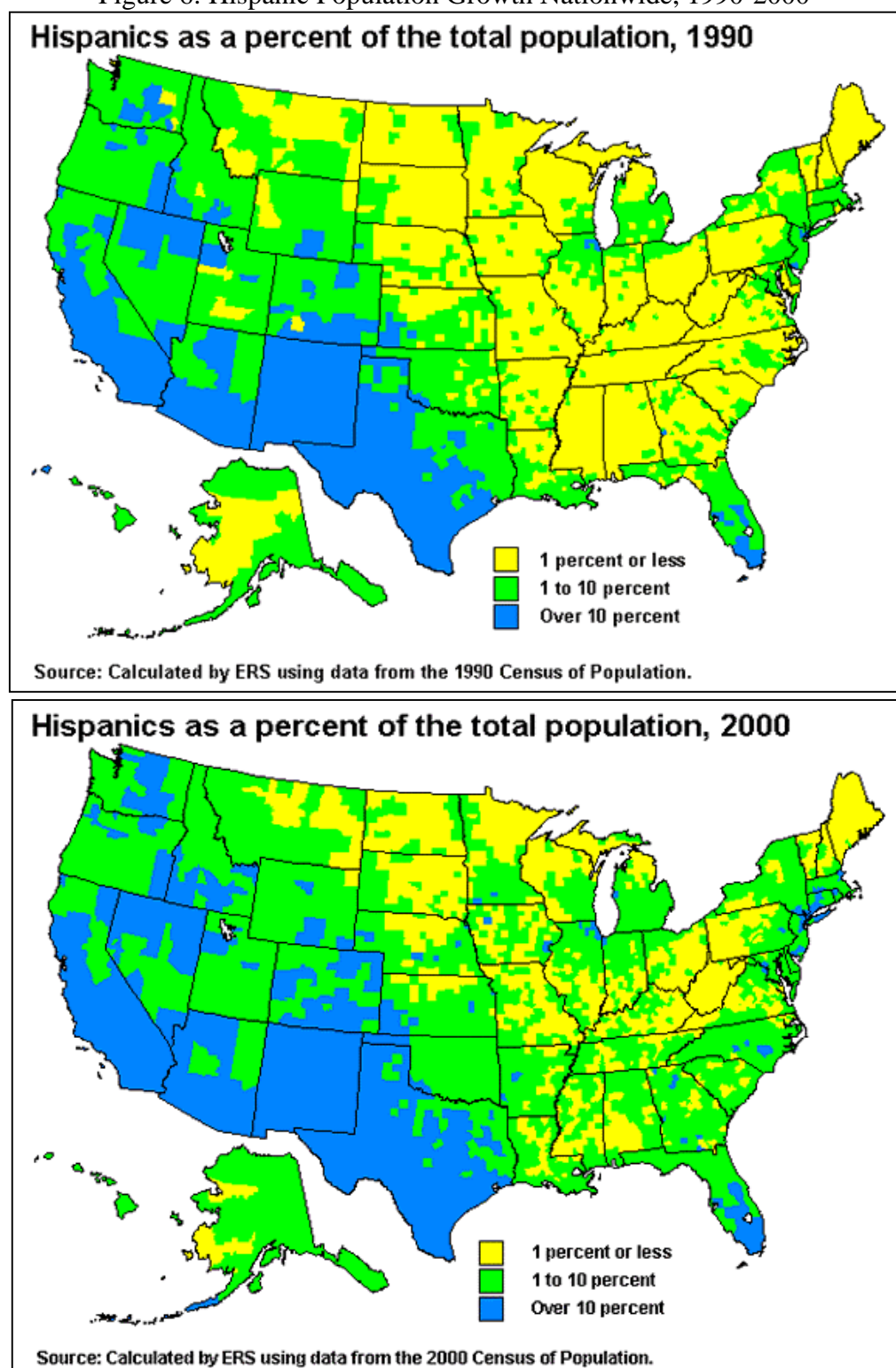
Thus, as the Vidalia onion crop has grown, so have the numbers of Latinos in the area. And as they have become familiar with the local region, each year more and more of them have chosen to settle out of the migrant stream and make the Vidalia region their home.

The “New Latino Diaspora” in National and Statewide Context

Before focusing on the arrival of large numbers of Latinos in the Vidalia region itself, it is important to note that this growth of a Hispanic population in a region not traditionally home to large numbers of Latinos is a manifestation of both national and statewide trends. Latinos surpassed African Americans as our nation’s largest minority group during the 1990s (U.S. Census Bureau 2001). As part of this growth, large portions of the Southeastern and Midwestern United States have seen dramatic increases in their Latino populations as illustrated in the maps in Figure 12 as low-wage labor across the nation has become increasingly Latinized (Griffith 1995, 129).

Thus, this dissertation contributes to the emerging literature on education in what Villenas, Murrillo, and Hamann have described as “the New Latino Diaspora.”⁹ Sofia Villenas’ dissertation study (1996) was the first of a series of studies of Mexican American and Latino education and communities in regions of the U.S. not traditionally home to Latinos. Since then, a small number of other studies have been completed examining the educational consequences of the “New Latino Diaspora” in the South (Velázquez 1998; Hamann 1999; Murillo 1999; Tinley 2000; Welch-Mooney 2000). Also, an edited volume (Wortham, Murillo & Hamann 2002) collecting research from Georgia, North Carolina, Louisiana, Maine, Colorado, Illinois, and Indiana has been recently published.

Figure 6: Hispanic Population Growth Nationwide, 1990-2000



(USDA 2001)

When conceiving of their volume, editors Wortham, Murillo, and Hamann asked the hopeful question, “Is it possible that in locales not traditionally home to Latinos that the long-standing inequities and inadequacies of Latino education in the U.S. might be avoided?” (Hamann, 2002). This hope was largely based upon Wortham’s study in rural Maine and Hamann’s dissertation regarding Dalton, Georgia. In both cases, the researchers found reason to hope that the lack of a local tradition of Latino under-education and mis-education might free the “New Latino Diaspora” from these negative traditions of Latino education in the U.S.

Unfortunately, taken together, the studies in the volume do not support such hope. The shining example of the bilingual and bicultural Georgia Project in Dalton, Georgia is quite exceptional.¹⁰ The studies show that “the New Latino Diaspora represents a unique socio-historical location” (Hamann, Wortham and Murillo 2002, 2), but not necessarily a better one.

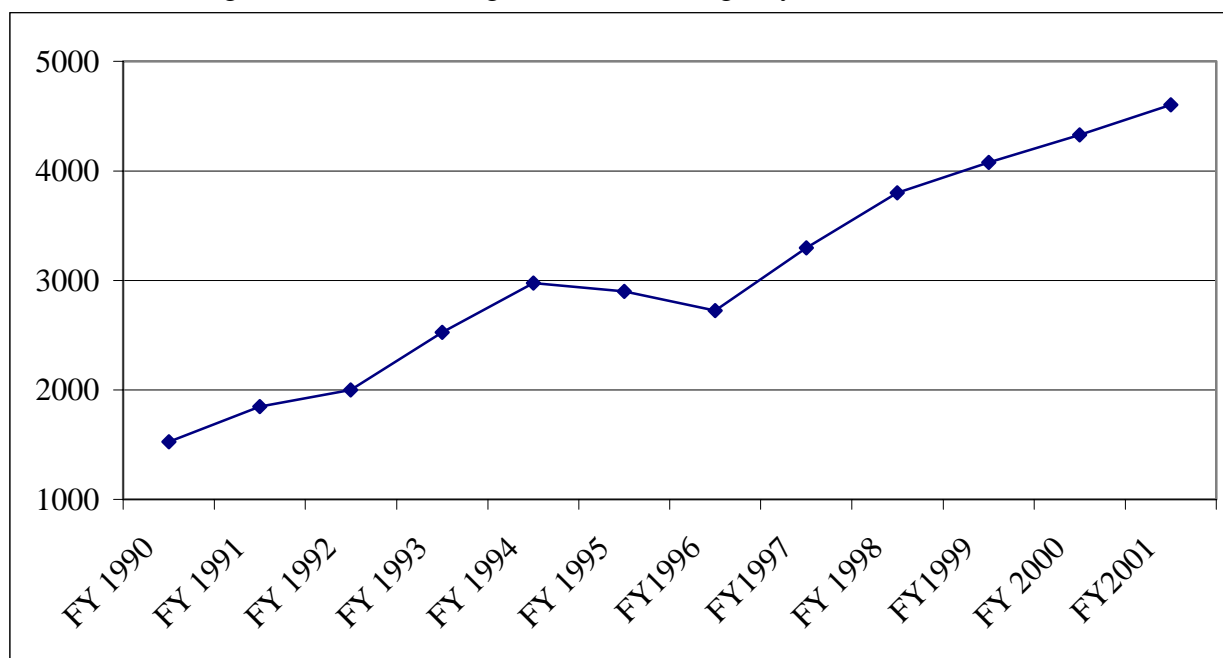
The benefits of a lack of a negative history are often matched by other difficulties:

- 1) near absolute lack of local knowledge of Latino language and culture;
- 2) extremely limited supply of potential bilingual / bicultural mediators;
- 3) political disenfranchisement and economic marginalization of newly arrived, labor migrant Latinos who haven’t yet formed a vital community voice; and
- 4) pressure for Latinos to assimilate to fit into traditionally white, monolingual English-speaking, largely Protestant communities.

Nonetheless, Latinos continue to arrive in new areas all across the U.S., particularly in the South. Employers across the South have increasingly recruited and become dependent upon Mexican American workers to harvest field crops, process chicken, construct buildings, and work in low-wage, low-skill factory and service sector jobs (Torres 2000). Within the state of Georgia, influxes of Latinos have occurred in many agriculturally-oriented south Georgia

counties, the rapidly expanding metropolitan Atlanta area, the chicken-processing centers of Gainesville and Carrollton, and around Dalton's carpet factories. As shown in Figure 7, Live Oak Migrant Education Agency, which services nearly the entire Vidalia onion region, has documented the dramatic tripling of the agricultural migrant population of the region during the 1990s.

Figure 7: Live Oak Migrant Education Agency Annual Enrollment



(Live Oak Migrant Agency 1999, 2002)

The “New Latino Diaspora” in the Vidalia Onion Region

Thus, the Hispanic population of the eight focal counties generally arrived as migrant farm laborers and grew with the increasing need for low-wage agricultural production and processing labor in the area. Thus, most of the local Hispanic population entered the Vidalia region economy at or near the bottom of the socioeconomic pecking order as wage laborers.

Hired farmworkers had one of the lowest median weekly earnings [\$280] and one of the largest percentages (45 percent) of workers with family incomes less than \$20,000 in 1999. ... Unemployment among the hired farm labor force was 10.6 percent, compared with 4.2 percent for the total wage and salary labor force (Runyan 2000).

Contrasting with the relatively low black and white population growth (17% and 14%) detailed earlier in this chapter, the growth of the focal counties' Hispanic population during the past two decades has been phenomenal. As shown in Figure 8, in 1980, Hispanics accounted for, on average, approximately 1% of the local populace in the eight focal counties. By 1990, these numbers had increased only slightly to less than 2% of the local populace. However, in 1990 the two counties most tightly tied to the production of Vidalia onions, Tattnall and Toombs counties, had begun to see a rapid increase in their Latino populations to over 3%.

Figure 8: Hispanic Population Change - Eight Focal Counties & Georgia

COUNTY	1980*		1990		2000		1990-2000	
	Hispanic Pop.	% Hispanic	Hispanic Pop.	% Hispanic	Hispanic Pop.	% Hispanic	Hispanic Growth	Hispanic % of Tot. Growth
Appling	124	0.8%	138	0.9%	792	4.6%	474%	39%
Bulloch	335	0.9%	360	0.8%	1052	1.9%	192%	5%
Candler	92	1.2%	138	1.8%	882	9.2%	539%	41%
Evans	88	1.0%	109	1.3%	625	6.0%	473%	29%
Mont'y	85	1.2%	142	2.0%	271	3.3%	91%	14%
Pierce	128	1.1%	104	0.8%	357	2.3%	243%	11%
Tattnall	136	0.8%	547	3.1%	1883	8.4%	244%	29%
Toombs	175	0.8%	824	3.4%	2310	8.9%	180%	74%
GEORGIA	61260	1.1%	108922	1.1%	435227	5.3%	300%	19%

(Kriesel 2002; *U.S. Census 1980)

During the 1990s, the growth in Latinos spread across the entire region, averaging 305% and surpassing even the exceptionally high statewide Latino growth rate of 300%. Despite accounting for less than 2% of the local population in 1990, during the subsequent decade Hispanics provided over 30% of the population growth in the region. Most notably, during the 1990s, 3 out of every 4 new residents in Toombs County, where Vidalia is located, were Hispanic. In Appling and Candler Counties, 2 out of every 5 new residents were Hispanic.

There is reason to suspect that long-standing problems regarding race and ethnicity labels (American Anthropological Association 2000) and undercounting of persons who are

impoverished, undocumented, or of color (Irvine 2000; Gurr 1999) may have led to an undercount of Hispanics in Georgia by Census 2000. UGA Rural Sociologist Doug Bachtel believes that the Census 2000 count represents only one half of the total number of Hispanics in the state of Georgia. He estimates that in 2000 Georgia was home to more than one million Hispanics or 13% of the total state population (Bachtel 2000).

Figure 9: Hispanic Population - Eight Focal Counties, 2000

COUNTY	Hispanic Population	% of Population Hispanic	% of Population Spanish at home	% of Population Mexican-heritage
Appling	792	4.6%	5.1%	4.0%
Bulloch	1052	1.9%	2.8%	1.1%
Candler	882	9.2%	9.0%	7.8%
Evans	625	6.0%	6.2%	5.0%
Montgomery	271	3.3%	3.0%	2.8%
Pierce	357	2.3%	3.1%	1.8%
Tattnall	1883	8.4%	7.7%	7.2%
Toombs	2310	8.9%	9.4%	7.5%
<i>GEORGIA</i>	<i>435227</i>	<i>5.3%</i>	<i>5.6%</i>	<i>3.4%</i>

(US Census 2002,a)

There are data in the Census 2000 numbers for the eight focal counties that throw into question the validity of the local Hispanic head count. For example, as shown above in Figure 9, the percentage of residents who reported that they speak Spanish at home exceeded the number of self-identified Hispanics in five of the eight focal counties. No matter what their actual number, as this table shows, the vast majority (over 80%) of Hispanics in these counties are of Mexican-heritage.

Despite their substantial and growing numbers in the local community, as Figure 10 demonstrates, Latinos do not have much of a voice in the politics of the Vidalia Onion region, nor in the state as a whole. The gap between the Hispanic percentages of the regional and state populations and registered voters is particularly noteworthy. Across the eight focal counties, there are more than 35 Latino residents for every 1 active Latino voter. This compares with

ratios of 2.8 to 1 for blacks and 2.1 to 1 for Whites in the Vidalia region (Georgia Secretary of State 2002) and a ratio of 5.6 to 1 for Latinos nationwide (US Census 2001, 2002a).

Figure 10: Hispanic and Black Voters - Eight Focal Counties & Georgia, 2002

COUNTY	Hispanic % of Population	Hispanic % of Registered Voters	Number of Active Hispanic Voters	Black % of Population	Black % of Registered Voters
Appling	4.6%	0.36%	24	20%	19%
Bulloch	1.9%	0.22%	37	29%	24%
Candler	9.2%	¹¹ 1.70%	57	27%	25%
Evans	6.0%	0.09%	5	33%	31%
Montgomery	3.3%	0.02%	0	27%	24%
Pierce	2.3%	0.02%	2	11%	11%
Tattnall	8.4%	0.97%	81	31%	24%
Toombs	8.9%	0.16%	22	24%	23%
GEORGIA	5.3%	0.29%	10997	28%	27%

(Georgia Secretary of State 2002)

Latino Enrollment in the Schools of the Vidalia Onion Region

The Hispanic percentage of the local enrollment in the schools has been climbing in every county since at least the mid-1990s. For example, Toombs County's Latino enrollment has grown from 9% to 15% between the 1994-1995 and 2000-2001 school years. Jumps from 1% to 5% and from 5% to 9% were also recorded during the same period in Evans and Candler counties, respectively (Georgia Department of Education 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002). Three of the focal counties in this study (Toombs, Tattnall, and Candler) are among the top seven counties in the state of Georgia for percentage of students who are Hispanic (Kriesel 2002).

As is generally the case across the U.S., Hispanics in the eight focal counties are substantially younger than average and thus have a disproportionately large school-aged population. As shown in Figure 11, in most of the focal counties the percentage of pre-K students who are Hispanic exceeds the current K-12 enrollment, which indicates that they can

expect their Latino enrollment to continue to rise for the foreseeable future.

Figure 11: Hispanic Median Age & Pre-K Population - Eight Focal Counties & Georgia

COUNTY	Median Age in 2000		% Hispanic 2000-2001*	
	Entire Pop.	Hispanics	K-12 Students	Pre-K Students
Appling	35.4	22.4	4.4%	9.2%
Bulloch	¹² 26.1	22.2	0.9%	1.9%
Candler	35.6	22.5	8.4%	3.2%
Evans	34.0	24.3	5.0%	2.7%
Montgomery	33.6	23.9	4.9%	8.3%
Pierce	36.2	23.6	2.3%	4.0%
Tattnall	33.9	23.1	8.9%	11.8%
Toombs	34.2	22.2	14.9%	26.3%
GEORGIA	35.1	26.4	4.7%	5.6%

(Kriesel 2002; *Georgia Department of Education 2002)

This sudden and continuing growth of a substantial Latino populace and a large Latino student enrollment where there long has been none reopens the question of how they have interacted with the local schools and communities. As documented in other locales (Wortham, Murillo and Hamann 2002), the arrival of large numbers of Latino and Mexican-heritage migrants to help with agricultural production in the Vidalia region has externalized some of the farmers' indirect labor costs by placing these burdens upon the local schools (Hackenberg 1995, 238). The following data will show that the schools of the region have been generally ill-equipped for these new students and unable or unwilling to absorb the additional expense of meeting their needs.

Continued Inequities in Schooling in the Vidalia Onion Region

Consistent with the Vidalia onion region's history of inequitable schooling for impoverished laborers, the school systems in this region generally demonstrate worrisome patterns of "second-generation educational discrimination" (Meier and Stewart 1991) against both blacks and Latinos. Recent educational statistics from across the Vidalia onion region

confirm the unfortunate persistence of inequitable traditions in local public schooling and can map the relevance of these traditions to local Latino education. As the following statistics will demonstrate, the patterns of secondary discrimination against African Americans in the local schools have also manifested themselves in Latino schooling, but to an even more acute and problematic extent.

As Figure 12 demonstrates, with few exceptions, African Americans in the eight focal counties have historically experienced unequal educational outcomes in the local public schools. A strong longitudinal measure of the educational status of black residents born before 1975 is provided by the percentage of African Americans who had completed less than ninth grade as of 1990. In every one of the eight focal counties, the number of African American pre-high school drop outs was substantially higher than among the population as a whole.

Figure 12: Inequitable Education - Eight Focal Counties & Georgia

COUNTY	1990		1999-2000				
	< 9 th Grade Education		Black % of				Minority Teachers
	All Adults	Black Adults	Enrolled Students	Students Retained	College-Prep Grads	All Grads	
Appling	20%	27%	29%	37%	11%	33%	12%
Bulloch	13%	26%	39%	59%	19%	31%	14%
Candler	24%	32%	36%	43%	16%	31%	16%
Evans	20%	33%	46%	58%	34%	37%	6%
Montg'y	19%	27%	37%	37%	32%	36%	18%
Pierce	19%	23%	14%	19%	13%	16%	8%
Tattnall	21%	26%	36%	51%	25%	40%	8%
Toombs	18%	24%	21%	22%	15%	22%	7%
GEORGIA	18%	27%	37%	44%	27%	35%	18%

(Kriesel 2002)

Turning toward more contemporary measures, in 1999-2000, in nearly every case, blacks were retained at higher rates and graduated with a college-preparatory diplomas at lower rates than whites. Finally, in every county, the percentage of teachers of minority backgrounds (nearly all African American) was far outstripped by the African American student populace.

In order to examine these patterns in greater detail and compare them to the patterns emerging in Latino education in the eight focal counties, I have prepared the eight tables in the Appendix. These tables summarize all the data regarding African American and Latinos contained within the annual Georgia Department of Education Report Cards for the public schools of the eight focal counties from 1994-1995 to 2000-2001. When the data is averaged across this seven-year period and compared with the average black and Hispanic enrollments, some very clear patterns arise across nearly all eight counties. With regards to African Americans in the schools during these seven years, one positive fact was:

- Black students graduated in or near the same percentage as they were enrolled in the schools in 7 of the 8 counties (*exception: Evans County graduated blacks at a disproportionately low rate*).¹³

However:

- Blacks students were underrepresented among graduates receiving college preparatory diplomas in all 8 counties;
- Blacks students were disproportionately retained (held back a grade) in 7 of the 8 counties (*exception: Montgomery County did not retain blacks disproportionately*);
- Blacks were underrepresented among certified personnel in all 8 counties.

With regard to the same data for Latinos, the same problematic patterns emerge:

- Hispanic students were underrepresented among graduates in all 8 counties
- Hispanic students were underrepresented among graduates receiving college preparatory diplomas in all 8 counties;
- Hispanic students were disproportionately retained (held back a grade) in 6 of the 8 counties (*exceptions: Bulloch and Montgomery Counties did not retain Hispanics*

disproportionately); and

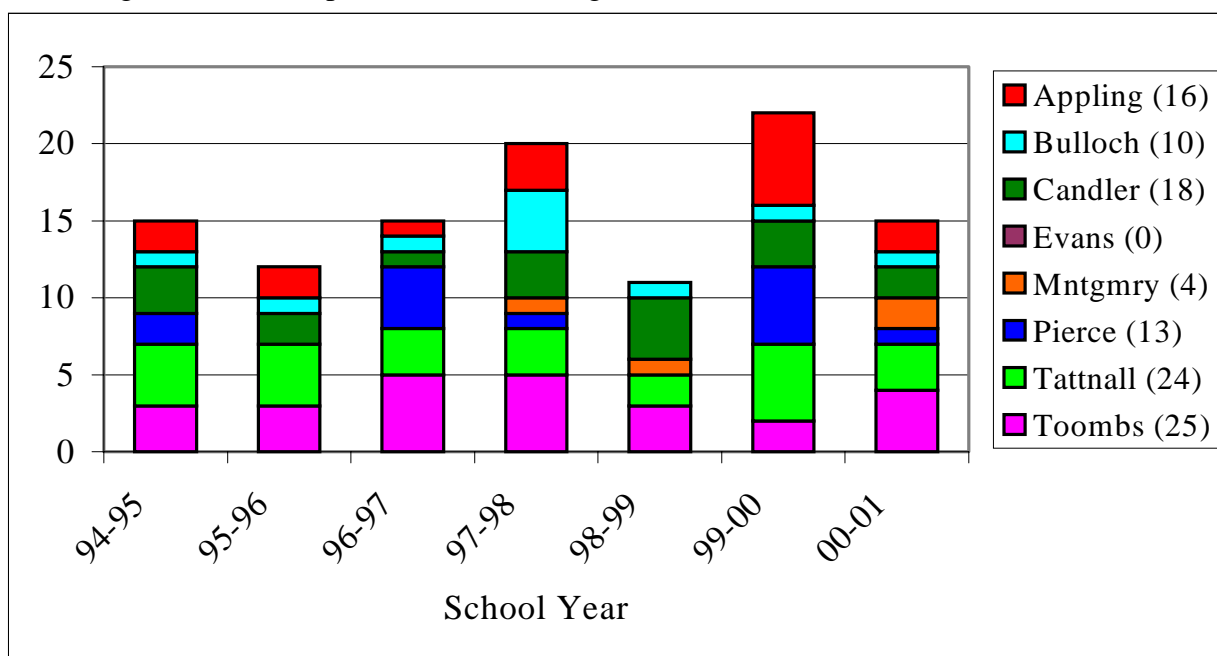
- Hispanics were underrepresented among certified personnel in all 8 counties.

Thus, the patterns of inequitable educational outcomes for African Americans in this region are repeating themselves with regards to Latinos. Importantly though, as the charts in the Appendix show, in nearly all of these measures of secondary discrimination in nearly all of the counties, the *relative* gap or disproportion between the student population and other statistics was larger for Latinos than African Americans, as the final chart in the Appendix demonstrates. Thus, these patterns of secondary discrimination are even more troubling for the Vidalia region's Latinos.

However, since these measures are based upon seven-year averages, it is reasonable to ask if some of these gaps have closed as Latino enrollment has grown over this time span.

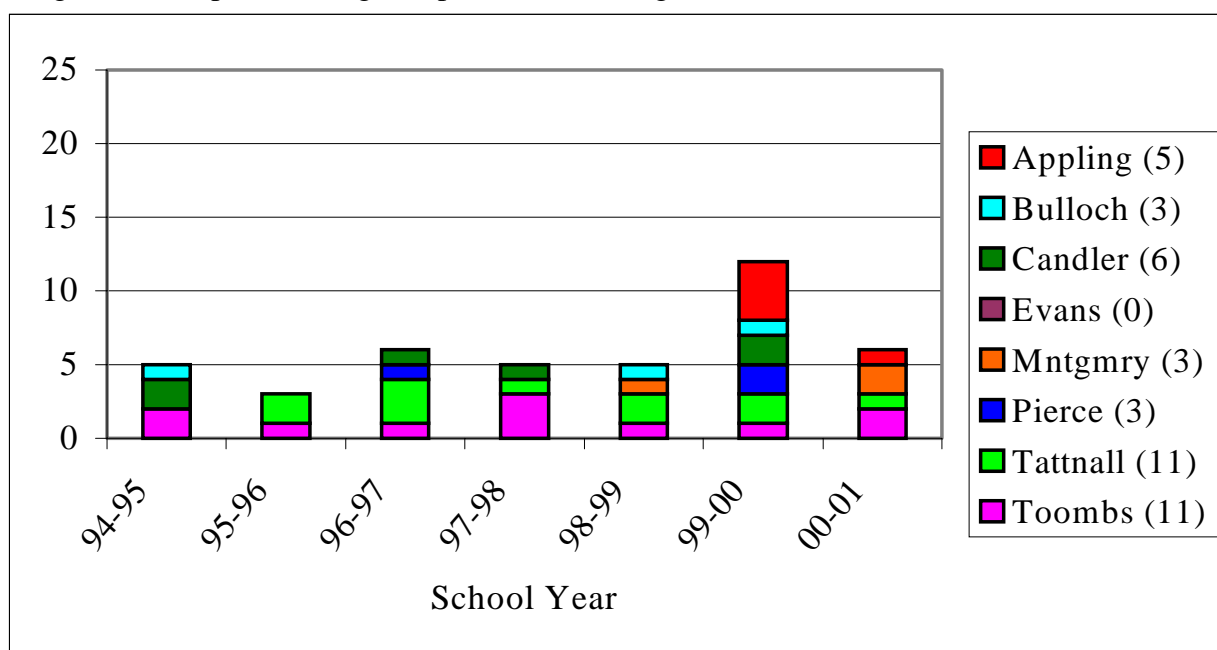
Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case. As the following graphs show, there are slight upward trends in the numbers of Latino graduates (Figure 13), Latino college preparatory graduates (Figure 14), and Latino certified personnel in the eight counties (Figure 15). However, these trends fail to match the rapid and ongoing rise in Latino students. For example, the local schools graduated the same number of Latinos in 2000-2001 as they did seven years earlier.

Figure 13: All Hispanic Graduates - Eight Focal Counties, 1995-2001 (Total=110)



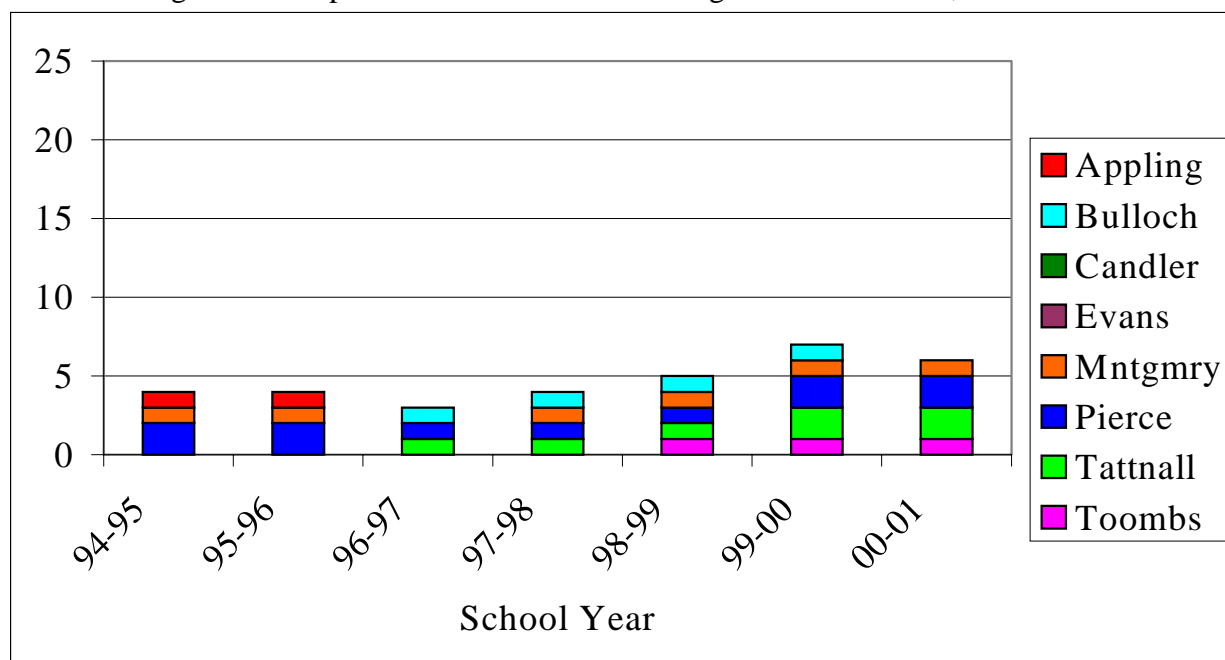
(Georgia Department of Education 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002)

Figure 14: Hispanic College Prep. Graduates - Eight Focal Counties, 1995-2001 (Total = 42)



(Georgia Department of Education 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002)

Figure 15: Hispanic Certified Personnel - Eight Focal Counties, 1994-2001



(Georgia Department of Education 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002)

Taken altogether, the eight counties still did not have eight Latino certified personnel as of 2000-2001. These continuing shortages of Latino high school graduates and instructional personnel emphasize the relatively unusual experiences and privileged status of the ten participants in this dissertation. Finally, the fact that both blacks and Latinos are graduating with college preparatory diplomas at disproportionately low rates may be the most disturbing indicator since it echoes the local and regional history of using tracking as means to blunt the effects of desegregation on local whites (Page and Page 1991, 1993; Deever 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994).

Lack of Services for English Language Learners

In addition to these concerns about the transfer of the traditions of inadequate and inequitable schooling for blacks in the Vidalia region onto Latino education, the large numbers of local Latino students who are English language learners (ELLs) (as indicated by the number

of homes where Spanish is spoken, shown earlier in Figure 17) raises a separate set of issues regarding the provision of ELL services such as ESOL. As I have documented elsewhere (Beck and Alleksaht-Snider 2002), the rising number of Latino students in the local schools has usually not prompted a legal, much less a fully adequate, response by many school districts.

The provision of supplemental educational services for ELLs has been legally required since the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Lau v. Nichols* (1974). In that ruling, the Supreme Court found that school districts whose policy for ELLs consisted of submersion or neglect were in violation of the constitutional requirement for equal protection under the law. Within the current administrative interpretation of this ruling, school districts must provide research-based, educationally sound assistance to ELLs such as ESOL, bilingual education, and/or dual language immersion. Nonetheless, as the numbers in Figure 26 display, decades after *Lau v. Nichols* and years after receiving their first Latino ELL students, Vidalia region schools did not and often still do not provide adequate ESOL services.

The estimates of unserved ELL students in each school district shown in Figure 16 are conservative, based upon a calculation that assumes 36% of the enrolled Latino students are ELL.¹⁴ Nonetheless, even with this conservative estimate, there were likely more than 200 ELL students not receiving ESOL or any other ELL services in the counties in 2000-2001, a generation after the arrival of the first Mexican heritage migrant students. This approximately twenty-year delay in the implementation of a federal educational mandate echoes the delay in desegregation of the local schools described earlier.

Figure 16: Estimates of Unserved ELL Students - Eight Focal Counties, 1994-2001

	APPLING		
	Hispanic Students	Students in ESOL	Unserved ELLs (est.)
94-95	61	0	22
95-96	66	0	24
96-97	71	0	26
97-98	95	0	34
98-99	100	0	36
99-00	115	45	0
00-01	138	54	0

	BULLOCH		
	Hispanic Students	Students in ESOL	Unserved ELLs (est.)
	29	2	8
	40	2	12
	59	1	20
	60	0	22
	53	1	18
	59	0	21
	70	32	0

	CANDLER		
	Hispanic Students	Students in ESOL	Unserved ELLs (est.)
94-95	82	0	30
95-96	92	0	33
96-97	116	0	42
97-98	138	0	50
98-99	149	0	54
99-00	156	0	56
00-01	152	0	55

	EVANS		
	Hispanic Students	Students in ESOL	Unserved ELLs (est.)
	15	0	5
	36	0	13
	37	0	13
	37	0	13
	56	0	20
	70	0	25
	95	0	34

	MONTGOMERY		
	Hispanic Students	Students in ESOL	Unserved ELLs (est.)
94-95	13	0	5
95-96	17	0	6
96-97	16	1	5
97-98	29	1	9
98-99	38	0	14
99-00	51	0	18
00-01	62	0	22

	PIERCE		
	Hispanic Students	Students in ESOL	Unserved ELLs (est.)
	38	0	14
	33	0	12
	48	0	17
	51	0	18
	67	0	24
	56	0	20
	71	0	26

	TATTNALL		
	Hispanic Students	Students in ESOL	Unserved ELLs (est.)
94-95	187	25	42
95-96	209	35	40
96-97	245	20	68
97-98	244	23	65
98-99	265	36	59
99-00	309	50	61
00-01	282	38	64

	TOOMBS		
	Hispanic Students	Students in ESOL	Unserved ELLs (est.)
	225	0	81
	229	0	82
	278	0	100
	284	0	102
	303	0	109
	346	127	0
	395	159	0

(Georgia Department of Education 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002)

However, as with desegregation, the responsibility for this delay is not solely limited to local officials. Georgia DOE enforcement of legal expectations regarding ELL education has been largely non-existent, prompting an OCR investigation of the state DOE that began in 1999 (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).¹⁵ Moreover, until 2000, the Georgia DOE's funding structure put rural schools in the Vidalia region at a disadvantage for ESOL funds. For years, statewide ESOL funding was determined by a single student FTE count each October, the time of year with the lowest seasonal migrant population in this region. Funds generated by this count were distributed to the various school districts during the subsequent school year. Thus, small, poor, rural school districts were forced to find local funding for the startup costs of ESOL services and then usually found that the reimbursement generated by the October student count did not match the costs of their larger ELL populations during the rest of the school year. Given the lack of local Latino political power described earlier, it should come as no surprise that very few of the school districts voluntarily dipped into their general fund to cover the costs of ESOL instruction. Instead the issue of ELL assistance was often pushed aside by local school administrators as someone else's responsibility – a responsibility that has generally fallen to federally-funded migrant education paraprofessionals, a job held now, or in the past, by all but one of the participants in this study.

Like the data regarding retention, graduation, and certified staff, the patterns that emerge from this data regarding ELL services show disturbing themes from local African American education recapitulated in local Latino education. As with desegregation, most of these counties failed to implement a constitutionally-mandated effort to provide equitable education (ELL services) for a generation or more (Page and Page 1991, 1993; Deever 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994). In addition, like the long-delayed implementation of desegregation, the recent establishment of

new ESOL programs in three of the counties only occurred in response to federal action to force the issue. A US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights investigation in Toombs County during the summer of 1999 prompted both Toombs and Appling counties¹⁶ to start full-fledged ESOL programs. Bulloch County chose to hire an ESOL teacher the next year when a county administrator recognized that OCR action regarding this issue was probably imminent.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the quality of these ESOL programs and the preparation of their teachers cannot be relied upon. Many of the ESOL teachers in these counties are simply local teachers who were hastily re-tooled, often through in-services and correspondence-type courses, in order to allow minimal compliance with the demands of OCR.¹⁸

Continued Latino Population Growth and Continued Problematic Schooling

It is clear that the struggle toward equity in education in the Vidalia onion region is far from over and that the addition of a growing Latino population has continued, recapitulated, and expanded traditions of discrimination and inequity for the children of wage laborers. Unjust schooling constrains and structures the life opportunities of poor children in these counties, just as they do across the nation. Moreover, as this description makes clear, the local schools of this region have historically avoided any steps forward toward more equitable and progressive education for the poor and people of color until faced with the pressure of federal civil rights law enforcement. Finally, each step forward has often been minimalist. Thus, many of the patterns that characterized the local elite's response to black / white desegregation are being repeated today with regards to the new challenges of Mexican heritage education.

Nonetheless, despite these manifestations of inequity in schooling, the local Latino populace continues to grow and the numbers of Mexican heritage students in the schools has not

yet reached a plateau. The face of the Vidalia onion region has changed permanently. Even if this year's onion crop were to be the last, large numbers of Mexican heritage people would still call this region home. "Georgia is experiencing a wave of immigration unlike anything since the colonial era. ... [This is] the most significant social and cultural upheaval in Georgia since the early days of racial desegregation" (Athens Daily News 1999). *Taquerias* and *bailes* are here to stay in the heart of Dixie, and the schools, communities, and new Latino residents of this region continue to negotiate precisely what this change means for all of them.

Endnotes for Chapter 2

- ¹ Many of these schools received support from the federal Freedmen's Bureau. These efforts in part established the idea of the common school in the South and sparked the establishment of publicly funded education and teachers colleges in this region (Beck 1995).
- ² Nonetheless, as some of the best-educated and most prominent members of their communities, many African American teachers cultivated an ethos of caring, high expectations, and achievement without submission that is valued by many researchers and African Americans (Siddle-Walker 1996; Cecelski, 1994; Phillipsen, 1993a).
- ³ Over time other local farmers began growing sweet winter onions, but the crop never expanded much beyond small-scale marketing in roadside stands and regional grocery stores until the 1970s (Green 1991, 58).
- ⁴ The act was passed after much political wrangling over the size and borders of the region (Harrigan 1980).
- ⁵ The Black Belt is a swath of predominantly rural counties that extend from the historically tobacco plantation lands of Virginia south through the Carolinas and Georgia before turning west across Alabama to the Delta lands of Mississippi and Louisiana
- ⁶ Note that for the first time, Census 2000 distinguished between "Black alone" and mixed race "Black with other races." In some regions of the U.S., the population counts for these two categories differ noticeably, but not in the counties under study here. Across the eight counties, nearly 99% of blacks self-identified as "Black alone" while only 1.1% self-identified as "Black with other races" (Kriesel 2002).
- ⁷ The Sunbelt states are those states, from the southeast to the southwest that began to experience rapid economic and demographic growth during the 1970s, a trend that has continued in many of these states until the current recession.
- ⁸ In 2002, Dee Strickland was an unsuccessful candidate for Georgia's State Agricultural Commissioner.
- ⁹ Although this term is used by other scholars studying similar locales and contexts, I have chosen not to use it widely in my dissertation. As pointed out by Joel Taxel in conversation with me, the word "diaspora" generally implies coercion or violence as the causation of movement, as in the Jewish and African Diasporas. Since the vast majority of the Latinos in rural southeast Georgia are of Mexican-heritage (not from El Salvador, Guatemala, or Nicaragua) and primarily driven by economic incentives, not war and terror, I feel that to apply the term diaspora to their experience would be inaccurate. Nonetheless, although I am not entirely comfortable with the "diaspora" terminology, it is to this emerging genre of contemporary research that my dissertation most clearly belongs.
- ¹⁰ The exceptional nature of Dalton's response to their Latino influx can be found in the historical traditions of industrial paternalism in Southern mill towns whereby businessmen have accepted their responsibility to compensate for at least some of the externalized costs of their business (Hall, Leloudis, Korstad, Murphy, Jones, Daly 1987) and a series of fortunate coincidences and unusual windows of opportunity (Hamann 1999). Neither these traditions or fortunate happenstances characterize the situation in the Vidalia region.
- ¹¹ This remarkably high Latino voter count in Candler county would be grounds for a study to examine how and why, proportionally, more Latinos are registered there than in adjacent counties.
- ¹² Bulloch County's median age is remarkably low due to the presence of Georgia Southern University.
- ¹³ Note that along with being the only county with a disproportionately low black graduation rate, Evans County is the only county of the eight that did not graduate a single Latino from 1994-1995 to 2000-2001.
- ¹⁴ In those local school districts that are currently testing for ELL needs and providing ESOL classes, the actual percentage is between 37% and 46%.
- ¹⁵ In Georgia, there has been "no requirement that districts seek or accept special ESOL funding ... The federal mandate (from the *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court ruling) that language minority students have equal access to an adequate education does apply in Georgia too, but there is little infrastructure or popular political sentiment to ensure that this guideline is adhered to" (Hamann 1999, 11). This is in part the result of many years of poor enforcement by OCR across the country (Figueroa and Gutiérrez, 2000; Ricento, 1998).
- ¹⁶ The Superintendent of the Toombs County schools is married to the Curriculum Coordinator for the Appling County schools. One of my last responsibilities with Live Oak Migrant Education Agency was to assist in the planning of the new ESOL program in Toombs County and in the training of the new teachers. Since then I have taught their daughter at Georgia Southern University.
- ¹⁷ This characterization of the implementation of Bulloch County's ESOL program is based upon face-to-face conversations between myself and the Bulloch County administrator during the late 1990s.
- ¹⁸ Again, this characterization of the preparation of Vidalia region ESOL teachers is based upon my personal and professional knowledge as one of the primary ELL/ESOL resources in the region.

CHAPTER 3

A THEORETICAL CONFESSION OF PRECONCEIVED DISCOURSES

The point of engaging in field work... is to give yourself the chance of being surprised, to have experiences that generate new knowledge not wholly prefigured in your starting out positions. But it is in many ways the 'theoretical confession' and type of originating puzzle that set up this possibility. You cannot be surprised unless you thought you knew, or assumed something already, which is then overturned, or perhaps strengthened, or positively diverted, or fulfilled in unexpectedly elegant ways... To repeat and clarify: the original elements of a 'theoretical confession' are not tightly structured positions looking merely for exemplification... They are nagging issues which drive a curiosity within an overall theoretical sensibility of a particular kind. (Willis 2000, 113-114)

This chapter will describe or, as Paul Willis terms, confess my starting out positions – the set of preconceptions that I started with over four years ago when I first began my academic research and writing about the experiences of Mexican heritage migrants in rural southeast Georgia and discuss how those "starting out positions" have proven to be problematic. This chapter will serve to set the stage for my presentation in Chapter 4 of my revised theoretical frame for this dissertation study.

The phenomena of large numbers of Mexican-heritage migrants living in the rural South is a relatively new one. Because of its novelty, the question of what it means for large numbers of Mexican-heritage people to live in the South has often been approached in terms of assumptions and preconceived discourses transferred from other contexts, other places, and other times. As developed in Chapter 2, this is necessary, but it must be done with great caution. For this reason, this chapter will challenge the relevance of some common preconceived discourses regarding the American South and Mexican American migrancy that others and I have brought to the study of Mexican-heritage peoples in the rural South by linking my preexisting

(mis-)understandings to popular, literary, and academic representations of the rural South and the status of Mexican-heritage migrants in this nation.

Who am I and What are Discourses?

In order to frame this chapter, it is important that I reveal myself and the topics at hand to reflection and scrutiny. From the perspective of my topic, I am a triple outsider. I am neither a Southerner, nor of Mexican-heritage, nor from a migrant farmworking background. I am a solidly middle-class Yankee Gringo, raised among the dairy farms of rural upstate New York. As such, I have carried a number of preconceptions to this study, many of which were formed during the first quarter century of my life spent living outside the American South and without daily interactions with Mexican-heritage migrants. Most of my preconceptions were formed by popular, literary, and academic representations of the rural South and Mexican-heritage migrant farmworkers.

The multifaceted field of discourse analysis provides approaches to examining this dialectical relationship between the social order and representations thereof. However, because of the diverse uses to which the term has been applied across a wide range of fields, “discourse” is not easily defined. Jaworski and Coupland (1999) open their reader on discourse with ten different definitions (1-3). They note though, “Whatever discourse is, and however concretely or abstractly the term is used, there will at least be agreement that it has focally to do with language, meaning, and context” (xi). After surveying the definitions offered by others, Jaworski and Coupland suggest that “Discourse is language use relative to social, political, and cultural formations – it is language reflecting the social order but also language shaping the social order, and shaping the individuals’ interaction with society” (3). Additionally, I maintain that images,

in parallel with language, reflect and shape the social order, and therefore visual discourse must be considered alongside linguistic discourse.

For this reason, in order to characterize the “broader social order” many researchers have asserted the importance of “interrogating the images” (Hall n.d.) and linguistic representations – the discourses – of popular culture (Apple 1986, 83; Said 1978; Williams 1977; Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999), for “behind the commodity, the book [or newspaper or film], there stands, indeed, a whole set of human relations” (Apple 1986, 88). This line of reasoning has been particularly well argued with regard to the dialectical discursive relationships between particular social categories and cultural representations of these identities (van Dijk 1998, 1999; McCarthy 1993, 1998; Hall, n.d.; Kellner 1995; Alvermann, Moon and Hagood 1999). These dialectical relationships can be conceptualized as a continual cycle of exchange between communities of people and the discourses that describe and define them and other communities.

I propose to briefly examine discourses regarding Mexican-heritage migrants and the South, particularly those which I know influenced me before my arrival in this region of the nation a decade ago, because my dissertation is, in the end, a cultural representation of the experience of Mexican-heritage migrants in the rural South and thus a part of the larger societal discourses regarding these topics. By examining representations and preconceived notions regarding my topic, I believe I have become better prepared to reflect upon and challenge my own work to move beyond problematically reified categories in social discourses about these topics.

What I Knew of the South

I never knew many Southerners nor had I traveled in the South before 1989. When I reflect upon what I knew, or thought I knew of the rural American South before my first visit to this region as a Peace Corps trainee, three media that create and transmit images and discourses come to mind: popular television, literature, and Southern history in both academic and popular forums. Although I am certain that there were other cultural representations of the South that I was exposed to and consumed during my youth, the discourses presented by these media clearly have played an important role in structuring my thought about the rural South. However, as McGee (1983) points out, the discourses in these media cannot necessarily be assembled into a consistent representation of the South.

According to social mythology, the South has been a land of romantic plantations, lazy po-white trash, rich and evil slave masters, noble yeoman farmers, white supremacists, political conservatives, religious fundamentalists, agrarians, newly developing industries and education, savagery and decadence, and insurmountable social problems. (100)

Despite their inconsistency, these media build a powerful, problematic, and incomplete collection of discourses of Dixie.

Television

When I was a young child during the late 1960s and early 1970s, popular television was full of situation comedies representing the people of the rural South. During this era shows such as *Gomer Pyle U.S.M.C.*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and *Green Acres* were consistently in the top ten of Nielson's annual audience size ratings (Verschuure 1982; Blake 2002). As Vershuure asserts, most of these shows "portrayed both the southerner, and the South in general, as a backward land inhabited by mindless simpletons" (1982, 92). By the mid-1970s, these shows had entered syndicated immortality and I remember spending many hours watching them

alongside my parents and sister. By the end of the decade, *The Dukes of Hazzard* and their Confederate flag-bearing car “General Lee” were a regular part of my television routine. Both McGee (1983) and Kirby (1986, 163) demonstrate how long-standing staple characters and popular stereotypes of the South were the basis for this comedy show. The corrupt law man, his bumbling and drawling assistant, the underdressed young woman, the rowdy young man, and the multigenerational and dirt-poor family living under one roof all have antecedents in Erskine Caldwell’s extremely popular but problematic book (and later movie) *Tobacco Road* about “Jeeter Lester and his lazy-greedy-morbid tribe” (Kirby 1986, 54). While presenting white Southerners as poor, uneducated comic fools, these televised images of the South generally erased the existence of Blacks.

Literature

During my senior year in high school, I had the opportunity to study under a vibrant and brilliant literature teacher, George Ball. His literary love in life was William Faulkner and Faulkner’s stories of fictional Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi during the post-Civil War / pre-Civil Rights era. Thus, I read many of Faulkner’s works, which often reinforced and enhanced the images of the South presented on television. Faulkner’s stories consistently represent tensions between elite, “respectable” white land-owners and poor whites, as in the short stories “A Rose for Emily” and “Barn Burning” (Faulkner, 1950). In the macabre “Rose for Emily,” an elite white southern woman murders her poorer suitor and hides his body in her mansion, where she sleeps with his bones for forty years. The villain in “Barn Burning” “is a mercenary, vicious poor white” (Tuck 1964, 216) a former Confederate soldier who, in vengeance for perceived slights of class, attempts to burn down the barn of the man for whom he

sharecrops. Meanwhile Faulkner's representations of blacks are inconsistent, but generally written from a white narrative position. For example, "The Bear" (Faulkner 1942) follows an elite white teenaged boy's unraveling of his family's sordid history of slave ownership and sexual exploitation.

Also during my senior year, Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize winning *The Color Purple* (1982) made the rounds among the college-bound students in my class. Walker's work presented an Afro-centric, feminist perspective on the rural South that complemented Faulkner's work. Set in south Georgia, *The Color Purple*'s portrayal of violent racism and sexism is stark. Despite its hopeful conclusion, the book does not portray the rural South in terms that challenged my understanding of this place as an oppressive and unappealing locale.

History and Academe

Despite being too young at the time of his assassination to actually remember his life, I know that I have always held Martin Luther King, Jr. in high regard. I distinctly remember a middle school assignment to identify and write about our heroes. I collected photos of and wrote about Mahatma Gandhi and Reverend King. Thus, from a relatively early age I remember identifying, at least superficially, with the African American struggle in the South. In the mid 1980s I watched the video series *Eyes on the Prize* (Henry Hampton 1986). I was moved by the searing images of lynchings, assassinations, fire bombs, water hoses, and attack dogs deployed by segregationist white southerners, Bull Connor, and the Ku Klux Klan against righteous adults and children of color. Also while in college I attended a lecture by Danish photographer Jacob Holdt. His *American Pictures* (1985) book and presentation graphically depicts the inequalities

of American society and the way the ideology of racism is used to justify injustice, particularly in the South.

