

The Difficulties of Adaptation on Migrant Youth

*A study relating the perceptions of children in Peribán de Ramos,
Michoacán, Mexico and Adams County, Pennsylvania*



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Focus Statement

When asked to compose a response about the hardship of being an immigrant youth, a dear friend of mine who came to America from Eastern Europe ten years ago wrote:

Why is it so hard? Because you face people's ignorance of other cultures and their subsequent belief in their superiority based on the fact that they fit into a society that when you are young values sameness and conformity. Because as the years go by you begin to fear that you will never become part of your new surroundings since you will always be a foreigner, while simultaneously you realize that you are slowly but painfully losing the sense of belonging to your native country. And finally, it is difficult because the ache of having to have once abandoned an entire life marked by stability and security for one composed of uncertainty never truly leaves you; even as you try to suppress the memories that never surrender to your pleadings and the question that never disappears, Would I have had a better life or become a better person if I had never left?¹

It is evident through this powerful narrative that the experience of being a young immigrant or migrant is one full of pain, hardship, and instability. Every story of young people who have had no choice but to leave their home and start an entirely new life in a foreign and ambiguous country is different. Those of us who have not had to endure such compelling experiences will never be able to empathize with the immigrant and migrant youth of the world. However, by talking to them personally, we can give them a voice and begin to understand what the process of adaptation is like.

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The 2003 Dickinson College American Mosaic was a program which studied the relationship between Adams County, Pennsylvania, USA and Peribán de Ramos, Michoacán, Mexico. I spent the semester researching the impact migration has on youth.

I observed programs which aid Mexican migrants with the adaptation process for a few weeks in Adams County. However, I spent most of the time in Peribán where I met and interviewed a number of migrant youth who contributed what their perceptions are of adaptation and acculturation.

In this paper, I explore two stresses of adaptation on children: familial pressure to preserve one's heritage as well as the societal and educational pressure to conform to one's surrounding. I distinguish what scholars say about child adaptation; describe the methods used to conduct my research; post the findings I came across; and conclude by trying to find meaning behind the data collected. If it is possible to pinpoint some of the problems regarding adaptation, we may then be able to find ways which can make the process easier on the world's migrant and immigrant youth.

Literature Review

The Difficulties of Adaptation for Migrant Youth

Mexican migration and immigration to the United States increases at a fast pace. In 1960, Mexican-born people comprised 1 percent of the population. By 1996, however, there were 18 million native Mexicans residing in the US for a total of 6.7 percent². With Latinos comprising 12.5 percent to the US population, they are the fastest growing minority group in the US. However, the lowest public opinion ratings of any other immigrant group in the US are of Mexicans³. With this negative sentiment comes discriminatory and unruly acts against Mexicans in America.

Children of Mexican migrants experience a great deal of pain and hardship upon arriving to the US. They are placed into schools, which many times neglect to recognize their cultural heritage, and they struggle with cultural barriers such as learning a new

language. There is an effort to create a more comfortable adaptive learning environment for immigrant and migrant youth. Nonetheless, it is still difficult for a child to psychologically cope while trying to adapt to a new cultural surrounding.

Migration can be difficult for children who accompany their families on the strenuous, and often times, dangerous journey to the United States. Growing up, a child deals with wanting to be accepted by his or her peers, and trying to form an identity for him or herself. Being a migrant child places more strain on this process and can be emotionally harmful while one is trying to balance the ambiguities of childhood with the assimilation into a new culture. One's heritage may be something a child is willing to give up at a young age, if it means being accepted into American society. This cultural loss may have a psychological effect on migrant youth. No child should have to give up a part of him or herself to appease a dominant society.

Being uprooted from the only life one has ever known- and leaving culture, friends, and often family can be emotionally confusing and draining on a child who does not yet comprehend the economic and stabilizing logic behind migration. Once placed in a new atmosphere, author Lilian Rubin explains factors which can impact a migrant or immigrant child psychologically: "language inadequacies, a general unfamiliarity with the customs and expectations of the new country, limited economic opportunities, poor housing conditions, discrimination, and what psychologists term the 'stresses of acculturation'..."⁴ This stress can impact a child in many different ways, and while it may effect some more than others- having to worry about such intense matters at a young age plays a role on a child's perception of life. In an article for the *International Migration Review*, Michael Aronowitz mentions that the psychological effects for

children of migrant and immigrants can be “anxiety, aggression, inability to tolerate frustration, low self-esteem, dependency and poor relations with peers.”⁵ Children may begin displaying some of these characteristics once faced with the many different pressures placed on them.

The first stress of youth migration to be discussed lies within the migrant family structure once arriving to a new country. The way in which youth cope with adaptation may often times depend on how their family copes. In her ethnographic study about the relationship between ethnic families and education, Guadalupe Valdés discusses the difficulty for immigrant parents once moving to the US. She says “...it did not occur to them [immigrant parents] that values involving, for example, the way in which children were raised would need to be questioned. They fully expected that their children would grow up with the same notions of reciprocity, respect, and responsibility that had been part of their families for generations.”⁶ Once parents realize that their personal values may not be stressed through their new society they make sure to preserve their cultural customs in the home.

Conflict arises when parents hope for their child to maintain the family’s cultural identity contradicts with the pressures society places on youth assimilation. Mexicans who have not traveled to the US can be seen wearing clothing with American sports teams, symbols and phrases on them. If the American image is that potent among native-Mexicans, the urge to immerse oneself in US culture may be more potent for children who have migrated to America. Scholar Min Zhou explains that these youth sometimes feel that their parents restrict their chances to become an ‘American’⁷.

Once having looked at familial stress on migrant youth, it is important to understand the conflicting societal pressures which may conflict with it. A child's social environment is generally dominated by the time he or she spends in school. Thus, many of these societal pressures come from the educational system. When children come to a new country not knowing the language or various cultural customs, the formal education they receive will undoubtedly be one of the key elements in determining how they are able to cope with the acculturation process. Because educational practices differ from state to state (and country to country), the way migrant youth are treated in school varies. When trying to provide a comfortable educational atmosphere for migrant students, there are still many flaws to the system.

One flaw is when a child attends school system where his or her culture is not considered the norm. Author Angela Valenzuela describes, "In a school context that privileges a North American or English-speaking identity over a Mexican or Spanish-speaking one, there is strong pressure to assimilate subtractively... Thus, immigrant youth necessarily emulate a marginal peer group culture when fulfilling their desire to fit in."⁸ The educational system's way to deal with the language and cultural barriers is to stress assimilation upon young migrants. If students' cultural background and heritage are not considered in the classroom, they are generally encouraged to replace their primary culture with the American value system. Scholar MM Gordon estimates that "ethnic minorities would eventually lose all their distinctive characteristics and cease to exist as ethnic groups as they pass through the stages of assimilation, eventually intermarrying with the majority population and entering its institutions on a primary-group level"⁹. The complete assimilation that Gordon predicts may allow migrant youth to be accepted by

American society. However, pressured assimilation and lack of cultural support may lead to some of the psychological problems already discussed in this paper. It could also be a reason as to why Latino children score poorly on standardized tests, and have a high dropout rate in US schools*.

How the US Attempts to Make Adaptation Easier for Migrant Youth

Students who come to the US without prior knowledge of speaking English are referred to as limited English proficient (LEP). During the 1993-1994 school year there were 2,121,281 LEP students enrolled in US public schools.¹⁰ In proportion to the increase of US immigration and migration the number of LEP students continues to rise throughout the nation. This increase calls for the US educational system to provide methods of aiding migrant youth who need to learn English and adapt to US culture. Students who are in need of language acquisition in the classroom are called English language learners (ELL).

