

FROM MIGRANT WORKER TO FAMILY SUPPORT WORKER: A CASE STUDY OF
CHANGING PARENTING BELIEFS AND PRACTICES AMONG HISPANIC HOME
VISITORS IN IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA

by

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Abstract

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Sonji Keizs

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This dissertation studied evolving parenting beliefs and practices among Hispanic women residing in the rural Southwest Florida town of Immokalee, who are currently employed as paraprofessional home visitors in parent education programs targeted towards new immigrants from Latin America. As styles of parenting and the manner in which individuals interact with children under their care are closely linked to class status, parenting beliefs and practices are the central variables examined in this study. This research sought to uncover transformations in participants' parenting belief systems and practices that occurred as they engaged in the work of socializing recent immigrant families to accept and adopt American middle class standards of mothering. The in-depth focus on the intersection of their traditionally held parenting beliefs and practices, with institutionalized expectations and practices found in the occupation of parent education/home visiting, provides novel insights into the dynamic processes of assimilation, acculturation, and identity development unfolding amongst second and third generation Hispanic women in contemporary American society. Qualitative research methods were used in this study including participant observation, content analysis, and in-depth interviews with study participants.

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Sonji Keizs Nicholas

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Styles of parenting and occupation are two of the most important indicators of class status. *Mothering* refers to deliberate and continuous actions taken by caregivers (primarily women) throughout a child's formative years, to improve the chances that their children will be able to function competently upon entering adulthood (Katz Rothman, 2005; Ruddick, 1989). Two distinct patterns of mothering linked to class provide context for the analysis of parenting in this study. Middle class children experience *concerted cultivation*, as they are exposed to multiple and varied extra-curricular activities which their parents believe will equip them to assume positions on the upper rungs of the socioeconomic ladder in adult life. By contrast, children from poor and working class families often experience *natural growth*, which is characterized by less structure outside of school and more freedom for children to direct their own leisure time activities with markedly less parental input and supervision than the former method (Lareau, 2003).

Occupations are likewise closely linked to class status and often, to race and ethnicity. This is seen in low-skill, low-wage entry level jobs to which new ethnic immigrants gravitate (Steinberg, 1989, p.37). The more seasoned members of such groups tend to know about and inform newer members of work opportunities which they in turn, seek out (Rodriguez, 2004). Subsequently, the occupation becomes one with which the particular ethnic group is associated. This phenomenon is observed in communities throughout the United States such as the South Florida town of Immokalee (pronounced *Ee-mock-a-lee*), that for the last three decades has attracted immigrants primarily from Mexico, Guatemala, and Haiti seeking work as farm

laborers (Thissen, 2004). Currently, entry level agricultural work in Immokalee is performed predominantly by laborers descending from these countries.

Through the processes of education and assimilation over time, ethnic immigrant groups alter their belief systems and customs such as in the area of child rearing; have opportunities to diversify occupational choices; and subsequently experience social mobility (Kaelble, 1981). This is observed among Immokalee women in this study most of whom descend from farm working immigrants, currently employed as paraprofessional family support workers providing parent education through home visiting programs targeted towards new immigrants.

Theory

This research examines identity development, socialization, and mobility among Hispanic women working as home visitors who have a history of working in the agricultural sector. In seeking to understand the connections between group members' evolving identities and their work, research questions are grounded in Interactionist Theories.

Mead submits that the self develops over time through processes of interaction and social experiences with others in a variety of settings throughout the lifetime (Morris, 1967). Participants in this study hold many statuses and carry out a wide array of roles including home visiting employees, mothers, Immokalee residents, daughters, Americans, grandmothers, Floridians, Chicanas, wives, interpreters, volunteers, voters, trainees, mentors, immigrants, friends, consumers, and parishioners to name a few. Depending on the setting, home visitors define themselves in any number of ways. *Work* as an institution is one of the strongest factors present in an individual's life helping to shape his/her self image. Home visiting work draws on internal qualities such as leadership and mentoring abilities in ways that study participants had not typically experienced prior to their employment in this field. Hence, engagement in home

visiting broadened their perceptions of the many statuses they held. This research explored home visitors' perspectives on their identities and as such, provides fresh insight into assimilation experiences of second and third generation Hispanic women as they are occurring in the early twenty-first century.