The Discourse of Dixie

As I review the influences on my own thinking and imagining of the South before I came here, the morality play of Southern history as I understood it was clear-cut. Neil Young's angry song "Southern Man" summed up the discourse of Dixie that I knew:

I saw cotton and I saw black
Tall white mansions and little shacks
Southern man when will you pay them back?
I heard screamin' and bullwhips cracking
How long? How long? (Young 1970)

As Marius (1984) has asserted, for many people, including me, the South was "the regional incarnation of all that was hateful and decadent and backward about America" (145). Thus, when I came south over a decade ago, I did not expect to find much that would appeal to me. The buffoons on television, the motifs of Faulkner and Walker, and the images of Civil Rights movement were imbedded in my assumptions about what I would find. I arrived expecting to see stark contrasts between old monied, former slave-holding families and potentially sociopathic poor whites. I expected to find impoverished children of former sharecroppers still scratching out a hard-scrabble existence. I expected to find overt animosity between whites and blacks and social segregation still at work.

In retrospect, I can never know what I would have seen if I had not arrived with these expectations. Nonetheless, I do know that too many of my preconceptions seemed to be confirmed during my first years in the South for me to simply set aside the discourse of Dixie.

Mexican heritage Migrants and Representations Thereof

I came to rural North Carolina's old tobacco belt in 1991 to work as a translator and health advocate for Mexican-heritage farm workers. Although I had grown up around farming, I had not been around migrants of any background before. The dairy farming in upstate New York that I was familiar with has always been a largely family-based enterprise, and the year-round nature of the work contrasts with the type of seasonal agricultural labor that attracts the Mexican-heritage migrant stream. Thus, when I came to work among migrants, I knew as little about them as most Americans, which is next to nothing.

Silence, Invisibility, and Erasure

As Rothenberg writes:

Our supermarkets are filled with glistening produce ... fruits and vegetables appear before us as if by magic ... Few people realize that virtually every vegetable or piece of fruit we eat was handpicked by a farmworker, a member of our nation's poorest and most disadvantaged class of laborers. (1998, xiii)

We all depend upon Mexican-heritage migrant laborers who work for sub-poverty wages to provide us with low-priced foods and a higher standard of living. Nonetheless, for the vast majority of Americans, the realities of migrant farm labor are hidden. Clearly, the existence of migrant farmworkers is systematically denied in our culture through a dominant discourse of silence, invisibility, and erasure. Popular movies, television, journalism, and literature largely ignore their existence and contribution to our economy and society. Rothenberg provides a response as to why such invisibility is sustained by elites and average Americans alike:

Farmworkers earn an average of \$6,500 per year and commonly suffer abuses that would be inconceivable in other industries. [They have been] consistently denied the legal protections provided to other workers ... The poverty and marginalization of migrant farmworkers calls into question America's vision of itself as an egalitarian nation that offers a fair deal to anyone willing to work hard for a living. (1998, xiii)

Contributing to this erasure of migrancy is the portrayal of the farm and farmer in sanitized, unrealistic, but powerful cultural images in American society. From television's *Green Acres* and Mr. Greenjeans to Fisher-Price's Farm Activity Set and the song *Old MacDonald*, the ideals of the farm, the farmer, and farming are important symbols of a supposed common American heritage.¹ And, as with other "American" images, the farm has been cleaned up by what Loewen (1995) describes as "herofication." Farms are bucolic and pastoral, rather than noisy and smelly; farmers are earthy and thoughtful, rather than dirty and parochial; farmwork is honest and happy, rather than exploitative and poisoning. For these reasons, cultural representations of farms most often exclude the actual farmworkers wading in manure, broiling under the sun, being injured by machinery, and dying young of cancer.

So, although I had grown up around farming and knew that manure smelled and that farmers could be very difficult people to get along with, I had no first-hand experience nor second-hand cultural exposure to migrant farmworkers and their lives.

Litany of Sorrows

Given that I started out knowing very little about Mexican-heritage migrants, I did learn a great deal during my years in migrant outreach. Nonetheless, when I sat down to write and present my first academic paper on the topic (Phenis, Nuñez and Beck, 1998), I fell into a discursive pattern that has been identified as "deficit thinking" (Valencia and Suzuki 2001, xxii) and "benevolent racism" (Villenas 2001, 4). This discursive pattern served to reproduce problematic representations of migrants that reified their supposed inadequacies as people and parents as compared to the supposed white middle-class American norm.

In her fieldwork among Latinos and their health and social service providers in rural

North Carolina, Villenas repeatedly understood the predominantly white service providers' self-presentation as "characterized by a publicly welcoming response attached to a genuine concern for the 'Latino plight'" (2001, 7). These "well-meaning" (Villenas 2002, 31) service providers were institutionally and personally inclined toward validating their work with their clients by focusing upon "what Latino parents didn't do or didn't have" (Villenas 2001, 7) as compared to white *Norte Americano* norms. As Villenas notes, this deficit orientation is hard to avoid for "the line between viewing people with 'needs' and viewing people with 'deficits' is very thin for Latino/as who are marked in the larger society by the race, class, language, and immigration status" (Villenas 2002, 22).

Unsurprisingly, as a white educational and health service provider who had worked among Latino migrants in North Carolina and Georgia, I fell into this discourse during my early academic work. My first paper presentation on migrancy was unfortunately entitled "The Plight of the Migrant Child" and was presented at the National Youth-at-Risk Conference (Phenis, Núñez and Beck 1998). In retrospect, I regret this choice of title and forum. Nonetheless, this fact does support Villenas' assertion that what she labeled as the discourse of benevolent racism is pervasive among those intending to help migrants in the South.

One reason for the power of this discourse is that when Americans move beyond the earlier-described discourse of silence, invisibility and erasure regarding Mexican-heritage migrants, they can be easily overwhelmed by the seemingly pervasive misery of migrant life as contrasted with *Norte Americano* norms. This pattern is not limited to me and the southern service providers Villenas observed. In my review of the literature regarding Mexican-heritage migrants I have identified what I call the discourse of "migrancy as a litany of sorrows" in the work of many academics, advocates, and journalists. As Sabia (1999), writing of the Mexican-

heritage migrant population in the Vidalia region asserts:

Existing research on the migrant farm laborer has tended to dwell on the victimization of the migrant population. Academic studies have tended to focus on the internal dysfunctions and external barriers that impede Latino social assimilation and economic ascendance, particularly among migrant laborers. (95)

This discourse emphasizes the impact of macro-level social structures upon migrants, problematically de-emphasizing their agency as individuals and as a collective capable of altering their condition. Cisneros (1994) drew together some strong examples of this discourse:

In 1967 Robert Coles, the well-known child psychologist and political activist, wrote about the “psychological pressures of growing up in the cycle of migrant farmwork.” He said, “How literally extraordinary, and in fact how extraordinarily cruel their lives are: the constant mobility, the leave-takings and the fearful arrivals, the demanding work they often manage to do, the extreme hardship that goes with a meager (at best) income, the need always to gird oneself for the next slur, the next sharp rebuke ... The misery ... cannot be denied its importance, because not only bodies but minds suffer out of hunger and untreated illness.” Nearly three decades later, these same problems and challenges remain: a 1993 [National Advisory Council on Migrant Health] study reported that migrant farmworker life still consists mainly of “poverty, hard manual labor, unsanitary living conditions, lack of medical insurance or access to care facilities, high rates of illness, early death, economic uncertainty, and personal humiliation” (8).

In this discourse, the material circumstances and deprivations of migrancy take front stage while migrants are reduced to "cogs" in the machine of capitalist agriculture. Using this discourse, Lange (1936), Steinbeck (1939), Agee and Evans (1941), and Murrow (1960) brought migrancy to the, albeit short-term, attention of the American public. Discourse of migrancy as a litany of sorrows calls out for action, but that tends to deny the ability of migrants to play a role in such action.

Discourse of Dixie + Litany of Sorrows = Expectations of Oppression

It was from within these discourses about the rural South and migrants that I began my academic examination of Mexican-heritage migrants in this region. Given this combination of

preconceptions, it should be no surprise that I approached my pilot study assuming that I would find a great deal of oppression in the southern Mexican-heritage experience.

It seemed only logical to assume that the long history of class and race-based exploitation of poor blacks and whites by landowning farmers would simply be transferred onto the South's newest, relatively impoverished brown arrivals. And, as the last chapter has described, there are a number of objective measures that indicate that this may very well be happening. It seemed sensible to expect that local racists would simply shift long-standing attitudes regarding blacks onto those who were replacing African Americans in the fields, another group of phenotypically distinct people, Mexican-heritage workers. It seemed reasonable that traditions of physical violence and intimidation, long used to "keep Blacks in line" would be applied to the social and political control of Latinos in the rural South. Such concerns are not entirely misplaced either. University of Georgia sociologist E.M. Beck has statistically documented that the activities of white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan has increased in precisely the parts of the South with the fastest growing immigrant populations (E.M. Beck 2000).

Expectations of Oppression in Research regarding Latinos in the South

Other researchers and writers working in a wide range of academic fields examining the status of Mexicans and other Latinos in the South have clearly started with similar assumptions and presented evidence to support such concerns. For example, in the introduction to *Latino Workers in the Contemporary South*, anthropologists Duchon and Murphy state:

One would probably expect such populations to have a hard time in the South, and indeed in some cases at the beginning of the new phase of immigration service providers were concerned for the very lives of the new residents (Viviano 1986). After all, the South has a history of racial intolerance, xenophobia, and poverty. (Duchon and Murphy 2001, 2)

Similarly, in introducing his examination of the status of Mexican-heritage workers across the

South, rural sociologist Saenz (2000) states:

My interest in examining nonmetro and metro distinctions in the labor market experiences of Mexican immigrants stems from the less lucrative labor markets of nonmetro areas and the relatively high degree of racial and ethnic intolerance commonly associated with these settings, especially in the South. (62)

A relatively large proportion of the academic studies of the Latino influx into the South have been conducted in Siler City, North Carolina, due to its proximity to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Most of these studies have interrogated the relevance of the South's history of racial oppression to the development of an understanding of contemporary Latino experience here. For example, educational anthropologist Murillo (2002) asks of Siler City's Latinos "How does it feel to be a *Problem?*":

Given the addition of a "third race" to a historically biracial southern community, do newcomer Latinos face instances when southern etiquette is at moments suspended, so as to initially enforce the structures of exclusion and displacement? The history of physical violence directed at African Americans in the South reminds us that breaches in etiquette would not be unprecedented. Are the old race-relation conventions perhaps made to fit new demographic configurations, as practices and beliefs of exclusion become legitimized through policy? (219)

In her own work regarding Siler City (pseudonymed "Hope City"), Villenas (2001) discusses the anti-immigrant activity of the Ku Klux Klan in the town by stating

While, in general, Hope City residents did not want the "sleepy" town to be associated with Klan activity, the material realities of white supremacy as cultural and ideological domination (hooks 1995) have always been present in the everyday lives of Hope City residents. Institutionalized racism was rampant in the areas of housing, employment, and police surveillance. (7)

Geographer Cravey (1997), writing of Latino poultry workers in Siler City asserts that Latinos have become part of a "highly racialized division of labor in agriculture" in the South: "African Americans and Latinos have been two vulnerable groups upon which southern poultry factories have come to rely" (297). Writing of the same locale in North Carolina, oral historian Love (2000) writes "race still divided the county socially and economically, a division that was

exacerbated by the influx of relatively poor Hispanic immigrants, most of whom were willing to take the lowest-paying jobs and endure discrimination silently” (5).

Finally, journalism professor Vargas (2000) frames her feminist and postcolonial analysis of news coverage regarding Latinos in North Carolina as follows:

North Carolina has both a diverse population and a long history of racial prejudice and discrimination against peoples of color. ... North Carolina is in the southern Black Belt, a region characterized by sharp distinctions between Blacks and Whites. Southern Blacks are over-represented in every national indicator of poor quality of life (Wimberly and Morris 1997). Against this historical backdrop whereby social stratification is closely linked to race, Latinos are being racialized and constructed discursively as another of the state’s inferior races. (267)

As should be clear from these examples, the assumption that Mexican-heritage migrants would encounter oppressive circumstances in the historically racialized South was and is widely presented and oftentimes supported by research across a number of different fields. Nonetheless, as the following sections will demonstrate, projecting such a discursive pattern onto contemporary Mexican-heritage experience in the South can be problematic.

Expectations of Oppression in my Pilot Study Interviews

Given my pre-existing conceptions about the South and migrancy and the general academic discourse about the topic of Mexican heritage migrant experience in the South, it should be no surprise that in the winter of 1998-1999 I entered my first oral history interviews for my pilot study expecting to find evidence of discrimination and injustice in the stories of the participants. These assumptions occasionally manifested themselves in my role in the pilot study interviews. I did not fully understand this problematic dynamic until the spring of 2002 when, in preparation for my dissertation interviews, I re-examined the tapes and transcripts from my pilot study. When I did, I was heartily embarrassed and troubled by a few of my interview questions

Scott: How about just insulted? You said that some . . .	<i>interpretation</i>
Ignacia: I don't understand what you're . . .	<i>I return to a modified version of the question</i>
Scott: Well, I guess I'm asking, have there been times in your life or instances in your life when you felt insulted personally because you were Hispanic?	<i>Ignacia attempts to minimize our difference by seeking clarification</i>
Ignacia: Because I was Hispanic?	
Scott: Or when you were insulted personally or when you were physically threatened because of it?	<i>My fourth use of "insulted" and third use of "threatened"</i>
Ignacia: Are you saying like that time whenever that teacher said that to me . . .	<i>Ignacia refers back to her earlier story of a teacher who flippantly dismissed her future potential, seemingly because of her status as a migrant</i>
Scott: Yeah, and you were also talking about some of the students calling you racist names . Did it ever get worse than that?	<i>I cut her off improperly</i> <i>Until this point in the interview, Ignacia has not used the term racist/racism. In fact, earlier in the interview she rejected my use of this term</i>
Ignacia: No. It never got worse than that. It was just you know it hurts your feelings when someone calls you a wetback, kinda singling you out. And you know you're not different than anybody else. Now what basically gets me, what I get angry about is people talking about the Hispanic community...	<i>Ignacia uses the escape that I provided her by asserting it never was worse, even though my interpretation is problematic.</i> <i>Possibly in response to my persistent search for negativity, Ignacia then turns to a contemporary issue regarding prejudice</i>
(Ignacia Marquez Johnson 1 st solo 12/16/98, 271-284) ⁴	

Clearly, I entered the interviews of winter 1998-1999 caught within the expectations of oppression that the discourses of Dixie and migrancy as a litany of sorrows had encouraged me to construct. I persisted in ignoring her more positive perspective and in imposing my understanding upon Ignacia until she acquiesced. It is important to note though that the leading and negative questioning exemplified here was not all pervasive in the interviews. As noted before, this is one of a relatively small number of problematic examples. For this reason, and because the participants persisted in asserting their perspectives, even in the face of my

imposition, I do not believe that all the pilot study data is irrevocably tainted. Thus, I will use data from the pilot interviews, but not without comparison with the stories from my more recent dissertation interviews, which reflect a much more careful consideration of my role as an interviewer.

Toward a New Understanding of Mexican-heritage Experience in the South

As described in this and the previous chapter, the discourses of Dixie and migrancy as a litany of sorrows are not entirely without basis in reality. Clearly the issues of class and race inequity in the South remain to this day and appear to be relevant to the educational experiences of Latinos in the Vidalia onion region. Nonetheless, this is not a region entirely populated by Bull Connors and Daisy Maes, Celies and Reverend Kings. An understanding of the region built upon such a limited cast of characters and the discursive patterns they support can only lead to further stereotyping and misrepresentation. As for migrancy, the issues of inhumane immigration laws, substandard housing, unhealthy work conditions, below poverty wages, inadequate child care, continued child labor, virulent prejudice, and constant threats of violence faced by migrants must be addressed if the educational status and material living conditions of Mexican-heritage migrants are to be improved. Nonetheless, when these realities become all-consuming, the realm of human agency is lost as they form an inventory of difficulties that seems to deny the possibility of action to both insiders and outsiders. Apple (1990) comments:

Certainly, we must be honest about the ways power, knowledge, and interest are interrelated and made manifest, about how hegemony is economically and culturally maintained. But, we also must remember that the very sense of personal and collective futility that may come from such honesty is itself an aspect of an effective dominant culture. (161)

For this dissertation to be more than a mere confirmation of what I thought I already knew, I have needed to move beyond and expand my pre-existing conceptions of the status of Mexican-heritage peoples in the rural South. My embarrassment at the pilot study interview sections analyzed above and my realization that I had much to learn about their understanding of the world was an important step toward a more balanced perspective on the Mexican heritage experience in the schools of the Vidalia region.

Another crucial step forward came for me when I applied a less intrusive method of interviewing to my dissertation interviews and began to hear the often positive experiences of my participants. This more balanced way of questioning and listening, described in Chapter 4 and exemplified in the data presentation for this dissertation, allowed me to develop a more complex understanding of my participants' lives. My resultant analysis balances the positive with the negative, agency with structure, choice with constraints. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, my preconceived notions based upon pre-existing societal discourses regarding my topic did not support such a balance when I first examined in my pilot study the status of Mexican-heritage migrants in the rural South. My previous knowledge of the topic and my personal predilections led me to emphasize structure over agency and thereby obscure the crucial fact that my participants have chosen to live their lives in rural South Georgia and, within the context of that choice, acted as rational, self-interested people seeking to maximize opportunities for themselves and their families. It was with my realization of this imbalance that I re-approached my dissertation research with a self-reflective intentionality to extend, challenge, and reconstruct my understandings of how Mexican-heritage people have acted and made meaning out of their lives in the South within the context of social traditions and constraints.

Endnotes for Chapter 3

¹ Although less than 2% of Americans today are farmers, nearly all of us have great grandparents who worked the land. Thus, the farm serves as a common cultural reference point in the building of the American identity. Appiah and Guttman (1996, 87) provide a very clear critique of the idea of a “common” American culture, asserting that there is no such thing. Rather, there is a “dominant” American culture that privileged Americans misconstrue as “common” to all.

² See the Appendix for a description of the transcription conventions used here.

³ As with all of the participants in this study, Ignacia Marquez Johnson is a pseudonym. She will be introduced along with the other primary participants in greater detail in Chapter 5.

⁴ This citation format will be used for excerpts from the oral history interviews: Ignacia Marquez Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 67-75 = Turns 67-75 from Initial Individual Interview by Scott A.L. Beck with Ignacia Marquez Johnson, conducted December 16, 1998.

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FRAME AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Following Willis' (2000) suggestion quoted at the beginning of Chapter 3, this chapter outlines the revised perspective that I bring to the rest of this dissertation – a perspective that allows a more balanced way of viewing and representing the experiences of my Mexican-heritage participants in rural Georgia. This renewed theoretical framework has served to structure how I entered the field, what I have looked for, and how I have interpreted what I have found. Therefore this framework requires explicit explanation before I describe my research methods and process and present the data I have collected.

Postpositivist Realist Theory: Ontological Foundations

My theoretical framework is based in postpositivist realism, an approach that has emerged from literary theory and has found application regarding questions of history, identity, and multicultural education. Its foundations are found in the work of Wilhelm Hegel, Karl Marx, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Raymond Williams, Richard Boyd, and especially Sandra Harding. Its first strong articulation emerged in the writings of Satya Mohanty ([1993]2000), particularly in his book *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (1997). Important to my research project regarding the experience of Mexican Americans, postpositivist realist theory has found support among prominent Chicano and Latino

scholars including José David Saldívar, Ramón Saldívar, Linda Martín Alcoff, Paula Moya, and Michael Hames-García.

Postpositivist realism, as I use it in this dissertation draws heavily from Harding's feminist standpoint theory (1991). Postpositivist realism is essentially a rearticulation of feminist standpoint theory with a stronger emphasis on the theory-mediated and recursive process of developing knowledge. Mohanty, Harding, and I pursue this method by starting inquiry with attention to the position of marginalized others. Postpositivist realism and feminist standpoint theory build upon dominant, but incomplete and sometimes inaccurate knowledge by adding devalued and previously dismissed perspectives to construct more accurate, but still incomplete interpretations of how the world works.

In this approach, marginalized perspectives are considered to have valuable epistemic privilege. Epistemic privilege is granted to those whose relatively limited power and privilege allows the possibility of seeing through the obscurity of hegemony and the development of "alternative theoretical pictures and accounts of the world we all share" (Mohanty 2000, 61). In this way, we are encouraged to pay serious attention to the alternative perspectives voiced by people of color, women, the poor, and others whose daily material lives are constrained by prejudice, exploitation, and exclusion. This places the voices of the marginalized on equal footing with dominant perspectives. The two are then synthesized into a new, better but still imperfect interpretations of the world. Postpositivist realism extends the work of Harding by emphasizing the crucial importance of recursivity and multiple marginalized perspectives to this process.

The logic of postpositivist realist theory has been most clearly articulated by Mohanty's Chicana feminist student Paula Moya (2000, 2002). Moya explains that postpositivist realist

theory starts with the ontological assumption that social categories have systematic material impacts upon lived experience (2000, 87). To paraphrase and extend Cornel West (1994): race, class, gender, and sexuality “matter.” This assertion finds strong theoretical support in the work of Neo-Marxists, Critical Race Theorists, and Standpoint Feminists. Just as crucially, it is supported by decades of research in education, history, sociology, political science, economics, women's studies, racial / ethnic studies, and many other fields that has repeatedly demonstrated the salience of social categories in understanding the differential life opportunities of people. Most importantly, as the following pages explain, this theory acknowledges, is embedded within, and validates the lived experiences of millions of human beings who know the daily trials, pains, and dangers of poverty, sexism, racism, and homophobia.¹

History, Identity, and Postpositivist Realism

Roman (1992) states researchers “cannot afford to ignore the fact that social subjects are born into and socially constituted” (574) by what Sharp (1982) described as “a world already made” (50). This assertion is reminiscent of Foucault’s (1972) conception of pre-existing social discourses. In this case, the distinction between Foucault’s concept and the postpositivist “world already made” regards the nature of the relationship between social construction and material context. In contrast, in a postpositivist frame, the “world already made” is rooted in a material reality, that although it cannot be fully defined, can be approached and understood through a socially mediated process of epistemic cooperation. This is the heart of post-positivistic empiricism.

The world exists independently of our knowledge of it; it is not paradigm specific. But significant portions of it, namely the social and the cultural aspects of it, including much of the natural world, are also causally affected by our actions, our theories, and our knowledge-gathering procedures (Mohanty 1997, 193).

Thus, the meaning of the world cannot be entirely redefined through social construction. Rather, it exists in a dialectical relationship wherein the material context of the world serves as a validity check upon social constructions, while social constructions, in turn, influence material reality.

Postpositivist realism asserts that there are empirical facts, such as the fact that the Mexican-heritage population of the Vidalia onion region has grown dramatically during the past generation and the fact that Javier will never get his hand back. These facts can be substantiated through the observation and study of concrete data, records, and human lives. Nonetheless, what these facts mean is another thing altogether. Empirical facts such as these impact the social construction of our world, but not in a singly definable and clear manner. Rather empirical facts are interpreted and understood through a recursive process of individual interpretation, cognitive theory building, and the social testing and revision of such theories.

Despite the fact that we are born into certain historically-situated identity categories, these categories are not inflexible in postpositivist realist theory. They are socially constructed and are thus continually in motion through time relative to their membership and the society around them. In this way, an important connection is to be made between the concept of a “community of practice” (Levinson and Holland 1996) and the concept of a social category. A community of practice is not anchored to a single center, but it is held within bounds determined by material realities such as poverty, gender, or skin color. Thus, social categories can be understood as somewhat fluid, but not arbitrary nor fragmented, communities of practice with shifting centers of gravity that move as the lives and actions, entries and departures of the members of the category impact the meaning of the community as understood by its members and by outsiders.

Also, a single social category or community of practice does not define each individual. Nor is each individual simplistically located at the “intersection” of multiple, but separable categories.² Rather, each person “blends” (Hames-García 2000, 103) different categories and communities of practice, with the blending producing a unique, inseparable, and continually evolving individual identity that is both more than and different from a sum of its component parts.

Through a mutually-influential blending, a person’s identity is outlined, although not fixed in time or space. Instead, “there is a non-arbitrary limit to the range of identities we can plausibly ‘construct’ or ‘choose’ for any individual in a given society” (Moya 2000, 87) at a given historical moment.³ A contemporary wealthy, gay, African American male can credibly choose to move between different “situated selves” such as “hip-hop” or “academic elite” discourse-identities or “opera lover” or “Boston Red Sox fan” affinity-identities. However, he could not credibly claim to be an impoverished white woman in our society today, for the constraints of his social location and experiences preclude such claims as both unreasonable and of little explanatory or predictive value regarding his life experiences.

Postpositivist Realist Theory, Cultural Production, and History in Person

The ontological assumptions outlined above place postpositivist realist theory adjacent to, but distinguishable from both the positivist and postmodernist traditions. This sets the stage for an epistemology based upon the postpositivist realist assertion “that it is possible for human beings to have knowledge that is about the world as it is” (Alcoff 2000, 315) and the postpositivist assertion that this reality can be studied and approached, although it can never be fully understood within the limits of human endeavor and cognition. Crucially, I do not claim

that it is possible to develop absolutely certain and accurate knowledge – that would be inconsistent with the premises of postpositivism. However, neither does postpositivist realism accept that fallibility implies the impossibility of knowledge and the reduction to relativism. Instead, postpositivist realism recognizes that not all empiricism is positivist in nature, and not every search for knowledge of the real world is a search for certainty (Zammito 2000, 298-300). Starting with these premises, Moya (2000, 80-87) explains the reasoning underpinning the postpositivist realist theory of identity.

Levinson and Holland assert that the “educated person is culturally *produced* in definite sites” (1996, 14). Holland and Lave’s (2001) “history in person” suggests that we should attend to how people are “historically fashioned” (30). Postpositivist realist theory clarifies the nature of this production or fashioning by explaining that an individual’s social location (their nature- and institutional-identities) within a society will serve to circumscribe that person’s collection of experiences. A person’s enduring self (Spindler and Spindler 1994), when placed within a historically-situated social context will generally result in his or her exposure to, invitation into, or exclusion from particular communities of practice. Bourdieu developed this premise into his concept of “cultural capital” (1986) whereby a child born into a wealthy family is much more likely to be exposed to socializing experiences that are highly valorized in their particular society. In contrast, as Moll et.al. have demonstrated, a poor child’s “funds of knowledge” (1992) are likely devalued and dismissed by social institutions such as schools.⁴ These individual patterns of exposure, inclusion, and exclusion will structure her collection of experiences and, in turn influence, although not determine, her process of identity formation. Thus, as asserted by Holland and her collaborators, in postpositivist realist theory social structures constrain individual agency.

Nonetheless, historical structures do not usurp contemporary agency, for the context of our lives is continually evolving through time, demanding restructuring of our narratives of the self, our cognitive theories of who we are in the world. In this way, postpositivist realist theory provides a forum for substantial individual and social group agency through cognitive theory building. "Postpositivist realism puts [individuals] in the world with nothing but our theories to make sense of things" (Hames-García 2000, 108).⁵ These things, each person's experiences, are "contextual and dispersed and [are] subject to reflection and reorganization" (Wilkerson 2000, 258).

Therefore, within the postpositivist realist conception, an individual's identity is "a process of meaning making" (Alcoff 2000, 325), a cognitive effort to explain his or her experience. Giddens (1991) has similarly characterized the maintenance of self-identity as "the reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives" (5).⁶

Since different people, even if they are of similarly historically-situated backgrounds, will over time collect different experiences and use different interlocutors to discuss these experiences, each will recursively construct different narratives or theories of self-identity to understand their lives. In this way, "cultural models are 'distributed' unevenly across the individual members of a community because the public 'instituted models' ... are appropriated and therefore internalized in different ways by such individuals" (Levinson 2001, 349). Over time, two people of similar backgrounds may diverge in their individual theories of the self. They may even eventually come to interpret the same event in opposing ways as they apply their divergent self identity narratives to the cognitive process of interpreting their "shared" lived

experience. Thus two seemingly “similar” people can come to see the world and themselves in largely incompatible ways.

This potential for individual divergence in identities is moderated by the role of conversational interlocutors. Gee (2001) notes, “People can actively construe the same identity trait in different ways, and they can negotiate and contest how their traits are to be seen (by themselves and others)” (8). Ochs and Capps (2001) call this “living narrative,” “ordinary social exchanges in which interlocutors build accounts of life events” (2), co-constructing narrative theories that both explain personal experience and form self-identity. Postpositivist realist Henze asserts “A person's interpretation of her experience ... is necessarily social; it draws upon 'accounts and notions' provided by one's social environment. ... Others play an essential and inevitable collaborative role in producing the interpretive framework through which one views one's life” (2000, 233-234).

Similarly, in situated learning theory:

Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning. These systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are part of systems among persons. The person is defined by, as well as defines, these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities (Lave and Wenger 1991, 53).

This study depends upon the assertion of the important role of social interaction as a mediating force in the development of theories of the self (Gee 2001, Ochs and Capps 2001, Henze 2000, Lave and Wenger 1991). Mohanty (1997) and Moya (2000) continue from this assertion to the claim that interpretation of experience through socially-mediated, theory-building cognitive processes allows for and predicts differential accuracy and error in the interpretation of experience by different individuals with different experiences and different

conversational partners. My postpositivist realism thus depends upon finite and fallible, rather than ideal and epistemic agents (Mohanty 1997, 114). This assertion can be expanded beyond individuals puzzling out their lives to include academic researchers puzzling out a study topic. Thus, some individuals or researchers will at different times develop narratives of the world that are either more or less accurate or erroneous in their explanation of how the world works. As would be anticipated by empirical method, "our best test for the accuracy of an interpretation of experience is whether or not it continues to provide coherent explanations of future experiences" (Wilkerson 2000, 265).

An Epistemic Basis for a Political Standpoint

As noted earlier in this chapter, postpositivist realism calls for attention to the perspectives of marginalized peoples as a means to challenge and revise dominant perspectives. Additionally though, in order for marginalized perspectives to present such a challenge to hegemony, they need a politicized or critical edge, what Harding calls a "standpoint" (1991). This assertion acknowledges that oppressed and marginalized people can construct narratives that serve to facilitate the status quo and reinforce hegemony without providing any leverage toward change. For example, a woman who is repeatedly beaten by her husband may construct a theory or narrative of her experience that attributes the violence to her "failure" to be an ideal homemaker. Nonetheless, no matter how many times dinner is on the table and the house is spotless when he gets home, the beatings will likely continue. In this way, her theory about the violence can be said to be inaccurate because it does not have predictive value. In contrast, a more politicized narrative that identifies the situation as explicitly abusive and locates the problem outside herself

will likely allow her both more accuracy in her predictions and more liberatory alternatives in her actions.

Willis' (1977) famous study of working class lads provides another example of the emergence of an alternative world view that lacks a politicized standpoint. Willis' lads socially constructed a narrative of class identity. They personally internalized and publicly celebrated this narrative. However, it only served to prepare them for a life of labor. The lads' theory of the world did not carry any power for them to see outside the social system and change their position. It simply allowed them to avoid admitting their future drudgery as factory workers by glorifying their status as their own choice.⁷ The lads did not socially construct cognitive and political tools to actualize their opposition to the social system, only to accommodate themselves to it. Within postpositivist realist theory this draws into question the epistemic value of the identities they built for themselves because postpositivist realist theory asserts that identities and the communities of practice that coalesce around them can be critiqued according to their explicative and liberatory (Friere [1970]1993) power.

Similarly, recent work by critical race theorists has shown the value of building and presenting politicized narratives based upon the life experiences of people of color or from other marginalized groups. Critical race theorists have repeatedly used personal narratives to reveal the limits of mainstream understandings and precedents. For example, although dominant perspectives in law regarding prejudice and discrimination may assert that our nation's criminal justice system is fair and color-blind, CRT narratives, such as *The Rodrigo Chronicles* (Delgado 1995) show the persistence of racism in the lived experience of marginalized people and how even well-intentioned efforts toward equity and civil rights can contribute to the perpetuation of injustice. The work of bell hooks' has followed a similar path. She has repeatedly told powerful

stories from her own experience that foreground her marginalized perspective so as to remind, challenge, and sometimes shock her readers that all is still not well with the world (1984, 1989, 1992, 1995). Thus, CRT and hooks demonstrate the power of narrative, as asserted by postpostivist realism, and turn that power toward politically liberatory ends.

In this way, historically-situated, and socially constructed, material reality serves as a validity check upon infinite creativity in the construction of theories of the self, the world, or history.

The theories of identity or history that we construct will lead us toward either more accurate and useful understandings, or more erroneous and problematic misunderstandings of reality. Some theories will have comparatively greater epistemic value, explanatory power, and effective usefulness because they better account for “the multiple determinants of an individual’s social location” (Moya 2000, 84)⁸ or because they better account for the multiple determinants of a particular historical question. Our ability to comprehend the world depends upon “our ability to acknowledge and understand the social, political, economic, and epistemic consequences of our social location” (Moya 2000, 85). Critical race theorists have shown these consequences to be political with significant impacts upon social justice for marginalized people and groups. Those theories that are successful in explaining and predicting should be preserved and further developed, while those that fail this test should be modified or rejected. Within postpostivist realism, the claims to knowledge by both individuals seeking meaning and self-identity in their lives and researchers seeking understanding in their data will always be contingent and subject to revision, but they provide a position from which to learn and to act in the world.

My Standpoint

As can be assumed from the fact that I am writing a doctoral dissertation at a major university, my daily life is not tightly constrained by prejudice, exploitation, and exclusion. I am a son of privilege who cannot claim to be either a Mexican heritage migrant or southern insider. Thus, I have to write out of my lived experience and I must “reckon with” my own situatedness (Zammito 2000, 283).

My ethnic and racial, linguistic, and regional heritage as an Anglo Yankee marks me vis-à-vis the communities I work in and study. I cannot be mistaken for a person of Mexican heritage or for a migrant farm laborer. Nonetheless, my lived experience working among and as an advocate for Mexican heritage migrants in this region has situated me particularly well to conduct this research. I am not “a total stranger, armed with a tape recorder” (Wolfson 1976, 196). Thousands of home visits⁹ with Mexican-heritage migrants and their families and years of living in and interacting with the local schools, have allowed me to build some of the skills described by Thompson (2000): “The insider knows the way round, can be less easily fooled, understands the nuances, and starts with far more useful contacts and, hopefully, as an established person of good faith” (140-141). As an academically credentialed gringo with years of experience in the milieu I am studying, I am unusually positioned as an outsider / insider. I bring to the process of writing this dissertation a broad, politicized perspective on the status of Mexican heritage migrants in this region that is complemented by a great deal of personal experience and credibility with local Mexican heritage educators, as witnessed by the surprising ease with which I was able to recruit participants (discussed later in this chapter).

Nonetheless, it is not enough to assert the relative uniqueness of my positionality, for as Foley, Levinson and Hurtig assert, “if White male scholars are to do useful critical [studies] of

people of color and women, they must confront a host of ethical and methodological questions” (2001, 82). Foremost among these questions is: How is it that I can claim my interpretation of Mexican-heritage experience in the rural South is more justifiable than another's interpretation? Alone, independently, I probably cannot.

However, through the method suggested by my theoretical frame, I believe I can. Appeals for empathetic understanding across lines of difference are the strongest grounding for such a claim (Moraga 1983, Greene 1995, Nussbaum 1997, Henze 2000). Without the possibility of empathy across difference, we are doomed to a form of nihilism that valorizes only authentic voices and denies the possibility of building more accurate interpretations by synthesizing dominant perspectives and marginalized perspectives from a critically politicized standpoint.

The remainder of this dissertation presents my interpretation and synthesis of these perspectives. In order to construct a more accurate and useful understanding of the nature of Mexican-heritage education in rural southeast Georgia, I have taken into account the epistemically privileged knowledge of my participants, people whose lives are defined by a struggle to make meaning of their positionality vis-à-vis the structures of society and education in this region. My role as the researcher in this study has been to combine the epistemically privileged and yet sometimes critically limited perspectives of my participants with more politicized literature and research of the academy. I have attempted to write this analysis from the position of a “cultural mediator” (Duranti 1997, 91), working recursively between academic language and the oral narratives of my Mexican American participants. Through this recursive process, I have constructed and presented my own interpretation, an interpretation that I maintain is a more accurate though still incomplete, an interpretation upon which I hope future researchers

will build. I have done my best to extend the voices of my participants honestly and in a liberatory manner that advances their interests and the interests of others whose voices are not heard loudly in local, state, and national corridors of power.

My Methods: Journaling

As is anticipated by my theoretical frame and by the discussion of mistaken preconceptions in Chapter 3, in the process of constructing a more complex and accurate understanding of Mexican American education in this region, I have found many of my basic assumptions challenged. I have not attempted to deny these challenges nor have I attempted to pass through the process of dissertation research unscathed. A crucial element during this process has been my cultivation of reflectivity through journaling (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Behar asserts “what happens within the observer must be made known ... if the nature of what has been observed is to be understood” (Behar 1996, 6).¹⁰ Thus, the primary focus of my journaling has been to record my activities and experiences and look inside myself for my responses to these. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) state that journal entries serve as “reflections on [my] experience of the experience help maintain a sense of moving in and out of the experience ... [in order to] maintain an educative sense of critique and growth” (87). My journaling has provided me with a text of the self to be examined alongside the oral history interview such that, “the self can be a source rather than a contaminant of knowledge” (Luttrell 1997, 132).

However, reflexivity by a privileged researcher like myself for its own sake is an ethical dead end. Reflexivity, as postpositivist realism maintains, only serves its purpose if it occurs in response to dialogical exchanges with the participants in this study and the data they have provided. As Roman asserts, in listening to the perspectives of my oral history participants, I

have been forced toward further self-examination and questioning: “The politics of speaking with others permits white educators ... to struggle with what it means to make choices about one’s political allegiances rather than to use one’s privileged location as an excuse for paralysis, guilt, and shame” (Roman 1993a, 84). In this way, my journaling has played a crucial role in my development of this dissertation study, particularly in regard to the processes of participant selection, interviewing, and data analysis.

The Necessity for Oral History Method

The choice of oral history methods is a sensible one for my theoretical frame, research topic and set of participants. William Chafe notes that until the past two generations “almost all ... [archival] sources have represented a white perspective” (Chafe 1980, 10). Thus, any historical study of the experiences of people of color and people of impoverished backgrounds must first encounter the fact that there are often few documentary sources that represent the subjects’ own perspectives.

This clearly applies to Mexican heritage experiences and agency during the past twenty-five years in the Vidalia onion region. For example, one cannot turn to local news sources and official archives. The City of Vidalia's 1990 Centennial Committee's official, book-length publication *As Sweet as its Namesake: The Story of Vidalia*, does not acknowledge the existence of any Latinos in either the local community or onion fields (Vidalia Centennial, Inc. 1990). This is despite the fact that by 1990 Toombs County’s Latino population had already surpassed 3% (Kriesel 2002) and Mexican heritage labor was essential to the town's growing fame and fortune as a major producer of sweet onions. Even today, when Latinos comprise a more

substantial and still growing portion of the Vidalia region population, they are systematically written out of the script of the local news, or represented in a largely problematic manner.

In a manifestation of the discourse of silence, invisibility and erasure discussed in Chapter 3, over the course of 134 recent radio news stories¹¹ broadcast by Vidalia's only radio news organization, the existence of the local Mexican heritage community was hinted at only four times and directly addressed but once. Moreover, of those five representations, none could be characterized as neutral, let alone positive. Rather, all of the stories presented Latinos / migrants in a negative light. Four of the five Vidalia news stories were arrest reports regarding suspected Latino criminals. The fifth Vidalia news story created a celebratory tone at the expense of local Latinos: "Southeastern Technical College in Vidalia plans to use a \$101,025 grant to help the area's growing Hispanic population learn English and find a job" (Vidalia Communications Corp. 2002). The phrase "and find a job" foregrounds an inaccurate assertion that many, if not all, of the area's Hispanics are unemployed and thereby implies that they are burdens upon the community. In fact, Latinos in Georgia work at a higher percentage than either whites or blacks (University of Georgia Public Affairs 2001). Nowhere in any of the 134 stories is it acknowledged that the labor of Toombs County's Latinos is actually essential to the multi-million dollar onion crop that forms the foundation for Vidalia's unusually healthy and growing rural economy. Similarly, in a series of locally produced children's picture storybooks about Vidalia's sweet onions, Latinos are erased from the local farms as a white farmer and his wife are shown alone in the fields pulling onions (Kight and Alexander 2000). These storybooks have gained a great deal of attention and circulation in the local community and schools.¹² In this context, this dissertation is particularly important as a means to document and bring to voice the experiences of some of this region's Mexican heritage people, a community whose very

existence is often erased and frequently misrepresented. This dissertation is one of the few opportunities for the Vidalia area's Mexican heritage people to tell their own stories, even though these stories will pass through the filter of my interpretation and analysis.

Oral History as Historical Narrative

Thankfully, there is a strong tradition in historical research supporting the use of oral history as a method to address such gaps in the recent historical record. For this reason, oral history has been “connected with an effort to authenticate the experiences of different ethnic groups in American culture” (Celedón 1998, 1) and has found strong support and use among feminist scholars (Sangster 1994). Living memory provides a source that “puts human flesh on the otherwise dry bones of historical argument” (Murphy 1986, 159), providing a better-contextualized and more balanced understanding of the topic at hand by adding the narratives of marginalized peoples.

Thus, as a means to both document and center the experiences of some of the Vidalia region's Mexican heritage residents, I have chosen to use oral history interviews to provide a forum for my study participants to demonstrate how they have come to understand their lived experiences and life stories. Without any such effort, the knowledge experiences and attitudes of the Mexican heritage pioneers of this region and its schools would likely be lost – a regrettable loss given the magnitude of the demographic and social changes that have followed their arrival.

As Freund and Quilici note “oral narratives are one of the few sources which give us information not only *about* the informants but *by* them” (1996, 21). During the process of dialogue about their lives, my participants' implicit assumptions and explicit statements have exemplified the narratives of the self they have created as some of the first Mexican Americans

in rural southeast Georgia. As pioneers in the schools of this region, their positions have placed them in an intriguing and dynamic position marginal to both the Mexican heritage migrant community and the local, predominantly white, community of educators. As marginal individuals they have been able to play an important role in mediating the emergent history of Mexican heritage education in this region. As Toews asserts, “understanding change in the history of meaning requires a contextual analysis that is more than intertextual, that connects meanings to experience, that does not lose sight of the fact that ‘living individuals’ and not only texts are participants in the history” (1987, 897; as quoted in Zammito 2000, 291).

The human memory is not a purely primary source because “memory is not just a biological structure which would, if properly interrogated, reproduce an accurate mirror image of the past” (Lummis 1987, 128). Memories are the building blocks we use to construct our identities in the world, and we frequently reshape, cut, and mold those building blocks to fit our edifice of the self. Thus, oral history interviews have provided a forum for my study participants to demonstrate how they have constructed themselves using their lived experiences and life histories. During the process of dialogue about their lives, their implicit assumptions and explicit statements have exemplified the narratives of the self they have created as pioneers - some of the first Mexican Americans to settle, attend school, and work as educators in rural southeast Georgia. As Hareven states,

Research on the subjective reconstruction of life has shown very clearly that individuals interpret their life history in relation to the social structures and the culture within which they function. They attribute meaning to their life stories by placing them in a larger context, and they employ their respective cultural backgrounds (2000, 328).

Thus, as suggested by postpositivist realism’s perspective on narrative as recursive theory building, these interviews do not claim to directly reveal objective truths about the past of my

participants and research site, but rather how the remembered past has influenced and been influenced by my participants' processes of meaning making and self construction.

Moreover, my choice of oral history as the focus of my research methods is a logical extension of the theoretical framework that I have developed. As Sangster (1994) demonstrates, oral histories are not "created out of many possible discourses, but out of a limited range of discourses which are the product of the power relations of class, ethnicity, and gender, as well as people's resistance to those relations" (p.23). Thus, the production of oral history narratives reflect the constrained agency of individuals. Moreover, since my theoretical framework asserts that more insightful explanations of social realities emerge through socially mediated cognitive processes, it is incumbent upon me to engage in just such a process in the course of my research.

How were Participants Selected?

As I argued in Chapter 1, the life stories of my participants are of particular value and insight because of their paradoxical positioning in the social and educational changes wrought by the influx of Mexican heritage migrants into the schools of the Vidalia onion region. In order to collect longitudinal perspectives on the past 10-25 years of Mexican heritage educational experience in the schools, I limited my sample to Mexican heritage educators in the Vidalia onion region who were previously students in the schools of the region. This limit, when combined with the dates of the earliest documented Mexican heritage migrant enrollee in the local schools, implied that all participants should be approximately 20 to 40 years of age. All the participants are women because there are no male Mexican-heritage public-school educators in the region, nor have there been many in the past.¹³

How were Participants Recruited?

After leaving LOMEA 1999, I maintained intermittent contact with and compiled a current list of Mexican American educators in the region through my outreach activities on behalf of Georgia Southern University and my continued contact with former LOMEA colleagues. As of the Spring of 2002, this list included sixteen Mexican heritage educators currently working in the schools of the Vidalia onion region and another ten Mexican heritage women who had once worked as educators in the region. Of course, not all of these would necessarily fall within the guidelines I had established for my study, especially since many of them had arrived in the Vidalia region after dropping out or graduating from school and thus never attended schools in this region.

Upon receiving approval for my dissertation study from both my dissertation committee and the University of Georgia Human Subjects Research Office in June 2002, I immediately sought contact, via phone and face-to-face meetings, with the four pilot study participants. Three of them were still in the state and willing to be interviewed again. One had recently left the state without leaving a forwarding address.

I also began contacting potential new participants by phone or during face-to-face meetings. Although it was not my intention initially, this aspect of my participant selection took on the life of a “snowball sampling” (Atkinson and Flint 2001) process as contact with one potential participant rapidly led to others. Thus, in the end, I found myself with more (six) new participants than I had originally intended (four).

I started with three women with whom I had worked during my time at LOMEA, and who were still employed in the migrant education program. All three had previously expressed a willingness to be interviewed during informal contacts with me at Latino and migrant-oriented

events during the previous few years. Soon family, friendship and work connections had more than filled my quota of participants less than two weeks after the beginning of the recruitment process.

It was at this point that the idea of paired follow-up interviews with the participants occurred to me. With two sets of family relations in the participant pool, it seemed attractive to ask the sister-sister and aunt-niece pairs to sit down together and thereby deflect the interviews away from me and toward conversations between the participants. With the enthusiastic support of my committee and approval from the Human Subjects Research Office, I implemented this change to my interview plans for the new dissertations study participants. Thus, all four of the pilot study participants were interviewed twice, each time singly, while the six new dissertation study participants were also interviewed twice, initially alone and then in a paired follow-up.

Although I set out with the intention of gathering sixteen individual interviews from eight participants, I ended up gathering seventeen interviews (fourteen individual, three paired) from ten participants. I was not declined by any of the potential participants that I approached. I believe that my reputation and involvement with education in this region and my network of friends and colleagues among local Mexican heritage educators allowed me to directly and successfully approach the participants, even those who had not met nor worked with me before.

How was Consent Obtained?

As outlined in my prospectus, at least one, most often multiple face-to-face, e-mail, or phone contacts preceded all the initial interviews. My first contact with each of the potential participants sought to fulfill two purposes: the explanation of the scope and purpose of this research project to the potential participant; and the clarification of the participant's meeting of

the criteria for my sample. Subsequently, I would provide them with the *Informed Consent Cover Letter* and the *Consent Form* (see Appendix) for them to review. If, after reviewing these materials, a participant was still interested in being interviewed, we scheduled an interview time that was mutually convenient. If this scheduling was done face-to-face, I then provided the participant with a copy of the *Preliminary Questionnaire* (see Appendix) and asked that they complete it before the interview. Some of the participants failed to do so and therefore their first interviews began with the completion of the questionnaire.

How were the Interviews Conducted?

The pilot study interviews were conducted during December 1998 and January 1999. The dissertation study interviews were conducted from June to August 2002. In those cases where the participant had not yet completed the *Preliminary Questionnaire*, I encouraged them to complete it while I set up my microcassette recorder. Often the inquiries on the questionnaire would prompt the participant to verbally volunteer important and/or relevant information. Thus, more than once I asked permission to turn on the tape recorder early in order to capture our exchanges prompted by the questionnaire.

No matter how each interview began, I would soon turn to the interview protocol presented in my prospectus supplement (see Appendix). Not surprisingly, I was unable to ask all these questions of all the participants. Nonetheless, as marked in the Appendix, certain key questions were part of nearly every interview.

During the dissertation study interviews, I was much more successful than I had been in the pilot study interviews in following Anderson and Jack's advice to set aside my analytical and interpretive mindsets and "immerse [myself] in the interview" (1991, 19) by actively listening to

the story being told. My role in the dissertation interviews, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, was much less problematic and leading than in the pilot study. I generally spoke less and when I did, my comments either stayed close to the interview protocol, asked for clarification of what had just been said, or simply served to echo the participants' word in hopes of drawing out further elaboration.

Nonetheless, it would be disingenuous to claim that the interviews were like naturalistic conversations among equals. I believe that both my participants and I entered each interview cognizant of the inequalities between my social standing and control over the context as contrasted with theirs. Chapter 5 will include my impressions regarding the dynamics of power at work in many of the interviews. Despite the fact that nearly all the interviews were conducted in locations that can fairly be characterized as the participants' "territories" (their homes or workplaces), I brought a great deal of power to the interview process. I am a white, male, middle-class, highly-educated, a native speaker of English, the initiator of the interviews, the asker of the questions, and the one ultimately responsible for the analysis and interpretations in this dissertation. Thus, like Luttrell (1997), I have avoided "a false 'we'" (vx) in referring to the participants and I have worked to avoid denial of my power over and responsibility for the interviews.

Unsurprisingly, given my role as the interviewer, the vast majority of the interviews were conducted in English. In nearly every interview, at some point I expressed willingness and ability to talk in Spanish. I sustained exchanges and comments in Spanish and Spanglish with the participants who knew me best, but the less familiar participants did not accept my invitation.

What Questions were Asked?

