

## **The Integration of Mexican Immigrants in Dalton/Whitfield, Georgia: The School Experience**

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*Here in the United States, the thing I most do not understand about Mexican culture is reticence of many Mexicans to learn English and to better assimilate themselves in American society. I certainly support the belief that it is important to never forget one's past and to cherish one's native culture. However, many Mexicans do not understand that, while they can retain their native culture, they must also remember the adage, 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do'. In the defense of these Mexicans here in Dalton, I think, the American business community encourages Mexicans not to learn English, etc. Because business want their labor and consumer dollars, American businesses post signs in Spanish, employ bilingual worker to interpret, etc. (senior Dalton school teacher, July 1999; quote from his diary).*

### **Our starting point: Joining sociology of immigration and sociology of schools**

The schooling of migrant children (those who were born in a country other than the United States) is more commonly approached by researchers specialized in education. They are interested in school success or failure for measuring educational achievements and the adequacy of school policies. Yet, they follow the school trajectories of migrant children by metamorphosing their nature. Once in the school, the international migrant children become *students* belonging to a minority group regardless his/her migratory trajectory and his/her

national/regional backgrounds. In other words, children arriving from Guanajuato, Mexico or Izabal, Guatemala, become magically, once in the school, equals under the same educational category: Hispanic English Learner Student or Low English Proficiency student. Education researchers artificially separate different aspects of the same phenomenon: a) the arrival of foreign migrant workers including their children who are often also migrants; b) the school enrollment of international migrant children and the educators' actions on them, and c) the changes on the school dynamics that immigrant children induce. Due to this disconnection between immigration and schooling, educational centered researches do not conceive the changes happened in the schools as part of the immigration flux, nor as a migration influence on institutional dynamics in the host society. The categories used in academic and public scripts show the consequences of separating migrant studies from educational investigations: the same child is a member of a migrant family (1.5 generation or second generation) from one point of view, and an English Language Learner (ELL) struggling in the school for being successful, from the other. In fact, "migrant student", in the U.S. official vocabulary, is a category only considered valid in the educational correct policy speaking when the student is a child of agricultural worker who moves across the U. S. (Hamann, 2001); in that official terminology, migrant children is the one who moves within the U.S. territory.

As a result of that slipping semantics, the major concern of researchers who investigate school challenges for Latino students (migrants or not) in the United States is not immigration but poverty, spatial segregation, social maladjustments, lack of teacher training, unequal school resources and budgets, language barriers, college transitions and other factors like inadequate policy making decisions that affects school achievement (Suárez-Orozco and Pérez, 2002; Gándara and Contreras, 2009; Leal and Meier, 2011;

Garcia, 2001; Romo and Falbo, 1996)<sup>1</sup>. In that particular and well contextualized institutional artifice –i.e. viewing things from the schools, and only from the schools-, those researchers rarely related what is happening in the schools as part of the incorporation of immigrants into the host societies.

The divorce between the study of immigrant incorporation/integration and school responses<sup>2</sup> is even more paradoxical because the historical and political functions that schools played in the American society in the past and must to continue playing in the near future: “Indeed, in the American context [last decades of XIX Century], schooling and immigration are two profoundly interconnected elements in the process of creating a nation in a society that, unlike other societies, could not draw upon common history and memory, rituals, or language toward this end...The school as a source of alternative authority...was a powerful means by which the second generation (and less frequently younger members of the first generation) came to recognize how their experience differed from that of their parents. In this sense, the school’s role was very different than other institutions such as the variously denominated churches, or the workplace with which the children of immigrants in the nineteenth century were all too familiar” (Fass, 2007: 23 and 28). “[During the first decades of the XX Century] Public schools and educational officials, of course, were

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<sup>1</sup> Exceptions of works given attention to the role played by the schools on immigrant children integration could be found in the contemporary literature (Shah and Marschall, 2011; Hamann, 2011; Crosnoe, 2006; Suarez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valdés, 1996; Rumbaut and Cornelius, 1995) as well as in the classic one (Bodnar, 1985). Paradoxically, in his *Children of the Uprooted*, Handlin (1966) paid no attention to what schools did or did not with migrant kids. For the author, the *Americanization* of children of immigrants was a general process where schools did not play a specific role: “They grew up Americans, shaped by the society which was home to them.” (p. xvi); “Sometimes they [second generation] acquired a thin veneer of Americanization, changed their names, aped the local dress and manners, and even intermarried. Still, they stood apart in their consistent marginality.” (pp. xv-xvi).

<sup>2</sup> As examples among others, two major contributions for understanding late XX Century immigrant incorporation to the United States (Portes and Rumbaut, 1990, and Hirschman, Kasinitz and DeWind, 1999) gave very little or no attention of what schools do or do not with migrant children or children of immigrants.

always interested in using the classroom to inculcate American values and beliefs in the foreign-born and having them abandon their former traits and beliefs which were often perceived to be strange, often radical, and simply undesirable” (Bodnar, 1985: 190); “If demography is destiny, the United States is entering a perilous era [XXI century] and seems perversely engaged in implementing policies that will greatly heighten the threat to the American future... In that new society, the largest minority group will be Latino, three times as large as the present black population... We could reasonably expect that farsighted leaders would be seeking ways and means to weave together the disparate elements of our changing population with the greatest urgency. Nowhere should this effort be more intense than in our schools. Unlike most other industrial societies, the United States has a weak system of social welfare provision... Only the schools exist as a major instrument for bringing the society together...” (Orfield, 1998: p. 276-277).

Our purpose in this paper is to show how the schools in Dalton and Whitfield became central actors of the incorporating/integrating process of immigrant families. In fact, the fastest, most visible, permanently debated migration’s impacts on Dalton and Whitfield communities were those that were related with the schools districts. Schools were (still, are) the arenas where local societies a) have been negotiating the most durable and legitimate internal changes they had to implement for receiving and adjusting immigrants, and b) had been imagining their future (i. e. what the host society is expecting about immigrants and their families; how much the receiving communities had to change for successfully integrating the new immigrant component). In our field experience in the area, we conclude, as researchers of new destinations of Mexican immigrants in the United States, that schools are the arenas where immigrants culturally, socially, linguistically, deeply and subordinately encounter the host society with its own feelings, beliefs, wishes, fears and

imaginaries (Tobin et al. 2013). In fact, we recognize that we were invited primarily to come to Dalton and Whitfield because civic leaders and school officials realized they needed help in the process of preparing schools to serve newcomers (Hamann, 2003).

The school centered-scripts, as we argue in this paper, hide the inextricably web of relations of resistance, domination and accommodation that school actors build in their everyday encounters with immigrant children and parents. Instead, the school centered scripts told us a story of achievements and failures of schools goals, like dropout rates, math, reading and writing scores by race/ethnic categories, graduation performances, college enrollment, depriving from Latino/Hispanic category of its very ontology (i. e. in the case of Dalton, most of them are migrants coming from Latin American countries or children born in the United States but their parents are adult migrants coming from Latin American countries).

In fact, school achievement is one of the subjects that everyone wants to talk; although, immigration not at all, as this description of a young Dalton teacher in 1998 attests when she was writing her diary about her experiences in Mexico: *In class [during the 1998 Universidad de Monterrey's summer teacher training for teachers of Georgia] today we discussed immigration. It is such a complicated and involved issue that I sensed a great reluctance on the part of many classmates [other DPS and WCS teachers and principals] to become involved in the discussion. As with all issues, there are many points of view and, if a person is ever attempting to be open minded. It is the type of issue that has many "gray" areas and very few black and white.*

In sum: our goal in this paper is to join the sociology of schools and the sociology of international immigrants' incorporation in order to describe the role played by schools and educators in receiving, accommodating, and trying to incorporate migrant children to the host society in Dalton and Whitfield. Doing this, we focused on social continuities and discontinuities. Continuities are the attempts of school actors to reproduce their local and regional communities in spite of the immigration impacts and its demographic consequences. Discontinuities are simply the opposite: those irreversible impacts and consequences that immigrants draw out with.

### **Dramatic transformation of school demography**

In arriving to Dalton/Whitfield area, we have a fortune. The dramatic enrollment changes in both school districts, made evident for all actors involved in the schools that the new composition of the student's body was the consequence of the sudden arrival of immigrants. Thus, nobody could ignore the link between immigration and school transformations. Moreover, the equation was clear: industrialists hired migrant workers; workers bring their children; children enrolled the schools. During the 1990's, immigrants arrived to Dalton City and Whitfield County producing a radical demographic transformation. Many of them came from Mexico and Central American countries sharing common backgrounds, schooling experiences and language. Some of them have had deep contact with American society in other regions of the country like Texas, California, Arizona, Illinois or New York. Most them reunified their families in Dalton/Whitfield and have the intention to settled permanently, if possible. All of those who took their children with them and come to the area enrolled them in the schools.