The work of home visiting is characterized by a high degree of autonomy for the home visitor. As the work setting is largely defined by exchanges between the client and the home visitor, the potential for each to influence the other is present, particularly in long-term home visiting programs. By design, clients are influenced by interventions made by home visitors (Sweet and Appelbaum, 2004). A series of evaluations of the Nurse Family Partnership Home Visiting Program for example, showed that participants altered their parenting and health behaviors after receiving nurse home visits, as compared with their peers who received no intervention (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University 2007, p.13). Less is known however, about the effects of participating in such interventions on home visitors themselves; hence this is one contribution of this research. Cooley's "looking glass self" suggests that we develop a sense of self by our imagination of how we believe others view us (Rosenberg, 1973). It follows that in the intimate relationship of clients and home visitors, home visitors gain some sense of self from their experiences with the clients they serve. This perspective was employed to unearth the ways in which home visitors in this study came to define themselves through their occupation and particularly through the clients they serve. In terms of ethnicity, clients of study participants shared some similarities with participants. Asking in depth questions of participants about their work and on their views of their clients provided further insight into participants' definition of themselves.

Globalization is a world-wide system of economic, political, and cultural exchange

characterized by the concentration of power in the hands of a few wealthy nations and powerlessness in the hands of the remainder (Green, 2001). Manifestations of globalization are evident in daily life in Immokalee where 45% of residents were born in Latin America and 70% have Hispanic roots (Pemberton and Dow, 2006). On a daily basis during the harvest season, one can observe bus loads of migrant workers arriving into town from Mexico and Guatemala via Southwestern U.S. states such as Texas and Arizona. The prospect of obtaining low level farm work continues to draw these groups to Immokalee as they try to escape joblessness and extreme poverty found in their countries of origin. The lives of most in this community are directly shaped by global economic forces that compelled many to leave their homelands in search of work opportunities abroad. The forces that drew them to the United States for work and the continued transnational status of many is just one example of how the economic aspects of globalization play out in the lives of contemporary immigrants (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc, 1997). The study of home visitors in Immokalee thus, is greatly enhanced by placing their lives and even more so, the lives of the clients they serve, in context of such forces.

Immokalee - Background

Immokalee is located on the southern gulf coast of the Florida peninsula in Collier County about 40 miles inland from its more popular coastal neighbor, Naples. The geographic distance between the two can also be viewed metaphorically as Immokalee is rural and impoverished whereas Naples is cosmopolitan and affluent (Pemberton, Dow, and Luallen, 2006). Much of the activity occurring in Immokalee, including work, is related to agriculture. Large farms specializing in the production of winter crops such as tomatoes, melons, and cucumbers, dot the landscape and packing houses abound throughout the town (Williams, Loret de Mola, 2007). Neighborhoods are highly segregated by race and ethnicity with the

community's oldest residents of African American and White American heritage occupying distinctly separate areas of town. Consistent availability of entry-level agricultural employment has attracted immigrants of Mexican, Guatemalan, and Haitian descent into town since the 1970's. They likewise reside in ethnically divided neighborhoods. As the twenty-first century began, farming continued to be central to life in Immokalee and the majority of Immokalee residents were involved in some way and at varying levels with the work of planting, picking, processing, and distributing crops (Roka and Emerson 2000). Over time however, descendants of immigrant groups increasingly became involved in the middle-levels of farm working. For example it is commonplace to find Mexican Americans whose family roots in Immokalee go back a generation or more, working as *pin hookers*; crew leaders organizing and supervising the work of other lower level farm workers (Roka and Emerson 2000).

In addition to mobility within the agricultural sector, the descendants of first generation immigrants have branched out of farm work altogether into more varied occupations (Rodriguez, 2004). This is the case in Immokalee. As a poor community, Immokalee has attracted numerous (though disjointed) social and human service projects and programs designed to assist clientele to address basic needs such as housing, education, nutrition, and health care (Pemberton and Dow, 2006). Diversity in client population necessitates that health, human, and social service providers incorporate culturally competent practices into their organizational frameworks (Betancourt, Green, Carrillo, Ananeh-Firemong, 2003). In Immokalee, this has meant development of a workforce able to negotiate both the professional workplace and the social worlds of the steady stream of new immigrants arriving into the community from Latin America and the Caribbean. In recent years, second and third generation Americans of Hispanic descent have increasingly taken on employment within such agencies and have become the face of

human service organizations providing direct services to the immigrant clientele (Roka and Emerson 2000). One such human service need that is being addressed pertains to child care and mothering, thus a growing number of Immokalee residents have found work in this field.