The guiding questions for the interviews emerged from my pilot study research and were refined in consultation with my dissertation committee. The questions were compiled into a interview protocol (Carspecken 1996) that structured, but did not dictate, the course of the interviews (see Appendix). Instead, the protocol provided a thematic scaffold of open-ended descriptive questions (Spradley 1979) that served to draw out the personal experiences of the participants. As the participants shared their experiences, I asked some of the relevant follow-up questions listed in the protocol. At other times I simply built upon the participants' responses by seeking clarifications or echoing their words in hopes of prompting further elaborations. In this way each interview tended to develop individual themes at great length before moving to another theme as suggested by the protocol (Ladson-Billings 1994, 150). This participant-lead pattern of emergent theme development did not occur with all of the participants. Nonetheless, the pattern occurred in enough of the interviews to contribute a number of new and unanticipated perspectives to my subsequent analysis.

As planned in my prospectus, I developed a second protocol for the follow-up interviews with the new dissertation participants (see Appendix). This protocol was based upon emergent themes from the first interviews and my responses and unanswered questions as I listened to the tapes of the first interviews. Since many of these questions were only relevant to one or two participants, and since the follow-up interviews with the new participants were conducted in pairs (thus decreasing my control over the flow of the interviews), the collection of questions that I actually asked in the follow-up interviews varied widely.

After the completion of each dissertation interview, I sat down and wrote a descriptive narrative of the interview from my perspective (Duranti 1997, 116) in my journal. These post-

interview narratives have facilitated my reflexivity regarding my “reactions to informants and the feelings [I] sense from others” (Spradley 1979, 76). For example, during the early interviews I found that I was not comfortable with my original idea of scribbling quick notes during each interview regarding the participants’ non-verbal cues such as eye contact and physical positioning. My attempts to do so seemed to make the participants uncomfortable and stifle their talk by increasing their awareness that this was an interview setting. Thus, I set aside that approach and focused upon presenting a high level of engagement and active listening to my participants during the interviews. I then subsequently reconstructed the interviews from memory for the purposes of my journal. Such journaling about the interviews left me better prepared for data analysis and interpretation by allowing me to unveil and bracket my subjectivities vis-à-vis the participants.

What Resulted from the Interviews?

The interview statistics table in the appendix presents a basic statistical analysis of the seventeen interviews broken down on the basis of individual participants and interview types:

- Pilot study individual interviews (4 initial and 1 follow-up).
- Dissertation study individual interviews (3 follow-ups with pilot study participants and 6 initial interviews with new participants).
- Dissertation study paired interviews (3 follow-ups with new participants).

A number of patterns emerge across the data:

- The average interview was approximately 1½ hours in length, with the shortest interview taking only 21 minutes, and the two longest interviews taking over 2½ hours.

- Contrary to the expectations stated in my prospectus, the follow-up interviews were generally longer than the initial interviews. This is likely in part an artifact of my switch to paired follow-ups with the new participants.
- Most of the interviews averaged around 5 turns per minute (12 second turns), with a few noteworthy outliers that will be discussed in Chapter 5.
- Most of the interviews averaged a pace of about 156 words per minute. Again, the most noteworthy outlier from this average will be discussed in the next chapter.
- The ratio between my word count and the words spoken by the participants varied widely over the corpus:
 - In two of the most problematic pilot study interviews, the ratio was approximately 1:1. The overall pilot study average was approximately 1:2.
 - In contrast, in the dissertation study interview ratios were much better at approximately 1:3 for individual interviews and 1:4 for paired follow-ups.
- The ratio between my mean length of turn (measured in words) and the participants' mean length of turn showed a similar improvement between the pilot and dissertation studies:
 - The overall pilot study average was approximately 1:2.
 - In contrast, in the dissertation study interview ratios were significantly better at approximately 1:4 for individual interviews and 1:3 for paired follow-ups.

What Happened after the Interviews? Transcription and Coding

During my pilot study I had selectively transcribed the sections of each interview I wanted to use in the study. Even this limited amount of transcription made me painfully aware

of my limitations as a transcriptionist. Thus, as I began this dissertation research, I found a professional legal transcriptionist whose reputation for accuracy and speed was unsurpassed in the Statesboro/Savannah region. In order to test her skills though, I provided her with copies of the pilot study tapes for full transcription. Her results were impressively accurate and rapid, though not inexpensive. She agreed to work with me on this project. After each interview I would return to my home and make a duplicate copy of the original tape before immediately sending off the tape to the transcriptionist. Within a few days the transcriptionist e-mailed to me her complete draft transcription of each interview in a MS Word file.

I then compared the transcription line-by-line with the duplicate tape I had made, listening to the tape with a transcription machine while seated at a computer with the draft transcription open in front of me. During this double-check process I added in Spanish and Spanglish terms from the tapes (the transcriptionist was not bilingual) and corrected any misspellings of names, proper nouns, or obscure terms. My Spanish translations were later double checked by committee member Martha Allexsah-Snider and Mirlin Hernandez, a Mexican heritage woman who grew up in the Vidalia region and is currently studying Elementary Education at Georgia Southern University.

After this double check, in preparation for coding of the data, I converted the transcriptions into a tabular format in MS Word files, with each interview corresponding with one file. At this point I replaced the participants' names with pseudonyms and deleted or altered other names that would clearly reveal the identity of the participant. The first two columns of the table uniquely specify each turn throughout the hundreds of pages and dozens of hours of interview data by providing a code for each interview code and a count for each turn. This system allows for quick and precise indexing of the entire corpus of data. The third column

holds the actual transcription text. Other columns were provided for coding and comments during the analysis process, i.e.: criticisms of my interview style; concerns about leading questions and missed opportunities; remarks regarding the participant's mood and self-representation and doubts about the accuracy of their stories; lists of potential follow-up questions for subsequent interviews (incorporated into the follow-up interview protocol referenced earlier); and notes regarding potential privacy concerns and the use of Spanish or Spanglish. This was where I made notes about "self-evaluative comments, meta-statements, and the overall logic of the narrative" (Gluck and Patai 1991, 9). In addition, this space allowed for the coding of themes that fell outside the range of my original conception of my research questions.

As I proceeded with the process of coding the transcriptions, I began with a list of approximately 35 themes explicit and implicit in the research questions for this study, i.e.: race, class, migrancy, school experiences as a student and as an educator, and hopes for the future. Many of these themes had structured my pilot study analysis four years earlier. However, I quickly found a large number of other themes and sub-themes emerging from the data that did not precisely fit my preconceived research questions and expectations. By the time I had coded the data, my list of themes for coding had grown dramatically to include over 100 themes, as shown in the appendix.

As new themes emerged from the data, I returned to previously-coded transcripts and sought out examples of the new theme. Thus, as suggested by a postpositivist realist perspective on the construction of narrative understandings of the world, the coding process was recursive in nature and I read over each transcription multiple times during the coding process.

This process of coding soon lead me to understand the limitations and faulty preconceptions built into my research questions. This was most apparent regarding my first cluster of questions regarding the relevance of the South's history of race- and class-based schooling to my participants' lives. Although I assert the relevance of the rural South's traditions of segregation, desegregation, re-segregation, and mis-education of blacks and the poor, my participants frequently did not present or perceive this history as relevant to their own experiences. Many of the participants were largely ignorant of the history of race and class in Southern education and expressed a clear disengagement from the struggles between blacks and whites over civil rights and educational equity. Instead they connected and contrasted their current status in the schools and community with their personal histories of migrancy and dangerous living in a city, in Mexico or along the Texas-Mexico borderlands.

In addition, of particular note was the difficulty I had limiting my coding of many of these themes to just one column (corresponding with a single research question category) in the tabular format. The participants' stories frequently shifted both temporally and geographically between different times and places in their lives as they compared and contrasted, often without my prompting, their childhood experiences in Mexico, Texas, Chicago, or elsewhere with their later lives here in Georgia. Thus, I had to set aside my plans for a well-structured coding process that would primarily focus upon the research questions as I had preconceived them. In this way, I found myself charting new conceptions of the Mexican heritage experience in southeast Georgia – conceptions that sometimes contradicted my preconceptions, sometimes complemented my expectations, but always enriched my understanding of the lives of my participants.

Although I had stated my intention to be open for such complexities, it was at this point that I began to understand the complexities of historical and identity representations and of individual agency within structural constraints. As Luttrell states “I analyze [women’s] life stories for the insight they give into the twisted relations of selfhood, class, race, and gender identity, and schooling. By twisted I mean simultaneously entangled and at odds, interwoven and warped” (1997, xiii). Like Luttrell, I began to perceive and untangle the twists of constraints and agency that make up the cultural production my participants’ experiences and identities.

Member Check and Coding Check

Once the transcripts had been entirely transcribed and coded, I created duplicate files and deleted all the coding from these files. These coding-free transcription tables served two purposes.

I provided these tables, along with my list of themes, to my wife, Delores Liston, so that she might provide a blind cross-check of my coding. Delores is an experienced qualitative researcher and is familiar with my research project. She read through each of the transcripts one time, briefly noting where she saw examples of particular themes in the data. I then compared her coding with my more detailed coding in order to: a) make sure I had not missed any significant examples of the themes; and b) place emphasis upon the examples that both she and I noted as significant. In particular, Delores’ deep grounding in feminist theory allowed her to code additional examples of the relevance of gender and sexism to the participants’ narratives.

Also, as planned, I mailed one copy of each participant’s interviews to each participant, along with a letter asking for their feedback, comments, and corrections regarding the content of the data (see Appendix). This member check (Lincoln and Guba 1985, 108) process has not yet

been entirely successful since only one participant returned her transcriptions with comments. In a most charitable interpretation, this may indicate a general trust among the participants in my work. Less charitably, this fact may indicate that the interviews themselves took all the time that the participants were willing to give to this study. Least charitably, it is possible that some of the participants have been angered by the process and are unwilling to maintain contact with me. However, the positive casual and professional contacts I have had with a few of the participants since the interviews do not support this third interpretation. Moreover, it is common for participants to be reluctant to respond to transcripts and the resultant study (Foley 1995).

Data Analysis, Interpretation, and Writing

Since the coding process had shown me that I could not establish an easy one-to-one correlation between my research questions and each of my participants' responses, I entered the next stage of the data analysis and interpretation process unsure as to how I might structure my data presentation. During this step I used graphic organizers and *Inspiration* software to help conceptualize and visualize the emergent connections between the coded themes. My preliminary webs included many of the coded themes and mapped the interconnections between these themes that had emerged in the participants' narratives. I then began combining these smaller webs into a larger comprehensive web, connecting the preliminary webs with each other via shared themes. Eventually I had all of my themes included in the web and interconnected in a multitude of ways.

Next I counted connections and started sorting out the "focal" themes (Field v. School, Rural / Urban, Schools of Childhood, Roles as an Educator in Schools, Linguistic and Racial Difference) that were connected to the largest number of other themes and that occurred

frequently across all the interviews. I visually moved these five “focal” themes out from the main cluster. I then sorted and color-coded the themes according to which “focal” theme they were most closely connected to. Eventually, nearly all the themes ended up in one of the “focal” theme clusters.

This grand theme web served as the beginning for the new structure for the data presentation, a structure that is reflected in Chapter 6, with a larger chronological structure supported by thematic details and examples. As I examined this web I was struck by the grander chronological narratives told by the women’s stories: narratives of earlier trials and turning points contrasting with current fulfillment and dreams for the future. I realized that I could incorporate most of the emergent themes within this chronological structure so as to present the women’s various stories within a comprehensible meta-narrative that would center their voices while revealing the unities and discontinuities in their experiences.

Once I had settled upon a grand chronological structure with specific thematic details, I turned back to the data to select what would find its way into the final dissertation. I used MS Windows’ and MS Word’s text searching capabilities to find all occurrences of each relevant theme code and keyword in the seventeen transcripts. Since each interview turn was uniquely numbered, I was able to copy each occurrence, along with its surrounding context, out of the transcripts and copy them into separate files that would form the basis for each section of the data presentation chapter. I then recursively edited and rewrote each data presentation section so as to present the most important essences and themes from the data corpus as concisely as possible.

My final task was to construct a coherent interpretation that synthesized the views of my participants, my politicized standpoint, and previous research literature in this area. Thus, in

Chapter 7, I followed Levinson and Sutton's (2001) socio-cultural approach to the study of educational policy to contextualize these narratives within the past quarter century of interlocking, multi-level struggles to define the nature of Mexican American education in the rural South. This final stage of my analysis and interpretation adds more viewpoints by interpreting my findings vis-à-vis macro-level social theories. This theoretical dialogue applies my postpositivist realist understanding to the process of interpreting my participants' identities by developing a provisional understanding of my participants' life experiences in the rural South as constrained by historical and socio-economic structures and affected by their choices as human actors. It is my hope and expectation that this new and more accurate, though still incomplete, interpretation of the experiences of my participants and other Mexican-heritage people in the rural South, can serve as a starting point for future researchers in this area.

Endnotes for Chapter 4

- ¹ Pérez (1993, 272) argues quite persuasively that minorities, women, gays and lesbians cannot set aside identity politics because much of society still distributes power unequally on the basis of these identities.
- ² Luttrell (1997) articulates a strong critique of the “intersection” model (7).
- ³ Gee’s typology of identities (2001) and the Spindlers’ work regarding multiple selves (1994, 13-14) are helpful in distinguishing the relative accuracy in identity claims by making clearer the historically situated nature of such claims.
- ⁴ Heath (1983) provides a richly detailed example of this contrast.
- ⁵ This premise echoes work from the cognitive sciences, particularly “The Theory Theory” or “Theory of Mind” (Morton 1980; Gopnik and Meltzoff 1997; Gopnik, Meltzoff and Kuhl 1999) model of cognition which asserts that cognitive development and learning proceeds through a process of creative thinking and testing comparable to the thought processes of a scientist constructing a theory. In other words, we are all the time engaged in theory building and theory testing - this is the normal state of an interactive, cognitive being.
- ⁶ This assertion was brought to my attention by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, 82).
- ⁷ O’Connor explains how such alternative, but ultimately hegemony-reinforcing, identities arise: “Some communities are organized so as to allow for, or even *require*, that some participants fail ... Schools are one prominent example of this kind of community in western culture, in that within schools, as Lave puts it, not-learning and failure identities are active normal social locations and processes (1993, 16)” (O’Connor, forthcoming, 11). Moreover, those who succeed in school “are simply becoming good at what they are given the opportunity to do on a regular basis, that is, at engaging in the kinds of practices through which they become identified and identifiable” (O’Connor, forthcoming, 12). This assertion is supported by the functioning of Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* within the reproduction of hegemony in Apple (1990, 26-42).
- ⁸ On an antebellum plantation, white / black racial identity would likely have great explanatory power. In a contemporary rape crisis center, male / female gender identity would likely be more salient. While, at the Super Bowl, team affiliation-identities would need to be addressed. Nonetheless, in all of these contexts, all types of identities would contribute to the moment-by-moment interactions and social positionings of the participants.
- ⁹ My first position with Live Oak Migrant Education Agency (1994-1997) was as a Recruiter / Home-School Specialist. In this capacity I frequently spent three or four days per week visiting migrant camps in the Vidalia onion region. Depending upon which camps I was visiting, I would usually visit at least five migrant homes per day. During the onion harvest though, I visited upwards of twenty homes per day. I worked in that capacity at LOMEA for over three years. Thus, by even the most conservative calculation (3 years x 50 weeks x 3 days/week in the field x 5 home visits per day = 2250 home visits), I have conducted well over 2000 visits to migrant homes, and likely many more.
- ¹⁰ Behar also quotes Harding, “the beliefs and behaviors of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims of the research. *This* evidence too must be open to critical scrutiny” (Harding 1987, as cited in Behar 1996, 29).
- ¹¹ The Vidalia Communications Corporation website maintains a record of all their major “newsbreak” stories during the past few months (Vidalia Communications Corporation 2002).
- ¹² For example, this book was “Book of the Month” at Claxton Elementary School in Evans County in January 2003.
- ¹³ According to my recollection and records and the recollections of my participants, there has been but one male Mexican heritage educator in the schools of this region during the past decade. As will be seen in Chapter 11, he left his job in the schools almost immediately for another, better-paying job.

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW OF THE PARTICIPANTS AND THE INTERVIEWS

This dissertation focuses upon seventeen interviews with ten primary participants totaling approximately twenty-seven hours of tapes and nearly 700 pages of transcripts. Clearly I could not and should not present all my data in this dissertation. As Harry Wolcott has written:

The critical task in qualitative research is not to accumulate all the data you can, but to “can” (i.e., get rid of) most of the data you accumulate. This requires constant winnowing. The trick is to discover essences and then reveal those essences with sufficient context, yet not become mired trying to include everything that might be described (1990, 35)

Thus, what follows is the result of my effort to glean significant essences from my data. It is my hope that by presenting my method in the previous chapter and my data here, the reader will feel comfortable with the essences I have chosen to center for my data presentation and analysis.

This chapter will introduce the ten primary participants. I will briefly summarize each of their unique life stories and map out their interrelationships with each other and with me, the researcher. Further, I will provide a short comparative analysis of each interview. In this way, the data presented in Chapter 6 can be contextualized with an understanding of the individuals whose lives are recounted.

The biographic information presented here is intentionally non-specific. The ten women who participated in this study are exceptional in many ways, not the least of which is their membership in a small group: Mexican heritage women in rural southeast Georgia who have

Figure 17: Overview of Participants

Participant	Mother	Father	Born	Arrived SE GA	Yrs. Vidalia area Student	Education	1 st Job in Schools	Job in 2002	Years as Educator
Guadalupe Flores	Mex Amer DO-5 th	Mex Amer DO-GED	1 st /4 1960s U.S.	1970s middle school	4 yrs.	DO-10 th GED	Migrant Educ. Parapro	Unknown	3 yrs.
Nanci Alvarez	Mexicana Grad-Second	Mexicano Grad-Prepa	3 rd /3 1960s Mexico	1980s middle school	5 yrs.	Grad-HS BS, MEd	Migrant Educ. Parapro	Migrant Counselor	12 yrs.
Ester Fuentes	<i>Mexicana Divorce</i>	Mexicano Grad-Second	5 th /8 1970s Mexico	1990s high schhol	2 yrs.	Grad-HS BEd	ESOL / Spanish Teacher	ESOL Teacher	2 yrs.
Ignacia Marquez Johnson	Mexicana DO-Primaria	<i>Mexicano Divorce</i>	8 th /8 1970s U.S.	1980s middle school	2 yrs.	DO-10 th GED AB	Migrant Educ. Parapro	Federal Employee	6 yrs.
Angelica Marquez	Mexicana DO-Elem	Mexicano DO-Elem	3 rd /7 1980s U.S.	1980s pre-school	12 yrs.	Grad-HS	Migrant Educ. Parapro		3 yrs.
Dominga Ramírez	Mexicana DO-Primaria	Mexicano DO-Primaria	7 th /12 1980s Mexico	1990s elem. school	8 yrs.	DO-10 th GED	Migrant Educ. Parapro		1 yrs.
Manuela López	Mex Amer DO-7 th	Mexicano DO-5 th	6 th /7 1970s U.S.	1980s middle school	2 yrs.	Grad-HS (not GA)	Migrant Educ. Parapro		5 yrs.
Berta Pérez	Mexicana DO-Primaria	Mex Amer DO-Elem	1 st /4 1970s Mexico	1980s high school	2 yrs.	DO-9 th GED	Migrant Headstart Asst.	Migrant Educ. Parapro	1 yrs.
Yadira García	Mexicana DO-Primaria	<i>Mexicano Divorce</i>	7 th /8 1970s Mexico	1980s elem. school	6 yrs.	Grad-HS	Migrant Educ. Parapro	Migrant Outreach	4 yrs.
Katia García			8 th /8 1980s U.S.	1980s elem. school	6 yrs.	Grad-HS (not GA)	Migrant Educ. Parapro		1 yrs.
<i>Averages & Totals</i>	<i>2 mothers completed secundaria</i>	<i>2 fathers completed secundaria</i>	<i>5th/7, 1974 ½ U.S. Born ½ Mexico</i>	<i>Avg: 1985 12 y.o.</i>	<i>Avg: 5 yrs.</i>	<i>6 Grad 4 DO & GED 3 College</i>	<i>All but 1 has worked as a Migrant Educ. Parapro</i>		<i>Avg: 4 yrs.</i>

completed high school or a GED and returned to work in the public schools. In an attempt to protect their privacy and identity, I have intentionally deleted or obscured many identifying details from their biographical data, although none of the data has been fictionalized or distorted. In addition, from here forward, the names of particular counties, cities, and schools in the Vidalia onion region will also be replaced so as to help protect the privacy of the participants. The table above presents some basic biographical data regarding the ten participants' backgrounds, families, and arrival in the Vidalia onion region, work in the local schools, and marital status.

Guadalupe Flores

Guadalupe Flores was born, the first of four children, in the mid 1960s in a small south Texas town less than thirty miles from the Rio Grande. Her parents were both first generation Mexican Americans, children of Mexican immigrants. Both spoke Spanish as their first language. Both had dropped out of school, her mother in fifth grade. Señor Flores returned to school as an adult to obtain his GED. The Flores family spent most of the 1970s moving as migrant farmworkers across the Southeastern U.S. Guadalupe's father's skills as a truck driver and crewleader allowed him to find seasonal work as they followed the crops. During this time she changed schools frequently and missed many days of instruction.

In the late 1970s the Flores family settled out of the migrant stream when they found steady work on a vegetable farm bordering southeast Georgia's Vidalia onion region. Guadalupe was a sixth grader when she enrolled as the earliest Latino student in the Vidalia onion region that I identified. It was her first consistent experience of education in an English-only environment. Like many study participants, she was retained after her first school year in

southeast Georgia. Three years later, her family moved to one of the central Vidalia onion region counties.

Guadalupe spent four years as a student in southeast Georgia schools. However, as the eldest in the family, Guadalupe spent time in the fields working to help make ends meet. By the mid 1980s she had dropped out of school and was working in the fields full time. Guadalupe married and bore four children over the next decade.

In the mid 1990s she separated from her first husband and was forced to seek public assistance. An adult education program for Georgia's welfare recipients prompted her to pursue a GED. After two years of study and tests she passed the exam and found steady, indoor work with benefits at the local grocery store. She subsequently remarried to a Mexican field worker and was invited to work in the local schools as a migrant education paraprofessional. She maintained her job in migrant education for approximately five years before leaving southeast Georgia in 2002.

Guadalupe Flores was both the first and last participant I interviewed during the pilot study in the winter of 1998-1999. When I attempted to contact her in 2002 regarding the possibility of another interview for this dissertation study, I found that she had recently left the state of Georgia. I was unable to locate a forwarding address or phone number for her. Nonetheless, since Guadalupe had been the only pilot study participant with whom I had conducted two interviews during the winter of 1998-1999, I decided to include her data in this study because her data still generally parallels the rest of the participants' data.

Both interviews with Guadalupe (Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98; Guadalupe Flores 2nd solo 1/28/99) were conducted in her office at the county middle / high school where she had once been a student and was working at the time as a migrant paraprofessional. The first

interview was 125 minutes long, but a tape malfunction caused the loss of approximately one-half hour of data. Upon realizing the problem, we recapitulated, as best we could, the content of that half hour before continuing on. This interview was interrupted twice, once by a class of students passing by and once by a break for lunch.

The second interview was a short (21 minutes) follow-up during which I sought to address specific questions that had arisen during the intervening pilot phase interviews with the other three participants. The content of the interview was strongly influenced by African American – Mexican American tensions earlier in that day at Guadalupe's school. Since the interview was goal driven, my role was more problematically dominant than in any other interview. I spoke nearly half (49%) of the words and produced a very high mean length of turn (25.9 words), while Guadalupe's mean turn length was notably low (27.3 words).

Since both interviews were conducted as part of the pilot study, when I was not journaling, I do not have any contemporaneous reflections upon the interviews to share. However, my recollection of the interviews is that the first was filled with long and emotional narratives about Guadalupe's childhood and her understanding of her current life as preferable to her earlier life in Texas and as a migrant. The second interview was unfortunately short with little of the heart-felt sharing that Guadalupe had provided in the first interview.

Nanci Alvarez

Nanci Alvarez was born, the third of three children, in the mid 1960s in central Mexico. Her father and mother soon moved the family to a fast-growing city in that region. The Alvarez family were middle class entrepreneurs, operating an ice and beer distributorship and a small diner in one of the city's bus stations. Nanci's father completed preparatoria (high school)

before joining the army. Her mother completed secundaria and was formally trained as a midwife in Mexico. Nanci's parents are clearly the most educated of all the participants' parents.

During the late 1970s, Nanci's father, mother, and eldest sister began traveling to the U.S. to work in the factories of the urban Midwest and the fields of the Southeast. During this time Nanci experienced a great deal of independence and responsibility as she helped run the family businesses and explored the city largely unsupervised. After misbehaving a great deal during her primary years, she became a successful and popular student in school.

Suddenly, as she entered her teen years, her parents found steady work at a dairy farm in the Vidalia onion region and decided to relocate the entire family there. Thus, having never traveled to the U.S. before, Nanci was smuggled across the Rio Grande and brought to a town of less than 4000 residents. After settling in southeast Georgia, her family did not migrate with the crops. The local rotation of seasonal work was enough to provide for their most basic needs without traveling.

She became the first Mexican American to enroll in the local middle school. She was also retained early in her career in the local schools and decided to drop out. However, after working in the fields all summer, she recommitted herself to her schooling. After five years in southeast Georgia schools, she graduated from the local high school in the mid 1980s, the only Mexican heritage person in her class.

With the financial and logistical support of the farmer who employed her family and local clergy, she enrolled in a local two-year college. Like nearly half of the participants, the Reagan-era farmworker immigration amnesty program (part of the 1986 Immigration Reform and

Control Act) helped her and her family to obtain resident alien status and she eventually went on to complete a bachelor's degree in the early 1990s.

Also during the early 1990s, she began working in the regional migrant education program as a paraprofessional. She has since moved up through the ranks of the migrant education program and obtained a graduate degree in education. During the past decade Nanci's parents and sisters have each established successful small businesses in the local area. She is married to a Mexican crewleader who works in one of her family's businesses. She recently gave birth to her first child.

It was through our work in the same migrant education office that Nanci and I came to know each other. In fact, Nanci was my primary trainer when I started my work in migrant education. Of the participants in this study, Nanci and I have the closest relationship and in traditional, cultural anthropological terms, she might be understood as the "key informant" (Tremblay 1957) for this study since it was through my work with her that I was introduced to the Mexican heritage community of the Vidalia region. She and I continue to collaborate, most notably in the recent implementation of the Goizueta Foundation Fund Scholarship Program at Georgia Southern University targeted for needy, largely undocumented Latinos.

I interviewed Nanci by herself twice, approximately three and one-half years apart (Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99; Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02). Both interviews were of average length (99 and 90 minutes). The first interview was conducted before a meeting for local migrant students and their parents in the cafeteria of the high school that Nanci had graduated from. Nanci was attentive and talkative during most of the time, although as the meeting approached, we agreed to cut off the interview in order to be ready for the arrival of the families.

The second interview was conducted in her business office on her family's property. There we were interrupted by a number of customers, phone calls, and the necessity to care for her newborn baby. During this interview we talked about her new baby and I spent much of my time holding and rocking the child. A microphone malfunction during the second interview caused the loss of approximately twenty minutes of data. Unfortunately, I did not recognize the problem until the interview had been completed. Fortunately though, much of what was lost was Nanci's repetition of a story that she had told during our first interview.

Ester Fuentes

Ester Fuentes was born the fifth of eight children in a city in central Mexico in the mid 1970s. Both her parents had completed secundaria (9th grade), making them the best educated parents beside Nanci's. When Ester was starting school in the early 1980s, her family crossed the border into the U.S. illegally and settled in a large Midwestern city where Señor Fuentes found work in construction. Soon after arriving in the states, Señora Fuentes left the family, leaving the father to raise eight children. Señor Fuentes would eventually remarry and Ester's stepmother would play a large role in Ester's upbringing during her early teen years.

During the next decade Ester's father moved around the city as his work sites changed. Thus, Ester never spent more than a few years in a single school. After being retained after her first year in the U.S., Ester excelled in school. She was enrolled in bilingual education programs alongside other Latinos and was eventually placed in a challenging magnet school program.

After ten years in the urban Midwest, Señor Fuentes was unable to find steady work in construction and began traveling in the southeast as a migrant fieldworker. After working in the Vidalia onion region one spring he chose to relocate his entire family to a small crossroads in

rural southeast Georgia. In this way, Ester started over again as one of a handful of Latinos at the local high school.

Tragic events over the next two years threw the family into turmoil and separated the Fuentes children from their father and stepmother. It was during this time that my roles as a migrant education outreach specialist and food bank president first brought me into contact with Ester and her siblings as they sought community assistance.

Despite these difficulties and the necessity to help care for her younger siblings, Ester was able to graduate from a Vidalia onion region high school in the mid 1990s. She immediately began to study education at a local state college. Upon graduating in the late 1990s, she worked for two years as a Spanish/ESOL teacher in the Atlanta area and then in a Vidalia onion region school district. (Ester is the only one of the ten primary participants who has never worked as a migrant education paraprofessional). She has since returned to metro Atlanta where she continues her work as an ESOL teacher.

I interviewed Ester by herself twice, approximately three and one-half years apart (Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99; Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02). The first interview was of average length (93 minutes), while the second was long (153 minutes). Both interviews were conducted at her apartment or home. The first interview was conducted without substantial interruption. The second interview was broken up by the return home of one of her roommates. As will be developed later, during her second interview Ester was much more outspoken in her criticism of the schools in the Vidalia region.

Ignacia Marquéz Johnson

In the early 1970s, the Marquéz family left a rural area of central Mexico and crossed the border into the U.S. Ignacia's mother carried her across the border in her womb. Soon after, Ignacia was born, the last of eight children. Neither of Ignacia's parents had completed primary school in Mexico. Ignacia's father struggled with alcoholism and was abusive toward Ignacia's mother. As a result, the marriage of the Marquézes did not last long after they crossed into the U.S. Remarkably, when the law became involved and her parents divorced, the Immigration and Naturalization Service deported the father and granted legal status to the rest of the family. Nonetheless, Ignacia's mother was left alone to raise eight children ranging from approximately twenty to two years of age.

For approximately a decade the family traveled between the Midwest and the Southeast planting and harvesting crops in the fields. Ignacia never spent even one entire school year enrolled in the same school. Nonetheless, Ignacia was generally a successful student who was never retained. By the mid 1980s, Ignacia's six eldest siblings had all dropped out of school to work in the fields. Thus, when the family found more-or-less steady, year-round work in southeast Georgia and decided to settle here, only Ignacia and her slightly older brother were still enrolled in school. They entered the local schools and found themselves socially isolated in a school with less than a handful of Latinos. They dropped out of school together after two years in Georgia schools.

Over the next decade Ignacia worked with her family in the fields and on the line in a sewing factory. In the mid 1990s, after seeing two of her siblings successfully study for their GEDs, she decided to go back to school to obtain hers. Soon afterward she began working in the local schools as a migrant education paraprofessional. I helped train Ignacia in her new job.

While working in the schools she continued her studies at a local private college and earned an associate's degree in business. During this time she also met and married a local Anglo schoolteacher and took his surname. They have one child. After the birth of her child, Ignacia was discontented with her work environment and low pay and chose to leave migrant education. She now works in a better-paying job in a federal office in the local area.

Like Nanci and Ester, I interviewed Ignacia by herself twice, approximately three and one-half years apart (Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98; Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02). Both interviews were of below average length (64 and 67 minutes). The first interview was conducted in her office at the elementary school where she had once been a student and was working at the time as a migrant paraprofessional. The interview was interrupted two times when Ignacia was called to the office to help the staff there. The interview occurred at the end of the school day and was cut short by the loading of children on the busses.

The second interview was the last interview among all the focal participants. It was conducted at a state park before a picnic that brought together our families. During this interview my wife Delores entertained our two daughters and Ignacia's son and prepared the food. Ignacia's husband and her best friend kept to themselves while Ignacia and I talked a short distance away. The interview was interrupted once when our children came seeking our attention. This second interview was cut short by the serving of the picnic dinner and the subsequent desire of Ignacia's husband and best friend to return home. During her second interview, Ignacia, like Ester, was much more outspoken in her criticism of the local schools.

My first interview of Ignacia was one of the most problematic in the entire corpus. More than in any other interview I clearly fore-grounded my powerful roles as Ignacia's coworker and trainer, losing track of my supposed role as a researcher collecting data. Ignacia only spoke 55%

of the words and our mean length of turn were nearly balanced (Scott: 25.7 words; Ignacia: 32.4 words). The second interview was much more successful. Ignacia dominated this interview speaking an exceptionally high 90% of the words and producing a mean length of turn of 119.7 words. Meanwhile I halved my mean length of turn to 13.1 words.

Until now I have described the pilot study participants. The remaining six women were only interviewed during the dissertation data collection process.

Angelica Marquéz

Angelica Marquéz is the niece of Ignacia Marquéz Johnson, the daughter of Ignacia's eldest sister. Angelica is approximately ten years younger than her aunt. Angelica's mother came across the border with her parents, siblings, and unborn sister Ignacia in the early 1970s. Angelica's mother traveled as a migrant between the Midwest and the Southeast alongside Ignacia before marrying a Mexican American from *el Valle*. Neither of Angelica's parents completed elementary school. Angelica was born in the early 1980s, the third of seven children, while the family was working in the upper Midwest.

A few years after she was born, Angelica's parents found steady work and settled in the Vidalia onion region. A few months later the entire Marquéz clan, including Ignacia, followed suit. Having settled out at a young age, Angelica does not remember much of migrancy. Her parents have continued to do fieldwork, but their primary source of income comes from leading pine straw crews. Angelica did not have work in the fields on a regular basis, but she often cared for her younger siblings while her older siblings and parents labored. During the mid 1990s, I occasionally would speak to her and her family in my work as a migrant education outreach specialist. Angelica was able to attend the same school district throughout her school career and

graduated from a local high school in the late 1990s after spending twelve years as a student in rural southeast Georgia.

Toward the end of her high school years she was placed, through a pre-graduation internship program, in the local elementary school as a bilingual assistant. Upon graduation, she was hired as a migrant education paraprofessional. She was hired after I had left migrant education and thus I did not know her well before approaching her to join the study. Angelica has worked as a migrant paraprofessional for three years and is unmarried.

When I first sought to contact Angelica Marquéz to ask her to join the study, I did not realize that she was the niece of Ignacia Marquéz Johnson. I did not make the connection until I first met with her and Dominga Ramírez, at their summer school workplace. During our conversation I suggested that Angelica might want to talk with her aunt Ignacia before agreeing to join the study. It was Angelica and Ignacia's familial relationship that first suggested to me the possibility of paired follow-up interviews. However, Angelica rejected the idea of being interviewed with her aunt, saying she would be uncomfortable. However, she liked the idea of an interview with her co-worker Dominga Ramírez.

Thus, I interviewed Angelica twice, once by herself and once with Dominga (Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02; Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02). The interviews were separated by nine days in June 2002 and were both conducted at the school where they both had once been students and were currently both working as paraprofessionals during the annual migrant summer school program. The first interview with Angelica was shorter than average (41 minutes) because it was conducted during her class's naptime in a classroom adjoining her own. The interview was interrupted once by a brief visit from a migrant summer school staff member.

The follow-up interview with both Angelica and Dominga was conducted on the end-of-summer-school cleanup day, when no children were at the school. This interview was longer than average (117 minutes) and was conducted in the school's library, away from the bustle and celebration of the end of summer school. The interview was interrupted twice by brief visits from migrant summer school staff members. Also, Angelica was twice called to the office for a few minutes. During these times the interview continued between Dominga and me alone.

Angelica and Dominga knew of each other while they were enrolled in a local high school together, but they were not friends. The separation in their attitudes would become acutely apparent during the course of their paired follow-up interview. Their opinions and perspectives often clashed in uncomfortable, but telling ways. In reviewing the transcript, I counted at least seven substantial disagreements between the two. I spent much of the interview struggling to bridge this gap. In the end, this paired interview had the highest participation by me of all three paired interviews (37% of the turns, 27% of the words). This was my first paired interview and I was unsure afterwards if the difficulties were caused by me, the paired format, or the conflicts between the women.

Dominga Ramírez

Angelica's interview partner, Dominga Ramirez was born in rural central Mexico in the early 1980s, the seventh of twelve children, representing the largest family among the participants. Neither of her parents had any substantial formal schooling. Like Ester, Dominga came to the U.S. for the first time early in her school career when her family crossed the border illegally in the late 1980s. The Ramirez family moved around the Southeast as migrant

farmworkers for about three years. Thus, Dominga's early schooling was frequently interrupted. Like many other participants, she was retained after her first year in U.S. schools.

In the early 1990s, the Ramirezes settled in the Vidalia onion region. Although her parents and older siblings continued to travel to find work and lead small crews in the fields, Dominga and her siblings stayed put and were able to continue their schooling in a single school district. During the mid 1990s, I occasionally would speak to her and her family in my work as a migrant education outreach specialist. Dominga spent eight years in the local schools before deciding, in part because she was above the expected age for her grade, to drop out in the late 1990s and pursue a GED through an alternative program for the children of migrant farmworkers.

Within a few months of completing her GED, through the intervention of Nanci Alvarez, Dominga found work as a migrant education paraprofessional in one of the local elementary schools she had attended as a child. Dominga has worked as a migrant paraprofessional for nearly two years and is unmarried.

Dominga's recruitment proceeded in parallel with that of her interview partner, Angelica. I interviewed Dominga twice during June 2002, once by herself and once with Angelica (Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02; Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02). The interviews were separated by nine days and were both conducted at the school where she was working as a paraprofessional. The first interview with Dominga was shorter than average (69 minutes) because it was conducted during her class's lunch and recess time. The follow-up interview with both Angelica and Dominga was much longer and has been described above.

Dominga was one of the least talkative participants. In both interviews her mean length of turn was remarkably low (24.9 and 22.4 words). This yielded a high turns per minute count of

8.3 in the first interview. Only Katia Garcia (to be described later) exceeded Dominga in these measures of limited responsiveness.

Manuela López

Manuela Lopez was born in the early 1970s in a small U.S. town less than ten miles from the U.S. – Mexico border. She was the sixth of seven children. Her father was a Mexican immigrant who had dropped out of fifth grade. Her mother had been born on the U.S side of the borderlands, but was raised and schooled in Mexico until she dropped out in seventh grade.

The Lopez family moved throughout Manuela's childhood. Of all the participants' families, the Lopezes migrated over the largest area and for the longest time, moving from one corner of the U.S. to the other for a decade and a half. Thus, Manuela's school career was often interrupted and disrupted. Further complicating her education was the fact that she married young, while still in school. However, her mother made a "deal" with Manuela's husband, insisting that he support her in finishing her schooling.

Manuela first attended school in southeast Georgia as a middle school student during the mid 1980s. Although many of her siblings overcame the obstacles of migrancy to succeed in school, Manuela always struggled in her learning. In the course of her individual life history interview she admitted to having some troubles learning but described how the tutorial support of an older sister and a few patient teachers had helped her make it through. She finally graduated (overage for grade level) in the early 1990s from a borderlands high school through a special summer remedial program for migrant students who were struggling to pass the state graduation exam.

She and her husband continued migrating and working in the fields until the mid 1990s when they found steady work in southeast Georgia and settled here. She was a mother of two and working as a fieldworker in the late 1990s when she went to the local high school to translate and advocate on behalf of her husband's younger sister. School administrators were delighted to find a bilingual person with a high school diploma and they quickly hired her to work as a migrant education paraprofessional. She now has over five years of experience as a migrant paraprofessional.

I interviewed Manuela twice, once by herself and once with Berta Perez (Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02; Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02). The interviews were separated by nearly a month. During both interviews Manuela proved herself to be exceptionally talkative, reducing my role in the interviews to 7% and 5% of the spoken words, the lowest percentages across all the interviews. She also produced by far the highest mean length of turn (150.7 words) in our first one-on-one interview.

The first interview was slightly longer than average (110 minutes) and was conducted at a table outside Manuela's wood-frame home in the center of one of the Vidalia onion region's small towns. We were interrupted a few times by her two children and a phone call. This interview was conducted on the same day as the follow-up interview with Nanci Alvarez and thus suffered from the same microphone malfunction. Ten minutes of data were lost to the problem during this interview. I reconstructed the lost section of the interview (re: she got her job in migrant education) in my journal notes.

Manuela and her paired interview partner Berta Perez knew each other, but not well, through their work in migrant education. Berta had occasionally sought out Manuela's more

experienced advice in the past. Thus, when I asked if they would be willing to be interviewed together, they both welcomed the excuse to introduce their families and talk to each other.

This paired interview was conducted during a multi-family picnic at the same state park as the follow-up interview with Ignacia. After we had eaten, Manuela, Berta and I settled down to talk while my wife and Berta's husband entertained the eight children. The interview was interrupted a couple times when the children came seeking drinks and our attention. It appeared that the interview was over when we stopped to clean up the picnic, but the children then unexpectedly decided to go play by the lake. When Manuela and Berta responded to the departure of the children by returning to our discussion, I turned on the recorder again and collected an extra half hour of tape. In this way, this paired follow-up interview was exceptionally long (152 minutes). The interview was the most lively and fast-paced (199 words per minute) of all the interviews, with a great deal of over-talk and little role for me beyond introducing topics for discussion. Although they did not agree with each other uniformly, the two women seemed to develop a level of mutual respect that was absent in the earlier Angelica Marquéz – Dominga Ramirez paired follow-up interview.

Berta Pérez

Manuela's interview partner, Berta Perez, was also born in the early 1970s, the eldest in a family of four children. Her father was a Mexican American truck driver who had grown up in the U.S side of the borderlands. Her mother was from the Mexican side of the borderlands. Neither completed elementary school. Berta's parents met in Mexico and Berta was born there. She lived in a large city in northern Mexico with her mother for the first six years of her life before her father brought her and her mother across the border to live in the U.S.

Berta started school in the U.S. while her father worked as a truck driver. However, during the economic downturn of the early 1980s, Señor Perez was laid off and the family began to travel across the Southeastern U.S. as migrant farm laborers. It was during this period that Berta was retained a year in school.

During the mid 1980s, the family relocated to the Vidalia onion region of southeast Georgia where Señor Perez was able to establish himself as a crewleader. Thus, Berta's family settled down in rural Georgia just in time for her high school years. Remarkably, for someone of Mexican heritage, Berta has bright red hair. Berta believes that largely because of this she was well accepted by her teachers and classmates in the local schools, despite her accented English and Latino surname. Nonetheless, she was the eldest child and her father needed help managing his crew if the family was to avoid moving again. Thus, she soon dropped out of school after less than two years in Georgia. Berta helped manage the family crew-leading business for nearly a decade. During that time she married a Chicano-identified Mexican American farm laborer and bore four children.

Her life was traumatically changed in the mid 1990s when her second child was critically injured and lost a limb in an agricultural accident (the watermelon shed accident at the beginning of Chapter 1). The shock and anger of this event prompted Berta to swear off farm work and commit herself to a new path focusing upon education and evangelical Christianity. (Berta made frequent references to Christian spirituality, unlike any other participant.)

After the accident, Berta returned to school, earned her GED, and took a job as a bilingual paraprofessional in the local Migrant Head Start where her son was enrolled. In the past year she shifted from Head Start to a new role as a migrant education paraprofessional, filling the vacancy left by the departure of Guadalupe Flores. I added Berta about two weeks

after the other dissertation study participants in order to provide a follow-up interview partner for Manuela. When I suggested that she could later be interviewed alongside Manuela Lopez, Berta responded with great enthusiasm.

I interviewed Berta twice, on two consecutive weekends (Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02; Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02). The first interview was conducted that same day as our first phone contact. We sat at the kitchen table in her family's mobile home outside one of southeast Georgia's small towns. While we talked she kept a window open to monitor the activities of her four children and their cousins and friends. The interview was interrupted multiple times by the children. The interview was slightly longer than average (110 minutes).

The first interview was also twice joined by Berta's husband. He was the only participant's spouse who sought to engage himself in any interview. He appears to have wanted to make sure his ideas about the schools were heard by me, particularly regarding the need for more and better paid bilingual instructional staff members like his wife. Berta's husband's contributions to the interview have been deleted from the transcript at her request, but they can be characterized as fairly reflective of a politicized Chicano perspective. The second, follow-up interview with both Manuela and Berta has been described above.

Yadira García and Katia García

The Garcia family is originally from a rural region of central Mexico. It was there that Yadira was born, the seventh of eight children, in the mid 1970s. Neither of the Garcia parents had any formal schooling, but their families had been small-scale farmers and ranchers.

While still a toddler, Yadira was smuggled across the border, along with her family, to live in a small border town in the U.S. A couple years later, in the early 1980s, Katia was born,

the eighth of eight children and the only one born a U.S. citizen. While his wife was pregnant with Katia, Señor Garcia abandoned the family to live with another woman, leaving Señora Garcia to raise eight children ranging from age eighteen to newborn. Through most of the 1980s the Garcias stayed in the borderlands during most of the school year and migrated across the Midwest and Southeast during the summer and winter breaks. Finally, in the late 1980s, the marriage of one of the elder daughters prompted the family to settle in rural southeast Georgia.

Yadira and Katia enrolled in schools in the Vidalia region where they were the only Latinos. Yadira was socially isolated at first, but she excelled academically. Katia was also isolated and she struggled in her studies. Katia was retained one year early in her Georgia school career. Both sisters described their mother and siblings as holding them to strict and high expectations for behavior. Both girls seemingly rebelled against this scrutiny by running off to marry Mexican American men in their mid-teens. Nonetheless, like Manuela, under pressure from their mother both Garcia sisters finished their schooling.

Yadira's first marriage ended quickly about the same time she graduated from a Vidalia onion region high school in the mid 1990s. She then began working as a migrant education paraprofessional. Like a number of other participants, I helped train Yadira for her job. Soon after though, she remarried, this time to a gringo with roots in another southern state. They left Georgia to live near his family. There she found work with another migrant education agency. This second marriage was ill-fated also. Finally, in the late 1990s, Yadira returned to the Vidalia onion region. She has since married a third time to a Mexican immigrant and begun to rise through the ranks of the local migrant education office. She has one young child.

In contrast with her sister, Katia's youthful marriage to a Mexican American has lasted. Soon after marrying, she and her husband moved to a large city in the Southwestern U.S. to be

near his family. She completed high school there and then they immediately moved back to rural southeast Georgia. Katia has no children. Within the last year Katia has begun working as a migrant paraprofessional. Yadira, Katia, another sister, and their mother all live in mobile homes within walking distance of each other. Their family has opened a number of small businesses in the area that cater to the local Mexican heritage community, including a *tortillería* and a restaurant.

The family connection between Yadira and Katia was one of the clearest examples of the snowball effect in my recruitment process. When I asked her to join the study, Yadira informed me that her younger sister, Katia, had started working for migrant education about six months earlier and suggested that I ask Katia to join also. I interviewed each sister twice, once alone at each woman's workplace (Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02; Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02), and once together at Katia's home (Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02).

Although I had spoken with her by phone, I met Katia for the first time just before our first interview at the school where she was assisting with migrant summer school. We sat and talked in a school conference room for 97 minutes. Her unfamiliarity with me was seemingly reflected in the interview. The interview was dominated by many extremely short turns (8.4 per minute). In the end, my word count was a problematic 41% of the total. However these numbers may be reflective of a general reticence to talk by Katia since across both this and the follow-up interview with her sister, she produced the lowest mean length of turn of any participant (19.4 and 19.2 words). Yadira and I met in the mid-afternoon at the office of my former and her current employer, the local migrant education agency for a 43 minute interview. Both of these individual interviews were relatively uninterrupted.

A month and one-half later, the Garcia sisters and I met at Katia's home and talked around her kitchen table for an average length interview (95 minutes). The interview was interrupted by two phone calls and a sudden thunder shower that sent us scampering to roll up the windows in our cars. Near the end of the interview Katia's husband came home from work. After some brief introductions and an explanation of the research project, he told us to go ahead with our work and he moved to the adjoining living room to quietly watch TV.

As might be expected among sisters, Katia and Yadira knew each others' stories well. Thus, some details that interested me were not volunteered unless I asked for them. Nonetheless, their stories, particularly those regarding Yadira's life, were lively and entertaining. Once again Katia showed herself to be relatively quiet, while elder sister Yadira dominated the conversation to a greater extent (54% of all words) than any other paired interview participant.

Conclusion

As can be seen from these profiles, both my participants and the conditions under which we conducted the interviews varied. The interviews occurred in homes, in schools, and at parks in isolation and with large numbers of children nearby, under time constraints and at a leisurely pace. Interviewing and research is a human endeavor and requires flexibility. I believe that my data collection process generally struck a reasonable balance between compromise and attention to the protocols described in Chapter 4.

Most of the participant parents were poorly educated, but a few were relatively well schooled, especially by Mexican standards. Half of the participants are American born, half are Mexican by birth, nonetheless, nearly all identify with their Mexican heritage and accept the identity label "Mexican" or "Mexican American" (see Appendix for a discussion of these labels

and others). Most of the participants have experienced poverty and migrancy, although to what extent and for how long varies greatly. Many come from homes where entrepreneurial ventures, small business ownership, and migrant crew leading have served as means to get ahead since arriving and settling in southeast Georgia.

All were students in the schools of the Vidalia onion region during the early years of the Latino influx, but for widely varying periods. All have subsequently worked in the schools of the local region, usually starting out as migrant education paraprofessionals. Taken altogether, they do not provide a representative sample of the entire Mexican heritage community in the region. They are generally better educated, more literate in English, and more secure financially than the majority of Vidalia Latinos who still work as labor migrants in the fields and factories. Moreover, they are among the very few Mexican heritage people in the region who have worked in the schools as educators. As a portion of that population, they are a large sample, possibly as much as a third of the total. The next chapter recounts their stories so as to help build an understanding of the unique perspectives they have developed in their crucial positions as pioneer students and medial brokers in the schools of the Vidalia region over the past generation.

CHAPTER 6

PRESENTATION OF THE ORAL HISTORY DATA

This chapter will present, within a chronological structure, five major themes that emerged from the oral history data that I collected during my interviews with the ten participants. As noted in chapter 5, the parallels in the participants' lives allowed for a number of significant themes to develop across their narratives. The themes move from the participants' remembering of past gauntlets, through turning points that altered their lives, to their generally positive perspective on the present, their struggles with issues of power, race, class, and gender, and finally their hopes for the future.

