THE ROLE OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL ADULT LEARNING IN THE ADAPTATION PROCESSES OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS

by

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(Under the Direction of Sharan Merriam)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of formal and informal adult learning in the sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation of Mexican immigrants in the state of Georgia. The research questions focused on the formal adult education and informal learning activities the immigrants have participated in since coming to the United States, the ways these learning experiences have contributed to their adaptation, and the aspects of the teaching/learning transaction which have supported their adaptation processes.

Because adaptation is a long-term process, the life history method was employed. The sample consisted of five Mexican immigrants who had been in the U.S. from 5 to 25 years. Three life story interviews were conducted with each immigrant. The immigrants' participation in adult education programs was observed. Some of the immigrants shared artifacts from their lives.

Data were analyzed using two methods. First, the holistic-content method was used to construct a life history for each participant and to track themes related to the individual's sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation. Then, the categorical-content method was employed to look across the five immigrants' histories and to identify common themes.

Data analysis revealed that the immigrants had engaged in a wide range of learning activities in the United States. These activities were learning the English language, attending GED classes, developing job-skills, acquiring business knowledge, learning to drive, preparing for the citizenship interview, and purchasing a home. These experiences contributed to the immigrants' adaptation by developing their survival skills, enabling their participation in the labor force, increasing their physical mobility, and enhancing stability in their lives. Aspects of the teaching/learning transaction contributed both directly and indirectly to the immigrants' adaptation processes. These aspects were American teachers who acted as helpers, course content, level appropriate instruction, instructional quality, student input into the learning process, student/student relationships, and the teacher/student relationship. The Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model was introduced.

Two conclusions were derived from this study. First, the contribution of formal and informal learning to the adaptation processes of Mexican immigrants varies along sociocultural, economic, and political dimensions. Second, deterrents and motivators internal to the learning experience influence continued participation in learning activities.

INDEX WORDS: Adult learning, Workplace learning, Adult education, English as a Second Language, Participation, Mexican immigrants, Sociocultural adaptation, Economic adaptation, Political adaptation, Life history

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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

2004

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May 2004

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My greatest appreciation to Catholic Social Services, Inc.-Athens. It is through my work with this agency, first as a volunteer and later as an employee, that I came to know the Latin American immigrant community in Georgia.

Thanks to my major professor, Sharan Merriam, for encouraging me to take on the challenge of conducting research with the Latin American immigrant population and for guiding me through the dissertation process.

Un abrazo for Dra. María Mercedes Ruiz Muñoz for offering her support and wisdom as I tackled the analysis and writing of this project.

Finally, lots of love to my mother, Alma Ashcraft, for being understanding when I was feeling the pressures of doctoral study and for her unwavering belief that I can accomplish anything.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

There is a long history of Mexican immigration to the United States. It began during colonial times when much of what is now the southwestern United States belonged to Mexico and continues to be strong today (Carlson, 1987; Engstrom, 2000; Martin & Midgley, 1999). “In 2000, Mexico accounted for more than one-quarter of the foreign-born population” of the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002, p. 1). The latest census data indicate that there are 7,841,000 Mexican immigrants in the United States. Although their numbers are highest in the states of California and Texas, they are branching out to other states as well (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Official census data show that in the year 2000, people of Mexican origin made up 63 percent of the Hispanic population in Georgia (Guzmán, 2001). These immigrants have been concentrated in south Georgia, metro Atlanta, Dalton, and northeast Georgia (e.g., Gainesville). In these areas they have found work in agriculture, construction, poultry farms and plants, carpet and textile factories, and in service industries, such as domestic work, landscaping, and restaurants (Murphy, Blanchard, & Hill, 2001).

The arrival of Mexican immigrants is a relatively new phenomenon in Georgia, and there is still much to learn about their processes of settlement and adaptation. Adult education is one tool that people utilize to help them adapt to life changes, changes such as those produced by the immigration experience (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). Therefore, formal and informal adult learning may have a role in Mexican immigrants’ adaptation processes. Exploring this role is the focus of this study.

Adult Education for Immigrants Today

Several forms of adult education have been specifically designed for immigrant populations. These include English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, civics education, and first-language literacy instruction, among others. “ESL instruction is the fastest-growing sector of the adult education program in the United States" (Stewart, 1993, p. 138). Over the decades, the field of ESL has evolved into several different branches. Publicly funded adult ESL programs were originally developed as remedial programs linked to Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Education Development (GED) classes offered to the general public. The ESL classes help people with low English proficiency to develop their language skills in order to participate in ABE and GED programs alongside native English speakers. These types of ESL programs assume that participants are literate in their native language (Graham & Cookson, 1990).

For those who wish to learn English, but who do not have the goal to participate in ABE or GED programs, survival skills programs were developed. These programs focus on the communication skills needed to function in everyday situations, such as shopping or going to the doctor. Literacy skills are not emphasized (Graham & Cookson, 1990; Stewart, 1993).

Other more specialized ESL programs have been developed as well. Occupational ESL programs provide participants with the skills necessary to obtain a job (e.g., filling out a job application) (Graham & Cookson, 1990), while vocational ESL programs teach language skills related to particular occupations, such as jobs in the hospitality industry. In these programs, language instruction is often coordinated with on-the-job training (Graham & Cookson, 1990; Stewart, 1993). Labor unions continue to be a major provider of this type of language and job skill instruction along with providing other kinds of education, such as programming on workers rights and safety (Rosenblum, 1996).

English for Special Purposes (ESP) classes teach academic language and the language needed in professional fields such as medicine or law (Stewart, 1993). These programs are targeted towards immigrants and foreign students who have completed their secondary education. They are offered in colleges and universities and are usually paid for by the students themselves.

Another type of ESL program involving adults is the family literacy program. These programs are “designed to strengthen literacy resources by involving at least two generations” (Weinstein, 1998, ¶1). They may consist of several components, such as adult education and ESL, parenting classes, classes for children, as well as activities that children and adults participate in together. One of the goals of family literacy programs is to improve children’s school achievement by encouraging parental involvement in their education. Another goal is “to improve skills, attitudes, values, and behaviors linked to reading” among children and adults (Weinstein, 1998, ¶3). A third goal is for parents to develop advocacy skills, and a fourth is to foster the parent-child relationship. An example of a family literacy program is the federally funded Even Start (Weinstein, 1998). Thus, several types of ESL programs have been developed to help immigrants achieve a range of goals.

Adult ESL classes may be offered by various entities. Some of the most common providers are K-12 public school districts; community colleges; community-based organizations such as literacy councils, religious organizations, and ethnic organizations; correctional institutions; libraries; and workplaces (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2000). Wrigley (1993) reviewed program descriptions of 123 adult ESL literacy programs and visited eleven of these programs. Based on this data, she was able to distinguish six major curricula orientations among the programs: providing students with a common educational core of language skills and cultural knowledge; preparing the students for social and economic adaptation; emphasizing cognitive and academic skills so that students will learn how to learn; making the instruction relevant to the lives of the learners; advocating social change; and managing learning through technical measures (e.g., diagnostic testing). Of the 123 programs reviewed, "personal relevance emerged as the strongest orientation inasmuch as some aspects of this philosophy appeared in virtually all program descriptions" (p. 457). Wrigley recognizes that "given funding realities, teacher preferences, and learner goals, no one philosophy will meet all needs" (p. 463).

Since a certain level of English proficiency is required to obtain U.S. citizenship (Nixon & Keenan, 1997; Stewart, 1993), ESL instruction and civics instruction often go hand in hand. The federal government uses the following definition of civics education:

> An educational program that emphasizes contextualized instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, naturalization procedures, civic participation, and U.S. history and government to help learners acquire the skills and knowledge to become active and informed parents, workers, and community members. (Tolbert, 2001, p. 9)

This includes citizenship education, which teaches the "basic skills needed to pass the INS exam" as well as civic participation education, which "teaches immigrants how to be active community members and why they should be active by providing them with a comprehensive understanding of the U.S.'s culture, government, and educational system" (Tolbert, 2001, p. 10). The U.S. government has budgeted $70 million dollars for English literacy and civics education in the year 2002 (Tolbert, 2001).

Another learning need that many immigrants have is to learn how to read and write in their first language. Since the 1970s, adult native language literacy programs have appeared at the grassroots level. Due to demographics, most of these programs offer instruction in Spanish. Yet there is not much support for these programs. Government policies around welfare, immigration, and citizenship put emphasis on learning English and allow little time in the educational program for developing first language skills (Rivera, 1999).

Finally, immigrant communities often strive to meet their own broad learning needs through establishing their own adult education programs. Montero-Sieburth (1990) describes several ethnic organizations which provide adult education, one of which is the Instituto de Progreso Latino. The Instituto offers “not only traditional high school subjects, but also courses in human rights, housing, health, art, etc. to a clientele of mostly Mexican immigrants” (Montero-Sieburth, 1990, p. 107). Spanish literacy classes are also taught, and all courses, except for the ESL courses, are taught in Spanish.

Participation and Adaptation

Little is known about the participation of Mexican immigrants in adult learning activities. Furthermore, identifying studies which provide data on this population is complicated by the variety of terms used to describe research samples. For example, some projects have researched “Hispanics,” a term which encompasses all Spanish speakers, including Spaniards (Marín & Marín, 1991). Others have researched “Latinos,” people of Latin American origin. This term includes Spanish-speakers as well as people from Brazil, Belize, and Guyanas, which are non-Spanish-speaking countries (Marín & Marín, 1991). Thus, studies on Hispanic or Latino populations may or may not include Mexican immigrants. Another layer of confusion is added when one considers that Hispanics or Latinos in the United States may be native born or immigrants. Native born persons of Mexican origin are sometimes called Mexican Americans or

Chicanos (Marín & Marín, 1991). The multiplicity of terms used to describe research samples makes it difficult to pinpoint data on adult learning which is specific to Mexican immigrants.

Although a large body of literature exists on participation in formal adult education and other adult learning activities (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Silva, Cahalan, & Lacierno-Paquet, 1998), little of this literature is focused on the participation of Hispanic/Latino, Mexican American, or Mexican immigrant populations. The research that does exist on the participation of these populations approaches the phenomenon from several different angles. First, some of the research has focused on the participation of these groups in specific formal educational programs. For example, González (1985) studied the participation of Hispanics in the educational programs offered by Michigan's Cooperative Extension Service. Wallace, Malizio, and Erwin (1987) surveyed GED and adult education students in the fifteen counties in Texas with the largest Hispanic populations to find out how they had learned about the educational program they were participating in, to elicit suggestions for improving the program, and to gather information about their reading, television viewing, and radio listening habits.

Other studies have been centered on the acquisition of certain skills, such as first or second language literacy. For instance, Delgado-Gaitan (1987) conducted an ethnographic study of eight Mexican immigrant families involved in a Spanish/English adult literacy program. The program also trained the parents to carry out literacy activities with their children. Delgado-Gaitan investigated the parents and children's attitudes toward literacy as well as their home literacy practices. Similarly, Lanteigne and Schwarzer (1997) present a case study of a Mexican immigrant participating in an ESL program. They describe the gains he makes in English language proficiency over a four-month time period as well as the increase in his family reading activities.

Understanding the needs of Hispanic immigrants has also been a goal of research. Kissam (1998) discusses the findings from the California Statewide Assessment of Special Needs of Limited English-Proficient Adults with regard to Mexican immigrants. This survey assessed the English language skills required by this population to function in their workplace, family, and community in addition to the skills necessary to support lifelong learning. Dale, Andreatta, and Freeman (2001) interviewed Mexican immigrant and Mexican American migrant workers in North Carolina to determine their needs. One important need they identified was opportunities to learn English.

Additional research has highlighted the factors promoting and inhibiting participation in certain adult learning activities. Hayes (1989) surveyed Hispanics in ESL programs to learn about the barriers to their participation in those programs. Sparks (1998) investigated the cultural and structural factors which inhibit the participation of Mexican Americans in adult basic education and English literacy programs.

A further line of inquiry has focused on the context of the immigrants' learning. Campos Carr (1991) conducted an ethnographic study of the learning Mexican women immigrants experience in their work in an Illinois electronics factory. Monkman (1997) explored how the transnational context (Mexico/U.S.-California) influences Mexican immigrants' learning processes before, during, and after migration. Velázquez (1990) studied the culture of migrancy and its impact on the early schooling, adult education experiences, and family support for learning among migrant farmworkers in North Carolina.

My own research (Ashcraft, 2003) took the individual learner as its point of departure. It looked at the range of learning activities engaged in by recently arrived Hispanic immigrants living in Georgia (the majority of them Mexican). Findings suggest that these immigrants are lifelong learners who actively learn in formal and informal settings and across the domains of their lives. Likewise, their participation in adult learning activities is shaped by their immigrant experience.

Although the participation of Mexican immigrants in adult learning activities has been established, we do not know how this participation affects their lives in the long-term. Nordhaug (1987) quotes Anderson and Darkenwald, who promote the study of participation in adult education “as an independent variable: the study of its outcomes rather than its antecedents” (Nordhaug, 1987, p. 120). Later, Beder (1999) reviewed 23 studies of the outcomes of participation in adult literacy education; however, none of these studies focused on immigrant populations. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages has called for research into the outcomes of immigrants’ participation in adult education. In an Action Agenda, it recommended research to “determine the impact of participation in adult education programs on adult English language learners’ involvement and success in U.S. society” (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 2001, p. 11).

One possible outcome that adult education could have in the lives of Mexican immigrants is to facilitate their adaptation to U.S. society. Berry (1980; 1983; 1997; 2003; Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988) has developed a model of acculturation in which immigrant adaptation may take four forms: assimilation, integration, rejection or deculturation. Integration is viewed as the most positive form of adaptation that an immigrant might take when settling in a new culture (Berry, 1997; 2003).

Adaptation can occur in various dimensions of an immigrant’s life: the psychological dimension, the sociocultural dimension, the economic dimension, and the political dimension. This study focused on the social processes of sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation.

Sociocultural adaptation refers to an immigrant's ability to manage "everyday social situations in the host culture" (Ward & Kennedy, 1996, p. 291). Ward (1996) has developed a model of the sociocultural adaptation, or acculturation, process. Some factors moderating the process are the time spent in the host culture, cross-cultural training, language proficiency, and relationships with host nationals. When economic adaptation occurs, "the occupational, income, and labor supply patterns of a particular group reflect that of the general society taking into account relevant variables" (Padilla & Glick, 2000, p. 180). Research into the economic adaptation of immigrants has been based on theories of human capital, straight-line and segmented assimilation, economic restructuring, and ethnic enclave economies. Political adaptation is often measured by an immigrant's involvement in political processes, such as becoming a citizen and voting in elections. Marriage to a U.S. citizen and English language proficiency are two factors that have been shown to influence this dimension of adaptation (Garcia, 1987; Liang, 1994; Pachon & DeSipio, 1994; Portes & Curtis, 1987; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001).

The sociocultural adaptation of Mexican immigrants has been mixed; that is, some individuals are more acculturated and some are less (Negy & Woods, 1992; Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974). Mexican immigrants as a group, however, are among the least integrated immigrant groups economically (Padilla & Glick, 2000) and politically (González Baker & Espitia, 2000; Liang, 1994; Portes & Curtis, 1987). Some of the individual factors that have impeded the adaptation of Mexican immigrants are their low levels of formal education, lack of English language proficiency, and limited work experience in the U.S. Furthermore, they may be in the United States without documentation and/or lead transnational lives. Social factors, like contact with Americans and experiences of discrimination, also influence their adaptation processes.

Only three studies have been identified that investigate the role of adult education in some aspect of the adaptation process. First, Cookson (1978) studied the participation of Mexican-American small businessmen in business-related adult education and the impact of this participation on their individual modernity, adoption of modern business practices, and occupational achievement. Adult education encouraged more effective business practices and thus had an indirect effect on occupational achievement. Second, Lind (2000) explored the role of ESL classes in the sociocultural adaptation processes of sixteen immigrants, nine of whom were Mexican. She found that the ESL classroom provides a community where immigrant students learn together and support each other in reaching their goals. The support that they gain in the classroom enables them to take steps toward sociocultural integration in the larger community. Third, Buttaro (2001) examined the participation of eight Hispanic women (one of whom was Mexican) in ESL classes. She found that participation in these classes impacted the women's linguistic, cultural, and educational adjustment. These studies offer insight into the ways that two forms of adult education (business-related and ESL) may influence economic or sociocultural adaptation. However, more research needs to be done to gain a clearer picture of how adult education may contribute to an individual's sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation.

In addition, we know that the majority of adult learning is informal and self-directed (Marsick & Watkins, 2001; Merriam, 2001; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). There is no reason to assume that the learning of the Mexican immigrant population is any different than that of the general population in this regard. Thus, it is important to also explore the role of other forms of adult learning in the adaptation processes of Mexican immigrants along with their participation in more formal activities.

Problem Statement

The Hispanic population in the United States has increased dramatically over the past decade (Guzmán, 2001) and is becoming a noticeable presence in Georgia. Some of this growth can be attributed to the arrival of immigrants from Latin America, of which Mexicans form the largest group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Adult education programs, such as English as a Second Language and citizenship courses, have been created for immigrants with the goal of helping them to adjust to life in the United States. Research has shown that many Mexican immigrants are active participants in these and other adult learning activities. For instance, they experience informal and nonformal learning in Mexico and in the U.S. before, during, and after migration (Monkman, 1997). Once in the U.S., they engage in a range of formal, nonformal, self-directed, and informal learning activities (Ashcraft, 2003), and the workplace is one of the primary contexts in which learning occurs (Campos Carr, 1991).

Little research has been conducted on the outcomes of Mexican immigrants' participation in adult learning activities. One benefit of Mexican immigrants' participation in adult education and other adult learning activities may be to facilitate their adaptation to U.S. society. However, we know little of how their participation may affect their lives and their adaptation to U.S. society along sociocultural, economic, and/or political dimensions. Having more knowledge on this issue would enable adult educators who are involved in program planning for and instruction with Mexican learners to better serve them.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to understand the role of formal and informal adult learning in the adaptation to U.S. society of first generation Mexican immigrants living in Georgia. The research will be guided by the following questions:

What formal adult education and informal learning activities have the immigrants participated in since coming to the United States?

How have their learning experiences contributed to their sociocultural, economic, or political adaptation?

Which aspects of the teaching/learning transaction contribute to the immigrants' adaptation processes? How do they contribute to these processes?

Significance

The Mexican immigrant population throughout the United States has been growing and will continue to increase. Although the sociocultural adaptation of these immigrants has been variable (Negy & Woods, 1992; Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974), they are among the least integrated immigrant groups economically (Padilla & Glick, 2000) and politically (González Baker & Espitia, 2000; Liang, 1994; Portes & Curtis, 1987). This study will contribute to a better theoretical understanding of the adaptation process of Mexican immigrants. In addition, it will add to our understanding of formal and informal adult learning in a population that has received little attention in the field of adult education.

Growing numbers of Mexican immigrants means that more and more adult educators will encounter Mexican immigrants among their learner population. This study will provide practical information that program planners can use to design programs that will facilitate Mexican immigrants' adaptation processes. Likewise, it will supply information that will enable adult educators to provide more effective instruction for this population.

Finally, immigration and immigrant education are concerns for many policymakers. The U.S. federal government allocates millions of dollars each year to support educational programs for adult immigrants. The findings from this study will be informative to the policymakers who enact the legislation surrounding such programs.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The population of Mexican immigrants in the United States has significantly increased over the past decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Special forms of adult education have been developed to serve immigrant populations (Stewart, 1993), yet we know little about the long-term impact that participation in adult education has on immigrants' lives. The purpose of this study is to understand the role of formal and informal adult learning in the adaptation processes of first generation Mexican immigrants living in Georgia. I will review here the history of Mexican immigration to the United States; the literature on sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation; the literature on adult education participation; and the empirical findings related to the adult education and adult learning experiences of Hispanic immigrants. I will then discuss adult education outcomes and the research that explores adaptation as an outcome of immigrants' participation in adult learning activities. I will conclude by sharing my assumptions as a researcher about adult learning and immigrant adaptation.

History of Mexican Immigration

There is a long history of Mexican immigration to the United States. It began during colonial times when much of what is now the southwestern United States belonged to Mexico. When the expanding United States annexed Texas in 1845, it led to the Mexican-American War. This war ended with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, in which Mexico ceded the areas which would become Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and half of Colorado to the United States in exchange for fifteen million dollars. The Mexican citizens who remained living in these territories became U.S. citizens, and there continued to be a lot of movement between the two countries (Carlson, 1987; Engstrom, 2000; Martin & Midgley, 1999).

The immigration started to be more unidirectional (*from* Mexico *to* the U.S.) in the twentieth century. Labor shortages created by World War II led the U.S. and Mexico to negotiate the Bracero Program, a program which allowed Mexican agricultural workers to work temporarily in the United States. During this program, which lasted from 1942 to 1964, more than 4.5 million Mexican workers came to the U.S. This laid the foundations for an extensive social network which has supported immigration from Mexico ever since (Engstrom, 2000; Martin & Midgley, 1999).

Once the Bracero Program ended, “the United States did not stop employing Mexican workers; it simply shifted from a de jure policy of active labor recruitment to a de facto policy of passive labor acceptance, combining modest legal immigration with massive undocumented entry” (Durand, Massey, & Parrado, 1999, p. 519). By the 1980s, illegal immigration from Mexico was starting to be seen as a social problem. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 attempted to halt illegal migration by allocating more funds to the United States Border Patrol, enacting sanctions against employers who knowingly hired illegal aliens, and offering amnesty to long-term undocumented residents under the Legally Authorized Worker (LAW) program and to undocumented agricultural workers under the Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) program. Under this act, 2.3 million Mexicans were legalized (Durand et al., 1999; Engstrom, 2000). However, it did not stop the flow of illegal immigration. In fact, “it actually encouraged additional undocumented migration by family and friends who had remained behind, and it was instrumental in transforming a predominantly rural, male, and temporary flow of migrant workers into a feminized, urbanized, and permanent population of settled immigrants” (Durand et al., 1999, p. 527).

Today there are approximately 7,841,000 first generation Mexican immigrants living in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). These immigrants are no longer confining themselves to the traditional immigrant receiving states of California, Texas, New York, Illinois, and Florida. They are spreading into all areas of the United States in a phenomenon that has been called the “New Latino Diaspora” (Wortham, Murillo Jr, & Hamann, 2002). Hamann (2002) explains:

> Increasing numbers of Latinos (both immigrant, and some from elsewhere in the United States) are settling both temporarily and permanently in areas of the United States that have not traditionally been home to Latinos--for example, North Carolina, Maine, Georgia, Indiana, Arkansas, rural Illinois, and near resort communities in Colorado. (p. 1)

U.S. Census data indicate that from 1990 to 2000 the Hispanic/Latino population in Georgia increased 299% (Atiles & Bohon, 2002; Guzmán, 2001). Although the census covers a ten year span, in reality, this exponential growth in the Hispanic/Latino population in Georgia occurred over the last five or six years of the decade (Atiles & Bohon, 2002). The growth in this population was prompted by both the economic and sociocultural conditions in the state. There was a strong regional economy (Duchon & Murphy, 2001); the poultry, carpet, and farm industries needed workers (Atiles & Bohon, 2002); and the 1996 Olympics held in Atlanta created a boom in the construction and landscaping industries (Atiles & Bohon, 2002). Furthermore, Georgia was and is seen as a safe place where families can escape from the negative effects of urban areas, like Los Angeles and Miami, which have been traditional immigrant destinations (Atiles & Bohon, 2002).

According to the 2000 Census, the number of Hispanics/Latinos in Georgia had risen to 435,227, which was 5.3 percent of this state's population. This may seem like a small percentage; however, it made Georgia the state with the eleventh largest Hispanic/Latino population in the U.S. Persons of Mexican origin made up 63 percent of this population (Guzmán, 2001). Since then, the growth has continued. More recent data indicate that from 2000 to 2002, the Hispanic/Latino population grew another 17 percent, with a net gain of 102 people per day (Bixler, 2003). The Hispanic/Latino population in Georgia has been concentrated in south Georgia, metro Atlanta, Dalton, and northeast Georgia, which is the site of this study. In these areas, Hispanics/Latinos have found work in agriculture, construction, poultry farms and plants, carpet and textile factories, and in service industries, such as domestic work, landscaping, and restaurants (Murphy et al., 2001). These new arrivals are creating challenges in all sectors of society, including education (Atiles & Bohon, 2002; McLaughlin, Liljestrom, Lim, & Meyers, 2002; Zúñiga, Hernández-León, Shadduck-Hernández, & Villarreal, 2002), law enforcement (Atiles & Bohon, 2002; McLaughlin, 2003), the judicial system (Gurr, 2003; Wyatt, 2002) religious institutions (Mock, 2003), and health care (Atiles & Bohon, 2002).

Adaptation

Berry has developed a model of acculturation which he discusses in several works. Acculturation occurs when people from different cultural groups have sustained contact with each other, such as when immigrants with one culture settle in a country with another culture. Since the immigrant group and the dominant group have different cultural values, beliefs, and practices, this contact results in conflict. In order to resolve the conflict, one or both groups adapt by making changes in their cultural patterns. There are four possible outcomes of the immigrant group's adaptation: assimilation, integration, rejection, and deculturation (Berry, 1980; 1983; 1997; 2003; Berry et al., 1988).

There are two important issues influencing the adaptation strategy chosen by an immigrant group. The first pertains to whether the group wishes to maintain its culture and remain as a distinct ethnic group, and the second relates to the desirability of contact with other ethnic groups. "These are essentially questions of values, even ideologies, and may be responded to on a continuous scale from positive to negative. For conceptual purposes, however, they can be treated as dichotomous (yes or no) decisions" (Berry et al., 1988, p. 65). When assimilation occurs, the members of the immigrant group give up their culture and are absorbed into the larger society. They lose their cultural identity and relate to the dominant culture. In integration, the immigrants maintain their cultural integrity while at the same time seeking "to become a integral party of a larger societal framework" (Berry, 1980, p. 13). Rejection (Berry also calls it "separation") occurs when the immigrant group attempts to maintain its culture and avoid interactions with the dominant group. Finally, deculturation (Berry also calls it "marginalization") results when the immigrant group loses contact with its own culture but has failed to assume any other culture in its place (Berry, 1980; 1983; 1997; Berry et al., 1988). Deculturation/Marginalization "is characterized by striking out against the larger society and by feelings of alienation, loss of identity, and what has been termed *acculturative stress*" (Berry et al., 1988, p. 67).

Individuals and groups may choose different forms of adaptation depending on the social context and the time period (Berry, 1997; Berry et al., 1988). Moreover, "individuals and groups may select the domains (for example, language, food, dress, religion) in which they will change and those in which they will not change" (Berry et al., 1988, p. 65). Of these four adaptive strategies, integration has the most positive results (Berry, 1997; 2003).

Integration itself may also take two forms: pluralism and multiculturalism. Pluralism occurs when several cultural groups *exist* together in one society. However, when the cultural differences of these groups are *valued*, the society can be said to be multicultural (Berry, 1980). Therefore, each group must make some changes to accommodate the others and accept "the right of all groups to live as culturally different peoples" (Berry, 1997, p. 10). In order to achieve this, the non-dominant/immigrant groups will need "to adopt the basic values of the larger society, while at the same time the dominant group must be prepared to adapt national institutions . . . to better meet the needs of all groups now living together" (Berry, 1997, p. 10-11). Certain conditions are necessary for multiculturalism to develop. The larger society must value cultural diversity, and there should be low levels of prejudice. The different cultural groups should hold positive attitudes toward each other, and they should all identify with the larger society (Berry, 1997). Figure 1 is my representation of Berry's model.

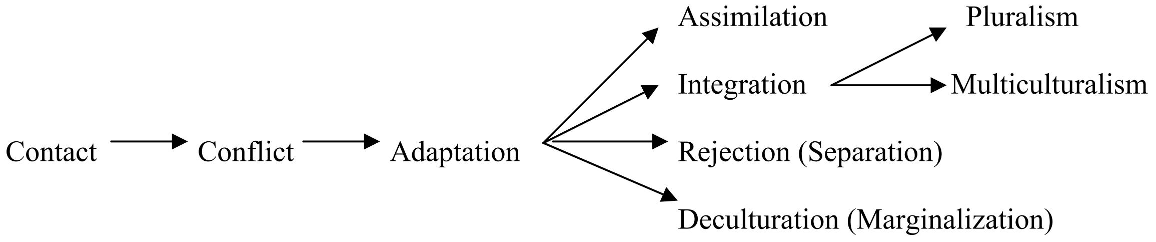


Figure 1. Acculturation

Berry (1997) distinguishes between different dimensions of adaptation. Psychological adaptation "refers to a set of internal psychological outcomes including a clear set of personal and cultural identity, good mental health, and the achievement of personal satisfaction in the new cultural context" (p. 14). Sociocultural adaptation refers to the person's ability to manage their daily life. It depends on the person's cultural knowledge, the degree of contact he/she has with the new culture, and attitudes between the cultural groups. Economic adaptation "refers to the degree to which work is obtained, is satisfying and is effective in the new culture" (p. 14). For the purposes of my study, I am more interested in the *social* processes of adaptation. Thus, I will focus on sociocultural and economic adaptation. To these, I would like to add political adaptation, which has been defined as "a process whereby an individual eventually becomes a participant in various phases of the political process" (Garcia, 1987, p. 373).

Although Berry recognizes that adaptation occurs along various dimensions, the model he presents is more suited to psychological and sociocultural adaptation than to economic or political adaptation. It also does not address the relationship, if any, that exists among the dimensions of adaptation. For example, might a person be assimilated along the sociocultural dimension yet experience low levels of economic adaptation? In addition, the model seems to assume that once a form of adaptation is achieved, the immigrant maintains that condition indefinitely. I, on the other hand, believe that the form of adaptation exhibited by an immigrant can vary over time and in different contexts. For instance, a young person who lives in a traditional immigrant destination like California may exhibit a certain form of adaptation. However, as the person matures and becomes a domestic migrant, arriving to live in a state like Georgia, that same person may exhibit a different form of adaptation.

Sociocultural Adaptation

Sociocultural adaptation refers to the immigrants' "ability to 'fit in' and negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450). The research into this domain of adaptation draws on social learning models, which "emphasize the acquisition of culturally-appropriate skills and behaviors" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 451), as well as social cognition models, which focus on "expectations, values, attitudes and perceptions in the cross-cultural adjustment process" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 452). Sociocultural adaptation and psychological adaptation can influence each other. For example, if an immigrant lacks appropriate social skills, this could cause him/her to be frustrated in interactions with members of the host culture. This frustration would cause the immigrant psychological stress. Likewise, if the immigrant is experiencing a great amount of psychological stress due to other factors, the stress could affect his/her behavior with members of the host culture. The relationship between these two domains of adaptation depends on the immigrant "group's need, capacity, or opportunity for integration into the host culture; that is, the more reliance on the host culture as the primary environment for interaction and support, the stronger the relationship between the two forms of adjustment" (Ward & Kennedy, 1993, p. 134). Therefore, psychological adaptation is more tightly entwined with sociocultural adaptation in assimilation than in integration.

Ward (1996) describes acculturation as a process and presents an acculturation model for the psychological and sociocultural domains. Although Ward has been a great proponent of separating these two domains in acculturation research (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, 1996; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward & Kennedy, 1996), she combines the psychological and sociocultural domains in her model, which is presented in Figure 2.

In this model, the immigrant group is experiencing influences from two societies: its society of origin and the society where it is settling. The two societies are shaped by social, political, economic, and cultural factors. This contact between the two cultures can cause the immigrants to experience stress. In addition, certain skills are needed, which the immigrants may or may not have, to facilitate the immigrants' life in a new culture. The stress and possession/lack of skills lead the immigrants to manifest certain affective, behavioral, or cognitive responses. The amount of stress the immigrants experience, the kinds of skills they

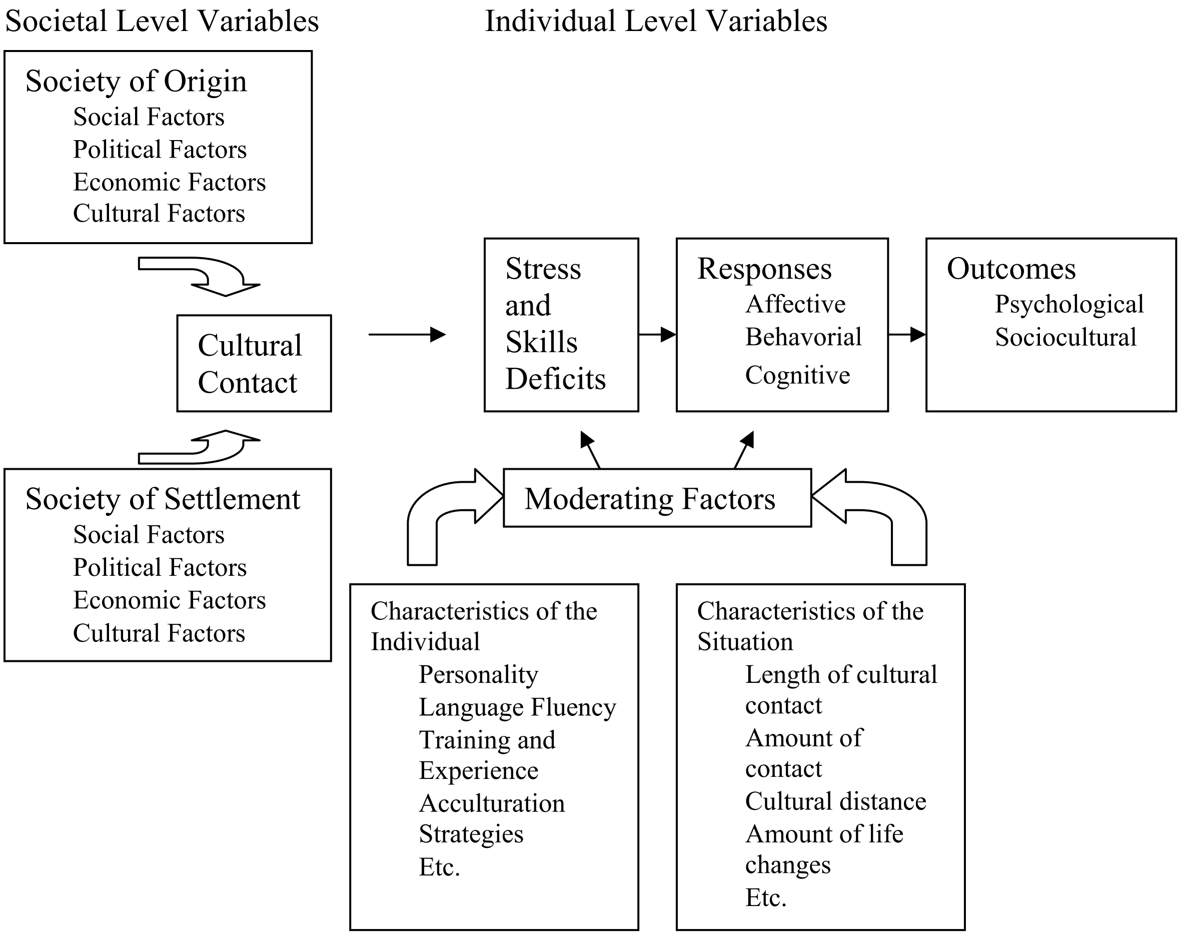

Societal Level Variables
Individual Level Variables
Society of Origin
Social Factors
Political Factors
Economic Factors
Cultural Factors
Cultural Contact
Society of Settlement
Social Factors
Political Factors
Economic Factors
Cultural Factors
Stress and Skills Deficits
Responses
Affective
Behavorial
Cognitive
Outcomes
Psychological
Sociocultural
Moderating Factors
Characteristics of the Individual
Personality
Language Fluency
Training and Experience
Acculturation Strategies
Etc.
Characteristics of the Situation
Length of cultural contact
Amount of contact
Cultural distance
Amount of life changes
Etc.

Figure 2. Ward's Model of the Acculturation Process (1996, p. 129)

may possess, and the way they respond to the situation are moderated by individual and situational characteristics. The immigrants' response to their situation leads to some form of psychological or sociocultural adaptation.