The consequences were immediately visible and seemed, since de beginning, irreversible: the white student proportion was 80 percent in 1989 in DPS; it fell down until 21 percent in 2015. The percentage of white students radically changed, and also the number of white students decreased: in 1990 DPS counted with 3,131 white students while in the school year 2015, we found only 1,684, as a result of the middle-class white flight to private schools of the area that began around 2000<sup>3</sup>. The percent decline in white student population was -36.4 percent from 1995 to 2015 losing about -1.8 percent as average rate of annual reduction.

The opposite happened with the Hispanic student population. The proportion of Hispanic enrollment grew suddenly between 1995 and 1999 and continues growing steadily until 2015. Today, the etnoracial composition of the school population in DPS is much more similar to that one can observe in the school districts of several counties and cities of South California or South Texas than that usually characterizes the school districts of the U.S. historical Southern states.

Among the schools in DPS, Roan Street elementary school (PK, KK, 1, 2) became the icon of that rapid transformation. Located in the East side of the city (the poorer one since the last decades of the XIX century), Roan Street school was dedicated to educate the working class white youngest students until 1990. In 1985, almost 90 percent of the students were classified as whites. In 1995 the presence of white students was still visible with 33 percent of the total enrolment. When we visited for the first time the school, in

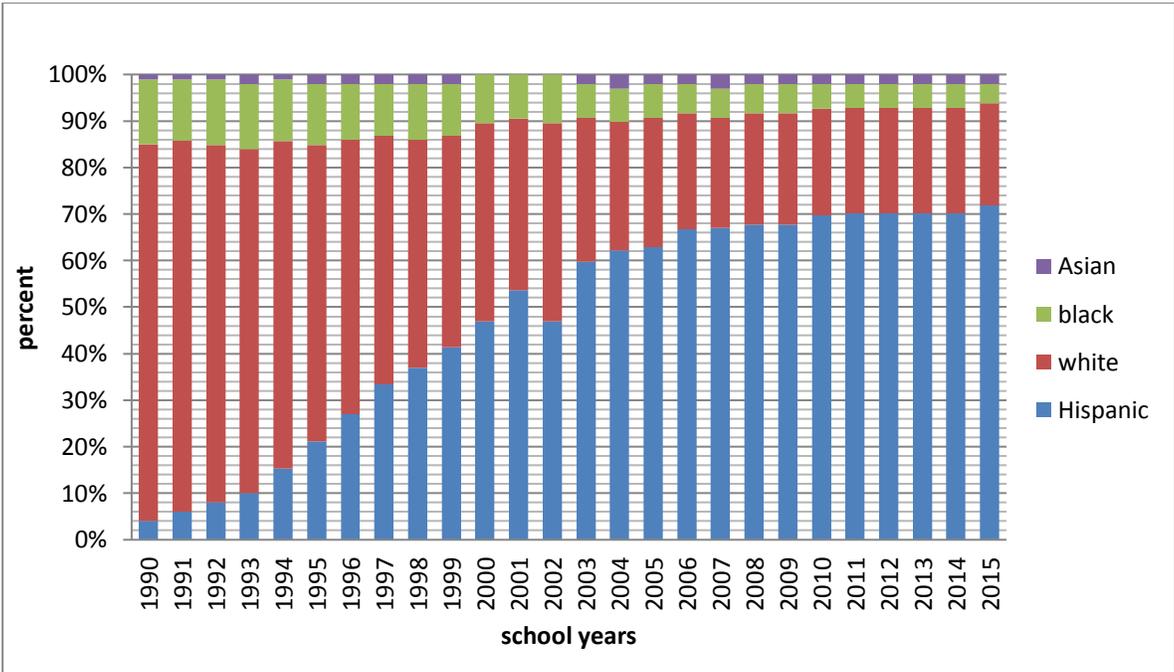
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<sup>3</sup> One of the principals we interviewed several times witnessed the “white flight” in the following terms: *You know when Latinos started coming to Dalton, we had a huge exiting of white. And a lot of them were going to schools in Chattanooga. Then when the economy went bad and the parents started losing everything they owned and leaving the multimillion dollar homes all the kids came back to our school. We got a bunch of them back* (Interview February 2010).

1997, this proportion had fell to less than 18 percent. This reduction was due more to increase of the number of Hispanic children newcomers (indeed “migrant children” or “children of migrants”) in the school and less to a decline of the number of white children. The total school enrolment in 1995 Roan Street’s school was 544 students. In 1997, it was 718.

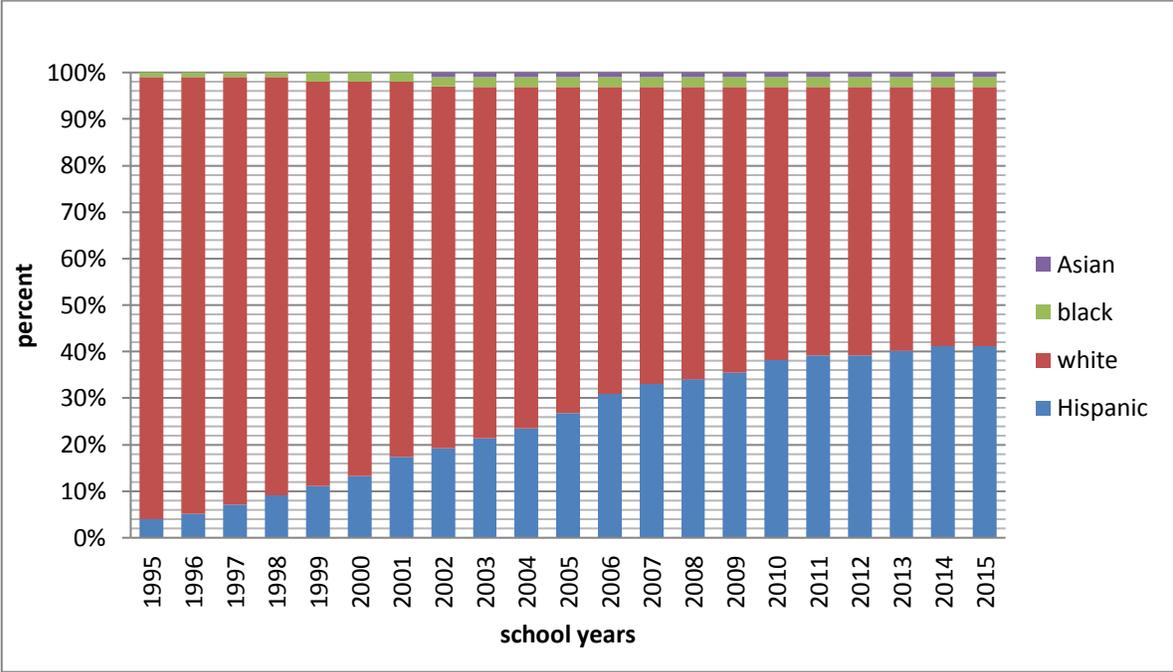
In this sense, it is worth to say that the total enrollment in DPS grew consistently since the arrival of Latino immigrants. In 1990, the city’s school district matriculated only 3,876 students. The number of students in 2000 was 5,074. The enrollment increased more than 100 percent in 25 years. In 2015, DPS enrolled 7,858 students. Undoubtedly, the Latino influx represented a demographic bonus for the city, and the school district.

Graphic 1: Dalton Public Schools Enrollment: Percent By Etnoracial Groups



The pace of the Hispanic (again, “migrant children” or “children of migrants”) enrollment in WCS was slower but consistent. In this school district, only 1% of the school population was Latino in 1990. By 1995, that proportion still remained small compared with that of DPS the same school year. However, since 2000 the increase of Hispanic student proportion progressively increased arriving to 40 percent in 2015 since the white students represented a little bit more than a half of the total enrolment. Once again, the arrival of migrant workers with their families induced a growing school total population in the WCS. In 2015, the district counted 13,410 students while twenty years before it had only 10,312.