Many of the excerpts that represent these themes are open to multiple, and sometimes contradictory, interpretations and are not necessarily limited to the categories where they have been placed. For example, some of the participants' stories of mediation between the interests of the school and their students can be viewed as advocacy or amelioration, depending upon the perspective applied. Thus, remembering the postpositivist theoretical frame's assertion that the synthesis of multiple perspectives enriches understanding, I have, on occasion, presented these contradictions as examples of the basic tensions between my participants' agency and the constraints upon their action.

Section I: Gauntlets of the Past

Nearly all ten participants presented life stories that constructed their past difficulties and trials as central to their understanding of their place in the world. The particular set of gauntlets represented by each participant varied according to her personal life experiences. The most powerful and most frequent among these were the Border, the City, Living Dangerously, Poverty, Migrant Childhood and Fieldwork, and Isolation and Prejudice upon Arrival in Rural Southeast Georgia, each of which will be described and exemplified in this section.

The Border: Crossing

“The U.S.- Mexico border *es una herida* [is a wound] where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds” (Anzaldúa 1987, 25). The border is a militarized zone where each night thousands of people seek to change their lives for the better while hundreds of armed police and soldiers seek to thwart their hopes and dreams. Half of my ten primary participants (Nanci Alvarez, Ester Fuentes, Dominga Ramirez, Berta Perez and Yadira Garcia) were born on the Mexican side of the border and crossed into the United States illegally as children. The process of crossing into the U.S. is one of the clearest and most literal examples of a gauntlet of the past for these participants.

In response to my question regarding how she and her family came from urban Jalisco to rural Georgia, Nanci Alvarez vividly described sneaking across the Rio Grande into the U.S.:

Scott: Do you remember coming across the border at with the *coyote*?ⁱ

Nanci: Yeah. No the coyote left us. Yeah he left us and then it was dark – it was getting dark ... Finally we got to the other side. By this time, our guide was gone. El coyote left us totally. So we kept on walking and then we got to this field and there was – you could see the lights, the immigration lights you know going around like that – so whenever we see that it was coming, we would just kind of squat down so that they

ⁱ coyote = a smuggler of immigrants across the border

couldn't see us... So we got to the other side and it was dry on the other side. So we waited and waited and waited – you know a good 4 hours or so – and we didn't see el coyote so we gave up. We started just gathering our things – our jackets and everything – and we were just going to go across the other side where the lights were and we were just going to try to get some help because it was just too long, we were too cold. Anyway we started leaving a little path there to go to the other side, a car came up and started blowing the horn. So we said this is it – this is our ride – so we jumped in the car and they told us to just keep your head down and all that. Well, it wasn't 2 minutes that we got in the vehicle, driving off, when the immigration car was coming by with the lights off. Trying to make sure that, well anyway that night 30 people got caught in that same spot.

(Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 107-118; see also: Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 512-520)

Nanci's tale describes her family's trek across the border so as to emphasize the drama and the difficulty of the journey. Four other participants also spoke similarly of the difficulties of crossing the border and entering the United States. The consistency of their stories among themselves and when compared with those of thousands of others who have made the same trek (Rothenberg 1998) leaves little doubt as to the lasting significance of the fear and trauma of these tales.

The Border: Living Dangerously

Four of my ten participants (Guadalupe Flores, Manuela López, and Katia and Yadira García) lived along the Texas-Mexico border for an extended part of their lives. In retrospect, they most frequently presented the borderlands in negative terms, with a few significant exceptions. Guadalupe Flores, for example, repeatedly characterized south Texas as a region where Mexican-heritage people encountered prejudice on a regular basis. She also repeatedly described the economic desperation and resultant criminal dangers, including prostitution, in the border region (Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 34-37, 111-117, 170-171; Guadalupe Flores 2nd

solo 1/28/99, 102-111, 122-127). The Garcia sisters also spoke of similar perils where they had lived as children:

Scott:	Can you imagine what your life would have been like, Katia, if you had been brought up in [your hometown in the borderlands]?
Katia:	It would have been very different. I would probably never have graduated from school. Probably would have dropped out around 7 th grade or 6 th grade. It was pretty tough there.
Scott:	What do you mean by tough?
Katia:	A lot of violence. Not as much as the big towns, this was like a little town, but yeah.
Yadira:	There's just so many other things going on around there. Because you didn't have to ride the bus to the school because you could walk. And on the way there, you could stop by your friends' house and there's just so much more that you can you know – not so much negative things, but yeah you can be headed that way.
Scott:	What kind of negative things?
Katia:	Drugs.
Yadira:	Yeah, there's a – where we lived at – there was a lot of drunk people around our house. They never bothered us. Not that I can remember, they never bothered us, but you know there was always drunk people walking by the streets from our house. Anybody could have easily – you know, us being young kids, you know, you just grow up in that, seeing that – it's just not good. Surely there was drugs going on with all that. Prostitution. (laughs) ...
(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2 nd pair 8/25/02, 16-23; see also: Yadira Garcia 1 st solo 6/13/02, 69-74)	

As will be developed later, Manuela Lopez' stated that these perils contribute to the choice of many people along the border to migrate to places like southeast Georgia (Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 140).

Elsewhere, Katia twice referred to the borderlands as “ugly” (Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 125; Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 433). Nonetheless, Katia retained some positive memories of childhood fun there (Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 2-7). Katia's internal contradiction between romantic memories of childhood and contemporary representations of borderland squalor was personified in the disagreement between Angelina Marquéz and Dominga Ramirez:

Scott:	How do you think your life would have been different if you guys had grown up say I don't know – along the border between Texas and Mexico or back in Mexico – wherever your family was originally from – what do you think would have been different in your lives?
Dominga:	I always wanted that. I always thought about how if we hadn't ever came over here, how it would be different. I always wonder. I think that I would have completed school. Maybe, you never know, because there's more Hispanics there and there's more people that you can relate to.
Angelica:	Well, I've been to Texas where my godparents live which are my daddy's brother and I don't think I'd like to live in Texas. I mean I could go there to visit but I don't think I could stay there.
(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2 nd pair 6/28/02, 341-344)	

Although the participants generally presented the borderlands as a dangerous place full of troubles and temptations, for Katia and Dominga it was not entirely unattractive. Nonetheless, the strong consensus among most of the women was that the borderlands were a place they were glad to have left behind.

The City: Living Dangerously

The parallel and stereotypical dangers of “urban blight” were described by the three of the four participants who had spent a substantial portion of their earlier years in urban areas (Nanci Alvarez, Ester Fuentes, and Katia Garcia). Berta Perez lived in a Mexican city as a child, but did not reflect on it as a perilous place. Nanci Alvarez spent her first twelve years living in a large Mexican city and portrayed a rough, streetwise life in Mexico:

Nanci:	...We were living in the roughest neighborhood in the city. It was either that or we could have been dead or in jail right now. That's what happened – I mean go over there, the people my age are not there anymore. You go to the cemetery – that's where you find them or either in jail – you know it's just a way – the way it is over in our neighborhood.
(Nanci Alvarez 2 nd solo 6/12/02, 86; see also: 127-128, 201; Nanci Alvarez 1 st solo 1/27/99, 3-8)	

Ester Fuentes lived in a major US city for a decade before moving to southeast Georgia. Her description of that city repeatedly echoed Nanci's descriptions:

Scott: What was the biggest challenge for you in school?

Ester: In school? I always had this thought that, because I grew up in a really, really bad environment – not only my parents but a community, drugs, gangs, people killing in front of my house – I saw people growing up, getting pregnant. I always thought, I don't want to do that so I always wanted to go to school. I love to go to school – I always loved going to school and it was very hard for another student to really focus in the school because the environment was really, really bad. I always wanted to leave...

(Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 132-133; see also: 264-265; Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 443-450, 483-488).

Poverty

Nearly all of the participants spoke of financial trials in their families' lives. The temporal range of these stories reached back to the participants' parents' experiences as children and extended forward to their own arrival in southeast Georgia as field workers. For example, Ester Fuentes directly characterized her parents' childhoods in Mexico as impoverished:

Scott: ...When you were a kid first coming here to the United States, when you first got to [US city], could you have imagined achieving all that you have done so far?

Ester: I always had big expectations and I guess that was my father because he came from a very poor family...

(Ester Fuentes 1st solo ½/99, 571-572)

Scott: ...What about your mother's family?

Ester: My mother's family? They were very poor. They were very, very poor and I don't know much about them, but what she told me was that I don't think they had an education...

(Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 65-66; see also: Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 6-9; Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 72)

In addition, nearly all of the participants also had direct understandings of poverty and its challenges built upon their own experiences, such as when Dominga Ramirez recalled the uncertainties of subsistence farming without irrigation in rural Mexico:

Scott:	How did people make a living there?
Dominga:	Well what we did is we had land and we'd plant like corn and then beans and whatever and we would plant it and grow it and if it rained we were lucky, if it didn't – too bad.
(Dominga Ramirez 1 st solo 6/19/02, 63-64; see also: Katia & Yadira Garcia 2 nd pair 8/25/02, 9-11)	

Most of the women spoke of experiences with poverty on this side of the border, particularly when they first came to the U.S. and/or were traveling as migrant farmworkers. Four of the women (Ester Fuentes, Guadalupe Flores, Nanci Alvarez, and Berta Perez) spoke of an extended period of downward mobility when their parents, because of financial hardship and/or a desire to escape the dangers of the city or border, began moving the family in search of work as farm laborers (See especially: Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 200-203). Unsurprisingly, given her verbosity and her family's extended period of migrancy, Manuela Lopez provided the greatest number of migrant poverty stories, only two of which I have excerpted here:

Manuela:	...when we got there it was like - first day of school – we never took our books and everything because we knew we couldn't ever stay there. And that time they were like you can come in and they fed us and I was like, "Oh, Wow!" Then they started taking us to the dentist. They gave us some clothes, they gave us some decent shoes. It was used clothes, but the tennies, you know they were brand new and for us it was – because we were 7 in the family so my daddy would always go the store that had the most cheapest shoes and they all have those 4 lines – they were black shoes with 4 white lines, stripes down. We were all like – oh we got brand new shoes, you know, we got brand new shoes...
(Manuela Lopez 1 st solo 6/12/02, 20)	

Manuela:	...there was a nun in Ohio.
Scott:	What did she do?
Manuela:	She would go over and give me the classes for confirmation – that's communion in our church. I guess we had such a low self esteem because we didn't have any running water, we didn't have any electricity ... There was a river, we could get wet there and they would go into town and we would bring water and we would cook and we would wash – instead of buying soap, we would wash with ashes and it would wash the dishes real good...
(Manuela Lopez 1 st solo 6/12/02, 44-46)	

Migrant Childhood: Constant Movement

Beyond grinding poverty and economic vulnerability, the nature of migrancy as a lifestyle of continual dislocation provided some of the most striking “past gauntlet” stories in the interviews. When asked to describe her family’s movements as migrants, Manuela provided the following narrative of misinformation, vulnerability, and child labor:

Manuela: Okay, we would move first, we would just go from Texas to Oklahoma and then from Oklahoma back to Texas back to Oklahoma and then in Oklahoma, we worked there for a pretty long time. We stayed there. And when we went back to Texas and then we would go to and it – it was just like if somebody would say “Oh we went to such and such place and there’s work and they give everybody work.” My dad would be leaving and we would go. One time they lied to him and tell him there was a lot of real good work in ah over here in ah in Wisconsin, and we went to the town they told us and there was no work. And that place there was just a lot of people that they was like professional jobs. There was no crops. They had crops, but in other towns far away from there. We went and got food stamps and stuff like that and my mom and dad weren’t used to just sitting around and getting benefits so we moved from that place to a different town. And that’s when they told us where do y’all get this crop or this factory and they would tell us there’s work but only you and your husband can work and your older daughter, but your kids cannot. And my dad, no, no, no, we all have to work and if we are not all going to work, we’re moving somewhere else. So we would pick up and leave. We will go to a different place, a different town where there was work. But we will be working like in asparagus. We would get up early in the morning and the boss – they wouldn’t pay us by the boxes, they would pay us by the weight. And then the farmer there, they would not allow for us to give them asparagus early in the morning – we had to give it from 10:30, 11:00 and by then the asparagus didn’t have any weight.¹ They lost the weight. So my daddy he made us all a cap and with a really big light bulb – so early in the morning we would be cutting asparagus by then we could have a whole bunch of them.² ... We moved to other states where there was work, there was help. When we come to Florida. We would work in the strawberries and then when there was no strawberries we will go work in the oranges. Then when strawberries were finished, we will get the strawberries and we would just get on the side of the road and start selling it and get some money out of that so we could move to another state.

Scott: So you oftentimes would move from one place to another without much money?

Manuela: Yes. Sometimes we would make you know some good money, but once we got there – the rent – the down payment, turning on the lights and all that deposit, you know, so money was just going from one site to another. But usually whenever we would go from Texas to another state, the first 2 paychecks was to pay the bills that we have we were like behind in Texas and the other bills was to pay the lights, the water, the rent, the insurance for the vehicles and stuff like that and a little bit of groceries and then the last paycheck was for us to buy our own clothes...

(Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 93-96)

Financial insecurity and the continual search for work made the participants' migrant years vulnerable and uncertain times. Stability was a seemingly unattainable dream (Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 5-10). Berta Perez directly addressed the constant arrivals and leave-takings and her desire to settle down:

Scott: Back then when you were migrating around and moving from place to place, what did you think about that kind of work?

Berta: I said that whenever I grew up, I wasn't going to be caught up in that. That was to me – I always said if I ever get married and if I ever have my kids – I don't want to have them like that. I mean because only I knew how much it impacted me. Only I knew how much I suffered. You know as far as trying to catch up... Because it was hard for me. Hard for me to adjust, hard for me to accept. I always look at it as you know how a family – how you were born into a – how you might be born into a family where there was alcoholism or drugs – it was something that only you knew what burns you had to deal with. Just the idea of you packing up and leaving – I mean that left a big hole in me...

(Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 270-271; see also 293-294)

Yadira echoed Berta's memories of frequent exclusion with occasional acceptances suddenly destroyed by the necessity to move and make "new friends over and over again" (Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 60; see also 33-34). For many of the participants, the continual changing of schools and communities was particularly devastating with negative personal, social, and academic consequences. Retention was a common experience. Seven of the ten participants were held back at least once during their school careers, four of them during their first year in school in Georgia.

Migrant Childhood: Family Togetherness Caveat

Despite all these trials, the portrayal of migrancy that emerged from the interviews was not entirely negative. All of the participants had worked in the fields as children (oftentimes illegally) and recognized the physical discomforts and low pay that such work offered.

Nonetheless, four of participants (Ester Fuentes, Manuela Lopez, Dominga Ramirez, and Yadira Garcia) spoke of the value of the family closeness and time together as children work alongside their parents in the fields. It was this time with their family that they often described as the best part of fieldwork and that they seemed to regret losing as they moved out of the fields.

Scott: What were the best things about that work?

Ester: That I get to work with my family and we actually had the opportunity to make a living, you know. An honest living and not doing drugs or not doing anything illegal. I always had like a *una meta*ⁱⁱ – how many onions we’re going to cut today – we had like a goal, you know. And we always worked in a group and I think that’s the best thing and everything because all these families always worked to better themselves as a family and everything goes for the family. To buy a better truck, to buy better things, better furniture, everything is for the whole family.

(Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 223-224; see also: Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 139-140; Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 79-82; Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 189-191)

Isolation upon arrival in Southeast Georgia: Language

The final type of gauntlet that emerged from a number of the interviews was a sense of social isolation among the participants when talking about their arrival in rural southeast Georgia. Social isolation was clearly a part of the participants’ migrant childhood experiences elsewhere. Nonetheless, most spoke very directly of their isolation upon arrival here, oftentimes portraying it as worse than what they had encountered elsewhere. Much of this isolation can likely be attributed to the fact that these women were often the first, or nearly the first, and only Latinos in their class, grade, or even school. Thus they entered a social context that, having no

Latinos, was unfamiliar to them. Moreover, those who were learning English or were used to socializing with friends in Spanish faced a huge barrier since there were very few other bilinguals or speakers of Spanish.

Scott:	You both talked about having a difficult time there when you first got to school here. Why was that? What made this place so difficult?
Katia:	It was very different. We were used to seeing, I guess, a lot of Hispanic people in schools and here you didn't see much when we got here. So it was kind of hard to come to a new place – you didn't know nobody – you didn't know the teachers – you didn't know the school. So it was pretty hard.
Yadira:	And it was a pretty big school where I was going to – well it seemed to me like a pretty big school and so many different people.
Scott:	Different as in . . . what made them different to you?
Yadira:	Well you know being used to speaking English and Spanish – Spanglish – all mixed. That was one thing. And I was always afraid – and sometimes I'm still afraid of saying the wrong word or using it in a different way. They look at you – you know, kids would look at me weird. Like, where are you from? And the accents – right away they'd say, you're not from here, where are you from?
(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2 nd pair 8/25/02, 27-31; see also: Katia Garcia 1 st solo 6/13/02, 239-260)	

Nanci Alvarez' isolation was accentuated by her total inexperience with English and the lack of other Spanish speakers at her school

Nanci:	... I mean it seems like you are all day long in classrooms where you don't know what in the heck they saying. They, you know, you just get upset. I used to go and go to sleep cause I they bore me with all this work you know I didn't have any idea of what they were saying and just to go to lunchroom I would just skip meals. I didn't want to go and plus I didn't like the food so it was just the whole adjustment.
Scott:	What did you do during that time when everyone else was in the lunchroom?
Nanci:	I would go and sit outside.
Scott:	By yourself?
Nanci:	Um hum
Scott:	Were you the only Hispanic in the school at that time?
Nanci:	Um hum
(Nanci Alvarez 1 st solo 1/27/99, 56-62; see also: Nanci Alvarez 2 nd solo 6/12/02, 252-255)	

ⁱⁱ a goal

Isolation upon arrival in Southeast Georgia: Race

Elsewhere in the interviews, Nanci and others more directly address how racial issues contributed to their isolation. During our first interview, Guadalupe Flores spoke of her racialized fears upon enrolling as the first Latina in a Vidalia region school and I followed up on this topic during our second meeting:

Scott:	Hum, Do you remember anything about um your first days here in Georgia, south Georgia in school when you came to Broxton?
Guadalupe:	My first day I was scared, um I've never been around a lot of white people. I've never been around a lot of black people either. I was like, do you know, scared.
(Guadalupe Flores 1 st solo 12/7/98, 80-81)	
Scott:	You were the first Hispanic kid in the school and up until then for a few hundred for a hundred years, everyone around here would be either white or black. Um, how did you explain yourself to people? Did they how did they and how did they perceive you? How did they look at you? Were they sure what you were? How did you explain what you were?
Guadalupe:	They would look at me kind of funny and they would ask me my name, where I was, where did I come from, did I come from Mexico, what was my name?
Scott:	So they knew enough to ask if you were from Mexico?
Guadalupe:	Yes, cause they told me I looked like an Indian, so they would mix me up with an Indian. And I would tell them no, I'm a Mexican American and they would look at me, "Where you come from?" I come from Texas. "Oh, so you not from Mexico. You're not an Indian." No. (pause) But, I mean they looked at me like something new came into the room you know. They didn't expect it.
(Guadalupe Flores 2 nd solo 1/28/99, 25-28)	

Nanci's identity was even less clear to her classmates and to the local governmental institutions at the start, as she was categorized according to the pre-existing, dichotomous black/white categories for everything from homecoming queen nominations to medical records:³

Nanci:	...one of the girls said, "Well, Nanci may make one." And the homeroom teacher said, "She's not black." And then another boy said, "Well she's not black and she's not white, what is she?" And she said "Spanish." I don't think she knew exactly what was the answer for that.
Scott:	What have they done since then? Have there been many Hispanic kids who have been nominated to their homecoming court, is it still black and white?
Nanci:	Black and white.
Scott:	Still all black and white. I know that, was it your niece was in one of the pageants?
Nanci:	Which one?

Scott: I'm not sure, it's been some time in the last 5 years, one of your nieces I believe was in a pageant. Are the pageants all white? Are they black pageants or white pageants?

Nanci: They have black pageants and they have white pageants.

Scott: And which one did your nieces go to?

Nanci: The white.

Scott: Has that ever been an issue, people ever . . .

Nanci: I had one that won, and one that was third.

Scott: And that's happened what, in the last few years?

Nanci: No, it's been awhile.

Scott: So when you first got here, they couldn't figure out where to put you, black or white.

Nanci: You know even when I went and got my shots at the health clinic, my little slip said that I was black.

Scott: Hm, when you first got here?

Nanci: Yeah. But then here in school they put me as white.

(Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99, 233-249)

Thus, upon their arrival here as some of the first Latinos, the historical dichotomy between black and white sometimes forced racialized social choices upon the participants:

Katia: I had – here in Metter they're divided. They are divided here in Metter.

Yadira: Well that's one thing. You see I had white friends. That's who I hung out with. That's who – we did our homework together and it was all white friends. But I talk to some black friends – so I was kind of sometimes I was in the middle. I would hear it from both sides. One would talk about the other. Of course, I never told anybody. I didn't want to cause any problems. Because I was in the middle. But you know there were some things that the – like some of my white friends, they would say about this black guy – “Oh he is so cute, but he's black.” So there was like absolutely no way ever that she would even go out with him for any reason. But I just thought, I wonder what they're speaking about me? But no, I don't think they were that bad. That's just one example.

Scott: Do you have some others?

Katia: In school, I remember like when the blacks would hang around with the white people. It was like when we went outside for recess, the blacks would have their little bunch over here and the whites would have their little bunch.

Scott: So during recess they were – they would separate?

Katia: Yeah.

Scott: Where would you be?

Katia: In the middle too...

(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 499-511)

Ester Fuentes described the effect of this uncertain positioning between black and white as a type of social isolation that was compounded by the fact that most Latinos in the area were

transitory migrants, and thus not expected to stay around long enough to establish friendships, creating a tough position for any adolescent student:

Scott: What do you remember about those first days here at your high school?
 Ester: Well people were very friendly, they used to try to be friends, but they also like kind of excluded you as part of their own group, I don't know why. So actually I feel like kind of isolated, especially I came from a city where I was raised in, there was a big Spanish population and I went to school with Spanish kids and a few Americans, but most of them were Spanish and from other cultures. That was first time when I was like only with African Americans and white people and I don't know – I don't want to be racist or anything, I just think that everybody tried to keep on their own side or something. Sometimes they even had problems with the African Americans. They had some fights I remember in 1991. They wouldn't even speak to each other. I was like caught in the middle because I'm not black, I'm not white, who am I supposed to talk to?

(Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 80-81; see also: 112-117)

Ignacia Marquéz Johnson spoke of acute isolation felt by her and her brother in school and attributed it to racial or ethnic prejudice:

Ignacia: No one chose to reach out to me. They were just so unkind at times. You know it was almost like there was a lot of prejudice-ness. The school was basically – I want to say there were more blacks than there were whites in that school. And the school right now is set in a black community. But no, other than my brother and myself, there was one other Hispanic girl and a Hispanic guy. My brother was friends with the Hispanic guy. The Hispanic girl didn't like me. I don't know why. (laughs) She never liked me. But no, we tried to be friends with people you know and no one would ever come up to us and just talk to us or try to be friends with us or want to interact with us or nothing like that. No one.

(Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 135; see also: 108-113)

Altogether seven of the ten participants shared stories of racial ambiguity and racialized social barriers and isolation.

Isolation upon Arrival in Southeast Georgia: Prejudice

Ignacia explicitly refers to prejudice in the local schools toward her and her Latino schoolmates upon her arrival. This theme was widespread in the interviews and took on many forms. Generally peers seem to have been the harassers, but teachers were not innocent. Not

only did they tolerate such behavior by the students, sometimes they did it themselves. The range of acts moved from what Yadira Garcia described as “ugly looks” to name calling to actual physical assault.

Scott:	Who would give you ugly looks?
Yadira:	The whites mostly. Yeah.
Scott:	In all these different places?
Yadira:	No, the hardest part to me was here in Georgia, because there weren't hardly any Hispanics in the school that I went to here. I made some friends right away but still there was other people that would call me names...they called me onion sometimes in school. Sombrero. Certain names like that.
Scott:	How did that make you feel?
Yadira:	Little. Yeah...
(Yadira Garcia 1 st solo 6/13/02, 35-42; see also: Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2 nd solo 8/11/02, 72-73; Dominga Ramirez 1 st solo 6/19/02, 183-186; Nanci Alvarez 1 st solo 1/27/99, 39-42)	

Dominga Ramirez twice spoke of the harassment by peers moving beyond verbal abuse and taunting to physical violence:

Scott:	...How do you remember the people here in Georgia making you feel when you got here in 2 nd grade?
Dominga:	Awful. I remember the kids they would pick on me because I didn't know English and I couldn't tell the teacher when they would push me around. I hardly didn't have any friends – I couldn't talk to anybody. In the classroom I remember when I was in the 2 nd grade, there was just one Hispanic girl that she would translate what the teacher would say, but she wouldn't hang around with me or play.
(Dominga Ramirez 1 st solo 6/19/02, 157-158).	

Scott:	How has the way the local people respond to you changed since then?
Dominga:	I think they're nice. Everybody around here, they get along with everybody. I mean I don't know a whole lot of people around here because I don't go out so much, but it seems different than how it used to be.
Scott:	How does it seem different?
Dominga:	I remember when we were here once, that some guys tried to beat up my brothers – partly because they couldn't speak English. My brothers would be walking to the store and then some black people would be throwing rocks at them or saying – following them or chasing them. I remember I would be at the house and they'd come running or they'd come with . . . they threw rocks at them and hit one of my brothers in the head so he was bleeding.
(Dominga Ramirez 1 st solo 6/19/02, 201-204).	

Although most of the participants spoke of their peers and classmates as the primary sources of prejudicial language and actions, in one case, the teacher's inaction and dismissiveness was identified as a problem (a fact that will be particularly relevant as the participants' roles in the schools today are discussed later).

Katia: Here in Georgia, the school that I used to go was very scary. A lot of people would make fun of me.

Scott: Really? Who were the people who made fun of you?

Katia: It was mainly whites and black people that would make fun of me.

Scott: The students or the teachers?

Katia: The students. The teachers wouldn't care. They would listen, but they wouldn't say nothing to them. I was always by myself, never had friends in school...

Scott: And how would that make you feel?

Katia: It made me feel pretty bad. Because I mean I was a little girl, I didn't know how to defend myself.

Scott: What did you do?

Katia: Nothing. I would just be quiet because I never liked to get into trouble in school. So I would just let them – I would just let them talk, never said nothing.

Scott: Why didn't you go to the teacher when they were picking on you?

Katia: Because they would just tell me to be quiet.

Scott: The teacher would?

Katia: Yeah.

Scott: You tried that?

Katia: Yeah, they would just tell me to be quiet and go sit down.

(Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 147-170)

Unfortunately, some teachers did worse and took on an active role in the denigration, name-calling, and mocking. Ignacia Marquéz Johnson repeated the following story about a teacher's attitude toward her twice:

Ignacia: I don't know, I just didn't – I guess part of me in the back of my mind – I wanted to pursue something different and I wanted to better myself, but at the same time in the back of my mind I just had this thought that that wasn't for me. I didn't belong there – that I wouldn't fit in. I'll never forget the comment that one of my teachers made one time whenever I was signing out, because like I say we moved from state to state a lot and my brother and I didn't stay in school very long before we withdrew, we were withdrawing from school one day and I went to one of my teachers and I told him that I was moving away and I had him sign my report card or whatever and give me my grade so that I could take it on to the next school. And he

looked at me and he said do you think you'll ever amount to anything? Do you think you'll ever learn anything? He belittled me and I just felt so small at that time whenever he said that. That's something I'll never forget ... looked at me and he said do you think you'll ever amount to anything? Do you think you'll ever learn anything? He belittled me and I just felt so small at that time whenever he said that. That's something I'll never forget ...

(Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 105; see also: Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 86-89)

Nanci also repeated a particularly difficult story about a teacher who had mocked her accent in front of her classmates (Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99, 95-96; Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 240-241). Only two of the ten participants did not share tales of such overt acts of prejudice by teachers and students.

Isolation upon arrival in Southeast Georgia: Shyness and Curiosity Caveats

These descriptions of social isolation and prejudice on the basis of language and race generally externalized the causes of the participants' ill-ease in their new school. However, four of the participants attributed at least some of their lack of strong friendships to their internal shyness. For example, Ignacia repeatedly described herself as shy and discussed how her experiences of prejudice caused some of her shyness (Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 138-139; Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 70). Both Ignacia and her niece Angelica portrayed their internal changes away from shyness as resulting from the friendship and support of others (Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02, 42, 61-64, 80). Notably, four of the participants also spoke of shyness as a problem among their current students (Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 47, 69, 213-214; Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 656; Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 422).

A second important caveat to these stories of prejudice and isolation emerges from the narratives. Four of the participants spoke of receiving a warm, if curious, welcome upon their

arrival in southeast Georgia. Crucial to note, though, is the fact that these four women all arrived in the schools with abilities that set them apart from many Mexican heritage students: three spoke English fluently and comfortably, and the fourth, Berta Perez, spoke some English and had bright red, non-Mexican appearing, hair:

Berta: ...I remember I was the only Spanish girl going to Mount Vernon. I was going to the middle school then and I was the only one. But yet they didn't really treat me as an outsider at that school because of my red hair. They always thought that I was American, even when I spoke – even though they said I had an accent, but they always have considered me to be American. Until I tell them I was born in Mexico, they say, "I never seen a Mexican with red hair." But they always thought that I was American.

(Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 154)

Given the lack of pre-existing linguistic diversity in the Vidalia onion region, the novelty of the participants' ability to communicate bilingually was also of particular note to their local peers. Ester Fuentes and others remembered being asked to "speak Mexican" (Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 175; see also: Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 59-64; Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 84-85).

Gauntlets of the Past Reprised

The past trials remembered by my participants in their narratives took on many forms and coalesced around a handful of themes described here. Despite the diversity of these stories, as the table in the Appendix shows, tales of gauntlets of the past were produced by each participant.

Half of my participants were smuggled across the U.S.- Mexico border illegally. When younger, most lived in a locale, along the border or in a city, where the plagues of violence, drugs, and prostitution were perceived treats. Nearly all recalled poverty in their experience, and half also recalled poverty in the experience of their parents and grandparents. All the participants were children of migrant farmworkers and thus remember the toll of continual

movement and child labor in the fields. Finally, most told of a strong sense of isolation upon arrival as one of the first Mexican heritage students in the schools of southeast Georgia. They attributed this isolation to various causes: language, race, and prejudice and/or internal shyness. Taken together, these representations often built a largely negative and difficult representation of the trials each of the women overcame in her earlier years.

Nonetheless, these oppressive experiences were not without redemption. The experience of migrancy was generally recognized by the women as harsh and difficult. However, most of the women waxed at least somewhat nostalgic regarding the family unity that it allowed and cultivated. Also, some of the women portrayed their welcome here in southeast Georgia in at least neutral, if not positive terms, by referring to the curiosity that their novel presence would inspire in their classmates. The next section will develop some of these more positive themes as elements of major turning points in the women's narratives – times and events that altered their lives and often sparked their transition out of migrant farm labor and toward new lives as educators.

Section II: Turning Points

The participants in this study are exceptional women whose experiences set them apart from and place them on the margins of two communities. Their background is to be found among the hundreds of thousands of poor Mexican-heritage migrant farm laborers who have passed through the Vidalia onion region during the past generation. However, the combined facts that they have settled out of the migrant stream, succeeded academically, and moved out of wage labor and into jobs as educators clearly separate their lived experiences from the vast majority of southeast Georgia's Mexican heritage people. Their current work in the schools

brings them into daily contact with the community of predominantly white, middle-class teachers and school staff members in the Vidalia region. Nonetheless, their background as impoverished Latino migrants, their bilingual and bicultural abilities, and their roles as the primary tutors, teachers and advocates for Mexican-heritage migrant children in the schools marks them as different from most participants in the culture of schooling in this region.

Their position on the edge of both the Mexican-heritage and the educator communities of the region has developed over time. The genesis of this development can be traced to one or more turning points in their lives that set them on a new path leading out of the fields. In explaining their life stories, each of the participants constructed narratives with distinct turning points and specific strategies or support that marked their transition away from labor migrancy and toward another life. This section will map these turning points by examining three types of themes that emerged in the interviews: Fields versus School, Family, Graduation or GED, and Southeast Georgia as a Land of Opportunities.

The Fields versus The School

One of the most consistent themes across all of the interviews was the construction of a nearly absolute dichotomy between the fields and the school. The participants' narratives about their own childhood and parents, their choice to become educators, and their work with students all reflected a sense that their lives and the lives of other Mexican-heritage migrants in the region are structured by a singular choice between work in the fields or success at school. Altogether, there were over fifty occurrences of this theme of fieldwork versus schooling across the interviews, and every participant spoke of this theme at least twice. Thus, in discussing the turning points in the participants' lives that allowed them to move out of the fields, one must

value and examine the central role of the school and schooling in their narratives.

The fields vs. school dichotomy manifested itself in a variety of ways, but its basis can be traced to the participants' childhood experiences as migrants and the parental *consejos* of their youth. After hearing this theme repeatedly across many of the interviews, I directly asked Dominga Ramirez and Angelica Marquéz about this theme during our follow-up interview:

Scott:	That's something I heard from a lot of folk that I've spoken with. I think maybe everybody – this idea that you go to school or you're in the fields. Can you talk about that some more?
Angelica:	I can tell you, that's what my parents would tell me and that's what would scare me enough to make me go to school and do the best that I could.
Dominga:	That's what our parents told us and that's what we saw. All my cousins they quit school, and that's where they are out in the fields. I don't know why they quit. Some of them, they didn't pay attention in class I guess. They didn't learn what they were supposed to so they kept on failing and as a result they failed too much, then they decided they wanted to quit school, they don't want to be in school anymore.
Scott:	Was there ever any other option? Was there any other possibility, other than school or going to the fields?
Angelica:	Not that I know of anyway.
(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2 nd pair 6/28/02, 300-304)	

As in any duality, there must be a relationship between the two elements that allows them to stand in opposition to each other. In some cases, it was the simple fact that in the migrant community, nearly everyone who dropped out of school immediately found themselves working in the fields, like Dominga's cousins.

Finances and poverty often drove the fields vs. school dichotomy. As described in the previous section, the reality of continual movement created a clear tension between schooling and fieldwork. The financial necessity to move on to the next seasonal crop constantly disrupted the children's schooling. Guadalupe Flores spoke of how this tension was made explicit during her family's discussions.

Guadalupe: I felt bad because I knew I wasn't doing good. My grades, they were not good. I would cry cause my dad would get after me. You know cause I would never bring up my grade more than a sixty. And my mom would tell him if you would stop moving us around probably she would get somewhere.⁴ You know, and it was it was just, it was horrible, it was, I got scared cause I got retained twice and um when we stayed there in Georgia, that's when I started picking up on everything.

(Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 215)

Manuela also developed the theme of fields vs. school by explaining how financial need prompted her father to pull his children away from studying and into the fields to work (Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 117-118). Similarly, Berta Perez, spoke of being forced to drop out of school in order to help organize her father's work crew:

Berta: Yes. It was. It was because I knew, I really knew deep down inside that one day I was going to be pulled away because only I knew what was going on in the house where my dad was having – being self-employed, he needed somebody to help him out. Since he was just barely starting on business, he couldn't afford to hire anybody to – so I was the oldest – unfortunately it wasn't my brother, it was me the oldest so he would tell me that I am probably going to need you to come and help me. I remember I was missing several days at a time and stuff like that. Then the teachers started getting concerned and asking me you know why was I missing too many days and I would tell them it was I had to go help my dad work...

(Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 159-160)

Berta did eventually drop out in order to help manage her father's crew. This theme of older siblings sacrificing their education in order to support their family and the education of their younger siblings will be further explored later in this chapter.

The Fields versus The School: Fieldwork as Lesson, Motivation, Punishment, and Threat

According to the participants' narratives, fieldwork was used by their parents as a means to enhance their children's development by serving as a lesson, motivation, punishment, and/or threat in different circumstances. This invocation of fieldwork has also been recently documented in the work of López (2001). López examined high (academically) achieving

migrant families and found that the dichotomy of fieldwork versus schooling was used by migrant parents as a means to teach their children the cold, hard realities of migrant life. Like Angelica Marquéz and Dominga Ramirez above, Katia Garcia acknowledged this practice in her upbringing:

<p>Katia: ... it was because I would ask for things, that I mean, I didn't even know how my mom was paying them and stuff like that. She told me she said, "Well you're going to have to find out how we win our money," and she took me out in the tobacco fields.</p>

<p>(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 183-188)</p>

Additionally, fieldwork was repeatedly described as a punishment for doing poorly in school (Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 218-234; Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 299). Not surprisingly then, most of the participants cited the threat and lessons of fieldwork as a primary motive for their persistence in school until graduation. Manuela Lopez' comments to this effect are exemplary.

<p>Scott: What made you decide to stay in school until you graduated? To stick with it?</p> <p>Manuela: Oh, working in the fields, being wet, getting up too early in the morning to go work from sun up to sundown. We would actually see the sun come out in the fields after working there for an hour or maybe 40 minutes or so and once the sun – okay we can't see the crop anymore now it's time to leave- and whenever the sun was too hot and we're hungry – that was lunch...</p>

<p>(Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 202-203)</p>

Two other participants spoke of having dropped out of school and then subsequently learning dramatic and tragic lessons from farm work that drove them back to schooling. Nanci Alvarez twice told the story of how an injury to her sister and the dismissive attitude of a farmer regarding the injury prompted her to reconsider her decision to drop out of school.

<p>Nanci: I dropped out between the middle school and high school. Cause I didn't want to be here you know at all.</p>
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<p>Scott: That was when you were twelve or thirteen?</p>
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<p>Nanci: Thirteen</p>

<p>Scott: Thirteen and you dropped out</p>
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Nanci: And we were in the tobacco field, and some of these Mexican boys made fun of me cause they said I was dumb and I couldn't do the work and that was the reason. I decided to stay out and it was so hot, so hot. When the bus started bringing the kids the first day of school and

Scott: So they were...in September or so?

Nanci: Yeah, and I um and then my sister burned her hand. The farmer just looked at her and it was not like, "Are you ok or you need assistance?" I mean he just looked at her and (shrugs). That was it. She burned her hand in the muffler of the tractor. And it made me mad and I decided I was not going to work in the fields.

(Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99, 138-144; see also Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 258)

Farming is the second most dangerous profession in our nation, and it is the most dangerous profession where children are commonly in the workplace (P.R.I. Marketplace 2003). Thus, tales of injuries to migrant children are frighteningly common. This dissertation began with the loss of two-year old Javier Gutierrez' hand in an onion packing shed. Although Javier's parents were unable to use that tragedy as a turning point to get out of migrant fieldwork, a parallel event for participant Berta Perez provided the impetus for a dramatic transformation in her life. Berta's son, who lost his arm in a watermelon packinghouse, was referred to in the third newspaper quote at the beginning of Chapter 1.

Scott: Do you feel comfortable telling me about the accident? What happened?

Berta: Yeah. ... My husband, my cousin and my brother-in-law started working and I stayed in the car with my two kids. *Allí me queda.*ⁱⁱⁱ They started working like around 11:00 and I started – I remember the contractor came by and told me, "You know what, I really need some more help – can you help me out?" And I said, "No, I can't because my kids." He said, "They seem like they are pretty good boys." I said, "Yeah because I'm in here with them. If I get out of here, they'll be everywhere. Besides that I'm afraid they might get run over by them – you know there were tractor trailers – you know the tractor pulling the trailers." I said, "They are small, you can't see them and the forklifts had them big boxes." It was too much traffic going and I was afraid. He says, "Well look, I'll tell you what – I'll put you to do a simple job as far as just putting stickers on – just wipe it off with the cloth and put the sticker." I said, "Oh, I don't know." And he would leave and come back – leave and come back and then there was a big thunderstorm and I had to take all of my clothes – all of the stuff from the top of the Blazer and put it inside so it wouldn't get wet. I had to take my kids into the shed and everything stopped because we were inside the shed. When the thunderstorm passed by, we left the kids right there near, but they were inside this big

ⁱⁱⁱ there I stayed

watermelon box. The man said listen my mom is going to start cooking dinner for the people, why don't you let her take care of the kids while you work. I said that sounds good. So at 3:00 I started working – thinking that she was going to be taking care of the kids. Like around 7:00 that's when my husband you know all of sudden screamed at me and said – *¡mujer, el niño!*^{iv} – and I said what – because you can't hear because of all that – I said what – he says – and then he had him in his arms – he was 3 years old and he had him in his arms and he had this big thing wrapped around with blood – and I said what, what happened. I came over to where he was. By that time he was already going inside the car to take him to the hospital. I looked and everybody kept pointing to there – his arm – I said what? When I seen his arm caught in the converter belt – I said oh my God – I felt like a chicken that they had just cut off her head. I didn't know what to do. ... After that for real – I never – like I said my father when he died he was going to leave me like 150 acres farm – the one that he normally would always do the crops – he was going to leave me for me to run – leave me the trucks and everything – for me – just like a business that he was passing down to me for me to continue because I knew how to run it because that's what I did. But I said no, I don't want nothing to do with that. It's not worth it. Look what all happened to my son. It's not worth it. I always used to tell people – I said don't ever take your kids out in the field because an accident – it could happen to anybody. In the blink of an eye accidents happen. They do not ask for your permission, they just happen. Here I was being real cautious about other things and before I knew it my son has snuck into the packing shed and put his arm in the converter belt and got it caught. See those were homemade converter belts. They were not like the ones that you buy nowadays that they have these shields – they have the protect bar – well that one was like welded together – how was a 3 year old supposed to know? It was like this big pole was in between the converter belt and he tried to pass in between – just a child, you know.

Scott: Yeah, just snooping around.

Berta: Yeah and he didn't realize that the belt was going to take him into where the converter was and cracked his arm all the way to right here.

Scott: They tried to reattach it?

Berta: Yeah, but it was so – it was crumbled up so much. It was out of shape, I mean – just whenever they showed it – whenever I seen it there it was already all white. There was no way. He still had to go through a 7 hour operation just to see if they could try get his shoulder to function up and down... But that's how I decided that that was not the route for me. That's when I decided to just make a u-turn and find something that I can tell my kids, you know what – just an education. Never did I think I would be a teacher's assistant. ...

(Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 340-349)

It is important to note that in both of these cases of tragic farm working injuries, Nanci and Berta responded by turning toward education and schooling as a means to leave the fields. When faced with the frightening reality of the fields, both women understood schools as their means to get

^{iv} woman, the boy!

out of the fields. The study participants also developed the theme of the fields vs. school dichotomy as an explanation for their choice to become migrant educators. In the next section the theme will reemerge again as a motivational tool used by the participants with their current students, much as their own parents had used fieldwork as a lesson, motivation, punishment, and/or threat.

The Fields versus The School: Education as a Means to a Vague, but Better End

With these multiple examples of how fieldwork contrasted with schooling in the experiences of the participants, it becomes clear that school is understood as crucially important to their ability to do what so many other Vidalia region Mexican heritage people have not been able to do: get out of the fields and move beyond migrancy and wage labor work. As constructed in their narratives, success in school carried a special promise for a different, better future. However, as displayed by Angelica Marquéz' response in this section's opening excerpt, the exact nature of that promised future was often very unclear and vague. As constructed in the narratives, success in school meant an opportunity to become "*somebody*,"⁵ be "*someone*,"⁶ "*make something of ourselves*,"⁷ or "*do something with your life*."⁸ Unlike talk of becoming a doctor, lawyer or other well-paid professionals that pervades white middle class childhood, the means of education did not lead to any well-defined end. Despite this vagueness regarding the possible outcomes of education, it is important to note that although my participants may not have known (and their current students may not know) what it was that could be attained through schooling, they knew it was better than fieldwork.

The Fields versus The School: Being Somebody and Doing Something = An Indoor Job

These vague conceptions of what schooling could allow them to do were, like schooling itself, placed in a dichotomy opposite fieldwork. However, unlike schooling, they were not well understood by the participants, especially as they spoke of their childhood understandings of what school success could mean for them. The crucial and defining features of “being someone” or “doing something” were often a goal that most middle-class non-migrant Americans take for granted in their work lives: employment in an indoor job protected from the elements, with a steady and reliable paycheck. This ideal of indoor work of any sort was consistently valorized by most of the participants. For example, Manuela Lopez excitedly described how a summer job as a school janitor working inside air-conditioned rooms was a special experience for her, a migrant child used to spending summers in the sun and dust of the fields.

Manuela: ... We had to sweep, we had to use big like kind of those machines to kind of wax the floor and it was two of us holding it because one of us couldn't get a hold of it you know. It was a lot of fun because we were spending time with our friends inside the air-conditioned rooms was something very different. We felt very important there...
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(Manuela Lopez 1 st solo 6/12/02, 148)

Other participants also made explicit the desirability of indoor work as contrasted with the physical discomforts of fieldwork. Dominga Ramirez was particularly clear on this point:

Scott: What was the worst thing about the field work?
Dominga: When it was cold, your toes, your hands were freezing. You couldn't hardly move when it was hot. When it's really hot, you can't hardly do anything.

(Dominga Ramirez 1 st solo 6/19/02, 87-92; see also: Katia Garcia 1 st solo 6/13/02, 464, 552; Manuela Lopez 1 st solo 6/12/02, 60)
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Note that comparable comments about the physical discomfort of fieldwork were displayed earlier in the discussion of what kept some of the women in school. Angelica Marquéz closed the loop by making explicit the link between schooling and obtaining a highly prized indoor job:

Angelica: ... There is work here. We have plenty of work in agriculture and I mean also if she's bilingual, there are opportunities for her to find a job indoors.
 Scott: What else do you need to have in order to have a job indoors?
 Angelica: I think that probably the first thing would be to finish school and then maybe later on go on to college. But at least finish high school.

(Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02, 29-32)

Thus, the participants in this study consistently constructed a worldview within which the fields and fieldwork were contrasted with schooling. In this worldview, fieldwork could be a spur to academic achievement, but the benefits obtained by such achievement were not well known, other than the fact that they included an indoor job sheltered from the discomforts of nature and the dangers of fieldwork, and steady income. Learning this lesson and applying it to the challenges of staying in school constituted a turning point for many of the participants, serving as it did as the key motivation for them to stay in school.

Family: My Parent Knows Best

In talking about the elements of their lives that allowed them to achieve academically and move out of the migrant stream, nearly all of the participants spoke of the value and power of their family, particularly their parents and older siblings. Most of them constructed their parents' words as invaluable and sometimes nearly sacrosanct. Notably, the strongest valorization of parental advice seemed to be constructed by the four daughters of divorce among the participants. One of these, Yadira Garcia, was probably the most emphatic in this representation of her mother's advice and choices.

Yadira: One of the things – well, I used to go to the fields until I was 11 years old and my mom would say, if you don't finish high school, this is where you're going to be at. This is what you're going to do for the rest of your life and I knew that's not what I wanted to do. Like now she keeps telling me that you have to go back to college. You have to finish college and that's on her mind all the time. So whatever she tells me it has a lot – it just means a lot to me.
 Scott: So is your mom your number one counselor?

Yadira: Oh yeah, even though like I said she doesn't know how to read and write, she knows what's best for all of us.

(Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 139-142; see also: 129-130; Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 23, 268; Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02, 119)

However, Yadira's presentation of her relationship with her mother is a clear example of the past being re-presented in a more positive form than it likely occurred, for Yadira did not always respect and follow her mother's advice as closely as she implies.

Yadira and Katia's mother and Ignacia Marquéz Johnson's mother had both married young and subsequently endured difficult and painful divorces. For this reason, these mothers were particularly protective of Ignacia, Yadira, and Katia in trying to keep them from mistaken marriages at a young age.

Yadira: ... It's like whatever she [my mother] says has a lot of impact on me. Anything positive or negative that she may say about me or anybody you know it makes me kind of look at things the way she does.

Katia: Yeah, every time she told us something – don't get married young because if you do, you're going to do this and that – and here we go and we got married young.

Yadira: In that way, she wanted to keep us – I don't know – kind of watch over us.

Katia: I think she was scared that we would go through what she went through. That's probably why she was the way she was.

(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 69-75)

Nonetheless, despite their mother's efforts, both Garcia sisters married young. However, that did not stop their mother from acting to assure that her daughters would finish high school.

Scott: How old were you guys when you got married?

Katia: I was 16, going on 17.

Yadira: I've been through quite a bit.

Scott: You don't have to talk about it if you don't want to.

Yadira: Because of – my mother's not a bad person. I know that the way she's been and she's meant it in a good way. So I have nothing against her, absolutely nothing. But I got to that age where I was 16 and I wanted to go out and she just wouldn't let me. She wouldn't let me have friends, guy friends, because she thought – I'm going to school, I don't need to be thinking about guys. But I – school to me had always been the – well had always been the first thing – so it was like I thought I could have boyfriends and go to school at the same time. But to her, it just wouldn't go. So I thought I would run away with a guy and I did at 16. He was from Texas. But she made it there before I did and she even knew exactly where he lived. I didn't.

- Scott: Your mom?
- Yadira: She knew.
- Katia: Yeah, we would never keep – well we tried to keep stuff away from her, but when we tried to tell her – she said I already knew. She knew before we even told her.
- Yadira: Yeah and she made it to Texas before I did that time. And she got it through to him that I had to finish school and I had to keep going to school. Otherwise, she would take me back. But she made sure that I was going to high school and that he was treating me okay. She's always been checking on us. But I came back home and I finished my senior year here. And of course, I regret it. I've always regretted doing that. Always. And I'm not blaming her. It's something I did, it was my choice. But I finished high school here and then I went one year to college and then I got married with a white boy. (laughs) Which things were going fine until we moved to Arkansas and there things got bad and we moved back and we got a divorce and now a few months later I remarried.

(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 79-87; see also: Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 435-436)

Ignacia Marquéz Johnson's mother was similarly reluctant to see her daughter repeat her troubled and failed first marriage.

- Scott: Was that the first time that somebody in your family had dated a gringo?
- Ignacia: Yeah, as a matter of fact whenever I met [my husband] – okay, this is – a lot of people look at me weird when I say this but – I was 26 at that time – I had never dated. My mother was not real big on letting her daughters go out alone with a guy. We never dated anybody. ... She was very, very strict. But now I appreciate my mother being very strict on me. I appreciate the fact that she did what she did. Then I didn't understand it, even though I was 26 years old, and I felt like I was mature enough to make my own decisions and mature enough to take my own chances. But I know now why she did it. She was just trying to protect me. All that time, being she went through a bad marriage, she doesn't want us to go through the same thing. She was afraid that we were going to get hurt.

(Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 63-68)

Similar deference to parental authority and judgment was presented by Ester Fuentes, the fourth daughter of divorce among the participants, and the only participant raised primarily by her father (Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 264-265).