What are the factors that moderate the immigrants' experience of stress, the skills they may possess, and the responses they manifest? Ward (1996) describes several factors operating at the individual and the societal level that affect sociocultural adaptation: time in the host culture, training and previous experience, expectations, intercultural communication and language fluency, relations with host nationals, cultural distance, and experiences of discrimination. Sociocultural difficulties usually occur at the beginning of an immigrant's experience in the host culture. As new skills and knowledge are acquired over time, the difficulties are resolved. If an immigrant acquires knowledge of the host culture before immigrating and during resettlement, his/her sociocultural adaptation will be facilitated. This knowledge may be acquired through training or previous experience in the host culture. In the case of Mexicans, this knowledge may be acquired through transnational networks (Monkman, 1997). Holding realistic expectations of life in the host culture will also facilitate adaptation. However, if expectations are not met, or a person has negative expectations, difficulties in adaptation may occur (Ward, 1996).

Proficiency in the language of the host culture and knowledge of interactional norms allow the immigrant to seek information and to more easily develop relationships with members of the host culture. Contact with members of the host culture supports sociocultural adaptation because this interaction “offers valuable opportunities to learn culture-specific skills” (Ward, 1996, p. 137). Likewise, if the immigrant group has chosen to pursue the assimilation or integration modes of acculturation, identification with host nationals reduces sociocultural adaptation problems (Ward, 1996).

Cultural distance refers to the differences and similarities between the home culture of the immigrant and the culture of the host society. More differences (wider cultural distance) will hinder adaptation while more similarities (narrower cultural distance) will encourage it. Other differences between the two societies, such as differences in the social, political, or economic systems, can also impact the adaptation process. Finally, the attitudes of the host culture toward the immigrant group, whether the host culture accepts it or discriminates against it, will shape the immigrants’ process of sociocultural adaptation. Even *perceptions* of discrimination by the immigrant group can have a negative impact (Ward, 1996).

In addition to being a process, acculturation can also be considered as a state of being (Ward, 1996). As such, it can be measured (i.e., a person can be determined to be more or less acculturated). To this end, several scales have been developed to measure the acculturation level of Hispanic populations in the United States. Dana (1996) reviews some of these scales: the first and second versions of the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA/ARSMA II), the Cultural Life Style Inventory (CLSI), the Bicultural/Multicultural Experience Inventory (B/MEI), the Measure of Acculturation (MOC), the Bicultural Involvement Questionnaire (BIQ), and the Hispanic Assessment Scale (HAS).

One of the most popular scales, the ARSMA, was originally published in 1980. It measured "acculturation along a line representing Mexican culture at one extreme and American (U.S.) culture at the other extreme" (Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995, p. 275). It assumed that acculturation required a reduction in one of the two cultures. The scale has since been revised to more accurately reflect biculturalism. It now measures the two cultural orientations separately. In addition, it attempts to measure the four outcomes of acculturation (assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization) proposed by Berry. The first part of the ARMSA-II asks participants to respond to statements surrounding language use and preference (e.g., *My thinking is done in Spanish*), ethnic identity and classification (e.g., *I like to identify myself as an American)*, cultural heritage and ethnic behaviors (e.g., *My family cooks Mexican foods*), and ethnic interaction (e.g., *I associate with Anglos*) (Cuéllar et al., 1995, p. 297-298). This part of the scale produces a Mexican Orientation Score and an Anglo Orientation Score, "both of which are independently derived and are used to generate a multidimensional configuration yielding primarily two acculturation modes: integration and assimilation" (Cuéllar et al., 1995, p. 283). The second part of the scale attempts to measure separation and marginalization and presents such statements as *"I have difficulty accepting some ideas held by Anglos"* and *"I have difficulty accepting some values held by some Mexicans*" (Cuéllar et al., 1995, p. 299-300).

Economic Adaptation

"Full economic integration requires that the occupational, income, and labor supply patterns of a particular group reflect that of the general society taking into account relevant variables" (Padilla & Glick, 2000, p. 180). Much of the research on the economic adaptation of immigrants has revolved around the concepts of human capital, straight-line and segmented assimilation, economic restructuring, and ethnic enclaves. "Human capital theory posits a direct relationship between skill acquisition, labor productivity, and earnings potential" (Allensworth, 1997). The amount of human capital a worker possesses is determined by the level of education the worker has, the worker's employment history (in particular his/her work experience in the United States), and the worker's English language proficiency, among other job skills. It is assumed that immigrants with higher levels of human capital will be able to integrate into the labor market more easily and earn higher salaries while those immigrants with lower levels of human capital will work in lower status jobs and earn less (Alba & Nee, 1997; Allensworth, 1997; Portes & Zhou, 1992). Mexican immigrants in general have lesser amounts of human capital and end up working in less prestigious occupations (Padilla & Glick, 2000). Although the differences in human capital exhibited by different groups of immigrants can account for some of the variation in their economic integration, it cannot account for all of it. For example, some studies have shown that Mexican immigrants with human capital resources comparable to members of the dominant group still earn less; they receive lesser economic return on their human capital investments (Allensworth, 1997; Portes & Zhou, 1992).

The straight-line assimilation theory holds that immigrants may earn less than members of the dominant group upon arrival. However, as the immigrants gain skills and experience in the United States, they climb the economic ladder until eventually they are earning the same as members of the dominant group in their profession. Furthermore, each generation will do better economically than the last. In this view, economic adaptation is often associated with social mobility (Alba & Nee, 1997; Kossoudji, 1989). The segmented-assimilation theory was developed in reaction to the straight-line assimilation theory. The segmented-assimilation theory recognizes that different immigrant groups have different experiences of adaptation. Some groups experience upward mobility and eventually integrate into the middle class just as the straight-line assimilation theory predicts. However, other groups experience downward mobility and integrate into the underclass. Even other groups manage to integrate into the middle class economically while maintaining their own identity culturally. The experience that an immigrant group has depends on the interplay of individual factors, such as level of education and English proficiency, and structural factors, such as racial status and socioeconomic background (Zhou, 1997).

Economic restructuring has also been offered as an explanation for the lack of economic adaptation by some immigrant groups. Immigrants with low levels of education, language proficiency, and job skills have few employment options. Many have ended up working in the manufacturing sector because these jobs do not require a lot of skills. However, in recent years, the manufacturing sector has been undergoing changes, with jobs being eliminated or degraded. This means that immigrants have had to turn to service jobs at the bottom of the economic ladder, jobs which “do not offer comparable wages, stability of employment or mobility ladders” (Alba & Nee, 1997, p. 847). The immigrants’ lack of human capital makes it harder for them to move out of the service sector (Alba & Nee, 1997; Gilbarg & Falcón, 1992; Portes & Zhou, 1992).

A final area of research involves the economies within ethnic enclaves. An ethnic enclave forms when large numbers of immigrants of the same national origin settle within the same geographical area. Enclave economies often arise because the immigrants cannot integrate into the mainstream economy (either because they lack the necessary human capital or because the dominant group discriminates against them). Thus, the immigrants open businesses to serve the residents of the enclave by offering products from the immigrants' homeland or services in their own language. The entrepreneurs are not the only people who benefit economically from the development of the enclave economy. They may hire other immigrants to work for them, giving these immigrants the opportunity to acquire skills which they can then use to open their own businesses or to transfer to the mainstream economy (Alba & Nee, 1997; Gilbarg & Falcón, 1992; Portes & Zhou, 1992).

In addition, these enclave economies have developed their own sources of capital financing. Portes and Zhou (1992) describe some of the financing practices in the Dominican, Cuban, and Chinese enclave economies. In the Dominican enclave, businesses are often financed with investments from other immigrants or from investors in the homeland. During the early development of the Cuban enclave economy, Cuban immigrant bank employees would give business loans to other Cuban immigrants based on the applicant's business reputation back in Cuba. The Chinese have utilized rotating credit associations, an established cultural practice in China, as well as investments from Chinese overseas to finance their businesses. These practices within the enclave economy have meant that the immigrants have not had to rely on mainstream sources of financing to establish their own businesses. In this scenario, the ethnic community has influence over the economic wellbeing of its own members.

Although Mexican businesses are prevalent in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001a), Mexicans have yet to develop a strong enclave economy. One explanation for this is that they possess low amounts of human capital. Moreover, they have not received the same kind of support for entrepreneurship from the U.S. government as other groups, such as Cubans, have (Gilbarg & Falcón, 1992). Another explanation is that the social capital of Mexicans has been diluted by the acculturation of their U.S. born members. Therefore, the group does not have the "bounded solidarity" and the "enforceable trust" which characterizes successful enclave economies (Portes & Zhou, 1992).

Political Adapation

Political adaptation encompasses "civic identity and assimilation; naturalization; political organizational involvement; political attitudes; partisan involvement; electoral activities; and, political orientations and ideologies" (Garcia, 1987, p. 374). One aspect of political adaptation that has received a lot of attention is naturalization. However, Pachon and DiSipio (1994) remind us of the complexity of the naturalization process. We should not take the dichotomous view that an immigrant is either a citizen or an illegal alien. An immigrant could fall into one of several categories. First, the immigrant might be a naturalized citizen. Second, the immigrant might have permanent residence and be in the process of applying for citizenship. Or he/she might be a permanent resident and be perfectly happy to remain with that status and to not seek citizenship. Third, the immigrant might be a permanent resident who has not yet lived in the U.S. long enough to be eligible for naturalization. Fourth, the immigrant could be in the U.S. temporarily under refugee or asylee status. And finally, the immigrant may be in the U.S. illegally, and thus be ineligible to seek citizenship.

Several studies have been conducted on the determinants of naturalization across immigrant groups (Liang, 1994; Yang, 1994) as well as among Hispanic immigrants in particular (Alvarez, 1987; González Baker & Espitia, 2000; Pachon & DeSipio, 1994; Portes & Curtis, 1987). These studies investigate different variables and at times present contradictory findings. For example, Portes and Curtis (Portes & Curtis, 1987) asked legal Mexican immigrants who had been in the U.S. for six years whether they intended to naturalize. The response was correlated with four sets of predicators: background characteristics and skills, U.S.-acquired skills and resources, residential patterns and social relations, and attitudes and orientations. The analysis points to different predictors for those who intend to naturalize and those who have actually gone through the process. Actual citizenship change can be best predicted if the immigrant entered the U.S. as the spouse of a U.S. citizen, has children, owns a home, and is fluent in English.

Liang (1994) studied six immigrant groups, one of which was Mexican, to test the assimilation paradigm as well as to explore how social contact with Americans and social capital resources influence naturalization. The major assumption of the assimilation paradigm "is that as immigrants become more educated, more familiar with the culture and language, and more successful in economic terms, the more likely they are to assimilate in other aspects of life" (p. 409). Liang's findings supported the assimilation paradigm. In the case of Mexicans, their lower socioeconomic status, lower levels of education, and lower levels of English proficiency hindered their naturalization. Current census data show that only 20% of the foreign-born population from Mexico are naturalized (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002).

The concept of social contact has been viewed through two opposing theories. The ethnic enclosure theory proposes that ethnic communities promote in-group interactions and discourage interactions with Americans, thereby reducing the propensity to naturalize. The ethnic resilience theory argues that contact with Americans, and the ensuing discrimination that may be experienced, causes immigrants to be more aware of their own ethnic identity, making them less likely to naturalize. Liang (1994) found that residential social contact with Americans positively influenced the naturalization of Mexicans while occupational social contact negatively influenced it.

Social capital refers to “resources in family relations and community organization” (Liang, 1994, p. 412). It may facilitate naturalization in two ways. First, it may provide a source of information, for example, information on how to apply for citizenship or how to study for the exam. Second, marriage to a U.S. citizen reduces the time one must be a resident before being eligible for citizenship. Liang found that the propensity to naturalize is increased when at least one member of the family is already an American citizen through birth or naturalization. This is true for all immigrant groups.

To this point, Liang’s findings seem to support those of Portes and Curtis (Portes & Curtis, 1987). However, in contrast to Portes and Curtis, Liang found that home ownership as a measure of physical capital “significantly decreases the likelihood of naturalization for Mexican[s]” (p. 429). It is hard to gain a clear picture from these studies as to why immigrants do or do not naturalize. In fact, of the five quantitative studies of naturalization determinants that I reviewed the only variable that is consistently found to be positively related to naturalization is English language proficiency (González Baker & Espitia, 2000; Liang, 1994; Pachon & DeSipio, 1994; Portes & Curtis, 1987; Yang, 1994). Even so, Portes and Curtis (1987) point out that “the effect of English knowledge is, however, more complex because it also facilitates greater exposure to American society, and hence, the possible emergence of more critical perspectives" (p. 370), perspectives which would discourage naturalization.

The 1988 National Latino Immigrant Survey (Pachon & DeSipio, 1994) took a more direct route to investigating naturalization determinants by asking immigrants the reasons why they had or had not chosen to naturalize. The most common reason for pursuing naturalization that was given by all of the Mexican respondents was the desire "to participate more fully in American life" (p. 98). When unnaturalized naturalization-eligible Mexicans were asked to rank nine reasons for not having naturalized, the belief that there were no real benefits to naturalization and the difficulty of the citizenship exam were ranked as the top two. In addition, when the respondents were asked to give the one most important reason for not having naturalized, 38.1% of the non-naturalized Mexican immigrants said they had not thought about naturalization.

Another measure of political adaptation that has been studied is voting participation. Traditional models to predict voting participation have focused on five sets of variables. One set of variables is demographic characteristics, such as age, race, and level of education, as well as socioeconomic indicators. Another set of variables is social incorporation, i.e., whether the social context encourages or discourages voting. Included among these variables are employment status, residential stability (whether the person moves often), and marital status. A third set of variables is institutional variables, such as rules surrounding voter registration or absentee voting. Political mobilization and party competition create a fourth set of variables. Finally, attitudinal factors make up a fifth set of variables. Attitudinal factors include partisanship, political interest, and political efficacy. Political efficacy may be external, which refers to the person's belief about the importance of their vote, or internal, which refers to the person's understanding of government and politics (Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001).

Ramakrishnan and Espenshade (2001) tested the first four sets of variables from the traditional models with a data set from the Current Population Survey November Voter Supplements (1994, 1996, and 1998) to see which of these variables are most relevant for predicting the voting participation of four immigrant groups: White, Black, Asian, and Latino. Among the demographic variables, they found that voting increases with age and that voting is highest among immigrants with college and graduate level education. Of the social incorporation variables, "marital status and residential stability show a robust relationship to voting participation across immigrant generations" (p. 883). Among the contextual variables, registration requirements along with the closeness of senate/governor races impacted voter participation. The other variables in the traditional models were not found to be significant with the immigrant population sample.

Then Ramakrishnan and Espenshade tested other variables, not included in the traditional models, which they believed would impact the voting participation of immigrant groups. These were generational status (i.e.,whether the immigrant was first, second, or third+ generation), time living in the United States, previous political experience under repressive or democratic governments, linguistic barriers (e.g., if voting materials are in English), ethnic residential concentration, and mobilization over anti-immigrant legislation. For Latino immigrants, Ramakrishnan and Espenshade found that there is a positive correlation between length of time living in the United States and voting. In fact, first generation Latino immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for twenty years or more are more likely to vote than second or third generation Latino immigrants. Furthermore, there is a strong link between mobilization over antiimmigration legislation and voting. However, ethnic concentration seems to have a negative effect on voting behavior among Latinos. Finally, a state's political culture (i.e., Is there a history of strong voter turnout in this state?) will influence the participation of all immigrant groups. In Georgia, the voting participation of Hispanics is low. They "account for less than 1 percent of the state's 3.6 million active voters" (Basinger, 2002, p. D2).

Factors Influencing the Integration of Mexican Immigrants

Mexicans are the largest immigrant group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Although their sociocultural adaptation has been variable (Negy & Woods, 1992; Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974), they are among the least integrated immigrant groups economically (Padilla & Glick, 2000) and politically (González Baker & Espitia, 2000; Liang, 1994; Portes & Curtis, 1987). There are several factors which have influenced the adaptation of first generation Mexican immigrants in Georgia.

Formal education has been shown to play a positive role in all dimensions of adaptation. It facilitates adaptation for a number of reasons:

> First, education is a personal resource in itself: problem analysis and problem solving are usually instilled by formal education and likely contribute to better adaptation. Second, education is a correlate of other resources, such as income, occupational status, support networks etc. . . . Third, for many migrants, education may attune them to features of the society into which they settle; it is a kind of pre-acculturation to the language, history, values, and norms of the new culture. (Berry, 1997, p. 22)

Mexican immigrants tend to have very low levels of formal education. In fact, 66% of adult Mexican immigrants nationally have less than a high school education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Similarly, a 2001 survey of the adult Latin American (primarily Mexican) immigrant population in northeast Georgia indicates that 69% have not graduated from high school (McLaughlin et al., 2002).

English language proficiency also affects adaptation across the dimensions. Higher levels of English proficiency allow Mexican immigrants to interact with Anglos, thus supporting their sociocultural adaptation. It allows them to obtain better paying jobs, which promotes their economic adaptation. In addition, a certain level of English is required for the naturalization exam. Therefore, it also facilitates their political adaptation. In a survey conducted among the Mexican immigrant population in northwest Georgia in 1997, 53.6% of the women and 16% of the men reported that they do not speak English at all. Men's greater English proficiency can be attributed to the fact that they have lived in the U.S. longer and that they are employed outside of the home (Hernández-León & Zúñiga, 2000).

Work experience contributes to economic adaptation. However, Mexican immigrants are fairly young. The northwest Georgia survey found that 33% of the men and 45% of the women are under the age of 31 (Hernández-León & Zúñiga, 2000). This means that their labor experience is limited. With low levels of skills and education, Mexicans end up working in low paying jobs with restricted mobility. In Georgia, the employment of Mexicans is concentrated in agriculture, construction, poultry farms and plants, carpet and textile factories, and in service industries, such as domestic work, landscaping, and restaurants (Murphy et al., 2001).

An immigrant's legal status may also affect his/her adaptation across the dimensions. It most obviously impacts political adaptation since illegal immigrants are ineligible for citizenship. It also influences economic adaptation since illegal immigrants earn substantially less than legal immigrants (Rivera-Batiz, 1999). Illegal status also affects sociocultural adaptation since immigrants may seek “isolation and invisibility to avoid apprehension and deportation” (Peña, 1984, p. 318).

“Transnationalism refers to sustained ties of persons, networks, and organizations across nation-state borders, arising out of international migration patterns and refugee flows” (ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education/Colombia Teachers College, n.d.). Transnationalism among Mexican immigrants is well documented. Some Mexicans will come to the United States to work for a few years and then return to Mexico. After staying in Mexico for a time, sometimes years, they return to work in the States again. During this back and forth movement, they maintain social ties with people both in Mexico and in the U.S. These social networks facilitate the migration process by providing information about jobs and housing (Massey, Goldring, & Durand, 1994). Transnational social networks have brought Mexican immigrants to Georgia as well. As one Mexican immigrant in Gainesville said when interviewed, “The [poultry plant] owner was asking us for more Hispanic people. He would pay $50 for each Hispanic worker we brought to [the company]. From there, I called my cousin. He called his cousin, his brother-in-law” (Guthey, 2001, p. 64).

Although transnationalism may bring immigrants to the States, I suggest that it may also disrupt their adaptation processes. For example, immigrants may believe that there is no reason for them to learn English because their stay in the U.S. is not permanent. Moving between the two countries weakens relationships that they may have formed with Anglos and disrupts their work histories. Furthermore, moving between the two countries may keep immigrants from meeting U.S. residency requirements. The Mexican immigrants in the northwest Georgia survey seem to have settled in the U.S. permanently. “One-fifth of the women responded that their families already own a home in Carpet City. An additional 25% have plans to buy a house within the next year" (Hernández-León & Zúñiga, 2000, p. 59). Likewise, employee turnover is low among the Mexican immigrants working in the Gainesville poultry industry, and more immigrants there are also buying homes (Guthey, 2001).

"Full integration into societal institutions also includes contact between members of the newly emerging group and of the dominant culture" (Welch & Sigelman, 2000, p. 68). Indicators of social contact include intermarriage, occupational integration, and geographical/residential integration. "The ultimate mark of integration, according to demographers, is intermarriage, indicated by the share of unions formed between Mexicans and other, previously distant, nationalities." (Durand, 1998, p. 210). Rosenfeld (2002) examined the intermarriage of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans with non-Hispanic Whites and non-Hispanic Blacks in the United States over a 30 year time span. The intermarriage of first generation Mexican immigrants with these groups is very low. They exhibit "extremely high levels of national origin endogamy" (p. 154); that is, they tend to marry other Mexicans. However, later generations of Mexican Americans are increasingly marrying non-Hispanic Whites. The frequency of these intermarriages has increased from 19% in 1970 to 29% in 1990. Intermarriage with non-Hispanic Blacks continues to be rare (e.g., 1.4% in 1990). Rosenfeld takes these intermarriage rates as evidence that Mexicans are assimilating with White Americans, thus refuting the segmented assimilation hypothesis. Data is not available on intergroup marriages between Mexican immigrants/Mexican Americans and Georgians.

Occupational segregation keeps Mexican immigrants from having the opportunity to interact with Americans in the workplace. The latest census data show that 83% of Mexican immigrants work in the service industry, as skilled workers, and as farm and manual laborers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). This occupational segregation also occurs in Georgia. Mexican immigrants usually work with others of their ethnic group in industries that rely heavily on immigrant labor. For instance, Hernández-León and Zúñiga (2000) describe how the poultry plant in “Carpet City,” Georgia has been “colonized by Mexican and other Hispanic workers. In the local plant, 80% of the 550 slaughtering and processing workers are Hispanic” (p. 58).

Hispanic populations in the U.S. have traditionally been concentrated in states like California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois. However, the New Latino Diaspora means that Hispanics are moving into areas, like Georgia, where they make up only a small percentage of the population (Hamann et al., 2002). You would think that this would give them more opportunity to integrate into the community, yet they are still geographically isolated. For example, some Georgia counties, such as Whitfield and Hall, have very large Hispanic populations (22.1% and 19.6% of the population, respectively) while other counties have minimal Hispanic populations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001b).

Finally, the adaptation of Mexican immigrants in Georgia across the dimensions is shaped by their experiences of real and perceived discrimination. Even when Mexicans make every effort to integrate socioculturally, racist attitudes held by the dominant group will prevent them from doing so (Wells, 1980). The rapid growth of the Mexican community in Georgia has ignited some racist feelings among Georgians as well. For example, when large numbers of Mexican students started entering the Dalton schools, some Anglo parents complained that their children were being neglected, and they withdrew them from the school system (Engstrom, 2001). Yet the discrimination may be manifested even more overtly. As recently as July 13, 2002, the National Alliance, a White supremacist group, staged a protest in Gainesville against the number of Latinos in Hall county ("News & issues affecting our Latino community," 2002).

Labor market discrimination keeps immigrants from integrating economically (Gilbarg & Falcón, 1992). Hernández-León and Zúñiga (2000) note how Spanish language job advertisements in "Carpet City" quoted one hourly rate for certain jobs while the English language job advertisements for those same jobs quoted an hourly rate that was fifty cents an hour more. Experiences of discrimination will also make immigrants think twice before seeking U.S. citizenship (Portes & Curtis, 1987).

Adult Education Participation

Over the past few decades, UNESCO and the U.S. National Centre for Educational Statistics (NCES) have released several studies on the participation of American adults in adult learning activities (Valentine, 1997). The latest UNESCO study, conducted in 1994, reinforces the traditional profile of the adult learner in the U.S. According to this profile, the typical adult learner is young, single (never married) or married, and was born in the United States. The learner and his/her parents are highly educated. This person lives in an urban area and is employed (or seeking employment) with a large company in a position with supervisory responsibilities which requires processing large amounts of textual information. The learner has a high literacy ability and frequently engages in literacy practices. Finally, he/she participates in social and cultural activities. Valentine points out that in the samples of the NCES studies that have been conducted over the years "whites were over-represented among participants" (p. 100). It is unknown whether this was remedied in the UNESCO survey because UNESCO did not provide an analysis based on race and ethnicity. Therefore, these studies leave us ignorant about the participation of groups like Mexican immigrants in adult learning activities.

Research in the area of participation in adult learning activities has included motivation for participation as well as barriers or deterrents to participation. This has led to the construction of models in an attempt to explain why adults do or do not participate. In the 1960s, Houle explored some of the motivations that adults have for participating in learning activities and came up with a typology of learning orientations. His typology consists of goal-oriented learners (who participate in order to achieve some goal), activity-oriented learners (who enjoy the activity itself), and learning-oriented learners (who consider learning as its own reward). Further research has expanded this typology to include other motivations for participation such as being able to meet new people, fulfilling expectations imposed by an external authority, serving others, escaping from the routine, and promoting family relationships (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Yet the most compelling reason for participation in adult learning activities these days is for job-related motives (Valentine, 1997).

Aslanian and Brickell (1980) posit that “most adult decisions to seek educational renewal are clearly and directly related to significant changes in their lives” (p. ix). In their research, they found that some of the life transitions that motivate adults to participate in adult learning include changes in career, family life, leisure activities, artistic life, personal health, religious life, and *citizenship*. The citizenship category includes becoming a citizen and becoming a more active citizen (i.e., becoming more involved in community activities). Obviously, this last transition is one that is relevant to the life of Mexican immigrants and could motivate them to participate in adult learning activities. Although Aslanian and Brickell do not mention it, the immigration process itself is a life transition of major proportions.

Closely related to the concept of motivation is the idea of barriers or deterrents to participation. Silva, Cahalan, and Lacierno-Paquet (1998) give an overview of 15 studies on the barriers or deterrents to participation in adult education. Seven of these studies examine participation in adult education programs in general while the other eight concentrate on participation in specific types of adult education programs, including Adult Basic Education, continuing professional education, ESL (see discussion of Hayes, 1989 below), and higher education. The most frequent barriers that appear across the studies are lack of time and family responsibilities (situational barriers) along with the time and place where courses are held and the cost (institutional barriers). In addition, several dispositional barriers are mentioned, such as lack of support from family and friends, having doubts about one's own ability, and having had negative educational experiences in the past.

Several models have been developed to explain or predict the participation of adults in learning activities. Cross (1981) reviews four models from the field of adult education before offering her own model: the Chain of Response (COR) Model for Understanding Participation in Adult Learning Activities. Silva et al. (1998) describe participation models emerging from the fields of economics, social psychology, leisure studies, and health as well as frameworks from theories of change, drop-out and attrition frameworks, time allocation literature, and frameworks from consumer choice behavior. They include six models from the field of adult education. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) discuss seven models from the adult education literature. Table 1 summarizes the models that are presented in these works:

Table 1. Adult Education Participation Models

Models	**Cross (1981)**	**Silva et al. (1998)**	**Merriam & Caffarella (1999)**
Boshier's Congruency Model	*		*
Cookson's ISSTAL Model			*
Cross's Chain-of-Response Model	*	*	*
Darkenwald & Merriam's Psychosocial Interaction Model		*	*
Henry & Basile's Decision Model		*	*
Knox & Videbeck's Theory of Patterned Participation		*	
Miller's Force-Field Analysis	*	*	*
Rubenson's Expectancy-Valence Model	*	*	*
Tough's Anticipated Benefits Theory	*		

Most of these models, with the exception of Tough's, are constructed to explain participation in formal educational activities and have little explanatory power for participation in other learning activities. In addition, these models assume that the adult education participant is a native of the country he/she lives in and a fluent speaker of that country's language. Therefore, they do not shed much light on the participation of non-English speaking immigrants in adult learning activities.

Adult Learning of Hispanic/Latino, Mexican American, and Mexican Immigrant Populations

Over the past century, several forms of adult education have been developed specifically for immigrant populations in the United States. One need that immigrants have is to learn English. Various forms of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes have arisen to meet this need: remedial ESL linked to GED and ABE programs, survival skills programs, occupational and vocational ESL, English for Special Purposes, and family literacy programs (Graham & Cookson, 1990; Stewart, 1993; Weinstein, 1998). Citizenship classes prepare immigrants to take the naturalization exam while civic participation education helps immigrants become active community members (Tolbert, 2001). First language literacy programs provide immigrants with literacy skills in their native language (Rivera, 1999). In addition, immigrant communities have developed educational programming in other areas, such as human rights or health issues, to meet their own learning needs (Montero-Sieburth, 1990).

Although adult education for immigrants is well established, the studies on immigrant learning are few. Furthermore, it has been difficult to identify studies that deal specifically with the adult learning experiences of Mexican immigrant populations because the sample in many studies is not clearly defined. The researchers may state that the sample consisted of Hispanics or

Latinos, yet they do not indicate the national origin of the participants (e.g., Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.) or whether the participants were immigrants or native born. Thus, I include here studies that have been conducted with Hispanic/Latino, Mexican American, and Mexican immigrant populations. Studies on the adult learning experiences of Hispanic/Latino, Mexican American, and Mexican immigrant populations have examined participation in certain programs, acquisition of particular skills, educational needs, deterrents/barriers to participation in certain activities, the context of learning, and the learning experiences of individuals. However, none of these areas of research has been fully explored.

Surveys of Program Participation

González (1985) studied the participation of Hispanics (Mexicans, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans) in the educational programs offered by Michigan's Cooperative Extension Service (CES). Interviews were conducted with 16 key informants and questionnaires were administered by mail to 62 respondents. The purpose was to learn about the awareness of CES programs in natural resources and public policy, 4-H, agriculture and marketing, and home economics. The study also sought information on programming needs and deterrents to participation. The findings indicate that 4-H was the most widely-known of CES's programs and the program regarded as being most highly needed. Lack of time, lack of information about the programs, and age (being too old) were the key reasons for non-participation. Key informants recommended the creation of more bilingual programs.

Wallace, Malizio, and Erwin (1987) present the findings from a survey of 11,000 GED and adult education students in the fifteen counties in Texas with the largest Hispanic (mostly Mexican) populations. The GED sample was approximately 30% Hispanic, 13% Black, and 51% White while the adult education sample was approximately 65% Hispanic, 14 % Black, and 9%

White. These surveys asked students how they learned about the educational program they were participating in and elicited suggestions for improving this program as well as gathered information about the students' reading, television viewing, and radio listening habits. Specific findings related to the Hispanic students were that half of the Hispanic GED candidates had learned about the program through friends. In addition, the Hispanic GED candidates, more than Blacks or Whites, had stressed that the program could be improved by increasing publicity. Unfortunately, the report does not provide racial/ethnic breakdowns for the rest of the findings.

Studies on Skill Acquisition

Delgado-Gaitan (1987) describes an ethnographic study she conducted of eight Mexican immigrant families living near Silicon Valley. These families were involved in an adult literacy program, "designed to teach English as a second language as well as Spanish and English reading skills" (p. 13-14). Family literacy was also an objective of the program. The participants were observed at home and in their literacy class. In addition, two types of interviews were conducted: ethnohistory interviews, in which the participants talked about their past and present lives, and structured interviews with specific questions about their literacy practices. Delgado-Gaitan found that the families had immigrated to the U.S. for economic reasons and believed that becoming proficient in spoken and written English would enhance their social and economic status. The parents valued education, which motivated them to develop their own literacy skills as a way to help their children. They also valued bilingualism among their children and encouraged the development of their children's Spanish language skills. Most of the literacy activities at home revolved around reading the children's schoolbooks, letters from family members, and school bulletins. These texts were written in Spanish and English.

Lanteigne and Schwarzer (1997) present a case study of Rafael, a Mexican immigrant living in Kansas, as he learns English. They describe his job, community, family life, and classroom interactions. Through analyzing Rafael's writing samples, his listening comprehension, and his scores on the Basic English Skills Test, Lanteigne and Schwarzer note the gains in his English proficiency over a four-month time period. In addition, they observed the increase in his family's reading activities. Rafael's case contradicts the stereotypes of Mexicans being lazy or unwilling to learn English.

Studies on Educational Needs

As part of a study on the adult education needs of limited-English adults, Kissam (1998) surveyed limited-English Spanish-speaking households in three immigrant communities in California. Kissam states that the majority of the households were of Mexican origin. There were findings in seven key areas. First, immigrant communities are very diverse, and program planners need to be sensitive to the community context. Second, immigrants who live in immigrant communities have little need for English in their daily activities. They do, however, need English for occupational mobility, management of family life (e.g., when children speak English), and civic participation. Therefore, immigrants need "high-performance" (p. 6) language skills that will transfer across domains. Third, language learning needs to be extended beyond the classroom. Fourth, instruction should develop the immigrants' ability to learn how to learn. Fifth, students should be grouped in classes based on their individual needs instead of on their language proficiency. Sixth, although large numbers of limited-English Spanish-speaking immigrants participated in adult education programs, their participation was short-term and sporadic. Seventh, program planners need to pay more attention to the actual communication demands placed on immigrants in different contexts. Kissam then presents the immigrants' self-assessment of overall English-language ability, workplace competencies, ability to deal with family life demands, ability to participate in community life, and ability to learn new skills and information. In every domain, the immigrants rated their ability to function in their current Spanish-speaking environment higher than their ability would be in a hypothetical English-speaking one.

Dale, Andreatta, and Freeman (2001) interviewed 24 Mexican and Mexican American migrant workers in North Carolina to determine their needs, one of which was adult education. The greatest need was in the area of language learning. Participants often did not know where ESL classes were held, they lacked transportation to the classes, or they were too tired after work to attend. Some people attempted self-directed language learning activities at home but were hampered by their low literacy skills in Spanish. Another learning need identified by women was learning how to drive.

Studies on Deterrents/Barriers to Participation in Certain Activities

Hayes (1989) administered a Spanish-language version of the Deterrents to Participation Scale that had been developed for low-literate adults (DPS-LL) to 207 Hispanics living in New Jersey to learn about the barriers to their participation in ESL programs. She found that the strongest barriers were related to “a lack of time to attend classes on a regular basis, the low priority of education in relation to work, costs, and lack of transportation” (p. 60). Although these are common findings in participation studies (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), I question the validity of this study for two reasons. First, it asked respondents who were currently participating in adult ESL classes to rank “how important each deterrent was for them *before* they began to attend classes” (p. 51). Therefore, the survey was not applied to non-participants about actual deterrents. Second, the survey was a Spanish-language translation of the same survey that had been administered to native Anglo populations. Great efforts were made to assure that the survey was accurately translated. However, given that the questions had been developed for Anglo populations, I believe that some of the prompts may not have been culturally relevant for Hispanic or immigrant populations.

Sparks (1998) interviewed second and third generation Mexican Americans in the Southwest who had participated in adult basic education and English literacy programs in the past but who were currently non-participants. The purpose was to understand the historical and contemporary structural constraints on their participation. Sparks found that the learners had felt marginalized in the adult education environment. They felt that they were invisible and inferior and that teachers didn't care about their learning. The learners had expectations about the classroom environment, the program organization, and the teaching-learning exchange that were not met. They also had strong cultural identities and felt proud of their bilingualism. However, the adult education system did not value their culture and language. These findings imply that changes need to be made in adult education practices to be more inclusive and supportive of nondominant groups.

Studies on the Context of Learning

Campos Carr (1991) shares findings from an ethnographic study on the lives of Mexican women workers based on five years of field work in an electronics factory in Aurora, Illinois. "The major question organizing this research was: Are the myths and stereotypical images that prevail in the media reflective of the psycho-social reality and experience of Mexican working women?" (p. 1). Campos Carr worked in the factory in a support services position and conducted participant observations there. In her position, she was privy to company documents. She also had the opportunity to talk informally with over 75 women and conduct in-depth interviews with

15 participants. As a result, Campos Carr provides a history of Mexican immigration to Aurora and a description of the electronics factory and the women's experiences working there. The workplace is found to be the site of much informal learning in areas such as knowledge of community services or new English words. Campos Carr also presents the life stories of six of the participants. "The personal stories told by the mexicana workers shatter popular claims that Mexican women do not want to learn English, are not interested in furthering their schooling, and simply do not place much importance on education" (p. 219). Although many of the Mexican women wanted to learn more English or study for the GED, they were deterred by their husbands, childcare and household responsibilities, and institutional bureaucracy. In addition, they felt discouraged when they discovered that acquiring structured knowledge in a classroom setting is more difficult (mentally) than working in a factory.