Graphic 2: Whitfield County Schools Enrollment: Percent By Etnoracial Groups



No surprise, the reactions of principals, school officials and teachers passed from incredulity to resistance and/or incomprehension. As Julia –elementary school teacher, born in South Georgia- stated when we interviewed her in February 2010: *When the influx began, it was really bad. I didn't want to work here.* Just for avoiding the misunderstanding, Julia did not represent the teacher's anti-immigrant position at all; she was the opposite. In fact, during our participation in The Georgia Project initiatives, she was recognized, among the Dalton teachers, for being one of the most responsible educators in trying to include and integrate Hispanic students. She spent twice the summer in the Intensive Spanish and Mexican Culture Program offered by the Universidad de Monterrey scholars since 1997 until 2007 (the year when federal and local funds were cut off for this kind of training programs).

The early opposition recognized by Julia is understandable if we consider that, when the demographic alteration started in Dalton, no one has any idea about what multicultural education meant, or about what transitional bilingual education implied for schools and teachers, or about the role assigned to schools in integrating foreign non-English speaker students; no one did, just for one exception, the non Georgian principal of Roan Street School who had written a Ph. D. dissertation about the values and methods of bilingual education in the United States (Beard, 1996).

Paul, a school teacher in WPS and one of the most active participants in the Georgia Project programs since the beginning, proud of being one of the rare teachers in Dalton/Whitfield area who spoke other languages than English, shared his memories with us in 2010: *When I first started teaching in Whitfield, there were almost no Latino children here, maybe 1% in the late 80's and that number was growing. It was sort of a natural interest for me because I was teaching some foreign language courses and a little bit of*

*everything and each year I saw more and more kids coming there that were from Mexico and it was interesting to me about the whole process of learning languages, for them. I saw them struggling with no support being taught by indifferent teachers, many doing the best they could I think. But some of them were actually hostile to them, I believe. But most of them were doing the best they could, I will give them that. None of them had Spanish. None of them had any sort of special skills to teach ESOL.*

### **The Georgia Project**

The Georgia Project (GP) was a partnership between two school districts experiencing dramatic changes and a Mexican private university where we were teaching sociology (Schick 2009).<sup>4</sup> It was an agreement between people representing southern communities suddenly altered by immigrant influxes and Mexican scholars interested in supporting Latino American immigrants and their children. It was, since the beginning, a heterodox marriage with very few chances to be successful, as we will describe in the following sections. We tell the story of this marriage not with the purpose of assessing the achievements and failures of that binational joint venture, but to analyze -as professional, not intrusive, outsiders, with-clear-membership as members of the GP committee-, how the school dilemmas and debates were essential part of the integrating process of international migrant adults and children in Dalton. Again, for us, the schools became the doors opened for observing and analyzing while participating.

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<sup>4</sup> In this section, inevitably, we act much more as subordinated participants observers than a simply observers because we were active part of the GP since its inception.

How did Georgian educators, civic leaders and school officials take the decision to go to Monterrey, Mexico? This part of the story would be uninteresting if it was a mere anecdote. But it is not the case. It is a central part of the chronicle because behind the visible actors of that partnership, there were other influent participants who explain the course of the events. When "...Georgia institutions including state government and universities failed to respond quickly to Dalton leaders' impatient requests for assistance..." (Hamann 1999: 9), they look at the most powerful carpet industrialists in town. Dalton schools officials and civic leaders communicate to the captains of industries how the school transformations were the consequence of the decisions taken by carpet industry –and poultry plants- to hire foreign workers coming from Mexico and Central America. As this causal association between the carpet mills decisions about their workforce and the demographic changes was absolutely visible in a small industrial town, it was easy for school officials and civic leaders to show how industries were part of the "problem" as well as, perhaps, part of the solution.

That kind of interconnection between school districts and industries was not unusual in a mill town like Dalton. In fact, Dalton Public Schools' creation, in 1886, concurred with the installation Crown Mill, the first important carpet industry in town (Thomas 1996). Since the beginning of the school history of Dalton, there were number of interrelations between industrial owners and school officials: in 1886, "...the local leaders who were promoting Dalton's nascent development exploited a loophole in Georgia public education law that permitted cities to establish public school systems using local taxes; they established DPS." (Hamann, 1999: 129).

That sort of interrelation, typical in mill towns with paternalistic traditions (Patton, 1999), explains how the Georgian delegation arrived to the Universidad de Monterrey 110 years after the aperture of DPS. Shaw Industries had a productive joint venture with a branch of the Alfa Corporation in Monterrey, taking advantage of NAFTA opportunities. Since this commercial and manufacturing linkage, both industrialists of Dalton and Monterrey had frequent contacts and personal ties.

The interest of this story is that it shows the source of the binational interconnection. The GP was, in some sense, an accidental by-product of globalized industries and, also, an indicator of the capacity of big corporations to influence the making decision processes in educational institutions, both in a mill town, as Dalton, and in an industrial city (with long paternalistic traditions, also; Palacios and Lamanthe, 2010) as Monterrey.

### **The Dalton educators' foundations: assimilation, a unidirectional process**

Regardless these important and powerful economic global forces, people who intervened in the design and implementation of that unorthodox educational joint venture had played their own roles and followed their own logics of action. Let's begin with the logic of action and rationale from which the Georgian participants acted. According to Hamann (1999), the school officials and members of the Dalton Board of Education, shared the common beliefs that integration/incorporation of newcomers was a unidirectional process of assimilation based in Darwinists thesis justifying the idea of cultural progress (including certainly the ranking of inferior and superior cultures, and societies). In this vein, the Georgian actors considered that the principal task of the schools was to transform newcomers, in a unidirectional way, from foreign people into productive citizens respectful

of American and local values: “the structural framework within which the Georgia Project was being enacted can be further linked with the old ideas that immigration was a problem, that assimilation conducted through schooling would lead to its amelioration, and that cultures could be thought of in evolutionary and hierarchical terms.” (Hamann, 1999, p. xxv).

In more practical terms, generally, Georgian participants in the creation of the Georgia Project recognized that their community had changed since economic forces transformed its demography. They acknowledged also that those demographic changes drew several unexpected consequences they could not manage and probably they did not know how to manage. At the center of those transformations it was the school, the arena when the processes of integrating newcomers will concur. Schools were viewed as being the agents of that unidirectional assimilation urgently needed by receiving society’s legitimate members.

Based in these beliefs and diagnosis, school officials and members of the Board of Education, fully recognized they needed bilingual teachers. They needed to complement their teacher’s body. Meanwhile, they did not imagine or consider any change in the other crucial components of the educational processes like curriculum’s architecture and purposes, or methods implemented in the schools, or contents taught to students, or methodologies of designing tests and evaluations, or special training programs to local, regular and certified teachers, or new forms of pedagogical relationships, or creating new symbols for welcoming newcomers, or imaginative forms of establishing communication with parents and adult members of immigrant society. Since the beginning, the schools had

being considered agents that had to remain intact in their whole conception, except for one thing: they need bilingual teachers.

The first team of those bilingual teachers arrived from Monterrey to Dalton in 1997. Their arrival was vastly publicized in the local and most influent newspaper, in local radio stations, public and private meetings. The GP became a small but noisy symbol of some Dalton community members' will for integrating, from the schools, the newcomers and their children. The message sent to the public was: Mexican bilingual teachers arrived to our school for supporting the local teachers and the schooling success of Hispanic children.

### **The Monterrey scholars' initial proposals**

From the Monterrey side, the logic of action we followed was entirely different based in our interpretation of the "needs" of our Georgian partners. We read carefully the first letter sent to us by the Superintendent of DPS in September 27, 1996: "I have now met with our eight school principals on two occasions to discuss the possibilities of assistance from Universidad de Monterrey... We have discussed many strategies which could assist us... All of us agree that adult bilingual assistance in the classes would be of great benefit to all concerned. By providing instruction in the native language, these students could increase their skill levels in academic subjects. Also, we could provide intensive English instruction with the ultimate goal being that of a literate bilingual student... Perhaps this program could lead to an exchange of educators. We could possibly send some of our teachers for training in Mexico. Other ideas include: instructing our teachers in the Spanish language, creating Saturday classes for children and adults (families), summer school, obtaining textbooks in Spanish and many others". The letter pointed out not a unidirectional way of assimilating

process but a two-way welcoming integration strategy for migrant workers and their families. Indeed, we saw, from this letter, community leaders ready to act in transforming culturally, socially, and politically their traditional way of life.