Family: Older Siblings Support Younger Siblings

As has been documented elsewhere, it is common both among migrants and among Mexican heritage people for elder siblings to support and care for younger siblings (Gandara 1994). In some cases, it was the work of older siblings in the fields that allowed the families of my participants to survive, pay the bills, and enroll the younger children in school. (This pattern of older siblings forced to sacrifice their education for the good of younger siblings and the entire family was apparent in the participants' stories of poverty among their parents and grandparents discussed in Section I.) As noted earlier in this chapter, Berta Perez dropped out of school in order to support her father's crew-leading enterprise. Angelica Marquéz spoke of deferring her dreams in order to assist her younger siblings:

Angelica: Yeah. I remember when I graduated I was going go on to college to be a teacher and my parents didn't have the money so I never went back and now that my sister has graduated I'd rather her go ahead and go to college and I'll wait and maybe one day I'll go back.

(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 325)

As displayed in Chapter 5 though, most of the study participants are the younger children of large families (on average, the participants were the fifth of seven children in their family). Thus, for most of my participants, their older siblings were crucially important in their upbringing. For example Manuela Lopez, and Ignacia Marquéz Johnson, as some of the youngest children in their large families, benefited from their older siblings' sacrifices.⁹

Scott: Compare - You have 6 siblings - Compare their educational paths to yours...
 Manuela: My oldest brother, he had to quit school in order to help my second brother to get his education because he was going to school for law enforcement. He was doing very good and all but my parents and we could not work enough to support ourselves and support him. He went to become a butcher...

(Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 210-211)

Scott:	So when you were growing up, before you got to school, everyone spoke Spanish in your house?
Ignacia:	Everybody spoke Spanish – none of my brothers or sisters had been at school. Actually me, the two sisters, the middle child, and the next one and the youngest boy and then me were the only four that were able to pick up some English because we were younger. My four older brothers and sisters were –they went to school-but they couldn't understand anything- they couldn't read – they couldn't do any work at all – so they just basically were the ones that supported us. They went to work.
Scott:	They worked in the fields?
Ignacia:	They worked in the fields.
(Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1 st solo 12/16/98, 40-43; see also: Katia Garcia 1 st solo 6/13/02, 78-81)	

I later asked Ignacia what this meant for her relationship with her older siblings. Her response reaffirmed the lesson of the fields vs. the school.

Scott:	Was there any pressure coming from them saying you got to stay in school, we are out here working so that you could be in school?
Ignacia:	Um hm, they always told us that. They would look at our report cards every 6 weeks and they would – they would never punish us for bringing home a bad grade or anything, but we would get reprimanded. They would get on to us and ask us why our grades were so low. And they always did tell us that they were out there to work and give us the best that they could and they wanted us to put forth some effort and go to school and make something of ourselves so later on we wouldn't have to be the ones out there in the fields like they were.
(Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1 st solo 12/16/98, 100-101)	

In other households also, the older siblings also took on the functions of tutors and monitors for younger siblings with mutual support and high expectations as the guiding principles.

Scott:	Who made you do your homework?
Yadira:	My older sister, [name]. She was always checking my grades. Always. And one thing here that they didn't do in Texas I know is that they made the parents sign the papers. Especially if they were bad. In Texas, I don't remember ever doing that. They probably do it now, but I don't ever remember having to do that down there.
(Yadira Garcia 1 st solo 6/13/02, 91-96)	

Manuela:	... the kitchen was everybody's desk. When we got on the table you know [grandma] had everything out of the kitchen, she was cooking – it was never greasy in the kitchen and we always had paper and pencils and it was all seven of us doing our work. I don't know how to do this – oh you just have to multiply and everybody was everybody's teacher – what is a verb, what is a pronoun – oh a person, place or thing we just learned that today – you know. So everybody was giving everybody information. We would all help each other with our work and
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we would turn the table around and everybody would be checking everybody's work making sure we had it right. The only thing I hated was that they would never give us the answer. I mean my head was so hard – I was a very hard person – special ed – if I would have known about special ed, I think I would have fit it just perfect in there. They would always explain everything and they would actually laugh and say my goodness can't you get it? No, how do you do it, how do you multiply and understand. They would tell me in Spanish, they would tell me in English until finally you know. My sister, [name], was the one who had the most patience and she'd say it's okay, stop crying, we're going to get this. And she would get apples, she would chop stuff and she would divide it, and I would do it. You know how to get it now? Oh, okay, this is easy....

(Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/13/02, 207; see also: Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02, 114-115)

From these examples emerges a strong theme of familial support for education. Not surprisingly, given recent research on Mexican American education and home-school connections (López 2001; Valdés 1996; Gonzalez et al. 1995), the form that such support has taken in the life stories of my participants does not necessarily meet the expectations of predominantly white middle-class teachers. Often times the support of one child has required the sacrifice of another. Nonetheless, these are clear examples of families struggling to support their children's education despite terrible odds and socio-economic pressures.

Graduating: The Crucial Role of Caring Mentors

Outside of their families, every participant could remember at least one person who was crucial in assisting them in their academic and work lives.¹⁰ Oftentimes these mentors were schoolteachers or counselors who were willing to take the time to provide individual tutorial help (Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 208-209; Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 406; Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99, 89-90, 169-178). Other caring mentors simply listened to the internal struggles of these young women who often felt isolated from the social milieu around them.

Ester: ...actually I would spend all my time at the counselors' office. Ms. [main counselor's surname], she was very important in my life. I always thought that she actually understand – I really feel they were too childish for me – so I always went to her office for lunch break or recess. I always went to talk to her all the time. She always talk about those dreams, important stuff about college and going to school and I like that stuff.

(Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 108-109; see also: 247-257; Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/13/02, 155-156; Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 151-154; Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 511-518)

Other caring mentors were not educators, but people and institutions in the community.

For example, Nanci Alvarez, the most highly educated of all the participants, received crucial financial support from a Catholic nun and the farmer that employed her family (Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99, 185-193, 208-213). Ester Fuentes, the only other four-year college graduate among the participants, also received private financial support from private donors and a church (Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 327-329). Both Ester and Manuela Lopez also spoke of Catholic nuns who played important and inspirational roles in their lives (Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 322; Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/13/02, 46).

Graduating: A Drama for those who Struggled or Dropped out

I had expected to find that my participants would emphasize the importance of the fact that they had graduated or completed their GEDs. This was not uniformly the case. Those participants who were able to complete their high school degrees through traditional means generally did not discuss their graduation at length. However, the four participants who either struggled to obtain their diplomas through alternative programs or dropped out and later returned to school for a GED generally constructed dramatic tales of their efforts and took great pride in their accomplishment.

Manuela Lopez, a self-described weak student ("la burrita"), graduated through a summer remedial program for Texas migrant children who were unable to pass the state graduation exam.

She clearly constructed this accomplishment as a major turning point in her life.

Manuela: The day we got our results, they called them – they called our parents and told them we had passed. Some of them came back and they were waiting for us and stuff like that, but unfortunately my parents couldn't come back. So I just had to stick around the house and clean and kind of help my sister. Then once they came, you know, they did a little bit of food for me and celebrated with me and all that. But it was like – I was crying, but I wasn't really crying because I passed, I was crying because I wasn't there – they weren't there with me. It was hard, but it was like *los golpes de la familia, los golpes de la vida*.^v You learn. You take a big step. I'm not ever going to – you know if I ever kids, I want to be there for them or there for her.

(Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/13/02, 147-152)

Four other participants dropped out of high school only to later earn a GED. Dominga Ramirez left school and directly entered and graduated from a federally-funded GED program for migrant children. She did reflect upon that choice and accomplishment with some joy.

However, her regret for choosing not to stay in school clearly overrode her sense of accomplishment in earning a GED (Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 356-370).

In contrast, the three women who dropped out of school and worked for a number of years before returning for their GEDs, told of the difficulty of deciding to go back to school, the struggle they faced in their studies, and the sense of great accomplishment that earning their GED brought to them. As noted earlier, Berta Perez' choice to return to school resulted from the trauma of seeing her son lose his arm in a farm accident. Guadalupe and Ignacia's tales were not as dramatic, but they clearly reflected a great deal of pride.

Scott: Can you tell me a little bit about Ms. [female GED teacher's surname]? ...
 Guadalupe: Oh, she's my she's my guardian angel! When I got married with my first husband, I was having a lot of problems So we separated ... I was receiving welfare and food stamps ... then they mailed me a letter about the Peach program And I read it, and it sound interesting. So I thought about school and all that and I say I'm too old to go back to school and my sister and my brother [name] told me Guadalupe, it's never too late to go back again. Go and my dad told me the same thing. I said it's embarrassing, I'm old. It don't matter, you

^v the bruises of family, the bruises of life

going you know ... I sat there with my little notebook and my pencil and I felt awkward. Cause there was nothing but blacks and whites and I was the only Mexican in there. ... She said what grade did you quit; I said ninth grade going on tenth and uh how long has it been? I said it's been a long time. I said I think I'm gonna have to start from small. She said don't worry you'll get somewhere. So I went now to school for a whole two years. First time I went to go take my GED, I missed it by uh ten point I think. I'm not too sure. Came back, said I ain't going back. Said you're going back, so I went back to school again for another whole year. Second time I went back I missed it by two points ... I went back. Here I am studying at nights, reading books, gosh she would make us read, and I hated reading. She said that's the only way you're gonna get past that GED, cause it's nothing but reading problems. Oh God I said that's a lesson. I would go home, study, go to bed and you know my mom would help me with the kids and here comes the quarterly. We had to go back to take the test. Went back. She said Guadalupe you need two points, Guadalupe you can make it. I said Ms. [female GED teacher's surname] if I don't make it this time I'm not going back. She said you can make it. I know I'm not going to make it. She said don't say you're not. Don't say never you know. So I went and I took my test. OK, and she told me Guadalupe do you want to know your points right now? I said, ma'am, I'm nervous. Don't worry. So she took my test and she graded my test right there in front of me. I looked at her and said please God help me this time I don't want to come back up here. So I went outside and sat down and she called me Guadalupe are you ready for the bad news. I said yeah let it hit me right now, I ain't passed right? Well, let me tell you something. You're going to keep on struggling with math. That's your weakest point right there. She said that's about it. I said well what's the good news? You passed. I said oh good. I started yelling, jumping up and down.

(Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 238-259; see also: Ignacia Marqu   Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 102-104)

Guadalupe's story of earning her GED also reaffirms how important a single caring educator could be in the lives of the participants.

Southeast Georgia: A Refuge

The first section of this chapter developed the theme of Gauntlets of the Past in the participants' narratives, examining how each of the participants constructed a life story that included earlier years filled with substantial trials and difficulties. As demonstrated in that section, many of the participants reflected upon their first years here in the Vidalia onion region

with great bitterness due to the isolation they experienced as some of the first Mexican heritage children in the schools. Nonetheless, a central fact remains: all but two of my ten participants have chosen to remain in southeast Georgia. Clearly there must be elements of the life and opportunities available in this area that drew them here and prompted them to stay on. It is only upon the acceptance of this assertion that one can begin to explain the dramatic growth of the local Mexican heritage population described in Chapter 2. The rest of this section will examine some of the positive aspects of the Mexican heritage experience in southeast Georgia. Taken together, these aspects can be understood as crucial in the participants' opportunity to move out of the migrant stream and into their roles as educators. In fact, some participants even explicitly doubted their ability to have accomplished this transition anywhere else.

As described in Chapter 3, many people come to the rural South expecting to find racialized prejudice surrounding them. For example, Manuela Lopez came to Georgia carrying concerns about the KKK and lynching based in stereotyped discourses of Dixie.

Scott:	So was it what you were told to expect and what you found once you got here?
Manuela:	It was totally different. It was more lenient, it was more – I felt more relief because when we got here I mean we were renting a place and they would tell us – buy the place, we'll sell it to you or like – oh no, not in Georgia – there's a lot of discrimination here – ya'll don't like blacks, ya'll hit them, ya'll kill them, ya'll hang poles up there and ya'll walk in the streets with fire and stuff like that – we said no. I guess this neighborhood is pretty good, you know. We feel safe and secure and they even called me up to translate them at the Sheriff's Department. I have translated at the court before I started working with the migrant program. So I felt like we were fitting in - into town. It was a totally different point of view once I got to meet everybody or they got to meet us. But I was expecting the worst. We would go into the stores and just get what you want and don't, you know you walk in there they're going to think you're stealing just because you're Mexican. I guess you got to get to know people in order to find out how they really are.
(Manuela Lopez 1 st solo 6/13/02, 161-162)	

Similarly, Guadalupe Flores repeatedly compared her experiences in Georgia to the prejudice she faced as a Mexican American in south Texas and found her new home much more welcoming

(Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 34-35). Thus, for at least two of the participants, rural southeast Georgia became a refuge from prejudice and discrimination.

As discussed earlier, many of the participants previously lived in an area, usually a city or along the border, with perceived problems of drugs, gangs, prostitution and violence. With reference to these gauntlets of the past, the relatively placid rural life of southeast Georgia is a clear refuge. Ester Fuentes commented on her father's choice to leave Chicago:

Ester: ... I don't know why he liked it, because it's like the smallest town – not in Georgia – but to me it was like the tiniest place he had ever gone. And he liked it and he was like well the city is really bad, especially during that time – a lot of gangs and drugs, everything around Chicago so he didn't really want us to grow up in that environment – so that's why he decided to come here.

(Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 101; see also: Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 72; Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99, 3-8; Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 127-128)

Manuela Lopez observed that this sense of safety from "urban" and "border blight" continues to draw Mexican heritage families to this region (Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/13/02, 137-138, 163-166).

Southeast Georgia: Hay Trabajo

Despite these reasons for the arrival and settlement of Mexican Americans in southeast Georgia during the past generation, one cause must be understood as central and prerequisite: the need for workers in local fields and small industries. Chapter 2 described the rapid expansion of the Vidalia onion crop, its profitability, and the existence of nearly year-round field work in this region, in large part due to the onion crop. The rarity and attraction of this nearly year-round work is borne out in the narratives of the participants describing why their families came, settled, and remained in this area.

Scott:	What did you know about the South? About Georgia and about South Carolina?
Yadira:	Nothing, we knew nothing about it. Nope, we hadn't heard – we just heard, we would just hear from people that there was just a lot of work – a lot of work up here. That's why we moved.
Scott:	<i>Hay trabajo</i> ^{vi}
Yadira:	<i>Hay bastante trabajo</i> ^{vii}
Scott:	Que tipo?
Yadira:	And there was a lot of work. Well, in Michigan it was <i>el pepino, el esparago</i> . ^{viii} We would go to <i>el esparago</i> first. We couldn't stay for the <i>pepino</i> and the strawberry after that because it was, I mean whatever money you made that week you would have to pay for the food and it was just not worth it. But when we came to South Carolina, it was a little better and Florida was a little better, but it was more expensive to live. And Georgia was one of the best places to work and you know there's just a lot of work here. And it was just pretty, my mom really liked it here.
(Yadira Garcia 1 st solo 6/13/02, 63-68)	
Dominga:	I think the reason my family stayed here is because if there's no onions, there is always squash, cucumber or there's something else – another crop that you can do. In November I think they start planting onions, then like in April they start pulling onions.
Angelica:	Well my parents decided to stay here – the first reason was because they started having more family and they wanted us to finish school and they didn't want us to be changing you know go from school to school. And then another reason is because they were – I don't know if they were the first ones, but they were one of the first ones to start doing pine straw ¹¹ and then they would sell a lot of pine straw. So they stayed here because there was always work.
(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2 nd pair 6/28/02, 163-165; see also: Angelica Marquéz 1 st solo 6/19/02, 88-90; Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2 nd solo 8/11/02, 13-16, 101; Manuela Lopez 1 st solo 6/13/02, 50; Nanci Alvarez 2 nd solo 6/12/02, 96)	

Southeast Georgia: A Land of Opportunities - Crewleading and Entrepreneurism

My participants' families have done much more than find stable, year-round work in the fields in southeast Georgia though. As the local Latino population has grown, the last decade has seen a continually the expanding range of opportunities for Mexican heritage people to find work that is not in the fields.

^{vi} There's work

^{vii} There's plenty of work

^{viii} cucumbers, asparagus

Berta: I think it's different [than when I came here]. Because now just the idea of the Hispanic population being so tremendous. I mean it's outrageous the numbers. There's so many kids. Back there, back then I remember when even Hispanics didn't even work in factories, you know companies. I remember that whenever I started working in the Oxford Company, it was a sewing company, I was one of the first Hispanics that started working there and then after that I started recommending other ones. Before you know it they had a lot of Hispanics working there. The different factories that I have worked or places that I have worked, I always recommend Hispanics because they are such good workers – dependable. They always have open doors for them. But back then it was not like that...

(Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 322-323; see also: 257; Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 267-272)

Angelica Marquéz and Dominga Ramirez elaborated on the job opportunities presented to them as bilingual high school graduates.

Dominga: ... They [local people] are now needing more Hispanics or bilingual people in different offices or stores and businesses. They are needing more people that can speak both English and Spanish.

Angelica: I remember when I was working – I think it was last year when I was working here and then I had a part-time job at Piggly Wiggly. They offered me the job so I took it. It was not that I needed to work but they offered me the job so I took it and then one afternoon we went to KFC to get chicken and one of the ladies asked me did I want to work there since we got there and I knew exactly what I wanted and I told her that I would see...

Scott: The Kentucky Fried Chicken people offered you a job just because you knew what you wanted and could order?

Angelica: Well yeah because they had I remember on the weekends they would have a whole bus full of Hispanics that were there and they couldn't order because they didn't know what to ask for. She saw that I could speak real good English and I could speak Spanish so she asked me if I wanted to work there. ...

Scott: How about you? Have you ever been offered a job . . .

Dominga: Yeah, they want me back at the [convenience] store. They've been asking me. If you're not happy at the school, you can always come back. They always tell me you know whatever, they've always asked me if I wanted to come back.

Scott: Why do they want you back so much?

Dominga: I think it's because they need me. Also there was buses of Hispanics would walk in there. Like she said on Sundays, they try to buy beer and sometimes I'd be working in the café and there was somebody at the store you know because it was in the same building and they were trying to say something and they would call me go up there to see what the people wanted.

(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 269-282; see also: Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 254-256)

The tremendous workload being carried by the region's Mexican heritage wage laborers places a premium on bilingual skills. Keeping the economy functioning requires a class of bilingual middle managers to supervise Mexican heritage field laborers and a class of bilingual small business owners, managers, and staff to provide services and goods to thousands of Mexican heritage workers. Since my participants' families were some of the first Mexican heritage people in the region, often their parents, family members, and they themselves have had opportunities to move up the farming hierarchy into crew leading, up the industrial hierarchy into supervision, or to start up their own small businesses.

For example, Nanci Alvarez' father arrived in the area in 1980, as part of one of the first Mexican heritage labor crews in the region. The crew was overseen by an African American crewleader. However, Sr. Alvarez had been a small business owner in Mexico and apparently saw an opportunity. Thus, according to this story, with the support of a local farmer one year later he was leading his own crew (Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99, 194-197; Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 135-148). Guadalupe Flores told a parallel story of her father's transformation from a labor crewmember to a settled farm worker and then a crewleader through the support of a local Vidalia region farmer (Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 177-182). This pattern of moving out of the lowest rung of field work and into crewleading or other economic opportunities after arriving in southeast Georgia played out in all the participants' narratives about their families. Ester Fuentes' story was filled with such transformations, but not in the fields. For example, some of her siblings have taken supervisory roles during the growth of Mexican heritage employment at one of the region's largest employers, a huge retail distribution center (Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 16-23) where Berta Perez had also worked.

Although few crewleaders, middle managers, and small business owners catering to

migrant and Mexican heritage laborers become wealthy, these roles clearly allow for a much more stable and comfortable lifestyle than migrant fieldwork. According to Berta Perez, this is particularly true of crewleaders in the Vidalia onion region.

Scott:	So what – your dad wanted to be – to work as a contractor and why did he choose to do that here in Georgia rather than in Florida? Do you know?
Berta:	Because well, we all know that in the onion business you do – everybody makes money. If you play your cards right, everybody makes money. That’s a very good job.
(Berta Perez 1 st solo 6/29/02, 230-231; see also: Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2 nd pair 6/28/02, 116-126; Katia & Yadira Garcia 2 nd pair 8/25/02, 252-278)	

All of the participants’ families arrived in the region as migrant farmworkers traveling for work in the fields. Most of them had never known anything other than labor migrancy. Four of the families had worked in more stable or better paying jobs in the U.S. or Mexico before falling upon hard times and entering the migrant stream. No matter their previous experience though, as the table below displays, all the participants have at least one close family member (other than themselves) who has made the transition out of the fields and into better paying and/or preferable careers.

Figure 18: Participants’ Family Members whose Work Status improved in the Vidalia region

Guadalupe Flores	Father	was a Truck driver and Policeman elsewhere in the U.S. borderlands, became a Crewleader in southeast Georgia
Nanci Alvarez	Father	was a Small Business Owner in Mexico, became a Crewleader and Entrepreneur in southeast Georgia
	Sisters	became Entrepreneurs in southeast Georgia
Ester Fuentes	Father	was a Construction Worker in Mexico and the urban U.S., became a Crewleader in southeast Georgia
	Brother	was a Construction Worker in the urban U.S., became a Crewleader in southeast Georgia
	Brother & Sister	became Warehouse Supervisors in southeast Georgia
Ignacia Marquéz Johnson	Brother	became a Policeman in southeast Georgia
Angelica Marquéz	Father	became a Crewleader and Entrepreneur in southeast Georgia
	Brother	became a Factory Supervisor in southeast Georgia

Dominga Ramírez	Father	became a Crewleader in southeast Georgia
Manuela López	Husband	became an Entrepreneur in southeast Georgia
Berta Pérez	Father	was a Truck driver in the U.S. borderlands, became a Crewleader in southeast Georgia
Yadira & Katia García	Mother	worked in a tortillería in the U.S. borderlands, became an Entrepreneur in southeast Georgia
	Sisters & Brothers	worked in a tortillería in U.S. borderlands, became Entrepreneurs in southeast Georgia
<i>(all arrived in Georgia as Migrant Farm Laborers)</i>		

The Vidalia onion region has not only has been a refuge from the trials of migrancy for the participants and for their families. This locale has been a land of opportunities allowing access to a bit of the American dream. One to two decades after arriving here as some of the poorest of the poor, most of them now own at least a mobile home and a small plot of land to put it on, while many own their own small businesses, nice cars, and comfortable homes.

Southeast Georgia: A Land of Opportunities - Becoming Educators

Beyond the agriculture, business, and industrial sectors though, the rapid and continuing growth of the local Mexican heritage populace has created a need in education and social services for bilingual and bicultural paraprofessionals and professionals. Yadira Garcia commented:

Yadira: There's just a lot of – there's a whole lot of opportunities here. We just don't take advantage of them as we should because right here, even with a high school education, you can find jobs anywhere. Because of so many Hispanics in the area. Like translating work- you know doctor's office or health department...
(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2 nd pair 8/25/02, 13-15)

These positions are clearly as "being someone" and "doing something" because of their relative prestige, stability, and indoor locations. Thus, as understood through this chapter, the participants' entry into the schools as educators can be understood as the culmination or

fulfillment of their move out of the fields.

The participants followed different paths to become educators. Few of them pursued this work with great intentionality. For some, an innocent visit to the school and the subsequent revelation to the school staff that they were bilingual and had finished high school led to an unexpected and unsought job offer. For others, the job came by way of a school staff member seeking them out. These stories reinforce Katia Garcia's judgement that "there's a whole lot of opportunities here," especially for educated bilinguals.

During a visit to the high school to advocate for her husband's younger sister, Manuela Lopez found herself being asked to work there (Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/13/02, 171).¹² A similar turn of events occurred to Guadalupe Flores (Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 304-305). Ignacia Marquéz Johnson became an educator at the urging of a close church friend who works as a teacher (Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 18). Ignacia's niece, Angelica Marquéz found her way to migrant education also through the intervention of a school staff member who recognized the need for a bilingual staff member (Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02, 136-141). In Dominga Ramirez' case, it was participant Nanci Alvarez who recruited her to work in the schools (Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 385-386). Equally unintentional was Yadira Garcia's route into the field of education by way of a job posting at the local employment office (Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 171-176).

Yadira's younger sister Katia followed her into migrant education work in part because of its status as an indoor job, and then secondarily because of the chance to help children (Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 525-526). Nanci Alvarez followed a similar route to migrant education on the recommendation of her elder sister who had worked as a migrant paraprofessional.

Of all the participants, only three recalled times during their childhood when they

imagined themselves growing up to be teachers, child care providers, or social service workers.

Angelica Marquéz' stated a long-standing interest in childcare (Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02, 136-141). The only other prominent examples of participants who had thought of becoming educators were Ester Fuentes and Guadalupe Flores:

Ester:	I always used to teach my brothers and sisters.
Scott:	Oh, so you played school?
Ester:	All the time – I mean I used to give books and charts from school and I always used to teach them. Later on I didn't really, really want to teach because I was not too happy with the school system they have and how kids acting up and they did not respect the teachers. That's why I really didn't want to be a teacher.
Scott:	Then you came back around to it.
Ester:	Yes. I like to work with people, I like that you can really make a difference on somebody's life if you really get close to that person and try to understand them and see what they really need. Not just isolate them.
(Ester Fuentes 1 st solo 1/2/99, 576-580; see also: Guadalupe Flores 1 st solo 12/7/98, 494)	

Berta Perez' path to being an educator was equally intentional. However, as presented earlier, it was not until her son's accident transformed her life that she turned to the schools for a better life for her and her family (Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 224-231).

Turning Points Reprised

The turning points in the lives of my participants revolve around four axes: the dichotomy between the fields and the school; support from their families and caring mentors; graduating; and the array of opportunities for Mexican heritage people in southeast Georgia.

As has been shown, within the understanding of the world constructed by my participants as they reflected upon their childhoods, the field was diametrically opposed to school. Thus, those who did not want to work in the fields from sun up to sun down for the rest of their lives needed to complete their education. In this way, fieldwork was presented as a lesson, motivation, punishment, and threat to those who struggled or failed in school. Those who

heeded the lesson and threat of fieldwork were assured that their education was as a means to a better, although often quite vague, future of "being somebody" and "doing something."

The second axis of family support showed that the advice of parents, such as the lessons of fieldwork, was highly valued, though not always followed. Crucial support for the education and careers of younger children was provided by the work (usually in the fields) and counsel of older siblings. The third axis, graduation, was not constructed as a grand achievement by most of the participants, although the drop out participants who had returned to school as adults did construct dramatic retellings of the completion of their GEDs. All of the participants, whether they dropped out or not, highlighted the importance of the role of caring mentors and the struggle to stay in school versus dropping out.

The final axis is one of location: southeast Georgia. In the participants' stories, the Vidalia region of Georgia represents a refuge from the gauntlets of prejudice, urban / border blight, and migrancy. Here they have found work to be plentiful enough year round that families can settle out of the migrant stream and seek a better life. Here they have found a land of opportunities where they and their families have been able to become crewleaders, entrepreneurs, and, of course educators.

Taken together, these turning points summarize how my participants understand their own personal transformations from migrant fieldworkers to educators. The next section will examine how they understand where this transformation has lead them and how they construct their roles in the schools of rural southeast Georgia.

Section III: The Promised Present

Given their humble origins, the ten participants in this study have fulfilled many of the goals of their youth by finishing high school or a GED and then “being somebody” and “doing something” as an educator in southeast Georgia. Their youthful experiences and the lessons of their parents’ lives promised that if they could stay in school, a better life would become available to them, and that promise, to at least some extent, has been fulfilled.

This section is framed by an assertion that from my participants’ perspectives, many of their hopes for better lives have been actualized by their jobs in the schools. This chapter will proceed from this assertion to examine how they understand themselves, the people around them, the students and families they serve, and the schools they work in today. In outlining their understandings, this chapter will explore three major themes: Schools are better today, the participants’ role in the school, and emerging gaps between the participants and the families and students they serve.

Schools are Better Today

When they were asked to compare the schools they work in today to the local schools they attended as children, there was a strong consensus among the women that today’s schools in southeast Georgia are better than those that they attended ten to twenty-five years ago. There were a number of reasons for this improvement according to the participants: an increasing number of Mexican students in the school, “nicer” and Spanish speaking educators, and increased Latino-specific resources and services, especially ESOL classes.

The participants’ emphasis upon the importance and benefits of the increasing number of Mexican heritage children in the schools of southeast Georgia is consistent with the gauntlet of

isolation described in Section I. As adults recalling their own experiences as the first and often the only Mexican heritage child in their classroom or entire school, the participants repeatedly looked upon the condition of their students today with joy and a bit of envy.

Half of the participants (Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 60; Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 81; Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 242; Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 34; Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 158, 342, 524-525), focused upon the lack of Latinos in school as a cause for a shortage of friends. However, as the local Latino population grew, this was less problematic for the younger participants. For example, Katia Garcia, one of the youngest participants, was enrolled in the local schools recently enough to have experienced this difference for herself (Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 306-307, 367-370).

In their later paired interview, Katia and her sister added the increased Latino-specific resources in the schools and Spanish-speaking teachers as other improvements since their childhood years.

Scott: How is their experience – kids who are arriving now – different from the one you had? Or is it different or is it the same? Think about the kids you are working with and enrolling in school and tutoring.

Katia: It's different because when we started going to school, there wasn't that much Hispanic children in the – that many Hispanic children in school. And now there's more Hispanic children, more that you can speak Spanish with, and more people that will help you that speak Spanish. When we started going to school, I mean, I don't remember a teacher that would speak Spanish. So it was kind of – just easier for them now because they have more people that speak their language.

Yadira: And now they have some of the forms in Spanish, too, at the school – at least some of them. And when I've been to some schools that are just starting to get Hispanics, they want at least the most important things translated to Spanish.

(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 48-50)

Elsewhere Katia stated that she felt the teachers today are “nicer” than in the past because “they listen more to you now” (Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 283-286).¹³ Similarly, Berta Perez

described one caring educator, the principal of her school, and her willingness to listen as a “big blessing” for local Hispanics (Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 362-365).

Another change of particular significance to Katia and others was the fact that more local educators speak Spanish than a generation ago (Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 657-660). Ester Fuentes also brought attention to the increased efforts by educators to speak some Spanish and to the increased Latino-specific resources in the local schools and communities. Finally, Ester also spoke of improved testing and placement practices and increased efforts to get children out of the fields and into school (Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 226-238, 317-323, 355).

Schools are Better Today: ESOL

One of the most noteworthy new changes in the area’s schools during the past few years has been the advent of ESOL programs. As explained in Chapter 2, nearly all the school districts in Vidalia onion region delayed the implementation of educational services for English language learners for many years, despite the mandate of *Lau v. Nichols*. During the past few years though, in part because of a U.S. DOE OCR investigation in Toombs County, a number of the local districts have started up ESOL programs. When asked how the schools are different today than when they were children, four participants referred to the establishment of these new ESOL programs as a tangible improvement. In our first conversation Berta Perez did not even give me enough time to start the tape recorder before she began to praise the ESOL classes as a blessing.

Scott: So you never had ESOL classes, but you see what they’ve got here as a blessing?

Berta: Yes, I found it very helpful, I mean I wish they would have had that when I was growing up ...

(Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 1-2; see also: Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 430, 494-497; Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 451; Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 150 & 210)

This is not to say that the ESOL classes and teachers are seen by the participants as a panacea or even as an unmitigated success. For example, Ester appeared to express doubts about the limited understanding of Latinos and migrancy among local ESOL teachers: “I mean there are good teachers, but like I told you before – they do not have that experience. They did not really know how to deal with us” (Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 451).

Concerns regarding tensions between the ESOL teachers and the migrant paraprofessionals, particularly regarding English-only pedagogical practices, were raised by Berta Perez and Manuela Lopez, leading to one of the most spirited discussions in the entire corpus, only part of which is excerpted here.

Scott:	What do you hear about the ESOL teachers?
Berta:	I’m just saying that she was telling me that about sometimes the ESOL teachers don’t want you to work with them.
Manuela:	No, because I’m with an ESOL teacher and they are not to speak Spanish – only English – that’s their little logo – only English, no Spanish.
Scott:	Who tells them that?
Manuela:	The ESOL teacher.
Scott:	Who tells the ESOL teacher that?
Manuela:	It’s in the book. ¹⁴ She even showed it to me. She goes – look here
Berta:	Well you know the summer school, the summer school curriculum we were doing – it says – in English. She told it to me, the summer school teacher showed me that. And then she said, well of course excluding the ones that don’t know how to speak English.
(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2 nd pair, 7/6/02, 504-549)	

In addition to the local ESOL teacher’s lack of understanding of their students and the inappropriateness of English-only instruction, as shown in Chapter 2 and noted by one participant, many of the local districts continue to under-fund ESOL, and thereby fail to provide sufficient ESOL teachers and classes for the number of ELL students.¹⁵

Schools are Better Today: Participants' Own Roles in the Schools

Clearly the participants agreed that today's Vidalia onion region schools are better than those they entered a decade to a generation ago. Although a number of other reasons for this perceived improvement were provided, the most common justification given for the improvement centered on the participants' own roles in the schools today as educators.

This theme provides a window into how the participants understand their daily functioning and roles within the structure of the school. However, since this theme is somewhat self-congratulatory, it also raises questions of perspective. To what extent is their perception that the schools have improved since their childhood tied to their own need to assert self-efficacy? Furthermore, even if the schools have improved, to what extent can this improvement be truly attributed to these women? Although the answer to this question lies outside the scope of this current study, as will be mentioned in Chapter 7, these will be important questions to pursue using other means and data sources. Thus, this data, must be viewed with a particularly skeptical eye.

Unsurprisingly, the data describing the participants' various roles in the schools is some of the most complex in the entire corpus. There are multiple roles that the participants described for themselves in the schools, most of which connected to their particular combination of:

- Spanish-English bilingual abilities,
- Mexican heritage bicultural understandings,
- Background as former migrant farmworkers.

This section will also include their description of the relevance of these three elements to their work by including their more general comments about the value of having Mexican heritage and

migrant background educators in the schools. Subsequently, this section will describe the participants' perceptions of their roles in the schools as follows:

- Simple tutoring
- Language translation
- A source of pride and a motivation to achieve for Mexican heritage and migrant students
- Use of own life story to connect with and motivate students
- Approachability because of perception of caring and trustworthiness
- Motivation for today's students to persist in school as a role model
- Ability to teach the teachers about the students' culture and backgrounds
- Willingness to advocate for the students with the school
- Ability to explain the school to the students

Schools are Better Today: Participants' Own Roles in the Schools – Tutoring

In talking about how the schools are better today for the Mexican heritage children of the Vidalia region, a few participants either stated that when they were young there was no migrant paraprofessional available to tutor them, or that the migrant paraprofessional was relatively ineffective. Katia discussed this in response to the interview protocol question about advice for a new arrival from her hometown in Texas.

Katia: That it's going to be easier than it was when I got here. Because now there's a lot of help in school. Because when I got here, I didn't remember a parapro like I am now, sitting down with me and helping me out with my work. I had to go home, Yadira would help me out a little bit, I had to do it myself. But from then on until I met Ms. [Angla former migrant educator] – she helped me out a lot in school.

Scott: So there is more help now than there was when you got here?

Katia: Yeah. There is.

(Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 279-280)

Scott:	Do you think what you're doing for the kids – that you're doing a better job, worse job or about the same as the people who were in the position before you? How would you compare what you do with what they did?
Angelica:	Well from saying in the past years, actually I think it's better because I was here all year and the ones that were here – there would be like 2 or 3 in a year that would come in and leave and come in and leave. So the children were really not getting any help because the ladies were trying to stay up with their paperwork and all that. But I hope I'm doing better.
(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2 nd pair 6/28/02, 266-267)	

Angelica's characterization of a high turnover rate for migrant paraprofessionals at her school before her arrival is accurate. More examples of comments regarding the lack of or ineffectiveness of tutorial help when the participants arrived as students will be provided in the following sections addressing other themes.

Schools are Better Today: Participants' Own Roles in the Schools – Translation

A second basic element of the job description for any Spanish-English bilingual educator in the Vidalia onion region is translation. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the rapid growth of the local Latino student populace has far outstripped the number of Latino educators in the region, and few of the largely locally born and raised educators have bilingual skills. Thus, the one or two bilingual staff members in each school building spend many hours simply translating in a wide variety of circumstances. Moreover, it is noteworthy that not just any Spanish-English bilingual can do this work well. Familiarity with the particular dialect of borderlands Spanglish prevalent in the migrant stream is especially useful. As explained by Manuela Lopez, the necessity to use the language of the people, rather than standard academic English or Castilian Spanish in order to communicate, represents a dramatic compromise for many teachers and administrators.

Manuela: ...it's like a lot of things – if you put it the perfect Spanish way, a lot of parents are going to come back with a permission slip and they are going to come back and they're going to say – you've got to read that letter to me – it's in Spanish, but I don't know what it says. Because you need to put down to her Spanish – we will not have school tomorrow for whatever reason or this will be the last week or such and such this is going to be the last day of school – like if you put school will proceed on whatever – what is proceed, what does that mean? Martes, va a comenzar^{ix} You need to write that kind of Spanish, I tell them. And I have written the other one in Spanish and stuff like that and then they call me or they come to school and I tell the principal – just let me write it my way and you're going to see that we won't have too many parents – because usually we'll get 15 calls or we'll get 5 to 7 parents come in and then the way I wrote it, the message that they wanted to get across with the Hispanic family – it was in English and the other half was in Spanish. And even though they were coming in for me to translate that one letter – and when I wrote it to them the way I write and the way we speak it, not one phone call, not one parent came in.

(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 358; see also: Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 393-398)

The participants provided a variety of reasons why their bilingual skills and translation are valuable to the schools. Manuela reflected upon her own frustrations as a child, seeking, but not finding, someone to help explain her class work in Spanish (Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 248-249). Other participants told anecdotes reinforcing the importance of native language tutors and translators (Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 342-347; Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 297-299; Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 407). Additionally, Dominga Ramirez and Katia Garcia specifically argued, respectively, for more bilingual Latino classroom teachers as a means to facilitate parent-teacher communication (Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 471-474) and to allay students' fears about monolingual English language instructors (Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 627-630).

^{ix} Will begin on Tuesday

Schools are Better Today: Participants' Own Roles in the Schools – Pride and Achievement

Complementing Katia's suggestion that the emotional, rather than simply the logistical, value of bilingual Latino educators should be considered, Manuela Lopez reflected upon the pride she felt upon attending a school in south Texas with many Mexican heritage educators.

Scott:	Mexican Americans?
Manuela:	Yes, even our principal – you look at our year book and the principal was Mexican, everybody was Mexican – here we were like they have Mexicans, they're actually teachers – so we feel so proud of them or something out of the ordinary. But over there you know it was pretty good...
(Manuela Lopez 1 st solo 6/12/02, 133-134)	

Later, Manuela spoke of the increased achievement she saw in her own students when a Latino briefly taught at her school.

Manuela:	...We had a teacher – he was Mr. [Latino surname] in school – and he didn't speak – he never spoke to them in Spanish and I heard him speak in Spanish one time to me – but he never spoke Spanish to them. ¹⁶ But just because his last name was [Latino surname], I mean they gave it all they could and they wanted to have the highest averages in his class and he was a math teacher and he was a coach.
(Manuela Lopez 1 st solo 6/12/02, 188-191)	

Similarly, Ester Fuentes implied that her school's "Spanish principal" showed an especially high level of commitment to programs for immigrant students and stated that "she is always writing proposals to get money and funding to get these programs going" (Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 424)

Schools are Better Today: Participants' Own Roles in the Schools – Life Story

As might be expected of a researcher documenting the oral histories of educators, I was particularly interested to hear whether and how the participants brought their own life stories to bear in their work with their students. For Ignacia Marquéz Johnson, the memories of her own migrant childhood helped motivate her daily work as she looked at her students and saw herself.

Ignacia: ... And that's when [my Angla friend] told me about the teaching job and I thought – maybe I should try teaching. And once I tried it, I enjoyed it. I loved working with the kids. I loved seeing their little faces and I kept looking at them and the whole time that I would sit there and teach them, I would think back to when I was a child. I would think, well they gave me this opportunity, why not give it to them. I guess I wanted to just give back a little bit of what was given to me.

(Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 143)

Nearly all of the participants¹⁷ spoke of the importance of letting their students know that they themselves had been there, experienced the same struggles, and made it through to a better life.

Berta: ...A lot of these kids whenever they ask – whenever I tell them you know I know what you're going through because I went through the same thing when I was growing up – and then I start telling them about it, they are like – Really, Ms. Perez? You were born in Mexico? For real, Ms. Perez, you used to migrate from state to state? You dropped out? You got your GED? – they are just shocked of how everything that went.

(Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 328-331; see also: Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 312; Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 255; Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99, 94; Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 169)

In addition to sharing her story of trials and success, Ester Fuentes commented on the importance of being able to establish a cultural common ground with her students.

Ester: ...I always tell them about my life because they are so curious, they are always curious about who you are, who is your teacher. So of course I would tell them I was raised here. ... I tell them about I remember when I was in Mexico you know we would play games or we used to ah the piñata or Sweet 15 and stuff like that.

Scott: ¿*Quincenera*?^x

Ester: Yeah, the culture the stuff about that I experienced. They love that because they start – oh my God – they cannot stop talking.

(Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 381-385)

Katia Garcia explained that opening up about her life to her students in this way can bring out even the most reluctant and difficult students (Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 594-597).

Not surprisingly, the ability of these women to share common stories and familiar cultural experiences with their students bears fruit for all concerned and is a clear reason for the value of

^x Fancy, formal celebration of a Latina's 15th birthday. Comparable to a debutante's ball or bat mitvah.

Mexican heritage educators and the assertion that the local schools have improved during the past decade as more people capable of sharing such stories have become educators.

Schools are Better Today: Participants' Own Roles in the Schools – Trust

In terms of how these elements (shared language, ethnicity, and socio-economic background) can bear tangible results in students' behavior and achievements and in the functioning of the schools, the participants constructed a few common themes. One theme that was repeated by half of the participants was the idea of trust – that a Spanish-speaking, Mexican heritage, former migrant such as themselves was likely to seem much less intimidating, more approachable, more helpful, and crucially, more worthy of confidence to Mexican heritage migrant children and their families. Nanci emphasized trust as key to her position as a confidante for Mexican heritage migrant students families, especially as compared to her Anglo, middle-class boss, reaffirming the importance and relevance of her background to her work.

Scott: Are there particular things you feel like your background allows you to do, maybe better than somebody who didn't have the background or at least as far as how the students respond to you?

Nanci: That's a big thing. I can sit with students and they can open up to me, whereas they would not be able to open up to my boss easily. I can go to any of the migrant family homes anytime, any day and there would not be any hesitation for them to let me in or you know, whereas, because I have earned that trust. I get a lot of community support, a lot of support from my migrant families to do different things. Whereas I don't think my boss would.

(Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 269-270; see also: Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 418-422; Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 568-575; Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 11, 93, 158, 472; Angelica Marqu  z 1st solo 6/19/02, 157)

Schools are Better Today: Participants' Own Roles in the Schools – Persistence

A second result of having people of their background in the schools, according to the participants, was an opportunity to invoke their own life stories of struggle and persistence as a

means to motivate their students to stay in school and do their best work. Ignacia, a high school drop out herself, evoked the threat of fieldwork and migrancy to motivate her students.

Scott: Well, like looking back on the choices you made along the way in education and school, are there things that you either regret having done or that you're really happy that you did and do you ever talk about those things with your students?

Ignacia: With my older kids I do. The 5th graders, I always try to encourage them to stay in school, because the one thing I regret is dropping out. I wish I had never dropped out... I tell them that sooner or later it's going to catch up with them. If they don't want to waste their life, not really waste their life, but they don't want to be out there in the fields like everybody else is. Their parents for instance. I tell them to think about their parents out there in the cold right now in the fields. Especially in the wintertime or under that hot sun. Is that what you really want to do? Think about that.

(Ignacia Marqu   Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 154-155; see also: Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 312-313)

This characterization of fieldwork as wasting one's life complements the conception, developed earlier of non-field work as "being someone." Another example came from high school and college graduate Ester Fuentes, whose life story *consejo* for her students focuses upon the hard work that is prerequisite to any opportunity to "become somebody else" – someone other than a migrant farmworker.

Scott: How is that important to have Spanish educators or Spanish people working in the schools? What difference does that make for the kids?

Ester: I think it does make a difference because they can see that there's other lifestyles that they can – there's other things that they can do. They don't have to do the job you know – they don't have to be rich. I'm telling you farming is not a bad thing, but they know they can do other things besides that. Like I told you, a lot of these parents, they don't believe that education is very important. So they need role models like that. To say you know you have to work hard and everything – I used to do this, I used to do all of that, I mean I used to tell the kids in school – I used to plant those onions, but believe me, if you want to become somebody else, you have to work very, very hard. I used to tell the kids that and I know if there is people like that that are Spanish and stuff like that, then the kids are going to get motivated. I can do it, you know, I can see myself doing it. Before there was like only like – okay there's role models that are white people, but they cannot really identify themselves. I don't think so.

(Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 324-325; see also: 433-434; Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 396)

Schools are Better Today: Participants' Own Roles in the Schools – Teach the Teachers

Three other interrelated roles for Mexican heritage educators emerged from the interview narratives. All three roles can be included under the category of cultural and political mediation, for in each case, the participants' peculiar positioning between and on the margins of both the community of impoverished Mexican heritage migrants and the predominantly middle class white community of local educators places them so as to transmit and negotiate understandings across the wide linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic divide that separates the experiences of the two groups. The aspects of the cultural and political mediation that were most clearly developed by the participants were teaching teachers, advocacy for students, and intervention on behalf of the school.

The idea that current classroom teachers need to know more about Mexican heritage migrant children, their families, culture, background, and educational needs was articulated by most of the participants (Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 353; Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 444 & 460; Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99, 287; Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 440 & 451; Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 105 & 161; Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 235; Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 90 & 192; Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 418; Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 359; Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 29-30, 185-207). The role of the participants themselves in providing this information to the teachers was most clearly developed by Manuela Lopez and Berta Perez in their paired interview.

Berta:	Yeah, that's what you have to explain to them. To them I mean to a lot of these teachers you know they think like, "Oh, they are just doing it on purpose, they just want to get on our nerves. But it's not so much that. You really have to explain.
Manuela:	Teach them the culture.

Berta:	Whenever the kids don't come to school – okay well what, how are they going to get an education being out there – but listen you know it's not because of their choice – you've got to understand... Sometimes when you explain to them how their situation is then they're like – okay, so that explains why this and that explains why that.
Scott:	What are some of those things you have to explain? You've talked about like the toilet paper in the trash can is something you do normally in Mexico or kids having to have to work. What are some of the other things that like teachers and principals want to know about or need to know about?
Berta:	... in Mexico, whenever your parents are getting on to you, you know, you don't look at your parents in the face. The kids are always looking down and say, "Okay, okay Mom, I'm sorry." You know it's like they are ashamed of what they are doing. And here they want you – look at me, I'm talking to you, look at me. And you can't do that to the child when they – from Mexico they're not used to that – that's being disrespectful. And you know you can't – I mean even I even if we were to be telling each other – look at me in the face, I mean now I know, but before I wouldn't.
Manuela:	You either need to look to the side – and you not look to the side, you look down or just look at the shoes or just . . .
Berta:	Just be quiet, don't say a word – "Answer me, I'm talking to you, answer me, look at me." You terrify the poor kid. He goes into like a straight coma and lay down. Silence. That's one of the ones, you know. Another one is like I said when the kids are taking to work or babysitting. To them, the parents feel like it's more important taking them to work or not having to pay a babysitter and them staying at home, than for them to go to school.
Manuela:	And a lot of them also it's like – you know he used the same clothes he was using a day ago or yesterday.
Berta:	Or don't take a bath.
Manuela:	You know, he smells.
Berta:	They might not have hot water.
(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2 nd pair 7/6/02, 185-207; see also 29-31; Manuela Lopez 1 st solo 6/12/02, 239)	

Schools are Better Today: Participants' Own Roles in the Schools – Advocacy for Students

Half of the participants moved beyond teaching about the students to the teachers and into more explicit forms of advocacy on behalf of students. Berta Perez spoke of advocating for change by "speaking out" on behalf of the students to teachers and school administrators (Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 158). An example of such an act was provided by Manuela Lopez in her

explanation of how she challenged the judgment of the school nurse in order to protect a student and his family. This excerpt continues the previous excerpt.

Manuela: ...Some parents they tell them go take a shower and they just wet their hair and then they go to school. And a lot of times – we had one kid – man he stinks, we don't know what's wrong with him – and I'm like well what is it – and I said what – you know and I was embarrassed to tell the kid, you know, you stink. What exactly is it. So I said, do you need anything – I mean, you know, sometimes we have accidents, you know, do you need clean underwear or something. And it turned out, it was his tennies, his mom washed his tennies and they look white and pretty, but they didn't dry overnight – so his tennies were still soaking wet and his feet were dirty. He had a cut, he had not told his mother, on his foot and it was getting infected. So when I took the shoe off, I was like – (blows out of mouth) – it smelled terrible. I took him to the nurse and I told them the situation. And the principal said well you know, did the parents know about the cut – no. You know because the nurse was like, I've got to call DFACS right now. And we were like you know well let me tell the principal too and see what he wants to do. I told him that he only has one pair of shoes and they went to work and the mom washed them, but they didn't dry. You know it was either wear your tennies wet or not come to school. And he had a test and he wanted to come. So they put like medicine, they treated the wounds and they gave him another pair of shoes. They washed his shoes at school and they dried them and sent him home and stuff like that. They told the mother – I called home and I told him that he had a cut under his foot. That when he was – you know after he took a shower he was playing outside and he stepped in a hole and he cut himself a little bit and it was – it had happened 4 days ago and it was getting pretty bad – well I don't have way to pay them, I don't have money to go take him to a doctor – and I said well there's this program at the Health Department. And it was like – oh yeah I used that before, I just didn't remember, or I couldn't really – I didn't think it was that bad because I asked him, he cried, but he said he was okay – when I saw it was just a little bit of blood, I didn't think it was infected. And I said well we saw it today and it needs to be treated...

(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 196)

The most explicit cases of advocacy by a participant were described by the only participant who was interviewed after she had left the field of education, Ignacia Marquéz Johnson. Apparently near the end of her time in migrant education and near the end of her patience with the treatment of Mexican heritage migrants at her school, Ignacia spoke out about clearly unacceptable comments and actions by other staff members. Her meta-talk and laughter (not shown here) before sharing these stories shows that she was aware that she was about to step

across a line, a line that she might not have been willing to cross during our earlier interview when she was still employed by the schools.