Monkman's (1997) work explored how living in a transnational social context impacts adult learning by interviewing 29 Hispanics who were socially connected to each other. The sample included Hispanic immigrants to California, adult children of immigrants, and people in Mexico socially related to these immigrants. Monkman collected in-depth life histories from these participants to determine how the immigration experience (their own or that of another person) had affected their adult learning. Monkman discusses her findings on adult learning in terms of the phases of migration. In the first phase, Separation, participants learned about the immigration experience informally from talking to others who had accomplished it. In the Transition phase, the immigrants actually moved and resettled in the new area. Again, informal learning played a major role in finding housing and jobs and getting children enrolled in school. It wasn't until the third phase, Incorporation, when the participants began to take advantage of nonformal learning opportunities (e.g., ESL classes, job training, citizenship courses).

Monkman's conclusion is that the context of immigrant learning needs to be expanded to include socio-cultural contexts outside of the U.S. and that "linear models of immigration need to be replaced with more complex analyses of transnational social relations so that we can better understand adults' lives and learning processes" (p.1). The weakness in this study is that Monkman does not incorporate any of the adult education literature into her discussion.

Velázquez (1990) conducted an ethnographic study with migrant farmworkers in North Carolina to learn about the culture of migrancy and how it influenced the educational experiences of migrants; their perceptions of schooling, learning, and education; and their participation in adult basic education (ABE) programs. She interviewed nine migrant farmworkers and conversed informally with 18 others. Although Velázquez states that migrants in the Eastern Stream are usually Puerto Rican, Mexican American, Anglo, Canadian Indian, or Black, she does not indicate the race/ethnicity of the informants in her sample. She found that the migrants valued education even though they had had negative experiences in the formal educational system. These negative experiences were relived in traditional adult basic education programs. The informants began to "view education as a means to better employment and personal satisfaction" (p. 15) when they participated in an ABE program that had been especially designed for migrant students. Velázquez gives some recommendations for designing such programs.

Studies on Individual Learning Experiences

Ashcraft (2003) interviewed 10 Latin American immigrants (six Mexicans, one Colombian, one Guatemalan, one Honduran, and one Salvadorian) to explore the range of adult learning activities in which they participate. The informants held positive attitudes toward lifelong learning. They were actively engaged in learning English through ESL classes, self-directed efforts (such as listening to language cassettes), and informal experiences at work and in the community. Their learning, however, extended beyond language. For example, the informants were engaged in self-directed efforts to learn how to make home decorations and to play the guitar. They learned informally how to perform their new jobs and how to carry out daily activities in a new culture. Findings indicate that the immigrants' participation in adult learning activities was influenced by their status as immigrants. The great number of changes they were experiencing in their lives was an impetus for learning. However, low English proficiency and undocumented status created barriers to participation.

Adult Education Outcomes

Nordhaug (1987; 1991) provides three reasons why it is important to study the outcomes of adult education participation. One reason is to understand how participating in adult education benefits individuals and society. He calls this "*the efficiency aspect* of adult education" (Nordhaug, 1987, p. 113). The second reason is to determine how the benefits of participation are distributed among different groups of people (e.g., different social classes or different age groups) as well as among different regions, types of courses, providers, and instructional methods. This makes it possible to determine the equality of benefits. The third reason is to compare the efficiency and equality aspects of adult education with other forms of education. Nordhaug notes:

> Very few studies of individual outcomes of participation in adult education have been conducted, its importance being eclipsed by the concentration on demand-related aspects like motivation, barriers, and recruitment. An essential task for future research is therefore to clarify what kind of resources are conveyed through participation as well as to which groups they are actually channeled. (Nordhaug, 1987, p. 114)

Nordhaug (1987; 1991) draws on three theories, Human Capital theory, Status Attainment theory, and Cultural Capital theory, to describe the social and economic benefits that an individual might receive from participating in adult education. In Human Capital theory, education is an investment that will have an economic payoff in the future. It is most relevant in work-related adult education in which learning new skills results in higher wages. In this way, education is linked to upward mobility. However, the theory cannot account for people who participate in work-related adult education for non-economic reasons, such as wanting to obtain a safer or more interesting job.

The Status Attainment approach attempts "to lay bare processes which generate distributions of socioeconomic rewards as well as reproduction of inequality across generations" (Colbjørnsen, 1986 as cited in Nordhaug, 1991, p. 130). It expands upon the Human Capital approach by examining the social benefits of education in addition to the economic benefits. In this theory, a person's social background affects the returns he/she gets from the educational system (e.g., the type of education he/she receives) and the socioeconomic status the person achieves in his/her first job. Taken together, the person's level of education and the status of that first job influence the person's current socioeconomic status. It is assumed that further work experience and training will also affect the status attained.

Cultural capital, the knowledge, behavior, and dispositions that are valued by a social group, is also acquired through formal and adult education. For example, leisure courses in wine-tasting or tennis promote the knowledge, values, and life-style of certain social groups. Moreover, cultural capital can be transmitted in the workplace when training is used to instill acceptance of organizational culture. Like the Status Attainment approach, the Cultural Capital approach focuses on education as a means for social mobility. However, the Status Attainment theory emphasizes the number of years of education an individual has while the Cultural Capital theory concentrates on the content of that education and how it is transmitted. Nordhaug indicates that the choice of theory used in the analysis of adult education outcomes "is contingent upon the type of adult education that is being studied, as well as on which aspects of adult education are in focus" (1987, p. 119). He recommends the development of form-specific theories, that is, theories that are specific to certain forms of adult education.

Since Nordhaug's (1987; 1991) works, Beder (1999) has identified 115 studies on the outcomes and impacts of adult literacy education in the United States. He reviews 23 of these studies, which include studies that had been conducted at the nationwide level, at the state level, on programs for welfare recipients, on family literacy programs, and on workplace literacy programs. Beder concluded that participants in adult literacy education are likely to experience gains in employment and earnings, to acquire a GED and to continue their education, to have a more positive self-image, to be more involved in their children's education, and to achieve their personal goals.

I propose that one of the benefits of adult education for immigrants may be to facilitate their adaptation to U.S. society along sociocultural, economic, and/or political dimensions. Three studies have been identified which focus on adaptation as a result of immigrants' participation in adult education. Cookson (1978) looked at participation and economic adaptation. He surveyed 52 Mexican American businessmen in Chicago to understand the contribution of formal education to occupational achievement as compared to the contribution of work experience and self-planned adult learning. The survey gathered information on the businessmen's occupational achievement, business practice adoption, individual modernity, adult education participation, work experience, and formal educational attainment. It was found that adult education positively affected occupational achievement indirectly by encouraging the adoption of more effective business practices.

Lind (2000) studied the sociocultural adaptation of immigrants participating in ESL classes. Her data consisted of focus groups with exit-level ESL students, interviews with 16 former adult ESL students, and more than 100 reflective papers on cross-cultural adjustment collected from exit-level ESL students. Among the interview participants, there were nine Mexicans, four Poles, two Jordanians, and one Syrian. Lind developed a model of their integration process. The first stage of the model is Disconnection, in which immigrants feel isolated from both their home culture and American culture. The key component of the model is the second stage, which Lind calls Anchoring. In Anchoring, the immigrants become "part of a social unit or community for the purpose of membership, support, and working toward a common goal to meet a need or resolve a personal issue that is shared by the members of the group" (p. 81). Adult education classrooms can provide that Anchoring community where immigrant students learn together and support each other in reaching their goals. The support that they gain in the classroom enables them to take steps toward the final stage, Integration. Although Lind's study was centered on students in ESL classes, she stresses that it is important for students to Anchor in an educational program that meets their learning goals.

Buttaro (2001) examined the participation of eight Hispanic women in ESL classes for welfare recipients in New York. The sample consisted of three women from the Dominican Republic, two from Puerto Rico, and one each from Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. Butarro created case studies of each participant through observations, interviews, and analysis of the learners' school work. Moreover, each participant was asked to write an essay in either Spanish or English about her life as an immigrant woman. Buttaro found that participation in these classes had an impact on the women's linguistic, cultural, and educational adjustment.

Assumptions

There are three assumptions that I have made in conceptualizing this study. First, I believe that as humans we continue learning throughout our lifetimes. Our education does not end once we complete our formal schooling. Likewise, I believe that all people are learners. I assume that the Mexican immigrant participants in this study will have had some adult learning experiences in the United States. Second, I assume that learning contributes in some way to immigrant adaptation. Furthermore, previous research that I have conducted with Latin American immigrants indicated that the majority of their learning experiences were self-directed and informal in nature (Ashcraft, 2003). Therefore, my third assumption is that these same kind of learning experiences will play a larger role in the immigrants' adaptation processes than formal adult education experiences will.

Summary

Mexican immigration to the United States has been prevalent throughout U.S. history (Engstrom, 2000; Martin & Midgley, 1999). Today Mexicans are by far the largest immigrant group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002), and they are becoming an increasing presence in the state of Georgia (Atiles & Bohon, 2002; Murphy et al., 2001; Wortham et al., 2002). This study will explore the role of formal and informal adult learning in the adaptation processes of first generation Mexican immigrants living in Georgia.

Immigrants adapt to their new environment along sociocultural, economic, and/or political dimensions. If an immigrant has adapted along the sociocultural dimension, he/she is able to manage "everyday social situations in the host culture" (Ward & Kennedy, 1996, p. 291).

Sociocultural adaptation is influenced by such factors as cultural knowledge, language ability, and social contact with members of the dominant group (Ward, 1996). Economic adaptation occurs when immigrant groups work in the same type of occupations as members of the dominant group, earn equivalent incomes, and are able to achieve similar economic status (Padilla & Glick, 2000). Research in this area has looked at the effects of human capital, straight-line and segmented assimilation, economic restructuring, and immigrant enclaves. Finally, political adaptation refers to an immigrant's involvement in political processes, such as naturalization and voting. Marriage to an American and English language proficiency are two factors that have been shown to affect this dimension of adaptation (Garcia, 1987; Liang, 1994; Pachon & DeSipio, 1994; Portes & Curtis, 1987; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001).

The adaptation of Mexican immigrants living in Georgia is influenced by several factors. As individuals, they have little formal education, low English language proficiency, and limited work experience in the U.S. In addition, they may be in the United States illegally and/or lead transnational lives. Social factors, such as contact between social groups and discriminatory practices, also affect adaptation processes.

Research in adult education participation has produced a profile of the typical adult learner in the U.S. (Valentine, 1997). Motivation for participation and barriers and deterrents have also been examined. This has led to the construction of multiple models of adult education participation (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Silva et al., 1998). Studies on the adult learning experiences of Hispanic/Latino, Mexican American, and Mexican immigrant populations have explored participation in certain programs (González, 1985; Wallace et al., 1987), acquisition of particular skills (Delgado-Gaitan, 1987; Lanteigne & Schwarzer, 1997), educational needs (Dale et al., 2001; Kissam, 1998), deterrents/barriers to participation in certain activities (Hayes, 1989;

Sparks, 1998), the context of learning (Campos Carr, 1991; Monkman, 1997; Velázquez, 1990), and the learning experiences of individuals (Ashcraft, 2003).

Nordhaug (1987) discusses the need to study adult education outcomes and describes three possible outcomes of adult education participation: the attainment of human capital, social status, or cultural capital. For immigrants, another potential benefit of adult education participation may be the facilitation of their adaptation to U.S. society. With the exception of Cookson (1978), Lind (2000), and Buttaro (2001), little research has been conducted on the role of adult education or other adult learning experiences in the adaptation processes of Mexican immigrants.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In the year 2000, there were 28.4 million people living in the United States who were foreign born. Fifty one percent of those people came from Latin America (Lollock, 2001), with the majority of them coming from Mexico (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Little research has been conducted on the learning experiences that adult Mexican immigrants have had in the United States and how that learning has affected their lives. The purpose of this research was to understand the role of formal and informal adult learning in the adaptation processes of first generation Mexican immigrants in the U.S. Given that adaptation is a long-term process, I chose to use the life history method to explore this question. This chapter will describe the design of the study, the sample selection, data collection and analysis, measures to ensure the study's rigor, my previous research experience with Hispanic immigrants, my subjectivity as a researcher as well as the study's limitations.

Design of the Study

This study employed the life history method, a form of qualitative research. Qualitative research studies share certain characteristics. First, data is collected in naturalistic settings (e.g., homes, schools, workplaces) as opposed to in a clinical laboratory, and the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection. This means that the researcher must rely on his/her own senses to obtain the data and that data collection, analysis, and interpretation are influenced by the researcher's subjectivities and positionality. The data that are collected are in the form of words or images rather than in numbers. These data are analyzed inductively with a focus on the meaning that the participants give to their experience. Finally, the outcome of qualitative research includes an expressive and persuasive description of the process of inquiry along with its findings (Creswell, 1998).

A life history includes the life stories that a person tells about him/herself as well as supporting information from observations, artifacts, or interviews with other people in the context (Bertaux, 1981; Cole & Knowles, 2001). The term *life history* is often confused with *biography, autobiography, narrative, and oral history*. A biography is an account of a person's life that is written by a second person. One key point here is that a biography is written. Although the biography may be based on data from a participant's oral life stories, the final product is a written one. Another key point is that a biography requires the involvement of a second person who writes the subject's life. In fact, the subject of the biography may not be involved in writing the biography at all, which is the case when the subject of the biography is deceased. An autobiography is also a written account of a person's life; however, this account is written by the subject him/herself. Biographies and autobiographies usually follow certain literary conventions (Denzin, 1989). Given these definitions, a life history could be classified as a biography or autobiography, yet a biography can only be considered a life history if the research process involved the participation of the subject.

Life history, narrative, and oral history all draw on a participant's life stories, yet they serve different research purposes. Life history attempts to understand a person's life as lived within a certain context.

> It is about understanding the relationship, the complex interaction, between life and context, self and place. It is about comprehending the complexities of a person's day-to-day decision making and the ultimate consequences that play out in that life so that

> insights into the broader, collective experience may be achieved. (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 11)

Polkinghorne (1995) defines a narrative as a story in which "events and actions are drawn together into an organized whole by means of a plot" (p. 7). A narrative may be fictional, or it may be derived from life events. Based on this definition, a life story is a type of narrative. However, Cole and Knowles (2001) employ a different definition of narrative. In their definition, narrative research focuses on understanding how the participant makes meaning of his/her individual life. Life history research expands on the narrative. It "goes beyond the individual or the personal and places narrative accounts and interpretations within a broader context" (p. 20). Oral history, in contrast, places less emphasis on the individual's life. It uses the participant's life stories to learn about life in a community or to illuminate "a specific event, issue, time, or place" (Atkinson, 1998, p. 8).

Although the life history method shares some characteristics with other forms of qualitative research, it also exhibits some characteristics which make it unique. First, there is a strong emphasis in life history research on understanding the contexts in which participants have lived and currently live. In fact, Cole and Knowles state that "the slogan 'Context is everything' could well be the hallmark of life history inquiry" (2001, p. 22). Context may refer to cultural, political, educational, occupational, familial or other environments in which the participant interacts and which influences how their life develops. Although context is extremely important in life history research, it is not the unit of analysis but rather "a reference point, an essential backdrop that helps us understand an individual's life and experience" (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 79).

Second, the life history method provides a longitudinal view of a person's life. This allows the researcher (and the participant) to understand the participant's past in relation to their present life (Bertaux-Wiame, 1981; Kohli, 1981). In addition, it illuminates cause and effect sequences, such as the decisions the participants have made and their consequences (Bertaux & Thompson, 1997; Cole & Knowles, 2001).

The life history method was particularly suitable for studying the role of adult learning in the adaptation of Mexican immigrants to U.S. society. Adaptation is a long-term process that depends on individual as well as contextual factors. The life history method allowed this researcher to understand the experiences of the individual participants and the contexts in which they lived. It provided retrospective data which indicated changes in the participants' lives over time. In addition, the participants were able to reflect on decisions they had made (such as the decision to participate in an adult learning activity) and the consequences of those decisions in their lives.

Sample Selection

Five participants were selected for this study through purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling entails establishing clear criteria for inclusion in the sample (Creswell, 1998). There were four criteria that potential participants had to meet in order to be included in this study. First, the participants must be Mexican-born immigrants living in Georgia.

A second criterion was that the participants should not have earned a university degree. Nationwide statistics on the educational level of Mexican immigrants indicate that only 20% have a high school education and 66% have even less formal schooling (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Surveys of the adult Latin American (primarily Mexican) immigrant population in Georgia provide comparable data; 69% have not graduated from high school (McLaughlin et al., 2002). Thus, immigrants with university degrees were excluded from this study in order to form a sample that was more representative of the Mexican immigrant population in Georgia. Even so, the participants' level of education in this study ranged from 8 years to 14 years, which was higher than the average level of education for this population. One study conducted in northwest Georgia in 1997 found that among Mexican immigrant parents men had an average of 6.8 years of formal schooling while women had an average of 7.2 years of education (Hernández-León & Zuñiga, 2000).

A third criterion was that the participants should have come to the U.S. as an adult. For the purposes of this study, an adult was defined as being a person who is no longer in school and who is financially self-supporting. This criterion is significant because immigrants who receive their primary and/or secondary schooling in the United States are exposed to the English language and learn about American culture and history as part of their educational experiences. Any degree of sociocultural or political adaptation they exhibit as adults may be attributed to the socialization they experienced in the school system as youth instead of to their adult learning experiences. Furthermore, U.S. employers would perceive a U.S. education as being more valuable than a foreign education; this could have a positive effect on the immigrants' economic adaptation. This study hoped to isolate the contribution of adult learning experiences to immigrant adaptation. Therefore, the sample consisted of immigrants who came to the U.S. as adults and who did not attend primary or secondary school in this country.

The adaptation of immigrants to life in the United States is a process that takes years. For this reason, it was necessary to select participants who had been in the U.S. sufficient time to allow for this process to begin. Moreover, length of residence can be seen as an indicator of the intention to remain in the U.S. permanently. A fourth criterion for inclusion in this study was that participants must have been living in the United States for at least five continuous years. Preference was given to people who have lived in the U.S. for longer periods of time. Transnational migrants (i.e., immigrants who had returned to live in Mexico for a period of time) were included in the study but only if their current period of U.S. residence had lasted at least five years. Although all of the participants met the selection criteria above, I attempted to form a diverse sample which included men and women as well as people of different ages and occupations, with different immigration statuses, and from various regions of Mexico.

Participants were recruited through three venues. First, I asked the contacts I had in local social services agencies serving Hispanic immigrants to identify potential participants who met the above criteria. Two participants were located this way. Second, I asked individual Mexican immigrant students who participated in the ESL program that I supervise if they could recommend any participants. Two other participants were identified through this method. Finally, one participant was contacted though snowball sampling (Creswell, 1998). I asked the immigrants who participated in the study if they could identify potential participants among their friends, family members, neighbors, and coworkers. Four potential male participants that I approached declined to participate in this study. Given the methods of recruitment employed, the sample may be biased toward those immigrants who are having difficulties adapting to life in the United States and who are seeking help to facilitate the process.

Marín and Marín (1991) indicate that it is appropriate to offer participation incentives to minority participants, especially since participation places a larger burden on them than on non-minority participants. Because the participants in this study gave up four and a half hours of their free time to be interviewed, I offered them a $30 gift certificate from a local store or restaurant as an incentive. One of the participants requested a certificate from a Japanese restaurant while the other four chose to receive certificates from a discount store chain.

Every effort was made to follow ethical research practices during the implementation of this study. The study was approved by the University of Georgia's Human Subjects Office before any data collection took place. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, and their participation was and will remain confidential. All documents given to the participants (e.g., the consent forms) were translated into Spanish.

Data Collection

In the life history method, data take the form of transcripts from life story interviews, field notes from observations, and copies of artifacts.

The Life Story Interview

The life story component of a life history is usually collected through multiple semi-structured interviews with the participant. An interview is "a form of discourse" that is "shaped and organized by asking and answering questions. An interview is a joint product of what interviewees and interviewers talk about together and how they talk with each other" (Mishler, 1986, p. vii). In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has an interview guide, which contains

> a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions. Yet at the same time there is an openness to changes of sequence and forms of questions in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subject. (Kvale, 1996, p. 124)

A life story interview seeks to access the personal stories that individuals have identified as meaningful and that they choose to tell about themselves. These stories emphasize "the most important influences, experiences, circumstances, issues, themes, and lessons of a lifetime"

(Atkinson, 1998, p. 7). Neither a life story nor a life history needs to encompass a person's entire life (Bertaux, 1981).

For this study, I collected life stories from the participants during three life story interviews. Informed consent was obtained from each participant before conducting the first interview. Each interview lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. The first interview dealt with the participant's life in Mexico, including his/her childhood, school experiences, early labor experiences, and his/her decision to come to the United States. The second interview focused on the participant's life in the United States. The participant was asked to describe the communities in which he/she had lived, the jobs he/she had held, and his/her participation in adult education or other adult learning experiences. The third interview gave the participant an opportunity to reflect over the course of his/her life and to think of his/her future. The interview guides for each of the three interviews are presented in the appendix.

I reviewed the content of each interview before conducting the next interview in the sequence to identify if there were any points that needed to be clarified or expanded upon in the consequent interview. Participants were able to chose the language (Spanish or English) of the interview. All of the participants opted to conduct the interviews in Spanish. Participants were also able to decide the time and place of the interviews. Interviews were held in the office of a social service agency, in the classrooms of the ESL program I supervise, in the participants' homes, and once, in my home. The interviews were recorded on audio-tape and later transcribed.

Observations and Artifacts

Observation is another method of data collection relevant for life history research. Cole and Knowles (2001) promote observation as a way to learn about the context in which the participants live. Observations not only provide information about the physical setting in which the participants live and work but also offer insights into their daily activities and their relationships with other people. During any observation, a description of what is being observed and the researcher's reaction to the observation are recorded in field notes.

I was able to observe two of the participants as they engaged in formal adult learning activities. The participants signed separate consent forms giving me permission to conduct the classroom observations. I also had to gain consent from the classroom teachers and the program administrators before the observations could be conducted. I observed the adult ESL class of one participant on three occasions and the GED class of another on two occasions. During these observations, I took notes while the classes were in progress on the content of the lessons and the classroom interactions. I was also able to conduct an observation during a social event in the Mexican immigrant community: a mass and a party for the *quinceñera* (fifteenth birthday) of one of the participant's daughters. In this case, I was an actor in the events, and I waited until I left the site to write my field notes.

Artifacts also contribute to our knowledge about the context of the participants' lives. Artifacts, such as birth certificates, medical records, or letters, may provide information about the past life of the participant. Other artifacts, such as a time line created by a participant during an interview, are representations of the life that are produced during the research process. Historical documents also help researchers to understand the broader context. In addition to contributing contextual information, artifacts can be used during the life story interview to elicit information from the participants by asking them to explain the significance of the artifact or to elaborate on the events of their life at the time the artifact was produced (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

In this study I sought to collect copies of artifacts that provided evidence of the participants' adult learning and/or their sociocultural, economic, or political integration. Two of the participants allowed me to copy documents such as their certificates of attendance in ESL classes, their naturalization certificate, and letters from employers verifying their employment history. Three of the participants showed me newspaper clippings and family photos. They explained the settings, the events, and the participants in the photos. I kept a log of these items. Finally, I was able to collect artifacts of my own experience during this research process. I have photos, a napkin, and party favors from the *quinceñera* I attended.

Data Analysis

To prepare the interviews for analysis, I transcribed the interviews in their original language (i.e., Spanish). The transcripts were given to the participants for their review, and any corrections or revisions they requested were made. Once the transcription was finalized, formal analysis of the life stories began.

Atkinson (1998) emphasizes that

> . . . life stories should be read first and foremost as a whole. They *are* a story in progress, a work in progress, with many interesting and important parts, but the meaning of the story is in the whole, not its parts. . . . Understanding parts of the story is important for recognizing patterns and themes that connect the parts to the whole. Thus, the researcher's role in considering applying a theoretical perspective to a life story would be to move back and forth from the part to the whole to discover the meaning that is in the whole. (p. 67)

Keeping Atkinson's position in mind, two methods of life story data analysis were employed: the holistic-content method and the categorical-content method.

To analyze data through the holistic-content method, the life story is read through in its entirety while the researcher looks for recurring patterns in the content. The researcher writes down his/her initial and global impressions of the story, noting the features that stand out. Then the researcher takes some of the themes and traces their development from the beginning to the end of the story. The researcher can use colored markers to distinguish the themes and mark where they appear. During this process, it is important to note where each theme emerges and where it ends, the context in which it appears, its prominence in the story, and the transitions between themes. It is also important to notice episodes that contradict the themes. The end product is a discussion of the story globally and thematically (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998).

When I analyzed my participants' stories using the holistic-content method, the results of which are presented in Chapter Four, I first read through the three interviews I had conducted with each participant. I read the interviews in the order in which they had been conducted (i.e., life in Mexico, life in the U.S., reflection over the life span), and I read them as if they were a novel. That is, I engaged myself in the ongoing story line which was the participant's life. I recorded my overall impressions in my research journal. Then I returned to reading the interviews to construct the life history. This time I made notes on the key family, educational, and workplace experiences in the person's life. I must recognize here that I identified certain events as being key based on the purposes of this study. However, the participants might have identified other events as being more significant for them. For example, one participant spoke at length about her desire to have a family and the trouble she had conceiving. Although I did not feel that this data was relevant to the study, I mentioned it in her life history because it was important to her. After I had constructed the life history of the participant, I read the interviews yet again to develop the themes of sociocultural, economic, and immigrant adaptation. For example, I used a pink marker to highlight information related to sociocultural adaptation (e.g., learning the English language, pre-immigration knowledge of American life, experiences with American culture, interactions with American people); I used a green marker to highlight information related to economic adaptation (e.g., labor experiences, the immigrant's financial situation, purchasing power); and I used a yellow marker to highlight information related to political adaptation (e.g., legal status, naturalization process). These themes are discussed at the end of each life history. I followed this procedure for each of the five participants.

In the categorical-content method, the life story is read, and the sections of the text pertaining to each research question are extracted and put together in one file. Then, these data bits are sorted into categories, each representing a theme. The categories may come from existing theory, or they may be inductively derived from the data themselves. As the data bits are sorted, the categories are refined and defined. Finally, conclusions are drawn and may be presented statistically or descriptively (Lieblich et al., 1998). Variations of this analytic process, which is often identified as *coding*, have been described by several other scholars, including Coffey and Atkinson (1996) and Ryan and Bernard (2000). However, these scholars include additional steps in the process, such as making theoretical connections between the categories and model building.

When I analyzed my participants' stories using the categorical-content method, the results of which are presented in Chapter Five, I read through the interviews again, extracting the data related to the participants' adult learning experiences. I created a separate file for each participant. At the time I created the files, I put preliminary code labels on the chunks of data. The following interview excerpt is an example. It was originally coded "Workplace language."

Workplace language (Fermín, III, p. 2)

I: Do you have the need to speak English there at work?

P: Well now that I already know the whole job, not so much. If I want, I don't speak, not in Spanish, not in English. I know my job, my whole job already. Just the supervisor might say to me, "Do you want to stay overtime?" But you understand that, right? . . . . But I don't need it much. Only if they changed me to another department. Because they don't know me and I also don't know the job. So I would have to struggle with English.

(I: ¿Allí tiene necesidad de hablar inglés en el trabajo?

P: Pues ahorita como yo ya sé todo el trabajo, no tanto. Sí quiero no hablo y nada en español, ni español ni inglés. Ya sé mi trabajo, todo mi trabajo ya. No más el supervisor me puede decir, "¿Te quieres quedar overtime?" Pero eso lo entiende uno ¿verdad? . . . . Pero no no necesito mucho. Solamente que me cambiaran a otro apartamento asi. Porque ya no me conocen y yo también no conozco el trabajo. Entonces, sí tendría que batallar con el inglés.)

Once the files were created for each participant, I printed those files. I cut the excerpts apart and physically sorted them in order to answer the research questions. I sorted the excerpts three times. First, they were sorted to categorize the kinds of learning activities the participants had engaged in. Then, they were sorted to identify the ways the learning experiences contributed to sociocultural, economic, or political adaptation. When certain categories, such as "participation in the labor force," became large, the excerpts within each category were further sorted into subcategories. Finally, the excerpts related to formal learning were sorted to identify aspects of the teaching/learning transaction which had contributed to adaptation. Not all of the excerpts were relevant for each of the research questions. The example interview excerpt above was useful for answering the second research question: How do adult learning experiences contribute to immigrant adaptation? It was placed in the category “participation in the labor force.” The participant discusses how transferring to a different department in his company would require him to know and use more English. This excerpt was further categorized as being related to the immigrant’s ability to make lateral job transitions within the same company.

Polkinghorne (1995) distinguishes between narrative analysis and analysis of narrative, two analytic processes which use different forms of data. Narrative analysis uses synchronic data, data which “lack the historical and developmental dimension” (p. 12). In this method, it is the researcher’s job to synthesize these data and to construct a story based on them. In contrast, analysis of narrative uses diachronic data, which “contain temporal information about the sequential relationship of events” (p. 12); that is, they are in story form. Analysis of narrative is based on paradigmatic reasoning, which seeks to find common themes or elements within stories or between stories. The holistic-content method and the categorical-content described above would be considered analyses of narrative.

Observational data and artifacts augment the life story that is told by the participant. When carrying out the categorical-content method of analysis, these items may be coded along with the life story data. The goal is to link the understanding of the participant’s life obtained from the three forms of data into a coherent representation of the participant’s life history. I primarily used the observational data and the artifacts to support my interpretation of the interview data.

Rigor

Once the life history study is complete, how can we judge its rigor? The concepts of reliability, that a replication of the study will yield the same results, and validity, that the findings from the study correspond to an external truth or reality, do not seem to apply. This is because “the stories we remember and tell about our lives reflect who we are, how we see ourselves, and, perhaps, how we wish to be seen” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 119). Therefore, the stories we tell about ourselves will vary over time as our self-concept changes. Furthermore, we will tell different stories to different people, or we may tell the same story in a different way, depending on our relationship with the listener.

Scholars have offered measures other than reliability and validity by which to judge the quality of life history research. Lieblich et al. (1998) suggest evaluating the study on four criteria. The first is width, “the comprehensiveness of evidence” (p. 173). This can be enhanced by providing numerous quotations as well as alternative interpretations. The second is coherence, the way the interpretation creates a complete and meaningful picture and how well it fits with existing theories or prior research. Third is insightfulness, “originality in the presentation of the story and its analysis” (p. 173). Fourth is parsimony, “the ability to provide an analysis based on a small number of concepts, and elegance or aesthetic appeal” (p. 173).

Atkinson (1998) also shares some criteria for evaluating the validity of life stories. To begin with, the story should be internally consistent; that is, the participant should not contradict him/herself in telling the story. The story should also be externally consistent, which means that "what is said conforms to what you may already know or think you know about the person telling the story or the topic or issue being discussed" (p. 60). Atkinson also recommends seeking corroboration. This could involve a member check, having the participant read the transcribed and edited story to verify that it represents what he/she originally said. It could also involve asking other people who are familiar with the participant’s life to read and comment on the life story. Finally, the story can be judged on how persuasive it is. Does it seem “reasonable and convincing to others" (p. 61)? Riessman (1993) offers criteria similar to those proposed by Lieblich et al. and Atkinson. However, to their lists she adds pragmatic use, "the extent to which a particular study becomes the basis for others' work" (p. 68).

I took several actions to strengthen the rigor of my findings. First, I employed data and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation refers to collecting data from several sources (Mathison, 1988). I collected interview data from five participants on three separate occasions. Observational data was collected on two of the participants over multiple occasions. Methodological triangulation, which involves using "multiple methods in the examination of social phenomenon" (Mathison, 1988, p. 14), is inherent in the life history method. To construct the life history, I conducted life story interviews with each participant in addition to conducting classroom observations and collecting relevant artifacts.

All of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. This created a challenge to ensure that the participants' language and meaning were accurately represented at all stages in the research process. The participants were given copies of their interview transcripts to review for accuracy. After allowing adequate time for the participants to read the transcripts, I consulted with them to see if any corrections needed to be made. Most of the corrections were of minor spelling errors. One participant, however, edited his interviews extensively to remove repetitions and fillers.

The findings in Chapters Four and Five include ample quotations to support them. These quotes are presented first in English translation. Below the English, the original Spanish is provided in parentheses. I performed the translation from Spanish to English myself. I have worked as a Spanish/English translator for several years, I have been trained as a court interpreter, and I am a member of the American Translators Association. The quotations are presented in both languages for two reasons. First, it respects the participants. They are Spanish-speakers, and they shared their life stories with me in this language. I do not believe that I could claim to accurately represent their stories if I did not include their original words here. Second, the presentation of both languages allows other Spanish/English bilinguals to judge the validity of my translation and to make their own interpretations of the data.

Marín and Marín (1991) discuss the issue of translation in research, particularly in regards to the development of data collection instruments. They recommend procedures such as double translation to ensure translation accuracy. In this method, translator A would translate the Spanish text to English, and translator B would translate the English text back into Spanish. The Spanish translation is then compared to the original Spanish text, which allows for mistranslations to be identified.

After much deliberation, I decided not to subject the quotations presented here to the double translation procedure. First, I analyzed all of the interview data in their original form (i.e., Spanish). Translation was not necessary for the purpose of analysis. The quotations represent only a small portion of the entire data set. They were translated here solely for the benefit of the monolingual English reader. Spanish-speakers can read the quotations in their original language. Second, the interview data were conversational in nature. The participants sometimes used nonstandard Spanish, English words, and invented Spanglish words. Therefore, an attempt to translate the English text back into Spanish would most likely not render the words used by the participants. For example, in the excerpt quoted above, the participant was speaking in Spanish; however, he used the word “overtime” in English. The participant’s use of English would not be reflected if the quotation were to be translated back into Spanish.

I was not able to formally conduct a member check with the participants as the findings are written in English, and the participants would not be able to understand an academic discourse written in English. However, I did discuss the findings with the participants informally. I also shared the findings with other people who are knowledgeable about Mexican populations (e.g., committee members, other researchers, and employees with local social services agencies) to elicit their comments on the validity of the findings.

Finally, I kept a log during the research process in which I described the research activities conducted, my reactions to people and events, issues that arose, the decisions I took to resolve such issues, and the theoretical insights that I had. This serves to make the research process more explicit.

Previous Research Experience

I have had prior experience conducting qualitative research with Hispanic immigrant populations. In a related study (Ashcraft, 2003), I conducted in-depth interviews with 10 recently-arrived Hispanic immigrants living in Georgia to understand their participation in adult learning activities. The informants, who were recruited from community-based adult ESL classes, included six Mexicans, one Colombian, one Guatemalan, one Honduran, and one Salvadorian. The interviews, which were 60-90 minutes in duration, were conducted in Spanish and transcribed in that language. Data were coded for concepts and themes. It was found that the participants engaged in a wide variety of formal, nonformal, self-directed, and informal learning activities. They held positive attitudes toward lifelong learning. In addition, it was found that the transitions they had experienced as immigrants, their lack of English language proficiency, and their legal status influenced their participation in learning activities.

This previous research informed the current study methodologically and conceptually. First, the experience of conducting research with Hispanic immigrant populations made me aware of some of the practical issues that I would face in carrying out the dissertation study, issues such as locating and recruiting participants and producing an accurate transcription in Spanish. Second, the previous research was focused on the participation of recently-arrived immigrants, that is, those who had been in the U.S. for seven years or less. As it turned out, eight of the participants had been in the U.S. for three years or less. In talking with these participants about their adult learning experiences, I began to wonder what the impact of their participation would be in the long-term. Would their current participation in adult education and other adult learning activities contribute to their adaptation to U.S. society in the long run? Thus, I began to see the need to interview immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for longer periods of time and to have them reflect on their past adult learning experiences in relation to their current situation.

I also had practice conducting life story interviews. During a course on Qualitative Interviewing (ERSH 8520) in May 2001, I conducted life story interviews (in English) with an uncle of mine and with a Colombian immigrant. The goal of these interviews was to understand the acquisition of cultural, social, and economic capital over the course of the lifetime. This experience helped me to realize the complexities involved in collecting life story data.

