

From Children of Immigrants to Migrant Children: Diverse Experiences in New Places of Settlement and the ‘Homeland’

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Abstract

Most studies of Mexican immigrants to new destinations have focused on the trajectories, settlement and integration experiences of the first immigrant/migrant generation. Relatively few studies have analyzed the experiences of their offspring. Over the past 10 years, the children of Mexican migrants who arrived in nontraditional destinations during the 1990s and early 2000s have come of age and are starting their labor market careers and families. At the same time, the children of more recent arrivals (post-2005) are still completing their schooling. Other second-generation adults have returned temporarily or more or less ‘permanently’ to their parents’ communities of origin after undergoing years of primary socialization in new destinations. In this paper we analyze the migratory trajectories, reception and integration experiences of children of Mexican immigrants in the small city of Dalton, a hub of carpet manufacturing located in the northwest corner of the Georgia state. Using survey data, interviews and two decades of research on Mexican immigration in Dalton and communities of origin in Mexico, we analyze the varied educational, linguistic and employment experiences of children of immigrants/migrants, including those who have returned to Mexico. Conceptually, this paper seeks to move beyond the taxonomy of children of immigrants as either 1.5 or 2nd generation to incorporate the more diverse experiences of those who have settled in new destinations, returned to Mexico, and those who circulate between new places of settlement and their parents’ homeland.

1. Introduction

The dispersion of Mexican immigrants to new destinations, a process that began during the late 1980s, has generated a vibrant scholarship largely focused on the migratory trajectories, labor market incorporation and social integration of the first generation (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2000; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2001). Scholars have also analyzed the process of immigrant community formation in new destinations, the variable responses of hosts to the arrival of newcomers and the consequences of large-scale immigration in receiving localities (Crowley and Lichter 2009; Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2005; Studstill and Nieto-Studstill 2001; Marrow 2011). Researchers have paid comparatively less attention to the children of Mexican immigrants in new places of settlement, many of whom are now coming of age, completing their education and entering the labor market (Hernández-León and Lakhani 2013; Silver 2015).

Based on 20 years of fieldwork in a new destination of Mexican immigration in the U.S. South and its feeder communities in Mexico, in this paper we move beyond seeing 1.5 and second generation individuals as children of immigrants to analyze the diversity of their social experiences as migrant children. Conceptually, we challenge the methodological nationalism of the categories 1.5 and second-generation and incorporate into the analysis processes of return to the parental homeland and circulation between Mexico and new places of settlement in the United States. Empirically, we show how new destinations of Mexican immigration offer a window into social processes that generate the varied social experiences of migrant children, including those who were born and underwent primary socialization in historic gateways and later moved to non-traditional destinations, those who were born in new places of settlement, those who are documented and undocumented members of the 1.5 generation, those who have been deported or have returned to the homeland in the context of family return migration, and

those who circulate between the country of origin and the new destinations of Mexican migration.

2. Theoretical Contribution

Over the past quarter century, scholars of immigration to the United States have increasingly turned their attention to the study of the integration experiences of children of immigrants in schools, neighborhoods and workplaces. Landmark studies have shown the varied experiences of children of immigrants in metropolitan gateways, such as New York, Los Angeles, San Diego and Miami (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). More recently, European scholars have followed suit, analyzing the offspring of newcomers in Amsterdam, Paris, Madrid and other continental destinations (Crul and Mollenkopf 2012). Sociologists have used the study of children of immigrants to update, extend and challenge the theories that account for the long-term incorporation of newcomers and their offspring to the social fabric and economies of destination countries (Ocampo 2016; Vallejo 2012; Zhou and Bankston 2016). Despite different theoretical perspectives and empirical assessments, scholars have found in the study of generations and intergenerational transfers a common framework to study children of immigrants. Counting from the point of immigration, researchers have dubbed the foreign-born generation the “first generation”; children (of immigrants) who are born abroad and undergo primary socialization in the country of origin but immigrate before the age of 15 the “1.5 generation”; and native-born offspring who grow up in the country of destination the “second generation” (Rumbaut 2005; Rumbaut and Portes 2001). Refining the generational framework, some scholars have argued that in the case of long, largely uninterrupted migratory streams, like

the Mexico-U.S. flow, several cohorts of 1.5 and second generations might coexist in one city or country (Telles and Ortiz 2008).

The categories of 1.5 and second generations are complex constructs, aspiring to capture the significance of place of birth, legal status, location of primary socialization, life cycle and intergenerational relations. However, a notable limitation of these categories is their methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). This is not entirely surprising. As conceptual creatures of the study of immigration and settlement, the notions of 1.5 and second generations have been used primarily to study children of immigrants “with their backs at the border, looking inward” (Waldinger 2015: 11). There are some exceptions to this dominant perspective. In *Mexican New York*, Robert Smith analyzed the negotiation of gender roles and identities of second-generation Mexicans in the context of return trips to the parental hometown in Mexico. In the same study, Smith also examined the re-creation of New York-based youth gangs in the community of origin in Mexico, which he attributed to

“the voluntary return to Ticuani of gang members who have had troubles in New York; the practice of New York parents’ sending errant teens, especially boys, home to Ticuani; and the changed social structure into which these teens are reintegrated, including the weakened means of social control and the cachet that returnees have among Ticuani youth” (Smith 2006: 232).