For over thirty years, one common educational technique used to aid LEP students in the US is called native language acquisition (L1), or bilingual education. Author Eugene E. Garicía describes this process as “acquisition of children who are acquiring more than one language, simultaneously, during early childhood.”¹¹ This method of learning English in the classroom began when President Lyndon Johnson implemented it in 1968, and is said to be an effective form of language acquisition in the US. Researcher, Ruth Persky discusses the age appropriation for being bilingual:

During this ‘bilingual period’ (from age 6 to 11 approximately) the child learns a language without

* The US has a 4.8 percent Hispanic dropout rate. With 30,396 Hispanic students enrolled in Pennsylvania in the 2000-2001 school year, there was an 8.9 percent drop out rate in the state [“Status and Trends in the Education of Hispanics” National Center for Education Statistics, 2003-008; 8. US Department of Education. <<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003008.pdf>>]

resistance, without self-consciousness, without analyzing it, without comparing it with his mother tongue, and without the mental shock of discovering that the new language does not express ideas in the same manner as his native tongue. After the age of 12, this bilingual gift gradually disappears. The learning process then becomes complicated by reasoning and the demand of the adolescent mind for logic and rules to guide¹²

According to Persky's data, bilingualism can be an effective teaching mechanism. In order for bilingual education to be successful, it is necessary to implement it among children of the correct age group.

Though bilingual education seems to be efficient in teaching English to young LEP children, it is possible that it is slowly being phased out as a language acquisition program in the US. One flaw it has is that it is sometimes difficult to use this method of acquisition because it requires teachers who are fluent in both Spanish and English. In 1998, Proposition 227 was passed in California, negating the use of bilingualism in the classroom. This move is slowly affecting other states such as Arizona, Colorado, and Massachusetts.¹³ It is undeterminable as to whether or not California's actions will have an impact on the entire nation.

A second method of language acquisition is referred to as second language learning (L2). The primary method which stems from second language learning is English as a Second Language (ESL). The National Center for Educational Statistics 2001 Staff Data Handbook explains that ESL is:

A program of instruction and services in which students identified as limited English proficient are placed in regular immersion instruction for most of the school day but receive extra instruction in English for part of the day. This extra help is based on a special curriculum designed to teach English as a second language and to develop the student's ability to use the English language in an academic

setting. The non-English home language may or may not be used in conjunction with ESL instruction.¹⁴

The ESL program works on a “pull out” system. If a teacher decides that a student needs to be at a higher level of English proficiency, the child is placed in an ESL program. In 1974, the Equal Educational Opportunity Act was established providing that: “No state shall deny equal educational opportunity to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin, by . . . the failure by an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs.”¹⁵ While programs such as ESL are mandatory in the US, there are many factors which contribute to whether or not the program is efficient or helpful to migrant students.

Eugene García proposes that “...effective second language learning is best accomplished under conditions which simulate natural communicative interactions and minimize the formal instruction of linguistic structures, eg. memorization drills, learning grammatical rules, etc.”¹⁶ One place this more liberal method of teaching English to immigrant and migrant youth can be found is through federally funded after school programs. One of the aims of these programs is to make the coping process for immigrant and migrant youth a less difficult experience, but also to provide an enjoyable environment for students. In the 1980’s intervention programs such as the Immigrant Resources Project and Multicultural Home/School Liaison Project were formed with the intention of making transitions easier for migrant and immigrant children. In 2001, President George W. Bush passed the “No Child Left Behind Act”, which provides more monetary funding to create better programs and methods to allow all children the opportunity to receive an equal education.

What Scholars Think Can Further be done to Make Adaptation Easier

Bilingual education, ESL, and after school programs are ways which the US is trying to make the processes of coping for immigrant or migrant children easier. However, not all of these methods are necessarily implemented correctly based on a number of factors. Thus, the next step is to look at ways in which scholars propose more action should be taken to aid migrant youth. Three of the categories discussed thus far (cultural family pressure on a child; the neglect of a child's culture in the classroom; and after school enrichment programs for immigrant youth) are ones which scholars claim need improvement.

First, regarding familial pressure, it is possible that programs could be set up to make immigrant and migrant parents aware of the difficulties of adaptation for their children. In this case, parents would understand that psychological distress is a result of familial pressure to keep one's cultural heritage. Persuading parents to teach their children to forget about family culture is not the objective. Guadalupe Valdés stresses that "...if family intervention programs are implemented with Mexican-origin families, they must be based on an understanding and appreciation and respect of the internal dynamic for these families and for the legitimacy of their values and beliefs."¹⁷ Valdés explains that in order to make the generational gaps smaller between parents and their children, programs must deal with the situation in a sensitive manner. As long as parents are able to understand the process of adaptation for their children, they may be able to implement less stressful ways of keeping the family's heritage.

The reason why familial pressure can be so hard on a child is because of the conflicting ideals he or she is taught in school. One way to aid children in the adaptation

process is to incorporate aspects of their culture into educational curriculum. This way the child is not forced to feel that adoption of American culture is the only way to fit in. Furthermore, this would help ease the potent contrast between American cultural values taught in school, and ethnic cultural values taught at home. In her book *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child*, Cristina Igoa explains her experience working with immigrant children. Realizing the issue of clashing cultures she discusses some methods she used to make the contrasts less intense. Igoa describes one technique she used: “Once I had completed the dialogue with each student and had read up on each child’s cultural heritage, we prepared for a celebration. We set a day for the students to bring their native food, music, and costumes, and we invited those who had learned cultural dances to add to the festivities meant to honor cultural differences.”¹⁸ Igoa’s technique is just what American schools need to implement, in order to make adaptation for immigrant and migrant youth easier.

One last potential method for improvement is to create more stable enrichment programs for struggling immigrant and migrant youth. Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco declare “Many major immigrant groups to the United States- including Eastern Europeans, Chinese, and Japanese-eventually organized their own after-school language programs. These programs were developed to teach the children of immigrants in their own languages about their cultures and national origins.”¹⁹ These programs are beneficial to youth who are adapting because they provide an outlet, which lets children spend time in a comfortable setting. Here they can be taught effective methods of how to adapt, without feeling certain pressures from school, family or peers. In order for enrichment programs to work there needs to be a substantial group of youth who can be

helped as well as a way to secure a place for organizations in the federal budget, or to find reliable monetary funding.

Methodology

For my study it was important to obtain both quantitative and qualitative research regarding migrant youth and adaptation. The first step was to understand migration in context and to learn about different methods of research and data collection. The Mosaic class used many scholarly sources to grasp the key themes and context of Mexican migration.

The next step was to interview informants who had stories which pertained to my study. Both formal and informal interviews were conducted. Informal interviews were general conversations had with informants, while formal ones consisted of using audio or video equipment to record what was said. It was important in both Adams County and Peribán to keep detailed field journals that described places visited, people encountered and the content of informal conversations had.

Once the formal interviews were conducted they were transcribed and filed. It is then that all of the data accumulated (both quantitative and qualitative) can be organized in such a way which presents findings and discusses what all of the data means to the broader picture of migration.

Early Participant Observations: Adams County, Pennsylvania

Adams County, Pennsylvania has one of the largest numbers of Mexican migrant workers in the state²⁰, and is the number one apple producer in Pennsylvania. Thus it attracts agricultural migrant workers who travel back and forth, (or eventually settle down) from countries such as Mexico. Puerto Rican and Cuban workers are the most

prominent majority after Mexicans²¹. The 1990 census indicates that the majority of workers who migrate to the U.S. are single males between the ages of 10 and 35.