History of Home Visiting Programs in the United States

Home visiting programs with a variety of goals have a long history in the United States. Some are universally offered in communities, such as Florida's Healthy Start Program for which screening is available to all pregnant women who seek medical care during pregnancy (Florida Department of Health, 2007). Others are preventative such as the social service agency offering in-home parent education to families with children at-risk of experiencing child maltreatment. Finally, some programs are interventionist such as the school offering visits to families of children with identified developmental delays (Wasik and Bryant, 2001).

In the mid to late 1800s, home visiting programs with a medical focus were a mainstay in America. Visiting nurse programs for example, were established to address the health care needs of the sick and poor (Buhler-Wilkerson, 2001). Other home visiting programs were initiated to specifically address issues of maternal health as well as to *Americanize* the burgeoning immigrant population in America during that time. Though the stated purposes of home visiting services have evolved over time, socialization goals that characterized many of the initial programs are still present in contemporary programs such as those in which participants of this study are employed.

From the mid 1990's onward fueled by research linking inputs in the early years of life to outcomes in later adulthood, home visiting programs by the thousands were initiated throughout the United States (Gomby, Culcross, and Behrman, 1999). By design, home visiting programs that focus on parent education have the ability to alter traditional cultural practices by directly

changing both the way that participants view parenting and subsequently how they carry out its functions. Contemporary home visiting programs are based on Ecological Theory which posits that dysfunctional families are best served by a broad range of intensive human service interventions that are coordinated to promote child well-being and to address shortcomings in parents' child rearing skills (Brandon, 2001). According to this model, home visitors can mitigate existing family weaknesses and indeed, help strengthen family functioning by linking families to a multitude of services needed and available in their communities.

The workplace of the home visitor for the most part is the home of the client. In this workplace, the client and the home visitor each have unique spheres of control. The client is essentially in control of the physical space and as such, determines multiple aspects of the visit such as who will be allowed in the home for the visit; what the environment will look like when the visit occurs; time of day for the visit; and whether or not to open the door at all for the visit. The home visitor likewise exercises autonomy in the workplace in that she directs and controls the flow of information to the participant. Depending on the client, the home visitor makes choices on what, when and how she will share information. This particular workplace is characterized by intimacy of these two principal actors who are each influenced by the actions of the other. Thus, clients and practitioners alike are affected by processes and interactions occurring during home visits.

Immokalee Home Visiting Programs

Several parent education home visiting programs were initiated in Immokalee in the late twentieth century. This includes the following programs featured in this study: Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) Home Visiting Program; Collier County Public School Even Start Program; Children's Home Society (CHS) Healthy Families Program; Youth Haven

Natural Helper Program; Collier County Health Department Healthy Start, Links to Healthy Babies, and Outreach Programs; and Collier County Housing Authority Jump Start Home Visiting Program. Depending on the sponsoring agency under which each operated, there were slight variations in the primary goals of each program. Specifically, Even Start and Jump Start had a focus on family literacy encouraging educational attainment for parents and children in the home. RCMA had a more comprehensive focus on meeting basic needs of migrant families and services tended to focus on employment, housing, and education. CHS programs focused on child safety, thus Healthy Families was geared towards child abuse prevention. Collier County Health Department Programs had a medical focus and were geared towards promoting physical health of newborns and mothers. None of the programs were mandatory. Rather, all were voluntary and free of charge to clients. Clients were referred by community agencies or were self-referred for program services. Each program differed in frequency, intensity, and total length of time that services were offered.

A common theme of the programs was the selection of culturally competent direct service staff to serve as mentors to identified clientele. The paraprofessional model asserts that clients are more receptive to home visitors with backgrounds similar to their own, who can serve as mentors, and who once trained and provided with consistent supervision, were better positioned to work comfortably and effectively with clients in their home settings (Hiatt, Sampson, and Baird, 1997). The home visiting programs in this study employed individuals who to an extent resembled clients socioeconomically and culturally and who program administrators believed would be most effective in reaching out to clients.