In studying the identities and life course experiences of the second generation, Smith brought attention to the role of the sending country in the transnational upbringing of some members of the second generation.

More recent studies of generational dynamics have focused on the contradictory experiences of the 1.5 generation, especially those who lack legal status; this group is sometimes

called the “Dreamer generation” (Gonzales 2016). As members of the 1.5 generation, Dreamers are foreign-born but immigrated to the United States at a young age and have spent most of their lives in this country. Despite the fact that their strongest and most meaningful attachments are to the United States, Dreamers have a tenuous legal presence and can be deported (although the Obama administration’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals of 2012 protected many from the immediate threat of deportation). Roberto Gonzales has studied the life course experiences of Dreamers, showing how they discover and come to terms with their “illegality” as they transition from protected environments associated with childhood to the exposed world of young adulthood. Having immigrated at an early age, these children of immigrants develop a strong sense of belonging to U.S. society, a sentiment fostered by their socialization and civic education in schools (Gonzales 2016; Enriquez 2011). It is in the process of seeking out higher education opportunities that these adolescents realize their unauthorized presence in the United States (Abrego 2006, 2011). As Gonzales states, “For undocumented youth, the transition to adulthood is accompanied by a *transition to illegality*” (2016: 11). According to Gonzales, the members of the 1.5 Dreamer generation, especially those who lack the protection of DACA and the sheltering environment of higher education, live their lives in limbo, in a permanent state of liminality “between belonging and exclusion” (2016: 28).

An emerging literature has begun to study and document the lives of the (formerly) undocumented 1.5 generation who have been deported and have returned to Mexico because of the educational and social mobility barriers they face in the United States. Contributions to this literature focus on the feelings of dislocation and sense of exile these youths experience upon return to the ‘homeland.’ As we show below in one of the sending communities to Dalton, some of these youths return to their parental hometowns while others settle in Mexico’s urban areas,

where they find employment in the thriving call-center industry and other services. The majority of these young men and women feel marginalized and struggle to develop a sense of belonging to Mexico. However, there is variation in the integration experiences of *los otros dreamers* (Anderson and Solís 2014). Not surprisingly, those with strong family support networks and financial resources in Mexico have had a smoother reintegration process than those who lack such social and financial capital and might have experienced downward assimilation in the United States, particularly incarceration (Olvera and Muela 2016). As Hirai and Sandoval (2016) have argued, the profound dislocations and the singular subjective itinerary these young adult returnees experience, lead them to produce reinterpretations of the past in the United States at the same time as they imagine their future in Mexico. Overall, members of the returning 1.5 generation have encountered unresponsive public institutions, a situation exemplified by the difficulties they have faced revalidating their U.S. diplomas (Anderson and Solís 2014; Da Cruz 2014; Gándara 2016).

The recent movement of more than half million children and youth from the United States to Mexico in the context family return migration has prompted academics to coin new terms to capture the experiences of this growing population. This large return flow is the consequence of multiple forces, namely, the new policies of interior enforcement, which have resulted in the removal of hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants every year, the voluntary departure of those afraid of getting caught in the deportation apparatus, and the dislocations produced by the most recent recession (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2016). Reflecting on this new flow, Zúñiga and colleagues have coined the notion 0.5 generation to conceptualize the experiences of U.S.-born children of Mexican immigrants who become migrant children when they move to the parental homeland. These scholars propose extending

the category of 0.5 generation to children and youths born in Mexico, who have experienced primary socialization and schooling in the United States, and have come back to the country of origin in the context of family return migration. While recognizing the highly consequential difference that birthright citizenship makes, Zúñiga and Hamman argue that,

“[T]ogether, [these migrant children] form a generation that brings a different experience and different worldview to Mexican schools than those schools anticipate or are accustomed to. Together they have more familiarity with the English language, the ubiquity of technology in American classrooms and public institutions like libraries, and most crucially, with the idea that semiotically being of a nation is contingent” (forthcoming: 11).

Breaking with the methodological nationalism that permeates the categories 1.5 and second generations, Zúñiga y Hamann explain,

“[W]e like Generation 0.5 because we want to escape the implications of being of an immigrant generation. With Generation 1.5, the one references being a first generation immigrant. We are not sure children in our sample are well described as being immigrants or emigrants, suggesting they are clearly from one nation and clearly now in another” (forthcoming: 11-12).

As we show below, migrant children of the 0.5 generation have diverse trajectories and experiences, depending on the causes and conditions of return, citizenship, gender, and social class. But they often share the difficult experience of being uprooted from the places they called home and struggle to adapt to their new academic environments, especially in regards to the used of academic Spanish. Although sheltered and supported by adults, these migrant children have to adapt to a new social environment, learn a different school culture, get reacquainted with

relatives and establish new friendships. As newcomers to rural communities, these children and youths have to adapt to different material conditions and negotiate new identities in a social context that greets them with a mix of stigmatization and indifference (Román González, Carrillo Cantú and Hernández-León 2016).