About the Researcher

As noted earlier, one of the characteristics of qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection (Creswell, 1998). Therefore, the data that are collected and the way they are analyzed are influenced by the researcher’s experiences, attitudes, and beliefs. This is especially true in an interview setting where the construction of meaning occurs in the interaction between the researcher and the participant (Atkinson, 1998; Kvale, 1996). For this reason, it is important to understand who I (the researcher) am and my perspective toward the research study.

I began studying Spanish in high school. My undergraduate degree is in Spanish Language and Literature/International Studies from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. The focus of our program was on peninsular Spanish, and I spent a semester studying at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid during my senior year. My first real contact with Mexican people came the next year when, seeking to practice my Spanish, I took a part-time job as a hostess at Mi Pueblo Mexican Restaurant. This was a family owned restaurant. I was the only American working there, and the only employee who had a high level of English proficiency. Of course, the other employees laughed at me and said I spoke Spanish with a Spanish accent.

I only worked at Mi Pueblo for three months. I then left North Carolina and moved to Atlanta to begin my master's degree in Applied Linguistics and Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language. In order to gain some practical experience teaching ESL, I began to work, first as a volunteer and later as an employee, with the Cobb County Adult Education ESL program. Students came from a variety of countries although there were a large number of Mexican students. It was in this context that I began to see Mexican immigrants as adult learners.

Upon graduation, I accepted my first full-time teaching position at the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, a private university with campuses around Mexico. I taught English as a Foreign Language at the State of Mexico campus, which is located just north of the Federal District (Mexico City). During that time, I lived among Mexican people and conducted all my daily activities in Spanish. I left Mexico after one year (in 1995) due to the economic crisis that Mexico was experiencing. I was being paid in pesos, and with the exchange rate, I was unable to pay debts that I had in the U.S.

I spent the next four years teaching in intensive academic ESL programs in the United States as well as teaching English for Specific Purposes at Kuwait University. I fondly remembered those days when I had worked with immigrant students in the Cobb County Adult Education ESL program. When I decided to return to the U.S. to begin my doctoral studies, my goal was to study adult education so that I could again work with immigrant populations.

Since coming to the University of Georgia, I have had the privilege to work as a program assistant with the Cyril O. Houle Scholars in Adult and Continuing Education Program for three years. One region that this program served was Latin America. Through my work with this program, I had the opportunity to use Spanish on a daily basis and to travel again to Mexico on four occasions. Furthermore, I was able to form relationships with adult educators in Mexico and other Latin American countries. In some respects we are working with the same learner populations.

For the past two years, I have immersed myself in immigrant education. I taught an ESL course at a community college and a preparation course for the citizenship exam in a private language school. In addition, I began working for a faith-based social services agency which is well-known for serving the Latin American immigrant community in Athens, Georgia. I supervise the adult ESL program offered by this agency, a program which serves over 200 Latin American immigrant students each semester. This work puts me into daily contact with Mexican immigrants in an adult education setting.

Limitations of the Study

The findings from this study have at least three limitations. First, a life story can be shorter or longer, depending on the amount of detail that is included. I recognize that I was not able to capture all of the details of the participants’ lives in three ninety-minute interviews.

Second, although I speak Spanish and have developed some level of competency in Mexican culture, I am still a *gringa*. The fact that I am a white American, and not a Mexican myself, might have deterred some potential participants from participating in the study. Moreover, it might have affected the level of comfort that the actual participants had with me. Third, there is a substantial number of undocumented Mexican immigrants in the United States (Bean, Corona, Tuiran, Woodrow-Lafield, & Van Hook, 2001). Potential participants who are undocumented may not have participated in the study for fear of being discovered. Those undocumented immigrants who did participate may not have been as forthcoming in their responses.

This chapter reviewed this study's design, the criteria for sample selection, the procedures for data collection and analysis, the measures employed to ensure the study's rigor, my previous research experience with Hispanic immigrants, my subjectivity as a researcher, and the study's limitations. Life histories were constructed with five Mexican immigrants to understand the role of formal and informal learning in the immigrants' adaptation processes. The results of the holistic-content analysis and the categorical-content analysis of the data are presented in the following chapters.

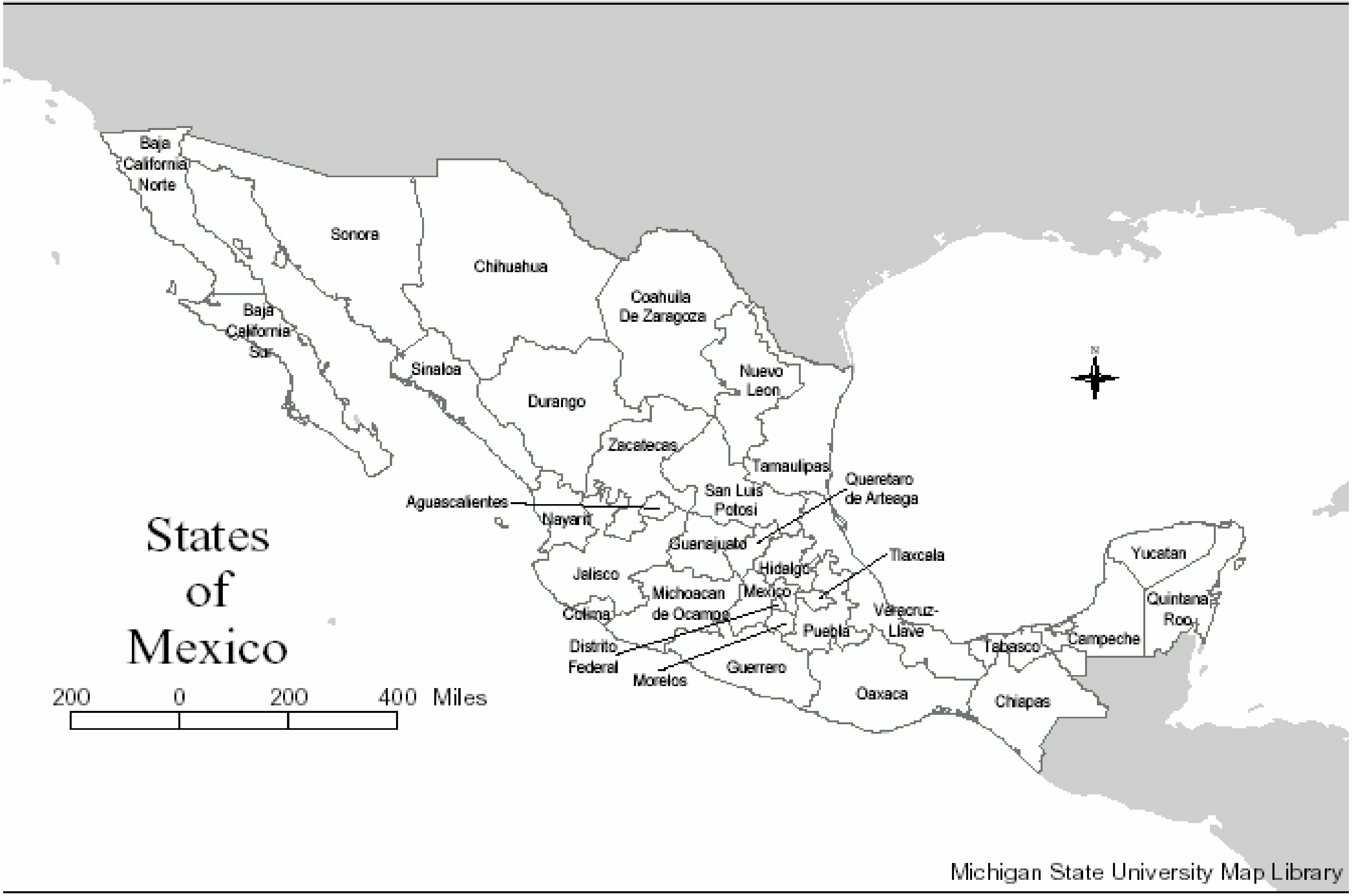
CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

The purpose of this study is to understand the role of formal and informal adult learning in the sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation of Mexican immigrants in the state of Georgia. This issue was explored through the construction of life histories with five Mexican immigrants (three males and two females). Participants had to meet the following criteria: They were born in Mexico, they immigrated to the U.S. as an adult, they have lived in the United States for at least five consecutive years, and they did not receive a university level education.

The five participants that you will meet in this chapter were recruited either through my personal contact with them in the social service agency where I work, or through snowball sampling. They represent four regions of Mexico: Nuevo Leon, Morelos, Guanajuato, and Hidalgo (see Figure 3). At the time of our interaction, the participants had been in the U.S. between 5 and 25 years. Their age at immigration ranged from 15 to 40 years old. Their level of education varied from eight years to high school plus two years of technical school. The sample included one citizen, one legal resident, and three undocumented workers.

The life histories were constructed using data from the three life story interviews I conducted with each participant, observations of the participants' involvement in adult education programs, and artifacts shared by the participants. All of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. According to the participants' preferences, the interviews were conducted in their home, my home, the office of the social service agency where I work, or the site of our ESL program.


Baja California Norte
Sonora
Chihuahua
Coahuila De Zaragoza
Baja California Sur
Sinaloa
Durango
Nuevo Leon
Zacatecas
Tamaulipas
San Luis Potosi
Queretaro de Arteaga
Aguascalientes
Nayarit
States of Mexico
Guanajuato
Tlaxcala
Yucatan
Jalisco
Hidalgo
Mexico
Michoacan de Ocampo
Colima
Veracruz-Llave
Quintana Roo
Distrito Federal
Puebla
Tabasco
Campeche
Morelos
Guerrero
Oaxaca
Chiapas
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Michigan State University Map Library

Figure 3. Map of Mexican States

The focus of the life histories presented here is on those family, educational, and workplace experiences which have shaped the participants' lives and the decisions they have made which have changed the direction of their life path. The histories are presented in the order in which I interviewed the participants. Following each life history, I provide an analysis of the individual participant's experiences as related to his/her sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation.

Marta

I first met Marta when she joined the ESL classes offered by the social service agency where I work. Along with being a student in our ESL program, she is a regular social services client in our office. I conducted the three interviews with Marta during December 2002 and January 2003. In addition to these interviews, I was able to observe her participation in the ESL class on three occasions. Marta shared with me copies of documents related to her employment and to her ESL participation. She also showed me her personal "archives" (e.g., family photos and newspaper clippings). At the time of our interviews, Marta was 45 years old and had been in the United States for five years.

La Historia de Marta (Marta's Story)

Marta spent the first five years of her life in a village *(rancho)* in Nuevo León. She is the second of nine children. Marta's father farmed his own land. When the harvest was not good, he traveled among the villages and towns buying and selling fruit. Marta's mother worked in the home and helped her husband with his work. As children, Marta's parents were not able to attend school because it was too far away from their home. However, they both had rudimentary literacy skills.

When it was time for Marta to enter kindergarten, her parents sent her to live with her father's brother in the town of Galeana so that she could attend school. Her father eventually built a house in Galeana, and the entire family moved there. Marta attended primary school in Galeana; however, she wished that her parents had been more involved in her school activities. Although they sent money to support the school when requested, they never went to the school to inquire about her behavior nor did they attend the school parties or watch her participate in the school parades.

Upon finishing primary school, Marta's parents sent her to live with a teacher in Monterrey, the second largest city in Mexico, which is four hours distance from Galeana. The plan was that Marta would care for the teacher's daughter in exchange for receiving middle school lessons from the teacher. Marta, however, was unhappy:

> Since I went with them, I was just crying every day that I want to go home . . . . And I felt, in the city of Monterrey, it's a very big city, right? I felt bad in their house even though they treated me very well . . . . But I wasn't happy there. I wanted to be with my parents.
>
> *(Desde que me fui con ellos, yo todos los días estaba puro llorar que ya me quiero ir para la casa . . . . Y me sentía, pues en la ciudad de Monterrey, es una ciudad muy grande ¿verdad? Yo me sentía mal en la casa de ellos aunque me atendían muy bien . . . . Pero yo no era feliz allá. Yo quería estar con mis papas.)*

After a week of living with this family, Marta experienced her first menstrual cycle. Marta's mother had never discussed this biological function with her although a girlfriend had given her some idea about it. However, it was not as she had expected:

> Four and five, six, and seven days passed and it didn't go away in all that time. I started to cry and cry. And I didn't [know] where to go to buy any sanitary napkins, and I didn't have any money to buy them with. I just put toilet paper. And it didn't go away. And I was also crying because I wanted to tell my mother what was happening to me.
>
> *(Pasaron cuatro y cinco, seis, y siete días y no se me quitaba en todo eso. Yo me empecé a llori llori. Y yo pues ni adonde ir a comprar unas toallas femininas, ni con que comprar porque no tenía dinero. Me puse puro papel de rollo del baño. Y no se me quitaba. Y por eso también lloraba porque yo quería contarle a mi mamá lo que me estaba pasando*.)

Marta's father came to Monterrey after two weeks to visit her and bring her some fruit. Marta told him at that time that she wanted to go home. She did not explain to him her reason, and he was left with the impression that she did not want to continue her studies. He took her home, but he was very angry:

> My father didn't talk to me like for a month. He didn't say a word to me. Angry because I didn't want to study. That I had not taken advantage when they were going to give me an education, that I wasn't interested in studying.
>
> *(Mi papá no me habló como por un mes. No me dirigiera la palabrá mi papá. Enojado porque yo no quería estudiar. Que a mí me iban a dar el estudio, que yo no había aprovechado, que no tenía ganas de estudio.)*

Later, when it came time to register for the middle school in Galeana, Marta's father did not want to enroll her. Martha remembered:

> I started to cry and cry that I wanted to go to school, I wanted to go to school. And he said they were lies. That I didn't want to go to school. If I had wanted [to go to school], I would have stayed in Monterrey.

> (*Empecé a llori llori que yo quería ir a la escuela, que yo quería ir a la escuela. Y él dijo que eran mentiras. Que yo no quería ir a la escuela. Si hubiera querido, me hubiera quedado en Monterrey.)*

Marta's father finally relented and signed the forms for her to enroll in the middle school. Marta studied three years of middle school. Among her subjects, she studied English two hours a week. When Marta graduated, she wanted to continue her studies in a normal school to become a teacher. Her father resisted this idea.

> I said, "I want to study, Dad. I want to be a teacher." He told me, "Why don't you study secretarial skills? It's what I need. Someone to help me do my accounts in my job in my business." I said, "Well, take me. If I don't get into the normal school, then I'll study secretarial skills." He took me. Well because of bad luck I didn't pass the exam.
> *(Digo, "Yo quiero estudiar, papá. Yo quiero ser maestra." Me dijo, "¿Por qué no estudias secretaria? Es lo que a mí hace falta. Que me ayudan hacer mis cuentas en mi trabajo en mi negocio." Dije, "Bueno, lléveme. Si no me quedo en la normal, entonces estudio secretaria." Me llevó. Pues de mala suerte no pasé el examen.)*

Marta held up her end of the bargain and entered a business institute to study secretarial skills. She only finished the first year of the program because she was never able to pass the typing class. Marta regrets not continuing her education:

> I am always thinking, "Why didn't I finish school? I wouldn't be working in what I work now. I would be working in another place . . . Why didn't I study what I wanted?" My dream was always to work with children. I wanted to be a children's educator. That was always my dream.

> *(Lo que siempre estoy pensando que "¿Por qué no terminaría yo la escuela? Yo no estuviera trabajando en lo que trabajo ahora. Estuviera en otro lugar trabajando . . . . ¿Por qué no estudiaría lo que yo quería." Mi sueño siempre era trabajar con los niños. Quería yo estar educadora de niños. Eso fue siempre mi sueño.)*

Despite not having a secretarial diploma, Marta managed to obtain a job as a secretary in the Secretariat of Hydraulic Resources. She worked there for three months. She then took a job as an operator in a telephone service *(caseta de teléfonos)*. This is a business establishment where people who do not have telephones in their homes are able to make long distance calls.

During this time, Marta established a relationship with her husband to be. They were married after six months, when Marta was twenty-three years old. Marta's husband did not want her to work full-time, so she left her job with the telephone service. However, she continued to work with the service on a temporary basis when other employees called in sick.

Before marrying Marta, her husband had established a pattern of migrating to work in the United States for a period of time and then returning to visit Mexico. After eleven months of marriage, Marta's husband returned to work in the United States. Over the course of their marriage, he migrated to the United States multiple times. During his absences, Marta remained in Galeana. She passed her days doing housework, knitting, sewing, helping her mother, and working from time to time in the telephone service.

Marta very much wanted to have children but had trouble conceiving. Her first child, a son, was born after seven years of marriage. Later, Marta gave premature birth to twin girls with severe medical problems. One of the girls died in the hospital; the other died a year later. A healthy daughter was born in 1993.

Marta's husband legalized his status in the U.S. during the amnesty in the 1980s. He later became a permanent U.S. resident and applied for Marta and the two children to join him in the U.S. The three had to appear in Ciudad Juárez for an immigration interview. They were approved, and came to Georgia in 1997.

Leaving her family in Mexico and coming to the United States was a difficult decision for Marta. Her father had suffered a stroke a few years earlier and was in a vegetative state. Marta and her siblings took turns caring for the father. When she received her U.S. residency, she was pulled between her feeling of obligation to stay and care for her father, and her desire to join her husband and unite her family in the U.S. She consulted with friends, family members, and the priest at her church. Everyone advised her to join her husband in the U.S. Marta decided to take their advice:

> I thought that I was going to have the opportunity to see him [my father] again. But no. I had been here for four months when my father died . . . .When I came, the separation was really sad. And I still can't get used to being here.
>
> *(Pensé que iba a tener la oportunidad de volverlo a ver. Y no. Tenía cuatro meses de haber llegado aquí cuando mi papá falleció. . . . Fue muy triste la separación cuando me vine. Y todavía no me puedo acostumbrar aquí.)*

To prepare for his family's arrival in the U.S., Marta's husband had purchased an older two-bedroom trailer on a rented lot in a predominantly Hispanic trailer park. The trailer was not the kind of housing that Marta was accustomed to. She stated, "I always say [to my husband], 'I left my house to come and live in a trunk.'" (*Siempre le digo, "Dejé mi casa para venir a vivir en un baúl."*)

For the first few months, Marta stayed at home while her husband went to work and her children attended school. Marta recalled, "I stayed alone here and I started to cry. 'Why did I come? I should have stayed in my town.' It was really hard." *(Yo me quedaba sola aquí y me ponía a llorar. "¿Para qué me venía? Ya me hubiera quedado en mi pueblo." Era bien difícil.*)

When Marta did leave home, all the areas of the city looked the same to her, and she began to experience a kind of panic attack whenever her husband took her out shopping. She described the feeling, "I went blind. I felt really bad, a headache . . . and I wanted to explode. (*Yo me cegaba. Me sentía bien mal, dolor de cabeza . . . y quería explotar.)*

Marta decided to look for a job. Her husband did not want her to work, but she insisted: "I told him, 'I'm going to go crazy shut in here by myself.'" *(Le digo, "Yo me voy a volver loca aquí encerrada sola.")* She obtained a job at the hotel Howard Johnson, but she had only worked three weeks when she received word that her father had passed away. Marta was given time off from her job for bereavement. However, when her bereavement period ended, she decided not to return to a job she did not enjoy. A friend told Marta about a job in a cleaners. She worked in the cleaners for a year bagging, ticketing, and hanging the clothes.

Around this time, Marta began to study English. She and her husband attended classes that were offered by various Baptist churches in their trailer park. They also began to receive individual English classes in their home, taught by volunteer tutors from a faith-based social service agency.

After one year at the cleaners, Marta went to Mexico for two weeks to visit her family. When she returned, the cleaners did not reemploy her. She then obtained a job in a plant nursery. She cleaned and watered the flowers, and planted them in baskets. When they were ready for sale, she bagged them and filled the orders. In this position, she worked with other Hispanic employees, some of whom were also from Galeana.

Marta continued in this job for a year. Again, she asked for time off to visit her family in Mexico. Her boss said that her job would be waiting for her when she returned, but she decided to quit anyway since the job did not pay so well. When she returned from Mexico, she obtained a job in an upholstery workshop. Her job consisted of removing the old upholstery and the staples and tacks from the furniture. Her boss would upholster the front of the piece of furniture while Marta would upholster the sides and back. She held this position for three years.

During this time, Marta's husband became disabled. He had worked in construction and injured his back on the job. However, he continued to work with the injury, which aggravated his condition. Eventually, his conditioned worsened to the point that he was unable to work at all. Marta became the sole breadwinner for the family, which was a new role for her. She stated, "Now I realize that I am both the husband and the wife." *(Ahorita me doy cuenta que soy el esposo y la esposa a la vez.)*

Later Marta also suffered a workplace injury in the upholstery workshop. She injured her arm carrying a chair, and her ability to work was also limited. At the time of our interviews, neither Marta nor her husband was employed. Marta's husband was trying to obtain social security disability, and Marta was participating in a rehabilitation program. The family was experiencing extreme financial hardship due to their lack of income and mounting medical bills. To meet some of the family's expenses, Marta took on house cleaning jobs and prepared Mexican food to sell to single men in the trailer park. During these hard financial times, Marta and her family received assistance from a faith-based social service agency and members of the Catholic church.

Since our interviews, Marta's husband has been approved for disability benefits; however, the cost of his medications is more than the amount of his benefit check. The rehabilitation program has placed Marta in a position preparing food in a deli. Marta and her husband, her teenage son, and nine year old daughter are still living in their two-bedroom trailer that was manufactured in the 1960s.

Marta's Sociocultural Adaptation

Although Marta's husband had worked in the U.S. for many years, Marta seemed to have known little about life in the U.S. before she arrived. She saw that people who had worked in the U.S. came back to Mexico with nice clothes and lots of money. People had told her that the U.S. was clean, it was pretty, and people ate bread instead of tortillas. Marta's experience with the English language had been limited to the two hours of instruction per week she had received in middle school. However, she had not expected that she would need English in the U.S. because many Hispanic people are here, and her husband would be with her. Marta also has a sister living in Athens. The symptoms (e.g., crying, headaches) that Marta displayed during the first few months of her life in the United States could be taken as indicators that Marta was experiencing acculturative stress (Berry, Uichol, Minde, & Mok, 1987). Of the five participants, Marta was the oldest upon immigration. She had spent 40 years of her life in Mexico. Thus, the process of sociocultural adaptation may have been more stressful for her than for the other participants.

Although Marta has interacted with Americans in the workplace, she lives in a predominately Hispanic neighborhood. Marta and her husband talked about several American friends who have helped them: the volunteer ESL tutors from the faith-based social service agency and the deacon from the Catholic church. They described these people as being just like part of their family (*como si fueran de mi propia familia*). However, these American "friends" are in actuality service providers, and their relationship with Marta and her family is unilateral. That is, they enter Marta's life, they call her and come to her home in order to provide assistance, yet she does not have the same capacity to enter and act upon their lives.

Marta demonstrated a strong religious faith. Over the course of the three interviews, she used the word "God" *(Dios)* 21 times and the word "church" *(iglesia)* on 39 occasions. In contrast, these words appeared less than seven times each in the life stories of the other participants. Marta and her family participate in the Spanish-language activities at the Catholic church in Athens. For example, Marta showed me a photo of her daughter dressed as the *Virgen de Guadalupe* (the patron saint of Mexico) during one church celebration. When Marta needed help here in the United States, she turned to people and agencies affiliated with the Catholic church.

At times, Marta expressed her desire to return to Mexico, "All the time I have thought, all the time thinking about going back." *(Yo todo el tiempo he pensado, todo el tiempo pensando en regresarme.)* Even so, she has been an active participant in the adult ESL classes provided by the social service agency for the past year and half. Each semester, she has been recognized for her high level of attendance. After a year in the Basic II class, she passed the exam to be promoted to the Intermediate I group. Marta is participating in that class at this time.

Marta's Economic Adaptation

Marta's status as a legal immigrant has enabled her to seek jobs outside of the traditionally immigrant-employing industries. In her jobs with the cleaners and in the upholstery workshop she worked primarily with Americans. However, her low level of education (9 years) as compared to Americans and her lack of English proficiency have limited her to low-paying jobs where she does not interact with the public.

The workplace injuries that both Marta and her husband have suffered, their inability to work, and the expense of their medical treatments have created great financial difficulties for the family. Even in this situation, their legal status has benefited them by making them eligible to receive public assistance in the form of social security payments and access to rehabilitation programs.

Marta's Political Adaptation

Marta entered the country as a legal immigrant. Because of the length of time Marta and her husband have been permanent residents, they are both now eligible to apply for citizenship. Marta and her husband expressed an interest in applying for citizenship; however, they mentioned three barriers. First, Marta's husband has low literacy skills. Although he claims to know all the answers to the one hundred citizenship interview questions, he is unable to write in English. Second, the family's economic situation prevents them from paying the fees involved in the application process. The U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services charge $260 to apply for naturalization, plus a $50 fingerprinting fee (*Immigration forms and fees*). Third, Marta's husband does not drive, and the naturalization application would have to be processed in Atlanta. Anyone who drives him there would have to lose a day of work. The reason Marta's husband was interested in obtaining citizenship was to insure his continued eligibility to receive government assistance.

Arturo

I came to know Arturo through his wife, who is a student in the ESL classes where I work. He had accompanied her to the school on one occasion. At that time, he talked to me in English, asking if I knew of any GED programs. I gave him the information I had about GED programs at the local technical college. Arturo later joined a GED class affiliated with that college. I conducted three interviews with Arturo and observed two sessions of his GED class in May 2003. At the time, Arturo was 34 years old and had been in the United States for fourteen years.

In the fall of 2003, Arturo invited me to his daughter's 15th birthday party *(quinceñera)*. I also contributed to the event as sponsor *(madrina)* of the party napkins.

La Historia de Arturo (Arturo's Story)

Arturo was born and raised in a middle-class family in the city of Cuernavaca, Morelos. He is the youngest of five children. His parents, who are originally from the State of Mexico, never went to school. They later migrated to Cuernavaca and learned to read and write in adult literacy classes. Arturo's father worked in paper factory. His father and another son also operated a metal workshop which produced tables, chairs, and doors.

Arturo attended public elementary, middle, and high schools in Cuernavaca. During his elementary school years, his parents were involved in the school's board of directors. In middle school, Arturo studied English four to six hours a week, and it was one of his favorite subjects. He remembered:

> One day when I was in middle school I said, "I want to speak English well. Some day to know the United States or some day when a person from the United States comes, I can guide him through the whole city. To show him the different tourist sites that exist. To work in this."
>
> *(Algún día yo decía cuando estaba en la secundaria, "Yo quiero hablar bien el inglés. Algún día conocer Estados Unidos o algún día que venga una persona de Estados Unidos, yo lo puedo guiar por toda la ciudad. Demonstrarle los diferentes centros turísticos que existen. Trabajar de eso.")*

He used to listen to American music and attempted to translate the lyrics.

Arturo saw that his father struggled to provide for the family, and so he decided to start working. During his years in high school *(preparatoria)* he worked seven hours a day in a convenience store and attended high school in the evenings from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. This was a high school designed for workers *(trabajadores)*; thus, many of Arturo's classmates were adults. Seeing older people studying motivated Arturo to take his studies more seriously:

> And these older people, like they pull you. And they motivate you, too. You say, "How is it possible that this person is older than I am and he is taking better advantage of the time than I am? I am also going to do it."
>
> *(Y esas personas mayores, como que lo jalan a uno. Y lo motivan también a uno. Dice uno, "¿cómo es posible que esa persona mayor que yo y está aprovechando más del tiempo que yo? Yo también lo voy a hacer.")*

Arturo continued studying English in high school. The teacher encouraged the students to learn English to obtain better jobs and higher salaries.

In the convenience store, Arturo shared responsibilities with one of his sisters. Arturo worked the morning shift, and his sister worked in the evenings. They served the customers, ran the cash register, made bank deposits, stocked shelves, conducted inventory, and placed orders with the suppliers. Arturo gave most of his earnings from the store to his parents and siblings to help meet household expenses. During school vacations, Arturo also helped his father and brother in the metal workshop.

Upon finishing high school, Arturo took the exam to enter the state university to study accounting. Spaces in this major were limited, and Arturo was not accepted. He continued working for a few more years in the store. Seeing that he would have little opportunity to continue his studies or advance in his current job, Arturo made plans to come to the United States. His idea was to work in the United States, save some money, return to Mexico, marry his girlfriend, and establish a home.

Arturo came to the U.S. for the first time in 1989 when he was 19 years old. Some friends convinced him to go with them to South Carolina. There he obtained work cutting tobacco in the fields. He remembered, "The contractor asked me where I was from. And I told him, 'I'm from Cuernavaca.' And he said to me, 'But you come from the city. This job, don't you think it'll be really tough for you?'" *(El contratista me dijo que ¿yo de donde era? Y le dije, "Soy de Cuernavaca." Y me dice, "Pero tú vienes de la ciudad. Este trabajo ¿no crees que va a ser muy pesado para ti?")* However, Arturo had "the dream of working, of earning dollars" *(la ilusión de trabajar, de ganar dólares)*, and he wanted to give agricultural work a try. He worked in the fields with other Hispanic workers around three months. The owner of the fields provided housing for the workers in a large house surrounded by tobacco fields. The nearest town was half an hour away by car. The boss would transport the workers to the work site every day and to town to shop on the weekends.

During this time, Arturo made friends with another worker who was Chicano. This person acted as a translator for the boss, and Arturo started to see the value of learning English:

> I made this a goal . . . to say, "If one day I work, I don't want to depend on anyone translating the instructions for me. I want to understand them myself." And up to now I do. I believe I do understand the instructions they tell me.
>
> *(Eso yo me lo formé como una meta . . . decir "Si algún día yo trabaje, no quiero depender que alguien me esté traduciendo las instrucciones. Yo quiero entenderlas por mi mismo." Y hasta ahorita sí. Creo que sí entiendo las instrucciones que me dicen.)*

Arturo and his Chicano friend began tutoring each other in their spare time. The Chicano taught Arturo English phrases necessary for daily activities. In exchange, Arturo helped the Chicano improve his ability to read and write in Spanish.

In September 1989, Hurricane Hugo struck the eastern coast of the United States. At the farm where Arturo worked, most of the crops were destroyed. Because of the destruction, the farm workers lost their jobs. Some friends invited Arturo to accompany them to Gainesville, Georgia. He recalled, "They said that there were chicken plants here where they were hiring people, that there were many Hispanics working." *(Decían que aquí había unas plantas de pollo donde ocupaban gente, que había muchos hispanos trabajando.)*

In Gainsville, Arturo obtained work in a chicken processing plant packing frozen chicken. He lived with some friends in a trailer in a trailer park. During this time in history, Gainesville did not have many Hispanic residents. Arturo remembered, "In that time you went to the hospital and it was rare the person who spoke Spanish. So, you had to force yourself to learn a little English to make yourself understood with them." *(En aquel tiempo iba uno al hospital y era raro la persona que hablaba español. Entonces, uno se había forzado a aprender un poco de inglés para darse entender con ellos.)*

A coworker in the chicken plant from Vietnam told Arturo about some English classes. Arturo entered the English program in the second level, where he attended two or three days a week. He was part of a group of fifteen to twenty students who completed several levels together. Arturo was the only Hispanic person working in the packing department. Knowing more English gave him more confidence to perform his job.

Arturo moved to live with a friend who had purchased a home in the countryside around Commerce. He ended up leaving the English program because he was working night shift and because he lived too far away to attend the classes. However, Arturo continued studying English with books and tapes on his own.

The change in residence also meant that Arturo needed to find a job closer to home. He took a job in another chicken processing plant where he weighed boxes of chicken. In this job, Arturo had no need for English because the workers were segregated; Asians worked together, Hispanics worked together, and African-Americans worked together. Arturo asked the supervisor why the workers were segregated: “He said to avoid problems, conflicts between one person and another.” *(Decía que para evitar problemas, conflictos entre una persona y otra.)* Arturo tried to practice his English by talking to people from different areas while he was on break.

Arturo left his job to go back to Mexico for a two-month visit. When he returned to the United States, he went to Texas, where he has an uncle. He worked as a roofer in Houston for eight months, and then he returned to Georgia. He was able to live with the same friends, and he obtained a job in the same plant, this time making cardboard boxes on a machine. He worked there for two years. Eventually, production in this plant was reduced, and Arturo was not working enough to meet his expenses. He decided to look for another job, and he found one in a chicken processing plant in Athens. He worked in this plant for two years, first operating the machinery that covered the trays of chicken in plastic and then making boxes. During this time, Arturo’s girlfriend (now wife) came to Georgia with their oldest daughter.

Traveling daily from Commerce to Athens became tiring, and Arturo decided to look for a job closer to his residence. He began working night shift in a factory in Commerce that produces industrial thread. The night schedule, from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., affected Arturo’s sleep patterns. This lack of sleep caused Arturo to experience facial paralysis:

> This eye didn’t close, the left eye. And part of my mouth. Like I didn’t feel movement. [The doctor] told me that the seventh nerve of my face was paralyzed. He said it was because I didn’t sleep well.
>
> *(Este ojo ya no lo cerraba, el ojo izquierdo. Y parte de la boca. Como que yo no sentía movimiento. Me dijo [el médico] que era que el séptimo nervio de la cara se me había paralizado. Me dijo que era porque no dormía bien.*)

The doctor wrote a letter to the company where Arturo worked, and he was changed to the day shift. There he worked mostly with Americans.

Meanwhile, Arturo’s brother-in-law bought the house where Arturo had been living. Arturo continued living there with his wife and brother-in-law. The three of them decided to open a Mexican store in Athens. All of the transactions were performed in the name of Arturo’s brother-in-law. He later decided not to work in the store, and he left the day-to-day operations to Arturo and his wife. Although the store sold Mexican products, many of their customers were African Americans who bought lottery tickets.

During this time, Arturo purchased a small trailer for his family. He eventually sold this trailer and purchased a triple wide, where the family (Arturo, his wife, and three daughters) now lives. The trailer is situated on an acre and a half of land. This allows the children to have room for a swimming pool and swings and the family to plant corn and tomatoes. The family has an amicable relationship with their neighbors, who are Americans. Arturo is currently making payments on this trailer.

After four years of running the store, Arturo decided to take a vacation in Mexico. His wife also quit working in the store to spend more time with their children. Arturo’s brother-in-law resumed control of the business.

Arturo spent a month in Mexico. Upon his return, he worked on and off with a friend in landscaping. At the time of the interviews, Arturo was working a temporary job in a car parts factory. He expressed an interest in establishing another business. He has participated in small business seminars in Atlanta and Athens directed toward the Hispanic community. Since our interviews, Arturo and his wife have opened a gift shop in Athens.

Arturo's Sociocultural Adaptation

Of the five participants, Arturo had the highest level of English proficiency and probably the most confidence when using the language. He described having had a strong interest in learning the language since his middle school days. Arturo took several English classes during his early years in the United States. After fourteen years of living here, he continues to study English in the GED program. Arturo expressed an orientation toward lifelong learning when he discussed his efforts to learn the language:

> I feel that I still need to learn a lot of English. Yeah, I can speak, I understand. But there are always new words that you don't know, right? A lot of vocabulary that isn't very common. You don't use it very frequently. And you are learning. Every day you learn more and more and more. And that is something very nice.
>
> *(Siento que me falta todavía mucho para aprender del inglés. Sí, puedo hablar, entiendo. Pero siempre hay palabras nuevas que uno no conoce ¿verdad? Mucho vocabulario que no es muy común. No lo usa uno muy frequentemente. Y ya va aprendiendo uno. Cada día aprende uno más y más y más. Y eso es algo muy bonito.)*

Arturo's workplace experiences have also provided him many opportunities to interact with Americans and practice the language. Although Arturo and his wife communicate with each other in Spanish, he often speaks English with his daughters, who at the time of the interviews were aged 14, 11, and 3. The older girls speak English fluently and help answer their parents' questions about the language.

Arturo has established friendships with Americans. One American friend, an older White man, frequently invites Arturo and his family to fish with him on his lake. Arturo has also maintained friendly relationships with his American coworkers. For example, on one occasion while living in Gainesville Arturo's car broke down. Arturo had a strong enough relationship with his American coworkers that he was able to call one of them and ask this person to do him the favor of giving him a ride to and from work.