Our interpretation of the first letter explains why during our first meeting in Monterrey, we proposed three new components of the interinstitutional agreement. As part of the signed accord, we suggested (as it was literally defined in the text of the Accord signed in March 1997):

- a) A “Bilingual Education Curriculum Design Program”.
- b) An “Intensive Spanish and Mexican Culture Program... educators from the two School Systems will spend four weeks of intensive Spanish instruction as well as immersion in cultural activities at the Universidad de Monterrey”.
- c) Additionally, we recommended a “Parent and Industry Workplace Involvement Program: The Universidad de Monterrey will conduct a comprehensive study of the Dalton/Whitfield community to reveal detailed demographic information related to the Hispanic Community. The information provided by the study will be used to develop and implement the following three programs: The recognition and development of community leaders; adult biliteracy; and parent, school and industry programs”.

Those programs, in fact, were subordinated to the most important segment of the agreement, at least for our Georgian partners: “Universidad de Monterrey Teacher Assistance...students and/or graduates will be assisting educators in the two school systems...”

Hamann (1999), analyzing the components of the GP concluded: "...DPS first approached the Universidad de Monterrey only with the intent of finding bilingual teachers; the other components of the Georgia Project were all suggested by the Universidad de Monterrey" (p. 162).

### **Validating the Monterrey's scholars foremost proposals**

Our field notes taken during our several early visits to Dalton in 1997 attest: we found that there were no real/significant interactions between the receiving not-homogeneous-society and the less-heterogeneous-group of newcomers. Even in the institutional arenas where interactions were feasible (the workplaces and the schools), the contact between "both" societies was limited to simplistic arrangements following subordinated relations (boss-worker, teacher-student). As a consequence, both "groups" remained strangers each other. Ironically, in June 1997, we wrote in our field notes: "one of the rare social spaces for inter-ethnic real interacting was the dancing night club for Mexicans and other Latinos where we could see white poor young girls who seemed to have learned well to dance Mexican music".

While working with our partners in Dalton, we had intensive, privileged, exhausting but fascinating field experiences. We visited schools, certainly, but also workplaces (several carpet mills), churches, malls, public parks, neighborhoods (for immigrants and for longer-term residents), soccer fields, restaurants (both for Mexicans and for non Mexicans), stores, hairdresser shops, bars, and just one dancing club. We talked with teachers, principals, school district officials, numerous Hispanic students, Catholic priests (and other ministers), industrial executives, civic leaders, restaurant owners (both Mexicans and Americans),

several business Hispanic owners and, of course, many Mexican newcomers and members of their families. We concluded that there was no channels of meaningful interaction between the “two” worlds. Moreover, we discovered that there were no interlocutors (i.e. people who were able to go-between). Nobody could play the role of mediating between newcomers and receiving society members, because none had the expertise of knowing both worlds.

That lack of real interaction was combined with a confusion we identify since our first visits to Dalton. Civic leaders, mill executives, and school official thought –a sincere thinking- that the Catholic priest, an energetic “Anglo” with German origins, was the legitimate interlocutor between them and the Hispanic community just because he was bilingual. Adjacent to the priest, it was, for them, the Centro Latino, a kind of private relief organization leading by a Baptist reverend from Puerto Rico. There were no interlocutors, even if they seemed to be, simply because they were not recognized at all by migrants we met.

It seemed, in consequence, that our assumptions about the needs of Dalton/Whitfield societies in order of building a new integrated society since the arrival of significant number of Mexican and Central American families were presumably right. The spirit of the three components we described in the former section was to train and empower multiple players able to produce significant two-way interactions. Even the role of bilingual Monterrey teachers, in the context of schools, should be, based on our findings, mediators between the school and children/parents, advocates of children, and mentors of students (explaining the rules, principles, and foundations of the American schools to them).

## The Bilingual Teachers Aid Program

The Monterrey bilingual assistant teachers (also *Georgia Project teachers*) program started in 1997 and ended up in 2001 in DPS. That program continued in WCS until 2007 and expanded its services to other school districts of northern Georgia and one school district in South Georgia. All Monterrey teachers who participated were Mexicans, bilingual, graduates from 4 years BA programs in education, linguistics or pedagogy from the most important universities of metropolitan Monterrey, and most of them stayed in Georgia schools two or three years; then, they returned to Mexico. They were not integrated as regular teachers but as paraprofessionals because they lacked of Georgia State certification. As paraprofessionals, they finally became translators not teachers, and even they were not considered as ESL assistant teachers at all. In the schools, after a period of doubtfully strategies about what to use the bilingual parapros, most of the Monterrey teachers became instructors working with a method of rapid teaching/learning English program known as *Direct Instruction*.<sup>5</sup>

Bilingual Mexican teachers became English instructors following an entirely scripted methodology that was presumably successful for acquiring English proficiency in a very short term. The monthly reports sent to us by the Monterrey teachers working in DPS the school years 1997-2000 described their dissatisfaction and distress because they were transformed finally in English teachers for Hispanic ELL's students (and, sometimes, for white students with learning disabilities). Their frustration was understandable, not just

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<sup>5</sup> Ironically, DPS officials covered the costs of Direct Instruction services and materials, at least partially, with the funds gotten from a Title VII grant that originally supported the implementation of bilingual curriculum in DPS schools.

because they were not English native speakers, but also because of what Hamman (1999) noted: “The line of thinking claimed by Direct Instruction proponents often comes with either veiled or explicit assumptions that teachers’ expectations for students are too low and that too many teachers are not competent enough to be able to deliver an effective curriculum without careful guidance or even complete scripting.” (p. 55).

From our archives we selected the most significant suggestions and concerns we discussed with our Georgian partners. First, we pointed out that the principals did not know or know very little the goals of the Georgia Project. Their lack of participation explained why the Monterrey teachers do not have clear ideas about their responsibilities and tasks. Hosted in the schools as *parapros*, they were merely substitutes of regular teachers in peripheral activities. We concluded from these events that the Monterrey teachers had limited membership in the faculty body of DPS. They were not only paraprofessionals, but outsiders, foreign people, who will never entirely share the perspectives of receiving society.

Second, we found that the only chance Monterrey teachers had to be perceived as useful for DPS faculty was to become efficient English instructors. We considered this a contradictory task with the spirit of the GP, given the fact that bilingual teachers coming Monterrey were not native English speakers.

Third, we insisted several times to use Monterrey bilingual teachers for supporting specially the most vulnerable migrant children: those who are newcomers in the United States and ignore American school rules, habits, codes, traditions. We emphasized the cultural and social transitions instead of language barriers. For example, in June 2008, we

pointed out: *Culturally, the "snapping" of fingers (gesture permanently used in Direct Instruction methodology) is sometimes regarded as "disrespectful" by Hispanics. (Note: In Mexico, you snap only at pet dogs when you are asking them to come close to you).* That was why we proposed to transform Monterrey teachers from “bilingual” paraprofessionals into cultural mediators –because presumably they understood the two worlds: children backgrounds and American southern schools-. It was an invitation to distinguish diverse categories of the students labeled *Hispanics*, asking special attention to those who were arriving directly from Mexico or Central America to Dalton.

Fourth, we called attention several times to the fact that the most valuable skill of Monterrey teachers was not only that they spoke Spanish (in fact, Mexican Spanish), but also they had some expertise in Mexican schools dynamics, contents, methods of testing, and curriculum. It meant that they were able to culturally communicate better with students coming from Mexico than any other member of the school body in DPS. Doing this, they could play the role of mediators and advocates of newcomers.<sup>6</sup>

Considering only the valuable linguistic dexterity (they spoke Mexican Spanish), we suggested to maximizing that resource as follows: *The Monterrey bilingual teachers could help the Anglo teachers learn Spanish, especially basic vocabulary and phrases that would be helpful to them when communicating with Hispanic students and parents (June 1998). The Monterrey teachers may teach advanced Spanish classes for Hispanic students (June*

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<sup>6</sup> In reality, this statement was not exact. All the Monterrey teachers came from one of the biggest and wealthiest cities of Mexico while most of the Hispanic students came from rural and poor villages. Additionally, there was social class line dividing Monterrey teachers and Hispanic students. The first were often members of the high professional middle class while the second were all of them members of the working class families.

1999). *Avoid translation in the classrooms: explanations should not be given in English and then translated to Spanish for the Hispanic students who do not speak English . If this is done, they will never learn English, or will learn it at a much slower rate* (June 1998).  
*Improve vocabulary classes; pay attention not only to words but to concepts* (March 1999).