While it might be too soon to tell what the likely trajectories of the members of the 0.5 generation are, it is clear that those who are dual nationals imagine their future in connection with the employment and educational opportunities in both countries and particularly in the United States (Zúñiga and Hamann 2010). As we show below, some of the youths holding dual citizenship are already circulating between the two national societies, cultivating their bilingual and bicultural skills-set. Those who lived in the United States without authorization know that they are not afforded the same privileges as their dual national peers. Still, when possible, they continue to cultivate friendships with former schoolmates and neighbors in the United States, seek opportunities to speak English, and some have managed to obtain non-immigrant visas to return to the United States (Hirai and Sandoval 2016).

3. Context

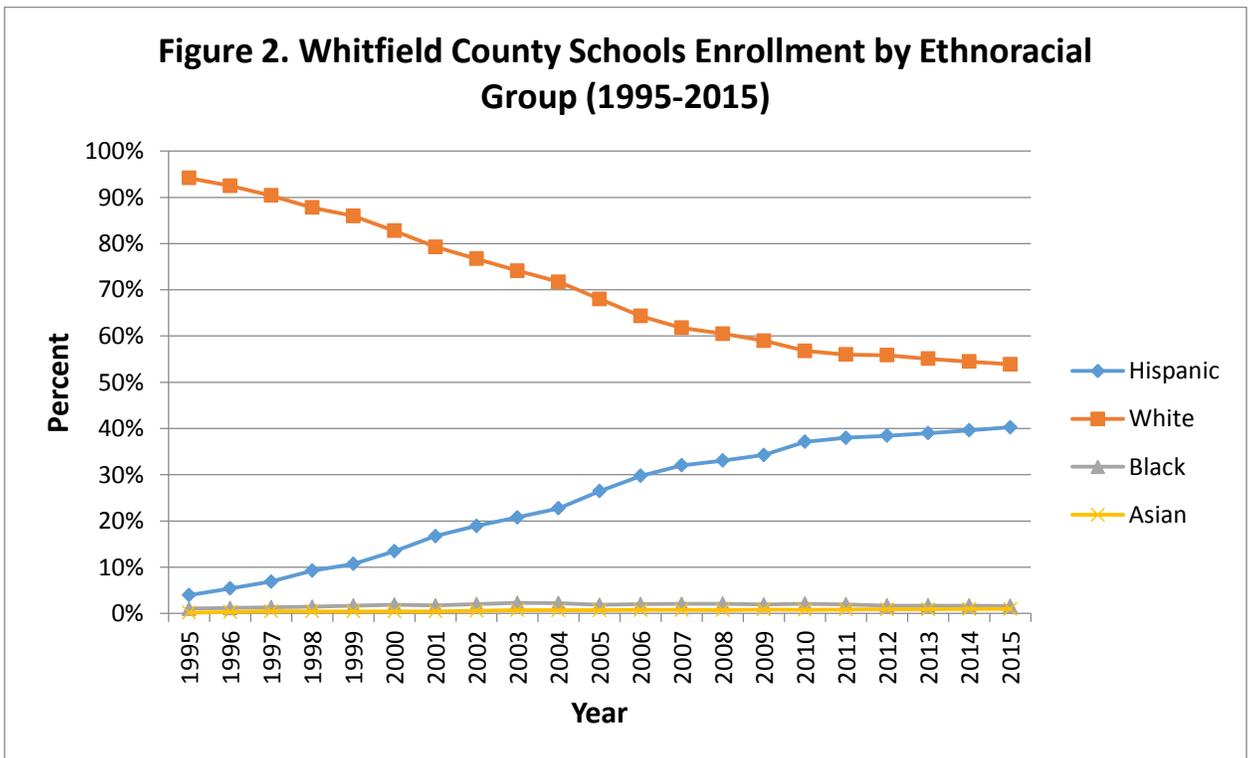
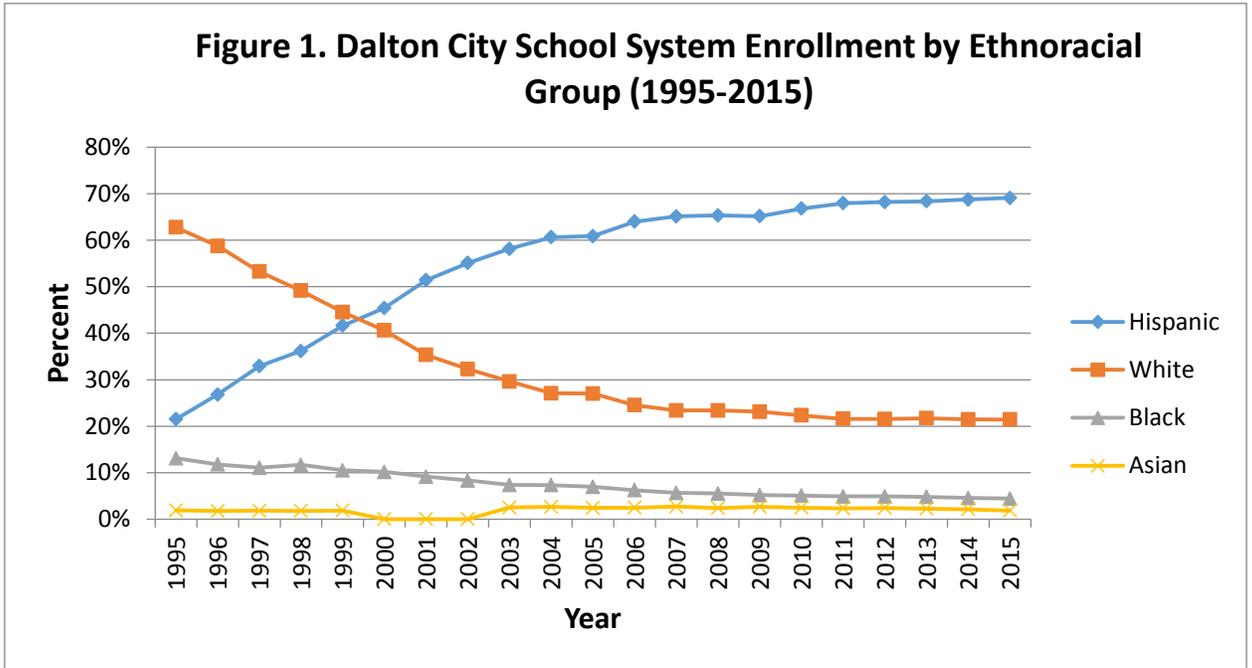
Deep in the southern Appalachia region and in the evangelical Bible belt of the United States, Dalton, Georgia, is internationally known as the largest manufacturing hub of wall-to-wall carpet in the world. This small city is the seat of Whitfield County and the economic center of a five-county region in northwest Georgia, where carpet production and its auxiliary industries are clustered. Dalton and its hinterland house carpet manufacturing companies of Fortune 500 stature, with billions of dollars in payroll and annual sales, as well as subsidiary firms providing specialized services to the big producers. During the 1990s and early 2000s, waves of business