Target Study Group - Home Visitors

The job descriptions and requirements for employment as a home visitor were very similar among the programs in this study. The Healthy Families Annual Report from 2007 described home visitors employed in that program and was useful in providing insight into the characteristics of other Immokalee-based home visitors. The highest level of education completed for all home visitors was a high school diploma or GED, which is the minimum required for the position. All had at least one year of experience working with children and or families in a social service setting prior to beginning employment as home visitors. The ability to establish trusting relationships; awareness of socio-cultural characteristics of the service population in Immokalee; possession of either English/Spanish or English/Creole bilingual skills; and the ability to be trained to deliver parent education and child development information; were considerations in the selection of each for employment as a home visitor. Sixty percent of home visitors were married; twenty percent were divorced and presently cohabitating; and twenty percent were single and never married. Those who were married or cohabitating had children ranging from 4 through 21 years of age. Twenty percent were grandmothers with pre-school aged grandchildren. The average age of the home visitors was 32 years. Home visitors reported to a BA level supervisor who helped them with managing clients on their caseloads (Children's Home Society, 2007).

Home Visiting Clients

According to the Healthy Families 2007 Annual Report, some risk factors for engaging in child maltreatment included single parenthood and lack of social support; having less than a high school diploma; late initiation of prenatal care; current domestic violence in the home; parent experiencing maltreatment as a child; and expressed approval of administering physical

punishment to an infant less than one year old. Clients targeted for home visiting services in Immokalee were parents with young children. In 2006, of the 796 women having live births in Immokalee sixty-two percent had one or more risk factors for child maltreatment and thus were referred to the Healthy Families Program for a voluntary assessment (Children's Home Society, 2007). Once enrolled for services, home visitors began to address the particular risk factors with clients that initially brought them to the program's attention.

One hundred and twenty-seven families were enrolled in the 2006-2007 program year. In keeping with the demographics of the community, 87 percent of the participants electing to enroll in home visiting services were Hispanic; eight percent were Haitian; four percent were African American; and one percent was Multi-Racial. Of those who were foreign born, most did not have the family support of relatives nearby to provide the kind of child care assistance customarily afforded to mothers of young children. If relatives were present, they tended to be peers such as sisters or friends who were also recent immigrants, and who were as limited in their knowledge of the community as the clients themselves. Thus for many clients, the home visitor was an invaluable part of their social network, fulfilling certain mentoring roles traditionally performed by mothers and grandmothers. The home visitors were also instrumental in acclimating clients to local community parenting resources and customs.

The majority (twenty-nine percent) of clients' age range at intake was 20-24. Twenty-one percent were in the age range of 25-29. Nineteen percent were aged 30-34 and eleven percent were over 34 years of age. Five percent were 19 years of age and fifteen percent of participants of clients were age 18 or younger. As far as housing, seventy-one percent were renters; twenty-two percent were living in homes of others; two percent were homeless; and five percent were

homeowners. Ninety-three percent were reliant on the public clinic for health care. Fifteen percent had completed 12th grade or GED; and less than two percent had some post-secondary education. The remaining eighty-three percent had completed 11 or less years of schooling at intake. Fifty-two percent of participants reported never being married; twenty-nine percent were married; and seventeen percent were cohabitating at intake. Income was not a determinant for program participation hence this information had not been collected. However, fifty-nine percent were unemployed at intake while forty-one percent were engaged in some form of employment. Clients included migrant workers residing in Immokalee during planting and harvesting season, October through May, as well as those in the permanent year round population (Children's Home Society, 2007).

Research Questions

Job titles used by agencies to describe Home Visitors included Family Support Worker, Parent Educator, Home School Liaison and Family Resource Counselor. Throughout this study, I use the term home visitor when referring to these individuals. They were in a pivotal position to affect changes to the beliefs and practices of clients they served who were representative of the immigrant groups from which the home visitors descended. They stood at the crossroads of old and new, thus in studying them, much is learned about the processes of assimilation, acculturation, and identity development. This study examined parenting beliefs and practices as it relates to the dynamics occurring at this intersection. It uncovered ways in which involvement in this work changed home visitors. This study further explored the work lives of the home visitors to shed light on changes in their parenting beliefs and practices as well as in their self definition, as they participated in home visiting work. Research questions were organized around the following general categories:

Workplace Socialization - I explored the extent to which the workplaces of home visitors contributed to their identity. For example, I looked at how their personal belief systems changed with the introduction of new information learned in the course of their employment as home visitors. I examined how this information altered the way in which they subsequently interacted with their own children, grandchildren, or other children for whom they provided care. At the same time this study queried whether or not there were aspects of mothering found in their cultures of origin vis-à-vis their clients, that home visitors found worthy of retaining and thus did not encourage clients to change. Hence, this study looked at both home visitors' embrace of new ideas on parenting and their preferences for retaining certain aspects of mothering and parenting found in their cultures of origin.