With a total population of 91,292 in the year 2000, the number of Hispanic residents in Adams County was 3,323²². The population increase of Hispanic residents in the county from 1990 to 2000 was 173.3 percent²³. Even with this large population influx, Latinos are still considered a minority in the county. According to Generation Diez director, Carmen Medina, who works in Pennsylvania, the number is still increasing. She reveals that in 2003, there are roughly 4000 registered Latinos in the county, and 10,000 as a whole (including illegal migrants)²⁴.

My first observations in Adams County were spent visiting organizations which are focused on aiding migrants. The three most pertinent organizations to my project were Rural Opportunities Incorporated (ROI), Generation Diez and Human Services. ROI provides various migrant aid such as helping workers with health care; food and housing services; a bilingual education program for children; and sometimes even getting legal status for migrants. Generation Diez offers outside services for migrant parents and families, but its primary function is to aid migrant and immigrant youth who have not yet fully acculturated into American society. Human Services helps teens and older migrants receive their GED and provides ESL programs. During our visits each program director provided us with statistics about the migrant population in Adams County as well as information about their organization.

The time that I spent with youth in Adams County was outside of the classroom, so my knowledge of the Pennsylvania education system is not very extensive. I did find out that during the 2001-2002 school year, 38,288 students in Pennsylvania were limited

English proficient students²⁵. I looked at interviews conducted with Marcia Kile, Judith Leslie, and Sarah Smith[†], three ESL teachers in Adams County to get a better idea of language acquisition programs in Pennsylvania.

I spent a few sessions helping with a fifth grade Generation Diez after school program. Though the students' parents in this particular class were not agricultural migrant workers, most of the youth were from Mexico and have had to come to the US and adapt to a new culture.

Unfortunately, I only had three or four sessions to interact with the Generation Deiz students. While there: I helped children with their homework; observed how the program aids migrant youth; and informally asked some of the students about life in Mexico. Branching off from these informal sessions, I interviewed two of the students (Claudia and Irvin) in a formal setting.

Two primary experiences which sparked my interest of migrant youth, were conversations I had with two Mexican-American teens at the home of Martín Gallegos (one of the 1998 Mosaic informants). The two students I met were Martín's oldest daughter Erika (a high school sophomore) and Pedro (a high school senior). Both teens live and attend school in York Springs, a small community (about 570 residents) in Adams County. Pedro discussed his perceptions of being an immigrant youth, and the difficult process of adapting to American culture. With a small group, I conducted a formal interview with Erika after our first informal meeting. She discussed life in the US as a Mexican-American youth.

Participant Observations in Peribán

[†] Not teacher's real name.

Peribán de Ramos, Michoacán, Mexico is a small town (population of about 11,000), and at first glance it is difficult to distinguish the relationship it has with Adams County, Pennsylvania. As it turns out, Mexican-American migratory flow is the common link between the two places. Like Adams County, Peribán is well known for its rich agricultural resources. It is one of the three largest avocado producers in Mexico²⁶. Though the town's economic status is relatively secure based on its agricultural fortunes, there are still a number of men and women who are in search of a better life, and more stability. Migrants take their chances in the US in order to establish economic security for themselves and their families each year.

Upon arriving to Peribán, I was introduced to a place full of culture, colors, and vitality. Our group stayed in a hotel about a block away from the central town plaza. It was in the plaza that I first met some of my informants; spent a good amount of time getting a feel for Peribán; and socialized with the townspeople. Depending on the time of day, different groups migrate to the plaza as a social ritual. From my daily observations a gathering of old men sat on the painted white benches, playfully bickering with one another while they seemingly enjoy life in their quaint town. In the afternoon it was common to see groups of school children (segregated by age) in full uniform laughing and chatting with ice cream cones in hand, from one of the four plaza *paletarias*[†]. These were some of my first observations regarding youth in Peribán.

In order to gather qualitative research in the Mexican town, I worked with a small research team. We each focused on a different aspect of youth culture, and tried to get a broad view of the topic. Our informants were within the ages of 10 and 15 years old. Miguel Nepita, Abraham Mejia, Jorge, and Irvin Urbina were the four were boys in my

[†] Ice cream shop.

study, and Anabel Andrade, Sylvia Esperanza, Erika Gallegos, Myra Mejia, Claudia Zepeda, and Carmen and Lizeth Rivera were the seven were girls. Three of the interviews (Erika, Claudia, and Irvin) were conducted in Adams County, while the rest were done in Peribán.

Table 1. List of Informants

<p><i>Irvin Urbina</i> 10 years old Interview conducted in Adams County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends elementary school in Gettysburg, PA • Born in Toluca, Mexico • Moved to Adams County when he was four years ago • Participates in a Generation Diez after school program • Speaks both Spanish and English
<p><i>Claudia Zepeda</i> 10 years old Interview conducted in Adams County.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends school in Gettysburg, PA. • Born in Jalisco, Mexico • Moved to Adams County when she was two years old • Participates in a Generation Diez program • Speaks both Spanish and English
<p><i>Lizeth Marie Rivera</i> 10 years old Interview conducted in Peribán</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not yet attend school in Mexico • Born in San Bernardino, CA • Moved Peribán in the Summer of 2003 with her father and older sister • Speaks English
<p><i>Carmen Christine Aguilar Rivera</i> 10 years old Interview conducted in Peribán</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends school at the Secundaria in Peribán • Born in Los Angeles, CA • Moved to Peribán in Spring 2003 with father and sister (Lizeth) • Speaks English (is learning Spanish)
<p><i>Abraham Naranja Mejia</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends the Secundaria in Peribán. • Born in Peribán • Moved to Hayward, CA when he

<p>10 years old Interview conducted in Peribán</p>	<p>was seven years old</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Came back to Peribán in the Winter 2003 • Speaks Spanish and English
<p><i>Erika Grace Gallegos Avalos</i> 10 years old Interview conducted in Adams County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school freshman in Adams County • Born in Adams County • Lived in Perinán for one year • Speaks Spanish and English
<p><i>Sylvia Maria Espinoza</i> 15 years old Interview conducted in Peribán</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends the Secundaria in Peribán. • Born in Plainfield, New Jersey • Moved to Peribán when she was nine • Speaks Spanish and broken English (before coming to Mexico- was fluent in English)
<p><i>Miguel Angel Zarate Nepita</i> 15 years old Interview conducted in Peribán</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends school at the Secundaria in Peribán • Born in Los Reye, Mich, Mexico • Moved to CA when he was 7 months old • Came back to Peribán when in elementary school • Moved to Pennsylvania shortly after coming back to Peribán • Came back to Peribán again at age 15 (Spring 2003) • Speaks Spanish and English
<p><i>Jorge Nicolas Barajas</i> 15 years old Interview conducted in Peribán</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends school at the Secundaria in Peribán • Born in Peribán • Moved to Provo, Utah when he was nine • Came back to Peribán when he was fourteen • Speaks Spanish and English
<p><i>Erika Fernandez Magana</i> 15 years old Interview conducted in Peribán</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends school at the Prepa in Peribán • Born in Peribán • Moved to Texas when she was seven

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Came back to Peribán when she was twelve • Speaks Spanish and English
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Anabel Andrade Espinoza</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">15 years old</p> <p>Interview conducted in Los Reyes, Mich, Mexico (25 mins outside of Peribán)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends school at the Prepa in Peribán • Born in Los Reyes, Mich, Mexico • Moved to Houston, Texas when she was eight • Came back to Los Reyes when she was eleven • Speaks Spanish and English

While each informant was useful to my study, I focus mainly on the stories of Miguel Nepita, Anabel Andrade, Erika Gallegos, and Carmen Rivera.