Fifth, once we recognized, in 2000, that the schools would not be transformed themselves pushed by the GP innovative spirit of collaboration, we proposed much more modest arrangements where the Monterrey bilingual teachers and regular teachers would participate in order to support the children of migration. We suggested, to work *at the instructor/student interface level with the following micro-initiatives: comprehend and value the backgrounds of Mexican students, supporting a truth instructor /student interface, creating micromanagements of the mainstream curriculum, collaborating with Universidad de Monterrey Summer Institute veterans, doing bicultural accommodations, planning bilingual sessions, inducing Mexican students to seek a school success, and improve self-esteem of Mexican students*. Several Monterrey teachers and even Georgian teachers could implement those micro accommodations for the benefit of newcomer students. One the Mexican *parapros*, working in an elementary school, pulled off a small part of the school territory (in fact, a small room) as a symbol of the welcoming gesture of teachers and staff for newcomers. She decorated the place with familiar school symbols for Mexican children, hanged signboards in Spanish, and placed in the center of the room the Virgin of Guadalupe image. She built something like a sanctuary for Hispanic students where they could discuss in Spanish about their school distresses, talk about their families, their migratory experiences, evaluate their learning progress, and clarify some misunderstandings related with their integration in the school. In that “sanctuary” one of us

met a child, 8 years old, who was born in Guatemala. That “Hispanic” student, in fact Mayan boy, spoke very little Spanish. The Monterrey teacher decided to communicate with him in English while trying to learn some words in Maya. Interestingly, the principal of the school, a middle age woman who never had gone to Mexico, born in Dalton, was happy to see what the Monterrey teacher had done.

This kind of micro-arrangements was implemented successfully in eleven schools (eight in DPS and three in WCS) where the 41 Monterrey female teachers were working during the school years 1997 to 2002. In the sphere of home/school interactions, they clearly facilitated communication between schools administrators, teachers and Hispanic parents. They became, in every school, the point of reference for immigrant mothers and fathers. They were not just interpreters or translators. Certainly, they were when offering translation assistance or sending written messages in Spanish. But, simultaneously, they clearly improve classroom and school/home trustworthy communication.

Additionally, Monterrey teachers, playing their role of teacher aid paraprofessionals, frequently identify the real academic progress of LEP students –in terms comprehension of concepts, methods, particularly in math and sciences- even if students could not express this appropriately in English. They used to explain to Dalton/Whitfield teachers: “he/she understood”. These kinds of practices keep LEP students from falling behind in particularly important subjects for schools and teachers.

As Hamman (1998) noted, almost a year after of the beginning of Teacher Aid Program in DPS and WCS: “It is hard to overestimate the apparent positive effects of the presence of Universidad de Monterrey-trained instructors in Dalton’s schools. In particular, I have

noticed... The Monterrey instructors are frequently relied upon by teachers and administrators as information sources. As Dalton teachers try to communicate with and effectively educate Mexican immigrant students, they are significantly aided by the chance to ask a Mexican colleague...about how school is organized and conducted in Mexico and what the school experiences of Mexican students or parents may have been”.

We also recognized, as Hamman (1998) did, that the Monterrey teachers became counselors/confidants of Hispanic students. Playing this role, they could support children and adolescent to overcome hard family events, harmful migratory experiences, or painful school interactions: “...it has allowed the schools to become more aware of the specific needs and circumstances of individual students (as the Monterrey teachers have served conduits of information from Hispanic students to school administrators and teachers)”.

Sixth, frequently Monterrey teachers served as role-models for working-class children. Monterrey teachers showed, implicitly and explicitly, to their students that they could become bilingual, biliterate, successful in the schools. Particularly those who had worked in Dalton High School motivated their Hispanic students to be better students, accomplish the high school and aspire to go to a college. As Hamman wrote in his personal communication to the GP committee, in 1998: “Given the recentness of Dalton’s Hispanic influx, and the concentration of Hispanic adults in Dalton in non-professional job categories, it is easy for students and teachers of all ethnic identities to absorb messages linking Hispanic ethnic identity and job prospects which do not require high school completion. By their very presence, the Monterrey instructors serve as counterexamples, challenging such an easy but mistaken belief...Also the Monterrey teachers’ professionalism and professional credentials challenge anyone’s notion that Hispanics cannot or do not become professionals.”

Finally, but not less important, Monterrey teachers', in some cases, impeded the worst consequence (for Hispanic students) that happens when a common "misunderstanding" is produced in the schools: low language proficiency is the indicator of low intelligence. One of the Monterrey teachers, specialized in special education –degree earned in Mexico- who spent more than five years serving the schools of WCS, summarized her contribution to the schools as follow: "*my most important contribution as teacher there [WPS schools] was that I could professionally verify, in Spanish, the quality and objectivity of test's results my American colleagues used to apply for classifying kids... often I could change incorrect decisions they were taken with boys and girls*" (Monterrey teacher, personal written communication, February 2010).

### **Bilingual education curriculum? Language politics and immigrant incorporation from the schools**

DPS is a singular case. While the school district had the highest percentage of Hispanic students in Georgia, with very low percentage of African-American students, 100 percent of its administrators were (still are) whites. In contrast, we have the following cases (data from the school year 2007/2008): Gainesville City School District had 53 percent of Hispanic students, 20 percent of African-American students and only 66 percent of administrators were whites; in Fulton County School District, among the total enrollment, 10 percent were Hispanic, 42 percent African-American and only 57 percent of administrators were whites; Atlanta Public Schools District with 4 percent of Hispanics, 85 percent African-American and only 10 percent of administrators were whites.

Moreover, DPS officials distinguished among other school districts in Georgia by their seniority. According to the information provided by the Georgia State Department of Education (school year 2007/2008) the school administrators of DPS had 25.2 years as average year experience. Compared with other school districts in Georgia, DPS had the third oldest team of administrators of the state, just after Clinch County Schools (28.1 average year experience) and Putnam School District (25.3). In general, the school administrators' average year experience in Georgia school districts was around 20 and some of them with even younger administrators like Fulton (14.3 years) or Atlanta Public Schools (18.3 years).

When administrators of DPS (and perhaps those of WCS) were elementary school students, probably read the chapter number 45 of the 1954 *History of Georgia* textbook we earned from Dalton Public Schools library that describes the common cultural heritage of Georgia people. From this chapter, we learned that one of the most precious components of the cultural Georgian heritage is the language and literature, though in the following words: “The first settlers of Georgia brought with them one of the greatest cultures to world knows –the English language. The one great tie that binds people together is a common speech...Besides, the English language is richest in the messages it carries on the printed page. King James’ translation of the Bible, the works of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton – these few books alone are a library of the world’s best literature- all in English. We have this rich culture of language and literature today –all over the United States- because Englishmen settled here and drove out the Spanish and the French.” (p. 402, underlined by the authors).

Notwithstanding those Englishmen heritage, who drove out two undesirable languages, in the name of unity and civilization, migrants kids arrived to the schools speaking primarily Spanish –with the exception of some Mayan kids who we met in DPS and WSC in 2002, 2003 and 2004-. Intertwined issues related with that unexpected fact, these schools districts have never had students speaking other languages different than English and, even more, have never faced the overwhelming school reality of big number of students speaking the same language spoken in very similar manner (i.e. Mexican and/or Central American Spanish). Among the issues conveyed by that reality, we distinguish several important themes of discussion, all of them strongly related with the integration of newcomers from the most visible barrier (for integrating them): the politics and ideologies of language.

As we see, in Dalton and Whitfield, English is defined as primarily and unquestionable condition of migrant incorporation into their new community. Based on the narration of one of our first white Daltonian informants, Susan, a woman who worked as city government official many times, and deployed an energetic leadership despite her age (interview of 2000), the largest part of Dalton/Whitfield community had very positive perceptions about Hispanic immigrants -with only few exceptions, like some practices, for instance: driving noisy cars-. The only thing host community expected (according to our informant), especially white middle-class employees and working class people, is Hispanic people have to learn English as quickly as possible and, at least, speak it in public spaces. Hence, the most urgent task of schools –with the support of other institutions- is to push the transition from non English speaker students to good English proficient ones. Children coming with migrant adults represent the opportunity to incorporate the newcomers, if not today, at least

in the future. Accordingly to this urgent goal, DPS and WCS' teachers complaint of what they consider one of the major blockage in incorporating newcomers into the local community: *As principal I am always concerned with the lack of participation by the majority of Hispanic parents. The conclusion that most parents are shy is one reason for the lack of participation. In addition, the language barrier prevents parents from active participation. Parents refuse to improve their proficiency in English and the majority of teachers and administrators are unable to communicate effectively in Spanish* (middle school principal, 1999).

From this perspective, it was perceived as unacceptable that, not only Hispanic parents (i. e. immigrant workers) “reject” to learn English, but also they also “insist” in speaking their language at home, and in public spaces.