consolidation left a few large manufacturers in control of the market. The Great Recession of 2007-2009 had a devastating effect on the carpet industry, wiping out thousands of local jobs. Today, 85 percent of the carpets and rugs produced in the United States are manufactured in the Dalton region, employing nearly thirty thousand people in the state of Georgia (Carpet and Rug Institute 2017; Patton 1999).

Recruitment in construction and poultry processing played a fundamental role in bringing a small group of immigrant pioneers to Dalton in the early to mid-1970s, who formed the first Mexican settlement in this city. Once in the Dalton region, newcomers quickly learned about the higher salaries and better conditions the carpet industry offered compared to work in poultry processing and jumped jobs accordingly. Social networks soon assumed the role of recruiters and fostered the exponential growth of the Mexican population in Dalton. Most Mexican immigrants in Dalton in the late 1990s hailed from the historic region of emigration in the western and north-central sections of the country, namely, the states of Jalisco, Michoacán, Zacatecas, Guanajuato, San Luis Potosí, Durango, and Aguascalientes. There were also small contingents of people from Guerrero, Chihuahua, Nuevo Leon and the metropolitan area of Mexico City. Social networks also helped channel Mexicans who had settled in historic gateways, such as California, Illinois and Texas, to Dalton.

Quantitative and qualitative data show Dalton as a destination for family migration. According to a survey of Latino immigrant parents we fielded in 1997, women made up the majority of new arrivals in Dalton in the 1993 to 1997 period, showing a clear trend toward family reunification (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2000). By 2001, the growing presence of Latino students had turned the local public school system into a majority minority district, a

trend that parallel, albeit in a less pronounced way, in the neighboring school district of Whitfield County (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).



In short, Mexicans arrived in Dalton directly from Mexico and from U.S. gateway states, turning the Carpet Capital into a destination for family migration and family reunification. The rapid growth of Latinos as a proportion of Dalton's total population summarizes the dramatic transformation of the local demographic landscape. In 1990, Latinos were 6.5 percent of the total population. In contrast, by 2010, they represented 48 percent of the overall local residents (American Fact Finder 2017).

4. Methods

The data presented in this paper stems from fieldwork conducted in Dalton and two sending communities, San Timoteo and Miramón (pseudonyms), in the states of Guanajuato and Zacatecas, respectively. We began data collection in Dalton, where we fielded a survey of Latino parents with children enrolled in Dalton Public Schools in 1997 and conducted dozens of interviews and countless hours of participant observation in schools, neighborhoods, restaurants, factories, soccer fields and people's homes, in numerous visits to the city. In 2008 and 2009, we conducted structured interviews with 58 male and female children of immigrants in the early stages of their occupational careers in Dalton. From 2007 to 2009, we conducted ethnographic fieldwork and interviews in San Timoteo, Guanajuato. We returned to San Timoteo and added other sending communities, including Miramón, Zacatecas, in 2016, where we, once again, conducted interviews and assessed patterns of return migration.