I met Miguel through a friend of Martín Gallegos, and Carmen and Lizeth by spending time in the plaza. I conducted both informal and formal interviews with all three children.

In addition to meeting informants on our own, the next step was go to local schools and meet youth there. Though our group spent much time at the Prepa and Secundaria, we did not sit in on classes, talk to many teachers, or gather information on the school system. I spent a lot of time with youth outside of the classroom in Peribán. Thus, the knowledge I acquired about the Mexican educational system is based on what my informants told me, and secondary research. I also found out through the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) describes that the Mexican education structure begins with the Basic level. A child has the opportunity to begin school at age three, and is required by law to stay within the educational system until they are 15-years-old.²⁷ The levels of this pre- collegiate schooling are: Pre-Primary (respectively pre school and kindergarten), Primary (1st- 5th grade), Secondary (6th-9th grade) and Preparatory (10th –12th grade). The

corresponding US educational structure consists of Preschool/ Kindergarten (3-5), Elementary School (6-12), Middle School (12-14), and High School (14-18).

We set up a meeting to convene with the directors of the Fundadores de Peribán Preparatoria (a public high school, which is referred to as the Prepa) and the Cinco de Febrero Secundaria (a public middle school). Each director set up a meeting for our small research team to be introduced to the students who had at one point lived in the US. At both schools we met with a group of migrant youth (about eight from the Prepa and twelve from the Secundaria), and informally discussed their transnational experiences. We assembled with each group about two or three times, and showed the students video footage of the interviews we had conducted at Generation Diez. Additionally, we asked students at the Secundaria to fill out a survey which asked questions about their migrant experience (see Appendix A) and played games such as Hangman (in both English and Spanish). From these two groups of students we were able to make connections with about six of them.

At the Prepa, we made a strong connection with Anabel (one of two girls at the school who agreed to participate in our study). We met with Miguel, Carmen, Lizeth and Anabel (see Appendix B) on numerous occasions outside of the Secundaria and Prepa setting and immersed ourselves in some of the daily activities of youth in Peribán (eg; eating ice cream in the plaza, shopping in Los Reyes, and going to the arcade). We also got the chance to meet and have informal conversations with these three youths' parents.

After spending time with these students we began setting up and conducting formal interviews with them. The most pertinent questions to this study were along the lines of *how difficult it is to be a migrant youth?*, and *what does society (namely the*

schools) do to aid these children in the adaptation process? During all of the interviews (conducted in Adams County and Peribán) I made sure to ask similar questions to each informant. There are times when a question slipped my mind, or it did not fit into the conversation, but for the most part there is a consistency among the questions asked to the youth.

In addition to conducting interviews with Peribán and Adams County youth, I had informal conversations with Iana, a 20-year-old college sophomore who immigrated from Bulgaria ten years ago and Judith a 20-year-old college junior who immigrated from Suriname eight years ago.

Findings

In Depth Look at Key Informants

The reason why I decided to primarily use Miguel, Carmen, Anabel and Erika in my findings is because I got to know them better than the other informants. Thus, I learned more about their lives and experiences as migrant youth.

Miguel was an interesting informant to work with because he hardly expressed emotion and never went in depth about his migrant experiences. He was not shy, and always initiated conversation, however, on camera he seemed nervous and fidgety. His mother was present while we conducted his interview.

The reason why he moved back to Peribán in the Summer of 2003 is because his maternal grandmother passed away. He moved back with his mother, and two younger brothers who are eleven and five. His stepfather remained in Pennsylvania to continue working, but followed the family to Peribán a few months later.

The unfortunate aspect of the informal and formal conversations we had with Miguel is that he contradicted himself on numerous occasions. For example, in his formal interview, when asked “Do you ever want to go back there [the US]?” Miguel replies, “Like, to go to High School, and that’s all.”²⁸ Later, at an informal gathering we asked Miguel what he wanted to do after graduating from the Secundaria, and he told us that he wanted to get a job.

Carmen and Miguel had a lot in common. Regarding both of them: there seemed to be more beneath the surface than we were able to get to. Carmen had a tough emotional exterior, and seemed like a strong individual. Like Miguel, Carmen moved to Peribán unexpectedly because her grandfather passed away. Thus, her father came home to take over the family bakery.

Her father was present during her interview, and she stared at the floor as she spoke. An interesting aspect to Carmen’s interview is her description of getting into trouble at school. She told us “The first time, this one girl said she was going to beat me up. I was like ‘if you’re going to beat me up, beat me up right now.’ I told her that in front of her mom. The next day, she went and told Richard that I was going to beat her up. The other time, I was supposedly jumping on the desk, and then the other time... There’s too many times.”²⁹

Anabel was one of the most mature informants we had. The responses she gave both on and off the camera were precise and intelligent. She was very open with us about her personal life, and verbally expressed her opinions on a number of different topics. While she spoke both English and Spanish, she was much more verbal when speaking Spanish.

It was through our experience with Anabel that we learned about Mexican youth culture. She showed us a photo album from her *quinceañera*[†], and a video from her seventeen-year-old sister's wedding.

Anabel expressed how much she loved the US on more than one occasion. She applied for a visa to visit her stepfather in Chicago, but was denied. She would like to attend college in the US and someday have an international relations job.

Like Anabel, Erika was extremely mature for her age, and also responded to our questions in an intelligent manner. Because her parents work late sometimes, Erika is given the responsibility to take care of her younger brother and sister.

Erika's description of how her life changed after living in Peribán for a year is one of the most interesting aspects to her interview. She explains:

From the inside, I changed a lot. I used to trust everybody that I knew, which is something bad, because they would betray my trust. From being in the United States, I learned to be more careful to who I have as friends. A lot of people over there, they just come up to you because they know you come from the United States, and that you have money. They just come up to, 'hey, how you doing?' and stuff. But, you have to be careful because sometimes they just want other things.³⁰

Her observations of people at such a young age are quite perceptive. Like Anabel, Erika would like to have a job in international affairs when she is older so that she can travel, and be able to use Spanish and English.

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When asked about their individual adaptation processes, the way the youth respond to the interview questions is one of the most important findings I came across. It is displayed throughout this section that many of the informants provided short and

[†] In Mexico, this is a celebration for girls when they turn 15 years old.

uninformative answers. The way many of the students discuss having to adapt makes the process of acculturation seem like an unsubstantial part of their lives. In spite of the lack of depth in many of the responses, the informant's firsthand accounts paint a vivid picture of what it is like to endure stress that other children their age do not have to. The interview data provides a diverse range of information and perceptions of what it is like to be an immigrant or migrant youth.

Erika and Anabel responses provide more significance to their migrant experiences. The older informants (Pedro, Iana and Judith) who I spoke to informally discuss their adaptation process in a different light than the younger ones do. When I asked the three older immigrants to tell me about adapting to a new culture, they gave me profound responses describing in detail what coping as an immigrant youth was like for them. Each of these informants has lived in the US for a reasonably long time, has succumbed the early stages of acculturation, and is fluent in English.

Pedro explained that upon his arrival to the United States there were hardly any Spanish-speaking students, who went to school with him. He discussed that being the minority for such a long time was a painful experience because the large non-Latino population never made an effort to learn about his culture, past life, or even to find out about him as an individual. Iana and Judith both responded along the same lines. When asked if it was difficult to adapt to a new society Iana said "The hardest thing I ever had to do was accept that I couldn't make those around me understand what I had been through, and what it was like to have had to accept the American culture and system even when I didn't want it. It took I think about 4-5 years until I finally realized that I couldn't win and that I had to conform."³¹

In comparison, some of the younger informants such as Miguel and Carmen responded to the same type of question with less revealing answers. In an informal conversation I had with Miguel, I asked him if he missed his friends in the US. Though he had spent eight years in Pennsylvania, and probably knew many of the same people throughout that time, he simply shrugged and answered “Nah, I made new ones here.”³² Here, it seems as though Miguel is brushing off his migrant experience as uneventful and ordinary.