Racial and Ethnic Identification - Questions focused on how home visitors viewed the role that race and ethnicity played in their lives. For example, questions were asked on how they identified themselves ethnically and whether or not they differentiated themselves from the clients they serve. I inquired on whether or not study participants saw issues of race and ethnicity playing out in their work and personal lives and furthermore if this provided a basis for commonality with their clients. I also explored home visitors' perspectives on the immigration debates currently occurring in contemporary U.S. society in order to gain insight into their sense of connection to U.S. culture as compared to immigrant culture.

Social Mobility - In this area, I focused on home visitors' views on their socio-

economic placement in society. For example, I asked questions on home visitors' work aspirations and their expectations for career advancement. Along those lines, I asked about their anticipated lifestyle over the next several years as well as that of their children and grandchildren. I also questioned them on their perceptions on differences between agricultural work and home visiting.

Design and Methods

Qualitative methods for data collection used in this study include participant observation, content analysis, and in-depth interviews with home visitors. Twenty-seven home visitors were interviewed for this study. Of those, twenty-five were first or second generation Latina or Caribbean American women; one was African-American, and one was White-American. Eighteen of the study participants were women who had personal and extensive history in agricultural work as migrant farm workers in Immokalee and were employed as home visitors in one of the programs described herein at the time of the interview. Recruitment of study participants was facilitated by distribution of a flyer announcing this project and the need for home visitors to participate, directly to the agencies employing parent education/ home visiting staff in the area. The study was explained to program administrators and letters of support were solicited from each. Once I received letters of support granting permission to contact potential study participants, I began recruiting home visiting staff from the various agencies. All home visitors who met the criteria outlined on the flyer, had an equal opportunity to participate in the study. Those who expressed interest were contacted and individual interviews were scheduled at their convenience. Interviews began in April 2008 and continued through August 2008. Prior to each interview, I explained the study to the participant and executed a signed consent. Each

interview was tape recorded and later transcribed. Each interviewee was assigned a pseudonym which is used throughout this writing to protect confidentiality.

This research was conducted from November 2007 through December 2008. Throughout this period, I was a participant/observer in many events in which home visitors and other members of the community were present. These events helped to frame the context for understanding issues covered in this study such as immigration, parenting, work, and identity. They occurred in venues that were open to the public. They were attended by a wide array of community members; from elected officials to average citizens and residents. In particular, the Immokalee Interagency Council (IIAC) meeting is a coalition of Immokalee based social service providers, government, and business entities that have a monthly information sharing meeting. I found this to be a particularly useful forum for gathering timely information on issues of concern to Immokalee from the perspectives of these three major forces operating within the community. I attended IIAC meetings in December 2007, and in March, April, May, July, August, September, October, and December 2008. Other community forums and events in which I was a participant/observer included El Dia Del Nino Conference on Children in April 2008 and the fifth annual Migrant Matrix Conference in October 2008. My observations from attending these meetings are reflected in various chapters throughout this study.

As a community in constant transition, several reports had been written about Immokalee community life throughout the decade in which this study occurred. I reviewed and analyzed some of these publicly available reports for relevant themes. I also gathered data from the US Census, the Florida Department of Health, Florida Department of Children and Families, the Collier County Health Department, and from the Home Visiting Programs used in this study, for

content analysis. These reports as well as literature provided by the programs themselves were also useful in framing data generated from interviewing study participants.

As home visitors, participants had received training on various aspects of parent education. In turn, they were expected to transmit certain concepts on parenting to clients they served. Through in-depth interviews, I queried participants on if and how their parenting beliefs and practices had changed since becoming home visitors and receiving employment-related training on parenting. I sought to find out how their work as home visitors had influenced their personal beliefs on parenting. I asked participants questions about their own experiences with being parented as well as with being a parent or care giver pre- and post-employment as a home visitor. In summary, data collection includes community observation, review of primary and secondary data, and participant interviews.