5. The 1.5 and 2nd Generation in Dalton

The conditions under which children of immigrants grew up in Dalton combined a mix of what scholars have called a positive and negative context of reception (Portes and Rumbaut

2014). Not surprisingly, undocumented families faced the looming threat of deportation as a result of the workplace the INS conducted in the region during the 1990s. However, the leaders of the local urban regime—the owners and top managers of the carpet industry—saw immigrants as a vital and welcomed addition to their workforce and contained the most virulent nativist and xenophobic attacks. Furthermore, local school leaders developed a progressive response to the dramatic transformation in the composition of the student body. Although these efforts did not unfold without contradictions and controversy, they symbolically and materially created a favorable context for children of immigrants.¹ More importantly, the children of Mexican immigrants arrived in a very well-resourced school district, benefitting from the taxes paid by the carpet industry to the City of Dalton. By comparison, the neighboring Whitfield Public Schools district, where Latino student enrollment also increased significantly in the 1990s and 2000s, did not spend as much money per pupil. While the ethnic composition of elementary and middle schools in Dalton reflect the class and ethnic segregation of the small city’s urban landscape, all students eventually converge on a single high school.

We focus here on the diversity of experiences of the children of immigrants in Dalton, which the categories 1.5 generation and second generation only begin to capture. The survey of parents with children enrolled in the Dalton Public Schools district revealed that this small city was a magnet for family migration and reunification. Nearly two thirds of the married and cohabiting couples we identified in the sample arrived together (or only a few weeks or months apart) to the Carpet Capital, especially after 1993. This pattern of family migration was strongest for individuals coming from California. In fact, according to our survey, 55 percent of the respondents who resided in California before moving to Dalton migrated to the Carpet

¹ Some of these efforts are analyzed in the paper Víctor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León are presenting in this conference.

Capital together with their families. For one third of our respondents, Dalton became a site of family reunification as mothers joined spouses who had migrated ahead of them. Most of these couples had endured periods of separation ranging from one to five years.

Many children of immigrants in Dalton were also migrant children, some born in Mexico and California and others in historic destinations of Mexican immigration, moving subsequently to Georgia. In the structured interviews we conducted in 2008-2009 with 52 members of the 1.5 and second generations in Dalton, our subjects recalled the contradictory reception they encountered in schools.² Recalling her first years in Dalton, Alma stated,

“In the beginning, you could feel a lot of hatred. You could feel a lot of the racism. As I said, a lot of the derogatory terms in schools by a lot of the students, but at the same time, you had all of these people that were welcoming, that were accepting, that wanted to help you and wanted to help you succeed.”

Young men born and raised in California recounted stigmatization at the hands of teachers and principals in Dalton who right upon arrival labeled them as potential gang members. Armando describes his interaction with a school principal when he first moved from Los Angeles to Dalton:

“The first day of high school, I was called into [the principal’s] office and he was looking at my transcripts and I thought he was going to say, “Welcome to Dalton.” I thought he was going to welcome me, give me this welcoming thing, because I’ve gotten it before. Like, “So, Mr. García, you’re from Los Angeles, huh?” I’m like, “Yeah, born and raised over there,” and like, “Oh, OK. So what gang are you from?” First thing he said, “What gang are you from?” And I was like...then it took me a second to like, “Wait a minute. What did he say to me?” Like, “Excuse me?” And like, “Yeah, I just want to know what

² Our interviewees include men and women who attended the Dalton and the Whitfield public school districts.

kind of gang you're from." I go, "What makes you think I'm from a gang?" "Oh, you know, you're from Los Angeles and being Hispanic, I assume you're from a gang." And I started laughing. I go, "I hate to tell you this, but not every Mexican from Los Angeles comes from a gang." "I'm just letting you know because we have a big gang problem here." I go, "You guys have gangs here?" I said, "I didn't realize Dalton had gangs." And he was like, "Yeah, that's why I'm asking what gang you're from, that way I can keep an eye on you." And that is...that was pretty much the tone of my high school years..."

Despite the racialization our interviewees experienced at the hands of peers and some teachers and school officials, particularly during the early stages of Mexican settlement in Dalton, many of them explained that "things got better" as more immigrants arrived and became a large proportion of the student body. They also spoke of good relations with black peers and more tense interactions with white pupils, who often called them racial slurs.

Hernández-León and Lakhani (2013) have shown that despite these early experiences, children of Mexican immigrants appear to be progressing steadily through the ranks of working-class and lower middle-class jobs. Armed with their bilingual skills, they have entered the local labor market as cultural and linguistic brokers between the predominantly Spanish-speaking immigrant population and the English-speaking native population. Many of our young adult interviewees reported that being bilingual and, in some cases, biliterate, gave them an edge in the labor market, opening employment opportunities to them. However, men and women followed different occupational paths and, therefore, different specific uses of their bilingual skills. Men joined their parents in the local carpet mills but assumed supervisory and low level managerial jobs, bridging the mostly White upper managerial echelons and the immigrant-staffed assembly line. In contrast, 1.5 and second generation women have avoided working in the carpet mills, an

environment they associate with sexual harassment. Instead, these women have utilized their bilingual skills in the service economy, tasked to connect businesses with the large Spanish-speaking customer base in Dalton.

Not surprisingly, these children of immigrants have attained more years of formal education than their parents and some are enrolling in the local Dalton State College (DSC) and other higher education institutions in the region. At the time we conducted our interviews, in 2008, only 11.3 percent of the students at DSC were Hispanic (Board of Regents 2008). By 2017, partly as a result of programs developed by the college, Hispanic enrollment swelled, making up almost 25 percent of the student body at DSC, the highest proportion of any public higher education institution in the state of Georgia (Board of Regents 2017).