Two of Arturo's daughters were born in the United States. Arturo is very conscious of the advantages they have as U.S. citizens. It would be to the family's benefit to continue living in the United States. At this time, the family does not have any plans to return to Mexico.

Arturo's Economic Adaptation

Arturo's labor trajectory (working in agriculture, chicken processing plants, factories, and landscaping) does not demonstrate progression toward better or higher paying jobs. Arturo has noted that many jobs in the U.S. require a GED. Arturo completed his high school education in Mexico and technically does not need a GED. However, he believes a GED earned here in the U.S. would be worth more in the labor market than his high school diploma from Mexico. He is now studying to take the GED exam; he hopes that obtaining a GED will allow him to obtain a better job with a higher salary and better treatment.

Perhaps there are more possibilities for Arturo to achieve his financial goals as an entrepreneur. Arturo's retail experience in Mexico has proven very useful to him in the United States. He was able to draw on this experience to operate a store here with his wife. He recalled:

> The job was the same. The only difference was that in that [store in Mexico] we were workers, and here we were owners . . . . What was new for me was how to prepare the taxes, how often to pay them, the permits of the license, that was new for me because I had to research it and I had to do it.
>
> *(El trabajo era lo mismo. La única diferencia era de que en aquella éramos trabajadores y acá éramos dueños . . . . Lo que fue nuevo para mí fue de como preparar las* taxes*, cada cuando pagarlas, los permisos de la licencia, fue nuevo para mí porque yo lo tuve que investigar y lo tuve que hacer.)*

With four years of U.S. store management experience under his belt, Arturo has now opened a gift shop.

Arturo is able to support his family in the United States, and he continues to send money to assist his parents and siblings in Mexico. One of his sisters also immigrated to the United States and lives in California. His wife has a brother and sister living in Georgia.

Arturo's Political Adaptation

Arturo's exact immigration status remains unknown. Regulations of the Human Subjects Office prohibited me from inquiring about the participants' legal status. However, I suspect that Arturo is in the United States without documents for several reasons. First, Arturo never brought up his legal status, and legal immigrants are usually quick to mention that they have residency or work authorization. Second, when Arturo and his wife operated the convenience mart, everything related to the store was in his brother-in-law's name. Likewise, Arturo's home telephone service was established in his brother-in-law's name. Third, Arturo's wife related to me her story of how she crossed the U.S. border illegally. If it is indeed true that Arturo is here without authorization, then he is excluded from participation in the political system.

Guisela

Guisela was identified as a potential participant through snowball sampling. Arturo recommended her to me; she is a cousin of Arturo's wife. I conducted the three interviews with Guisela during August, September, and October of 2003. During that time, she registered in the adult ESL classes where I work and was placed in our Intermediate I class. She attended three classes and dropped out because of lack of childcare. Due to her limited participation, I was unable to observe her in the ESL class. At the time of our interviews, Guisela was 28 years old and had been in the United States for a total of eight years.

La Historia de Guisela (Guisela's Story)

Guisela grew up on a *rancho* which was located on the outskirts of the town of Dolores Hidalgo in the state of Guanajuato. She was the third of six children. Guisela's father kept livestock and farmed another person's land, growing corn, beans, and squash. He had three years of schooling. Her mother ran a little store out of their home where she sold products such as soap, oil, sugar, salt, and soft drinks. She never attended school, but her father had taught her basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Guisela's parents held a positive attitude toward their children's education. However, Guisela felt that she did not have as much time as she would have liked to dedicate to her studies. She often had to help her mother in the store or her father with the crops and animals.

When Guisela was a child, the *rancho* had only an elementary school. It was necessary to go to Dolores Hidalgo for middle school studies. Students had to buy their books, uniforms, and school supplies. Plus there was the added expense of travel to Dolores and the cost of eating meals there. When Guisela completed elementary school at age twelve, two of her siblings were already attending middle school in Dolores. Her father could not afford to have a third child in middle school. Guisela was out of school for the next year and half. She stayed at home and helped her mother in the home and in the store.

When Guisela was thirteen and a half, an open middle school *(secundaria abierta)* was established in the *rancho*. However, it did not provide the same curriculum as the regular middle school did. While the regular schools taught ten subjects, the open school only taught five subjects, the most basic ones such as Spanish and math. English was not part of the open school's curriculum although the teacher did try to expose students to English on the side. Classes in the open school were taught during the evenings. Most of the students were youth like Guisela who had not been able to study middle school in Dolores. The students ranged in age from 15 to 22. At first, Guisela was happy to attend school to be with her friends and to get away from her mother. She recalled:

> The nicest thing is that I finished it [the school]. At first, I started off bad with low grades and then later when I realized that I was doing really bad, then I put more effort into it. And the nicest thing that I remember is that I could finish it. That they could give me my certificate.
>
> *(Lo más bonito es que la terminé. De que primero empecé mal con bajas calificaciones y que ya después cuando ya me fui dando cuenta que iba bien mal, ya le puse más ganas. Y lo más bonito que recuerdo es que pude terminarla. Que me pudieron dar mi certificado.)*

Guisela wanted to continue studying but found herself in the same situation as before. There was no money for her to continue her studies. She stayed at home for another year. When she was sixteen, she enrolled in a two-year computer course at a private institute located in another town, San José Iturbide. She traveled two hours (one way) to San José Iturbide to study two days a week. In this course, she learned Windows, Lotus, Excel, and Basic programming.

Upon completion of the course, the institute offered to help graduates obtain employment in different cities. Guisela, however, felt an obligation to stay in the *rancho* and help her mother.

She stayed at home for another year and a half. Then, an older brother who had been to the United States suggested that she should come with him to the United States. Guisela made the spontaneous decision to do it. Her father did not like the idea, but he allowed her to make her own decision. He said, "I don't think it's good. We don't have the money for you to go. But you are starting to grow up. So it's your decision." *("Creo que no está bien. No tenemos dinero para que te vayas. Pero ya estás empezando a crecer. Ya así es tu decisión.")*

Guisela had aspirations of working in the States:

> I knew that there was work . . . . I knew that working here I could help my parents and family there. I knew that it was difficult because of English. I knew that it was difficult because an illegal person doesn't have the same rights as a legal person in this country . . . . But what I most knew was that there were possibilities of finding a job and that by finding that job I could help my family.
>
> *(Sabía que había trabajo . . . . Sabía que trabajando yo acá puedo ayudar a mis padres y mi familia allá . Sabía que estaba difícil por el inglés. Sabía que estaba difícil porque una persona ilegal no tiene los mismos derechos que una persona legal en este país . . . . Pero lo que más sabía yo era que había posibilidades de encontrar un trabajo y de que encontrando ese trabajo yo podía ayudar a mi familia.)*

In 1994, at the age of 18, Guisela made the trip across the border with a cousin. They came directly to Georgia. She remembered, "My [female] cousin was the one who told me, 'There are jobs for women [in Georgia]. And it is easy to learn the jobs.'" *(Mi prima fue la que me decía, "Allá sí hay trabajo para las mujeres. Y pues sí es fácil aprender los trabajos.")*

Guisela stayed with an aunt and a cousin in Commerce and shared household expenses with them. Within a week and a half, she had found employment in a chicken processing plant in Braselton. The husband of a cousin worked in the plant and recommended her for the job. Guisela worked second shift cutting and weighing chicken tenders. This was her first paid work experience.

At this time, Guisela did not own a car and had to rely on others to take her to and from work. Because of her transportation situation, Guisela only worked a month in Braselton. She decided to take a job in another poultry plant in Athens where she would be able to ride to work with her cousin. In this job, she worked third shift packing legs and thighs on a plate. After a year, she was switched to dayshift, where she worked in the debone department as a relief person. In this position, she was able to learn all the different jobs in the department so that she could fill in for employees who needed to go to the bathroom or the infirmary. She remained in this position for another year. During this time, Guisela sent most of her earnings back to Mexico. She recalled, "Almost everything I earned, I saved to send back to my parents." *(Casi todo lo que yo trabajaba, ahorraba para mandarselo a mis papas.)*

During this time, Guisela was not aware of any available English classes. She picked up some vocabulary, words like knife, scissors, and tender, which were related to her work. She worked with both American and Hispanic people.

One of Guisela's brothers came to Georgia, and Guisela moved to Athens with him. Soon after, Guisela decided that after two years it was time for her to return to Mexico:

> I said, "I'm going to stay two years, maximum two years. I'm going to go [to the United States]. I'm going to know [the place]. I'm going to work. I'm going to make some

> money for me. I'm going to help my parents. And then I'm going back to Mexico to stay." That was my plan.
>
> *(Yo dije, "Voy a quedarme dos años, lo máximo dos años. Voy a ir. Voy a conocer. Voy a trabajar. Voy a hacer algo de dinero para mí. Voy a ayudar a mis papas. Y ya me regreso a México ya a quedar." Eso era mi propósito.)*

Guisela's parents did not know that Guisela was planning to return. She arrived home on Mother's Day in 1996.

Life in Mexico was a little easier now. With the money that Guisela and her brothers had sent home, the family had been able to expand the store and add on to the house. Guisela planned to stay in Mexico, and she purchased a car out of her savings. Guisela did not work in paid employment; like before, she helped her mother. She reminisced, "It was almost the same routine." *(Era casi la misma rutina.)*

In 1997, after eight months, Guisela's brothers suggested that they return to the United States. Guisela agreed: "As I had always liked adventure, to know other places, other jobs." *(Como que siempre me ha gustado como la aventura, como conocer otros lugares, otros trabajos.)* And the first crossing had been so easy. However, this time Guisela and the friend with whom she was traveling were detained by immigration three times. When she finally arrived in Houston, she was met by a brother who brought her to Georgia.

Again, Guisela stayed with her relatives in Commerce. She did not start working immediately: "I wanted to look for another different kind of job." *(Quería buscar otro diferente trabajo.)* She worked part-time helping her cousins in a store they ran. Guisela did not have success in finding a different kind of job. After eight months, she moved to Athens to share an apartment with a Guatemalan woman. She took a job in a poultry plant in the marinade department. There she worked night shift, placing chicken on a line so that it could be injected with marinade. The majority of her coworkers were Hispanic and African American.

During this time, Guisela reestablished a relationship with a former boyfriend from the state of Hidalgo. They spent much of their free time together. After eight months, she went to live with him in a rented duplex in a primarily Hispanic community.

Guisela had been working in the poultry plant for a year and four months when a friend told her about a job in a window treatment factory. Guisela took the job and worked for three years assembling curtains and blinds, inspecting them, and sending them to the packing department. She worked with both Americans and Hispanics, yet each person worked at their own table, which limited their interaction.

The window treatment factory provided an English as a Second Language program for its employees. The classes were offered during both day and night shifts so that employees could attend during working hours. The classes were free; however, employees were not paid if they missed work to attend class. Guisela participated regularly in the two and a half month course. The basic level course focused on developing daily life communication skills. The company eventually discontinued the course due to lack of interest by the employees.

While working with this company, Guisela became pregnant with her first child. She took six weeks maternity leave and returned to work in the factory. When Guisela became pregnant with her second child, the factory was at the point of closing. Although she was near her due date, Guisela continued working until the factory closed so that she could receive the employee settlement. At the time of the interviews, Guisela’s son was three years old and her daughter four and a half months old.

Between our first and second interviews, Guisela took another job in a poultry plant. She only worked for two weeks, though, because of childcare issues. Since Guisela is no longer working, she is not able to provide as much support for her family in Mexico. She stated, “I can’t send as much to my family right now, right? But once in a while I send them even if it’s fifty or if it’s a hundred [dollars].” *(No lo puedo mandar tanto a mi familia ahorita ¿verdad? Pero de vez en cuando les mando aunque sea cincuenta o que sea cien.)*

After the birth of her son, Guisela and her common-law husband moved to a three-bedroom house in Nicholson. They have been renting this home for the past two years on a month-by-month basis from a private individual. Their neighbors include the landlord, who is American, and the landlord’s family. Guisela, her husband, and her two young children share the home with Guisela’s two sisters. One of Guisela’s brothers, who works in construction, sometimes stays in the home as well. Currently, five of the six siblings are living in the United States.

Guisela and her husband have purchased a home in her husband’s home state of Hidalgo. The family hopes to return to Mexico within the next two years and open a business there.

Guisela’s Sociocultural Adaptation

Guisela had minimal exposure to the English language while living in Mexico. During her first stay in the United States, she was not aware of any English programs for immigrants. She was able to pick up work-related vocabulary on the job. Now in the U.S. for the second time, she has had the opportunity to study the language. She learned basic survival English in the workplace English program provided by the window treatment factory. She is also informed about other ESL programs. However, now that she is the mother of two young children, childcare is a barrier to her participation in those programs.

Guisela has not experienced any ongoing friendships with Americans. While she worked in the window treatment factory, Guisela had friendly relationships with three of her African American coworkers. However, her lack of English proficiency has made it difficult to maintain that relationship once the factory closed since they no longer see each other on a daily basis. She stated, “Now that I left work I hardly see them. Like some two times I’ve called them. And the little that they understand me and I understand them . . . . We hardly have any American friends.” *(Ya ahora que ya me salí de trabajar ya casi no las veo. Como unas dos veces les he hablado. Y lo poquito que me entienden y les entiendo . . . . Casi no tenemos amigos americanos.)*

Guisela came to the United States as a single woman. The fact that she has committed herself to a relationship with a Mexican man only strengthens her ties to the country and to the Mexican culture. Now that she is a stay-at-home mom, her opportunities to interact with American people are very limited. Her life is very much centered on her family.

Guisela believed that life in the United States had not changed her much. She still held values that her parents had taught her, such as saving money and having a close-knit family. She also recognized that the money one earns in the United States can make a person more materialistic:

> There are times that you go to the store and you don’t need those things so much. And you just see and it’s pretty and “I’ll take it.” And because you have the money . . . . All of us people who are here working, we are very good consumers.
> *(Hay veces que uno va a la tienda y no necesita uno tanto esas cosas. Y uno nada más ve y está bonito y “Ya me lo llevo.” Y porque tiene uno el dinero . . . . Todas las personas que estamos aquí trabajando, somos muy buenos consumidores.*)

Although Guisela's two children were born in the United States, Guisela and her husband hope to return to Mexico within the next two years. Over the years, they have sent money to her husband's family to purchase a house for them there. Guisela has never seen this house, but she knows she has a home waiting for when she returns to her country. Guisela is conscious that her children, who are U.S. citizens, may want to return to study or work in the United States some day.

Guisela's Economic Adaptation

In Mexico, Guisela had completed a two-year computer course. Yet she has never had the opportunity to apply those skills in the labor market either in Mexico or the United States. She never held paid employment in Mexico, and here in the U.S. she has held a string of jobs within the poultry industry. Guisela wanted to find "another different kind of job" *(otro diferente trabajo)*, and she finally obtained employment in a different industry in the window treatment factory. Guisela had a stable employment history in that factory (3 years); however, she lost her job when the factory closed due to the economic recession. Now she is unemployed and the family relies on the income her husband earns in his construction job.

Guisela dreams of owning her own business, perhaps a music, clothing, or shoe store. However, she is not sure if a person without legal documents like herself could open such a business in the United States. If she is not able to open a business here, then her plan is to save her money to open a business in Mexico.

Guisela's Political Adaptation:

Guisela admitted openly to me that she is in the United States without authorization. At this time, there are no avenues for her to legalize her status. She is excluded from participation in the political system.

Tobías

I first met Tobías as a student in the ESL program where I work. He was a student in the Intermediate II class (the most advanced level) during the spring and summer of 2003. He registered for the fall course as well but did not attend. He was not a participant in this study at that time. Later, when I was looking for research participants, I approached an older Mexican student in the program and asked him if he knew anyone who met the research criteria and who might be willing to participate. This man told me that his brothers had been in the U.S. for a long time, and he would see if one of them might be interested. He gave me the phone number of one of his brothers, who turned out to be Tobías. I conducted three interviews with Tobías in November and December of 2003. Because Tobías was no longer a student in the ESL program at that time, I was unable to conduct any observations of his participation. At the time of our interviews, Tobías was 29 years old and had been in the United States for six years.

La Historia de Tobías (Tobías's Story)

Tobías grew up on a *rancho* near the town of Baxthe in the state of Hidalgo. He was one of ten children. Tobías's father worked as a bricklayer and as a farmer. He grew corn and beans on another woman's land. When the crops were harvested, he gave half to the woman and kept half for his family. Tobías's mother helped with the farming and dedicated herself to maintaining the home: making tortillas, preparing meals over a fire, and producing pulque (a drink made from fermented cactus juice) for the family's consumption. Tobías estimates that his parents studied two or three years of primary school. Both of them had basic literacy skills.

When describing his home in Mexico, Tobías emphasized the poverty in which the family lived. When he was not in school, Tobías worked the land, took care of the family's animals, and gathered firewood. His diversions as a child were fishing and shooting birds with his slingshot.

Tobías entered kindergarten at age five. The kindergarten and elementary schools were located in the town of Baxthe, a thirty-minute walk from Tobías's home. Tobías was a mischievous boy, but he managed to maintain good grades. When he was in fifth grade, he was offered a government scholarship. However, the school personnel convinced Tobías to give the scholarship to another boy who was poorer and who had to walk even farther to school.

After completing his elementary education, Tobías was out of school for a year. He passed the time helping his father and gathering firewood. When he was thirteen, his father took him to register in the middle school, which was located in another town, Alfajayucan. One of Tobías's brothers, who was working in the capital city, paid Tobías's school expenses: shoes, uniform, books, and money for meals.

In the second year of middle school, Tobías was again offered a government scholarship. He used this money to pay the man who transported him to school every day. He recollected, "I had to walk even farther [than to the elementary school] from my house to the man's house, where he had the truck, where he waited for us to take us to the school." *(Yo tenía que caminar todavía más lejos de mi casa a la casa del señor, donde tenía la camioneta, donde nos esperaba para llevarnos a la escuela.)* Tobías was also able to start buying some of his own clothes and food while he was at school. In his third year of middle school, he started working on Saturdays on another man's farm. This also helped him meet his school expenses.

During most of the week, the students wore uniforms to school. However, on Wednesday, when students washed their uniforms, they were able to wear their own clothes to school. This was when social class differences among the students became obvious:

> Sometimes there were kids who wore clothes with a patch. I did. I'm not ashamed of that. I experienced it. I wore my clothes that way. There were people who wore the best brand of clothes. And that hurt me because sometimes they wanted to humiliate you. On the one day they had the opportunity to wear normal clothes, they humiliated the others.
> *(A veces había niños que llevan la ropa así con un parche. Yo lo hice. Yo no tengo verguënza de eso. Yo lo viví. Yo la traía mi ropa asi. Hay gente que traía de la mejor marca la ropa. Y eso me dolía porque a veces querían humillarte. En un solo día que tenían la oportunidad llevar ropa normal, humillaban a los demás.)*

In the middle school, the students chose a vocational track, and Tobías selected agriculture. The students spent much of their days out in the fields with the teachers giving lessons on soil types and irrigation methods. Tobías remembered, "There I felt like at home in my village. All of us who chose this subject, we were really people from the countryside, from the poor towns, who liked the country." (*Allí me sentía como en mi casa de mi rancho. Todos los que escogimos esa materia, éramos gente realmente del provincia, de los pueblitos pobres, que nos gustaba el campo.)*

Tobías also studied English for three years in middle school, but he claims he did not learning anything. He did not feel motivated to learn because he did not see that he would ever have a need for the language. He said to himself, "Me, what do I need English for? If I'm from the town. I'm going to stay here. If I work here, I won't need English. I go to the capital, I won't need English." *("Yo ¿para qué necesito inglés? Si yo soy del pueblo. Voy a quedarme acá. Si trabajo aquí, yo no voy a necesitar inglés. Me voy a la capital, no voy a necesitar inglés.")*

A few days after he graduated from middle school, his sisters, who lived in Mexico City, came to take him to the capital to study high school. The change in environment was dramatic. Tobías described his reaction:

> As I have never seen Mexico City, when I went for the first time, I was dizzy . . . . It could be another world for me . . . . Because it's a change. It's a 180 degree turn. From the field, countryside, where the air is pure, where there isn't noise to arrive in a city where day and night it's all noise, lights, everything, smog, smoke, all the cars.
>
> *(Como yo nunca he visto la Ciudad de México, cuando fui por primera vez, me mareaba . . . . Será otro mundo para mí . . . . Porque es un cambio. Es un giro de 180 grados. De un campo, provincia, donde el aire es puro, donde no hay ruido al llegar a una ciudad donde de día a noche es todo ruido, luces, todo, esmog, humo, todos los carros.)*

Tobías studied every day for a month to take the entrance exam for the national polytechnic high school. He took the exam in July and then returned to his village to await the results. In August, his siblings came to tell him that he had not passed, but they wanted to take him back to Mexico City to take the entrance exam for another school. He took the exam and again returned to his village. In September, his brother came to the village and said:

> "Pack all your things. Now, all your clothes, because you're going to the Federal District. You were accepted in the school." And at the moment when he told me all that, I became sad. Because it came to my mind that I wouldn't be going to the city and coming back like I wanted. Now it was to live in the city. To change from a lifestyle I had in the village to a city one. I went. I went feeling sad.
>
> *("Empaca todas tus cosas. Ahora sí, toda tu ropa, porque te vas para el D.F. Te quedaste en la escuela." Y al momento cuando me dijo todo eso, yo me puse triste. Porque me vino*

a la mente de que ya no iba a estar yendo a la ciudad y regresandome como yo quisiera. Ya era estarme en la ciudad. De cambiar de un ritmo de vida tenía en el rancho a uno de ciudad. Me fui. Me fui triste.)

In Mexico City, Tobías lived with his sisters and grandmother. His brother gave money to the sisters for his expenses. He did not do very well in high school during the first two semesters. In his second year, his grades began to improve, especially in the fourth semester when the students begin to specialize in a subject area. Tobías chose accounting as his specialty, and it was one of his favorite subjects. Tobías recalled, "My average totally turned around . . . . In fourth semester I was centered now on school. I didn't think about going to the village." (*Todo mi promedio dió un giro total . . . . En cuarto semestre ya estaba centrado ahora en la escuela. Ya no pensaba en ir al rancho.)*

In fifth semester, Tobías began working to fulfill his social service requirement (similar to an internship). He worked during the mornings in the Secretariat of Housing and Public Credit and went to school in the afternoons. He received a stipend of 500 pesos every two weeks. Sometimes he would go to visit his parents in the village over the weekend. Tobías remembered, "It was just to go, visit my parents and come back. I wasn't that interested in going to see friends. Because I was, basically I was more from the city than from the village." *(Ya nada más era de ir, visitar a mis padres y regresar. Ya no me llamaba mucho la atención de ir a ver los amigos. Porque ya yo estaba, basicamente ya era más de la ciudad que el rancho.)*

In what should have been his final semester, Tobías failed an economics class. He believes the professor made a mistake when entering his grade into the computer. Because of this error, Tobías had to wait another semester and take the final exam for the class again. This time he passed with a perfect score, 10, and graduated. He was the first in his family to graduate from high school.

Tobías wanted to continue his education at the university level. He studied for two months to take the exam for the Higher School of Adminstrative Accountants *(Escuela Superior de Contadores en Administración)*. When he did not pass, he returned to his village, where he stayed for six months, working the fields. Now he missed the city.

When the entrance exams were offered again, Tobías returned to the city and took the exam a second time, and a second time he failed. This time, he stayed in the city, "hanging around the city, wasting my time" *(vagando la ciudad, perdiendo mi tiempo)*. One day he passed by the military college and went in to talk with the recruiters. They told him that there wasn't an entrance exam for the military college, only the physical. They explained that the military college offered not only military training but an opportunity to study a profession. They told Tobías to return the next day, ready to enter the college. Tobías was very excited, but when he reached home, his sister informed him that she had found him a job in a Japanese restaurant. To avoid making his sister look bad, Tobías went to work in the restaurant. He regrets making this choice: "I swear that until now I regret it. I continue to regret it." *(Le juro que hasta ahora me arrepiento. Me sigo arrepentiendo.)*

In the restaurant, Tobías worked in the warehouse, in the bar, and on the cash register. He began to take English classes and computer classes in a private institute. It was difficult to work full-time and to complete both courses, so he dropped English and concentrated on the computer course. This was a two-year course where he learned programs such as Excel, Lotus 1-2-3, Power Point, Pagemaker, and Corel Draw. He also learned some software packages related to accounting.

Upon completing the computer course and earning his certificate, Tobías left the restaurant and tried to find a job in his field. He worked for the government again in a job similar to the one he had performed during his social service. However, the job was temporary and only lasted a month. When the job ended, Tobías felt hopeless: "I left the restaurant, the other [job] was only temporary, I finished school, and I was without money, without work, and without school." *(Dejé el restaurante, el otro solo fue temporal, acabé la escuela, y me quedé sin dinero, sin trabajo, y sin escuela.*) Tobías attempted to take the university entrance exam for a sixth time. He even tried changing his major to philosophy, but he was still unable to gain acceptance. He became sick and depressed: "Because of that, it occurred to me to call my brother who was here [in the United States]. To ask him how the situation was in this country." *(Ya para eso, se me ocurrió hablarle a un hermano que estaba aquí. Para preguntarle como estaba la situación en este país.)*

Tobías tried to obtain a tourist visa to come to the United States. He explained:

> But it was denied because I didn't have money in the bank, I didn't have property, I mean, a house or business. They told me, "You know what? You can't get a visa. What you want is to go to work.
>
> *(Pero se me fue negada porque no tenía dinero en el banco, no tenía propiedades, o sea casa o un negocio. Me dijeron, "¿Sabes qué? La visa no se te puede dar. Tú lo que quieres es irte a trabajar.)*

Tobías called his brother in the U.S. again, and his brother arranged for him to cross the border.

Tobías went to his village to say good-bye to his family. He then took a bus to Mexico City, flew to Tiajuana, and crossed the border with a group of people there. He flew from

California to Atlanta, Georgia. His brother met him in the Atlanta airport and brought him to Athens.

Tobías lived with his brother, sister-in-law, and their children in a primarily Hispanic duplex community. At first, he had difficulty finding work because of his lack of documents and his lack of English language proficiency. He tried to use an older brother's social security number and ID, but the age difference was too obvious: "And another thing since I didn't understand any English, they simply told me, 'There isn't work. There isn't work.'" *(Y otra cosa como yo no entendía nada de inglés, simplemente me decían, "No hay trabajo. No hay trabajo.")* Tobías ended up buying papers for $650. He obtained a job in a poultry plant. Yet he only worked three days and was fired. It turns out another man had starting working at the plant with the same name and social security number.

It took Tobías over two months to find a steady job. He finally found employment in a Chinese restaurant as a dishwasher, working 12-hour days. After a month, a friend convinced him that he could earn more at a different Chinese restaurant. As it turned out, this job was even worse, with even longer hours and lower pay. Tobías was fired after two weeks for insubordination.

Two weeks later, Tobías was employed working night shift in the sanitation department of a poultry processing plant. He enjoyed the work and was able to work a lot of overtime hours. He began to have a personal conflict with his boss, and after eight months he changed to another department, where he carried boxes of chicken. He worked there for a year and a half.

While working in the poultry plant, Tobías met a friend who suggested that he apply to a wood processing plant in Colbert. Tobías explained:

> I put my application. They didn't call me . . . . I put another one a week later because they didn't call me. I waited two weeks. They didn't call me. And the next week, I put one in English. I tried to complete it in English. And they called me.
>
> *(Puse mi aplicación. No me llamaron . . . . Puse otra a los ocho días porque no me llamaron. Esperé dos semanas. No me llamaron. Y a la siguiente semana, puse una en inglés. Traté de llenarla en inglés. Y me llamaron.)*

Tobías went for the job interview; however, he was not able to answer some of the interview questions because of his lack of English skills. Tobías was not hired at that time. He continued applying for different jobs. He realized that when he completed the application in English, he had a much better chance of being called for an interview.

In May 2000, Tobías applied to the wood processing plant again. This time when he went for the interview, he was able to answer the interviewer's questions. The interviewer told Tobías that he would call him that Friday. When the interviewer did not call, Tobías went to the plant. He met an American man in the parking lot, and he explained his situation to him. This man was a supervisor, and he helped Tobías to get hired at the company. Tobías remembered, "Because of this person, an American, I am in that company." *(Por esta persona, un americano, yo estoy en esa compañía.)* Tobías continues to be employed at the wood processing plant today. He has received two pay raises.

During our last interview in December 2003, Tobías told me that he was preparing to return to Mexico to visit his family after six years in the United States. His plan was to visit his family for a few weeks and then to return to work in the United States for another two years. He stated, "The truth, I don't have the idea of staying here." *(La verdad, no tengo idea de quedarme aquí.*) In the long term, Tobías hopes to go back to Mexico to open a mechanic shop with his brother. I have tried to contact Tobías's brother, but at the time of this writing, I do not know if he has made it back into the United States.

Tobias's Sociocultural Adaptation

As a youth, Tobías displayed a disinterest in learning the English language. He did not believe he would ever need it. Once he graduated from high school, he found that many employers in Mexico City required some knowledge of English. He enrolled in an English course at a private language institute. However, when time constraints meant he had to choose between studying English and studying computers, he chose to study computers.

Upon coming to the United States, Tobías quickly became aware of the benefits of knowing English. Tobías related a critical incident which motivated him to learn the language. He had a traffic accident, and the police arrived on the scene:

> That experience stuck with me because the policeman told me, "Don't be afraid. If you don't speak English," he said, "learn." Basically from then is when I had the idea to learn English. Because the policeman spoke Spanish, but he told me, "Learn English if you want to be in this country. Learn English." He said it three times. Since then, I have always remembered that learning English is everything for an immigrant. I've seen the policeman again. He greets me in English; I answer him. And he laughs, and I remember that thanks to him, maybe he didn't want to take me in, but he told me, "Learn English and everything will be easy for you." I haven't forgotten that experience. It was basically a push to learn the little English that I know. Because it was like a warning that if I don't learn English, maybe the next time, he was going to take me in. And he said, "Learn English." And I don't forget. Now I say to the people who arrive, "Learn English."

> *(Esa experiencia se me quedó grabado porque me dijo la policía, "No tengas miedo. Si no hablas inglés," me dijo, "aprende." Basicamente de allí es cuando tuve la idea de aprender inglés. Porque el policía hablaba español, pero me dijo, "Aprende inglés si quieres estar en este país. Aprende inglés." Lo dijo tres veces. De allí, donde todo el tiempo me he recordado que al aprender inglés es todo para un inmigrante. El policía lo he vuelto a mirar. Me saluda en inglés, yo le contesto. Y él se ríe, y yo me acuerdo que gracias a él, tal vez no quiso llevarme, pero me dijo, "Aprende inglés y todo será fácil para tí." Esa experiencia no se me olvida. Basicamente fue como un empujón para aprender lo poco de inglés que sé. Porque fue como una advertencia que si no aprenda inglés, tal vez adelante la próxima vez, me iba a llevar. Y me dijo, "Aprende inglés." Y no se me olvida. Luego yo le digo a la gente que llega, "Aprende inglés.")*

Tobías strongly advocates learning English to other immigrants. He has advised his friends who are looking for jobs:

> "Apply yourself to study English. If you don't want to go to the chicken plant, learn English. Because in Conagra, you don't need English there for anything. But one thing is sure, you're going to be on a line working the whole eight hours standing there, cold. They are going to bother you; they are going to shout at you. And you will have to lower your head. Why? Because you don't speak English."
>
> ("*Ponganse a estudiar inglés. Si no quieren ir a los pollos, aprenden inglés. Porque en Conagra, allí no necesitas inglés para nada. Pero eso sí, vas a estar en una línea trabajando todo tus ocho horas allí parado, con frío. Te van a molestar; te van a gritar. Y tú vas a tener que agachar la frente. ¿Por qué? Porque no hablas inglés.")*

Tobias's advocacy for learning English seems to be more related to economic rather than social goals.

Tobías participated in the English as a Second Language classes where I work during 2003, but his participation was irregular. He dropped out of the program because he believed the level where he was placed was too advanced for him. He claims that most of the English he knows he has learned at work or on the streets. One of his strategies for practicing English is to frequent dance clubs where American people go and to try to engage them in conversation. He also studies English on his own at home.

Tobías has worked with Americans, but there was only one episode in his life story where he described having had a personal relationship with an American person. During the time he worked in the poultry plant, he had an American girlfriend, who was also a coworker. After two weeks, the girl broke it off with him, and Tobías never understood why.

Of the five participants, Tobías was the only one who was a domestic migrant before becoming an international migrant. He left his village at the age of fourteen to study and then to work in Mexico City. This transition from rural to urban was perhaps more of a culture shock for Tobías than coming to the U.S. was. Tobías does not plan to stay in the U.S. over the long term.

Tobias's Economic Adaptation

Although Tobías studied a two-year computer course in Mexico, he has been unable to apply those skills in the labor market in either Mexico or the U.S. After a rocky start, Tobías managed to obtain stable employment in the United States, first in the poultry processing plant and then in the wood processing plant.

Tobías came to realize that knowing English is the key to finding employment outside of the poultry industry. He also realizes that he needs to know more English to advance in his current place of employment. The company has offered Tobías a higher level and higher paying position, but he declined it: “I have refused. Because there [you have] to talk with the mechanics, to talk with supervisors, to explain where there is a problem.” *(Yo le he rechazado. Porque allí hablar con los mecánicos, hablar con supervisores, explicar donde haya un problema.)* Tobías does not feel he is able to meet the language demands required by this higher position.

Tobías’s Political Adaptation

Tobías was quite open about the fact that he is in the United States without authorization. He expalined how he would like to legalize his status, “In the beginning, I set myself a goal, I said, ‘I am not leaving this country until I fix my migration status.’ Six years have passed and it’s still the same.” *(Para empezar, yo me puse una meta, dije yo, “No me voy de este país hasta que yo arregle mi estatus migratorio.” Pasaron seis años y sigue siendo lo mismo.)* Being a single person, the only way that Tobías could legalize his status at this time is to marry an American woman. He has investigated the possibility of paying a woman to marry him but has decided against it. Until now, he is excluded from participation in the political system.

Fermín

Fermín is 40 years old and has been in the United States for 25 years. He became a U.S. citizen in November 2002. I met Fermín when he came to the office of the social service agency where I work to solicit advice on sponsoring his wife and child for legal residency. I conducted the three interviews with Fermín in November 2003. He was not participating in any type of adult education program at that time.

La Historia de Fermín (Fermin’s Story)

Fermín is from a *rancho* near the town of Acambaro in the state of Guanajuato. Most of the people in this area work as farmers growing corn and beans or as bricklayers in construction.

Fermín described how this area has a strong culture of sending immigrants to the United States, "The villages are drying up by themselves . . . . All the young people come. And just the old people stay." *(Los ranchos están secando solos . . . . Todos los jovenes se vienen. Ya se quedan los viejitos.)* Because many people from this village are now living in the United States, there are a good number of houses which are locked up and empty.

Fermín is the ninth of ten children. Fermín's father came to the U.S. several times to work as a temporary agricultural worker *(bracero).* In Mexico, his father was also a farmer, and one of Fermín's memories from his youth is working with his father in the fields. Later in life, Fermín's father was unable to work regularly because he suffered from seizures. Fermín's mother helped his father and supplemented the family income by sewing and selling clothes. Fermín's parents had not gone to school. His mother learned to read and write at the age of 18, when the village's first teacher lodged at her house. His father also developed limited literacy skills.

At age six, Fermín entered first grade in the elementary school in his village. The school housed first, second, and third grade together in one classroom with one teacher. To continue his elementary studies, Fermín had to walk two miles to another village. However, the students in that village were more advanced academically, and Fermín had to repeat the third grade. The school in Fermín's village later expanded, and he returned there to study in the fifth and sixth grades.