With that particular background, the bilingual education curriculum design was dead since the beginning. For our Georgian partners, the most urgent need was, certainly, to get bilingual teachers as soon as possible. Nonetheless, for most of the DPS officials, principals, and teachers the most important and urgent task was to transform the newcomer children from Spanish speakers into English speakers as soon as possible. The idea to design a bilingual curriculum for Dalton schools was born in the middle of a growing opposition of bilingual education all over the country (Gándara and Contreras, 2009). Not surprising, describing policy school context, not in Georgia, but in Oceanside, California (Mission Vista), during the late 80s, Valdés (2001) attested: “Beginning in late 1980s, Mission Vista schools experienced a rapid population change. Large numbers of Latino immigrants of largely Mexican background moved into the community primarily because of the availability of apartment rentals...Latino principals and teachers were scarce;

mainstream teachers were tenured. Educators –as members of both the community and the wider society- reflected what Cortes (1986) has called the societal curriculum. They had internalized views and perceptions about change and about the challenge to California of educating a rapidly growing number of new immigrant students. Some teachers saw immigrant students as defenseless and as needing help and support. Others, however, saw them as intruders, as freeloaders, and as part of a group that simply refused to become Americans” (31-33).

Understandably, DPS officials, at different levels, opposed the idea of implementing a bilingual curriculum in their schools. First of all, they were not familiar with that kind of pedagogies, curricular strategies, administration of contents, and school organization. Even if the Title VII federal \$500,000 fund DPS granted for starting the GP implied the promise of developing a two-way bilingual instruction, they could not accomplish these goals. They did not write the proposal; they hired an anthropologist of schools –at that time, University of Pennsylvania Ph. D. student- who served as link between the federal fund requirements and the school district urgent needs. Once the grant was offered, they did not know exactly what to do about crafting a new vision of the schools including diversity, creating adaptations and extensions in the mainstream curriculum, organizing teacher training programs, enacting new organization of the classroom dynamics at every grade level (Hamann, 2003). Second, DPS school officials were very proud of the quality and prestige of their schools. Every year they felt the pressure of Georgia State testing activities. They knew that DPS position in the state ranking of school districts in Georgia depended from the testing results.

Thus, DPS officials “rationally” had doubts whether the bilingual education curriculum design would support the standardized school outcomes or not. Viewing the events from this perspective (the contemporary U.S. schools testing trends), it was evident for us the contradictory processes within which school officials might take decisions. For one hand, they need to incorporate, integrate, socialize, new generations, including newcomers. For the other hand, they have to accomplish standardized instruction outcomes in reading, writing, sciences, math, etc. (in English). This is the singular circle that Fass (2007) identify in her synthetic history of the schooling in the United States: “As we have seen, each new major current of immigration had contributed to the alteration of schooling and its purposes. In the early nineteenth century, problems of republican citizenship had empowered the schools to prepare [socialize] the immigrants of the mid-century for their roles in the commonwealth. In the early twentieth century, immigration had transformed the schools into large, comprehensive social environments that were to compensate for the problems of immigrant groups while selectively preparing their children for the new economy. By the second half of the twentieth century, the role of schooling had become demonstrable and urgent for economic success [instruct, teach, educate]. In that context, Americans looked ever upward as they sought to ensure that immigrants became successful Americans”. (pp. 37-38). In other words, following the arguments presented by Fass, schools became much more depending from economic forces: achieving standards, testing, selecting, evaluating, classifying, comparing, and ranking. Pushing by these dynamics, DPS officials felt the pressure of maintaining their prestige among the schools districts of Georgia.

Finally, the hostility against bilingual education programs and foundations was openly displayed by the Georgia Department of Education. Hamann (2003) documented the misfortune of a Title VII grant proposal presented in 1998 by Hall County Schools District, titled *Developmental Bilingual Education*. Given the fact that the proposal required the agreement of state level officials -even if no state funds were involved- proponents needed a letter of support from the Georgia Department of Education. Instead, Hall County Schools District received a letter that contradicted openly the intention of implementing two-way bilingual education components into the regular curriculum in the schools. The Georgia Department of Education reviewer wrote: “The goal of the Georgia Department of Education is to ensure that Limited English Proficient (LEP) students acquire English language skills as quickly as possible. The expeditious acquisition of the English language will ensure the effective functioning of students in American society...” (Hamann, 1999: 143). These reactions, among others, drove Hamann to conclude: “...it seemed likely that any possible activist contributions from the Georgia Department of Education after the end of my study would challenge the existing enactment strategy of the Georgia Project rather than support it.” (142).

### **Welcoming or unwelcoming newcomers from the schools: the fragmentation of the host society**

At the time we started our visits to Dalton and Whitfield, J. G. Keyes (1999) conducted a survey among 264 teachers of six elementary schools of DPS (those who responded to the survey among the total of full time/half time teachers in the elementary schools; at that time they were 327). The main goal of his work was to measure the DPS “educators’ attitudes” toward bilingual education plans in the school district and the

presence of bilingual Monterrey teachers –who arrived for the first time from Mexico- during the school year 1997-98. The data he collected from a standardized questionnaire give us an insight into the fragmentation of local teachers’ views about the arrival of newcomers and the expected role of the schools in welcoming or unwelcoming Hispanic students.

According to the Keyes’s survey, around one out of three DPS elementary school teachers clearly judged that bilingual education programs, multicultural perspectives, inclusion of diversity, were not the ways the school district had to adopt in order to integrate newcomers. For instance, 27 percent of respondents considered that bilingual education programs do not support ELL students; from their view, it delays non-English speaker students “from entering into the mainstream of life in the United States” (p. 162); 42 percent of the teachers did not agree with the program of hiring bilingual teachers from Mexico.

On the other side of the spectrum, an important proportion (49 percent) of teachers who responded the questionnaire acknowledged their society was becoming bilingual (“English and Spanish is essential in this part of the United States”). It seems like often the teachers would recognize the facts and separate them from their wishes. Ideally, school curricula, organization, materials must to remain unchanged over the time. However, the drastic changes in the school district enrollment, by the end of the 90s, already announced the irreversible trends the schools had to face. It seemed also that, individually considered, one teacher can disagreed with the implementation of two-way bilingual education strategies in his/her school while can admitted his/her community is becoming, at least for the moment, bilingual.

The survey did not allow knowing well the reasons of the teachers' resistance of the inclusion of languages other than English in the schools. However, some short written explanations were documented by Keyes (1999). One teacher wrote: *I feel that people who come to this country should be able to speak English. If I went to another country to live, I would learn their language and not expect them to learn mine* (p. 150). A second one explained with much more accuracy, relating multiculturalism with potential violence: *I believe in helping our Hispanics assimilate into American culture. By providing so much bilingual education and bilingual social services, we are no longer helping them assimilate—we are helping them to segregate. If I moved to Mexico, I would expect to have to learn Spanish. If you would like to see multiculturalism at its best, then look at Bosnia. They are so focused on their differences that they cannot see anything in common, and they are killing each other as a consequence* (p. 151).

At least, these two *assimilisionist* teachers expressed their commitment in “integrating” the children newcomers, one of the name of nationalistic norms (one nation, one language), the other in the name of peace (no one wants to see Bosnia in the U.S. South). Both were far from the so called Citizens against Illegal Aliens' positions (claiming deportation and depicting obscures stories about Hispanic population).

Beside the teachers resisting changes in the schools, we found several teachers who welcomed the backgrounds and languages of their new students. They experienced transitions that lead them to improve their Spanish oral skills for better serving their Latino students. Some others ask the students to speak Spanish in their classes and ask their students teach Spanish to them. There were even two teachers we met which invited their Latino students to speak in Spanish just for challenging their Anglo monolingual students;

from that way, those teachers thought they produce respect and admiration for their Latino kids among their monolingual peers, making apparent that newcomers are capable to speak in two languages.

As it is evident, the school faculty was fragmented in terms of welcoming or unwelcoming, educationally, newcomers; and more important, DPS teachers had divergent definitions about how to better integrate Spanish-speaking children in their schools and classrooms. They were fragmented but not antagonists. For practical, moral, legal, religious or multiculturalistic motives, they shared nuanced stances about what to do for responding to the school demographic, cultural and linguistic changes.