Ignacia: ... There was a fax that came through the fax machine in the office ... it said something about you don't have to have a social security number to be enrolled in school. And that was a big deal. That school down there – as nice as it could be sometimes – the office – if you walked in that office, it could be very, very cold. But I showed it to the records clerk because a lot of times when the students came in to enroll, that was the first thing they'd ask – do you have a social security number. I need to see social security number, birth certificate, immunization shots and all that. Okay, if I told her no, they don't have a social security number – well they have to have a social security number if they want to be in school. They have to go apply for one. So I would tell them ... I showed it to the records clerk and she said – oh now they don't have to have this, well what are they going to do now, they just think they are going to walk in and be allowed to go to school just because they want to. We just have to take their word for it because – if they said they were born or whatever, you had to take their word for it or something about having to take their word for it. ... I heard her mouthing off and this was very ugly and I got very hot under the collar. She said – well what are they going to do next, if they are going to be starting this now, well maybe they just go off and start their own country somewhere. So I walked in her office and said well maybe we will and I walked out. She never apologized for saying what she did or nothing ... [a teacher] was trying to get her students to read because accelerated reading is the big thing now in school. She was trying to get her students to read and because the students were not reading ... She put a wall – she called it the wall of shame outside her door on the wall. Like I said, she called it the wall of shame. She made faces out of paper plates to fit, to resemble the students faces, the actual students' faces and she glued them or taped them up on the wall.

Scott: And these are the students who...

Ignacia: Who did not want to read. Who did not have any accelerated reading points at all. And one of them was my niece. So you can imagine how I felt. So I went to [principal name] and I said, [principal name], do you realize what this person is doing? Oh yes, I okayed it. She came to me about it and I told her that was fine. If she can't get these students to read, then she needs to do something. She needs to try something else. And I said, [principal name] you cannot shame a child into reading. There are other ways to go about it. She said well she's tried everything she can and she can't get them to read. It's okay, I've okayed it. I went to the 4th grade teacher and I knocked on her door and she came out and I said, "Tell me about your wall of shame." And I guess she had already gotten several comments about it and she kind of copped an attitude with me and she said, "Well what do you want to know?" I said, "Well first of all, I'd like to know how I can get my niece's picture off of it." She said, "Well your niece needs to read." I said, "Well she's not interested in reading." I said, "She's not like me. I've always loved to read." I said,

“If she can’t read, then she’s ashamed of it and she’s not going to read.” I said, “She’s having problems with her reading which I myself am trying to help her with it.” I said, “But by you doing that, it’s not going to help the situation.” I said, “You’re only making her more ashamed of what she cannot do.” I threatened to write a letter to [county school superintendent] to get him to come down there and look and see what was going on. I was mad. I was very upset. The next day it was gone...

(Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 151-161)

The repercussions from Ignacia's outspokenness seem to have likely contributed to her choice to leave the school entirely, for in recounting her choice to abandon her "call" (Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 324) to be an educator, Ignacia spoke of hostility from the teachers (Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 144-145).

Stories of advocacy such as this were not common enough in the corpus to have any confidence that this was a regular event in the work of the participants in the Vidalia region. For example, Ester Fuentes described pursuing a letter-writing initiative among the families of her students in the Metro Atlanta area, but then stated that she would not have done the same in the Vidalia region because of local politics (Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 140-144). This seeming avoidance of outspoken advocacy by the participants while working in the local schools will be discussed later.

Schools are Better Today: Participants' Own Roles in the Schools – Facilitation of Schooling

More common than stories of advocacy on behalf of the students were stories of intervention by the participant on behalf of the school and its institutional expectations. Examples of the participants' role being focused upon behavior and institutional management include:

- intervening in potential fights and black-Latino ethnic tensions (Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 160; Guadalupe Flores 2nd solo 1/28/99, 12);

- investigating problems and enforcing rules after a child is sent to the office (Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 41-45, 178-183; Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 353).
- explaining bus conduct rules to parents and students (Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 186; Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02, 157 & 171);
- explaining the norms of U.S. public schools regarding sexuality (Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 197).
- explaining school documentation requirements to parents and students (Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 188); and
- explaining why a child is not going to pass (Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02, 173).

The Promised Present Reprised

This section began with the assertion that the ten participants had each fulfilled at least part of their aspirations to "be someone" and "do something" by getting out of the fields and in this classrooms as educators. Within this context of the fulfillment of the promise of education, this chapter has sought to outline the participants' understandings of their place in the schools and vis-à-vis the Mexican heritage community of the Vidalia region.

There is a strong consensus among the participants that the schools of the Vidalia region are better today than they were a generation ago when they arrived as some of the first Latino students. A number of rationales were provided for this consensus, including increased numbers of Latino students, nicer teachers who are learning Spanish, and the establishment of ESOL programs.

However, the most common rationale for the participants' judgment that the schools have improved referred back to their own roles as Mexican heritage, bilingual, formerly migrant educators. They emphasized their roles as tutors and translators in the schools, but they went far beyond these basics. They argued for the value of having Mexican heritage educators in the school in order to inspire pride and higher achievement from Mexican heritage children. The participants described how the telling of their own life stories and struggles can serve as a basis for trust and confidence and motivate students to stay in school. Finally, they spoke of how they mediate across cultural and political divides by teaching the teachers, advocating for students, and intervening with migrants on behalf of the institutional expectations of the school itself.

Section IV: Power, Schooling, Race, Class, Gender and Controversy

The role of rule enforcer and discipline facilitator is not necessarily one that the participants relished. Nonetheless, as explained in Chapter 2, from the perspective of local schoolteachers and administrators, it is crucial to the continued functioning of schools with large populations of students who do not meet local linguistic and cultural norms. The acquisition of this role by the participants raises a set of difficult questions regarding their positionings vis-à-vis both the majority of the local Mexican heritage community and the local power structure as reflected in the school hierarchy.

In the process of taking on these roles, the participants have seemingly shifted toward the identity of educator and an identification with the goals of schooling, including behavior management and what Spring (1997) criticizes as “deculturalization.”¹⁸ Nonetheless, although they may be facilitating the institutional agenda of the school, their access to power within the

education community is limited by their status as Latina women from impoverished backgrounds who generally lack advanced education and socio-political-familial connections.

As a result, most of the participants construct themselves as having a tightly constrained form of agency in the schools. Their work allows them to gently and incrementally make the schools better for today's migrant children one child at a time and one teacher at a time.

However, they generally do not see themselves as being able to speak directly and forthrightly in favor of changes that would challenge the system or individuals in the school. The following section presents evidence that the participants' perspectives regarding controversial questions, such as the culpability of migrant parents and issues of race, are constrained by a number of factors. Most prominent among these constraints are: 1) a contrast between their difficult experiences as migrant children and their current relative comfort and success; and 2) a disempowered position vis-à-vis the local power elite in their schools and communities. I believe that much of what they understand about these limits is implicit and thus not directly articulated. This section will highlight examples of both implicit and explicit discussions of these constraints as I interpret them.

Disconnections from Today's Migrants?

As shown earlier in this chapter, the participants constructed narratives of their childhood years that lionized their parents and acknowledged the relevance of prejudice to their experience. However, in talking of the experiences of today's migrants, most of the participants inverted these narratives, blaming migrant parents and denying the salience of prejudice today.¹⁹ This pattern of diachronic inconsistencies and inversions was one of the strongest indications that the participants have restructured their identifications as they have moved into the role of educators.

Disconnections from Today's Migrants: Blame the Parents

The recurrent theme “my parent knows best” expressed the participants’ deference toward and respect for their own parents and their parents’ choices. This deference was expressed even in the face of parental choices that might be viewed as problematic or even destructive during the participants’ childhoods, such as encouraging children to forsake school temporarily or permanently in order to help the family financially by working in the fields.

This conception of “my parent knows best” is not surprising. Nonetheless, in reviewing the interviews, most of the participants seemed unwilling or unable to transfer this deference for their own parents to the parents of their current students. Instead of recognizing that today’s migrant parents face the same obstacles and difficult choices that their own parents did, many of the participants blamed the parents of today’s migrant children for the academic struggles of their children. Furthermore, instead of recognizing the continuing value of the lesson and threat of the fields regarding the need for schooling, the participants seemingly rejected the lessons that they valorized from their own childhoods. In the end, there is an emergent double standard: a generosity and forgiveness toward one’s own parents, and criticism and disappointment toward the parents of today’s students.

This contrast was made explicit in some of the participants’ comments when asked to contrast their academic trajectory with those of their peers and their current students.

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- | | |
|---------|--|
| Scott: | Can you compare your life to like the average Mexican-American woman around here who is about your age? |
| Katia: | We work. |
| Yadira: | Some of them have more kids than we do. |
| Katia: | And some of them that could have become somebody, they are just home taking care of their kids. That were smarter than I was when I was in school. |

Yadira: I know we all can have a better life, going back to school. But I just – I don't know, they just like to be at home and having kids and work where they work. I don't know. I don't know if it's because they don't have their parents to maybe tell them about a better life or tell them to go back to school or they just want to be like their parents are. I don't know.

(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 152-156; see also Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 150)

Despite the fact that many of the participants were the beneficiaries of their parents' and older sibling's decisions to drop out of school in order to financially support their education, the participants were uncomfortable and disapproving of the same choice by their current students and their parents.

Angelica: Yeah because there's a lot of Hispanics that go to school and there's also a lot of them that drop out.

Dominga: I know some of them don't drop out themselves, the parents

Angelica: make them

Dominga: make them drop out. Either because they are not doing well in school or because – mostly the guys,²⁰ they don't take time to study – they don't really care, they just go there to have fun. Because I've noticed that. Maybe because their parents need their help you know with . . .

Angelica: When working – more income.

(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 293-297)

Ester Fuentes presented a similar type of contradiction regarding parents. Ester's own childhood was marked by continual, financially-motivated movement from Mexico to the U.S and then within the U.S. Nonetheless, she spoke respectfully and understandingly of her father's choices. However, when discussing her students today, she spoke of the fact that many of her students' parents move, thereby impeding their children's learning, neglecting to include any reference to financial necessity (Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 373). This presentation of the parents of their current students seems to echo the institutional perspective or script that frequently pervades teachers' lounges and that the participants have likely heard from other educators since beginning their work in the schools.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, Berta Perez constructed her narrative with more frequent

references to spirituality and local “Christian” norms than any other participant. Thus, when reflecting upon her students’ relationships with their parents she frequently constructed stories that expressed concern about the parents’ failure to serve as moral role models for their children. Examples of this pattern accusing parents of failing to serve as moral guideposts for their children included criticism of an alcoholic single parent, parents who cursed frequently, and a father who shared his drawings of naked women with his son (Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 41, 176-183, 197). In addition, Berta and Manuela developed their concerns that the students’ parents are not exposing their children to choices beyond fieldwork (Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 106-118) and not being adequately supportive of their children’s education:

Berta:	Now imagine if they were to feel like whenever you’re going down and you’re graduating and to receive your diploma – I mean that is the most wonderful feeling because they know that they have accomplished something. A lot of these kids, they don’t even know because they’re not given the opportunity. You know they’re put down all the time you know.
Manuela:	Well at our school, they are given the opportunity. I can’t say they aren’t.
Berta:	No, I’m [talking] about the parents.
Manuela:	They parents, yeah, well some parents are . . .
Berta:	They don’t believe in them, they don’t want to bother – okay you get an education, fine, if you don’t, that’s also fine.
(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2 nd pair 7/6/02, 122-126)	

Significantly, although Berta occasionally spoke of her father pulling her out of school to work with him, she was never critical of his choice, while she was highly and repeatedly critical of contemporary parents’ similar choices.

Disconnections from Today’s Migrants: Denial or Dismissal of Prejudice

Another diachronic discrepancy in the participants’ narratives emerged regarding the question of the existence of anti-Latino prejudice in the local community and schools. As

developed earlier, although a few of the participants claimed to have never faced prejudice here, most spoke of discrimination and prejudice as a gauntlet that they had passed through during their childhood in the Vidalia region. Nonetheless, when speaking of their situation today and the status of their students, most of the participants downplayed or denied the relevance of prejudice today. Dominga Ramirez provided a concise summary of this type of past versus present contrast.

Scott:	How about the social experience of being in school? How is it different for the kids that are in school now versus the way it was for you?
Dominga:	I think they get along – everybody with everybody now. More than what they used to. Back then it was like different colors didn't care for other colors or whatever. And now it's like it don't matter.
Scott:	Was that part of your experience, the different colors didn't like different colors?
Dominga:	Yes. I think that's what it was.
(Dominga Ramirez 1 st solo 6/19/02, 498-501; see also: Katia & Yadira Garcia 2 nd pair 8/25/02, 51-54 & 486-494; Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2 nd solo 8/11/02, 137; Guadalupe Flores 1 st solo 12/7/98, 130-137, 464-472)	

This pattern of speaking of prejudice in the past while minimizing its existence or relevance today can be understood as a manifestation of their identification with the schools and their desire to assert their own agency through the more general argument that schools are better today. Nonetheless, the corpus contained multiple examples where the participants spoke of their current students complaining of inequitable treatment by teachers and staff. The participants frequently told of denying or dismissing these claims of current prejudice. This led me to posit the possibility of an emergent disconnection between the participants' perceptions of the contemporary school climate and the understandings being built by their current students.

Ester:	... the kids used to come and visit me and they used to complain – oh Ms. Fuentes, I've been discriminated. They used to tell me all these stories you know about them and the teacher you know and stuff like that. I used to explain to them – maybe it's just thinking this way – it's just being things you know you're really need the things too much and you should look at it in a different way. Take advantage of the situation as much as possible. But I think that sometimes people just reading two things and they see things that are not really, really there.
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- Scott: What were the particular ... Is there any example that comes to mind of something that the students said happened or ...
- Ester: Oh I mean, their grades – they come and tell me – oh la, la, la, he failed me because he doesn't like me because I'm Mexican. They used to tell me and I go – come on, there has to be other reason besides that okay. Things like that or I was suspended because I'm Mexican you know and stuff like that.
- Scott: And how would you respond?
- Ester: I will tell them there has to be other reasons besides that you were suspended. There are other things that you probably did or there must be a misunderstanding, there has to be other issues or other things that come into the picture you know. Okay now tell me what really, really happened ... I really, really didn't want to try to make it a racial issue and stuff like that. There are ways you can make – by little things – make it racial. It's just a point of misunderstanding or a culture thing like I told you.
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- (Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 476-484; see also: Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 152-160; Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 338)
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Note that Ester's phrase "make it a racial issue" puts the "blame" for any "racial" issue upon the complainant who "plays the race card" rather than upon the person whose actions could be interpreted as racist. This is consistent with Ester's earlier logic that to talk about race is to be a racist. Of course, only further investigation of the students' perspectives could clarify the question of discontinuities between the participants' perceptions and the understanding built by the students themselves.

Disconnections from Today's Migrants: Dismissal of Prejudice – History and The Stars & Bars

In my three paired follow-up interviews I sought to further investigate my participants' understandings of contemporary prejudice by raising two potentially controversial issues: the continued relevance of the region's racialized history and the significance of the Confederate battle flag or the Stars and Bars.²¹

The question about the relevance of Southern racial history was drawn rather directly from the research questions for this dissertation. In the political climate of Georgia in 2002, simple questions about the meaning of the Stars and Bars seemed a very appropriate way to

examine what my participants understood of the racial politics and prejudices of today. I chose to ask about the flag's meaning by asking about its ubiquitous appearance on the back of vehicles and on political signs throughout the Vidalia region.

In order to avoid prematurely tainting the interviews with these controversial topics, I reserved them for the end of the interviews. The participants' responses to these questions were relatively consistent in their denial of any relevance to their lives today. Some participants clearly did not want to discuss local racial history and the flag, leaving the impression that they realized they were controversial and significant topics, despite their denials. Others acknowledged the region's racialized past, the flag's racist meaning, and the prejudice they faced when they first arrived here, but asserted that these were white-black issues, largely irrelevant to Latinos.

For example, late in her interview with her sister, Yadira Garcia was willing to speak of racism and prejudice as a problem in the past and as an issue potentially relevant to local African Americans today. However, she did not accept the relevance of these issues to her own, contemporary life.

Yadira: I try to look at things the positive way – I don't try to look – maybe some things, yeah ... If you want to look at certain things that way, I guess you'll find it. Because you know a lot of things you hear on TV. "Oh, he was being racist." But if you want to look at it that way, you're going to think that way. But I don't.

(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 482-497)

Here Yadira asserts a common, "If you don't look for it, it won't bother you," perspective which aligns well with the claim that those who ask questions about race are the racists.

I later brought the conversation around to the issue of the flag.

Scott: When you're driving around I assume you see the confederate flags on people's trucks, you know what I mean, the stars and bars?
 Yadira: Yeah, my husband used to always like to hang it somewhere. And I hated it.
 Scott: Your gringo husband?

Yadira: Yeah. Ex-husband.
 Scott: Why did you hate it?
 Yadira: Because I knew him and I knew he didn't mean it in a good way.
 Scott: Who was he directing it towards?
 Yadira: The black people, I think.
 Scott: What do you think he meant by it?
 Yadira: I don't know. When I see it I just think, you know, are they trying to let everybody know he's white, he's redneck or – not everybody's redneck, I know – but if it makes some people mad, why would you want to let everybody know? Have that big flag in the back of the truck. Or hang it out in the, you know, by the window or whatever. Why would somebody want to do that if they didn't want to try to make other people mad? I don't know... I just thought it was a black thing. I just thought it was the blacks and the whites. I've never thought it was directed to the Mexicans.

(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 537-551)

Due to time constraints, I did not have time to ask Angelica and Dominga about the South's history of race. However, their discussion of the flag question revealed many of the same types of responses presented by Katia and Yadira.

Scott: One last question. When you drive around here a lot, you'll see on the back of a lot of cars, trucks and vans the Stars and Bars – Confederate flag – do you know what I mean by that?
 Angelica: Yes. It has like an X – is that. . .
 Scott: Yes, do you see that a lot?
 Angelica: Yes.
 Dominga: I don't pay any attention to that.
 Angelica: I saw a truck that had a big flag on it had like a pole or something on the tailgate. And it had that flag. But it doesn't bother me.
 Scott: What do you think it means?
 Angelica: I hadn't really even thought about it. I mean I see them but I don't think – I mean I see them and that's it, I don't think anything else about them.
 Dominga: I'm not sure, but I think it's racist against blacks. I think it's against them.
 Scott: Have you ever felt it was directed towards you, toward Hispanics?
 Angelica: No. It's like my daddy says, if you don't like me then get away from me.
 Scott: Who does your daddy say that to?
 Angelica: Well he – actually what he says is – if you don't like the way I look, then don't look at me.

(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 627-639)

Of the six participants questioned about the history of race in the South and the Confederate flag, only Manuela Lopez acknowledged that the Stars and Bars might be interpreted as anti-Latino and directly relevant to her life. Additionally, Manuela was the most

willing to openly acknowledge the controversial nature of the race issue in this region, by presenting the following bit of meta-talk about the fact that they were being recorded that clearly acknowledges my status as a white person and the danger of talking about race.

Scott:	Do you ever hear the black folk talking about the white folk?
Manuela:	Should we tell him?
Berta:	Ahhhhhh. (laugh) Are you kidding – with that recorder, I don't think so. Then I'd be here (points to the ground)
Manuela:	Oh, (laughs) you'll be there!
(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2 nd pair 7/6/02, 334-337)	

Nonetheless, Manuela argues that an open discussion of race and history is beneficial. In contrast, Manuela's interview partner Berta seemed to pursue a desire to stay ignorant of the issue of race, reiterating Ester's desire to avoid "making it a racial issue" and Yadira's "if you don't look for it, it won't bother you" perspective.

Scott:	What do you know about the history of segregation around here? Do you know anything about what it was like in the schools before?
Manuela:	They couldn't go – it was black schools, white schools.
Berta:	There weren't hardly any Hispanics back then. So how can I even tell you about it?
Manuela:	A lot of black kids, I mean a lot of Hispanos, they say, we had a situation ²² where it was like – you guys don't like us just because we're Mexicans and we come from the poor – and you guys don't like us because of this and that – and he was talking like that – and this guy, I mean, like you say – real nice, well dressed and real you know normal – not very high, but just average grades – he said listen honey, you may have come from the poorest country, but we lived here – our ancestors lived here in the United States and they had to go to black schools and then there were white schools and we could not go. We had to drive on the bus and you know he started talking about – he knew his history real well.
Scott:	This is a black kid?
Manuela:	A black kid that was telling the Hispanic kids. He was telling them all about all this and it kind of opened up their eyes and like – shoot, you had it bad too, you know. And that kind of opened up a good relationship between the black kids and the Hispanics...
Scott:	When you're driving around here, you must see some of the cars or some of the vans that have the confederate flag on it – you know what I mean by the confederate flag, the stars and bars . . .
Manuela:	Yeah, you can see it outside on some of the people's houses out there in the yard.
Scott:	Yeah. Is that relevant to you guys? Do you know what it means? What do you think of it?

Manuela: I feel like I don't really know what it means. I mean I know
 Berta: You mean the flag?
 Manuela: Yeah.
 Berta: It's for liberty.
 Manuela: No *La otra*.^{xi} Is that what you're talking about, the other one? Which one are you talking about?
 Scott: The one with the stars like this and the stars like that. (drawing an X)
 Berta: I have no idea.
 Manuela: The – *como la* Dukes of Hazzard. You've never seen the Dukes of Hazzard?
 Berta: How can I teach them about it when I don't even know myself.
 Manuela: It's like they only like whites and they don't like any other cultures. It's like the only want the white, they want you away from their family or away from – I'm not too sure I know the definition but its against the negras, es como esta^{xii}...
 Scott: Do you know what it means?
 Berta: The rebels, the Yankees – I don't know. (laughs) But I will go look it up in the (laughs)
 Manuela: ...¿*Pero que significa*?^{xiii}
 Scott: More or less, my understanding of it is what you said . . .
 Manuela: We only want our kind and no other.
 Berta: What does it mean?
 Manuela: Basically *es como diciendo*^{xiv} – we only want whites, we don't want Negroes, we don't want Mexicanos.
 Berta: Is that what it means?
 Scott: That's, at least you've got a lot of people think it means. Some of the people. . .
 Berta: Okay, but if I learn this negative stuff, it's going to be from you Scott, because you're the one who is producing it. I did not know this and some things are better not left unknown.

(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 257-311)

Manuela here clearly evokes the discourse of Dixie described in Chapter 3. Notably, even Manuela's acknowledgement of the relevance of the local history of race must be tempered by an earlier assertion in her first interview that she did set aside many of her preconceptions of the South as a racist place after living here for a little while (Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 159-162, shown earlier).

Taken together, these excerpts do not indicate a uniform understanding of the South's racial history among the participants. Nonetheless, when combined with the earlier examples of

^{xi} the other one

^{xii} blacks, it is like that

^{xiii} But what does it mean?

dismissal of contemporary students' accusations of prejudice, it can be asserted that many of the participants presented a desire to avoid questions of race, at least with a gringo researcher, while others were willing to speak of it only as relevant to blacks today or Latinos in the past. Despite their efforts to avoid or diminish the relevance of race, it is hard to imagine living in the rural South for as long as these participants have without developing an awareness of the contemporary significance of race and the Stars and Bars.

For these participants, it seems better to erase or deny these issues than acknowledge them and their continued influence upon their lives. Moreover, this denial or dismissal of the possibility that prejudice continues to be directed against the local Mexican heritage community may seem plausible from their relatively privileged positions (as compared with the majority of local Mexican heritage people, as noted in Chapter 1). However, it may point out an emergent gap between their positioning in the world: immersed within and beholden to the institutional discourse of schooling and at a distance from less privileged local Latinos. As will be developed in Chapter 7, it appears that these participants may be constructing a discursive pattern akin to "internalized racism" (hooks, 1995, 119; Fanon, 1967) and the "colonized psyche" (Gilpin, 2002, 192; Memmi, 1965). This constrained perspective on issues of race and parenting can be conceptualized as the logical result of the participants' positioning vis-à-vis the power of local elites and school administrators.

Awareness of Power, Race, Class, and Gender

Despite the general reluctance to directly address controversial questions, a few of the participants were more explicit in their discussions of race, class, and gender. For example, as opposed to the majority of the participants, Katia Garcia acknowledged the persistence and

^{xiv} it is like saying

relevance of racism to her life and work (Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 461-467). In particular, Katia Garcia spoke of both race and class as obstacles to her access to power.

Scott: What do you think it would take for you to – I don't know – be a leader in [this] County? Be on the school board or elected to the county commissioners – I don't know – be the mayor of [South Georgia town] one day. What would it take for you to get there?

Katia: Probably have a lot of money and be white. That's probably what we'd have to do. Because I mean there's a lot of nice people here in [South Georgia town], but like there's a lot of other people that they might be nice, but they won't like another race that is not theirs.

(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 446-447)

Nanci Alvarez also raised issues of race and class regarding the actions of local law enforcement officials in setting up roadblocks near the camps housing migrant farmworkers.

Nanci: ...We still have a lot of ignorant people here in our community, you know, that even though I have been here for such a many, many years, they still call me migrant farm worker. I probably have much, much or twice the education that they do and they still see me you know. I don't care as long as they don't step on my toes because . . . I know I think I have learned that it's all who you know. I don't like sometimes why they have to say about the migrant farm workers. Just because we've been here for such a long time, when there is a problem they come to us, to me. They tell me what is going on and how their rights are being violated and so I just guide them to the right channels so they can get the help that they need or the counseling that they need to take care of the matter. People do take advantage of it. One example would be the road blocks they throw right here outside my house. So you tell me.

Scott: *La migra?*^{xv}

Nanci: No, the sheriff. I had never seen one outside the country club, you know. You can't tell me that the people that come out of the country club don't come out of there all drunk. But I have never seen one over there. But I can tell you at least once a week, there will be one right here outside my house.

Scott: Do they do that at some of the other . . .

Nanci: They do it around the [migrant] camps.

(Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 329-335)

According to this story, she and her family, as long-time Mexican heritage residents, serve as a clearinghouse for complaints of injustice and unfairness by local migrants. Although she does

^{xv} U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Service

not state that she advocates in these situations, she does “guide them to the right channels” where their concerns can be addressed.

Beyond the constraints of race and class, some of the participants also acknowledged the gendered nature of their jobs in the school. Teaching, child care, and especially paraprofessional work in the schools of rural southeast Georgia are nearly exclusively female realms. As pointed out in Chapter 7, this is no less so with regard to Mexican heritage educators. I directly asked about this fact in the three paired follow-up interviews. What emerged was an awareness of how the nature of their work with children and the terribly low pay they receive are linked to gender.

Dominga: Maybe – guys don’t seem to be interested as much as girls because it’s dealing with children.

(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 82-83)

Scott: ... Why do think it is almost all women who do your job? It is all women or nearly when you talk about Mexican-Americans. Why don’t we have any Mexican-American guys who do the job that you do?

Manuela: They have to support their families, they only have to pay bills. (laughs) It doesn’t pay enough.

Berta That is true. Yeah, you pay \$9.00 an hour and see if they don’t come over here. I mean even if you pay \$8.00 an hour, I’m sure you’d get some guys over here.

(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 102-104)

Scott: ...Why is it that we can’t get guys to work in the schools doing Katia’s job? Why can’t we get particularly Mexican-American guys to do it?

Yadira: I don’t know. I guess they feel weird being around women all the time.

Katia: They probably think that’s like a job for women. Not for men. That’s what I think, I don’t know.

Yadira: Yeah, because thinking about it, I have never thought about it, but I guess you know if they were to – like my cousin, he worked here in this county for just a little while. I don’t even think he worked there a month. But thinking about it like that, you know, probably he would come home and his wife would say what did you do today – I don’t know. It wouldn’t be the normal conversation. Especially if he was with guys – like how did your week go? (laughs) It’s just – I’m laughing, but it would sound different when he was around guys. Even though it would be a really good experience for them.

Scott: Your cousin, is that [Latino male name]?

Yadira: Yes.

Scott: Okay, I think I remember him working. Do you know why he left? What he did instead?

Yadira: He got a higher paying job.

(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 351-358)

As has been explored by Apple (1986) and Grumet (1988), the gendered nature of woman's work in the schools includes the expectation that as women, especially women of color, they will be compliant and willing to work within the constraints of the institution. Although women such as Delores Huerta and Concha Delgado-Gaitan, Mexican heritage educators turned activists, are strong exceptions to this expectation, the cultural and social expectations of Latina educators does not include outspoken advocacy.

As mentioned above, Ester clearly portrayed herself as standing outside the local power structure in the Vidalia region. Chapters 1 and 2 briefly touched upon the tight networks of influential local people who control the schools of this region. In describing her understanding of these networks, Ester mentioned the importance of a family name to having status within the schools and community. She also spoke of other elements of power: money, land, connections within the network of powerful people.

Scott: You said that the status and the money make a big difference in Mexico. Could you compare how it is there to how it is say down in the Vidalia area? Where you lived and what you saw down there?

Ester: Well it was just a question of power.

Scott: In which place?

Ester: I know that in [name of southeast Georgia town] it was really, really bad – the school systems they are really, really bad. I know [principal's full name] and I know [principal's husband's first name] and everything and I know them and they have the power and everything and they have social status and everything and people know them. But I'm a teacher, right, and I teach there. You know the way they vote whenever they are trying to make a decision and stuff like that, I don't think they take into consideration a lot of the teachers or a lot of the people around – just this group of people that they hire because they know each other, because they have status. They would not hire anybody else that came from another country or state to work there. They will hire somebody from that same circle, same status and everything.

Scott: Who are the people in that circle?

Ester: The ones that have the money. You know?
 Scott: How do the rich people get their money?
 Ester: I think they inherit it. (laughing). You know, generations, they just pass it on.
 Scott: Do they ... what gets passed on?
 Ester: Land and you know like especially in this area, I mean, they do lots of farming and stuff like that so that's how they get their money.

(Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 89-102)

The female principal named by Ester has long worked in the same school district where her husband, a local farmer, is on the school board. She has recently been promoted from school counselor to principal. Later during the same interview I asked Ester what it would have taken for her to gain enough status to get into the circle of powerful school and community leaders that she had described. She said that it would take 20 years.

Ester: Probably like I told you, I have to get in touch with the community, I have to help the people. I have to let the people know who I am. It's like a candidate that's running for office. You do propaganda for yourself and if you just don't know – if you don't allow the people to know you and do this stuff – how are they going to know if you're alive? I think it's more respect too. That if you are there for them, they're going to be there for you.

(Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 149-160)

Intriguingly, Ester's time line and prescription for gaining status through a campaign for personal recognition via money and community service matches well with the path taken by Nanci Alvarez during the past two decades as she has risen to be the token Latino member of her local community's predominantly white, middle / upper class civic organizations.

Scott: ... How much difference does it make how much money you make?
 Nanci: A lot.
 Scott: How does that express itself? Somebody who has money versus who doesn't, what's the difference in their life?
 Nanci: Popularity. The richest kids are the ones that are popular. The best dressed and the nice cars and they are favored by a lot of the teachers. It's just a small town and everybody knows everybody and how much money you're making. There was a Colombian family here and they spoke Spanish and English you know. They were considered the "in-group" or whatever you know just because their father was a doctor. They didn't look at me that way. They didn't treat me the same way that they treated them. But my father was not a doctor, my father was a farmworker. Money here makes a lot of difference. A lot. You know, I think so.

- Scott: How about the color of a person's skin?
- Nanci: If you have a status or like there is only one black man here that I see his name all the time. That's Dr. [veterinarian's last name] – he's a veterinarian here, he's a vet. He's invited to all these clubs, he's invited to talk to all these places. He's the chairman of the city commission or something like that okay. But just because he's a doctor. If he wasn't a doctor, he would not be doing all that. He's the only black man that you see here in all these kinds of things that goes on in town. He was our guest at the Lions Club and that's the only black person I have seen there. And we know each other, just because we are the only ones invited to different things.
- Scott: Really? So you go to these functions in the community and...
- Nanci: And every now and then we bump into each other because he's also invited to participate.
- Scott: He's the only black man, the only black at all?
- Nanci: The only one I have seen, yeah.
- Scott: A lot of people there and you're the only Hispanic?
- Nanci: Yes. (pause)

(Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 307-324)

Nanci is the only one of the participants who has risen to such prominence in the local non-Mexican heritage community. It is important to note here that Nanci is the best educated of all the participants and comes from the most middle class, entrepreneurial, and best educated family among the participants. Thus, she set about the project of building her status with many resources that most of the participants did not have. Even so, Nanci Alvarez' limited access to the corridors of power is seemingly as the "token Latino" alongside the local "token black."

Not Outspoken Advocates or Agents for Systematic Change

As developed in Section III, the participants understand their roles in the schools as making a difference in the lives of today's migrant students, especially when contrasted with their own experiences as students a generation ago. However, the participants did not provide many examples of outspoken advocacy on behalf of their students. Rather, much of what they described can be characterized as actions that benefit individual students and facilitate the functioning of the school as an institution.

For example, during the interviews, as the participants described their ideas for improving the schools, I would usually ask if they had ever acted on their ideas or passed them along to people in authority. Most often their response reflected a general unease at taking on such an explicit advocate's role. For example, Angelica had some specific suggestions regarding how her skills might be better used in the school. However, she said she was unwilling to put forward her ideas to her boss or colleagues.

Scott: Have you ever spoken to anybody about these ideas?
 Angelica: Not really. I just keep it to myself. I know the teachers wouldn't like it because they try to get all the time that they can to themselves.

(Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02, 182-183)

Similarly, Dominga Ramirez complained of fourth grade teachers at her school, the same school and grade level where the "wall of shame" story described by Ignacia Marquéz Johnson occurred. However, unlike Ignacia, Dominga did not feel that she could do anything about the teachers or the situation.

Scott: Tell me more about the 4th grade teachers.
 Dominga: They are the ones that they have the most problems with Hispanics.
 Scott: At the school?
 Dominga: Nobody else complains about them. When a Hispanic child comes into a room, they have nothing to say and find a spot for them. 4th grade teacher always had something to say.
 Scott: Are there any Hispanic kids in their rooms that do all right?
 Dominga: Yes.
 Scott: Which ones are those?
 Dominga: My sister was one of them that I know of. And there are some other ones that spoke English that are doing well.
 Scott: Do any of the other teachers have similar attitudes?
 Dominga: No. Just the 4th grade – some of the 4th grade – not the whole 4th grade. Some of the 4th grade teachers.
 Scott: Have you spoken to Ignacia Marquéz Johnson about that?
 Dominga: No. I don't see them much.
 Scott: When you see her, you might want to have a talk with her. Is there anything that you can do about that?
 Dominga: No. They have a bad attitude. I don't want to get involved or in any kind of trouble with them.

(Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 415-428)

In her second interview, Dominga discussed with Angelica Marquéz the potential benefits of having a bilingual secretary in the office in order that they, as migrant paraprofessionals would not be pulled away from their tutoring duties as often. However Dominga stated that she would only be willing to approach her principal with the idea if she had support from teachers.

Scott:	Would you (turning toward Dominga) ever feel comfortable suggesting that to [your principal]?
Dominga:	Probably. If the teachers back me up, yeah I could. Not by myself.
Scott:	How would you do that?
Dominga:	I would tell them to help me talk to her. It would be good for me to have somebody help me.
(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2 nd pair 6/28/02, 49-54)	

Ester Fuentes echoed Dominga Ramirez' understanding of the necessity to have and use local connections and support if one hopes to make change in the Vidalia region. As noted earlier, Ester had pursued a letter writing campaign at her new school in metro Atlanta. After her description of this effort, I asked if Ester had or could have taken such action in the Vidalia region where she had taught previously.

Scott:	Did you ever try to do anything like that down in southeast Georgia when you were a teacher down there?
Ester:	I didn't try to do it because first of all I was only a teacher. First of all you have to let other people know – you have to work hard to earn everybody's respect. They want to know who you are, you cannot just go and talk to somebody and say – yeah guess what, guess what they're doing . You cannot, you have to earn, especially if you don't have any status. I don't think I had status – I was just a teacher, a regular teacher who went to school and everything. So I don't have like a family name that's going to back me up.
Scott:	So a family name would give you status?
Ester:	Yes.
(Ester Fuentes 2 nd individual 6/11/02, 143-146)	

The only participant who did speak of taking on such an outspoken role, Ignacia Marquéz Johnson, as discussed in Section III, is also the only participant no longer working in the schools.

Section V: Ideas for the Future

Given the constraints on the participants' perspectives and power in the school, it is unsurprising that the participants' visions for the future of Mexican heritage education in the Vidalia region were limited in scope. Very few of the participants spoke of large-scale and systemic changes that they would like to see in the schools. Rather, for the most part they focused upon small and incremental improvements that might be made without challenging the pre-existing power structure of the schools. This final section looks at the generally small-scale improvements suggested by the participants.

Although two of the participants stated that they had never thought about it before,²³ most of the participants were able to describe what they would like to see changed in the local schools "if they were in charge." Nearly all of these ideas for improving the local schools came under two general categories: initiatives regarding parents and students; and initiatives regarding school and migrant education program staff.²⁴

Initiatives Regarding Parents and Students

Three initiatives regarding parents and students were repeated across multiple interviews: outreach for parental involvement; increased and facilitated access to extracurricular activities for Latino students; and rewards for high achieving Mexican heritage migrant students. As an extension of her emphasis upon parents as role models for their children within the previously-described theme of blaming the parents, Berta Perez asserted the need to get to "the root" of the situation by addressing the parents.

Berta: ... I don't know. And you know sometimes you have to start with the family for you to get to that child. You have to start from the root. Getting more involved with the parents. Getting the parents more involved. Because once you can get them involved, then you got more better chance of getting their attention.

(Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 361)

Ester Fuentes spoke of the contrast between the lack of Latino parental involvement in the schools of the Vidalia region as contrasted with the activity she sees in her metro Atlanta school (Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 422). To address this problem she suggested increasing the number of bilingual staff in the schools.

Ester: Well definitely I would encourage more professionals that were bilingual. I would make more programs involving the parents in the Spanish population. A lot of the times they don't have the opportunity that other parents have. They are not really accommodating to the Spanish parents because they – I mean all the news and everything is in English – so the parents are not aware what's going on in the educational system so – I know that the parents have to learn English you know and everything, but they should accommodate – they have to know they're paying taxes and working very hard. They should have somebody in there who's going to tell what's going on with their kids...

(Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 408-409)

In addition, Berta Perez and Manuela Lopez repeatedly emphasized, both singly and together, the need for the schools to find ways to reach out to Mexican heritage migrant students with extracurricular and sports activities that are both culturally appropriate and appealing. These women tended to conceive of such initiatives along gender-segregated lines, with soccer for the boys and club meetings for the girls (Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 48-56, 207-216; Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 267; Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 178-183).

Ester Fuentes spoke of the value of such activities in breaking down barriers and building social connections between Latinos and other students (Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 378) and Nanci Alvarez spoke of how she used extracurricular activities and sports to fit in as the only Mexican heritage child in her school (Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 209). However, the difficulty and cost of transportation is a limitation upon after school activities in any rural area.

Thus, Manuela Lopez spoke of the need to make provisions for transportation if Latino students are to become involved in large numbers in sports such as cheerleading and soccer and other extracurricular activities (Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 183).

Finally, Manuela Lopez, Berta Perez, and Dominga Ramirez expressed the value of and regrets at not having many rewards or incentives for the Mexican heritage migrant students who stay in school and do well.

Scott: Are there some things that you would like to do for the kids but you can't?
 Dominga: I would like to have something to reward them with for their efforts, you know, trying to do what they do because there are some that do try and some that don't. I would like to be able to reward those that do.

(Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 401-402; see also: Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 178-183; Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 253 & 425; Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 277)

Initiatives Regarding Staff: More Latinos

As has been discussed and demonstrated earlier, the participants provided a number of arguments for the value of their work in the schools, and by extension, for increasing the number of Mexican heritage, bilingual and bicultural, former migrant staff members at the school. Katia Garcia stated that this would be her first goal if she were in charge.

Katia: I have never thought about that. Probably what I would do, I'll put – I'll leave the secretary that is there now, but I would put another secretary that is bilingual up front because sometimes when the parents come and we are not here, there is no way they can communicate with them. Sometimes the parents would leave without knowing nothing. That's one of the things I would change. I think that would be it. And more Hispanic teachers. Not that many, but just a few because the teachers that are here are very good. That would probably be it.

(Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 625-628; see also: Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 199; Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 45)

Note that Katia suggests replacing some teachers with Latinos, but she quickly backs down and softens her suggestion by noting that the teachers are “very good.”

Despite the consensus among the participants about the desirability of having more Latino professionals in the schools, there are very few in the local area. Moreover, the area is generally not attractive to professionals of color who tend to live in the southeast's metropolitan areas. Thus, if a rural locale such as the Vidalia region wishes to increase the number of Latino teachers and professionals, it is likely that it will need to "grow its own." For this reason, Latino paraprofessionals, like the majority of the participants in this study, are an attractive pool of potential teachers for any effort to increase the number of certified bilingual teachers in a region. Three of the uncertified participants stated that becoming a certified teacher was their next educational and career goal (Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 271, 488, 494, 506; Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 324-326; Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 635-640). Importantly though, four of the participants stated that they were interested in going to college and pursuing a career in education, but not as a teacher. Rather, they stated a preference for counseling, social work, and/or home-school outreach. Dominga Ramirez was clearest in stating this preference and her reasons why.

Scott:	What would you want to study if you went up to college?
Dominga:	Education.
Scott:	Really? You'd want to be a – what would you want to be?
Dominga:	I would like to – like what I'm doing except have more – know more about it, you know, the same job I have. Like a translator or interpreter in school.
Scott:	Would you want to be a teacher?
Dominga:	I considered that but I changed my mind about that. There's too much going on with a teacher.
Scott:	Really? What do you mean by too much going on?
Dominga:	The people are asking for more and more than what they can give. Like they want the scores to go up for example kindergarten GCAP – whatever the test they give, they expect them each year to go higher and higher and then they're asking for too much. I think they are asking for too much. The teacher can only give certain amounts and if the student doesn't get it, that's the teacher's fault. The teacher is held responsible for that. I don't want to do it.
(Dominga Ramirez 1 st solo 6/19/02, 377-384; see also: Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2 nd pair 6/28/02, 572-585; Yadira Garcia 1 st solo 6/13/02, 205-208; Berta Perez 1 st solo 6/29/02, 37; Ester Fuentes 1 st solo 1/2/99, 372)	

Dominga's narrative echoes Apple's (1993) description of teacher labor "intensification" (123), especially with regard to high stakes testing. The unexpectedly (to me) high number of participants uninterested in becoming classroom teachers parallels studies of paraprofessionals' aspirations to teach by Kelly (2000) and Lavadenz (1994). It is plausible that at least some of this reluctance is attributable to an awareness among the women that becoming a teacher would change their role within the institution of the school, and, by extension, negatively impact their relationship with their students (Rueda and Monzo in press).

In response to the question of how to increase the number of Mexican heritage teachers in the schools, the participants did not develop any surprising answers, rather they reaffirmed some basic steps that would broaden the stream of local Mexican heritage students on their way to becoming educators. Nanci Alvarez spoke of the need to cut the Latino drop out rate in the region and actively encourage the students to consider careers in education.

Scott:	What can we do to get more Mexican-American educators in the schools here?
Nanci:	Well, if you are planning to have the population that was raised here in south Georgia or the population that came to South Georgia get more into the educational part, you first there will be just to have them actually getting into college and we are just now getting the first kids to graduate ... We haven't had that many kids to graduate from college yet. Just a handful. I think we only had one that went to work as an ESOL teacher and then she moved to Atlanta, ²⁵ but that was one of the first kids to graduate from high school. That's where we are right now, trying to get these other students to go into college.

(Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 295-298; see also: Angelica Marquéz 1st solo 6/19/02, 189; Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 203-204)

Initiatives Regarding Staff: Staff Development and Training

As shown earlier, the participants understand part of their role in the schools as teachers of the teachers, cultural guides to the life and background of Mexican heritage migrant children. This conception of schoolteachers of this area having much to learn about Latino and migrant

students held consistent as the participants expressed their goals and hopes for the future. After the stated desire for more Latino educators in the schools, the second most common type of response to the question, "what would you do if you were in charge?" regarded staff development or training for current teachers. It should be noted, though, that my previous job with migrant education included the planning and implementation of staff development. Thus, it is possible that the participants, intentionally or otherwise, emphasized the value of staff development in part because of my role as the interviewer. However, this theme was raised by Berta Perez without any reference to the fact that the migrant education curriculum specialist position she is speaking of was previously my job.

Berta: ... when I first started there in the middle school, a lot of the teachers were expecting a lot from them without really getting to know the background or the real way that they are brought up. The different way that they are brought up as far as the American children or other children. And I remember once I got Miss [migrant education curriculum specialist] in there to do a presentation for them about – you know how she does the presentation about the cultures and the migrant – what migrant is all about – you know how they move from one place and do – that opened up their eyes. They were more compassionate, they were more understanding... And see that's what these teachers need. They need to be trained and I think it's just like in society you know when we have our welfare thing – you know a lot of people don't know how to deal with these other poverty until they're trained. Then they understood and the kids you know they weren't being picked on so much because they knew that maybe they had parents that they didn't support them at home. Maybe they had a babysitter, maybe they had to go work. But they understood and weren't so harsh.

(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 29-31)

As part of her desire to see more training for current teachers, Yadira Garcia also spoke of the need for the teachers to experience first hand the home life of the their migrant students, much like Luis Moll and his collaborators have suggested through their conception of teachers as researchers (1992).

Scott: Say tomorrow you were superintendent of the schools, oh gosh, [of this] county, what would you do to change the schools, if you were the boss?

- Yadira: One of the – like I said – the teachers have to know and see where the kids come from. That’s one of the things I would do – the very first thing – is take some of these parents out as a recruiter I guess – I would take them out and show them where some of these kids live.
- Scott: Take out some of the teachers, you mean?
- Yadira: Yeah. Just take them out there to some of the trailer parks and show them where these kids live. That’s the very first thing I would do.
- Scott: What would you want them to see out there?
- Yadira: Just the living conditions. You know be more patient with some of these kids. I’m not saying they’re bad, but I think it would open their eyes a little more.

(Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 191-196)

Patience in a teacher was particularly emphasized and consistently valorized by four other participants. Thus, Yadira's emphasis upon training and experiences for teachers as a means to develop a greater patience for the students would likely be supported by a number of the participants. For example, her ideas parallel two priorities mentioned by Berta above: compassion and a greater understanding of the multi-year ELL development timeline.²⁶ In addition, Angelica Marquéz spoke of her role in the school as providing patience for the students when the regular classroom teachers cannot or will not.

- Scott: How are you trying to do your job – are you trying to do it similarly to how they did it or differently?
- Angelica: Well from what I remember, I try to do it different because I try to get all my students everyday. But I know I get them at least 3 or 4 times a week. Most of the children that I do get do need help. The teachers just don’t have the patience for them. They don’t like to deal with them because they are not as – they don’t know what the class knows – they are behind on their work or whatever.

(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 262-263; see also: 607-610; Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 302-303; Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 158; Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 249; Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 145)

Beyond staff development to address attitudes though, only Ester Fuentes, a trained ESOL teacher, spoke of the need to provide high quality training in ESOL methods and materials (Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 374 & 402).

Initiatives Regarding Staff: Staffing Changes

As pointed out earlier in this chapter, few of the participants were willing to consider taking on an outspoken advocacy role in the schools that might bring them into conflict with other school staff members. Only Ignacia Marquéz Johnson, the single participant who has left the schools entirely, described taking action as a staff member in her school in such a manner to directly confront inappropriate behavior by other staff members.

However, when asked how they would change the schools if they were in charge, two of the participants spoke of their desire to fire some of the most, in their view, problematic teachers and staff members. In reference to the teachers and staff that both she and Ignacia complained about, Dominga was clear what she would do if she had the authority to do so.

Scott:	... Say you were the principal at school tomorrow. What kind of changes would you make at your school?
Dominga:	I would throw those teachers out. I would find some other teachers for the 4 th grade. They have ESOL class – that's fine. I don't think there are other changes – I can't think of any right now, other than you know.
(Dominga Ramirez 1 st solo 6/19/02, 429-430; see: Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2 nd pair 6/28/02, 608-609)	

This contrasts sharply with how Katia earlier downplayed her suggestion to replace teachers.

Nanci Alvarez responded similarly, at least at first, before developing a more elaborate answer.

Scott:	Say tomorrow, you got the job as superintendent of the local schools, you're the boss now of the whole school system, what kind of changes would you make? What would you do? How would you – what would be your goals as superintendent of the schools?
Nanci:	I would get rid of people. (laughs) I don't know. I would have the school folks be more accountable for what goes on within the classroom.
Scott:	On what basis would they have to be accountable? What would you use to tell?
Nanci:	On their work. I mean I go to the school and I see you know a lot of socialization going on instead of working. I don't know...
(Nanci Alvarez 2 nd solo 6/12/02, 287-290)	

Ideas for the Future Reprised

As explained in the previous section, due to their life experiences and the current constraints on their voices and power, the participants were generally reluctant to present themselves as outspoken advocates for systematic change in the schools of the Vidalia region. It is thus not surprising that most of the participants did not conceive of dramatic alterations in how they would manage the local schools if they were in charge. Their ideas for how they would alter the functioning of the schools generally fell within in the realm of incremental improvements rather than radical restructuring, a reflection of their own understanding of their constrained agency within the local power structure and the lack of examples to provide an alternative vision.

Their suggested initiatives include efforts to increase parent and student engagement in the schools: outreach to families, more accommodating extracurricular activities, and rewards for migrant students who stay in school. In regard to the schools' staff, the participants called for the hiring of more Latinos (particularly Mexican heritage, bilingual / bicultural, former migrants), staff development to cultivate understanding and patience among current teachers, and the firing of a few particularly problematic teachers and staff. These initiatives clearly bear attention since they are valuable in the fact that they are both within reach and valorized by the participants from their unique perspective on the local schools.