While these figures may be cause for optimism, other data suggest otherwise. A separate non-random survey of adult Mexican immigrants we conducted in Dalton in 1998 showed high levels of unauthorized immigration. Specifically, 71 percent of the men we surveyed were undocumented while 88 percent of women lacked legal status, further suggesting that many members of the 1.5 and second generations in the Carpet Capital grew up in mixed legal status families.

After the Republican takeover of the legislative and executive branches in the mid-2000s, the state of Georgia began to pass a series of anti-undocumented immigrant laws. While some of these laws merely replicated federal legislation targeting unauthorized adults, other provisions set their sights on the undocumented 1.5 generation. Different bills excluded undocumented students from the benefits of in-state resident tuition, a provision that in practice has prevented DACA recipients from receiving this form of assistance to make college more

affordable (Foley 2017). Other measures prohibited undocumented youth from attending Georgia's most selective public universities (Gonzales 2016).

6. Migrant Children (or the 0.5 Generation) in the Context of Return and Circular Migration

6.1 San Timoteo, Guanajuato

San Timoteo is a small town of 1227 inhabitants (in 2010), located near the Guanajuato-Michoacán state line. Like other communities of origin in different regions of Mexico, San Timoteo has become a destination of members of the undocumented 1.5 generation and even a few who held and subsequently lost their Legal Permanent Resident status. An encounter with the criminal legal system in Georgia put these children of immigrants (and migrant children) through the deportation pipeline and back in the parental homeland. During the second half of the 2000s decade, these mostly young males had a visible presence in San Timoteo, where they gathered on street corners, playing dominoes and engaging in conversation. To be sure, not all young deportees come from Dalton. Communities like San Timoteo have veritable diasporas in the United States (and Mexico too). Some of these deportees lived in California, others in Texas and Illinois and a few more in Georgia. However, based on the observations and interviews we conducted in Dalton, we are aware that members of the 1.5 and 2nd generation formed and joined street gangs or crews in Dalton. Young returnees make their presence felt in town through tagging. In fact, many walls, abandoned houses and the modest plaza's gazebo are covered in graffiti with the names and emblems of local and Dalton street gangs. Even though youths claimed in the interviews that local crews are affiliated with Dalton-based Mexican gangs, it is

not clear how strong and direct such ties are and how important they are in developing a gang-like subculture among youngsters in San Timoteo.

According to the accounts provided by middle-school students residing in San Timoteo and Dalton, there used to be two gangs or crews, the *Arribeños* (the Highlanders) and the *Abajeños* (the Lowlanders), indicating the town's north and south divide along the street where the church and the plaza are located. These crews would fight with each other and with young males from neighboring towns during dances and other events. The same accounts describe that many of the Abajeños moved to the United States with their parents, thus preempting the previous style of conflict and leaving the Arribeños as the sole crew in town. This crew has absorbed the remaining members of the Abajeños and functions now as an affiliate of a Dalton-based gang, the Caguamos, whose tags can be found all over San Timoteo.

In fact, the local crew does not longer identify by its old name and appears to have fully embraced the identity of the Dalton gang. Such a development is the outcome of a seemingly growing flow of deportees who have come back to San Timoteo and who are members of the Caguamos.³ These forcefully returned migrants have been deported and barred from reentering the United States—some after having been detained by the anti-gang squad of the Dalton Police Department and later convicted of a range of felonies, including drug possession/trafficking and statutory rape. Several of them dress in full “cholo” attire, with baggy pants, loose shirts and tennis shoes with long white tube socks. Crew cuts and tattoos in hands, arms, face and torso complement their look. In the course of interviews, some of these deportees talked about having sojourned to Georgia in their childhood, not visiting San Timoteo in many years and now feeling like strangers upon their compulsory return to the hometown.

³ However, not all returning Caguamos are deportees as some of them come to San Timoteo for extended visits during the summer.

The homecoming of some of the members of the Caguamos presented two dilemmas for residents of San Timoteo. The first of such predicaments has to do with the reintegration to a locality with few and poorly paid employment opportunities beyond agriculture. Large assembly and manufacturing firms, which have set up shop in the region in recent years would not recruit these young adults. These companies and many other employers in the region often follow a policy of not hiring job seekers with tattoos, gang attire and prior drug consumption, which they can easily detect through the blood and urine tests and interviewing of applicants. San Timoteo's appointed political delegate, who represents the municipal authorities in town, expressed his concern over of the issue of gainful occupation of these youngsters in the following interview excerpt:

Political Delegate.- Ahorita todos los jóvenes andan desbarataos, bueno los que se juntan, son los que han mandado de Estados Unidos y son los que hacen un relajó aquí. No, no andan bien, andan robando, andan haciendo maldades aquí en el pueblo, andan como unos doce.

RHL.- ¿De los que mandan de allá?

PD.- De los que mandan de allá y son los que andan haciendo, como le diré, las travesuras. Los que son de aquí se dedican a la escuela, todos son buenas personas y se dedican a la escuela y de la escuela a su quehacer, lo poquito que hay que hacer.