Fermín's parents were not very involved in his education. He explained:

> When they reviewed my report card, they didn't understand the grades. I just took it, "Sign it." And my mom or dad signed there. But they didn't say, "Let's see. What grades did you get?" Or "you're doing very well." No. Just "Sign it." And they started working

> again in what they had been doing. They didn't know. And now here, me with my son, I know a little bit more. If my son brings me the report card, I say to him, "Why do you have such low grades here?" I ask him. And with me they didn't do that.
>
> *(Cuando me revisaron mi boleto, ellos no sabían las calificaciones. No más lo llevaba yo, "Y fírmelo." Y firmaba allá mi mamá o mi papá. Pero no decía, "A ver. ¿A qué calificaciones sacaste?" O "vas muy bien." No. No más "fírmale." Y ellos se ponen a trabajar de vuelta en lo mismo de andaban. Ellos no sabían. Y ahora aquí, yo a mi hijo, yo sé un poquito ya más. A mi hijo si me traiga el boleto asi, yo le digo, "¿Por qué tiene aquí tan bajos?" Asi yo le pregunto. Como a mí no me hacían eso.)*

To continue his middle school education, Fermín had to travel to the town of Acambaro. English was one of the subjects that Fermín studied in middle school, and he was able to learn some basic phrases. Attending middle school, however, was an economic hardship for Fermín's family because he had to pay to take the bus to Acambaro. Fermín dropped out after eighth grade. Nobody, neither his parents nor teachers, encouraged Fermín to stay in school. He stated, "Not many people went to middle school. We just tried to finish the sixth grade." *(No mucha gente iba a la secundaria. No más tratamos de terminar el sexto grado.)*

When he left school at the age of 14, Fermín started working with his brother as a bricklayer's assistant. He worked for six months. As a youth, Fermín did not have any aspirations for his future. He remembered:

> In that time all the people just had to grow up and [go] to the north. That's it. I think so. Because I saw all the people who were older than me and [they went] to the north and to the north in that time.

(En aquel tiempo toda la gente tenía que más que crecer y para el norte. No más. Yo lo pienso. Porque miraba todos mayores míos y para el norte y para el norte en ese tiempo.)

Fermín's older brothers were working in the United States. In 1978, at the age of 15, Fermín arrived in Anaheim, California with one of his brothers and several others from his village. He went straight to work washing dishes in a restaurant: "To work. To work. To work as if I were married. To work as if I were maintaining a family." *(A trabajar. A trabajar. Ya a trabajar como si yo estuviera casado. A trabajar ya como si estuviera manteniendo la familia.)* Fermín's first check was for $60, and he sent it directly to his mother.

In the U.S., Fermín felt like he was living the good life. Food was plentiful, and he and his brother bought a car. However, these luxuries came with a price. Fermín remembered a popular song that was called "The Cage of Gold" *(La Jaula de Oro)*: "We are in a cage of gold, but locked in. Locked in here. Because we couldn't go to Mexico. We couldn't go. We were here with money and all and eating well. But we couldn't go to see our family." *(Nosotros nos estemos en una jaula de oro, pero encerrados. Encerrados aquí. Porque no podíamos ir a México. No podíamos ir. Estábamos aquí con dinero y todo y comiendo bien. Pero no podíamos ir a ver a la familia.)*

For several years, Fermín and his brother lived in rented rooms that were constructed in the backyard of a person's house, "as if they were pigsties" *(como si fueron chiqueros)*. Ten people lived there, with three or four people to a room. They shared one bathroom.

Fermín worked as a dishwasher in the restaurant for two and a half years. He eventually became in charge of the other dishwashers. He felt uncomfortable in this position because at the age of 17 he had to give orders to men who were much older than himself. Fermín then worked as a busboy in the same restaurant for another seven months.

During this time, Fermín took an English class that was offered in a public school during the evenings. He entered the beginning class where he studied letters and numbers. There were many Mexicans in the class but also people from other countries, like China and the Philippines. Fermín participated in this program for two months. He explained:

> For us it was really hard because we came from work. We didn't have the chance to take a bath. We ran to the school. From the school, we left hurrying to make lunch for the next day. Then you went to sleep at twelve, one in the morning.
>
> *(Para nosotros era muy duro porque llegábamos de trabajar. No teníamos chance de bañarnos. Corrimos a la escuela. De la escuela salíamos corriendo para hacer el lonche para el otro día. Ya te ibas a dormir a las doce, una de la mañana.)*

Fermín left his restaurant job because he had become bored with the work. Over the next twenty years, he moved several times between California, Texas, and Illinois and was employed in a variety of jobs. He has picked peaches, almonds, olives, oranges, grapes, sugar cane, chile, and onions. He has worked in road construction and swimming pool construction. He has taken care of animals in a horse club and on an ostrich farm. He has worked in landscaping and in a melon packing plant. He has also been employed in factories making watch parts, furniture, cabinets, and cables. All in all, Fermín claims to have worked in over 100 different jobs in the United States!

During this time, Fermín went back to Mexico every two or three years to visit his family and friends in the village. On one occasion the visit was forced upon him! One day, on the way to work, Fermín was picked up by immigration in Texas and deported. As it had been a while since he had seen his family, he decided to go ahead and go back to his village. He was soon in the United States again.

Fermín legalized his immigration status during the amnesty in the 1980s under the Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) program, known among the workers as the “field letter” *(carta del campo)*. He had to submit an application, along with letters from three employers testifying that he had been employed in the agricultural sector during the designated time period. With this, he was able to travel freely between the U.S. and Mexico and to work with his own name and social security number.

Fermín married a Mexican woman from Acambaro in 1990. His wife waited in Mexico for him for several years. However, she and their twelve-year old son are now living in the United States without legal documents. Fermín also has an infant son who was born in the United States.

Fermin’s wife has a sister who has been living in Georgia for several years. At his in-law’s urging, Fermín and his family moved from California to Athens, Georgia in 1998. Fermín, his wife, and their two children live with his brother- and sister-in-law in a two-bedroom apartment.

Within three weeks of arrival, Fermín obtained work in construction, laying the floors of a new discount store. When that job ended, Fermín started working in a poultry processing plant. He worked there for six months, hanging freshly killed chickens. He then took a job at a garage door factory, loading trucks with orders. Again, he stayed for six months.

Fermín is now working as a welder in a company that manufactures electrical transformers. During the three years he has worked for this company, he has learned to operate the different machines in his area and has reached employee level Grade Four. He does not believe, though, that he would ever be able to perform a different kind of job in the company because he does not know enough English. Fermín also has a small landscaping business on the side.

Here in Georgia, Fermín submitted an application for U.S. citizenship; two years later he was called for the immigration interview. Fermín passed the exam and became naturalized the same day. His explained that his motivation for seeking citizenship was to be able to sponsor his wife and older son for legal residency: "I do it out of necessity. Inside, I am not rejecting Mexico." *(Yo lo hago por una necesidad. Yo por adentro no lo estoy rechanzando a México.)* He has not even informed most of his friends back home that he became a U.S. citizen.

Over the years, Fermín has been constructing a house in his village near his mother's home. Nobody lives in the house. It sits empty until Fermín goes to Mexico on a visit. Fermín would like one day to own a home in the United States. The family seems to be settled here. Fermín stated, "We are happy and we aren't leaving." *(Estamos contentos y no nos vamos.)*

Fermin's Sociocultural Adaptation

Although Fermín has been in the United States much longer than the other participants, he does not seem to be much more acculturated. He studied a basic level English class when he first arrived, 25 years ago, and has not participated in any kind of English program since. Fermín estimates that he understands 35% of English. I believe, though, that he does have a high level of comprehension as during our interviews he related conversations he had held in English, such as his experience in the citizenship interview.

Fermín has always lived with other family members and speaks Spanish at home. During most of his jobs, he has worked with other Mexicans. Fermín believes that his current job as a welder requires more English language skills than his other jobs have; however, since he works alone, he does not have to speak with anyone, in any language.

Over the years, Fermín has maintained strong ties to his village in Mexico. He has gone home for a visit every two or three years, and he eventually married a woman from the area. He is building a house in the village, and, after 25 years, he still continues to send money to his mother. Fermín finds it hard to believe that he has been in the U.S. for so long. He described how sometimes he dreams that he is back in Mexico.

Throughout his story, Fermín never mentioned having any kind of friendly relationships with American people. The important people in his life have always been his siblings, in-laws, friends from his home village, and now his wife and children. Fermín exhibited some Mexican cultural values. For instance, he has an altar to the *Virgen de Guadalupe* in his living room, and he told how he prayed to the Virgen before his citizenship interview. He also held beliefs about gender roles typical to rural Mexico. He discussed how he did not like the way American women sometimes take charge over household affairs by, for example, talking with repairmen:

> How is my wife going to go around with the plumber? . . . . I've seen it here. I don't like that at all . . . . The man is the one who is going to fix the house . . . . Like it says in the Bible, it said, "God and man" . . . . En Mexico . . . . the women don't go around there with the man.
>
> *(¿Cómo va a andar mi esposa con el plomero? . . . . Ya he visto aquí. A mí no me gusta nada eso . . . . El hombre es él que va a componer la casa . . . . Como dice en la Biblia, dijo, "Dios y hombre" . . . . En México . . . . las mujeres no andan allí con el hombre.)*

Fermin's Economic Adapation

Like the other participants, Fermín's motive in coming to the United States was purely economic. When he first arrived, he was amazed how easily you could buy food, clothes, even cars. The first time he returned to Mexico for a visit, he and his brother took a color TV, a stereo, an iron, a blender, rifles, ammunition, baseball bats, and mitts. Now the majority of Fermín's ten siblings are working in the U.S.

Fermín came to the U.S. with a low level of education (eight years) and very little work experience. His only job in Mexico had been as a bricklayer's assistant. Fermín's labor trajectory during the first 22 years of his life in the United States was irregular. He worked in many different sectors (e.g., service industry, agriculture, construction, manufacturing), sometimes holding a job for just a few months. He has been working in his current job for three years, which is the longest he has held any job. He enjoys the work, and the time has passed quickly for him. Fermín plans to stay with this company indefinitely.

In addition to his regular employment, Fermín has a landscaping business, which his twelve-year old son helps him with. Fermín has invested in a small tractor, a blower, and a trimmer. His earnings help him meet some of the family's bills.

Fermin's Political Adaptation

Fermín originally came to the United States as an undocumented worker. He was the only one of the five participants who was in the country during the amnesty in 1986. He was able to become a legal resident at that time. This benefited him by allowing him to legally seek employment and to travel freely between Mexico and the U.S. Because he legalized under the Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) program, he was not required to study English or civics as did workers who legalized under the Legally Authorized Worker (LAW) program.

Fermín applied for citizenship with the goal of sponsoring his wife and son, who are now in the United States illegally. When he first made the citizenship application, he bought a book which listed the questions from the citizenship interview. He studied this book and learned all the questions and answers. However, by the time he was called for the citizenship interview two years later, he had forgotten all the information and had to cram to learn it all again before the interview date. He now claims he has forgotten it all.

During the citizenship interview, Fermín was asked to answer ten questions about U.S. government and history. Although the interview was in English, Fermín was not asked to demonstrate English language literacy. Once he passed the exam, he participated in the naturalization ceremony. Fermín confessed that he did not understand everything that was said during the ceremony; sometimes he was just moving his lips. Fermín showed me his naturalization certificate. He now carries a copy of the certificate in his car in case he is ever stopped by the police and they doubt his legal status. He has submitted applications to sponsor his wife and child, and those applications are in process. Although Fermín is now a U.S. citizen, he did not express any interest in following political issues or participating in the electoral process.

Conclusion

By becoming immersed in the life histories of Marta, Arturo, Guisela, Tobías, and Fermín, we are able to understand more about the experiences of Mexican immigrants, their lives in their home country, and how they came to reside in the state of Georgia. Their histories also illuminate the factors influencing their sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation in this country. In the following chapter, I look across their five histories to explore more deeply their formal and informal adult learning experiences and how these experiences may have contributed to their adaptation processes.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Life histories were constructed with five adult Mexican immigrants living in Georgia to explore the role of formal and informal learning in the immigrants' processes of sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation. Specifically, the study sought to understand the kinds of formal adult education and informal learning activities the immigrants have participated in since coming to the United States, the ways these learning experiences have contributed to their adaptation, and the aspects of the teaching/learning transaction which have supported their adaptation processes. To answer the research questions, the life histories were subjected to categorical-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998), the results of which are presented in this chapter. Figure 4 outlines the key findings.

I. Types of Formal Adult Education and Informal Learning Activities
    A. Learning the English Language
    B. Attending GED Classes
    C. Developing Job-Skills
    D. Acquiring Business Knowledge
    E. Learning to Drive
    F. Preparing for the Citizenship Interview
    G. Purchasing a Home

II. Ways Learning Experiences Contribute to Adaptation

  A. By Developing Survival Skills

  B. By Enabling Participation in the Labor Force

  C. By Increasing Physical Mobility

  D. By Creating Security and Stability in the Immigrants' Lives

III. Aspects of the Teaching/Learning Transaction Contributing to the Adaptation Process

  A. American Teachers as Helpers

  B. Course Content

  C. Level Appropriate Instruction

  D. Instructional Quality

  E. Student Input

  F. Student/Student Relationships

  G. Teacher/Student Relationship

IV. Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model

Figure 4. Elements of the Role of Adult Education in the Adaptation of Mexican Immigrants

Participation in Formal Adult Education and Informal Learning Activities

The Mexican immigrants in this study have participated in a range of formal adult education and informal learning activities since coming to the United States. These activities include learning the English language, attending GED classes, developing job-skills, acquiring business knowledge, learning to drive, preparing for the citizenship interview, and purchasing a home. The immigrants' learning was most often stimulated by an immediate need to obtain information or acquire skills.

Learning the English Language

Learning the English language was one of the primary adult learning activities the immigrants engaged in. Their life histories demonstrated that language learning is a long-term process which occurs in multiple contexts.

Formal adult ESL programs. All five of the participants had participated in organized adult English as a Second Language programs at some point during their life in the United States. For Fermín and Arturo, their participation came soon after their immigration (25 years ago and 14 years ago, respectively). While living in California, Fermín attended a free basic-level class which was held in a public school during the evenings for two months. Arturo participated in an ESL program in Gainesville, Georgia. He started in the second level and completed three eight-to-ten week courses.

Guisela took a two-and-a-half month basic-level course that was provided in her workplace in Athens, Georgia. Although offered in the workplace, the course centered on developing survival language for daily life. The classes were free, but if employees attended during working hours they were not paid for the hours they lost from work.

Both Marta and Tobías participated in programs that were offered by faith-based organizations in Athens, Georgia. Marta had attended classes given by a Baptist church group in the trailer park where she lives. She later joined a program affiliated with the Catholic Church and has been participating in that program for the past year and a half. She studied in the Basic II level for two terms and is now in the Intermediate I class. Marta was the only one of the participants who was actively attending an ESL program at the time of the study.

Tobías also participated in the program affiliated with the Catholic Church. He attended the Intermediate II level class during spring 2002.

One-on-one tutoring. Marta and Arturo had the opportunity to receive one-on-one tutoring to aid them in their English language acquisition. Marta had tutors sent to her home by a faith-based social service agency. The tutors were university students who would come for an hour or so each week. They worked with Marta on the alphabet, greetings, verbs, and survival situations like making doctor's appointments. The tutoring ended when the students graduated from the university and left the area.

When Arturo worked in the tobacco fields, he received tutoring from a Chicano coworker. However, their relationship was more egalitarian; the Chicano helped Arturo develop his English skills while Arturo helped the Chicano develop his literacy skills in Spanish. Arturo explained:

> He wrote in English for me, right? And I wrote in Spanish. If I didn't understand a word, he told me what it meant. And I asked him, "Well and this, what does it mean?" or something, "How do you say it? How is it pronounced?" And well, it helped me a lot. *(Él me escribía en inglés ¿verdad? Y yo escribía en español. Si una palabra que no entendiera, me decía que significaba. Y yo le preguntaba a él, "Bueno y esto ¿qué significa?" o algo "¿Cómo se dice? ¿Cómo se pronuncia?" Y pues, me ayudó bastante.)*

This relationship ended when Hurricane Hugo destroyed the crops in South Carolina, and Arturo came to look for work in Georgia.

Self-directed English study. Arturo, Tobías, and Fermín discussed the ways they attempted to learn English on their own. When Arturo moved and was no longer able to attend the English program, he obtained materials to study at home. He described his efforts:

> What I did was to buy books. I bought some dictionaries and some books. And I continued studying on my own. There in the house when I had time in the morning, if I

had extra time I studied . . . . Then I got a course that is called "English Now." The course is very good, I consider it to be very efficient . . . . With video, audiocassettes, and workbooks also. And exams, too. You watch it on TV, right? And you repeat it the times you think necessary. And it's also very good with fourteen or sixteen videos. Also very good. What I really like are the conversations. You listen to the pronunciation and at the same time you look at the writing. It's really good. Currently there are many courses, a number of courses. The one that we got, that course helped me a lot. To date it is still helping me because there are books for graduates. They are very long conversations. And well, I think that is very good. Once in a while, I read those, study. And I find many new things. There are always things to learn.

(Yo que hice comprar libros. Compré algunos diccionarios y unos libros. Y yo seguí estudiando por mi cuenta. Allí en la casa cuando tenía tiempo en la mañana, ya si me sobraba el tiempo yo me ponía a estudiar . . . . Luego conseguí un curso que se llama "Inglés Ahora." Está muy bueno el curso, lo considero muy eficiente . . . . Con video, audiocasets, y cuadernos de trabajo también. Y también examenes. Asi ya lo mira uno en la tele ¿verdad? Y lo repite uno las veces que considera uno necesario. Y también está muy bien con catorce o dieciseis videos. Muy bien también. Lo que me gusta mucho de las conversaciones. Escucha uno la pronunciación y a la vez mira uno la escritura. Está muy bien. Actualmente hay muchos cursos, una cantidad de cursos. Ese que nosotros allí agarramos, ese curso me sirvió bastante. Hasta la fecha me sigue sirviendo porque hay unos libros que son para graduados. Son ya unas conversaciones muy largas. Y pues, yo considero que está muy bien eso. De vez en cuando me pongo a leer de esos, a estudiar. Y encuentro muchas cosas nuevas. Siempre hay cosas que aprender.)

Tobías also bought an English course to study at home, but he was not as enthusiastic as Arturo:

> I'm even embarrassed to tell you, I have an "English without Barriers" packet, that cost me $1,650 . . . . It's not "without barriers," it's "with barriers" because I haven't taken it out . . . . I don't know what happens. When you are watching the video, you need someone to motivate you. That someone makes you say the words, or that you are saying the questions. "English without Barriers," no. I mean, it's very complete. I looked at it. It's perfect. The course is very complete . . . . You see half of a video . . . . I turn the video off. I'm bored. I only saw two videos, that's it . . . . The others I haven't seen . . . . And each video has a song at the end. Well, the first video has a song by Madonna. It says, "Like a Virgin" . . . . According to that video, you have to sing that song. Because the words appear, you hear the music. So, you have to go seeing the rhythm of the music, to hear the rhythm of the music and sing it. I tried to do it. I did start. But I didn't put effort. I didn't put energy on my part.
>
> *(Hasta verguënza me da decirlo, tengo un paquete de "Inglés sin Barreras," que me costó $1,650 . . . . No es "sin barreras," es "con barreras," porque no lo he sacado. . . . . No sé que pasa. Cuando uno está viendo el video, necesita como que alguien le impulse. Que alguien lo obliga a decir las palabras, o que está diciendo las preguntas. "Inglés sin Barreras" no. O sea, hasta bien completo. Yo lo miré. Está perfecto. El curso está muy completo . . . . Ve la mitad de un video . . . . Apagaba el video. Me aburría. Solamente vi dos videos, nada más . . . . Los demás. No los tocaba de ver . . . . Y cada video al final trae una canción. Bueno, en el primer video trae una canción de Madonna. Dice "Like a Virgen" . . . . Según en ese video, uno tiene que cantar esa canción. Porque sale la letra,*

> *se oye la música. Entonces, uno tiene que ir viendo el ritmo de la música, oir el ritmo de la música y cantarla. Yo intenté hacerlo. Sí empecé. Pero no le puse empeña. No le puse esfuerzo de mi parte.)*

Tobías was more persistent when his self-directed learning was driven by his own immediate language needs. When he did not understand a word he had heard, he looked it up in the dictionary. He explained, “I bought some books. I began to write it [the language]. I began to hear it. And day by day I began little by little to understand more and more and more.” *(Compré unos libros; empecé a escribir. Empecé a escucharlo. Y día con día empecé a un poquito entender más y más y más.)*

Fermín prefers to utilize tapes for his self-directed learning rather than books. He stated:

> I get books and as sometimes my head hurts, better for me to throw them aside. I have a cassette in the car. So when I go to work, I am listening . . . . On the cassette it says that: about looking for work.
>
> *(Agarro libros y como que a veces me duele la cabeza y entonces, mejor los tiro. Traigo caset en el carro. Asi cuando voy al trabajo, voy oyendo . . . . En el caset dice eso: de buscar trabajo.)*

Informal language learning. The participants were able to learn some English through social interactions with Americans. Arturo has an American friend, who often invites Arturo’s family to fish with him. Arturo corrects this man’s Spanish while the man gives Arturo feedback on his English:

> And he also corrects me when I say a sentence in English and if I say the word, for example, in another tense. If I say it in past, in present, as it should be, and he tells me, “No, it’s more correct to say it this way.” And well, we feel very happy with that man.

> *(Y él también me corrije cuando yo le digo una oración en inglés y si le digo la palabra por ejemplo en otro tiempo. Se le digo en pasado, en presente, como debe de ser, y me dice, "No, lo más correcta es que la digas así." Y pues, nos sentimos muy contentos con ese señor.)*

Tobías practices his English with the Americans he meets in discos. He explained:

> I go to the centers, to the discos, of Americans. I try to converse. "What is your name? Where do you live? How long have you been working here? Do you like the job or not?" Things like that. That I understand. When they start to make another conversation, I tell them that my English is little. That I don't understand too much. But they tell me, "But you speak well!" "Yes, but only some words, some phrases, and I want to speak more." They say, "Continue this way and you will."
>
> *(Me voy a los centros, asi a los salones de baile, de americanos. Yo intento conversar. De "¿Cómo te llamas? ¿Dónde vives? ¿Cuánto tiempo estaba trabajando aquí? ¿Te gusta el trabajo o no?" Cosas asi. Que yo entiendo. Cuando ya me empiezan a hacer otra conversación, yo les digo que mi inglés es poco. Que no entiendo demasiado. Pero me dicen, "¡Pero hablas bien!" "Sí, pero solo son unas palabras, unas frases y quiero hablar más." Dice, "Continua así y lo harás.")*

The workplace was an important site where all the immigrants could interact with Americans and other non-Spanish speakers to develop their English skills. Sometimes the language they acquired was work-related. For example, while working in the nursery, Marta learned the names of the different flowers and the containers used to hold them. Guisela described her interaction with her coworkers in her first job in the poultry plant:

> There were some people working on the same line where I worked who were Americans. Well, I hardly understood them. Little by little, they told me with signs, and they told me the word slowly . . . . It permitted me to learn to say, for example, what I utilized: my knife, scissors, how to say tender, how to say box, bag.
>
> *(Había algunas personas trabajando en la misma línea donde yo trabajaba que eran americanos. Pero pues casi no les entendía. Poco a poco, me decían con señas, ya me decían la palabra despacio ya . . . . Permitió que aprendiera decir, por ejemplo, lo que yo utilizaba: mi cuchillo, tijeras, como se decía tender, como se decía caja, bolsa.)*

In Fermín's current job as a welder, he works with more American people than he has in previous jobs. Fermín sees the language-learning advantages of working with Americans:

> Here is where I practice more English. And there are words that I don't understand and I ask them, "And that? What does that mean? And how do you say that?" Here I ask them more questions. Because if you work with all Mexicans, well, they are the same that they don't know.
>
> *(Aquí es donde practico más el inglés. Y hay palabras que no entiendo y les pregunto, "¿Y esto? ¿Qué quiere decir esto? Y ¿cómo se dice esto?" Aquí les pregunto más. Porque si trabajas con puro mexicano, pues, están igual que ellos no saben.)*

When he first began to work in the wood-processing plant, Tobías had to interact with his coworkers through writing:

> Two Black people worked there, two Black women. And I didn't understand them much. I mean, I didn't understand them and they were irritated in the beginning. So, I told them to write what they wanted to tell me. And they did. I understood. I began to understand more and more.

> *(Allí trabajaban dos personas morenas, dos mujeres morenas. Y yo no les entendía mucho. O sea, no les entendía y se molestaban al principio. Entonces, yo les dije que lo escribieran lo que querían decirme. Sí la hacían. Me entendía. Empecé a entender más y más.)*

Aside from acquiring workplace language, Arturo has been able to practice his conversational skills with his coworkers:

> What I did was that when we were on break, I chatted with people from other lines. Be they Americans, Blacks, or people from Vietnam. I tried to practice English. And I liked it and they did, too. They liked to talk with me that way. We shared ideas.
>
> *(Yo lo que hacía era que, cuando estábamos en el break, yo pláticaba con personas de otras líneas. Ya sean americanos, morenos, o las personas de Vietnam. Yo trataba de practicar el inglés. Y sí me gustaba y ellos también. Les gustaba pláticar así conmigo. Compartíamos ideas.)*

Attending GED Classes

Only one participant, Arturo, was involved in a GED program. This program was offered by the technical college and met two evenings a week in an elementary school. Students took a pre-test to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Volunteer teachers gave review lessons to the group periodically. Otherwise, the students worked individually on exercises to develop their weak areas. Volunteer tutors would answer the students' questions and correct their work.

At the time of our interviews, Arturo had been participating in the GED class for one month. I observed his GED class on two occasions. Arturo was the only Spanish-speaking student in the class. The majority of the other classmates were African-American females.

In addition to attending the GED preparation class, Arturo studied for the GED at home:

> I have taken some books from the library. I am reviewing all the history and for the day that I take the exam it won't be so difficult for me, right? I am going little by little. One day I study one subject, another day other, that way. A little mathematics, too . . . . I rotate the subjects.
>
> *(De la biblioteca, sí he sacado algunos libros. Estoy repasando toda historia y, para el día que presente el examen no se me haga tan difícil ¿verdad? Poco a poco voy. Un día estudio un tema, otro día otro y así. De matemáticas un poco también . . . . Rotativo a los temas.)*

Developing Job-Skills

All of the immigrants saw the United States as the land of economic opportunity, a place where they could have a higher standard of living than what they had in Mexico. Thus, work and learning to work was a prominent feature in their life histories. For Marta, Guisela, and Fermín, who had very limited work experience in Mexico, most of their jobs skills were developed in the United States. Guisela described how she learned to perform her first job (ever) in the chicken-processing plant:

> I learned the job little by little. And because they give you forty-five days to learn your job. Well, since I had the desire to work and for them to give me the job, I tried to do it the best way. And to see another person who already knew the job. I saw, "Well, she does it this way. I am also going to do it this way." Or some person who already knew, sometimes they help you. He/she says, "No, you know what? It's better to do it this way."
>
> *(Aprendí el trabajo poco a poco. Y porque le dan a uno cuarenta y cinco días para aprender su trabajo de uno. Bueno como yo tenía ganas de trabajar y de que me dejaran el trabajo, pues yo trataba de hacerlo lo más bien. Y de ver a otra persona que ya sabía el*

> *trabajo. Yo veía, "Pues ella le hace así. Pues yo también le voy a hacer así." O alguna persona que ya sabía, pues a veces sí le ayudaron a uno. Sí dice, "No, ¿sabes qué? Mejor házlo así.")*

In her last job in the poultry industry, Guisela worked as a relief person. In this position, she had to learn how to perform all the jobs in her area.

Marta explained how her American boss taught her how to perform her job in the upholstery workshop:

> He told me how to measure the chair and how to measure the fabric with the rulers . . . . When it was plastic, to mark with a marker or white chalk. Or [if] it was some fabric where the white chalk was noticeable, then with yellow chalk. And he told me how to measure and cut. He was watching me when I was doing it . . . . I mean, I watched him how he measured and everything, right? . . . . And later he gave me a seat and then he gave me the measurements. How I was going to cut. How long, how wide. And when I was going to put it there, he told me how I was going to cut, how I was going to cover . . . I mean, he showed me once how to do the job. I did it and he went to check that it was good . . . . He didn't speak any Spanish. But I understood him. I don't know how to speak it, but I understood him what he told me.
>
> *(Él me decía como midiera la silla y como midiera en la tela con la reglas . . . . Para cuando era plástico, que marcara con un marcador o con un tiz blanco. O era alguna tela que se notaba el tiz blanca, que con tiz amarillo. Y me decía como midiera y como cortar. Él mirandome yo cuando lo estaba haciendo . . . . O sea, él, yo lo veía como medía y todo ¿verdad? . . . . Y después él me dió una silla y luego me daba las medidas. Como iba a cortar. Cuanto de largo, cuanto de ancho. Y cuando lo iba a poner allí me*

> *decía como le iba a cortar, como le iba a tapizar . . . . O sea, me enseñaba una vez como hacer el trabajo. Yo lo hacía y fue a chequear que estaba bien . . . . Él no hablaba nada de español. Pero yo lo entendía. Yo no se lo podía hablar, pero yo lo entendía lo que me decía.)*

Fermín claimed that he becomes bored easily. As a young man, he changed his jobs frequently, which means he was often faced with learning new job skills. Sometimes family members worked in the same area and were available to teach him. For instance, when he worked in the watch part factory, his brother taught him the job, and when he worked in the horse club, a nephew showed him how to care for the animals.

In his current job, Fermín had to learn how to weld. He has since learned how to operate other machines in his area. He stated, "I learned all of them. All. I mean, when somebody is missing, they can say to me, 'Fermín, can you work there?' 'Yes.' I go to any of those positions. There are like five positions that I could work now." *(Todos aprendí. Todo. O sea cuando falta alguien, me puede decir, "Fermín, ¿puedes trabajar allá?" "Sí." Allí voy adondequiera de esos puestos. Hay como cinco puestos que yo pudiera trabajar ya.)*

Sometimes engineers come from outside the company to test the employees' skills. Fermín has passed these tests and been given an increase in employee grade. The higher employee grade, however, has not meant much increase in salary. Fermín has become demotivated to learn new skills: "I don't want to learn more. Because the more you learn, the more they bother you." *(Ya no quisiera aprender más. Porque entre más aprende, más lo molestan.)*

During the third interview, I asked the participants to tell me about a significant learning experience they have had in the United States. Both Guisela and Fermín responded with workplace learning experiences. Guisela talked specifically about her job as relief person. Fermín has learned from many of his jobs. He said, "I have learned a lot here. About everything. About construction, welding, landscaping, all this I have learned here. And I don't forget." *(Aquí he aprendido mucho. De todo. De construcción, de soldadura, del landscaping, todo eso aquí lo aprendí. Y no se me olvida.)*

Acquiring Business Knowledge

Arturo was the entrepreneur in the sample. He ran a Mexican store *(tienda)* in Athens for four years, and he now operates a gift shop. Arturo's prior retail experience in Mexico proved to be an asset for him. He already knew about such issues as buying the merchandise and comparing prices among suppliers. When he first opened the Mexican store, he relied on the suppliers and the landlord to tell him about business requirements here in the U.S. He explained:

> Really the suppliers informed us the most in the beginning. We learned who to buy the merchandise from and about the permits that the business requires. For example, the building license, the taxes, how they are paid, how often, and we learned about all that. Then we made a contract with the owner of the place . . and he was the one who was telling us, right? of the requirements they have for a store . . . . those the county requires. *(Realmente lo que nos informaba más fue de los proveedores al principio. Nos informamos de con quién se compra la mercancía y de los permisos que require el negocio. Por ejemplo, la licencia del edificio, que las taxes, como se pagan, cada cuánto tiempo, y todo eso fue lo que nosotros nos informamos. Ya hicimos un contrato con el dueño del local . . y él fue que nos fue comentando ¿verdad? De los requisitos que pedían para una tienda . . . . Los que el condado requiere.)*

Later, Arturo and his wife attended some small business development seminars in Atlanta and in Athens which were directed toward the Hispanic community. These seminars were given in Spanish by members of the Chamber of Commerce. Arturo described what he had gained from these seminars: “They give an orientation related to businesses. For example, the licenses that are needed, the permit, how you go to register the employees, make the tax report. They give you tips for the business.” *(Nos orientan tocante de los negocios. Por ejemplo, de las licencias que se necesitan, el permiso, como va uno a registrar a los empleados, hacer la reporta de los taxes. Le dan a uno tips para el negocio.)*

Arturo also found the written material distributed at these seminars to be useful:

> Afterwards they gave us all the sheets, all the information in written form. About how to treat people, how to organize, more or less how much to invest, depending on the business that you going to put. How much to invest, to designate a certain amount for internal expenses. They [the expenses] are going to be needed for cleaning. Everything, everything. I mean, to have a list of all that is needed in the store.
> *(Después nos dieron por escrito todas las hojas, toda la información. De como tratar a la gente, como organizarse, cuanto invertir más o menos, depende del negocio que vaya a poner. Cuanto invertir, destinar cierta cantidad para gastos internos. Se van a necesitar para limpieza. Todo todo. O sea, tener una lista de todo lo que se necesita en la tienda.)*

Learning to Drive

Guisela, Tobías, and Marta mentioned how they learned how to drive in the United States. For Marta, this was a significant learning experience:

> That is what I am never going to forget . . . . I learned to drive here in the trailer park. And when I began to drive I shook everywhere from nerves . . . . We [Marta and a cousin] began to go out, but just here around the trailer park I began to learn. And on my

> first day when I went out on the freeway, I went with my feet shaking, shaking. I saw the cars that were coming, it seemed they were coming at me. In the night I was asleep and I was dreaming that the cars were coming at me. The horrible nerves that I'm not going to forget when I learned how to drive.
>
> *(Eso es lo que nunca me voy a olvidar . . . . Me enseñaba a manejar aquí en el parqueadero aquí. Pero ya cuando empecé a manejar todo me temblaba de nervios . . . . Nos empezara a salir, pero aquí nada más alrededor del parqueadero me empecé a enseñar. Y en mi primer día cuando salí ya a la carretera iba con los pies así tiembli, tiembli. Encontraba los carros que venían, parecía que me venían encima. En la noche estaba dormida y estaba soñando que los carros me venían. Los nervios horribles que no lo voy a olvidar cuando me enseñaba a manejar.)*

Marta's English tutor brought her the driver's license exam guide in English. Marta studied this guide to prepare for the written test. She recalled:

> I just memorized how the words were written and what each sign said. And when I had the exam, I remembered what I had seen. And I passed it all. What was more difficult for me was the driving exam because I didn't know how to drive in reverse.
>
> *(Me lo memorizé únicamente de como se escribían las palabras, y lo que decía en cada signo. Ya cuando tenía el examen, pues, me iba recordando que era lo que había visto. Y todo lo pasé. Y la que se me hacía más difícil era el examen de manejo porque yo no sabía manejar de reverso.)*

Acquiring this skill has been important for Marta and her family since her husband does not drive.

Preparing for the Citizenship Exam

Fermín was the only participant who applied for U.S. citizenship. He learned the U.S. government and history information required by the exam by studying books and tapes on his own. He remembered how he got started:

> I saw a book in the store. A Mexican store. It said, "Citizenship Test." A small insignificant book. I said, "I'm going to get it." It had the American flag painted there and it said, "Citizenship." I got it. It said, "Here are the 100 citizenship questions." The book cost me like $5. I said, "Well, that's good" . . . . And then I studied almost two years. I learned everything. And I forgot . . . . Then, the paper arrived, let's say in May. It said, "Present yourself in August to do the test." And I didn't even remember all the [questions] . . . . I learned, I remembered a little bit anyway. And I learned everything again. They gave me around a month but I learned everything again.
>
> *(Yo miré un libro en la tienda. Una tienda mexicana. Decía, "Prueba para la Ciudadanía." Un librito insignificante. Yo dije, "Lo voy a agarrar." Tenía la bandera americana allí pintada y decía, "Ciudadanía." Lo agarré yo. Decía, "Aquí están las 100 preguntas de la ciudadanía." El libro me costó como $5. Dije, "Pues, está bien" . . . . Y luego estudié como dos años. Ya me aprendía todo. Ya me olvidé . . . . Entonces, me llegó el papelito, por decir en mayo. Dijo, "Preséntense en agosto, hacer la prueba." Y yo ni mi acordaba de todas las- . . . . Aprendí, comoquiera si me acordaba poquito. Y ya aprendí todo de vuelta. Me dieron como un mes pero sí lo aprendí yo todo de vuelta.)*

Fermín also listened to a tape with the questions in his car. He does not remember the information any longer. He stated, "I just wanted to do the test." *(Yo lo que quería hacer la prueba no más.)*

Purchasing a Home

Arturo purchased a triple wide trailer home for his family. He took over payments on the trailer from a Peruvian couple. Arturo had to learn about the legalities involved in the transaction. He went to an American lawyer who had a Cuban assistant. He recollected, “The American told us everything and the Cuban translated it.” (*El americano nos decía todo y el cubano lo traducía.)* “They explained everything about the house to me, everything related to the payments, how often we have to make them.” *(Me explicaron todo lo de la casa, todo lo relacionado a los pagos, cada cuando tenemos que hacerlos.)*

Throughout their lives in the United States, the Mexican immigrants in this study have been involved in a variety of adult learning activities. Learning the English language, attending GED classes, developing job-skills, acquiring business knowledge, learning to drive, preparing for the citizenship interview, and purchasing a home are experiences which have contributed to the immigrants’ processes of adaptation.