Endnotes for Chapter 6

- ¹ As the morning sun dries out the asparagus, the stalks lose weight rapidly and their value to the field worker is reduced.
- ² This vignette also belongs to the “Parent knows best” genre to be discussed later.
- ³ Many schools in the rural South continue the traditions of segregated proms and yearbook personalities to this day.[cite recent news]
- ⁴ As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, most of the participants were quite deferential toward their parents. This is a one of the few critiques presented.
- ⁵ Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 152, 253; Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 434; Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 325, 434; Guadalupe Flores 1st solo 12/7/98, 267; Ignacia Marquez Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 139; Katia & Yadira Garcia 2nd pair 8/25/02, 155. Note that Suárez-Orozco, 1987, is entitled “Becoming Somebody” for similar reasons.
- ⁶ Dominga Ramirez 1st solo 6/19/02, 547.
- ⁷ Ignacia Marquez Johnson 1st solo 12/16/98, 101.
- ⁸ Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 152; Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 149, 318; Nanci Alvarez 1st solo 1/27/99, 227; Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 209, 258, 324; Ignacia Marquez Johnson 2nd solo 8/11/02, 177.
- ⁹ Ester Fuentes, the fifth of eight children, discussed how this pattern of elder children sacrificing for the younger siblings created a gap between sibling experiences and life goals:

<p>Scott: Last couple of questions. Is your idea of success and what you want to achieve in your life the same as the rest of your family?</p> <p>Ester: Well, the thing is that it depends on how much education – the elder ones, they didn’t receive as much education as the younger ones did, so I think to my older siblings, to them it’s just working to make a good living, to help their families. To me success, and to the other kids, was to achieve your goal and push yourself to your highest potential. It’s more like – I have more dreams to do other things, you know, than just about my family. It’s not only about my family. It’s also about myself.</p>
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(Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 444-445)
- ¹⁰ As shown in the Appendix., the names and responsibilities of mentors were explicitly sought by the pre-interview questionnaire. I then followed-up regarding each mentor’s role in the participants’ lives during the interviews.
- ¹¹ Much of south Georgia is covered with pine trees for the paper and lumber industry. The leftover pine straw (pine needles) is raked, baled, and loaded onto trailers for transport to urban areas for use as mulch.
- ¹² The school counselor who sparked this event was a person recognized by Ester Fuentes as a caring mentor to her and her younger siblings.
- ¹³ However, it should be noted that Katia, as an adult school staff member, is more likely to gain the ear of a teacher than she did as a student. Thus, she may be inaccurately projecting her current impressions of teachers onto her students.
- ¹⁴ Most likely the ESOL Guide or the Migrant Education Summer School curriculum guide from Georgia DOE. See Beck and Allestaht-Snyder (2001) for a critique of the guide for Georgia’s ESOL programs and its strong English-only bias.
- ¹⁵ The participant who spoke of ESOL under-funding requested anonymity regarding her comments.
- ¹⁶ Interestingly, Manuela presents the teacher as possibly abiding by an English-only rule at the school, like many of the teachers she now works with.
- ¹⁷ Only Katia Garcia stated any reluctance to tell her life story to her students (Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 584-585).
- ¹⁸ Spring (1997) describes “deculturalization” as the systematic and multi-faceted attempt by schools, government agencies, and private groups to encourage the assimilation of marginalized ethnic, racial, and immigrant groups toward the supposed mainstream norms of language and culture.
- ¹⁹ Although this potentially emergent gap between the participants and the Mexican heritage families and students they serve cannot be fully explored within the data available here, it does bear further investigation as noted in Chapter 7.
- ²⁰ The assertion that more of the region’s migrant males drop out than females deserves further investigation, although anecdotal evidence does not support it.
- ²¹ During the summer of 2002, when the dissertation interviews were conducted, Georgia state politics were in the process of a dramatic and historical upheaval, the magnitude of which would not be fully understood until the election of early November 2002.

Through back-room maneuvers and a surprise initiative, Democratic Governor Roy Barnes had removed the Stars and Bars from the state flag in 2001 in order to avoid a threatened boycott of the state by the NAACP. This choice enflamed the anger of many rural, white Georgians because of the Stars and Bars' symbolic evocation of the traditions of slavery and segregation. During 2002, the Republican Party and their eventually successful gubernatorial candidate, Sonny Perdue, appealed to Stars and Bars supporters with the slogan "Let us Vote!" The flag issue came to dominate the 2003 Georgia legislative session and yielded yet another controversial back-room compromise that has left Confederate heritage groups angry and embittered.

²² Manuela fails to introduce this story of a young black student teaching his Mexican heritage classmates about African American history.

²³ Two of the participants immediately stated that they had never thought of the possibility of being in charge of a school (Manuela Lopez 1st solo 6/12/02, 182-183; Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 625-628) and one responded with sarcastic disbelief:

Scott:	Say you were all of a sudden promoted to principal of the middle school.
Berta:	Yeah right.

(Berta Perez 1st solo 6/29/02, 354-355)

²⁴ The one exception was an initiative to teach Spanish at the elementary level supported by Ester Fuentes (Ester Fuentes 1st solo 1/2/99, 278).

²⁵ Ester Fuentes

²⁶ One caveat to the valorization of patience is to be found in Nanci Alvarez' assertion that if a student works at it, they can master English in two years: "It can be done. A student can excel academically from being here 2 years regardless of what the ESOL statistic says" (Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 255). By "ESOL statistic," Nanci seems to refer to ELL research indicating that it takes five to seven years to gain full academic proficiency in English (Thomas and Collier 1997).

CHAPTER 7

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This concluding chapter of my dissertation reviews much of what has gone before while building new connections with existing research literature and suggesting new directions for my future work. I begin by reemphasizing my participants' epistemic privilege and the value that this endows to their exceptional life stories as double pioneers in the schools of the Vidalia onion region. I then use the themes developed in the preceding chapters to respond to the research questions for this study and situate the findings of the study within the context of relevant research. Finally, I conclude with a series of recommendations for educational policy, practice, and further research.

A Reminder of My Theoretical Frame

As explained in Chapter 4, the theoretical framework I employed in my research is based upon a postpositivist realist assertion of the crucial importance of the epistemic privilege of often silenced voices in the building of more accurate understandings of our world. As Satya Mohanty explains, people with relatively limited power and privilege may develop "epistemic privilege," an ability to see through the obscurity of hegemony and construct "alternative theoretical pictures and accounts of the world we all share" (2000, 61). Standpoint feminist Sandra Harding has demonstrated that these alternative narratives have the power to challenge dominant hegemonic knowledge if they are informed by a political critique. bell hooks and critical race

theorists have provided numerous examples of such politicized narratives based in the lived experiences of marginalized people. In my postpositivist realist frame, the synthesis of these narratives with more mainstream discourses is a fruitful means toward building more accurate and useful interpretations of our world.

I undertook this dissertation as an effort toward just such a synthesis by working across diverse perspectives to construct a more complex representation of Mexican heritage education in the rural South. It is important to note, though, that a postpositivist realist approach cannot and does not claim to assert a positivistic truth. Rather, this study can only claim to improve our understanding of what it means to be a Mexican heritage woman pioneer in the schools of the rural South and what it means for the schools of the rural South to receive so many Mexican heritage people.

As was noted in Chapter 1, educational research and policy have systematically and nearly uniformly ignored or silenced the voices of women, such as my participants, who have lived the issues that concern policy makers. This is unfortunate since their knowledge of the margins between the dominant culture of rural Southern schooling and the oftentimes invisible culture of Mexican heritage migrancy provides insight into the struggles faced by this region's rapidly growing Mexican heritage student population and the local teachers who are charged with meeting their needs. My participants' exceptional experiences as pioneer Mexican heritage students and, later, as educators in the local schools can help educators and advocates better understand the educational consequences of the ongoing and dramatic changes in the local populace. This, in turn, can help us develop appropriate, forward-thinking responses to these changes. Bringing to voice the perspectives of my ten participants will not serve as a panacea or provide a comprehensive or simple set of solutions to the challenges facing Mexican heritage

education in the rural South. However, building a platform whereby their stories can be read and heard can only enrich, enliven, and redress the thus far imbalanced and underdeveloped discussion of Latino education in the rural South.

Connections with Relevant Research

As suggested by postpostivist realism, the ten women's perspectives on their lives and my interpretation thereof should not be understood as definitive or complete. However, since my participants stand in a very different place than middle-class academics like myself and my readers, their perspectives can enrich our conception of the world and help us move toward a more accurate understanding. The participants in this study see and construct the world through lenses that are shaped by their exceptional collection of experiences – experiences that have placed them on the edges of two communities of practice in the Vidalia region: the communities of Mexican heritage people and of local educators. Their perspectives upon themselves and the status of Mexican heritage education provide a challenge to many preexisting discourses, as the following section will display. This section will first build connections with three areas of similar studies and relevant research: Latinos in the South; Dual Frames of Reference; and Mediation, Negotiation, Brokerage, Institutional Perspectives, and Marginal Professionals. This will then allow for more fully theorized, although still tentative, answers to the original research questions that drove this study.

Latinos in the South

The range of research available regarding the lives of Latinos in the rural South has expanded dramatically during the past five years since I first began my academic work in this

area. As described in Chapter 3, handfults of sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and scores of journalists have published on the topic of how the rural South and its new Latino populace are changing each other. Many of the academic studies read much like this one, as the beginning of a much longer and larger project to understand a sociological and historical process that few predicted and none can control. Connections and contrasts with a few of the studies in this literature can help shed light upon some of the data and life stories presented here.

A basic theme that unifies all of the life stories told here has been the presentation of southeast Georgia's rural Vidalia onion region as a land of opportunities and a refuge from many gauntlets and troubles. This presentation finds at its root the basic fact that my participants and their families, people who had traveled extensively in search of economic opportunities, found this locale to be the best labor market they could find. Although this might seem surprising, in one of the few systematic analyses of the economics of the Latino influx into the rural South, Rogelio Saenz (2000) examined census data regarding over 9500 Mexican heritage workers in the rural South. His findings provide statistical support for the qualitative data presented here about the economics of being a Mexican heritage migrant in the rural South.

Nanci: Let me tell you. One of the greatest things about migrant ed that I have is that I am able to talk to these students. We get so many kids like that here. Basically I just tell them a little bit about me or what to expect. I just say do not give up ... I mean I see students cry and I cry. When I talk to these students one on one and I just try to give them some support for that certain moment and they cry and cry – it's because of their frustration. There's a lot of pain that goes on right then. I just tell them what to expect, what they can do and how much worth it it's going to be. I mean if I had to do it all over again, I would do it all over again because here in the United States education pays.

(Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 252-255)

Saenz (2000) states: "educational attainment has the most consistent effect on the annual income of Mexican-origin¹ workers" (79). In fact, Mexican heritage "workers with greater amounts of education in non-metro [rural] areas are better rewarded for their educational

credentials in comparison to their counterparts living in metro settings” (84). The participants’ narratives suggested that two reasons why their families have done so well in this region were their early arrival in the area and the opportunities that the rapidly growing Latino population created for crewleaders, middle managers, service workers, and entrepreneurs.

Scott:	So what – your dad wanted to be – to work as a contractor and why did he choose to do that here in Georgia rather than in Florida? Do you know?
Berta:	Because well, we all know that in the onion business you do – everybody makes money. If you play your cards right, everybody makes money. That’s a very good job.
(Berta Perez 1 st solo 6/29/02, 230-231)	

Again, Saenz’ data supports this assertion. Saenz states that more highly educated Mexican heritage workers actually earn more in the rural South than the urban South, reflecting “the large supply of less educated Mexican-origin workers and the small supply of more educated Mexican-origin workers in the non-metro South” (84). In addition, Saenz states “workers who had moved recently... had lower earnings than workers living in their state of residence for a longer period of time” (79), implying that the earlier Mexican heritage workers had arrived in the region and the longer they had remained correlated with increased earnings. Taken together, Saenz’ statistics suggest that the experience of opportunity and the narratives of success presented in this dissertation may be found more commonly than many might expect upon first consideration of the Mexican heritage experience in the rural South.

In addition to Saenz’ study, a handful of significant dissertation studies of the Mexican heritage educational experience in the South have been conducted during the past few years.² The work of Hamann (1999) regarding the bilingual, bi-national (U.S-Mexico) Georgia Project in Dalton, Georgia is important for showing the “innovative” (364) things that can begin happen when good intentions, large resources, administrative naïveté, and a bit of luck open a window of opportunity for policy implementation at a moment of “sudden and dramatic demographic

change” (392). However, this nexus of good fortune was not been sustained in Dalton, in part because of the emergence of “anti-immigration scripts” (Suárez-Orozco 1988) in local community discourse that undermined the transformative potential of the project, in part because the project never moved beyond supplemental “reform by addition” (Sizer 1983). Dalton’s combination of international resources with economic paternalism is not likely to occur in the Vidalia region anytime soon, if simply for the reason that the agricultural Black Belt has very different historical traditions that minimize the social obligations of the economic elite as compared to the South’s Piedmont mill towns where expectations of economic and social progressivism have deep roots (Hall, et al. 1987). Thus, Hamann’s (1999) study leaves Vidalia with an “ephemeral promise” (391) of what cannot be here. However, the study also points out the importance of seizing moments of historical change, such as the Latino influx into the South, and bringing to bear whatever creative combination of resources can be found to turn the change toward a positive transformation. It is in the spirit of such creative hope that this conclusion will later turn toward recommendations for policy, practice, and research.

Villenas (1996) examined eleven Latinas struggling to redefine their roles as mothers and women between the sometimes conflicting, sometimes concurring cultural expectations of the South and of their own Latino heritages. As such, Villenas opened many of the questions that I have tried to extend and clarify in this dissertation. Villenas mapped the edges of the discourse of “benevolent racism” among the predominantly white and female social service and teaching communities of her research site in North Carolina. She also described the responses of Latinas to the mix of good intentions and deficit thinking that forms benevolent racism.

My study has sought answers to the question of what happens when these two communities of practice – and the discourses they support – overlap in one person, a Latina who

is also an educator, a member of the institution who has lived the experience of those served by the institution. In the end, the compromises and choices made by my participants are alternately heartening and disturbing. Socioeconomic constraints of race, class, and gender generally did not allow my participants to consistently defend the interests and valorize the experiences of their Mexican heritage students, even when those experiences echoed their own lives. Instead, at times, they seemingly discounted their own lived experience and clearly presented the perspective and discourse of the institution of the school, Villenas' "benevolent racism." Nonetheless, given a slightly more empowering platform upon which to stand, such as education, certification, or a job that is not beholden to the local educational and economic power elite, participants such as Nanci, Ignacia, and Ester returned to their own life stories with a combination of pride and conviction that gives hope that the adoption of the institutional perspective is neither irreversible nor inevitable and that women such as the ten whose stories have been told here can be levers for more than just incremental change. However, in order for any such transformation to occur, it is crucial to understand their choice between their choice their childhood experiences and the institutional discourse. The following section places this choice in the context of Suarez-Orozco's work regarding "dual frames of reference."

Dual Frames of Reference

Rumbaut and Portes (2001) have shown that different immigrants, although they may share the same nation of origin, can take very different paths in their response to their new land. Key to this difference is the preservation of memories of their past life that preceded their current circumstances. Suarez-Orozco (2001) has shown the significance of some immigrants' abilities to move between "dual frames of reference" whereby they compare their memories of the land

and life they chose to leave behind with their, often materially improved, current circumstance. These dual frames of reference allow some immigrants to understand their current lives through eyes of great optimism, for generally, they can find criteria to claim that their lives are better today than in the past and thus justify their choice to immigrate, despite evidence of economic injustice or racial and gender inequities in their new home.

This analysis is particularly important to understanding how and why my participants constructed their understandings of their place in their world. Despite all the evidence presented in Chapter 2 and all the preconceptions outlined in Chapter 3, my participants generally did not present themselves as victims of injustice or as cogs in an inequitable schooling system. Instead, the women's ability to recall the gauntlets they faced during their migrant childhoods made their current situation seem quite appealing and successful.

Additionally, they have been more successful than most Mexican heritage residents in actualizing their aspirations to "be someone" and "do something" by graduating or obtaining a GED and working in an inside job away from the fields. Thus, the participants' view toward optimism is likely stronger than it would be among most of their Mexican heritage age cohort in the Vidalia region because of their success in fulfilling the promise of "the fields vs. the schools." Within this conception, the class status of my participants becomes critical to understanding their stance. All of the participants have moved beyond wage labor migrancy and gained at least a modicum of the American dream with stable jobs and a place to call home.

Moreover, their optimistic dual frame of reference is also not likely to be as common among the Mexican heritage children that these ten women currently serve in the schools. Increasing numbers of the Vidalia onion region's Mexican heritage students have lived most or all of their lives here as their parents have settled in the area and found steady work. As such,

many of these contemporary students can be understood as developing a more skeptical perspective regarding their home in rural south Georgia. Instead of comparing their circumstances to the difficulties of impoverished migrancy, these children may often measure their lives and opportunities against the dominant local group, affluent whites.

Evidence for these two assertions can be found in the work of Mexican researcher Alice Tinley's (2000) collective case study focused upon four Mexicano families in Alabama and their relationships with the local schools. The Mexican heritage families who participated in this study were not exceptional. The adult members of the families worked as labor migrants, earning low wages at the local poultry plant, a critical contrast with my participants. As low wage laborers, their current experiences would not necessarily contrast as sharply with their previous situations, denying them the same class-based dual frame of reference seemingly employed by my participants. In this way, Tinley's study provides a window into the struggles of the mainstream of rural Southern Mexican heritage families and helps estimate the gap between the current lives of my participants and the lives of the children and families they serve.

Tinley's research demonstrated a strong consensus among her participants that American schools interacted with the children of Mexican heritage labor migrants on the basis of prejudice and racism (Tinley 2000, 284-286). Tinley's participants' sincere accusations of prejudice parallel the complaints of bias from my participants' students. Nonetheless my study participants were generally unwilling to entertain or validate such concerns.

Yadira: Some of these kids, they just feel the teachers are being different to them.

Scott: What do you mean by that?

Yadira: They may not pay attention to them. So I've been told by some. The teacher is being racist or the principal. I try to explain to them that its not so much that they are being racist, but they have so much to do and they have to approach certain things to them in a certain way. They can't just go and you know spurt out a lot of things to them.

Scott: So you're hearing from the kids in schools around here . . .

Yadira: It's rare. But every now and then they will say, well the teacher or the principal or whoever, but I just think they don't approach them in the way that they are supposed to.

Scott: The students don't or the teachers don't?

Yadira: Yeah, the students. Some of the students are bad.

(Yadira Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 152-158)

Given the general denial or dismissal of continued anti-Latino prejudice articulated by my participants, even in the face of claims to the contrary by their students, Tinley's findings clearly reinforces my concern that my participants' exceptional positioning may allow them a greater level of optimism about race and prejudice than contemporary Mexican heritage labor migrants and their children. It is across this gap in interpretation that one might find the emergence of a very different, more critical and oppositional "Dixie Chicano"³ identity, a possibility that will be discussed later in this chapter under topics for further study.

Mediation, Negotiation, Brokerage, Institutional Perspectives, and Marginal Professionals

The participants in this study spend much of their time in the schools bridging gaps in language and cultural understanding between students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Weiss (1994) characterizes marginal persons such as the ten women in this study as "cultural brokers – people ... [who] help reduce the stresses generated by opposing philosophies during culture contact episodes" (337). In this position "betwixt and between" (337) two communities of practice, the ten women in my study are continually faced with the responsibility of mediating between the communities' different conceptions of education, fairness, and the family, among other issues. Hamann (1996) speculates

Perhaps to cross the barriers of language, class, and social status, to bridge back and forth between the primary and secondary sectors, a partially marginal figure is helpful, one who is viewed as approachable by timid LEP parents and as unthreatening by Anglo school professionals. (21)

Nonetheless, as Weiss points out, many of “the changes that the aids [paraprofessionals] brought to the school were in the expressive domain and concerned motivation, trust, self-esteem, and a sense of identity with the school. Unfortunately, these qualitative skills are not measured by academic achievement tests” (1994, 343).

Neither do these “unthreatening” changes address systemic inequities. Hamann (1996) described the paraprofessionals he studied as “partially remedying [the] schools greatest weaknesses” rather than playing a role in transforming the schools to a “progressive educational mission” (22). Although the ten women I interviewed are willing and able to make small-scale interventions on behalf of individual students and with individual teachers, they are generally limited from larger actions by the constraints of their disempowered socio-economic position. Despite their success vis-à-vis the expectations of the migrant community, for multiple reasons most of my participants are discounted as agents when they step into their roles at the school:

- they are generally not as well educated as the teaching staff;
- their job label and description as paraprofessionals clearly places them at the bottom of the instructional hierarchy in the school;
- they are people of color in a white-dominated institution;
- they speak English with a Spanish accent (and frequently with a sprinkling of Spanglish) in a setting where nativistic English-only attitudes are validated in written, official policy manuals;
- they come from extremely impoverished backgrounds, but are surrounded by and supervised by middle and upper middle class educators; and
- they are women in an institution that encourages passivity among women.

For all these reasons, the participants seem to have set aside at least some of the lessons of their life experiences and taken on the perspective of the institution when negotiating across the gap between the two communities that they bridge. Their deficit thinking regarding migrant parents is disturbing on three bases: it denies their own experience of valuing their parents and

their family-based decisions; it parallels the type of “benevolent racist” discourse described by Villenas (1996); and it represents a lost educational opportunity.

It appears that many of the women have learned to blame the victim as they have moved out of the fields and into the schools. In this sense they have probably had “too much schooling too little education” (Shujaa, 1994) – too much schooling in the values of the dominant culture and the devaluing of their own backgrounds and not enough education to broadly alter the schools in this region. As multiple ethnographic studies have shown (Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba 1991; Vasquez, Pease-Alvarez and Shannon 1994; Gonzalez et al. 1995), Mexican heritage children can benefit dramatically when schools stop ignoring and instead value and build upon the “funds of knowledge” that these students bring from their families. The women who participated in this study are positioned so as to potentially fruitfully bridge this home-school divide (Rueda and DeNeve 1999, Monzo and Rueda 2003), but without confidence in and ability to articulate the legitimacy of their own lived experiences, they are unable to serve as catalysts toward more culturally responsive teaching in the schools where they work.

This analysis is supported by the fact that the three most outspoken critics among the participants were the three with the highest level of education and the three who have moved beyond the role of paraprofessional to become a counselor, a teacher, and a federal employee. Nanci Alvarez, Ester Fuentes, and Ignacia Marquez Johnson each leveled strong and sometimes angry criticisms against the local schools for their current treatment of Mexican heritage students. Other related factors also facilitated their outspokenness: Nanci’s and Ester’s social capital as daughters of moderately well-educated Mexican parents, Ester’s departure from the region, and Ignacia’s departure from the field of education. Taken together, these elements freed each of them from many of the constraints listed above so that they were willing to reject deficit-

framed institutional discourses and directly criticize local school systems on the basis of their personal experience.

Tentative Answers to the Study's Research Questions

Participants' Understandings of Contexts, Structures, and Inequity

As detailed in Chapter 3, I came to my study with a common, but problematically limiting set of assumptions or preconceived discourse patterns regarding what I would find as I examined the Mexican heritage migrant influx into the rural South. My preconceptions about the rural South were strongly colored by what I had seen and read about this region's history of racial domination. My knowledge of migrancy focused upon the painful "plight" of a people whose lives seemed to be an endless cycle of misery and oppression. Thus, one of my original objectives in conducting this study was to build an understanding, based upon the life stories of my participants, of where Mexican heritage migrants fit into the racialized traditions of the region.

As the preceding chapters have shown, although race was not entirely written out of the life stories of the participants, it did not stand as the dominant theme that I had expected it to be. My assumption that the black / white context of Southern history would be central to how my participants understood themselves and their place in this region was largely wrong. As was shown in Chapter 6, my participants generally present the long local history of racism as largely irrelevant to their current lives.

Scott: One last question. When you drive around here a lot, you'll see on the back of a lot of cars, trucks and vans the Stars and Bars – Confederate flag – do you know what I mean by that?

Angelica: Yes. It has like an X – is that. . .

Scott: Yes, do you see that a lot?

Angelica: Yes.

Dominga: I don't pay any attention to that.

Angelica: I saw a truck that had a big flag on it had like a pole or something on the tailgate. And it had that flag. But it doesn't bother me.

Scott: What do you think it means?

Angelica: I hadn't really even thought about it. I mean I see them but I don't think – I mean I see them and that's it, I don't think anything else about them.

(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 627-634)

I believe that this tendency can be, at least in part, explained in terms of the participants' dual-frame of reference. From within their historical migrant frame of reference, many of the women freely complained of prejudice they experienced as a child when they arrived in the Vidalia region ten to twenty-five years ago. However, shifting to their current frame of reference as a relatively economically comfortable educator, few of the women granted much merit to accusations of continued, contemporary anti-Latino racism in the local community. Compared to the acute gauntlets of the past that they had endured, most of the women viewed their present experiences in the Vidalia region as offering an economic "land of opportunity" that seemingly made any claim of continued wide-spread or systemic prejudice untenable.

Moreover, from their perspective as school employees, accusations of prejudice and racism against their colleagues in the school threatened to upset the delicate balancing act that they had to execute as persons on the edge of two communities of practice – two communities whose responses to these accusations of racism would likely be entirely at odds. They needed to be able to continue in their role as cultural and linguistic brokers if they were to be able to bring home a paycheck next week. In this context, it made sense for the participants to dismiss or deny accusations of racism and prejudice, for such accusations would inevitably lead to difficult choices regarding their allegiances to the communities of practice they mediate.

Thus, I believe that my participants generally constructed life stories with me that diminished the contemporary issues of race, racism, and prejudice for both reasons of dual-

frames of reference and the politics of mediation. As will be discussed later in this chapter though, their denials do not mean that the racialized traditions of the South are entirely irrelevant to their lives.

Unlike racial issues, the historical traditions of gender inequalities in rural Southern education were not a pre-existing focus for my study. Thus, as the protocols reflect, I did not plan many questions that specifically addressed gender issues. When topics relevant to gender arose during the interviews, they were neither avoided by the participants nor were they viewed from a critical perspective. Rather, the gendered nature of their jobs and of opportunities for female students in the schools appeared to be largely taken for granted by the ten women. The fact that there are so few men, particularly Latino men, working as educators in the region was clearly a daily “obviousness” (Althusser 1971) – a fact that had never drawn their attention before.

Scott:	...Why is it that we can't get guys to work in the schools doing Katia's job? Why can't we get particularly Mexican-American guys to do it?
Yadira:	I don't know. I guess they feel weird being around women all the time.
Katia:	They probably think that's like a job for women. Not for men. That's what I think, I don't know.
Yadira:	Yeah, because thinking about it, I have never thought about it, but I guess you know if they were to – like my cousin, he worked here in this county for just a little while. I don't even think he worked there a month...
(Katia & Yadira Garcia 2 nd pair 8/25/02, 351-354)	

The women largely accepted that men don't work with children for low pay, but women do.

Scott:	But amongst your siblings, there's 3 guys who have either high school diplomas or GED. Do you have any idea why they never got involved in this kind of work? What kind of work...
Dominga:	Maybe – guys don't seem to be interested as much as girls because it's dealing with children.
(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2 nd pair 6/28/02, 82-83)	

Thus, although there was no explicit gender requirement in their job descriptions, their work activities and pay rate defined their positions as “women's work” (Hoffman 1981; Grumet 1988).

The gendered experience of their students also was left largely unchallenged, a fact encouraged by my lack of interview protocol questions regarding gender. Thus, the interviews contained few discussions of the differences in lives of Mexican heritage boys and girls in the Vidalia region. The few comments that were made tended to fall out along traditional lines. Boys play sports; girls join clubs. Boys drop out to work in the fields; girls drop out for pregnancy and marriage. Given the strongly gendered and mutually reinforcing expectations of both Mexican heritage and Southern, particularly white Southern, gender roles (Velázquez 1999, 136-137; Smith 1999, 13-14), it is not surprising to see these roles taken for granted by my participants.

In contrast with issues of race and gender, class-based inequalities in the Vidalia region were directly addressed more frequently by the participants. Multiple participants expressed an awareness of how money endows a person with status, power, and influence that they, the participants, do not have.

Ester: ... You know the way they vote whenever they are trying to make a decision and stuff like that, I don't think they take into consideration a lot of the teachers or a lot of the people around – just this group of people that they hire because they know each other, because they have status. They would not hire anybody else that came from another country or state to work there. They will hire somebody from that same circle, same status and everything.

Scott: Who are the people in that circle?

Ester: The ones that have the money. You know?

Scott: How do the rich people get their money?

Ester: I think they inherit it. (laughing). You know, generations, they just pass it on.

Scott: Do they – what gets passed on?

Ester: Land and you know like especially in this area, I mean, they do lots of farming and stuff like that so that's how they get their money.

(Ester Fuentes 2nd individual 6/11/02, 92-102)

Although the economic fortunes of each of them and many of their family members had improved dramatically since they had arrived in southeast Georgia more than a decade ago, only one participant, Nanci Alvarez, has attained any stature within the local, nearly entirely white,

upper-middle and upper-class elite. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 6, her stature is colored by questions of tokenism.

How did They Break Out of the Intergenerational Cycle of Labor Migrancy?

As noted throughout this dissertation, the lives of my participants are exceptional on many grounds, most significantly because they all were children of migrant farm laborers. Migrants have the highest drop out rate of any identifiable group in our schools (National Commission on Migrant Education 1992). Nonetheless, all ten women were able to do something that most migrants and their children never accomplish. They completed a high school degree or GED and moved out of the fields and into professional and paraprofessional positions as educators in the public schools. In this accomplishment, it appears that they have broken the cycle of wage labor migrancy that consigns generation after generation of Mexican heritage migrants to sub-poverty wages, desperate poverty, continual movement, and limited educational progress. As discussed in the introduction to this study, compared with the conditions of work for migrants, obtaining a paraprofessional position in the schools, despite its relatively low pay, is interpreted as being successful. Moreover, the stability and increased social capital (i.e.: familiarity with the functioning and expectations of schools) developed by former migrants in their roles as paraprofessionals often leads to more opportunities for both themselves and their children. Many women use work as a paraprofessional as a stepping-stone out of the fields and into higher status positions (witness Nanci Alvarez, Ignacia Marquez Johnson, and Yadira Garcia). Additionally, the simple fact that they do not move every few months in search of seasonal work means that their children have a much-improved chance at educational success. As noted in Chapter 6, this prioritization of the collective family good is a

lesson that many of the women learned from their own parents. However, the participants' move out of the field and into the school has allowed a very different set of options for the expression of familial agency.

In securing positions as educators in the schools, they fulfilled one of the basic lessons of their childhood, the dichotomy of the field versus the school. The only escape from the fields, in their youthful understandings of the world, was by way of the school. However, where success in school would lead them was largely unknown.

Berta: But it's like whenever we got – whenever [migrant education counselor] came over here and talked to the kids, the 8th graders, about careers – you know all these kids, they don't – I reckon because their parents don't ever sit down and talk to them about the future . .

Manuela: What do you want to be when you grow up?

Berta: Right, they don't even know what they want to be. Some of them, yeah they think about all I want to do is finish high school. They don't even think about college because they think to them going to college is like a fairy tale....

(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 106-108)

Education could allow them to “do something” and “be someone,” but “something” and “someone” were vague being better than a lifetime of endless toil under the hot summer sun and in the cold winter wind. Education would allow them an “indoor job” and the highly desirable stability and benefits accompanying such a job.

How was it that these ten women made this transition? A few crucial themes emerged from their life stories to explain their exceptional success.

First among these themes was the importance of family support and deference to the judgment of parents. Although the participants had not followed their parents' advice throughout their lives, they frequently attributed much of their success to their parents' counsel.

Additionally, the sacrifices of older siblings to support the education of their younger sisters and brothers was remarkably consistent across nearly all the life stories. The women who were

among the eldest in their families often delayed or gave up their dreams of an education in order to financially support their younger siblings. In turn, the participants who had elder siblings often told of how the fieldwork of their older sisters and brothers allowed them to stay in school.

Scott:	So when you were growing up, before you got to school, everyone spoke Spanish in your house?
Ignacia:	Everybody spoke Spanish – none of my brothers or sisters had been at school. Actually me, the two sisters, the middle child, and the next one and the youngest boy and then me were the only four that were able to pick up some English because we were younger. My four older brothers and sisters were –they went to school – but they couldn’t understand anything – they couldn’t read – they couldn’t do any work at all – so they just basically were the ones that supported us. They went to work.
Scott:	They worked in the fields?
Ignacia:	They worked in the fields.
(Ignacia Marquéz Johnson 1 st solo 12/16/98, 40-43)	

Complementing this central role of the family, nearly all of the participants also made reference to the pivotal role of caring mentors in their educational experience. Although the support that these mentors offered may seem trivial in terms of time or money, the fact that outsiders cared and were willing to provide any support at all appears to have been crucial for these women. In the context of the previously discussed vagueness of their youthful dreams of becoming “someone,” many of the participants simply did not know of the possibilities that their lives might hold. Thus, mentors with confidence in their abilities and knowledge of their options provided a crucial hand up for these women as they moved out of the fields and toward a new, promising, but unknown, life. These stories of the crucial role played by these mentors reinforces the assertion that empathetic outsiders are a resource that should be intentionally cultivated. This type of mentoring about the possibilities beyond fieldwork had to come from outside the family unit, since most of the women’s families did not know about other options nor did they understand, beyond the importance of schooling, the means to achieve such goals. The faith and support of caring, empathetic mentors was particularly crucial for the three women who

dropped out of school only to return for a GED years later.

Scott:	Um, can you tell me a little bit about Ms. [female GED teacher] and um
Guadalupe:	Oh, Ms. [female GED teacher]?
Scott:	Yeah
Guadalupe:	Oh, she's my, she's my guardian angel!
(Guadalupe Flores 1 st solo 12/7/98, 238-241)	

As portrayed in their narratives, without support from these mentors, the women believe that they would have given up many times over. Notably, these same facets of familial support and attentive mentoring have been identified in literature reviews by both Galindo and Escamilla (1995) and Montero-Sieburth and Batt (2001) regarding Mexican heritage and Latino school success.

Finally, the women's perception of the Vidalia onion region itself as an exceptional locale was clearly developed in their narratives. There was a strong consensus that this place had offered them and their families an uncommon combination of nearly year-round fieldwork and a refuge from the dangers of urban blight and life in the borderlands. This construction of southeast Georgia as a land of opportunities was quite surprising to me. Nonetheless, the consistency and strength with which the ten women articulated this perspective was undeniable and has forced me to re-examine my understanding of my adopted home.

Manuela:	... I just wouldn't want to go down there [to Texas]. There's too many gangs they talk about. A lot of people here, even students here in school – their parents they bring them down here to Georgia to North Carolina to Florida to get them away from all that violence. A lot of them they either migrate because they want to take their kids away from gangs or they migrate because they really need the work and the money to help them pay bills.
(Manuela Lopez 1 st solo 6/13/02, 138)	

The rapid growth of the region's Mexican heritage population because of these factors opened up new doors for the participants and their families. Thus, despite the fact that they all arrived in the region as impoverished migrant fieldworkers, each family had a number of members who had

stepped out of menial field labor to become crewleaders, managers, entrepreneurs, and educators.

How Have They Asserted their Agency as Educators in the Public Schools?

For the most part, as would be expected of poorly paid, low prestige paraprofessionals, the participants in this study did not present themselves as outspoken advocates for systemic change in the public schools of the Vidalia onion region. Aside from the actions of Ignacia Marquez Johnson toward the end of her time working in the schools, few of the women ever described actions that challenged the power and authority of traditional leaders in their school.

Nonetheless, there are many roles for educators that can have significant impacts upon the lives of individual students without causing systemic change. All but one of the participants started her work in the local schools as a migrant paraprofessional. Thus, in describing what they can accomplish in the schools, the women often focused upon the two officially sanctioned roles that feature prominently in the migrant paraprofessional job description: tutoring and translation. Additionally though, they spoke of less tangible function that they play in the school, roles that would likely be overlooked in a simplistic cost-benefit analysis of their work. Foremost among these are those they maintain as role models for their migrant and Mexican heritage students. Frequently they are the only Latino or former migrant on the entire school staff. As such they serve as a singular source of pride and inspiration toward higher achievement for their students. The life of labor migrancy socializes children into a world of seemingly limited options and pervasive ignorance about what else the world may have to offer. The mere presence of a Latino or former migrant educator in a school can allow Mexican heritage migrant children to see opportunities that they never knew existed – much like the participants themselves had doors opened to them by their mentors.

Crucial to this transformation is the use by the participants of their own life stories to establish common ground and trust with their students.

Katia: I can do better things with them [my students] because I understand how they feel. Because I've passed through that – I've been through that. There's another person that hasn't been migrating around, going to different schools, living what the kids are living through – I mean how are they going to understand? Because sometimes there are students that would just sit there and not do the work and you would go up to them – what's wrong, do you understand and they just wouldn't care. If you keep talking to them, tell them a little bit about how you lived when you were migrating and stuff like that, then they start opening to you. Then they will say well she has been through that and she understands and she's here, she graduated from school and that's what keeps them going on. With a person that hasn't been through what they have been, they are just have nothing else to do – just make them do their job. I can help them out a lot.

(Katia Garcia 1st solo 6/13/02, 594-597)

The participants repeatedly told of how stories of their migrant childhoods afford them a level of credibility and an ability to inspire that someone without their background would likely struggle to achieve with a population of migrant students. Weiss (1994) similarly found that the paraprofessionals in his study “utilize their special knowledge of these children to gain their trust” (340).

A second collection of roles that the participants spoke of were their relationships with school staff, teachers, and administrators. The participants presented the value of their knowledge of the culture and language of Mexican heritage migrancy in helping teachers and other staff members understand their migrant students. This ability to “teach the teachers” was constructed by the participants as a tool to alter attitudes one teacher at a time, one situation at a time.

Berta: Yeah, that's what you have to explain to them [the teachers]. To them I mean to a lot of these teachers you know they think like oh they [the migrant students] are just doing it on purpose, they just want to get on our nerves. But it's not so much that. You really have to explain.

Manuela: Teach them the culture.

Berta: Whenever the kids don't come to school – okay well what, how are they going to get an education being out there – but listen you know it's not because of their choice – you've got to understand. And then once you tell them, it's not that you go and tell everybody the kids' confidentiality – it's just that if it's going to help them, tell them. Sometimes when you explain to them how their situation is then they're like – okay, so that explains why this and that explains why that.

(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 185-187)

On the same case-by-case basis, the participants described negotiating between their conflicting roles as advocates for students and facilitators of schooling. The participants' positioning between and on the margins of multiple communities of practice means that, on a regular basis, they are called upon to bridge gaps and negotiate settlements across cultural, linguistic, and political divides. They have developed the cultural capital to know when and what to tell school officials about their migrant students in order to ameliorate the relationships between the children, their families and the school.

However, looking across the corpus it appears that many of the participants are constructing roles and identities in the schools that distance them from the experiences of their youth. Repeatedly the women presented institutional perspectives reflecting the “deficit thinking” (Valencia and Suzuki 2001) and “benevolent racist” (Villenas 1996) discourse of the local educational community. This discourse and the thinking that produces it focuses on the differences between mainstream and Mexican heritage lives and frames these differences not in terms of the systemic inequalities that underpin them, but in terms of a need for remediation toward Anglo, middle-class norms.

Angelica: Yeah because there's a lot of Hispanics that go to school and there's also a lot of them that drop out.

Dominga: I know some of them don't drop out themselves, the parents –

Angelica: – make them –

Dominga: – make them drop out. Either because they are not doing well in school or because – mostly the guys, they don’t take time to study – they don’t really care, they just go there to have fun. Because I’ve noticed that. Maybe because their parents need their help you know with . . .

Angelica: When working – more income.

(Angelica Marquéz & Dominga Ramirez 2nd pair 6/28/02, 293-297)

These deficit-framed descriptions of today’s migrant parents contrast sharply with the same participants’ laudatory presentations of their own parents. As shown in Chapter 6, the ten women interviewed for this study generally constructed positive identities and roles for their parents and families, describing their homes in terms comparable to how Villenas’ participants “reaffirmed Latino family lives through their life histories and narratives about family education” and “constructed themselves as ‘educated people’” (2001, 12). My participants repeated portrayed their parents as possessors of important and practical knowledge of life, even if they had not gone far in school.

The seeming inability of many of the women to project their own valuable experiences as youths onto those of their students parallels the type of blaming of one’s own disempowered membership group that has been described by Afro-centric scholars as “internalized racism” (hooks, 1995, 119; Fanon, 1967) and by postcolonial theorists as the “colonized psyche” (Gilpin, 2002, 192; Memmi, 1965). In both cases, victims of oppression, in order to succeed within the oppressive social structure around them, discard their own values and adopt and internalize the attitudes and discourses that underpin their own disempowerment. In this case, the discourse pattern presents academic failure as “something kids [and parents] do, as different from something that is done to them” (McDermott 1987, 363). The emergence of this discourse pattern among the participants points out the ironic role of the school in providing “too much schooling” (Shujaa, 1994) of these women in a dominant culture that devalues their own background.

As teachers from minority backgrounds, they are expected to draw on their cultural resources to meet the educational need of minority students, and many were hired for this very reason. The irony stems from the fact that those very resources were delegitimized by schools across their years as students. In some cases, minority students who became educators minimized, devalued, or negated their own cultural backgrounds and shifted their values to match those represented by the schools. (Galindo and Olguin 1996, 29)

Thus, the very institution that needs the women's bilingual and bicultural skills is the institution that undermined the women's own self-concept. As will be developed later in this chapter, this delegitimization of these women's lived experiences and cultural funds of knowledge has negative consequences for both them and for their ability to serve the educational needs of their Mexican heritage and migrant students.

What have they Gained and Lost and How do they Relate to the Mexican Heritage Community?

The shift by many of the participants toward the institutional perspective of the school seems to be particularly notable regarding issues of parental support for today's migrant children and assertions of continued prejudice against Mexican heritage migrants in this area. Despite the valorization of their own parents and the educational sacrifices (i.e.: dropping out of school to work) made by older siblings in their own families, the women often did not transfer this valorization onto the very similar choices of their current students. The theme of blaming contemporary migrant parents for the struggles of their children was quite common across the interviews.

Berta:	... A lot of these kids, they don't even know because they're not given the opportunity. You know they're put down all the time you know.
Manuela:	Well at our school, they are given the opportunity. I can't say they aren't.
Berta:	No, I'm [talking] about the parents.
Manuela:	They parents, yeah, well some parents are . . .
Berta:	They don't believe in them, they don't want to bother – okay you get an education, fine, if you don't, that's also fine.
(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2 nd pair 7/6/02, 122-126)	

The participants did not present the possibility that today's students might be learning the same childhood lessons of fieldwork as an incentive to achieve in school that they had learned as children. Nonetheless, as their own narratives developed and as substantiated by the work of Lopez (2001), this use of the lesson of the field as a means to motivate a child is a common type of migrant parent involvement in education.

Similarly, in their descriptions of the choice of contemporary migrants to drop out, they generally did not recognize that the choice might be a familial choice to sacrifice the educational hopes of an older sibling in order to give a younger sibling a better opportunity to complete their schooling. This prioritization of the familial economy over an individual's earning potential among Latino immigrant families has been described by Stark (1991), Wortham (1997), and Hamann (1997).

Thus, it appears that as the ten women in this study have moved into their roles as educators, they have lost sight of some of the familial solidarity that migrancy supports and requires. They seem to have taken on more individualistic identities, identities that are more comprehensible to and more strongly supported by the dominant culture of American schools (Spring 1988; Gray, 1994; contrast with Levinson, 2001). This contradiction merits both further research and an active effort to confront the women's failure to make connections with own experiences, as suggested by Galindo and his collaborators (1995, 1996).

The shift away from recognizing the communal or familial perspective was particularly ironic in that the most of the participants valorized the family unity they recall from their childhood. Migrant families live and work side-by-side, affording them a daily closeness largely unknown in middle class industrial and post-industrial society. When the participants stepped out of the fields and into the schools, they left behind the support and unity that continual contact

with their parents, siblings, and other relatives afforded them.

Scott: What were the best things about that work?

Ester: That I get to work with my family and we actually had the opportunity to make a living, you know. An honest living and not doing drugs or not doing anything illegal. I always had like a *una meta* – how many onions we’re going to cut today – we had like a goal, you know. And we always worked in a group and I think that’s the best thing and everything because all these families always worked to better themselves as a family and everything goes for the family. To buy a better truck, to buy better things, better furniture, everything is for the whole family.

(Ester Fuentes 2nd solo 6/11/02, 223-224)

The theme of familial closeness made it clear that something of value had been lost by the participants in their transition from the fields and into the classroom. Nonetheless, the participants often seemed unable to consistently recognize the value of their students’ familial ties and how those ties may be driving decisions regarding their schooling.

In addition, another diachronic inconsistency in interpretation emerged between the participants’ own stories of prejudice upon arrival in the local schools a generation ago and their relative lack of empathy for their current students’ comparable complaints. Ironically, their narratives recreated some of the dismissiveness toward racial, linguistic, and cultural prejudice that they recalled as so disturbing in their own childhoods. Thus, it appears that the move from the fields and into the schools has shifted the participants’ perspective upon migrancy such that they did not consistently validate, valorize, and defend the actions and perspectives of today’s migrant families.

What are their Visions for the Future?

As mentioned above, few of the participants presented themselves as agents for systemic change in the schools of the Vidalia onion region. Many argued that the schools of today are much better than the schools they attended when they arrived in the area. Thus, most of their

suggestions for continued improvement were generally limited to smaller-scale initiatives that would leave the structure of the schools largely intact.

As the logical extension of the “blame the parents” discourse, a common idea for the future was a desire to reach out to migrant and Mexican heritage parents in order to gain their cooperation, participation, and support in the schooling of their children. However, as described above, the conception of parental involvement seemingly supported by the participants echoed the institutional expectations of the school more strongly than the personal experiences of the participants themselves. The women tended to call for contemporary migrant parents to conform to “socially sanctioned ... traditional involvement roles” (López 2001, 417). López elaborates regarding these roles:

Within educational discourse, parent involvement is generally understood in terms of specific practices such as bake sales, fundraisers, PTA/PTO, and “back to school” nights. It connotes volunteering in schools, attending school activities, as well as participating on parent advisory councils and/or school governance boards. Parent involvement also refers to activities performed in the home to supplement classroom instruction, such as reviewing student homework. (López 2001, 416-417)

Unfortunately, for a myriad of cultural, economic, linguistic, and logistical reasons, migrant parents cannot conform to all these expectations. A recognition of the value of what migrant parents can and do contribute to the schooling of their children would be a valuable way to challenge traditional parental involvement expectations. Discussions with migrant parents about how to best support their children’s learning in school are warranted.

Additionally, the participants spoke of the need for schools to create inviting opportunities for their students to participate in life outside the classroom. Extracurricular activities and sports programs targeting Latinos and supported by after-school transportation were a focal point. The narrative proposed that such efforts would encourage migrant students to stay engaged in school and thereby slow their drop out rate.

The high Mexican heritage migrant drop out rate stands as a primary obstacle to another objective. As noted earlier, the ten women consistently valorized their own roles in the schools and thus strongly supported efforts to increase the number of school staff, teachers, and administrators from their background. However, the participants recognized that many more of their current students need to graduate from school if they are to have the opportunity to become educators.

Scott: What can we do to get more Mexican-American educators in the schools here?
 Nanci: Well, if you are planning to have the population that was raised here in south Georgia or the population that came to South Georgia get more into the educational part, you first there will be just to have them actually getting into college and we are just now getting the first kids to graduate.

(Nanci Alvarez 2nd solo 6/12/02, 295-296)

Additionally, returning to the theme of migrancy as a state of ignorance about other possible lives, the participants suggested that their students needed to have the possibility of becoming an educator explicitly presented to them so that the students could come to envision themselves at the front of a classroom, rather than at the back of a tractor.

Berta: ...I don't know why she wouldn't want to be a teacher, maybe because we have not programmed our kids to look into a teacher education career. Like I said, we just have to program them. Tell them – just like there was this lady that came from the Georgia Southern to do educational – to educate them about the careers and help – medical or whatever. And their eyes were opened up to different – the different positions that are there – the different titles. It's not just being a doctor, it's not just being a nurse, I mean there's so much. There's so much that it's into the whole medical area thing. So teachers is the same way, I mean here we need ESOL teachers you know we need all this. But you just have to be introduced to them. Let them see the real picture and I'm sure that – especially like the kids from high school that are ready to graduate, let them see all that. I think just because they have not been introduced into the possibilities...

(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 116)

There was a strong consensus among the participants about the need for teachers in the schools to receive staff development targeting the needs of migrants. Although one woman spoke of the need for training in ELL methods and materials, most focused upon the need to

challenge the attitudes of teachers by presenting the struggles faced by Mexican heritage and migrant students. The objective of this effort was frequently described as “patience” on the part of the teachers. In this way, they emphasized the need for teachers to recognize the complexity of the migrant experience and the difficulty of learning another language.

Scott:	Say tomorrow you were superintendent of the schools, oh gosh, [of this] county, what would you do to change the schools, if you were the boss?
Yadira:	One of the – like I said – the teachers have to know and see where the kids come from. That’s one of the things I would do – the very first thing – is take some of these parents out as a recruiter I guess – I would take them out and show them where some of these kids live.
Scott:	Take out some of the teachers, you mean?
Yadira:	Yeah. Just take them out there to some of the trailer parks and show them where these kids live. That’s the very first thing I would do.
Scott:	What would you want them to see out there?
Yadira:	Just the living conditions. You know be more patient with some of these kids. I’m not saying they’re bad, but I think it would open their eyes a little more.
(Yadira Garcia 1 st solo 6/13/02, 191-196)	

Finally, a few of the participants suggested that the attitudes of some school staff members were beyond redemption. These teachers, staff, or administrators, it was suggested, should be fired and replaced, preferably by new Mexican heritage migrant educators.

Recommendations for Policy

As discussed in Chapter 1 and earlier in this chapter, it is my hope that this dissertation can serve to spark action to improve the state of education in the Vidalia onion region for Mexican heritage students and all students. As such, I have compiled a list of educational policy recommendations that emerge from the issues and suggestions developed during the preceding chapters. Some of these are relatively simple reforms of existing initiatives and programs. Others are large undertakings, the most daunting of which may not involve the establishment of a

new institution or program, but the struggle to shift attitudes and broaden understandings across historically established lines of race, class, and gender. My policy recommendations include:

1) A general call for socio-economic justice for migrant farmworkers and their children clearly results from any fair examination of these stories. Families in the richest country in the world should not have to sacrifice one child's education in order facilitate the education of another. The people who put food on our tables should not do so for sub-poverty wages that prevent them from providing the same food to their own children. (The basic economic injustices faced by migrant farmworkers and the trials encountered by their children are thoroughly described in Chapters 1, 2, 3 and especially 6.)

2) A state-wide initiative to remove the most damaging and nativistic English-only policies from Georgia DOE documents and practice. (See the discussion between Manuela Lopez and Berta Perez, for descriptions of how state DOE English-only policies negatively impact both classroom instruction and cooperation between instructional staff members.)