RHL.- Estos chavos [los que regresan de EU] ¿tienen una ocupación, se dedican a algo o nada mas andan...?

PD.- No, andan de vagos

RHL.- ¿No se integran a la vida del pueblo?

PD.- No

In the eyes of the political delegate and other residents, the arrival of young deportees threatens to create gang-style conflict for the control of territory in San Timoteo. In several individual and group interviews, local middle school students, visiting youths from Dalton and members of the Caguamos described fights between the gang and youngsters from nearby hamlets passing through town—now a territorial turf to be defended against the incursions of youths from neighboring communities. The gang outlook is transparent in the words of a deported member of the Caguamos, who argued that they are “los meros buenos del pueblo, que aquí mandan... y ya nadie puede venir de otro pueblo a ‘quemar llanta’ o a traer el sonido a todo volumen.” In the course of these interviews, respondents also told of initiation rituals of new gang members, which included “being jumped” by several older members of the grouping. Constant street fights and acts of vandalism prompted the political delegate to call on the municipal police, which detained several youngsters in the municipal jail. Interviews with youths and adults alike revealed the existence of drug use, primarily marihuana. Although the evidence might suggest a spreading gang subculture in San Timoteo, teachers and other adult interviewees argued that some of these youngsters are merely “wannabe” kids who imitate rather than assume a full-blown gang identity. Alternatively, many more children and adolescents are involved with the thriving brass bands of San Timoteo, which often finance their instruments with family remittances, than with a local crew or gang.

Finally, as some children and young adults were returning to San Timoteo, others were only beginning their migratory sojourn, particularly through family reunification. While conducting fieldwork in the town we learned that even as the period of the Great Migration had drawn to a close (Hernández-León and Zúñiga 2016), men who had long sojourned to the United States, leaving their families behind, were moving their spouses and adolescent children to

Dalton but only after securing legal permanent residency for them. Having spent childhood and early adolescence in the community of origin, these teenagers were replenishing the ranks of the ranks of the 1.5 generation in the Carpet Capital.

6.2 Miramón, Zacatecas

Miramón, a small town of 1,490 inhabitants (in 2010), located in the northern section of the state of Zacatecas, has significant numbers of 1.5 and second generation youths, who, by virtue of their migration to the parental homeland, have now become members of 0.5 generation (Zúñiga forthcoming). Some of these migrant children were born in Dalton, while others were born in Mexico, leaving for the United States at a young age. Regardless of place of birth, both categories of migrant children have spent many formative years in Dalton, where they attended school. The immediate causes of their migration to the homeland are varied: some of them traveled with their mothers when the latter returned to help an ailing parent; other children moved to the parental hometown when either a father or a mother was deported to Mexico. Back in the homeland, these migrant children attend local schools—there are elementary, middle and technical high schools in town—and some adolescents are active in the local labor market. If in the 1990s and 2000s, migrant children experienced their sojourn to Dalton as part of a process of family reunification, in the 2010s they are living their “homecoming” as a return to the old arrangement of *a casa dividida* especially when fathers and older siblings re-emigrate to or remain in the United States.

As Zúñiga and Hamann (forthcoming) have shown in their research on migrant children, legal status looms large in the present and future of these youths. Those who were born in Dalton and are U.S. citizens, envision their lives as intertwined with the educational and employment opportunities available to them in Mexico *and* the United States. In contrast, those

who were born in Mexico and lived in Dalton without authorization, long for their time in the United States and hope for the uncertain possibility of a visa that takes them back to the place they once called home. Not surprisingly, citizenship and legal status are woven into the structure of opportunities and strategies that migrant parents built for their children. We identified one of these distinct strategies in Miramón: Dalton-based families send their children to the hometown after they complete elementary school and have them spend 2-3 years in Mexican schools, so that their offspring can be fully literate in Spanish. As a result of this strategy, in Miramón's only middle school one-fourth of the students are U.S. born (Interview with officials and teachers). When it is time to start High School (in the U.S. system), children come back to Dalton and resume school there. In pursuing this strategy, parents hope to make their dual-citizen children fully bilingual and biliterate and capable of operating in the labor markets of Mexico and the United States. In Dalton, we interviewed a young woman from Miramón, whose experience fit these dynamics, even though the motives for her temporary return varied slightly. In this quote, Elvira responded to the questions posed by Sarah Lakhani:

SL: So how well would you say you speak Spanish and how well do you speak English?

Elvira: Very well, both of them. As I said, we talked about being bilingual. I would say I'm bilingual, but I'm also biliterate, meaning that I can read and write in both languages. I went to school in Mexico, as I said, for four years or from the time in kindergarten up to 4th grade. And then in '98 I want to say, we went back to Mexico for a year, so just to stay over there with the family and I was in middle school there for a year.

SL: So why did you guys go back to Mexico for a year?

Elvira: Just to spend time and to finish getting everything ready and organized and then come back over here with my father, but the year that I was there was very interesting also. I was in middle school and in Mexico English is a required class that you have to take. My teacher, which was also the principal of the school, was teaching the class and he was like, “Well, you know, I know the language a little bit, but not as well as you do,” so I started pretty much teaching the class. Yeah, it was very interesting being a 14-year-old teaching a class.