Furthermore, and probably most important, the teachers postures about their Hispanic students, individually or collectively considered, were changing over the time. Cheryl, an ESL southern DPS elementary school teacher, born in Alabama, described her own itinerary as follows: *“I guess... it is unusual that I teach ESOL considering the area that I grew up in. I grew up in a small rural town on XXX in Northeast Alabama. It was a town made up of all white people. There were lots of prejudices against blacks. My first teaching job was in a majority black school. People back home could not believe that I was teaching in a black school. My last teaching experience in Alabama was at XXX, a small rural town in the valley between Sand Mountain and Lookout Mountain. This prejudiced community contained whites, blacks, and a large Hispanic culture. Teaching at XXX is how I was introduced to ESL. I feel that I’ve always tried to look at the people and not the color of their skin. I had not been around many black until I went to college. I was not around Hispanics until I went to Collinsville”* (Dalton ESOL teacher’s dairy written in 2000).

Julia, the teacher we quoted above and who stated: *When the influx began, it was really bad. I didn't want to work here* (Dalton Public Schools) described her personal story (we interviewed her 13 years after the beginning of the GP, in February 2010): *It was like that for me growing up. When I was raised up to not be prejudiced. Though my parents [born in 1945] taught me one way, they still could not get past the social stigma cause this was the early 70s when integration hit south Georgia, so it was a real hot social issue. They certainly encouraged me to have any friends I wanted and many of my friends were black, but still they never could...it really bothered my mother, and I could tell why she didn't want to say the real reason why when I would ask if one of my black friends could spend the night over...They raised me not to be racists and they're not, but go to that generation and they still couldn't get past that stigma. Now of course in my generation, I had no problem with that. It matters not one bit which child comes to my house if they are a friend of my child...but it took a generation to...shake the way they were raised. I think that's just what's going on now with whites and Hispanics. It's just 25 years later...That's why I think there was a lot of cultural awareness... culturally I had been—my training had been at XXX University. So if you think Dalton is backwards, you go up to XXX Kentucky and...there was nothing. My professors, I had one from Columbia, so he had no clue what Mexico was like [she did a minor in Spanish]. He'd never been there. And the rest were Americans who learned how to speak Spanish...A lot of my preconceptions of what a Mexican student was were stereotypical so I worked only 6 months in the schools before I did the Georgia Project so I had a lot of cultural eye openings. Realizing that, ok when a parent comes late to a parent conference they're not being rude, this is what is acceptable for their culture....there are a lot of ways that I learned to accept my students and my families better...a lot of us who did the Georgia Project were able to come back to our*

*grade levels and our schools and say 'ok, this is the culture that were working with' and I think that slowly the cultures have merged [fused] in Dalton. I think there's a long way to go, but I think it's the kids is where it's starting...I know from my 13 years teaching that's what has been the most exciting to see, was that it's starting in the schools with the kids.*

(Interview, February 2010; underlying by authors).

What Julia pointed out is that integration processes have to be comprehended as intergenerational transformations, as a longtime and not linear process. She prevented us to draw conclusions from snapshots during the process. She was aware of this, like other of our informants, as it was Susan (born in Dalton in the 40s), one of our first white Daltonian informants whose vision about the Hispanic influx we mentioned above. Given her long experience in the local government, Susan has the sense of history. She portrayed the process of integration as the realm of doubts, encounters and transitions that had been taken place in her own society by 2000. She witnessed how hard was for Dalton schools to integrate African American during the last 60s even if the city had no more than 5 percent of its population classified as blacks. As we attested in other place, African Americans were almost invisible for the white community members (Hernández-León and Zúñiga, 2005). When first black children enrolled Dalton schools (during 60s and 70s) –Susan described- very few teachers knew what to do with them. By the same token -she made the parallelism- Dalton current days (she means the beginning of the XXI century) are similar because educating and integrating Hispanics is about the same defy. Following her advice, the receiving community was not ready for facing the challenges involved in the sudden arrival of Latinos. The owners of mills pulled the migrant workforce they needed, *but when migration started, people had no idea of what to do* (interview in March 2000); she marked out: the community did not expected to experience such a fast transformation, and social

local organizations were not ready to respond to it. In her story she told to us, it was until 1996 when *we recognized we had problems with teachers at the schools* (in terms of being able and capable to teach no English speaker immigrant students).

In an entirely English speaking, Bible belt society with non experiences dealing with cultural diversity, like Dalton, we encountered Ted, who was born and raised in Dalton. He is (was) a religious man who recognized that changes he could develop in his K-2 school was the outcome of responsible and professional educators who supported micro and meso accommodations they implemented for welcoming Hispanic students: *I think I was the most fortunate of all y'all* [he is talking to other teachers we invited and gathered in a restaurant of Dalton for discussing about the evolution of schools; February 2010] *because Mrs. XXX* [the principal], *XXX* [the assistant principal], *and XXX* [the second assistant principal] *thru XXX* [the superintendent], *they really took it on. They took the Georgia Project seriously. We had 4 of the first teachers come and I actually was teaching a reading program then, a Reading Recovery, in which I trained those teachers to do this. Saw them using English and Spanish, the Monterrey teachers, to teach these children how to read and began to foster wanting learn the Spanish more to that I could relate vocabulary and reading... 'this word means this' 'oh, now I can take this book and go with it'. But everything started coming into place. We started getting 2 Spanish teachers. We had 4 elementary Mexican teachers there. They hired office staff. I think XXX [name of the school] was the first to hire office staff. They saw the importance of the first person who you see when you walk into the door for a parent to feel like this is a hospitable is to have someone say hello in Spanish. Luckily, XXX school has always supplied that front office, bilingual staff. For myself, I have actually taken Spanish and actually improved and I really use it daily. I have*

*more fun having parent conference totally in Spanish now and I think the parents appreciate it.* (Interview 2010; underlying by authors). Ted started learning Spanish when the GP was implemented in 1997. He spent two summers in Monterrey, then in Oaxaca, and one more in Cuernavaca.

What about parents, Hispanic and not Hispanic ones? We got less information from that component of the educational interplay and we collected the data in different moments of the story. In 1997, from the survey we conducted among parents of Hispanic students in DPS, we learned that 62 percent of them speak no or little English. We knew also that only 30 percent of them attended regularly to the school meetings while only 5 percent considered their children had faced strong difficulties in the schools. Additionally, 11 percent of them responded in the questionnaire that the most important reason to migrate to Dalton was to get better education for their children. Despite the common believe in certain circles –in the schools and out of the schools- Latino immigrants were far to be illiterate. The mean of school years they achieved was, in 1997, 7.2 years. Only 5 percent could be classified as “illiterate” (with 0 to 2 school years) and 10 percent of them earned the high school diploma or more.

Some parents –especially mothers- expressed, in our early encounters with them in 1997 and 1998 that the schools were not well serving their children, particularly in middle and high schools. However, they did not refer to discrimination or exclusion, teacher’s irresponsibility or school failure, but to the undesirable peer and discipline dynamics they saw in the schools.

From the white parents’ perspective, following information gathered by Hamann (1999), not directly from parents, but from teachers and school district officials, it seemed that poor white –and probably black- parents were aggravated by the implementation of the

GP. As a consequence of the divided social class lines that characterized Dalton since the beginning of the XX century (working class East side versus wealthiest West side of the city), the schools located in the East side were traditionally serving the children of mill workers and very few African American students. Understandably, under the testimonies gathered by Hamann from teachers and school authorities, poor whites and Blacks parents opposed the GP because this project was labeled to be conceived to respond to Hispanic children's needs. The reaction was expectable: "[the GP] encountered a muffled but real complaint 'why should they get what we never got?'" (p. 11).

In the fall 2010, we decided to test this reasonable reaction of the working-class component of the host society (something like: "the masters of our community are using our taxes for supporting newcomers; something they never did for us"). We interviewed five white mill workers who had their children in DPS or surrounding school districts:<sup>7</sup> Bill and Sherri (cutters in mill carpets), Cathy (sewer), Dale and John (truck drivers in different companies).

Bill was born in Chattanooga, did not graduate high school and moved to Dalton in 1989 because of the availability of "good" jobs; at the time of the interview he has three of his five children attending the schools in Dalton; he stated in the interview that he felt fine about being one of the only Anglo men at the factory and had nice friendship with another Latino co-worker.

Sherri was also from Tennessee, she moved with their husband to Dalton in the early 70s. She worked in several carpet mills and when the immigrant influx started their two

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<sup>7</sup> For obvious reasons, the interviews have been conducted by a white American MA student born in Ohio. She was studying in the Universidad de Monterrey at that time: "I grew up as a typical middle class American child in the suburbs of Fairfield, Ohio. Both my parents worked full time, my dad a pipefitter and my mom a secretary." (Stacy 2011: 7).

daughters were attending the DPS high school. She and her husband lived several years in the East side of the city. At the moment of the interview, she was working in one of the Shaw Industries branches.