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Often times, giving up part of one’s culture is not an option for a child. Thus, acculturation may be forced upon a student who never had the desire to leave his or her home in the first place. Marcia Kile, an English as a Second Language program director at an Adams County public school explains how she perceives the migrant students she sees in class:

But we also have to be careful with what looks like disinterest, depression; I mean it could be cultural as well. I mean kids don’t have a choice to come here, their parents decide that they would come here. And the U.S. isn’t where everybody wants to be. And sometimes there is a whole lot of trauma involved with our kids moving here. And then if they assimilate here, when they go back to Mexico, they really aren’t Mexican either. They look very American there, very Mexican here, and they ride they fence. Sort of like loose their country.³³

It may be hard on children when parents place pressure on them to keep their cultural heritage after immigration. All of the informants in my study describe that their parents preserved elements of their cultural heritage in the home after moving to the US. It seemed important to the parents that the children maintained their primary ethnic values.

When asked if the children practiced Mexican cultural rituals while living in the US (ie; eating Mexican food, listening to Latino music, or celebrating ethnic celebrations or holidays) *every informant* answered yes. The amount of time a child spent in the US did not make a difference in the responses.

To gain a parent's perspective on the matter, we interviewed Tony River (Carmen and Lizeth's father). Though Tony did not raise his children to speak Spanish in the US, he did provide them with a knowledge of their Mexican heritage:

Mara Waldhorn: When you were living in the US with your wife, and you were raising your kids, did you think it was important to keep some of your Mexican culture, and instill that upon them?

Antonio Rivera: Oh yeah.

MW: So what kinds of things did you do to keep that?

AR: We did the festivities. Like in September and the Santa Monica [Mexican Independence Day celebration]. That's basically what we have. We tried to go to church every Sunday- just to try to learn a little bit of where we come from. It was a long mass though. I tried to show my children where they're supposed to be.

MW: Did you guys cook a lot of Mexican food in the house?

AR: I didn't do any cooking [laughs]. We ate just normal tacos, enchiladas, soups, arroz, carne con chile, cerveche...³⁴

Tony goes on to explain that he also cooked a lot of Italian food, so there was probably a balance of Mexican and American culture in the Rivera home. Though Tony says that he prefers living in the US rather than in Mexico, his interview conveys the importance of preserving his heritage, and making sure that his daughters understood their roots.

Erika not only explained some of the Mexican cultural practices which her family partakes in, but also the dual national identity she has as a Mexican-American. Erika said:

I don't think it's really that hard. I am influenced in Mexican when I'm here at the house. From religion to the way we eat the food in our house. Especially because we always talk Spanish, and we're always watching Spanish news and everything. I wake up when I go to school, and it's definitely more American. I have English, the way I talk with my friends is very different that the way I talk with my parents. Of course, American food at lunch. I was telling some of my friends today that I eat American food in the morning, and Mexican food in the afternoon every single day. It's not very hard.³⁵

Having to juggle the practices of two different cultures does not seem to faze Erika. She looks at herself as both Mexican and American.

Sometimes parents place a certain pressure of culture preservation on their children. Anabel describes that strain her family placed on her after moving to the US: "In a certain sense, it's that, they [my parents] didn't, they didn't want me to adapt to the culture of [the United States]... I think that they didn't want me to change, for me to be Mexican. If you were Mexican, you had to follow the Mexican culture. Not another one."³⁶ Anabel does not discuss whether or not the pressure her family placed on her was difficult to endure or not, however it is evident through her response that stress was always placed on her to 'follow the Mexican culture.'

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On the other side of feeling familial stress to preserve one's native culture, there are societal pressures persuading youth to adapt to their new surroundings. The students do not mention direct strain placed on them by the school systems, but they tell stories of feeling uncomfortable and uneasy when placed in their new surrounding. A common question asked in the interviews was *Can you describe your first day of school in the*

country you migrated to? Below is a table compiling some of the informant's responses to this question.

Table 2. First Day of School Responses

Irvin Urbina	"[It was] Scary. Some friends speaked in Spanish, but the teachers were talking too fast for me." ³⁷
Carmen Rivera	"I didn't like the school. I was bored. I didn't understand the people. The people would just stare at me, and I would look at them, like 'what the hell are you looking at?'" ³⁸
Abraham Mejia	"[It was] Scary. Because I didn't know any English, and I didn't know no people from over there." ³⁹
Sylvia Espinoza	"Like... something weird, that I didn't know nothing in Spanish. And like, everybody see me like this, like something weird. You know?" ⁴⁰
Anabel Andrade	"...I was nervous, I was little, and therefore, I was nervous because I was going to start something new. And, without the language." ⁴¹

Through the compilation of responses seen above, it seems as though the transition of attending school for the first time in a new country is tremendously frightening for a child. Of the informants listed above, not one of them knew how to speak the native language in the country they moved to.

The fear of attending a new school does not end on the first day. Of our informants, Carmen and Abraham discuss being made fun of at school because neither of them spoke the language very well upon arrival. Regarding his lingual and cultural differences at school Abraham accounts "I didn't like to... the people over there, you know they were different from me and sometimes they tease me."⁴² When asked if it was hard for Carmen not being able to speak Spanish at the Secundaria in Peribán, she

answered: “A little bit. They still tease me because I don’t know how to speak all that well.”⁴³ Not being able to communicate in your surroundings is a difficult enough task without having people draw attention to your weakness.

Even students like Erika and Miguel, who already knew how to speak Spanish when they first attended school in Mexico, explain being teased because of the way they speak the native language. Miguel said “Some words that I say was like kind of funny, but I try to say the words the best I can. When I say those words, I say like everybody does it... Like my friend Bournie. He told me ‘say this vegetable.’ I said it, and he was like laughing. I’m just learning.”⁴⁴ Erika did not mention that she gets teased for the way she speaks Spanish, but she did say that at times her friends do not understand her because she speaks the language with an English accent.

Because it seemed difficult to ask students of such young ages if they feel that they have adapted to US society, we asked questions like *Who is your favorite singer?* This way, if the informants responded that their favorite singer or song was an American, they had clearly begun adapting to their new cultural surroundings. Some of the responses we got along the lines of favorite musical artist from both children who were still in the US, and ones who had moved back to Mexico were: Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Ja Rule, 50 Cent and Eminem.[†]

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Through visiting particular migrant aid programs in Adams County, I was able to observe that efforts are being implemented to make the adaptation process for students easier. Rural Opportunities Incorporated provides “services to farm workers, low-income families and economically depressed communities throughout New York, Pennsylvania,

[†] All of these artists are modern Hip Hop, Rap, and Pop stars in America’s popular music scene.

New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, and Puerto Rico.”⁴⁵ One of the ROI offices run out of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania provides a migrant Head Start program for the infant- five year-old children of migrant farm workers. The Head Start classroom offers a bilingual setting, so that children begin learning English at an early age. The children are separated by age level, and are placed in small classes which enables them to work one on one with their instructors so that they fully comprehend the new language being presented to them. In each classroom there is one teacher who speaks English, and one who is fluent with both Spanish and English. This way if students do not understand directions, instructions can be conveyed to them in their native language.