Ways Learning Experiences Contribute to Adaptation

The adult learning experiences described above have contributed to the immigrants’ sociocultural, economic, or political adaptation in four ways: by developing the immigrants’ survival skills, by enabling them to participate in the labor force, by increasing their physical mobility, and by creating security and stability in the immigrants’ lives.

By Developing Survival Skills

Survival skills are those skills needed to function in everyday situations. It was evident from the immigrants’ life histories that they often relied on family members and friends from back home to help them find housing and work in the United States. In addition, survival skills were also transmitted from immigrant to immigrant. For example, Arturo related how fellow immigrants gave him helpful hints on speaking English:

> I couldn't be understood. And then some friends who had been here a longer time, right, who had experienced the same thing that I was experiencing in that moment, they said to me, "No, you have to speak it, but differently. Look, it's written one way and pronounced another."
>
> *(No me entendía. Y ya entonces algunos amigos que habían estado más tiempo aquí ¿verdad? que ya habían experimentado lo mismo que yo estaba experimentando en ese momento, ya me decían, "No, pues, tienes que hablarlo pero diferente. Mira, se escribe de una forma y se pronuncia de otra.")*

Guisela also had cousins who were able to show her the ropes when it came to shopping. There were no Hispanic stores in the area at the time, so they had to shop in American stores. Guisela explained, "My cousins already knew where." *(Mis primos ya sabían adonde.)*

Many adult English as a Second Language programs have the goal of developing survival skills. For example, Guisela described the curriculum in her workplace English class: "It was related with . . how to order in a restaurant, how to talk in a store, in a hospital, to go to the doctor." *(Era relacionado con . . como a pedir algo en un restaurante, como le digo en una tienda, en un hospital, ir al doctor.)*

The immigrants in this study acknowledged their need to develop survival skills. Marta explained why she wanted to learn English: "When I was already here is when I began to be worried because I wasn't understood. I thought about my children, when they become sick, how was I going to tell the doctors what was wrong with my children?" (*Ya estaba aquí es cuando ya*

me empecé a preocupar porque no me entendía. Pensaba en mis hijos, cuando se enfermaban, ¿cómo iba a decirles a los doctores que es lo que tenían mis hijos?)

When Marta began her tutoring sessions, she was able to tackle this issue. She told her tutor:

> What I also want to learn is when I go to the doctor or to make an appointment when my children are sick. When I have to call for them to give me an appointment. I mean, she [the tutor] taught me that, too.
>
> *(Lo que quiero aprender también es cuando voy al doctor, o para sacar una cita cuando mis hijos están enfermos. Que tengo que llamar para que me den una cita. O sea, esa me lo enseñó ella también.)*

Arturo addressed similar content areas with his tutor:

> I asked him a lot, "Ok, if some day I get sick and I go to the doctor, how am I going to say, 'My head hurts.' 'That my leg hurts.' 'That my arm hurts here'?" something like that. And he would tell me how it is said. And I would tell him, "Ok, now write it for me. I am going to pronounce it and you tell me if it's ok or not."
>
> *(Yo le preguntaba mucho, "Bueno, si algún día me enfermo y voy con el doctor ¿cómo le digo 'Me duele la cabeza,' 'Que me duele una pierna,' 'Que aquí me duele un brazo'?" algo así. Y él me decía como se decía. Y yo le decía "Bueno pues, ahora escríbamelo. La voy a pronunciar y tú me dices si está bien o no.")*

I was able to observe Marta's ESL class on three occasions. Two of the lessons dealt with survival skills: one with first aid vocabulary (e.g., stitching, CPR, and cut) and the other with occupational vocabulary (e.g., bricklayer, cashier, and dentist). When discussing her ESL class, Marta said the most useful lesson for her has been the lesson on giving directions.

By Enabling Participation in the Labor Force

Adult learning was crucial to the economic adaptation of the immigrants. English-language learning, GED classes, job-skill development, small business seminars, and even learning to drive have played a role in the immigrant's ability to gain entry to the labor force, maintain employment, move within the company, have a voice in the workplace, and open their own businesses.

To gain entry to the labor force. For Tobías, learning English has been the key to gaining employment outside the poultry industry. He discovered that if he completed the job applications in English, he was more likely to be called for an interview. But completing an application was not enough; he also had to be able to pass an interview in English. As Tobías gained more English skills, he began to act as an interpreter for his friends during their job hunt. Several times, he took his non-English-speaking friends to apply for jobs, and he was offered the job instead because he knew more English.

Arturo was participating in a GED class, with the goal of taking the GED test as soon as possible. He believed the GED would allow him to obtain higher-level and higher-paying jobs. Because Arturo had not yet taken the GED at the time of this study, it is unknown whether obtaining the GED would actually have that effect.

Knowing how to drive was important for Marta as it facilitated her job search. She explained:

> I don't like to drive, but [I drive] more than anything out of necessity . . . . Also to go to work I always had to pay a ride to take me to my job. To look for a job I had to first look who worked in that job to [know] who could give me a ride. So, I learned how to drive.

> *(No me gusta manejar, pero más que nada por necesidad . . . . Para moverme a mi trabajo también siempre tenía que pagar ride para me llevan a mi trabajo. Para buscar un trabajo tenía que buscar primero quienes trabajaban en ese trabajo para poder (?) quien me raitiaba. Entonces, aprendí a manejar.)*

To maintain employment. Once a job was obtained, learning became necessary to maintain employment. As mentioned in the section on English-language learning, the immigrants sometimes needed English to communicate with supervisors and coworkers. Arturo described his experience in one of his jobs:

> I was the only Hispanic person. So, I felt obligated to learn more because they asked me something related to the job, and well, I had to know how to tell them, right? And in the beginning it was a little funny that I told them some things half in Spanish and in English. But we didn't understand each other perfectly. Halfway . . . . So it was because of this that I wanted to learn more English there . . In this case it wasn't to obtain a better position. It was just to feel more sure of myself there at work.
>
> *(Era el único hispano. Entonces, yo me vi obligado aprender más porque me preguntaban algo relacionado al trabajo, y pues yo tenía que saber decirles ¿verdad? Y al principio era un poco divertido de que yo les decía algunas cosas a medias en español y en inglés. Pero no nos entendemos perfectamente. A medias . . . . Entonces, fue por eso que quise aprender más inglés allí . . En ese caso no era para obtener un mejor puesto. Sino simplemente para sentirme más seguro de mi mismo allí en el trabajo.)*

Learning to perform a new job quickly was also essential to maintaining employment. Guisela told how she felt in her first job, cutting tenders in the chicken processing plant: "And since I had the aspiration of staying in the job, I said, 'I have to learn it. Before the forty-five days [of training] are up, I have to know my job very well.'" *(Y como yo tenía [la] ilusión de quedarme en el trabajo, yo decía, "Tengo que aprenderlo. Antes de que se cumplen los cuarenta y cinco días, yo ya tengo que saber bien mi trabajo.")*

To move within the company. The immigrants sometimes experienced lateral job transitions within the same company due to department closings and shift changes. By the term *lateral job transition*, I mean that the immigrant was transferred to another position which was not at a higher level or higher-paying than the job previously held. For example, Guisela had been working nights in the poultry plant packing chicken pieces on a plate. However, when she switched to day shift, she was assigned to a different job:

> They gave me the change to day in a department that is called debone . . . . but my job was that of relief person. I had to learn all the different jobs there were in the department so if a person wanted to go to the bathroom or to the infirmary, I had to stay in their place.
>
> *(Me dieron el cambio al día en un departamento que se llama debone . . . . pero mi trabajo era como de relief person. Tenía que enseñarme todos los diferentes trabajos que habían en el departamento para que si una persona tenía que ir al baño o la enfermería, yo me tenía que quedar en su lugar.)*

Two of the immigrants, Tobías and Fermín, talked about the opportunities for them to make vertical transitions (i.e., to be promoted) within their companies. Neither believed their English to be strong enough. Tobías had refused a promotion he had been offered. Fermín was content to stay in his current position. He was not interested in being promoted to work with the robots in his factory:

> Because sometimes engineers come. So you have to explain to them everything that's happening to the robot, because it doesn't weld well. You don't have enough English . . . . And there's a lot of work because you have to be with the telephone. The telephone is there. They call you. The foreman calls you. The supervisor calls you.
>
> *(Porque a veces llegan ingenieros. Entonces, tiene que usted explicarle todo lo que está pasando al robot, porque no solda bien. Uno le falta el inglés . . . .Y hay alta trabajo también porque tienes que estar con el teléfono. Está el teléfono allí. Te hablan. Te hablan del mayordomo. El supervisor te hablan.)*

The immigrants needed to learn more English before they would be able to take advantage of the promotion opportunities available to them.

To have a voice in the workplace. Even though the immigrants managed to enter the labor force, maintain their employment, and transfer to different jobs within the company, they sometimes felt they did not have a voice in the workplace. Fermín explained how his lack of English prohibited him from participating in employee meetings: "Sometimes you want to complain about things there and you can't because you don't know English well. And sometimes if you don't know [English] well, the people laugh and better for you to bear it, to bear it." *(A veces uno quiere reclamar cosas allí y no puede uno porque no sabe uno inglés bien. Y a veces si no sabes bien, como que se ríe la gente y ya mejor te aguantes, te aguantes.)*

Tobías realized that knowing English gives immigrant workers the power to defend their rights:

> Now English is the base of success for an immigrant here. If you don't speak English, you are nothing. They are going to treat you in the worst way. They are going to pay you want they want. They are going to cut hours in your check and you will never be able to

> tell them, "Hey, I'm missing hours. Pay me. I worked a certain number of hours." You will not be able to explain to them. And there isn't always a person available to translate what you want to say to the supervisor. That's why it is good to learn English.
>
> *(El inglés ahora [es] la base del éxito aquí para un inmigrante. Si no hablas inglés, no eres nada. Te van a tratar de lo peor. Te van a pagar lo que quieran. Te van a quitar horas en tu cheque y nunca vas a poder decirle, "Oye, me faltan horas. Págame. Trabajé cierta cantidad de horas." No vas a poder explicarles. Y no siempre hay una persona disponible para que traduzca lo que uno quiere decirle al supervisor. Por eso es que lo bueno es aprender inglés.)*

To open their own business. Arturo ran a Mexican store and later opened a gift shop. He gained the skills and knowledge necessary to operate a business in the United States through three modes: prior retail experience in Mexico, networking with suppliers and his landlord, and participation in small business development seminars.

By Increasing Physical Mobility

As the life histories illustrate, immigrants often live in segregated communities and work in immigrant-dominated industries. Some of the learning experienced by the immigrants has allowed them to see beyond their communities and workplaces and physically move out of them. Marta's story is the prime example. Marta's experience of learning how to drive has allowed her to leave the Hispanic trailer park where she lives to provide for her family's needs:

> Here I learned how to drive because I didn't know how to drive and I did it by necessity. Because my husband didn't drive, nor did I drive, and I saw that it was necessary to learn how to drive to be able to move about. Because I had to go to wash, I didn't have a washer. I had to go to dry the clothes. I had to go for the food. There weren't stores there

> nearby like there are now. We had to go closer to the downtown to bring the food. To go to the doctor to my children's appointments.
>
> *(Aquí aprendí a manejar porque no sabía manejar y lo hice por necesidad. Porque mi esposo no manejaba, ni yo manejaba, y vi que era necesario enseñarme manejar para poder moverme. Porque tenía que ir a lavar, no tenía lavadora. Tenía que ir a secar la ropa. Tenía que ir a la comida. No había tiendas allí cerquitas como las que ahora hay. Teníamos que ir más al centro a traer lo de la comida. Para ir al doctor a las citas de mis hijos.)*

Being able to drive has also facilitated Marta's job search.

In a similar fashion, Marta commented how the most useful lesson for her in the ESL class has been the lesson on giving directions:

> When we saw about the directions . . of how to look for an address, when they give me an address, how we do it to arrive to that place. I didn't know what a block was, one block, two blocks, block to the right. Yeah, I didn't know "right." "Left," that I did know. But what a block is, two blocks, I didn't know that. To get somewhere, how many streets you have to pass. I learned that.
>
> *(Cuando vimos lo de las direcciones . . de como buscar una dirección, cuando me dan una dirección, que como le hacemos para llegar a tal parte. Yo no sabía lo que era un block, one block, two blocks, block a la derecha. Sí, no sabía "derecha." "Izquierda," eso sí lo sabía. Pero lo que es un block, dos blocks, eso no sabía yo. Para llegar a una parte, cuantas calles tiene uno que pasar. Eso lo aprendí.)*

Marta is now quite familiar with the many shopping centers in Athens. She takes her children to play in area parks. This new mobility means that Marta does not have to be shut in her trailer as she was when she first arrived.

By Creating Security and Stability

Two of the learning activities described here, preparing for the citizenship exam and learning about home purchase contracts, are components of processes which create security and stabality in the immigrants' lives. The fact that Fermín learned the answers to the 100 citizenship exam questions is not significant in itself. Marta's husband has also learned the answers to these questions. What is significant is that Fermín was able to apply this knowledge in the citizenship interview and pass the exam. He is now a U.S. citizen, and he carries copies of his citizenship certificate in both his cars. This gives him the security of knowing that he cannot be deported. Fermín's status as a citizen will also facilitate approval of his family's residency applications. Once those applications are processed, the whole family will be in the United States legally.

Likewise, Arturo's experience of learning about the legal requirements for purchasing a trailer was not significant until Arturo completed the purchase. Now the family has a home they can call their own. This is an indicator that the family plans to stay in the U.S. for the long-term.

The formal and informal adult learning experienced by the immigrants had implications for their sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation. These experiences contributed to the immigrants' adaptation processes by developing their survival skills, enabling their participation in the labor force, increasing their physical mobility, and creating security and stability in their lives.

Aspects of the Teaching/Learning Transaction Contributing to the Adaptation Process

In this section, I will focus on the participants' formal learning experiences (i.e, ESL and GED classes and tutoring sessions), as these were designed by educators. There were aspects of the teaching/learning transactions involved in these experiences which directly influenced the adaptation process. Other aspects had an indirect influence by affecting the immigrants' satisfaction with and retention in educational programs. These aspects include the opportunity to connect with American teachers who act as helpers, course content, level appropriate instruction, the quality of instruction, student input into the learning process, student/student relationships, and the teacher/student relationship.

American Teachers as Helpers

The in-home ESL tutoring program that Marta participated in was unique in that it put her in personal contact with American people who became her "helpers." One of the ESL tutors actually took Marta to apply for the job in the laundry, contributing to her entry into the labor force. Later, another ESL tutor brought Marta the driver's license exam study booklet and helped her to study for the exam, contributing to Marta's improved physical mobility.

Course Content

The content of some of the language learning lessons the participants engaged in directly influenced their adaptation processes. The focus in the ESL programs and in the tutoring sessions on developing survival skills was right in line with the participants' desire to acquire such skills to carry out their daily activities. As can be noted in the previous discussion, topics such as going to the doctor were high priorities on the participants' language-learning agendas.

"Giving Directions" is a subtopic under survival skills which was expressly mentioned by Marta as being something useful she had learned in her ESL classes. Learning how to ask directions from an English-speaking person and to follow those directions to a place she needed to go contributed to Marta's physical mobility. It decreased her isolation and increased her access to the larger community.

Level Appropriate Instruction

Being in a class that provides an appropriate level of instruction can affect a learner's participation. Marta and her husband criticized the ESL classes offered by the Baptist church because students of different proficiency levels were in the same group. They did not gain a lot from the class because they felt the instruction was either too basic or too advanced for them. Marta explained:

> Some people who already know [English] attend there. I mean, they know how to speak it but not how to write it. There are others who attend who don't know anything. And others who know a little more. So, when everybody is together there in the class, those who know more are always asking more questions. And the people who teach pay more attention to them, to those who know more, than to those of us who don't know. So because of this sometimes we can't adapt, to be able to study well. To be able to learn well. I mean, we go but we always come back the same. Like the first day ten people go to the class. They start with the alphabet. That's fine. Some of us already know, others don't know anything, and others know more. So, those who know more are always saying, "No, not that! Do something else. Teach us about work." So they start with that about work. So those who don't know anything just sit there. Another day the same thing happens. The people come and instead of moving ahead, every day the class is always going backwards because they always have to start again with the people who arrive new.

> *(Allá asisten unos que ya saben. O sea, que saben hablarlo pero no lo saben escribir. Hay otros que asisten que no saben nada. Y otros que saben un poquito más. Entonces, cuando están todos reunidos allí en la clase, los que saben más siempre están preguntando más. Y las personas que enseñan les ponen más atención a ellas, que ya saben más, que a las que no sabemos. Entonces, por eso a veces no nos podemos adaptar, a poder estudiar bien. A poder aprender bien. O sea, que vamos pero siempre nos venimos igual. Como que el primer día van como diez personas a la clase. Empiezen con el abecedario. Está bien. Unos ya lo sabemos, otros no saben nada, y otros saben más. Entonces, estos que saben más siempre están hablando, "¡No! ¡Que eso no! Que mejor otra cosa. Que enséñenos acerca del trabajo" Entonces, empiezan con eso del trabajo. Entonces, los que no saben nada ya se quedaron allá. Otro día pasa lo mismo. Llegan las personas, y en vez de de seguir adelante, todos los días la clase siempre se va retrasando porque siempre tienen que empezar de nuevo con las personas que llegaron nuevas.)*

Marta and her husband stopped attending the ESL classes offered by the Baptist church.

Tobías also had an issue with the level of instruction. He attended an ESL program with four proficiency levels. However, he felt that he had been placed in a level that was too advanced for him:

> What happened in the English classes? When I got there, I found classmates who had come from [U.S.] high school. They were studying in the high school. Others who were electricians. Do you think that an electrician is not going to speak English? An electrician here? I mean, they spoke too much English. I was like, I hid so as not to speak. The

> teacher arrived . . . . She gave us a paragraph from a newspaper. We had to read and explain what it said. And I was like, “What am I going to say? I don’t understand.” *(¿Qué pasó en las clases de inglés? Cuando yo llegaba allí, entraron compañeros que vienen de la high school. Estaban estudiando en la high school. Otros que son electricistas. ¿Usted cree que un electricista no va a hablar inglés? ¿Un electricista aquí? O sea, hablan demasiado inglés. Yo me quedé, yo me escondía para no hablar. Llegaba la maestra . . . . Nos daba un parrafo de un periódico. Teníamos que leer y explicar que decía. Y me quedaba,“¿Qué voy a decir? No entiendo.”)*

Instructional Quality

The immigrants who participated in formal educational programs were also able to discern the quality of the instruction they were given. This is an additional aspect of the teaching/learning transaction that influences participation. Marta praised two of her teachers in the ESL program and criticized another: “They [the teachers she liked] brought more prepared topics to teach us. Because the Monday teacher, well, I’m sorry, right? A pale young girl . . . she never knew what to teach us.” *(Ellos llevan más tema preparado para enseñarnos. Porque la maestra de lunes, bueno, lo siento ¿verdad? Una güerita jovencita . . . nunca encontraba que enseñarnos.)*

Student Input

Another aspect of the teaching/learning transaction affecting student satisfaction with the educational program is the opportunity for students to have input into their learning process. For example, Marta believes she has a good relationship with her ESL teachers because she is able to suggest topics and teaching methods: “I’ve talked with them about what I want to learn. I mean, I tell them, right, that they should also dictate sentences to us to teach us how to write.” *(He*

hablado con ellos que es lo quiero aprender. O sea, yo les digo ¿verdad? que ellos deben también de dictarnos frases para enseñarnos escribir. No únicamente pronunciarlo sino también saber escribir.)

Arturo made a similar comment about the tutors in his GED class:

> They also ask us if we have any question, on what grammar topic I want to work, right? On pronunciation or on the period, the comma, on whatever topic I want. They let us select. Or they say to me, "What do you think if we work on this topic? Do you think it's good for you or is it very advanced or very low? What level do you consider it?" When we did the exam to determine each person's level, the teacher told me that I could select the topics. He said, "You can select the topics that you think you need more, to learn more. With pleasure we will treat those topics."
>
> *(Nos preguntan también si tenemos alguna duda, en qué tema de la gramática yo quiero trabajar ¿verdad? En pronunciación o en el punto, la coma, en cualquier tema que yo quiera. Ellos nos ponen a escoger. O me dicen, "¿Qué te parece si trabajamos en ese tema? ¿Consideras que está bien para tí o está muy adelantado o está muy bajo? ¿A qué nivel lo consideras?" Cuando hicimos el examen para determinar en qué nivel está la persona, me dijo el maestro que yo pudiera escoger los temas. Dice, "Tú puedes escoger los temas en los que tú consideras que te falta más, aprender más. Con mucho gusto tratamos de ese tema.")*

Student/Student relationships

The relationships among the students in the program can motivate the immigrants to continue their participation. Arturo described how in his ESL program, a group of students completed several levels together: "The environment seemed really good. We were fifteen or twenty students in the group. And almost all of us finished, like four or five levels we were doing." *(Me pareció muy bien el ambiente. Éramos como unos quince o veinte alumnos que estaban en el grupo. Y casi todos terminamos, como cuatro o cinco niveles que fuimos haciendo.)*

Marta has been participating in the same ESL program for a year and a half. Several of her classmates have also been in the program throughout this time period, and a camaraderie has developed among them. Marta explained how she tries to motivate her fellow classmates:

> That we go up to participate because when we participate, then we are gaining more confidence. And we are untangling our tongue to be able to pronounce the words. And I tell them, "If we don't participate, then how are we going to learn? Just by listening, well no. We also need to try to speak it to be able to develop ourselves." And many [students] don't want to participate. Because they can't. And I tell them, "That's how you learn. By participating. If you're wrong, well they will correct you and you will know how to form the question. Or how to answer."
>
> *(Que nos pasen a participar porque donde estamos participando, pues, allí vamos agarrando más confianza. Y nos vamos desenredando la lengua para poder pronunciar las palabras. Le digo, "Porque si no vamos a participar, entonces ¿cómo vamos a aprender?" Nada más escuchando, pues no. Necesitamos también hacer el intento de hablarlo para poder desenvolvernos." Y muchos no quieren participar. Que porque no pueden. Le digo, "Así es como aprende uno. Participar. Y si está uno mal, pues, a uno lo corrigen y ya sabe uno como hacer la pregunta. O como contestar.")*

Teacher/Student Relationship

A final factor in the teaching/learning transaction influencing participation is the relationship between the student and the teacher. One dimension of this relationship is the teacher's sensitivity to the students' comfort level in the class. Tobías felt uncomfortable because his ESL teacher pressured him too much to participate:

> And one teacher just directed herself to me. Just to me. She didn't say anything to the other classmates. Only to me. "And answer me. And answer me," she said. "Don't be afraid," she said. And that was also the part that disillusioned me. I mean, I don't know if she wanted me to learn like the others or she wanted to run me out of the class. I still don't know what her intention was.
>
> *(Y alguna maestra solo a mí se dirigía. Solo a mí. A los demás compañeros no los decía nada. Solo a mí. "Y contéstame. Y contéstame," me decía. "No tenga miedo," me decía. Y eso fue también la parte en que me . . me desillusionó. O sea, no sé si que ella quería que aprendiera como los demás, o quería huirme de la clase. No entiendo aun cual fue su intención.)*

Tobías ended up dropping out of the ESL class.

A second dimension of the teacher/student relationship mentioned by Arturo was the students' perception that the teachers respected them. He described the teachers in his GED class: "The teachers are very pleasant. All the ones I've met, right? They answer your questions and they never disrespect anyone." *(Muy agradable los maestros. Todos los que he conocido allí ¿verdad? Le aclaran uno dudas y nunca le falta al respeto a nadie.)*

In conclusion, several aspects of the teaching/learning transaction contributed either directly or indirectly to the immigrants' adaptation process. These aspects included American teachers who acted as helpers, the course content, level appropriate instruction, instructional quality, student input into the learning process, student/student relationships, and the teacher/student relationship.

The Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model

The aspects of the teaching/learning transaction mentioned by the participants above can affect whether learners continue to engage in a learning activity or decide to terminate their participation. To illustrate the link between aspects of the teaching/learning transaction and a learner's continued participation in a learning activity, I have developed the Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model (Figure 5). This model can be used to explain a learner's initial decision to participate in an adult learning activity as well as their later decisions to continue participating. In the initial decision to participate, the individual identifies a learning need or a learning interest. In the second stage, the individual encounters dispositional, situational, informational, and/or institutional supports or deterrents to participation in the chosen learning activity. If deterrents outweigh supports, the individual is classified as a nonparticipator. If the supports outweigh the deterrents, then the individual engages in the formal or informal learning activity. While participating in the activity, the individual (who is now a learner) experiences aspects internal to the learning activity which motivate him/her to continue participating or deter him/her from future participation.

The next day, the individual is back at stage one. He/she still has a learning need or interest. This time the individual has to make a decision as to whether he/she wants to *continue* participating in the learning activity. Again, the individual encounters dispositional, situational, informational, and/or institutional supports or deterrents to participation in the chosen learning

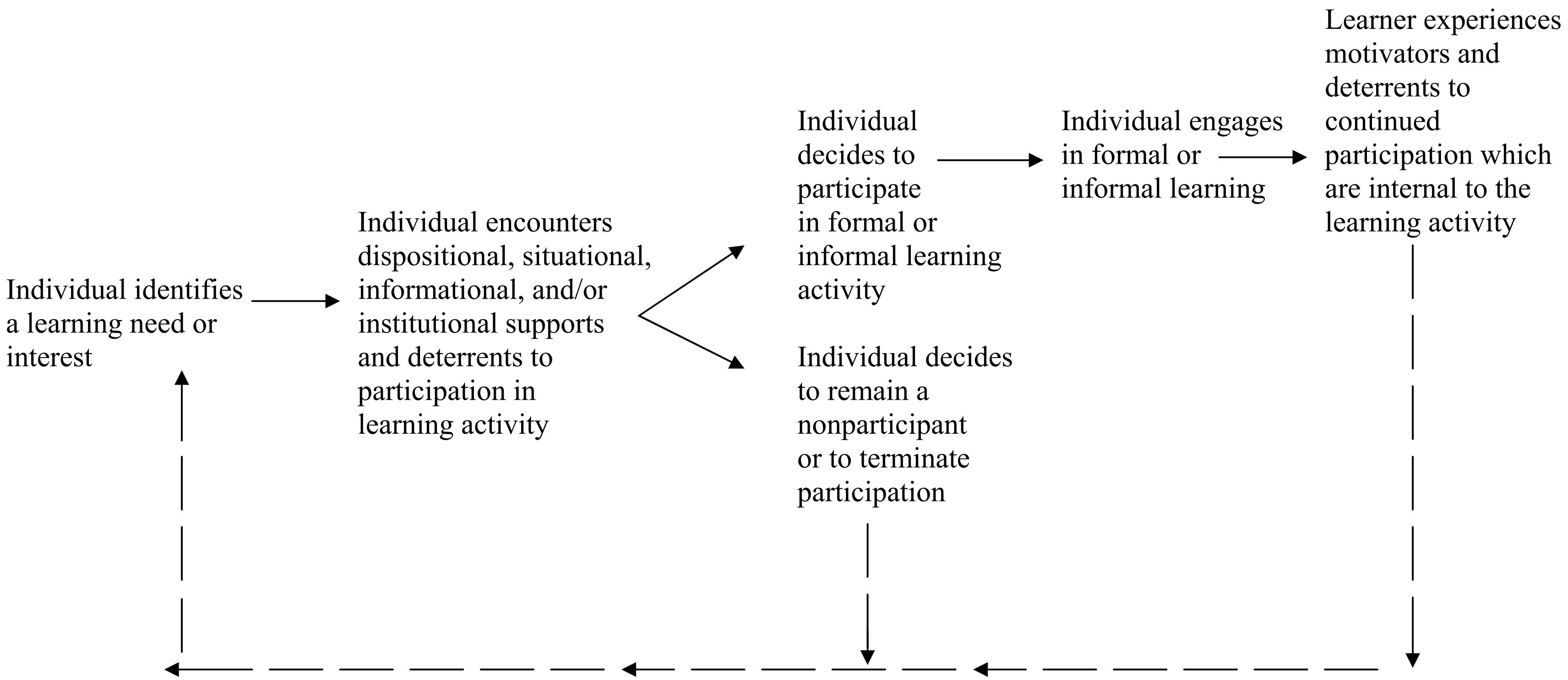
Individual identifies a learning need or interest
Individual encounters dispositional, situational, informational, and/or institutional supports and deterrents to participation in learning activity
Individual decides to participate in formal or informal learning activity
Individual decides to remain a nonparticipant or to terminate participation
Individual engages in formal or informal learning
Learner experiences motivators and deterrents to continued participation which are internal to the learning activity

Figure 5. Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model

activity. The individual now also has to consider his/her previous experiences in that learning activity and the motivators/deterrents contained therein. If deterrents outweigh supports, the individual decides to terminate his/her participation. If the supports outweigh the deterrents, the individual continues to participate in the formal or informal learning activity. The learner's new experiences during the teaching/learning transaction motivate him/her to continue participating or deter him/her from future participation.

This model can be applied to the experiences of the immigrants in this study. For example, Marta identified that she needed to learn more English to meet her daily survival needs. She encountered supports for attending an English program offered in her trailer park (e.g., she did not need transportation to get to the class). Marta participated in this program; however, she felt she was not able to learn much because students of different proficiency levels were in the same class. Although Marta still had a need to learn English, she evaluated her previous experience in the program negatively. This negative evaluation became a dispositional barrier to her continued participation, and she dropped out of the program.

Arturo identified his lack of a U.S. high school diploma as an obstacle to his obtaining a higher paying job. He believed that obtaining the GED would solve this problem. He recognized that he would need to prepare himself academically to take the GED exam. He encountered supports for participating in a certain GED preparation program (e.g., the classes were in the evenings; his wife could care for their children). Arturo began to participate in this program. While in the class, he found that the teachers and his classmates treated him with respect, and he was able to have input into his learning process. Arturo continued to have a need to prepare himself for the GED. He still encountered situational and institutional supports for participating in the GED program. Furthermore, he evaluated his previous experience in the program positively. This positive evaluation acted as a dispositional support for his continued participation. Every day that he participates in the program, Arturo experiences aspects of the teaching/learning transaction which either support or deter his future participation.

This model may be applied to participation in informal learning as well. For instance, Tobías described his self-directed efforts to learn English. He recognized his need to learn English, and he had the financial means to purchase an expensive video language program. He watched the first two videos in the program, yet the activity did not contain enough motivators therein for him to want to watch the rest of the videos in the series. He stopped using the videos as a means of learning English. However, Tobías still had a learning need, and he engaged in other informal learning activities, such as studying books and conversing with Americans in discos, which he found more motivating.

In contrast to the other participants, Fermín did not identify any current learning needs. He was able to manage with the English he knew, he was unmotivated to learn any more skills on the job, and he had met his goal of obtaining citizenship. Therefore, Fermín does not even make it to the first stage of the model.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the exploration into the role of formal and informal adult learning in the adaptation processes of Mexican immigrants living in Georgia. It was found that the immigrants participated in a range of learning activities. Primary among these was the learning of the English language through formal ESL programs, ESL tutors, self-directed learning, and informal learning in social and workplace contexts. Another formal educational activity was participation in GED classes. The immigrants explained how they learned to perform their jobs in the U.S. and how they developed their business skills. They described how they learned to drive. The immigrants also discussed the learning involved in becoming a U.S. citizen and buying a trailer home.

A second set of findings related to the ways in which these learning experiences contributed to the immigrants' sociocultural, economic, or political adaptation. These learning experiences developed the immigrants' everyday survival skills. They enabled the immigrants to participate in the labor force by facilitating their entrance into the labor force and strengthening their ability to keep their jobs, to make lateral and vertical job transitions within their companies, to speak up for themselves in the workplace, and to open their own businesses. Their learning experiences gave them the skills to increase their physical mobility. They also contributed to other processes, such as acquiring citizenship and buying a home, which created security and stability in the immigrant's life.

Finally, as the immigrants discussed their learning experiences, several aspects of the teaching/learning transaction were highlighted. Some of these aspects contributed directly to the immigrants' adaptation processes while others contributed indirectly by either supporting or deterring the immigrants' participation in educational programs. These aspects were the access to American teachers who acted as helpers, the course content, level appropriate instruction, instructional quality, student input into the learning process, student/student relationships, and the teacher/student relationship. The Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model was introduced. This model illustrates how aspects of the teaching/learning transaction relate to a learner's continued participation in adult learning activities.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of formal and informal adult learning in the sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation of Mexican immigrants in the state of Georgia. There has been a long history of Mexican immigration to the U.S. (Martin & Midgley, 1999), with states like California, Texas, and Illinois being typical destinations. However, the last decade saw the dispersion of Mexican immigrants into new areas of the United States as part of a phenomena called the New Latino Diaspora (Wortham et al., 2002). Georgia experienced a 300% increase in its Hispanic population from 1990 to 2000 (Guzmán, 2001), with an additional 17% growth from 2000 to 2002 (Bixler, 2003). Hispanics, which include Mexican immigrants as a subgroup, are now the largest minority group in the United States (Bernstein & Bergman, 2003). Little research has been conducted on the adult learning experiences of Mexican immigrants as a population, or how those experiences contribute to their adaptation processes. The questions guiding this study focused on the kinds of formal adult education and informal learning activities the immigrants have participated in since coming to the United States, the ways these learning experiences have contributed to their adaptation, and the aspects of the teaching/learning transaction which have supported their adaptation processes.

Because adaptation is a long-term process which depends on individual as well as contextual factors, the life history method was employed to explore this issue (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Five Mexican immigrants who had lived in the United States from 5 to 25 years were recruited to participate in this study. Three life story interviews were conducted with each immigrant. If the immigrants were actively participating in an adult education program, their classes were observed. Some of the immigrants shared artifacts such as certificates, letters, news clippings, and photos.

Data were analyzed using two methods. First, the holistic-content method was used to construct a life history for each participant and to track themes related to the individual's sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation. Then, the categorical-content method was employed to look across the five immigrants' histories and to identify common themes (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Data analysis revealed that the immigrants had engaged in a wide range of learning activities in the United States. Through these learning experiences, the immigrants developed their survival skills, were able to participate in the labor force, increased their physical mobility, and enhanced stability in their lives. The analysis also determined that the immigrants' participation in formal adult learning activities was sometimes influenced by aspects of the teaching/learning transaction.

Conclusions and Discussion

The findings as described in Chapters Four and Five have led this researcher to draw two conclusions. In this final chapter, I will discuss these two conclusions and relate them to theoretical and practical issues in the literature. The two conclusions are as follows: First, although formal and informal learning contribute to the adaptation of Mexican immigrants, this contribution varies along sociocultural, economic, and political dimensions. Second, deterrents and motivators internal to the learning experience influence continued participation in learning activities.

Conclusion 1: The Contribution of Formal and Informal Learning to the Adaptation of Mexican Immigrants Varies along Sociocultural, Economic, and Political Dimensions

As Aslanian and Brickell (1980) have posited, learning is often stimulated by changes in one's life circumstances. In coming to the United States, the Mexican immigrants in this study have confronted linguistic, cultural, laboral, and political changes. In the time they have lived here, they have proven themselves to be strongly goal-oriented learners (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). They engaged in formal and informal learning activities in order to meet their immediate and long-term needs for sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation.