The transnational strategies of these migrant children and their families defy the logic and practices of national school systems, which do not communicate with each other, and are structured around the validation of national educational careers (Gándara 2016). Having U.S. citizenship also puts on these young men and women the onus of potential sponsorship for legal migration of both parents and siblings, regardless of the current legal status and place of residence of these family members.

However, U.S. citizenship and the availability of documentation allowing these children to circulate between the United States and Mexico are not the only forces shaping their lives. Social class is an equally important factor determining access to opportunities. Children of migrants who own land and who managed to build a home in Miramón and accumulate some wealth using their savings and remittances, are afforded additional years of schooling. Conversely, the children of migrants whose sojourns to the United States have not resulted in the accumulation of assets in the form of a home, land, livestock and equipment, have to leave school and work to help support the family. Two vignettes illustrate the very different paths of migrant children currently residing in Miramón.

Miguel is 19 years old and was born in Miramón. He and his mother (and other siblings) joined his father in Dalton in 2002, when Miguel was five years of age. Three of his brothers were born in the United States. The family returned to Miramón when Miguel's father was deported in 2008. Miguel's aunts recounted the story that when he came back, Miguel stuffed his school diplomas in his pants and shoes. Upon return, Miguel resumed his education in the local middle school. He was a very good student and had a high GPA. Miguel received four scholarship offers to continue High School in the capital city. However, none of these scholarships included either a living stipend or the cost of books and materials. Miguel stayed in Miramón and began working at a nearby Japanese assembly plant that produces wiring harnesses for cars. Low wages and bad conditions made him quit this job. At the time of our conversation, Miguel was working in agriculture, helping his father in the local bean harvest. Miguel states vehemently that if he had U.S. citizenship, he would be working in construction in Atlanta or Dallas, installing steel rods in buildings, a job that would earn him as much as \$40 an hour. Miguel's father does not own land and works for others in town. Miguel's mother runs a small grocery store located in two rooms of the family home.

Contrast Miguel's experience with the case of Leticia. She was born in the suburbs of Atlanta in 1998 and began her schooling in Dalton. She moved to Miramón with her mother when she was 10 years of age. Leticia completed the last two years of elementary school and all of middle school in Miramón to then return to Dalton to continue High School there. She finished 9th and 10th grades in Dalton and once again moved to Miramón, to complete her schooling in the local technical High School. Leticia struggled with writing and reading Spanish but was supported by her grandfather and teachers, who, knowing that she had studied in the United States, used her as a bilingual assistant. Leticia finished High School with an excellent

GPA. Following the advice of her teachers, Leticia applied to a teacher certification program at the Universidad de Zacatecas and is already working as an English teacher in the local elementary school while she completes the program and obtains a full-time position. While her parents planned for Leticia to return and work in Dalton, she appears to be taking steps towards a professional future in Mexico. Although her father recently returned to the United States (after losing his Legal Permanent Resident status) and her mother operates a taco stand to make ends meet, Leticia's success appears to be anchored on the success and steady presence of her grandfather, who saved money, purchased agricultural equipment and owns land in Miramón.

Miguel and Leticia have similar experiences but also different trajectories. Both of them have lived and attended schools in Dalton and Miramón and, as a consequence, they are bilingual and bicultural individuals. While in the United States, their respective families lived in a mixed-legal status situation with some members being citizens, others legal permanent residents and some others undocumented residents. At the same time, the fact that only Leticia is binational and Miguel is not, powerfully differentiates their past and likely future trajectories. The unequal structure of opportunities they face is compounded by the social class standing of their respective families in Miramón. Despite his academic achievements, Miguel is currently toiling next to his father on somebody else's land. Propelled by her biliteracy, Leticia is building a future as a professional with the possibility of taking advantage of opportunities on both sides of the border.

7. Conclusion

In this paper we have analyzed the diverse migratory trajectories, educational experiences and early labor market incorporation of children of Mexican immigrants in Dalton, Georgia, a new place of settlement, and two feeder communities located in central and northern Mexico.

We argue that familiar categories of analysis, namely, 1.5 and second generations, only capture part of the varied social experiences of the children of immigrants. We call for the use of new analytical categories that register phenomena such as return to the parental homeland and binational circulation.

Using data from our two-decade study of Mexican immigration to Dalton, we show how members of the 1.5 and second generations are making inroads into the local labor market, actively using their bilingual and bicultural skills. We also demonstrate that while many of these young men and women are likely to remain in Dalton and the United States as immigrants, others have become migrants in their own right, returning to the parental homeland and circulating between the two countries. Having moved to Mexico as a result of the deportation of a family member, voluntary return or as part of family strategies that entail cross-border mobility, these migrant children have to negotiate their integration to a social environment that is new to them. Different factors mediate this process of integration, including gender, household economic resources, conditions of return, U.S. legal status of parents and children, and educational infrastructure in the communities of origin, among others. Whether these young migrants will return to the United States is an open question. While some long for the life they left behind, others appear to be building the foundation for a life in Mexico.

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