ROI also strives to incorporate the children’s primary culture into everyday activities. They celebrate both Mexican and American holidays in the classroom, and teach lessons based on both societies. Furthermore, the children are taught to adapt to cultural responsibilities. They are fed a home-style lunch everyday and are expected to help set the table, serve food and participate in good table etiquette (even at their young ages). Though I only had one day to observe how the ROI Head Start program is run, it seemed that there was a strong philosophy behind educating migrant youth. From the classes I looked in on, it seemed that this philosophy was being upheld in the classroom, and that the children enjoyed being there. It was explained to us that by the time they reach the end of the program, children are able to understand English, and are at the beginning stages of speaking the language.

The ROI Head Start program seems like it is doing a good job aiding migrant youth in the adaptation process. ROI is nationally and privately funded, thus it is always ambiguous as to whether or not the program will continue to receive aid. When we

visited in September 2003 the Head Start program was short staffed. Because Rural Opportunities is a seasonal program teachers are hard to retain because they are not provided with a fulltime job. Though the ROI Head Start is technically equipped to serve 38 children each season, there were only 26 enrolled when we visited- due to the lack of teachers and monetary aid.

In addition to observing the use of bilingual education, I also found that ESL is used in Pennsylvania schools. I did not observe any ESL programs in Adams County, thus I use interviews conducted by other Mosaic students to better understand ESL programs in Pennsylvania.

Mrs. Judith Leslie gives a general overview of the ESL program she teaches:

Our program is available to all children who come not speaking English at all. We test when they arrive... You need to take English if you can't speak it. We have guidelines when a child comes with absolutely no English. The minimum is 90 minutes a day, but because so much of it would be difficult during the day I often take mine more than that. Limited English is considered a 45minute minimum. And those are just guide lines and minimums, so I determine with testing, with how they do on their standardized tests, and with report cards, just how much time they need each year. It is an open door policy, when we finally exit them we monitor them for two years. We watch the report cards, talk with the teacher and if there really is trouble they are always welcome to come back to the ESL class.⁴⁶

Mrs. Leslie and Kile both explain that one of the best methods of teaching ESL students is through hands-on activities and a lot of repetition. Sometimes they find it difficult to determine when a student needs to be pulled out of one of his or her regular classes, because the child may be at a stage in his or her lingual acquisition where full immersion is more beneficial than the ESL classroom.

All three teachers mention that Pennsylvania was one of the last states to require teachers to have an ESL teaching certification. Furthermore, Leslie says “The school district just this year made a policy that all things coming from the community have to go home in Spanish.”⁴⁷ This will enable parents to have a better understanding of what their children are doing in school so they can become more involved in the education process. Lastly, Leslie mentions that there is no national curriculum to teach ESL, thus the teachers are able to structure the class as they see fit.

Informants Anabel and Abraham explain that upon their arrival to the US (as LEP students), they were placed in ESL programs. Neither of them elaborate on the time they spent in ESL, but they do say that it helped them learn English.

In addition to language acquisition programs in Pennsylvania schools, I had the opportunity to observe some migrant aid programs in Adams County. Generation Diez and Human Services have been set up in the county to help migrant youth (mainly Mexican) adapt to American culture.

Established in 1998 to aid 10-year-old migrant children in adapting to education and culture, Generation Diez has received funding to extend services to both elementary and middle school students. One aspect of the program is an after school program, which helps children with their homework, and teaches them valuable language skills, so they don't fall behind their peers at school. Along with conducting English, math, and reading efficiency tests, the organization conducts anxiety and depression tests, as well as cultural assimilation tests. These exams measure the effects of Generation Diez on the children in the program. Last year's results of the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) show that before the program, 42 percent of children were behind their English-speaking peers

by two grade levels, but only 21 percent were behind after the program. The children's competency in Reading, Math and Spelling all improved after participating in the program as well. WRAT as well as other tests such as Child Behavioral Checklist, Feelings Attitudes and Behaviors, and the Social Health Profile help: compare a child's level of academic achievement to the nationwide norm; assess how many years children are behind in school; measure "clinical" levels of achievement or failure; and helps if the child's public school does not accomplish any of this.⁴⁸ For example, Irvin Urbina told us in a formal interview that he is glad he comes to Generation Diez because he still has trouble with some aspects of the English language. Thus, he explains that being able to receive help with his homework helps him do well in school.

Human Services has many of the same goals as Generation Diez in trying to aid migrant youth in the assimilation process. However their services are directed towards older youth, and often adults who need to help earning a GED or learning English. Program Director for Human Services in Adams County, Grogan Ullah explained in a 1998 interview the purpose of his organization's services:

Our mission statement. That the institution accommodate the special needs of working youth and adults by holding classes that are suitable to their schedules (ie; evenings and weekends). That parents and students are empowered... That all students have the capacity to become productive members of society. That all students should develop both a sense of personal worth and learn to accept responsibility for self, family, community, and society as a whole...⁴⁹

Teaching English as a Second Language, or offering GED programs is run on an "open entry, open exit" policy- meaning that in addition to the classes being offered at times when migrants can attend, they are free to come and go as they please. Like Generation Diez, Human Services provides more than just educational opportunities to students who

take advantage of their resources. Ullah mentioned a program called Common Ground on the Hill, a blues and arts festival, which allows migrant workers to associate with other minority groups in the area, and learn about each other's cultures.

In contrast to the four constructive migrant aid programs in Adams County, I found that there be no formal equivalents (in or outside of the school system) to help migrant children in Peribán adapt. From informal conversations that people in my group conducted with the directors of the Prepa and Secundaria, they both explained that there are no programs in Peribán, which are meant to help students who do not know how, speak Spanish. We found that out of the twelve informants, seven spoke primarily Spanish in their US homes, three spoke a mix of Spanish and English, and Carmen and Lizeth were the only two who only spoke English.

Carmen, Lizeth, Sylvia and Jorge expressed having trouble once attending school in Peribán after being in the US. Sylvia was held back in school for two years and Jorge for one, because they did not speak, write or read Spanish well enough to pass the grades they were in at the Secundaria. Carmen says that because there are no programs at school to help her learn English she relies solely on her family, friends and individual teachers to help her.

Analysis and Conclusions

Scholars Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco discuss "Generalizations about the Mexican-origin population with regard to educational success or failure are difficult to make because there are important and significant differences... among the various groups that make up the Mexican-origin population."⁵⁰ One of the first things we must realize when analyzing the data of the informants is that they all have had unique migrant

experiences. While a lot of what they say helps my study, I can only look at their responses as different perceptions of youth culture and migrant adaptation. Regarding my four main informants, it is important to question why their perceptions are what they are.

One reason behind Miguel's contradictory state could be that he was unclear about his future, thus did not know how to answer questions about it. He had just been taken away from the home where he had lived for the majority of his life, and did not know whether he would remain in Mexico, or someday return to the US. This ambiguous state may have affected Miguel as an informant.

Carmen's depiction of getting into trouble at school may have been a consequence of having to adapt to a new life. Not knowing the language, she became frustrated at times, and hostility may have been a way for her to express herself. According to Michael Arnowitz aggression is a sign of youth who are having trouble in their new surroundings.

The reason why Erika and Anabel are so mature may have to do with the fact that they both had positive, life changing migrant experiences. It seems that Erika gained a new life perspective after coming back from Peribán, and the way Anabel spoke of the US it is possible that the same happened for her.

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Lilian Rubin and Michael Arnowitz discuss the psychological ramifications of immigrant and migrant youth as a result of having to adapt to a new culture and learn a new language. While their findings seem justifiable, most of the young informants I talked to did not express that they were psychologically impaired by their experiences.