3) A state-wide initiative to recognize the necessity for and value of bilingualism and biculturalism and a concomitant change in state educational policy. (See "Participants' Own Roles in the Schools" for understandings of the value of bilingual and bicultural skills in the schools. "A Land of Opportunities" discusses the economic value of bilingualism in the larger Vidalia community.) As shown by the experience of the Georgia Project in Dalton, efforts at moving institutional policies and transforming attitudes, such as these two recommendations entail, are complex and unpredictable in the outcomes (Hamann 1999). Nonetheless, they merit attention, for without these changes, the immigrant and English language learning students of this state will continue to be caught between nativistic politics and educational best practice.

4) A state-level commitment to fund the post-secondary education of Mexican heritage high school graduates, whether or not they have legal papers. (See “Initiatives Regarding Staff: More Latinos” regarding the value of and need for home-grown Latino educators in rural Georgia.)

5) The creation of a career ladder program, such as the Latino Teacher Project at the University of Southern California (Genzuk and Baca 1998), for women such as my participants. This program would not be limited to certification of teachers, but additionally allow them to choose related careers in social work, as many of them stated a greater interest in such work. This effort could easily use the new federal “No Child Left Behind” requirement for 2 years of college education for federally-funded paraprofessionals as a spring-board for these women to pursue a 4-year degree. (Again, see “Initiatives Regarding Staff: More Latinos.” However, note that many of the women did not necessarily want to become classroom teachers, preferring instead to pursue a role in the schools more akin to social work.)

6) The parallel creation of a cohort or community of support for these women so that they can share ideas and support with each other. This community cannot be expected to emerge from within the women’s employment in the schools or their occasional meetings via migrant education. In both of these forums, their positioning as disempowered minority women are stifling. In particular, their occasional gatherings at migrant education meetings generally ignore and devalue their knowledge (Beck and Alleksaht-Snider 2002). Instead, the new forum I am suggesting would upon their strengths and positionings as exceptionally successful Mexican heritage women. Out of such a forum might emerge an awareness of the power of their voices when brought together as a group. (Particularly salient to this recommendation is the data presented “Disconnections from Today’s Migrants?”)

7) In both the career ladder program and in the women's support group, stories of their childhood gauntlets and family choices should be validated and emphasized in order that they can develop counter narratives to the scripts of "blaming the parents" and "dismissing prejudice." Galindo and Olguin (1996) call this process one of "reclaiming bilingual educators' cultural resources" from the devaluating of mainstream schooling. My participants and other teachers of color need to learn to use their stories as a means to develop their own understandings and standpoints on their lives. Galindo and Olguin (1996) suggest:

Minority teachers who fail to reflect on the results of the formal education that devalued their cultural selves can present a more rigid transmission of dominant cultural values than that perpetuated by some non-minority teachers. Minority teachers ... become convinced that minority students will not succeed unless they reject some of their cultural resources for resources and values advocated by school culture. (37)

This image of a Mexican heritage teacher struggling with internalized racism as potentially more problematic than a majority-background teacher provides a strong caution against an uncritical approach to minority teacher education. From this perspective, it is essential that any effort to build a paraprofessional to teacher career ladder program incorporate a great deal of autobiographical reflection whereby the students (participants such as mine) can do the intensive self-examination exemplified by Galindo and Olguin's participants. Although this may at times be uncomfortable, if the participants are to be successful as teachers and advocates for the next generation of Mexican heritage migrants in this region, they cannot afford to forget or set aside the lessons of their youth. They must learn to recognize that today's migrant families face some of the same difficult choices about how to support the family's economic survival at the same time as they support their children's education. (This recommendation is also based upon the data presented in "Disconnections from Today's Migrants?" and the discussion thereof earlier in this chapter vis-à-vis the question of internalized racism.)

8) The institution of a program of faculty development in the local schools based upon the “funds of knowledge” model (Gonzalez, et al. 1995). This would directly address the participants’ call for a greater understanding among local teachers of the home lives of their students and hopefully spark an attitudinal change toward greater patience for migrant and ELL children. (Moll, et al.’s program is an elaboration and more positive (non-deficit) framing of the ideas for staff development suggested by some participants.)

9) In addition, a systematic program of teacher education regarding ELL development, methodology and materials would likely assist all the local schools in supporting the needs of their Mexican heritage and migrant students. (This suggestion echoes the concerns and ideas developed by the only certified ESOL teacher in the study, Ester Fuentes.)

10) The establishment of school extracurricular and sports programs with facilitated transportation that will attract Mexican heritage students and a mixture of local black and white students. (See “Initiatives regarding Parents and Students.”)

11) A program to encourage the U.S. DOE OCR to fulfill its legal responsibilities to investigate the size and quality of ESOL programs and the preparation of ESOL teachers in the Vidalia onion region. (This is suggested by the statistics presented in Chapter 2 and the concerns, outlined in Chapter 6, about ESOL instruction expressed by some of the participants.)

12) Asking OCR to investigate individual teachers and principal at the school described by Ignacia Marquéz Johnson and Dominga Ramirez.

13) An effort to support communication across racial and ethnic lines among today’s students, especially between African Americans and Mexican heritage students. Concerns about black-brown tensions have both historical and contemporary justifications (Meier and Stewart 1991; Anderson 1992; Martinez 1993; Rodriguez 1994; West, de Alva and Shorris 1996; Piatt

1997; McDonald and Beck 2000). In this context, Manuela's vignette of a black student informally teaching African American history to a group of Mexican heritage classmates is both beautiful and powerful.

Manuela: ... this guy, I mean, like you say – real nice, well dressed and real you know normal – not very high, but just average grades – he said listen honey, you may have come from the poorest country, but we lived here – our ancestors lived here in the United States and they had to go to black schools and then there were white schools and we could not go. We had to drive on the bus and you know he started talking about – he knew his history real well.

Scott: This is a black kid?

Manuela: A black kid that was telling the Hispanic kids. He was telling them all about all this and it kind of opened up their eyes and like – shoot, you had it bad too, you know. And that kind of opened up a good relationship between the black kids and the Hispanics.

Scott: At your school?

Manuela: Yes. It could have been other schools, pero it was just that situation and it was there on break, it was not even in a classroom. . .

(Manuela Lopez & Berta Perez 2nd pair 7/6/02, 260-264)

It is only through such communication and development of mutual understandings that the emergence of black-brown tensions, as have been seen in many other parts of our nation, can be avoided. Such an effort is not easily implemented. However the work of the Teaching for Tolerance program of the Southern Poverty Law Center provides numerous examples of successful initiatives of this type (Teaching Tolerance Project 1997).

Recommendations for Further Study

The elements of the following list of topics for further study emerge from two sources: pre-existing limitations upon the study that were recognized before the gathering of data and new questions that have arisen during the data collection, coding, analysis and writing processes. Take together, these suggestions lay out a course for research that can easily occupy me and other interested researchers for many years as the long-term consequences of the Latino influx

into the rural South play out in the schools and communities of this region.

First and foremost, I have explored the limitations of my perspective in Chapter 3. Although I have had some forms of insider knowledge to help inform this study, I am not an insider to the local Mexican heritage migrant community. Thus, I believe that is important for me to reiterate that the conclusions that I have drawn from this study are almost certainly different from those that would be developed by another researcher from that community. For this reason, I especially welcome critiques and reexaminations of my data and conclusions by Mexican heritage migrants whose backgrounds parallel those of my participants. In my role within the academy, I am already playing a part in helping such insiders gain access to the academic credentials they need to speak with their own voice and be heard. A collaborative extension and reexamination of my data with Mexican heritage migrants would likely be very fruitful for everyone.

New Data Sources

There are a variety of different data sources that could be added to this study to enhance and broaden its scope and perspective. Some of the most interesting perspectives to add to the study would include:

- 1) Focus group discussions about their life stories and current work among the participants, possibly as part of the support group building process suggested above. An especially challenging and potentially very fruitful task for me to take on with this group would be to present this study to them for their reading and responses.
- 2) Additional oral history interviews with Mexican heritage men and women, particularly drop outs, whose lives otherwise parallel my participants' lives.

3) Additional oral history interviews with African American and Anglo educators whose lives otherwise parallel my participants' lives. These educators, both black and white, would have been raised in this region during the beginnings of the Latino in-migration. They would now work as educators of the rapidly growing Mexican heritage population. However, as shown by P. Clark (1999) in his attempt to study the Mexican heritage influx into a rural North Carolina town, gaining the cooperation of local African Americans can be quite difficult, particularly for a white man such as myself. Thus, I would likely seek local African American (and possibly local white) collaborators for this project.

4) Additional oral history interviews or focus group discussions with today's Mexican heritage students and their parents.

5) Formal ethnographic observations in today's schools and classrooms in the Vidalia onion region.

New Research Questions

There are a number of important research questions raised by this study that could be addressed more adequately using the data sources that would emerge for the suggested studies outlined above.

1) To what extent is the participants' perception that schools and Mexican heritage education in the Vidalia region have improved since their childhood tied to their own need to assert self-efficacy? Furthermore, even if the schools have improved, what roles have the women in this study played in that improvement?

2) Does the class status of my participants separate them from the majority of local Latinos and allow them to occupy a less racialized identity?

3) What is the nature of the discourse of local, predominantly white, teachers about race, class, and gender? Is the discourse of “benevolent racism” developed by Villenas (1996) in rural North Carolina and adopted for this study an accurate portrayal of what is happening in rural southeast Georgia?

4) What would the women in this study make of Villenas’ concept of “benevolent racism?” How would they make sense of Villenas’ ideas and the connection I have asserted between benevolent racism and my participant’s engagement in the “deficit thinking” about today’s migrant families? How would my participants respond to being presented with the gap between their narratives about their own families and their discursive construction of current migrant parents and students?

5) What of Delpit’s (1995) argument that the women in this study should focus upon helping migrant children adapt to and consciously master the culture of power in the schools? In contrast with my analysis, Delpit might assert that the participants are helping the students by moving them away from accusation and commiseration about the school as a racist institution.

6) To what extent are my participants seeking to assimilate toward local norms of whiteness? To what extent is the local white community more accepting of Latino access to white privilege (McIntosh 1990) than African American access to the same social benefits?

7) To what extent have these participants seemingly adopted the range of Southern white female behaviors, discourses, and dress? To what extent is this shift in outward appearance and behavior prerequisite to moving beyond the level of the paraprofessional and into more empowering roles? This perspective on this study is suggested by Wright (2000).

8) What is the nature of my participants' relationships with local Blacks on a daily basis? How do they see themselves vis-à-vis the largest "minority" group in the region?

9) What do African Americans of the rural South think of the new Latino population? Where do they see Mexican heritage immigrants fitting into the region racial and class order? Are Latinos truly taking jobs that no Americans are willing to do anyway? Do they see Latinos as potential allies in their continued struggles for equity and justice? Or, is one of their views, as suggested by critical race theorists (Delgado and Stephancic 2001) and economic studies of immigration (Borjas, 1999) that Latinos have been used by the moneyed elites of this region to reduce labor costs and undermine the social and political gains of African Americans during the Civil Rights Era?

10) What attitudes, identities, and understandings are being developed by today's Mexican heritage migrant students in the Vidalia region? In particular, do they perceive a higher level of prejudice directed against them (as I have speculated) than the participants in this study were willing or able to acknowledge? Is there evidence of a nascent Chicano identity among these students, based in political and cultural "brown pride" as distinct from whiteness or blackness (San Miguel 2001)?

11) How do the understandings of the relevance of legacy of the South's history of racialized oppression compare and contrast with the understandings of comparable Mexican heritage women in other locales in the South (i.e.: Siler City, N.C.; Gainesville, GA.; Oneonta, AL) where nativist, anti-immigrant rallies have been organized by the Ku Klux Klan and similar groups? (Atlanta Constitution 1986; E. Beck 2000; Cuadros 2000; Duke 2002; Mohl & Knudsen 2000; Villenas 2001) How do my participants differ from comparable women in Dalton, GA. where one of the most progressive and multicultural responses to Latinos in the South has been implemented? (Hamann 1999)

12) In what other forums or contexts do my participants have agency? The home? The church? Community organizations? Could it be that they are able to more clearly articulate strong criticisms of the schools when in a different context conversing with a different interlocutor, particularly one whose identity is more comparable to their own?

13) To what extent can the status of Mexican heritage education in the rural South be understood as a function of their class status as predominantly labor migrants? To what extent can it be understood as a function of their membership in a historically racialized group? To what extent does their relatively novel status as immigrant and migrant ELLs in the South create a new dynamic distinguishable from regional histories of race and class inequity in the South?

14) Do the discourses displayed by the participants that valorize and emphasize their past gauntlets while discounting the prejudices and trials facing today's Mexican heritage students find a parallel in the understandings and life stories of African American teachers who can recall segregation and desegregation?

It is my hope to pursue projects such as these upon the completion of this dissertation, quite possibly using a more collaborative form of research that will bring local educators of color into the process of data collection, analysis and writing.

Conclusion

Two generations from now we do not know what the people of rural southeast Georgia will look like or what their dialects and accents will sound like. We cannot know what they will eat or where they will go home for the holidays. However, I am certain that the Vidalia region will be a much different place than it is today. Moreover, the Vidalia of 2050 would likely be incomprehensibly different from the Vidalia of 1950. Much of this difference will be

attributable to the presence of Mexican heritage people, people whose roots in this place may not be as deep as those of local blacks and whites, but whose contributions to the local community, culture, and economy are already substantial and growing each year.

My dissertation started out from a desire to definitively understand and explain how this demographic and social change had happened, what it meant, and where it was likely to end up. The document you have just read does not accomplish any of these goals, for the definitive study of Vidalia's Mexican heritage influx still waits to be written. Instead, I hope to have provided a set of snapshots from the perspectives of some of the Mexican heritage pioneers in the schools of this region.

From their stories and from the process of writing this dissertation I have learned a great deal about how my participants understand themselves and their places in the world. I have a better understanding of what motivates them in their work as educators in this region's schools. I have a clearer sense of the constraints and challenges that they face each day as they negotiate and bridge the treacherous political, cultural, and linguistic gaps between Latino students and parents and local teachers and administrators. Most importantly, I have learned a great deal of humility with regard to my sense of what is and is not significant in understanding the lives of others. Despite my years of experience working as an advocate for Mexican heritage families in the rural South, as the contrasts between the conclusions in this chapter and the discussion in Chapter 3 show, my ten participants had much to teach me. The new understandings and interpretations that their narratives have helped me construct are directly relevant to my continuing work in academia and the schools of this region. Moreover, the fact that I still have so much more to learn clearly marks this document as a beginning rather than an end.

Endnotes for Chapter 7

¹ Saenz' use of the descriptor "Mexican-origin" is synonymous with my use of "Mexican heritage" throughout this dissertation.

² Tinley (2000) falls into this category, but since her findings are most relevant to the work of Suarez-Orozco, it will be addressed in the next section of this chapter.

³ This is a phrase I coined.

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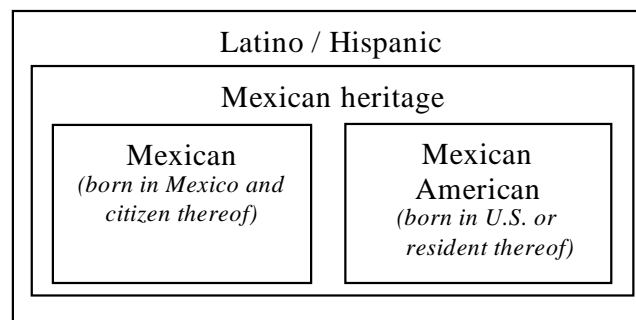
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APPENDIX

Appendix to Chapter 1: Mexican Heritage Labels

In the genre of qualitative research regarding Latinos, Hispanics, Mexican Americans, and Chicanos, it has become *de rigueur* for researchers to clarify their choice of label regarding their subjects. This is my disclaimer.

In the course of this dissertation I will shift between a number of different labels for the people whom I am studying. I understand these labels to be structured in a hierarchical manner, with larger categories including a number of smaller ones.



At the top of this hierarchy are the general labels Latino and Hispanic, which reference all residents of the United States who are of a Spanish-speaking background. Latino is often preferred over Hispanic by educated Latinos because of the fact that Hispanic was created by the U.S. government and echoes of the derogatory term "spic." Nonetheless, among the community I study and generally across the Southeast, many people prefer to be called Hispanics, possibly because it evokes a connection to European Spain rather than third-world Latin America, possibly because of their discomfort with their perception that Latino is a more politicized and

potentially radical label. This second possibility is supported by commentaries by my participants.

In the course of this dissertation I will treat these labels as synonyms while using Hispanic where appropriate with regards to governmental statistics collected using that label. (I will similarly move back and forth between African American and Black as synonyms).

Underneath this category are labels that connect to the national origin of different Latino / Hispanic peoples: Cuban-heritage, Puerto Rican-heritage, etc. The largest Latino / Hispanic group both in the U.S and in rural southeast Georgia, the site of my study, are people of Mexican heritage, people who can trace their ancestry back to the lands controlled by the Mexican nation before the Mexican American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848.

Many politicized scholars, artists, and activists have, since the late 1960s, asserted the importance of a Chicano / Chicana label and identity that can include some, if not all, of U.S. residents of Mexican-heritage. This label is usually understood to be voluntary, a label that individuals can choose to adopt for political and cultural reasons. Generally this label is rejected by people of Mexican heritage in the southeast, oftentimes because of its radical overtones.

Within the category of people of Mexican-heritage lies at least one more important distinction, between Mexicans and Mexican Americans. In much of the research literature this distinction is based upon birthplace with Mexican having been born in Mexico and Mexican Americans having been born in the U.S. Based upon my research though, I believe it is useful to open the category of Mexican American slightly wider, to include all persons of Mexican-heritage, born in the U.S. or otherwise, who have permanently settled in the U.S. and have no intention of returning to Mexico. Note that these definitions leave a realistic gray area between

Mexican and Mexican American – a space for Generation 1½ to negotiate their personal and national identities.

With this labeling structure in mind, it is important to point out that this is not in full accordance with the local parlance of the region I am studying. In the Vidalia onion region nearly all immigrants are Latinos / Hispanics and nearly all of these are of Mexican heritage, and nearly all of these arrived in the region as migrant farmworkers. Thus it is quite common to hear a conflation of all these labels such that *immigrant = Latino = Hispanic = Mexican = migrant* for many people in the Vidalia region, sometimes even in the speech of local, settled Mexican Americans. The terms Mexican heritage, Mexican American, and Chicano are not widely used in everyday speech in this region. Thus, although I have clarified my use of these terms, it is unreasonable to expect comparable clarity for my participants or other local sources.

For a broader perspective on questions of labels for Latinos and Hispanics in our nation, see Dávila (2001) and Oboler (1995).

Appendix to Chapter 3:
Inequitable Educational Outcomes in the Eight Focal Counties, 1994-2001

APPLING COUNTY Averages: 1994-1995 to 2000-2001	
Black % of	Hispanic % of
Retainees: 40.2%	Retainees: 3.4%
All Grads.: 29.4% <i>Enrollment: 29.3%</i>	<i>Enrollment: 2.3%</i>
C. Prep. Grads.: 16.4% Certified Pers.: 11.8%	All Grads.: 1.2% C. Prep. Grads.: 0.8% Certified Pers.: 0.1%

BULLOCH COUNTY Averages: 1994-1995 to 2000-2001	
Black % of	Hispanic % of
Retainees: 57.0%	
<i>Enrollment: 38.8%</i> All Grads.: 35.5%	Retainees: 0.6% <i>Enrollment: 0.6%</i>
C. Prep. Grads.: 20.4% Certified Pers.: 13.6%	All Grads.: 0.4% C. Prep. Grads.: 0.2% Certified Pers.: 0.1%

CANDLER COUNTY Averages: 1994-1995 to 2000-2001	
Black % of	Hispanic % of
Retainees: 45.4%	Retainees: 10.5%
All Grads.: 37.9% <i>Enrollment: 37.8%</i>	<i>Enrollment: 7.1%</i>
C. Prep. Grads.: 23.8% Certified Pers.: 22.0%	All Grads.: 3.5% C. Prep. Grads.: 2.9% Certified Pers.: 0.0%

EVANS COUNTY Averages: 1994-1995 to 2000-2001	
Black % of	Hispanic % of
Retainees: 59.7%	Retainees: 4.5%
<i>Enrollment: 45.9%</i>	<i>Enrollment: 2.6%</i>
All Grads.: 38.6% C. Prep. Grads.: 28.9% Certified Pers.: 10.6%	All Grads.: 0.0% C. Prep. Grads.: 0.0% Certified Pers.: 0.0%

MONTGOMERY COUNTY Averages: 1994-1995 to 2000-2001	
Black % of	Hispanic % of
Retainees: 36.5% <i>Enrollment: 36.4%</i> All Grads.: 36.3%	<i>Enrollment: 2.5%</i>
C. Prep. Grads.: 28.7%	Retainees: 1.6% All Grads.: 1.5% C. Prep. Grads.: 0.9% Certified Pers.: 0.9%
Certified Pers.: 16.1%	

PIERCE COUNTY Averages: 1994-1995 to 2000-2001	
Black % of	Hispanic % of
Retainees: 16.5%	Retainees: 2.2%
<i>Enrollment: 14.2%</i> All Grads.: 13.7%	<i>Enrollment: 1.7%</i>
C. Prep. Grads.: 12.0%	All Grads.: 1.1%
Certified Pers.: 7.7%	Certified Pers.: 0.7% C. Prep. Grads.: 0.5%

TATTNALL COUNTY Averages: 1994-1995 to 2000-2001	
Black % of	Hispanic % of
Retainees: 45.6%	Retainees: 10.4%
<i>Enrollment: 36.5%</i> All Grads.: 34.1%	<i>Enrollment: 7.7%</i>
C. Prep. Grads.: 24.7%	C. Prep. Grads.: 3.0% All Grads.: 2.2% Certified Pers.: 0.4%
Certified Pers.: 8.5%	

TOOMBS COUNTY Averages: 1994-1995 to 2000-2001	
Black % of	Hispanic % of
Retainees: 27.2%	Retainees: 20.1%
<i>Enrollment: 22.7%</i> All Grads.: 21.7%	<i>Enrollment: 11.3%</i>
C. Prep. Grads.: 15.2%	All Grads.: 3.3% C. Prep. Grads.: 3.3% Certified Pers.: 0.2%
Certified Pers.: 6.9%	

ALL EIGHT FOCAL COUNTIES	
Averages: 1994-1995 to 2000-2001	
Black % of	Hispanic % of
Retainees	Retainees
Enrollment	Enrollment
All Graduates	All Graduates
College Prep. Grads.	College Prep. Grads.
Certified Personnel	Certified Personnel

(Georgia Department of Education 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002)

Appendix to Chapters 3, 6 and 7: Transcription Conventions Used

<i>Symbol or Style</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
.	end of sentence or phrase
?	rising intonation at the end of a sentence or phrase indicating a question or uncertainty
...	interruption by interlocutor or other factor <i>or</i> indicates the turn continues beyond what is included
—	brief self-interruption
(pause)	a longer self-interruption or wait for interlocutor turn
(laughs)	description of non-verbal behavior
(indecipherable)	section of the tape is doubtful or indecipherable
<i>[talking over each other]</i>	section of the tape is unclear or indecipherable due to multiple, overlapping voices
<i>[cut:]</i>	section deleted from transcript due to interruption, tape change, or limited, tangential relevance
[city]	indicates the replacement of an identifying detail for the protection of the participant's confidentiality

Appendix to Chapter 4: Participant Recruitment and Interview Materials

Informed Consent Cover Letter

From: Scott A.L. Beck
108 Lakeland Drive
Statesboro, Georgia 30458
912/764-7377

To: _____
_____, Georgia 3____

Dear Ms. _____:

My name is Scott A.L. Beck. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Language Education at The University of Georgia. I am currently beginning my dissertation study research under the direction of Drs. Joel Taxel and Martha Alleksaht-Snider. My dissertation is an effort to understand the recent history and experiences of Mexican Americans in the schools and communities of the Vidalia onion region during the past generation. I am particularly interested in the experiences of those Mexican American migrant students who went on to become educators themselves. To my knowledge, I am the only person studying the Mexican American community in the Vidalia onion region.

This letter is a formal request for your assistance in this project. There is, of course, no penalty if you choose not to participate or if you choose to withdraw from the project at a later time. If you agree to participate, please sign the attached consent form and legal release, keep a photocopy for yourself, and return it to me in the attached pre-stamped envelope.

After your return of the release, I will ask you to complete a two-page questionnaire before conducting tape-recorded interview(s) with you. The *first* interview will last approximately two hours and will be scheduled at your convenience. *The second will likely be shorter.* During the interview(s) we will explore your memories of being one of the first Mexican American migrant students in this region, the path of your life since then, and your work as an educator of migrant farmworkers and their children. I will keep your identity confidential by using a pseudonym, a fake name, for you. After *each / the* interview, I will have the tape transcribed on to paper and give it to you to read over and add comments or explanations. If, in the process of researching and writing, I find that I need to ask you a few more questions, I may ask to meet with you again or talk with you by phone.

I plan to copyright my dissertation and submit parts of it for publication in a book or journal. You will be welcome to read my dissertation and any publications that come from it when they are completed. I will secure the interview tape(s) and transcripts under lock and key. After my dissertation is completed, depending upon your preference, I will either destroy the tapes or place the tapes in an archive, a safe storage area, probably at Georgia Southern University's library.

If you have any questions about this research project, please call me at 912/764-7377 (home) or 912/681-0354 (work). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study, they should be directed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone: (706) 542-6514; e-mail address: IRB@uga.edu.

Let me thank you for your assistance in studying this part of our local history.

Sincerely,

Scott A.L. Beck

Informed Consent Form

I agree to take part in a dissertation research study titled “We were the First: Oral Histories of Mexican American Women Pioneers in the Schools of the Rural South,” which is being conducted by Scott A.L. Beck, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Language Education, The University of Georgia, 912/764-7377 (home), 912/681-0354 (work) under the direction of Dr. Joel Taxel, Department of Language Education, The University of Georgia, 706/542-4511 and Dr. Martha Allexaht-Snyder, Department of Elementary Education, The University of Georgia, 706/542-4318. I do not have to take part in this study; I can stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

1. The purpose of the study is to understand the recent history and experiences of Mexican Americans in the schools and communities of the Vidalia onion region during the past generation, particularly the experiences of Mexican American migrant students who went on to become educators themselves.
2. I will not benefit directly from this research. However, my participation in this research may lead to information that could help parents, teachers, and school administrators meet the educational needs of Mexican Americans in the rural South and across our nation.
3. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:
 - Complete a two-page questionnaire about my background.
 - Participate in *two / a* oral history interview(s) with Scott A.L. Beck. The *first* interview will last approximately two hours and will be scheduled at my convenience. *The second will likely be shorter and will also be scheduled at my convenience.*
 - After *each / the* interview, I will have the opportunity to read over the transcript of the interview and add comments or additional explanations.
 - Possibly participate in shorter follow-up interviews or phone conversations with Scott A.L. Beck.
4. No discomforts or stresses are expected during this process.
5. No risks are expected during this process.
6. No deception will be involved in this study.
7. My identity will be kept confidential in all resultant manuscripts by the use of a pseudonym. The interview tapes and transcripts will be secured under lock and key. Upon completion of this study (check one box): ☐ *the tapes will be placed in a secure archive at Georgia Southern University's Henderson Library, the only research-oriented library in the Vidalia onion region, where they may be used by other researchers* OR ☐ *the tapes will be destroyed.*

The only person who will know that I am a research subject is Scott A.L. Beck. No information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if necessary to protect my rights or welfare (for example, if I am injured and need emergency care); or if required by law.

8. Scott A.L. Beck will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at: 912/764-7377 (home), 912/681-0354 (work).
9. I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Signature of Participant

Date

For questions or problems about your rights please call or write:

Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D., Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone: (706) 542-6514; e-mail address: IRB@uga.edu.

Your name: _____

Your year of birth: _____

Your birthplace: _____

The first language you learned: _____

Other languages spoken: _____

In what language are you most comfortable speaking & listening? _____

In what language are you most comfortable reading & writing? _____

Did you ever attend: ESOL classes Bilingual classes

Were you ever retained? Yes No

Your highest degree: _____

How did you afford to study for that degree? _____

Are you currently studying for another degree? Yes No What kind? _____

Your current job: _____

Your parents' names:

Their birthplaces:

How much schooling did they complete?

Did any other family members play a large role in your upbringing or serve as your guardian?

How much schooling did they complete?

[illegible]

Protocol for First Round of Dissertation Study Interviews

(Categories of questions are categorized as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd priorities)
 (The most important and most frequently asked questions are bolded)

Meta-Questions - Anytime

Was that hard for you to answer? ...why do you think it was?

Was that a fair question? ... why not?

Descriptive: tell me about... Structural: kinds of... Contrast: compare/difference?

Start

3rd: Homeplace & Immigration

What do you remember of your life as a child in *homeplace*?

What do you think of the schools there?

How do the people make a living there?

(What different kinds of jobs are available there?)

How did your family make a living there?

Did you work also?

What is your family's immigration history?

When did your relatives come to the U.S.?

Why did they come?

1st: Migrancy – Work & School

When you were a child and you were moving around, what kinds of work did your family do?

What was that like?

Where did you go?

Did you work also?

Tell me about a typical day of work for your family.

What did you think of the work?

What were the best things about the schools you attended during that time?

... the worst things?

(Tell me what you remember about your schooling during this time?)

Did you ever have to translate for your parents?

If so, tell me about that.

2nd: Georgia – Work

Why did your family decide to settle in southeast Georgia?

How did your lives change then?

Protocol for First Round of Dissertation Study Interviews, page 2

1st: Georgia – Pre-Arrival Messages

Before you came here, what did you hear about the United States?

... about the American South and Georgia?

What had you heard about the people here before you came?

How did you hear that?

Before you came here, what did you expect life was going to be like in Georgia?

1st: Georgia – Arrival Findings

Is that what you found when you got here?

(What was the same or different?)

How about the people, were they the way you had expected?

(What was the same or different?)

Imagine a young girl, maybe your cousin, was coming today from *homeplace* to live in Georgia.

What things would you tell her, what advice would you have for her?

goto race/class?

1st: Georgia – Arrival Reaction

How did local Georgia people make you feel when you arrived?

How did local Georgia people act towards you or respond to you?

(How did they look or talk with you?)

(How do you think they categorized you?)

Did you ever have to explain your background?

(your ethnic, language, national, or racial background)

Did this happen often?

How did you describe or explain yourself to them?

Has the response of local Georgia people toward you changed during the time you have lived here?

If so, how? Why do you think it has changed?

goto race/class?

2nd: Georgia – Arrival Schooling

How did you feel during your first days in school here in southeast Georgia?

Can you describe a typical day in school here?

(Tell me what you remember about your first days in school here.)

Do you remember anything in particular that was helpful or comforting?

... that was frightening or angering?

1st: Georgia – Classes & Classmates

Describe for me one of your typical classes when you first arrived here.

Where did you sit? ...what did you do?

Describe for me the students in your classes when you first arrived here.

(Were the children in your classes of all different backgrounds? What kinds of backgrounds? well-off, middle class, or poor, white or black or _____?)

Did you stay with this same group of students all through school here?

If not, how did your classmates change over the years?

What kinds of classes did you attend here?

(Many schools here in Georgia are tracked, with some classes preparing for college and some not. Was your school that way?

If so, which track were you on? Why? How did that make you feel?)

Who were your classmates during your final years in school here?

1st: Georgia - Friends

Who did you talk with when you first arrived in southeast Georgia?

Who were your closest friends when you first arrived in southeast Georgia?

(What did you do together? Were they mostly black, white, _____, or a mixture?)

Did your group of close friends change as you grew up? How and why?

1st: Personal - Schooling

What kind of student were you?

What made you decide to *drop out* / *stay in school until graduation*?

If you dropped out, what made you decide to get a GED?

How did you do that?

What kind of students were your siblings and others in your family?

How has your educational path been similar to or different from them?

... from others in the local Mexican American community?

... from others in your school?

What made the difference in your life... how did you take a different path?

What do you think of people who drop out of school?

1st: Personal - Mentors

Tell me about _____ *(family and people named on questionnaire)*.

How did she / he impact your academic and work life?

What did they say to you or do with you?

1st: Becoming a Migrant Educator

What kinds of work have you done as an adult?

How did you get out of the fields and “labor?”

How and why did you become an educator of migrant children?

How do you see your role in the school?

What do you see as some of the ways you help students?

Are there things that only you can say or do for your students?

If so, what?

Can you tell me what a “consejo” is?

Do you ever tell that type of advice to your students?

If so, can you give me an example or two?

Do you ever tell them about your life story?

How do they respond?

What are the best aspects of the job?

... the worst aspects of the job?

Are there things you would like to do for your students, but you can’t?

If so, what and why not?

1st: Communicating with Parents

What things about schools do the parents of your students have questions or concerns about?

How do you respond to these questions and concerns?

Is there anything that you find hard to explain to them?

Why do you think that is so?

Do you ever find yourself caught between parents or students and the school?

(Do the teachers or principal ever ask you to do things that you think your students or parents won’t agree with or wouldn’t like? Or vice-versa?)

How do you deal with that?

1st: Ideas for Change

If you could change the schools in this area, what would you do?

(If you were the superintendent, what would you do?)

What ideas have you seen working well in the schools? ...what ideas don’t work?

Have you ever told anyone at the school about these opinions?

If not, why not?

If so, how did they respond?

Do you think that the schools here need more Mexican American educators?

If so, why?

What can be done to help more Mexican Americans become educators here?

Protocol for First Round of Dissertation Study Interviews, page 5

2nd: Local Latino / Mexican American Community of Practice?

How has your life here been different than say a _____ in California or Texas where there are more people of your background?

Now that there are more _____ in this region, compare your experiences as a student here to the experiences of your students.

How has the town changed since you first came here?

Are the _____ changing the schools?

...if so, how for the teachers?

...how for the students?

2nd: Future Goals

What is your ultimate dream educationally or professionally?

What do you need to get there?

What do your parents and family say about your education and work?

Is your idea of success the same as theirs?

What do other Mexican Americans in the local area say about your job?

How about your children, what do they think of your work?

What do they want to do with their lives? What are your hopes for them?

3rd: Closing

Is there anything else that you would like to discuss with me or tell me about?

Race/Class Section

Use when raised by participant ... Rephrase using their language

2nd: Race/Class Labels

How do you describe yourself to people?

(When someone asks you, well, what are you? – what do you say?

How do you categorize yourself? What groups do you identify with?

Regarding your race, ethnicity, or language background? Regarding how much money you make?)

Who else do you include in that group or category with you?

How do you think local Georgia people see you now?

Have these labels made a difference in your life? ...if so, how?

What do you think of labels like: Latina - Latin American - Hispanic - Hispana - Chicana - Mexican - Mexicana - Mexican American - Tejana - American?

Do you prefer some of these? Which ones do you dislike? Why?

What do you think of labels like: rich - poor - working-class - middle-class?

Do you prefer some of these over others?

Which ones do you like of dislike? Why?

Has this changed during your life?

Protocol for First Round of Dissertation Study Interviews, page 6

2nd: Significance of Race/Class in Homplace

What differences between people are important in their lives in *homeplace*?

(Which groups can you think of in homeplace? Are their lives different from each other? If so, how?)

Does the color of a person's skin make a difference in *homeplace*?

...if so, how?

(Do people have different opportunities depending upon how they look?)

Does the amount of money a person has make a difference there?

...if so, how?

(Do people have different opportunities if they have more or less money?)

Does it make a difference there if you are a boy or a girl?

...if so, how?

(Do boys and girls have different opportunities?)

How did you and your family fit in there?

1st: Significance of Race/Class in Georgia

What differences between people are important in their lives in Georgia?

(Which groups can you think of in Georgia?

Are their lives different from each other? If so, how?)

Does the color of a person's skin make a difference in Georgia?

...if so, how?

(Do people have different opportunities depending upon how they look?)

Does the amount of money a person has make a difference here?

...if so, how?

(Do people have different opportunities if they have more or less money?)

Does it make a difference here if you are a boy or a girl?

...if so, how?

(Do boys and girls have different opportunities?)

How did you and your family fit in here when you first arrived?

How do you fit in now?

3rd: Threats & Intimidation

Do you ever see or hear local people saying or doing things that you feel are negative or insulting toward migrants or _____?

How often?

For example?

Has this ever happened to you?

Did you ever feel like you were being forced to speak English?

Has this changed since you arrived here? ...if so, how?

Outside your family, who do you talk with the most?

What languages do you speak with your friends?

Has anyone in your family worked as a crewleader? When and how?

Did your older siblings help you with your education? How?

Why is it that nearly everyone I have spoken with has referred to their choice being between either school or labor in the fields? Weren't there any other options?

How has la migra or INS affected your life? What do you think of the US laws about immigration from Mexico?

Do you have a place other than here that you think of as your home?

What made southeast Georgia home for you and your family? Why did you settle and stay here?

Is southeast Georgia a particularly good place for you? Why?

Many of my participants have talked about the rural life here, as compared to the life of the cities or the border... tell me what you see the difference as.

Do you have status in the local community? Why or why not? If not, could you get some? If so, what could you do to get status?

How have the schools changed since you first came here?

How are they better? ... worse?

How have the attitudes of people here changed toward you and other Mexicans during that time?

Why are there no Latino male migrant paraprofessionals?

Do the teachers or does the principal ever come to you with questions about the Mexican American migrant students and their families? What do they ask?

How do the kids at your school form groups? Do they play and talk with all different kinds of kids? Or, do they split up into groups? How are those groups formed? Are there groups that are mostly boys and girls; black, whites and Mexicans, poor, middle-class, and rich; popular and unpopular; athletes and nerds?

How does this compare to when you were a student here years ago?

How do you think the schools here will be different 10 years from now?

What do you know about the history of racial segregation around here?

Is that history relevant to you?

Interview Protocol for Second (Paired) Dissertation Study Interviews, Page 2

When you are driving around, I'm sure that you sometimes see the bumper stickers with the Confederate flags on people's cars and trucks. Do you know the flag I'm speaking of? The Stars and Bars?

What do you think they mean?

Are they relevant to you?

What do white folk around here think of the black folk?

What do black folk around here think of the white folk?

What do white folk around here think of the Mexican folk?

What do black folk around here think of the Mexican folk?

Do you ever get stared at or get ugly looks for speaking Spanish in public?

If so, how do you respond? Can you give me an example?

Have you ever heard someone say something like "I wish you'd speak American!"?

Cover Letter to participants regarding Member Check

SCOTT A.L. BECK

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Dear _____:

Thank you for participating in my dissertation research project. Your contribution is very valuable to me and I truly appreciate your time and effort in participating. I have learned a great deal from listening to your life story.

As promised during the interview process, I am now sending you copies of your interview transcripts so you can read them and provide me with feedback. After you have read over and marked up the transcripts, please use the enclosed, postage-paid envelope to return them to me. If you do not send the transcripts back to me, I will assume that you are comfortable with the transcripts as they stand.

Each interview was professionally transcribed and double checked against the tape for completeness and accuracy. I edited each transcript to note any problems in the tape recordings. In some places you may find a blanks (_____) marking places where the recording was not clear enough to be understood. If, as you read over the transcript, you think you remember what you said, you are welcome to “fill in the blanks.”

As I promised, in order to protect your privacy, I have given you a fake name, a pseudonym: _____ and deleted the names of other people mentioned in the transcripts. In this way, readers of my dissertation will not be able to recognize who you are. If as you read over a transcript, you find a section that you would rather I not associate with your fake name, you can tell me to use that section ANONYMOUSLY with no pseudonym. If there is a section that you would rather that I not use at all, you can tell me DON'T USE this section. Finally, if you feel that you would like to pull out of this study entirely, you can do so at any time.

If you have any questions, please call, write, or e-mail me. Mil gracias.

Con cariño,

Scott

Appendix to Chapter 4: Interview Statistics

Participant	Interview	Mins.	Turns				Words				Mean Length of Turn (in words)	
			Total	/min.	Scott	Prtecpnt	Total	/min.	Scott	Prtecpnt	Scott	Prtecpnt
Guadalupe Flores	1 st solo 12/7/98	95	546	5.7			17040	179	26%	74%	15.9	46.6
	2 nd solo 1/28/99	21	144	6.9			3828	182	49%	51%	25.9	27.3
Nanci Alvarez	1 st solo 1/27/99	99	406	4.1			14200	143	23%	77%	16.2	53.8
	2 nd solo 6/12/02	90	315	3.5			11792	131	18%	82%	13.4	61.0
Ester Fuentes	1 st solo 1/2/99	93	592	6.4			15074	162	37%	63%	18.5	32.6
	2 nd solo 6/11/02	153	490	3.2			19471	127	26%	74%	20.7	58.6
Ignacia Marquez Johnson	1 st solo 12/16/98	64	340	5.3			9873	154	45%	55%	25.7	32.4
	2 nd solo 8/11/02	67	174	2.6			11555	172	10%	90%	13.1	119.7
Angelica Marquez	1 st solo 6/19/02	41	220	5.4			6338	155	26%	74%	14.9	42.7
	2nd pair 6/28/02	117	635	5.4	37%	30%	16696	143	27%	42%	19.1	36.7
Dominga Ramirez	1 st solo 6/19/02	69	576	8.3		32%	10385	151	38%	62%	13.6	22.4
Manuela Lopez	1st solo 6/12/02	110	241	2.2			19876	181	7%	93%	12.5	150.7
	2nd pair 7/6/02	152	562	3.7	21%	40%	30255	199	5%	50%	13.3	66.6
Berta Perez	1 st solo 6/29/02	110	384	3.5		39%	15662	142	16%	84%	13.5	62.1
Yadira Garcia	1 st solo 6/13/02	43	248	5.8			6681	155	27%	73%	14.3	67.8
	2nd pair 8/25/02	95	575	6.1	30%	39%	13808	145	21%	54%	16.6	39.5
Katia Garcia	1 st solo 6/13/02	97	813	8.4		31%	13323	137	41%	25%	13.4	33.7
	AVERAGE	89	427	5.1			13874	156			16.5	19.2
Pilot 1998-1999 solo		74	406	5.7	50%	50%	12003	164	36%	64%	20.4	45.7
Dissertation 2002 solo		87	385	4.8	50%	50%	12787	150	23%	77%	14.4	
Dissertation 2002 pair		121	591	5.1	29%	71%	20253	162	18%	82%	16.4	

Appendix to Chapter 6: The Gauntlets of the Past: Occurrences of Themes in Each Interview

Interview		Dangers			Poverty		Migrant Childhood		Isolation in Southeast Georgia					TOTAL
		Border Crossing	Borderlands	City	Previous Generations	Own Experience	Challenges	Family Caveat	Language	Race	Prejudice	Shyness	Curiosity	
Guadalupe Flores	1 st solo 12/7/98	3	4		1		3		1			1		18
	2 nd solo 1/28/99		3						1	1				
Nanci Alvarez	1 st solo 1/27/99	1		1	1				2	1	2			13
	2 nd solo 6/12/02	1		2					1		1			
Ester Fuentes	1 st solo 1/2/99	1		4	1				2	2	2	1	1	25
	2 nd solo 6/11/02			2	1	1	3			1		2	1	
Ignacia Marquez Johnson	1 st solo 12/16/98	1				1	1			1	1	1	1	23
	2 nd solo 8/11/02				3	1	3	3		3	2	1		
Angelica Marquez	1 st solo 6/19/02											3		7
2nd pair 6/28/02	1	2					1							
Dominga Ramirez	1 st solo 6/19/02	1	1			1								12
						1	1	1	2	1	3			
Manuela Lopez	1st solo 6/12/02		2	1	1	7	7	5				1		25
	2nd pair 7/6/02					1								
Berta Perez						2							1	13
	1 st solo 6/29/02					2	6	1			1			
Yadira Garcia	1 st solo 6/13/02		2		1	2	3			2	1			16
	2nd pair 8/25/02		1			1		1	1	1				
Katia Garcia			2			1	1		1	1	1	1		20
	1 st solo 6/13/02		2	2	1		4		1	1	1			
TOTAL		9	19	12	8	23	29	15	10	16	16	10	5	

Appendix to Chapter 6: Turning Points: Occurrences of Themes in Each Interview

Participant Interview		Fields vs. School			Family		Graduating		Southeast Georgia				TOTAL
		Fieldwork as Lesson	Vague, but Better End	Somebody / Someone	Parents know Best	Older Siblings Support	Caring Mentors	Drama	Refuge		Opportunities		
									Prejudice / Blight	Hay Trabajo	Crewlead. / Entrepren.	Becoming Educators	
Guadalupe Flores	1 st solo 12/7/98	2	2				3	3	3	2	1	3	20
	2 nd solo 1/28/99								1				
Nanci Alvarez	1 st solo 1/27/99	2	1			1	4		1		1	1	20
	2 nd solo 6/12/02	1	3						1	1	3		
Ester Fuentes	1 st solo 1/2/99	2	3			1	4		2		1	1	29
	2 nd solo 6/11/02	3	2	1	1	1	2		3		2		
Ignacia Marquez Johnson	1 st solo 12/16/98	2	2	1		2	2	2				1	32
	2 nd solo 8/11/02		6	1	4	1	2	1	1	2		2	
Angelica Marquez	1 st solo 6/19/02	2		1		1	1	1		2		1	18
	2 nd pair 6/28/02	2		1		2	1			1	2		
Dominga Ramirez	2 nd pair 6/28/02	2		1		1	2			1	2		19
	1 st solo 6/19/02	2	2	2			1	1			1	1	
Manuela Lopez	1 st solo 6/12/02	5	3	2	4	2	2	3	3	2	1	1	33
	2 nd pair 7/6/02		1					1			1	2	
Berta Perez	2 nd pair 7/6/02	1	3	2				1				2	29
	1 st solo 6/29/02	1	3	2	3	2	1	1		1	3	3	
Yadira Garcia	1 st solo 6/13/02	2			2	2			2	2	1	2	26
	2 nd pair 8/25/02	1	2		2	3				2	2	1	
Katia Garcia	2 nd pair 8/25/02	2	1		2	4				2	2	1	30
	1 st solo 6/13/02	1		3	2	1	2		2	2	1	2	
TOTAL		33	34	17	20	24	27	14	19	20	24	24	

Appendix to Chapter 6: Promised and Promising Present: Occurrences of Themes in Each Interview

Participant Interview		Schools are Better Today									TOTAL	
		More Latinos, Nicer Teachers	ESOL	Participants' Roles in Schools								
				Tutoring	Translation	Pride & Achievement	Life Story	Trust	Teach the Teachers	Advocacy for Students		Facilitation of Schooling
Guadalupe Flores	1 st solo 12/7/98 2 nd solo 1/28/99	3		3	3	1	1	1	2	2		20
Nanci Alvarez	1 st solo 1/27/99 2 nd solo 6/12/02	3	1			1	1	2			1	14
Ester Fuentes	1 st solo 1/2/99 2 nd solo 6/11/02	7	3	2	5	2	3	3	2	1		35
Ignacia Marquez Johnson	1 st solo 12/16/98 2 nd solo 8/11/02	1		1	1		3	1				18
Angelica Marquez	1 st solo 6/19/02			7	4			1			3	31
	2nd pair 6/28/02		1	2	4	1		2	1			
Dominga Ramirez	1 st solo 6/19/02	4	3	1	1				1			27
Manuela Lopez	1st solo 6/12/02	1		2	2	4			1	1		43
	2nd pair 7/6/02		1		6	6	1	2	3	2	5	
Berta Perez	1 st solo 6/29/02	5	4	1	6	6		4	2	1	6	63
Yadira Garcia	1 st solo 6/13/02	2	2	2	1						2	23
	2nd pair 8/25/02			1	3						1	
Katia Garcia	1 st solo 6/13/02	4		2	2			1				23
TOTAL		32	16	35	52	21	16	20	17	11	24	

Appendix to Chapter 6: Power, Schooling, Race, Class, Gender and Controversy: Occurrences of Themes in Each Interview

Participant	Interview	Disconnect from Migrants Today		Not an Advocate for Change	Power: Race, Class & Gender	TOTAL
		Blame Parents	Deny / Dismiss Prejudice			
Guadalupe Flores	1 st solo 12/7/98		2		2	4
	2 nd solo 1/28/99					
Nanci Alvarez	1 st solo 1/27/99					2
	2 nd solo 6/12/02				2	
Ester Fuentes	1 st solo 1/2/99		1			11
	2 nd solo 6/11/02	1	3	1	5	
Ignacia Marquez Johnson	1 st solo 12/16/98			1		4
	2 nd solo 8/11/02	1	1	1		
Angelica Marquez	1 st solo 6/19/02	2	1	2		7
	2 nd pair 6/28/02	1	1			
Dominga Ramirez	1 st solo 6/19/02	1	1	1	1	7
	2 nd pair 7/6/02	4	1	2	1	
Manuela Lopez	1 st solo 6/12/02		1	2	1	12
	2 nd pair 7/6/02	8	7	2	1	
Berta Perez	1 st solo 6/29/02	1				19
	2 nd pair 8/25/02	1	3	1	3	
Yadira Garcia	1 st solo 6/13/02	1	3			12
	2 nd pair 8/25/02	1	3	1	3	
Katia Garcia	1 st solo 6/13/02	1		2		11
	2 nd pair 8/25/02	1	3	1	3	
TOTAL		23	30	17	19	

Appendix to Chapter 6: Ideas for the Future: Occurances of Themes in Each Interview

Participant		Ideas for a Better Future			TOTAL
		Initiatives re: Parents & Students	Initiatives re: Staff		
			More Latinos	Staff Development	
Guadalupe Flores	1 st solo 12/7/98		1		1
	2 nd solo 1/28/99				
Nanci Alvarez	1 st solo 1/27/99				5
	2 nd solo 6/12/02	1	1	21	
Ester Fuentes	1 st solo 1/2/99	1		1	7
	2 nd solo 6/11/02	2	1	2	
Ignacia Marquez Johnson	1 st solo 12/16/98	4	1		12
	2 nd solo 8/11/02	5		2	
Angelica Marquez	1 st solo 6/19/02		1	1	5
			1	2	
Dominga Ramirez	2nd pair 6/28/02		1	11	6
	1 st solo 6/19/02	1		11	
Manuela Lopez	1st solo 6/12/02	3	1	2	12
		4	1	1	
Berta Perez	2nd pair 7/6/02	6	1	2	15
	1 st solo 6/29/02	4	1	1	
Yadira Garcia	1 st solo 6/13/02	3	1	2	6
	2nd pair 8/25/02				
Katia Garcia		2			4
	1 st solo 6/13/02		2		
TOTAL		36	14	203	