Cathy was originally from Pickens County, Georgia; she has been working twelve years as a sewer (sewing the finishing ribbon along the age of the automat). In the factory, she was the only Anglo woman sewing among other Latino women. She has three children. The youngest one graduated from WCS high school the year we interviewed her.

Dale was also originally from a Tennessee small town eight miles northeast of Knoxville and moved to Dalton in 1990. He proudly told in the interview that he was of Cherokee descent. He has four children (4, 12, 16, 18 years old). The older ones attended DPS, and the youngest ones were matriculated in Chatsworth schools.

Finally, John moved to Dalton in the early 70s and worked as truck driver for 30 years in Shaw's Industries. He and his wife had two daughters who studied in DPS before the increasing presence of Latino students.

Bill did not identify any problems in the schools. Certainly he was aware of the growing enrollment of Hispanic students in the schools where their children were studying, but it was not a concern for him. He simply attested: *Its good [the Dalton school system], but sometimes it's not really what the budget can afford. But you know...* We learned from the interview that one of the oldest Bill's daughters got married with a Latino man. Since that event, Bill considered himself as grandfather of a Latina girl, his granddaughter. The interviewer asked him: *Do you ever have any contact with Latinos outside of work?* He simply answered: *Yeah*. Then the interviewer followed: *Yeah? Like how?* Bill responded: *My son-in-law, my granddaughter. I love them to death* (Stacy 2011: 157). The interviewer

used the level “Latinos”. Bill thought in his family members, also his granddaughter born in Georgia.

When interviewing Sherri, she did not identify any troubling changes in the schools, probably because their children graduated from high school ten years ago. During the interview she was not interested in talking about schools, instead she worried about the job scarcity workers were facing during 2010. She knew some “people” who thought “they” are taking our jobs –interestingly Sherri never used labels like “Latino”, “Hispanic”, or “Mexican”, just “they”: *They think that maybe they took jobs, especially now that there are not that many jobs. And a lot of them still have jobs. I mean I work, in my department, with Maria...And a lot of them has left that worked in that and went back to Mexico*” (Stacy, 2011: 104).

The youngest son of Cathy graduated from high school in 2009 in WCS. Again, she did not identify troubles in the school district as a result of growing Hispanic population enrollment. She only recognized differences between school districts in the area, but not in quality or resources. Interestingly, she was much more interested in talking about how embarrassed is to see people who do not speak English in stores or other public spaces: *You know. Somebody may be cussing at them or blaming them for stealing something when they didn't and they don't understand them. So you know, I think it's bad* (Stacy 2011: 160). Cathy acknowledged the effort was doing Nora her Mexican co-worker taking English classes at nights. Equally, Cathy pointed out that the schools had the task of teaching English of non-English speakers.

Dale arrived to Dalton in 1990. When the interview invited Dale to talk about the crucial changes that Dalton area had experienced during the 90s, he did not related that question with Hispanic influx but with other changes much more significant for him: *Well*

*it's grown so fast...when I came out here in 90-91 there was nothing like what there is now. Like the Bypass and all that was there...if you come down Cleveland highway where the Bypass goes to Rocky Face over here, wasn't even there. Most of the construction work over there I've done...So all those plazas and all of that, none of that was there... Nothing like that. There were 2 green lights in that whole area down there. (Stacy 2011: 162)*

For Dale, the more important –or at least more visible changes- during the last 20 years in Dalton were related with economic growth, not with demographic alterations. Then, following their causal arguments, he offered to the interviewer a good sociological lesson: economic growth attracts people like him: *I mean any time you got good jobs you got growth. And of course this is the carpet capital so. But you know as far as growth you've got people moving into there. The same thing I did you know. I transplanted from northeast Tennessee to here. You do what you got to do (Stacy 2011: 163).* That account of his own internal migration, allowed him to explain the arrival of Latinos in town. He did not see the difference between him and other people: [the Latino immigration to Dalton] *it fits. I mean they moved over here for a job just like everybody else has...(Stacy 2011: 163).*

Surprisingly, Dale, a truck driver who arrived to Dalton from northeast Tennessee in 1990, supported, if not “bilingual education” in these terms, at least the coexistence of two languages in the schools his children are matriculated. He considered that their four children were lucky because they had the opportunity to learn other language different than English. He did identify neither any problems in the schools, nor significant changes in 2010. His children were attending schools in DPS, then in Chatsworth School District: *My kids, you know, they've got Mexican friends. Their Spanish, they got, I'm sure they got to deal with them every day because there's a bunch in this area but the kids are kids. Whatever they're around is what they're going to learn. So in this case if this if the Spanish*

*kids have the English language and the English kids have the Spanish language so it's kinda like well it's here so I'm just learning as I go, and kids do that. And it's kinda a good thing for our kids cause when I was growing up it was one language and here they get a free language just being around it, you know. (Stacy 2011: 166).*

And John, a truck driver with long experience working in the carpet mills, had no interest in participating talking about schools during the interview. He seemed he has not observed substantial changes in the DPS. It was probably because their children were adults when we interviewed him. He judged much more attractive and funny to talk about the gastronomic inversing exchanges he introduced to their Mexican coworkers during lunch time: *we would all sit around and eat lunch together...and I brought the hot peppers...we were sitting around... I'd like to sell some of the restaurants around here some of my hot peppers.*

None of our interviewees had heard something about the Georgia Project.

## **Conclusions**

Acting, in this case, as non-intrusive participant observers and using the schools as observatories of a complex and abrupt process of integration, we discovered the ongoing cobweb that multiple and heterogeneous actors were weaving during more than two decades of doubts, fears, attempting, surprises, and achievements.

All along multiple movements and resistances, the Georgia Project, in terms of scientific purposes, served as device that invited builders of the cobweb –in the schools and out of the schools- to imagine, define, and act in the processes of welcoming or unwelcoming the new components of a Southern, industrial society. Every player, like all

social players, acted his/her role in constrained conditions, even the most powerful industrialists of Dalton who faced the competitive trends in a more globalized economy during the 90s and the decreasing dynamics of the national carpet markets that began in 2007. Nevertheless, industrial captains led the local macro processes always behind the negotiations and community initiatives. As Susan told us in 2000: *Taxes are coming from businesses; if businesses don't run, schools don't run* -in "...1996 city numbers indicated that approximately 73% of Dalton's tax base was business (commercial or industrial)-" (Hamann 1999: 130).

School authorities, in veiled or explicit way, recognized they were (are) facing changes that they did not induce, they suffered the consequences of decisions taken by powerful business owners in town. Their most visible challenge, then, was children talking and understanding other language than English. They seek help at state level institutions and did not find positive and useful responses. Incited by civic leaders, particularly the influential attorney member of a prestigious Southern lineage, school officials adventured collaboration with a Mexican university, searched and got the funds (federal, local, private), and advertised the heterodox project with unique traits.<sup>8</sup>

In the middle of those multifaceted desires and actions, there were the schools. These central institutions used important community resources and, maybe more important, they outline the future of the community. In the national context favoring English-only

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<sup>8</sup> "The Georgia Project was not a model created somewhere else and imported to Dalton, nor was it a model that arose out of a vacuum or from the singular benevolence of community leaders. The Georgia Project was an organic Dalton/Universidad de Monterrey creation, put together in the face of rapidly changing demographics." (Hamann 1999: 181).

educational politics, Dalton and Whitfield school's actors were (are) creative, purposeful even those who defended the continuity of their history and traditions at local level.

The diverse players we encounter during these years apparently were not fixed in their original postures. Often and generally, migrant and non migrants, they experienced changes and discovered new ways to define their ever changing situations and act according to this. Some of them acknowledge that the process of fusing diversity and building new sense of community is hard, long and risky.

Certainly, immigrants were in the most subordinate position, politically and socially. They knew they had to pay their fee of humiliation and segregation. However, most of them were parents of children attending the schools (and taxpayers). From this membership, they had (have), at least, a window open to weave a small part of the web.

Viewing the data we collected, it is hard to applied the dichotomist script to DPS and WCS that scholars used for explaining the interplay of integrating immigrants in host societies. According to this typology, host societies in industrial countries are divided in two categories of people: those who adherent to pro-immigrant scripts and those who hold anti-immigrant scripts (Suárez-Orozco 1998). At least, for issues related with schools and education, in Dalton and Whitfield, the making process of the integration web –advocating continuities or facing discontinuities- was inexorably much more nuanced, and veering.

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