However, it is not possible to say whether or not the students were emotionally scarred by their experiences, because many of them did not provide long or in depth answers to the questions asked.

The informal conversations I had with Pedro, Iana, and Judith can be used to help analyze *why* many of the Peribán youths' answers lacked substance and depth. Though Iana and Judith are not part of the Mexican migration experience, both of them know what it is like to be placed in a new country at a young age without prior knowledge of the language or culture. Each of these immigrants has had time to reflect on adapting to the US and has tried to make sense of his or her individual experience.

One reason behind Miguel's apathy to his adaptation experience could be that he really had no problems adapting to life in Peribán. This would negate all of the secondary research found to support this study, but it is a possibility. However, his unelaborated response may have been expressed in this manner because unlike his older immigrant counterparts, he is still undergoing the adaptation process and has not yet had time to reflect on the experience. Like Miguel, Carmen is still in the early stages of adaptation and cannot reflect on her complete experience yet.

The difference between the younger informants' responses with the older ones could also be due to a variety of different reasons such as age, gender, and intellectual ability. Additionally, the uninvolved Peribán youth responses could be due to the short amount of time we spent in Mexico. Had we been there longer, we may have created an even better rapport with our informants and been able to conduct more than one formal interview with each of them. More in-depth interviews may have led to answers which dug deeper into the children's migrant experience.

It is important to note that Anabel and Erika, the only two informants who provided longer and informative responses in their interviews, are two of the oldest informants. Unlike Miguel and Carmen these two girls are no longer in the early phases of adaptation. Both have been settled in their current residence for at least three years without having to worry about adjusting to a new culture or language. Like Pedro, Iana and Judith- Anabel and Erika have also had time to reflect on their adaptation experiences.

To test my reasoning behind some of the short responses, it would be interesting to see how Miguel or Carmen would respond to the same questions ten years from now- once they have emerged from the early stages of acculturation; are fluent in the new language they are trying to learn; and have had time to reflect on their migrant experience.

This theory regarding stages of adaptation may be due to the difference between events that are taking place in the present and events that took place in the past. One will most likely view an event in a different manner once it has already happened and he or she is given time to reflect on what occurred.

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The description that ESL teacher Marcia Kile gives about the struggle, which she observes students to go through regarding adaptation, correlates with scholar Lilian Rubin's theory of the 'stresses of acculturation'. One of these 'stresses', which seems to be a theme throughout many of the interviews is the role which parents play in their child's adaptation process.

The fact that all of the informants' parents attempted to preserve their Mexican heritage in their US homes is one way in which pressure could have been placed on the informants while they were trying to adapt to US culture.

Anabel's explanation of how her parents felt about keeping their Mexican culture in the US relates to Min Zhou's research. Zhou points out that sometimes a parent places an extreme amount of stress on a child to maintain his or her heritage while the youth is trying to simultaneously adapt to a new culture. It is unclear through Anabel's interview whether or not the pressure her parents placed on her emotionally scarred her. It is apparent, however that she had to make a conscious effort not to forget where she came from in addition to struggling with American societal pressures to conform.

The reason why Erika does not seem to have a problem with her dual cultural identities is because she has lived in the US for nearly her entire life. She was raised with an understanding of both US and Mexican culture from a young age, and thus never had to adapt to one or the other. When she spent a year in Peribán, she already had a good idea of her Mexican heritage.

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None of the informants explicitly mentioned the pressure placed on them to adapt to the new countries in which they were immersed. However, the way that many of them narrate what their primary experiences were like at the new schools, as well as their social encounters with peers may imply that the stress of adaptation did exist. The informants' primary culture was not present at their new schools. Thus, as author Angela Valenzuela suggests, the students were in many ways forced to 'assimilate subtractively'. It is understandable that this loss of one's culture is a result of how migrant youth are

treated in school. If their cultural background is ignored they end up having frightening and uncomfortable primary experiences (like many of the informants). Furthermore, when a child is ridiculed for not speaking the language well, more emotional strain is placed on them. To avoid fear and ridicule, it is thus apparent that students will feel more comfortable if they begin to adapt to the dominant culture, which surrounds them. It is evident through the choice of music children said they listened to in the US that most of them did begin to adapt to the culture around them. Thus societal pressures may have accelerated the acculturation process.

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Corresponding to Ruth Persky's positive analysis of bilingualism, the use of bilingual education through ROI Head Start seems to be effective among the children who attend the program. Because ROI was the only place where I saw bilingual education being used in the classroom, I did not witness any negative implications of the lingual method. However, because it was difficult to retain teachers and funding for the Head Start program, the passing of Proposition 227 in California begins to make sense. Whether or not a method is successful makes no difference when the proper resources are not available to keep it running.

Through the accounts of the ESL teachers in Adams County, it is evident that as the Equal Education Opportunity Act provides, Pennsylvania is not denying immigrant nor migrant children the right to equal opportunities in education. Mrs. Leslie, Kile and Smith describe that Pennsylvania is behind other states in applying certain ESL regulations. Thus, there is a possibility that migrant students are not receiving the most effective aid possible regarding language acquisition. Because I did not spend time in

ESL classrooms or talk to the teachers personally, it is non conclusive in my study as to whether or not the ESL programs are effective in Adams County. However, through my youth interviews, it is evident for students such as Anabel and Abraham (who attended ESL programs in the US) that this method of teaching was at least one aspect which helped them become fluent in English.

Regarding the last method of migrant youth aid which I observed in Adams County, it was apparent that enrichment programs such as Generation Diez and Human Services are beneficial tools of assisting with adaptation. It is evident through last years WRAT test results that Generation Diez is helping students acculturate. Whether or not these programs are funded by President Bush's recent "No Child Left Behind Act", they both set out to complete goals, which the act strives to achieve. In some ways, these programs help migrant youth learn the English language using the lenient and less rigorous methods Eugene García mentions.

Rural Opportunities, ESL, Generation Diez and Human Services all seem to provide an outlet for migrant students who need help adapting to a new country. The fact that Pennsylvania is finally making improvements to its migrant enrichment programs may suggest that it is taking the necessary steps to properly aid its continuous influx of immigrants and migrants.

It is unfortunate, however, for students in Peribán such as Carmen, Lizeth, Sylvia and Jorge who would have benefited from similar programs in Mexico. Because it is common for a family to continue speaking Spanish in their US homes, children will be prepared to speak the language if they return to Mexico. However, in rare situations such as with Carmen and Lizeth who unexpectedly moved to Peribán without any prior

knowledge of speaking Spanish, they are left unguided in the confusing realm of language acquisition. This does not necessarily mean that there is a flaw in Mexico's education system. Because there are fewer students who need language acquisition help, the country may not perceive this as a problem which needs to be addressed.

In my opinion one way to make the adaptation process easier for migrant youth is to make it mandatory for teachers to stress cultural diversity in both the US and Mexico. Scholar James Banks explains that in order to make the situation better for students "Teachers should also select content from diverse ethnic groups so that students from various cultures will see their images in the curriculum."⁵¹ Along the same lines, Cristina Igoa's approach in the classroom which stresses cultural diversity would work in both the US and Mexican education systems.

It seems through my research and findings that migrant youth are involuntarily placed in an extremely unjust circumstance when they are faced with adaptation in a new country. As children, who are still dependent on their parents, these youth do not generally have the choice of whether or not they get to leave their home. I would argue that migrant youth are placed in a situation where there is no other choice than to learn a language in order to survive in their new surroundings. Because of this, it seems that the informants I talked to went into a survival mode upon moving to a new country. In my opinion, it is not possible for these children to make a conscious choice based on whether or not they want to learn the native language or adhere to the culture of the countries they have moved to. Thus, in the early stages of acculturation, one does not think about the process, one simply does what he or she has to do in order to survive. Darwinian theory states that when competition occurs in society, the species with a greater potential to

survive will dominate. If migrant youth do not acquire the language and become accustomed to their new country they will become social outcasts and not be able to survive in society. Once acculturated, migrants have the chance to compete for a dominant spot in society.