Sociocultural adaptation. A number of studies that explore the connection between immigrant learning and adaptation focus on issues of sociocultural adaptation; that is, language learning and culture learning (Buttaro, 2001; Lind, 2000; Vosecky White, 2000). With regards to language and culture learning, the participants in this study were goal-oriented learners (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999), or, to use a term from the field of second language acquisition research, instrumentally-motivated learners (Ellis, 1997). Both of these terms refer to learners who engage in a learning activity in order to meet a larger goal, such as getting a job or passing an exam.

All of the immigrant learners in this study reflected a goal-oriented/instrumental motivation toward language and culture learning at some time during their life histories. They described how they needed to learn English to conduct their daily life activities in the United States. This level of English language usage is referred to as survival skills or lifeskills. For instance, the immigrants found that activities such as making purchases or visiting a doctor required some level of English language proficiency. Marta and Guisela talked about needing English to attend to their children's needs in the larger world outside their home. The adult

English as a Second Language programs the immigrants participated in reinforced the development of their survival language skills.

Arturo was the lone participant who exhibited an integrative motivation for English language learning. Learners with an integrative motivation desire to learn the language so that they can interact with native speakers of the language and participate in cultural activities (Ellis, 1997). Arturo expressed an interest from an early age in learning English so that he would understand American music. He described his many efforts to establish friendships with his American coworkers in the United States. He was also the only participant who actually talked about engaging in social activities with an American friend. I met this friend myself on one occasion.

In Berry's (1980; 1983; 1997; 2003; Berry et al., 1988) model of immigrant adaptation, there are four possible outcomes: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. During our interviews, I tried to elicit information from the participants on cultural changes they may have experienced by asking them how their life now is similar to or different than their life in Mexico was. The participants always responded by discussing the higher standard of living they have here and how they miss being with their extended families. This was not the kind of "cultural change" information that I was hoping to obtain. After I repeated and reworded the question several times, one of the participants, Fermín, finally responded that he did not like the way American women take control over household repairs. He believed this was a man's responsibility. This was the only example that I encountered of a participant's explicitly rejecting aspects of American culture. At the same time, the participants did not seem to be assimilating American culture or actively integrating either. Furthermore, the immigrants were not marginalized from their own culture. In fact, there were many examples of the participants' maintenance of their Mexican traditions: Marta's daughter dressed as the *Virgen de Guadalupe* to celebrate the *Virgen's* birthday; the shrine to the *Virgen* in Fermín's living room and his prayer to the *Virgen* before his citizenship interview; the elaborate party that Arturo threw for his daughter's *quinceñera* (paid for with the assistance of many *padrinos* and *madrinas*—myself included); Arturo's Mexican *tienda*; the cooking and selling of Mexican foods by Marta and Fermín's wife; and all of the participants' Spanish-language usage in the home, social settings, and oftentimes at work. Yet this cultural maintenance did not seem to be a conscious rejection of American cultural values or traditions. It was just the way the immigrants have always done things.

For these immigrants, life in the United States was an extension of their life in Mexico. According to Berry's model, cultural contact and cultural conflict are the stimuli for adaptation. Given the social and occupational segregation that the Mexican immigrants experience, they have not yet had to confront challenges to their ways of being in the world, challenges which would lead to the immigrants' assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization. Thus, Berry's categories of immigrant adaptation were not useful for describing the experiences of the immigrants here.

Learning how to drive and thereby increasing their physical mobility also facilitated the immigrants' sociocultural adaptation. It allowed them to leave their immigrant communities (if only temporarily) and enter spheres occupied by Americans. It enabled them to shop in the same stores as Americans, play in the same parks, and live in the same apartment complexes. For example, Guisela showed me a photo of her family at the Sandy Creek Nature Center. Of the dozens of family photos that Guisela had shown me, the photo taken at the nature center was the only one in which Americans were present. Without adequate transportation, Guisela and her family would not have been able to visit the center. Reliable transportation is also necessary for immigrants to be able to regularly attend ESL programs. Bohon and Atiles (2004) have noted the effect of transportation issues on the sociocultural adaptation of immigrants.

In general, the adult learning experiences of the immigrants in this study did not have a huge impact on their processes of sociocultural adaptation. Even after living in the United States for up to 25 years, the participants are still much more "Mexican" in their cultural orientation than "American." The most significant contribution of adult learning in this dimension of adaptation was to the development of the immigrants' everyday survival skills and to their increased mobility.

Economic adaptation. The influx of Latin American immigrants into the U.S. labor force and the economic adaptation of these immigrants and later generations of Hispanic Americans continue to be of great interest to immigration researchers (Capps, Fix, Passel, Ost, & Perez-Lopez, 2003; Cavalcanti & Schleef, 2001; Padilla & Glick, 2000; Sum, Fogg, & Harrington, 2002). Although these studies often discuss the negative effect of low educational levels or low English proficiency on economic integration, they have yet to consider the link between an immigrant's adult learning experiences in the United States and his/her experiences of economic adaptation. This study demonstrates how strong a link there is.

The immigrants in this study described the many ways their adult learning experiences have impacted their participation in the labor market. One important area of learning for economic adaptation is English language learning. The participants in this study were involved in organized adult ESL programs and engaged in self-directed language study. They also acquired conversational English and work-specific vocabulary through interactions with their English-speaking coworkers. English language proficiency has been called "a crucial first step in the broader process of economic mobility within the United States" (Espinosa & Massey, 1997, p. 28). For the immigrants in this study, learning English was essential for gaining entry into the labor force, maintaining employment, having a voice in the workplace, and transitioning within the company.

Preparation for the GED exam either through participation in formal programs or through self-directed study also plays a role in economic adaptation. Arturo held a high-school diploma from Mexico, yet he was studying for a GED in the United States because he believed the GED would help him obtain a higher-paying job. GED graduates do earn more than people without high school diplomas, but it sometimes takes five or more years from the time the GED is obtained to see the economic impact of the credential (Tyler, 2003). If Arturo does indeed pass the GED at a future date, he may be disappointed when he does not immediately get the higher-paying job he seeks. On the other hand, Arturo *was* correct in his belief that as an immigrant a U.S. GED is worth more in the labor market than his Mexican high school diploma. In their study comparing different groups of GED holders (Americans, immigrants who had been partially schooled in the U.S., and immigrants who had been totally schooled in their country of origin) Clark and Jaeger (2002) found that

> the wages of foreign-born, foreign-schooled GED recipients are substantially *greater than* the wages of individuals who receive a traditional high school degree outside of the U.S. [Their] results suggest that the GED, while relatively rare among the foreign-born, may be important in the assimilation of low-skilled migrants to the U.S. labor market. (p. 1-2)

Clark and Jaeger (2002) present two hypotheses to explain this phenomenon. First, during the process of studying for the GED, the immigrant may obtain other forms of human capital, such as English-language skills, which are valued in the labor market. Second, employers recognize the GED as a credential, and it may signal to them that the immigrant has the skills required to perform U.S. jobs.

Acquiring job skills was also a significant area of learning for maintaining employment and for making job transitions. However, the majority of the immigrants' job skills were developed informally through on-the-job training. The participants described how they learned their jobs by observing others or by heeding the advice of more-experienced coworkers. Not one of the immigrants mentioned developing their job skills through participation in an organized workplace training program. This is not surprising as non-English speaking immigrants are rarely offered opportunities to participate in organized workplace learning activities. VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1997) studied the participation of immigrants in workplace training in Australia and discovered that non-English-speaking-background (NESB) immigrants had less probability of participating in all forms of workplace training (structured on-the-job training, structured off-the-job training, and unstructured on-the-job training) than native-born workers or immigrants who spoke English as a native language. Of the three types of training, a higher percentage of NESB immigrants (73.7%) had participated in unstructured on-the-job training than in the other two forms. VandenHeuvel and Wooden define unstructured job training as "informal activities undertaken by a worker to improve job skills" (p. 834). It includes, "being shown how to do the job, watching others work, asking questions of coworkers and teaching self" (p. 834).

The development of small-business knowledge is another way adult learning contributes to economic adaptation. Arturo opened a Mexican products store with his brother-in-law and later operated the store in his brother-in-law's name. During this experience, he learned through informal means where to acquire merchandise, how to obtain permits and licenses, and how often to pay taxes. Raijman and Tienda (2000) studied 162 Mexican entrepreneurs in Chicago and found that working in a coethnic firm (i.e., a company that is owned by someone of your own ethnicity) within an ethnic economy can provide immigrants with valuable training experiences. The immigrants can later draw on the skills acquired during these training experiences when operating their own businesses. Raijman and Tienda also found that employment in the ethnic economy is closely tied to relationships with family and friends.

Arturo also sought to strengthen his business knowledge through participation in small-business development seminars. In these seminars, he received tips on how much money he should invest in his business and how much he should budget for certain expenses. Cookson (1978) investigated the participation of Mexican American businessmen in adult education activities. He found that participation in business-related adult education influences the adoption of business practices, which in turn affect the business's success and the businessperson's economic achievement.

Finally, even learning how to drive had a significant impact on the immigrants' economic adaptation. In a region like northeast Georgia, with limited public transportation, the ability to drive provides the immigrant worker the necessary mobility to apply for jobs in different areas or to work different shifts without depending on others for transportation. Atiles and Bohon (2002) have also documented how transportation issues affect the economic adaptation of Latin American immigrants in Georgia.

Political adaptation. Of the five participants in this study, three were undocumented, one was a legal resident, and one (Fermín) was a U.S. citizen. When Fermín first came to the United States, he took a two-month basic level English class. He has not participated in any kind of formal adult learning activity since. To prepare for the citizenship exam, Fermín studied books and tapes on his own. However, based on Fermín's own reports, his learning was very superficial. He studied the 100 citizenship questions in the book he had purchased. Yet when time passed and he had not been called for the citizenship interview, he forgot them. When he was finally called for the interview, he had to cram to learn all the questions again. He admits now that he does not remember any of the information.

Although the data this study has to offer on adult learning and political adaptation is limited, I still believe this is an important area to research. The immigration policies that are in place at any given time in history have a large impact on the scope and nature of learning that is required for political adaptation. For example, certain immigrants who legalized under the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 were required to take 40 hours of instruction in English language, history, and government. Stewart (1993) has called the amnesty education effort of that time, "one of the most massive adult education programs in American history" (p. 69). However, Fermín was exempt from meeting those educational requirements because he legalized under the provisions of the Special Agricultural Worker program (Stewart, 1993).

Recently President George W. Bush has proposed some reforms to U.S. immigration law. One reform would allow immigrants who obtain employment to legally work in the United States for a period of three years. Another reform would have implications for adult learning by revising what aspiring citizens need to know. In his speech, Bush stated:

> In the process of immigration reform, we must also set high expectations for what new citizens should know. An understanding of what it means to be an American is not a formality in the naturalization process, it is essential to full participation in our democracy. My administration will examine the standard of knowledge in the current

> citizenship test. We must ensure that new citizens know not only the facts of our history, but the ideals that have shaped our history. Every citizen of America has an obligation to learn the values that make us one nation: liberty and civic responsibility, equality under God, and tolerance for others. (Office of the Press Secretary, 2004, ¶28)

Thus, the issue of adult learning and political adaptation will have to be revisited as immigration laws and the political context of immigration evolves.

Conclusion 2: Deterrents and Motivators Internal to the Learning Experience Influence Continued Participation in Learning Activities

If we accept the first conclusion that adult learning contributes to immigrant adaptation, then we also need to consider those factors which encourage or inhibit an immigrants' participation in adult learning activities. Researchers in the field of adult education have identified several categories of barriers or deterrents which can affect a person's participation in adult education activities. These include situational barriers related to the person's life circumstances (e.g., lack of transportation, irregular work schedule), dispositional barriers (e.g., low self-confidence or negative feelings toward school based on prior educational experiences), institutional barriers (e.g., high cost of classes, class location), and informational barriers (i.e., not knowing what learning opportunities are available) (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Silva et al., 1998).

Participation barriers or deterrents were not the original focus of this study. However, in discussing their adult learning experiences, the immigrants mentioned factors that encouraged or inhibited their participation in various activities. For instance, they described informational and situational barriers (e.g., lack of energy due to work responsibilities, lack of child care, and the distance of the educational program from their home). The immigrants also discussed several aspects of the teaching/learning transaction which influenced their decision to continue or desist from participating in their chosen learning activity. These factors consisted of the relevancy of the course content, level appropriate instruction, the quality of instruction, the opportunity to exercise some control over the learning experience, the relationships between students, and the teacher/student relationship.

Several models have been constructed in an attempt to predict an individual's participation in adult learning (usually formal adult education) activities (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Silva et al., 1998). Surprisingly, some of these models abruptly end with the individual making the decision to participate or not to participate in a certain learning activity. For example, Rubenson's Recruitment Model ends with motivational forces acting upon the individual as he/she decides whether to engage in adult education (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Silva et al., 1998). Henry and Basile's Decision Model also ends with the individual in decision mode (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Silva et al., 1998). Darkenwald and Merriam's Psychosocial Interaction Model terminates with an indication of whether there is a high, medium, or low probability of the individual's participation (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Silva et al., 1998). These models imply that the influences on participation are external to the learning activity. They may be useful for predicting the initial decision to participate, but they leave us hanging. We do not know if the individual did participate in the learning activity, and if so, did he/she *continue* to participate? Why or why not?

Cross's Chain of Response Model (Cross, 1981; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Silva et al., 1998) does include actual participation as a component. The model also recognizes that the participation influences the individual's self-evaluation and his/her attitudes about education.

However, we are still left wondering: what is happening inside that little box in the model labeled “Participation”?

To understand what happens once the student engages in a learning activity, we must turn to the literature on persistence and retention. This literature acknowledges that there are aspects internal to the teaching/learning transaction which influence the learners’ decision to persist or drop out. Some of these aspects are curriculum and materials, teaching methods, relationships with teachers and fellow students, and access to technology (Comings, Parrella, & Soricone, 1999; Quigley, 1997; Tracy-Mumford, 1994). Quigley (1997) categorizes the aspects above as institutional supports or barriers. Like Comings et al. (1999), I prefer to distinguish between supports or barriers in the learning setting that are external to the learning transaction (institutional barriers) and those that are internal to the learning transaction (instructional barriers).

Quigley (1997) notes that institutional/instructional barriers have not been given much weight in the participation literature. Most students and educators do not openly cite them as being reasons for student drop out. However, Quigley also shares his experiences conducting follow-up interviews with students who had left his ABE program. He writes, “It was obvious that I was hearing socially acceptable responses. I was often given what the dropouts were comfortable telling me, or the answers they thought I wanted to hear” (p. 167). Quigley acknowledges that institutional/instructional barriers may exist within our programs of which we, as educators, are unaware. He identifies institutional/instructional barriers as “a rich field for future research” (p. 174).

I propose that participation models should be expanded beyond the individual’s initial decision to participate and revised to include the aspects of the teaching/learning transaction that influence the individual's continued participation in the learning activity or retention in the educational program. Quigley (1997) suggests that participators (those who complete a program), nonparticipators (those who never engage in a program), and drop outs (those who begin a program but end up leaving it) should be studied separately. I agree that these three groups probably face different deterrents and motivators and in varying strengths. However, I believe one model should be developed that can explain why a person becomes a participator, a nonparticipator, or a dropout.

In Chapter Five I introduced the Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model. This name reflects my belief that to participate in an ongoing learning activity or not to participate is not a one-time decision. Learners encounter deterrents and supports on a daily basis and must continually reevaluate their participation decisions. As Comings et al. (1999) point out, adults "must make an active decision to participate in *each class session* [italics added] and often must overcome significant barriers in order to attend classes" (p. 13). Situational barriers can spring up at any time; self-confidence goes through highs and lows; the institution might enact some changes in its policies; or the teacher might experiment with some new classroom techniques. The individual has to review all of the deterrents and motivators which are manifested in his/her life and prior experience and ask him/herself, "Do I want or do I need to engage in this learning activity *today*? And am I able to do so?"

The Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model contributes to the adult education literature in four ways. First, it incorporates findings from both the participation literature and the persistence/attrition literature. Second, it can be applied to decisions to participate in either formal or informal learning activities. Third, it recognizes that participation decisions are made on a day-to-day basis. Fourth, it acknowledges that learners will experience the learning activity either positively or negatively and there are motivators and deterrents to participation which are internal to the teaching/learning transaction.

The participation of Mexican immigrants in formal and informal adult learning activities contributes to their adaptation to life in the United States. However, that contribution varies among the dimensions of adaptation. Adult learning plays the greatest role in the immigrants' economic adaptation. The role of adult learning in sociocultural adaptation may be limited to the development of the immigrant's survival skills and to increasing their mobility. Adult learning seems to have a negligible role in the political adaptation of immigrants, yet this may be related to the immigrants' legal status and the immigration laws that are in effect at any given point in history.

Barriers/deterrents to participation in adult learning activities were reviewed. The immigrants in this study experienced traditional kinds of barriers and discussed a new category of deterrents and supports, those which are internal to the teaching/learning transaction. Existing models of participation were critiqued because they do not explain continuing participation and they ignore this new category of deterrents. A new participation model, the Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model, was discussed.

Implications for Practice

The Hispanic population in Georgia has been rapidly growing. It was recently estimated that 102 Hispanics a day come to Georgia as immigrants from Latin America and as domestic migrants from other U.S. states (Bixler, 2003). Among the numbers of Hispanics are Mexican immigrants, a population characterized by low levels of education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). More and more Mexican immigrants are entering our communities, our companies, and our classrooms. There are several actions that can be taken to enhance their participation in adult learning activities, thus contributing to their sociocultural, economic, and political adaptation. What follows are recommendations for Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED, and ESL educators; human resource training managers; chambers of commerce and economic development agencies; and policy makers.

Adult Basic Education, GED, & ESL Educators

The immigrants in this study shared perspectives of their learning experiences that have practical implications for ABE, GED, and ESL educators. One area of interest is the types of barriers to participation in adult learning activities that the immigrants have encountered. For example, they described informational barriers to participation (e.g., not knowing about available English programs). This barrier could be overcome by promoting educational programs through the Spanish-language media. Spanish-language newspapers, radio programming, and television broadcasts do exist in Georgia. Furthermore, announcements can be made at churches serving the Latin American immigrant community. Because the population is concentrated in certain areas, it is possible to disseminate information on available programs door-to-door in predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods. However, the best marketing tool is probably word of mouth. Educational programs could start a campaign in which they ask current participants to “bring a friend or family member.”

Situational barriers to participation described by the participants included lack of child care and the distance of the educational program from their home. Child care issues could be resolved if the educational program offered child care at the class site. Another option could be to develop a family literacy program in which both parents and children participate. Establishing workplace programs might facilitate participation for those immigrants who live far away from classes that are held at schools or churches. However, it is important that participants not be penalized for attending classes during working hours.

In addition to informational and situational barriers, the immigrants discussed specific aspects of the teaching/learning transaction that influenced their decision to continue participating in their ESL or GED programs or to drop out. These aspects included course content, level appropriate instruction, the quality of instruction, the opportunity to exercise some control over the learning experience, relationships with their fellow students, and interactions with their teachers.

Course content. The immigrants expressed having survival language needs and were attracted to the survival skills content in their ESL tutoring sessions and ESL classes. Educators should continue offering these kinds of programs with input from the students on what their most pressing language needs are. Students' satisfaction "with the learning activity in terms of meeting their purpose for attending the program" has been found to be "the most powerful predictor of continued participation in adult programs" (Tracy-Mumford, 1994, p. 19).

Level-appropriate instruction. Students come to our programs with varying levels of English language proficiency. Marta and Tobías felt frustrated when they perceived their class to be too easy or too difficult for them. Receiving language instruction that is appropriate for the student's proficiency level can impact the student's satisfaction with and retention within the program (Brod, 1995; Gibson & Shutt, 2002). If the educational program consists of different levels, an evaluation process should be implemented to determine which level is the best match for the student. Some programs, however, are unable to offer multiple proficiency levels because there is a lack of space or a shortage of teachers. In these cases, teachers need to be trained in methods, like peer-teaching, that can be used in multilevel classes so that all students have the opportunity to participate and learn. Several resources have been developed for teachers working with multilevel groups. For example, Hess (2001) provides step-by-step instructions for 154 activities that can be used in large, multilevel language classes.

Quality of instruction. Marta critiqued the pedagogical skills of her ESL teachers. Tracy-Mumford (1994) has called quality instruction “the foundation of effective student retention” (p. 16). Instruction is shaped by the instructor’s level of training and experience. Unfortunately, adult education programs are often staffed by part-time or volunteer instructors with low levels of training and few opportunities for professional development (Crandall, 1994; Kutner, 1992). In fact, a survey of adult ESL instructors found that 90% work part-time and are paid on an hourly basis (Burt & Keenan, 1998). Similarly, a survey of ABE instructors found that only 44% were employed full-time, with “full-time” being defined as at least 25 hours a week (Smith, Hofer, & Gillespie, 2001). These statistics indicate the need for expanded professional development opportunities for adult educators. Kutner (1992) describes some of the formats that professional development opportunities might take and identifies the key elements required for professional development activities to be effective.

Student control over learning. Self-directed learning can be defined as either a process or a product of learning. As a process, the term may refer to learner control of instructional variables within a formal educational setting (Candy, 1991). When instructors allow students to direct their own learning experiences, their motivation to participate is enhanced, and they are more likely to complete the educational program. The participants in this study explained how they appreciated being able to tell their teachers what they wanted to learn. In this way, they were able to influence the content of their lessons and have their immediate needs met. Another way that learners may exercise self-direction is through setting learning goals and personal goals that they hope to achieve through participation in the educational program. When instructors work with learners to establish these goals and use them as the basis for instruction, program retention is also enhanced (Comings et al., 1999; Tracy-Mumford, 1994).

Student/student relationships. Both Marta and Arturo discussed their relationships with fellow students in their ESL classes. Positive student/student relationships can also be an important force for retention. In a study on persistence among 150 ABE students, 50.7% indicated that teachers (see below) and fellow students were a source of support for their continued participation. Comings et al. (1999) calls this “a form of relational support” that is “located in the classroom” (p. 63). Student relationships may be even more important to Mexican immigrant students because “group collaboration rather than individual competition is emphasized in Latino cultures” (Huerta-Macias, 2002, p. 70). Comings et al. (1999) also interviewed practitioners about the ways their programs support student persistence. The practitioners mentioned “building community” among the students in the classroom and employing managed enrollment systems, “where students are let into a class on an infrequent and planned basis” (p.67). This allows students to build relationships within a stable group.

Teacher/student interactions. The participants in this study described their interactions with their ESL and GED tutors and teachers. On a positive note, some of the immigrants felt respected by their tutor/teachers and able to comfortably discuss their learning needs with them. On the other hand, another participant suspected that his teacher was pressuring him to participate because she wanted to run him out of the class! This study and other research (Comings et al., 1999; Tracy-Mumford, 1994) show how key positive teacher/student interactions are to student retention. Huerta-Macías (2002) suggests ways educators can build positive relationships with Hispanic students:

> Some ways to demonstrate caring are to greet students by name, to inquire about their well-being and that of their family, to praise individual and group accomplishments in the class, and to take time to periodically confer individually with students regarding class progress and related issues. (p. 67-68)

I would like to conclude these recommendations for ABE/GED/ESL educators on a personal note. I am an ESL educator, and I administer an adult ESL program with over 200 Latin American immigrant students. Three of the participants in this study were either current or former students of the program I administer. As adult educators, we are expected to know our student population and to conduct needs analyses (Sork & Caffarella, 1989). What better way to do this than to talk with a current or former student for four and a half hours and to review all aspects of their lives! The information that I gained by conducting this study prompted me to make immediate changes in our program curricula, activities, and intake process. For example, when I heard Arturo describe his confusion upon first arrival because he did not know how to use coins to pay for merchandise, I elaborated the theme of “money” in our Basic I curriculum to include more detailed treatment of coins. The teacher who implemented the lesson based on that theme commented to me afterwards that she was surprised how many students had trouble manipulating the coins. Arturo’s story helped us to identify a real and immediate learning need. When I began to realize what little contact the Mexican immigrant participants have with Americans, I arranged for a group of Americans who are studying Spanish to visit our Intermediate I class to act as conversation partners for an evening. The immigrant students participating in the class wrote an evaluation of the activity afterwards. Aside from describing their enjoyment of the interaction, several of them expressed pride to see that American people were trying to learn their language. Finally, I heard the learners’ complaints that the ESL classes they had participated in were often too easy or difficult for them. As we started the Spring 2004 semester, I made a point to explain to our new students during the intake process that they are able to change their class if they believe they have been placed in the wrong level. They do not have to stay in a class that does not meet their needs. I hope that by making students aware that they have this power we can improve our program's retention rates. I highly recommend that educators make the effort to become more knowledgeable about their students' past and present lives through extended conversations or interviews with them.

Human Resource Training Managers

This study demonstrated the importance of workplace learning in the adaptation processes of Mexican immigrants. These immigrants often work in agriculture, construction, and manufacturing, low-skilled occupations which typically offer few formal training opportunities (Capps et al., 2003). Moreover, if training opportunities are available, immigrants may be excluded from participating in them because of their low English proficiency (VandenHeuvel & Wooden, 1997).

Mexican immigrants come to the U.S. to work, and therefore, are eager to learn job skills if learning these skills will enhance their economic condition. Training managers need to tap into the potential of this worker population and provide more training opportunities for them. Huerta-Macías (2002) provides models of bilingual workplace education programs which have allowed Hispanic workers to simultaneously improve their language proficiency, obtain the GED, and acquire job-related skills. The programs are established through the collaboration of companies, government agencies, and educators.

Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Agencies

Having one's own business is a prevalent goal among Mexican immigrants. In her ethnographic study of ten Mexican immigrant families in Texas, Valdés (1996) found that all of the adult participants valued entrepreneurship:

> The view that having *"un negocito,"* a business of one's own, was the key to real success was very much present in the thinking of all the adults. . . . Not surprisingly, the real dream for all of them was becoming *comerciantes*, becoming part of the group that did not work for anyone else. Becoming one's own boss was, in fact, the real essence of the dream. (p. 179)

The participants in the present study also valued owning one's own business. Arturo ran a formal business establishment, while others operated informal businesses. For example, Fermín ran a landscaping service on the side. Marta and Fermín's wife sometimes cooked and sold Mexican food. The others held aspirations of opening their own business, if not in the U.S., then once they return to Mexico. Guisela talked about her dream to open a store while Tobías discussed his goal to establish a mechanic shop.

The economic adaptation of Mexican immigrants would be facilitated if there were more Spanish-language opportunities for them to learn about the requirements and demands of small-business ownership in the United States. In Atlanta, the Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce has established the Hispanic American Center for Economic Development. The objective of this organization is "to advance the formation and growth of Hispanic businesses in the state of Georgia" (Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, 2004, ¶1). It strives to achieve this goal by offering bilingual and bicultural educational programs for those who wish to open their own businesses. Programs cover such topics as writing a business plan, marketing, and accounting. The Center also acts as a business incubator (Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, 2004). In Athens, both the Small Business Development Center and the Athens Chamber of Commerce are reaching out to new entrepreneurs in the Hispanic community (Lee, 2004).

Of the five participants, Arturo was the only one who had participated in small-business development seminars. Given the high interest among Mexican immigrants in business ownership, more small-business development programs like the ones above need to be offered to take advantage of the entrepreneurial tendencies of this population. Furthermore, these programs should be offered in areas that are accessible to immigrant communities. Holding seminars in locations such as the Chamber of Commerce may be intimating to immigrants, thus inhibiting their participation. Greater accessibility to the Mexican immigrant community can be achieved if these programs are offered in places like community centers, in conjunction with ESL classes, or in affiliation with Spanish-speaking churches.

Policy makers

The U.S. government allots funds to support ESL and civics programs for immigrants; $70 million was budgeted for these programs in 2002 (Tolbert, 2001). However, demands for such programs far outstrip their supply. Tens of thousands of people are on waiting lists to access ESL programs (National Center for ESL Literacy Education, 1997). Much higher levels of funding are required.

Learning English is not the only learning need that immigrants have. Many wish to increase their educational level and obtain a GED as well as to develop job-related skills. Huerta-Macías (2002) calls programs which incorporate language instruction, academic preparation, and job training “workforce education programs.” As mentioned above, they are created in a collaboration between educators, business, and government. Huerta-Macías describes how these kinds of programs have been successful with Hispanics in Texas. Other states need to investigate establishing workforce education programs for Mexican immigrants.

To summarize, there are many actions that educators, trainers, the business community, and government can take individually and in collaboration with other entities to increase the number of learning opportunities that are available to Mexican immigrants and to enhance their participation in such opportunities.

Areas for Further Research

Based on what I have learned from this research experience, I would like to make the following recommendations for further research. First, the study could be replicated using different sampling criteria. The current sample included a mix of undocumented workers, legal residents, and U.S. citizens. The research questions could be further illuminated by exploring more in-depth the experiences of these subgroups. For example, the study could be repeated with a sample that consists of only undocumented workers or only U.S. citizens. Moreover, this study found that the impact of learning on sociocultural adaptation was limited to the development of everyday survival skills and an increase in mobility. The participants in the sample lived with other Mexicans. It would be fruitful to replicate this study with a sample of Mexicans who are married to or who live with Americans. This would generate more information on learning and sociocultural adaptation.

In the life history method, participants reconstruct their past through telling their life stories. A study that uses methods which capture life as it is experienced in the moment may yield different findings. Therefore, I suggest that the research questions from this study be explored using methods such as diary studies or ethnographic fieldwork which would allow the researcher to document the experiences of a recently arrived immigrant over a three to five year time period.

This study has looked at the range of formal and informal learning activities that Mexican immigrants have participated in since coming to the United States. Further lines of research could be opened by exploring more in-depth the participation of Mexican immigrants in particular activities, such as GED programs and small business seminars. For example, Tyler (2003) has noted that numerous studies have examined the economic impact of obtaining a GED, yet few studies have looked at non-economic impacts. Studying for the GED involves improving one's English skills and learning about American history. One area of possible investigation is the ways in which preparing for and taking the GED exam contribute to an immigrant's sociocultural and political adaptation.

The bulk of the research on the political adaptation of immigrants centers on explaining naturalization tendencies or voting participation among different immigrant populations. This field of research is dominated by quantitative studies (Aguirre, 2002; González Baker & Espitia, 2000; Liang, 1994; Michelson & Pallares, 2001; Portes & Curtis, 1987; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001; Tam Cho, 1999; Yang, 1994). Very little is known about the individual learning that immigrants experience during the naturalization process. Alvarez (1987) interviewed 38 recently naturalized Hispanics about their naturalization experiences. Although some of his participants mention taking ESL or citizenship classes and/or engaging in self-study to prepare for the exam, adult learning was not the focus of his study. While the present study did specifically look at the learning involved in naturalization, only one of the participants (Fermín) had actually experienced the process. Hence, more research is needed in this area.

Finally, the Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model was inspired by the data in this study. Other scholars could test this model. Surveys could attempt to operationalize the factors internal to the teaching/learning transaction which influence a person's continued participation. However, I would recommend approaching the testing of this model from a qualitative perspective. A set of individuals could be followed over a period of time, and their participation decisions could be mapped onto the model, allowing for the discovery of gaps or extensions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter concludes this study which explored the role of formal and informal adult learning in the adaptation processes of Mexican immigrants in the state of Georgia. The section on Conclusions and Discussion elaborated two conclusions drawn from the findings in Chapters Four and Five. These conclusions were: (1) The contribution of formal and informal learning to the adaptation of Mexican immigrants varies along sociocultural, economic, and political dimensions, and (2) Deterrents and motivators internal to the learning experience influence continued participation in learning activities. The Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model was discussed.

The Implications for Practice section of this chapter offers suggestions for ABE, GED, and ESL educators; human resource training managers; chambers of commerce and economic development agencies; and policy makers for working with the Mexican immigrant population.

Recommendations for future research include replicating the study with groups of Mexican immigrants with homogeneous legal status and with immigrants who reside with Americans. The same research questions could be explored using different research methods which allow for collecting longitudinal data. Other studies could be conducted which focus on immigrants' participation in a specific learning activity. Also, the connection between learning and political adaptation needs to be more thoroughly explored because the current study offered limited data. The Continual Decision Adult Learning Participation Model could be tested using quantitative or qualitative methods.

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APPENDIX

LIFE STORY INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview I (Life in Mexico)

1. We are going to start with your life in Mexico. Can you describe for me how the place where you grew up was?
   (Vamos a comenzar con su vida en México. ¿Puede describirme como era el lugar donde se crió?)

2. Tell me about your family during that time
   (Cuénteme de su familia durante aquel tiempo.)
   - What did your father/your mother work in?
     (¿En qué trabajó su papá/su mamá?)
   - How many years of education did your parents have?
     (¿Cuántos años de estudios realizaron sus papas?)

3. Describe the school that you attended.
   (Describa la escuela a la que asistió.)

4. Tell me about a school experience that stands out in your memory.
   (Cuénteme de una experiencia escolar que se destaca en su memoria.)

5. Tell me about the jobs you had in Mexico.
   (Cuénteme de los trabajos que tuvo en México.)

6. Tell me about your decision to come to the United States.
   (Cuénteme de su decisión de venir a los EEUU.)
   - When did you decide?
     (¿Cuándo lo decidió?)
   - What information did you have about life in the United States?
     (¿Qué información tuvo acerca de la vida en los EEUU?)
   - How did you obtain such information?
     (¿Cómo obtuvo tal información?)
   - Why did you make the decision to come?
     (¿Por qué tomó la decisión de venir?)
   - Who did you come with?
     (¿Con quién vino?)
   - How did you arrive?
     (¿Cómo llegaron?)

Interview II (Life in the United States)

1. You told me in the previous interview that when you came to the United States, you arrived in [Location A]. Tell me about your life in [Location A].
(*Me dijo en la entrevista anterior que cuando vino a los EEUU, llegó en [Lugar A]).*
Cuénteme de su vida en [Lugar A].)

    Tell me about the community where you lived.
    (Cuénteme de la comunidad donde vivía.)
    Tell me about your job
    (Cuénteme de su trabajo.)
    Who were the important people in your life at that time? Tell me about them.
    (*¿Quienes fueron las personas más importantes en su vida durante aquel tiempo? Cuénteme de ellos.)*
    Did you participate in any classes while you lived there? Tell me about them.
    (*¿Participó en algunas clases mientras vivía allá? Cuénteme de ellas.)*
    How did you spend your free time?
    (*¿Cómo pasó su tiempo libre?)*
    Is there an experience from that time in your life that stands out in your memory? Tell me about that.
    (*¿Hay una experiencia de aquel tiempo en su vida que se destaca en su memoria? Cuéntemela.)*
    How long did you live there?
    (¿Cuánto tiempo vivió allá?)

2. Tell me about your decision to move to [Location B].
(Cuénteme de su decisión de trasladarse a [Lugar B].)

Repeat questions from Interview II-1 above. Continue cycling through questions 1 and 2 until the narrative reaches the present time.

Interview III-Reflection

1. (When applicable) Tell me about your decision to . . . [e.g., buy a home, seek U.S. citizenship].
   (*Cuénteme de su decisión de . . . [comprar una casa, solicitar la ciudadanía estadounidense].)*

2. How is your life now the same as in Mexico? How is your life now different than in Mexico?
   (*¿Cúan semajante es su vida actual a la vida que vivía en México? ¿Cómo es de diferente su vida actual con respeto de su vida en México?)*

3. Describe a significant learning experience that you have had here in the United States.
   (Describa una experiencia de aprendizaje significativa que ha vivido aquí en los EEUU.)

4. In the ___ years that you have lived here in the United States, how have you changed?
   (*En los ___ años que ha vivido aquí en los EEUU, ¿cómo ha cambiado su manera de ser?)*

5. What are you most proud of in your life?
   (*¿De qué está más orgulloso/a en la vida?)*

6. What are your plans for the future?
   (¿Cuáles son sus planes para el futuro?)

7. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?)
   (¿Hay otra cosa que quisiera compartir conmigo?)