It is important to realize that my study only covers a small aspect of the migrant youth experience. Within the area that I covered, questions can be raised regarding my findings. The key questions which stem from inconclusive data or topics I would liked to have explored further are:

- How affective are programs such as ESL and bilingual education on migrant youth in Adams County?
- How plausible is it to believe that something can really be done to make the adaptation process easier for children?
- Besides familial and societal pressures, what other ‘stresses of acculturation’ did the children in my study face?
- What would my results be like if I came back ten years from now to interview the same children again about their adaptation experiences?

The struggle a transnational child must face between juggling his or her cultural heritage (which is stressed by one’s family) with societal pressure to conform (often stressed in the schools and by peers) is too much to be asking of people at such a young age. There are programs and ways to make the adaptation for young migrants less of a struggle, yet it is unclear as to how effective they are. The children throughout this study show us both directly and indirectly the struggles they have had to endure as the children of migrant and immigrants. Their perceptions of migrant adaptation give us a better

sense of the subject, and allow us to use their responses in order to find better methods of making the adaptation process easier. Historians Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut say that “America in 2050 will be a different place, but its culture and quality of life will be shaped in no small measure by what happens to today’s children of immigrants.”⁵² If we are able rid people of their ignorance and impose the teaching of cultural diversity in our country we may be able to make the adaptation process less stressful for our immigrant and migrant youth. If this is not accomplished we will be losing the thoughts, ideas, and leadership of young people who have the potential to contribute to our nation.

Reflections

Processing all of the data I had at the end of this project was a difficult task. Because there was so much, it never even occurred to me that I should narrow down my findings and focus on a centralized theme. In the beginning I compiled the data of my informants in such a way that I was presenting their responses as *fact*. While some of what these children say may well represent certain aspects of migrant adaptation- it was important for me to realize that each response can only be seen as one child’s perception of the migrant experience. Throughout the semester I had become most interested in the psychological strain children go through when having to come to a new country. Thus, it was easier for me to focus solely on this subject and present some findings as to *why* adapting is so difficult for these students.

At first, because I spent time at the schools in Peribán, I got too caught up in trying to understand the Mexican educational system. It took me time to realize that in order to compare the educational systems between Peribán and Adams County my research would have to be more extensive and set up differently. Instead of only

interviewing youth I would have had to acquire more statistical data and talked to school administrators and teachers from each place. Thus, before finding a centralized topic, I tried to analyze information that I never obtained regarding the educational systems of Peribán and Adams County.

It is because my study became so focused that I had to leave findings out of my paper, which were important to the topic of migratory adaptation and youth. For example, one key finding which did not flow with my presentation of data was the aspect of cultural differences between the educational systems in Adams County and Peribán. I found that in Mexico it was not uncommon for youth to drop out of school in order to acquire jobs. SEP findings show that the number of students in the Prepa decreases each year, and through people we met in Peribán it was clear that there were many youth who held full time jobs instead of attending school. I would have liked to elaborate on topics such as this one, but they did not correspond to my final centralized theme.

For me, the oral history and fieldwork aspects of this course held the most meaning. Immersion is the only way any of us were able to *understand* Adams County and Peribán. Carrying a heavy satchel bag of apples around my shoulders was more powerful of an experience than reading in a textbook about the kind of work agricultural migrants do. It is for this reason, that I conducted one on one interviews with children to better understand migration adaptation. I do not believe that this study could have been complete without having the words of the children. Oral history and immersion evoke certain emotions and expressions which one cannot read in a book or convey in a classroom. As I compiled my findings and data I became nostalgic for the time I spent in Peribán. The youth were more than data subjects and informants. They shared a part of

their life with me (a stranger), and made it easier to understand the stresses of being a migrant child.

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APPENDIX A

**Survey for the students at the *Secundaria*:
Mosaic, 2003**

Name:

Age:

Where were you born?:

How old were you when you went to the United States?:

Where in the United States did you live?:

How long did you live in the United States?

Would you prefer to live in Mexico or the United States?

Why?

Did you attend school in the United States?

Would you prefer to go to school in Mexico or the United States?

Why?

Did you speak English before moving to the United States?

Did you speak English in your home while in the United States?

Do you speak English in your home in Mexico?

What was the hardest part about adjusting to life in the United States?

- the language
- culture

-
- away from family/friends
 - other: _____
 - it was not hard

Do your parents speak English?

Did your parents require you to do certain things in your house to preserve your 'culture' while you were in the United States?

Are there things that you do now that you didn't do until you went to the United States?

How well do you think you speak English?

- Very Well/Fluent
- Ok
- Don't speak English

Favorite singer/group

Favorite TV show

Did living in the United States make it harder for you to get along with your parents or siblings?

Did you live with both parents when you were in the United States?

Do you live with both parents now?

Did both parents work while you were in the United States?

Do both parents work here in Mexico?

If you could bring one thing from the US to Mexico, what would it be?

APPENDIX B
Photographs of Key Informants

Miguel Nepita with younger brother



Miguel Nepita in Secundaria uniform



APPENDIX B cont...
Photographs of Key Informants

Carmen (front left) and Lizeth Rivera in the Peribán plaza



Carmen (left), Lizeth (right) and Antonio (back) Rivera in their Peribán home



APPENDIX B cont...
Photographs of Key Informants

Anabel Andrade in a hammock



***No photo of Erika Gallegos taken.**

APPENDIX C
Interview Questions

Where were you born?

How old were you when you moved to the US?

--if they were born in the US: how old were you when you moved to Mexico?

How many times have you been back and forth between Mexico and the US?

Where in the US have you lived?

Where in Mexico have you lived?

Where are your parents from?

(if they were born in the US): did you speak Spanish before you came to Mexico for the first time?

(if they were born in Mexico): did you speak English before you moved to the US?

Depending on either answer: was it difficult to adjust to the language, if you did not speak it?

Describe your first day of school in the new country, which you moved to.

If you did not speak the language, was it scary?

If you did not speak the language, how long did it take you to learn it?

Why did your family decide to move?

How did you feel when you first moved?

Tell me about school in the US.

Tell me about school in Mexico.

What is a typical school day like?

What are the teachers like?

What are the differences between the two.

Which do you like better?

APPENDIX C cont...
Interview Questions

Why?

When you went to school in the new country (and if you did not know the language), did the school help you learn the language?

If not, how did you learn?

Now that you are in Mexico, do you ever speak English?

Are you happy that you know how to speak 2 languages?

What do you want to do after school (college, work)?

Mention the language spoken in home- why is it that Tony's kids didn't speak Spanish at home if both of their parents are from Mexico?

Do the Spanish speakers parents speak English?

Favorite song artist/ song?

Favorite TV show?

What do you want to do after school (college, work)- aspirations?

Do you have any family in the States?
-- what is the communication like with them?

Tony Rivera

Where were you born?
--if in the states, how often do you travel back and forth between Mexico and the US?

Where in the states have you lived?

How long have you lived there?

What is your occupation there?

Why did you come back to Periban?

Ask about daughters.
--why do they not know Spanish?

APPENDIX C cont...
Interview Questions

Why did he decide to keep his daughter out of school?

What does he think about the school systems here/ in the US (as a parent).

Main differences between here and Peribán.

Which do you prefer?

--why?

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