Background of Researcher

Throughout the course of this study, I was employed as a Program Consultant with the Collier County Health Department. In this capacity, I provided contract management services to Children's Home Society of Florida, the sponsoring agency for the Healthy Families Program. As a liaison between the Health Department and Children's Home Society, my role was to ensure that each entity carried out responsibilities outlined in their sub-contractual agreement to operate Healthy Families in Immokalee. I also collected and analyzed program data and prepared reports for the statewide Healthy Families Florida program. Home visitors employed by Children's Home Society who worked in the Healthy Families Program were in the pool from which participants were drawn for this study. Although I had worked with these staff I did not have direct supervisory authority over them. These staff members and I had mutually exclusive employers and therefore, operated under the human resources policies and procedures of those

respective employers. Their voluntary participation in this study did not pose a conflict of interest and the non-compulsory nature of their participation was outlined in the consent form. With regard to home visitors from the remaining programs, I was likewise not in a position of authority over any participants and thus no conflict of interest existed. In April 2008, I received permission from the CUNY IRB to conduct this research and applications for continuing review were approved through completion.

I came to know more about Immokalee through my membership on various advisory committees; and regular attendance at community meetings. I have observed that many of the individuals who deliver services to the most vulnerable residents of this town are themselves, not so far removed from being the client they find themselves helping. Their capacity and desire to give in service to others, despite limitations in their own means, is noteworthy. Through this group, I desired to further explore and develop my understanding of socialization, mobility and identity development processes among recent immigrants. My established working relationships with individuals involved at varying levels of social and human service programs in Immokalee facilitated my access to the network of home visitors thus enabling me to locate suitable study participants.

Finally, like many of the women in this study, I was raised by immigrant parents who came to the United States in the 1970s. I am a 1.5 generation immigrant whose early childhood years were spent in England, Jamaica, and suburban New York. I married a first generation *transmigrant* from Belize, Central America who remains closely tied to his homeland culturally, physically, and economically (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc, 1994). I am the parent of a school-aged son so mothering was a significant activity of my daily life throughout the course of this research. My personal experiences with negotiating the issues in this work, i.e. immigration,

assimilation, acculturation, identity development, race and ethnicity, social mobility, and mothering, shape my perspectives and contribute to my desire for further study on these topics.

Significance of the Study

Broadly, this study contributes to the literature on the social processes of identity development, mobility, assimilation, and acculturation as they are unfolding among this group of women in present-day American society. The study also provides new insight into the world of women employed in contemporary home visiting programs. In addition to expanding knowledge of the social processes described herein, this study offers a unique contribution to the Sociology of Work and our understanding of the ways in which paraprofessional human service practitioners working in this growing field are not only instrumental to transforming the life course of the clients they serve, but are themselves changed by the work in which they are engaged.

CHAPTER II

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Immokalee Demographics

This study took place in Immokalee, Florida. In the year 2010 there were 24,154 residents of Immokalee and of those, fifty-five percent were male and forty-five percent were female (U.S. Census, 2010). Census data also indicate that Immokalee is a relatively youthful community as the median age was twenty-six years and more than twenty-eight percent of residents were from fifteen to twenty-nine years of age. The town has attracted large numbers of unskilled laborers from Latin America who are drawn to the area by opportunities for employment in agriculture as migrant farm workers. This partly explains the greater ratio of males to females as well as the youthfulness of the town's inhabitants as it is common practice for young males from the feeder nations to travel to Immokalee without their families in order to work.

The 2010 census data also shows that in terms of race and ethnicity, seventy-six percent of Immokalee residents are Hispanic or Latino; eighteen percent are Non-Hispanic Black; four percent are Non-Hispanic White; just over one percent is Multi-Racial; nearly 1/2 percent is Native American; and the remainder is identified as other races (U.S. Census, 2010). The data also indicates that nearly half of Immokalee families live below the poverty line and that the median household income is \$23,897.00. Low educational attainment among residents has limited job prospects and depressed wages. Seventy-one percent of all adults who are twenty-five years of age or older, had not earned a high school diploma and just under four percent had earned a college degree (U.S. Census, 2010).

Home Visiting Agencies/Programs

Twenty-seven individuals were interviewed for this study. All were home visitors employed with one of the six agencies/programs that agreed to advertise the opportunity to participate in this research among employees. The sponsoring agencies fell into the following categories: three (3) Private Non Profit Social Service Agencies; one (1) Public Health Department; one (1) Government Housing Authority; and one (1) Public School System. Literature from each agency/program listed missions, goals and objectives that were specific to the overall function of the particular agency. The following table outlines the goals of each home visiting program as displayed in program literature found variously in brochures, reports, and agency web sites.

Immokalee-Based Home Visiting Programs

Agency/Home Visiting Program	Type	Statement of Goals
Children's Home Society/ Healthy Families	Private	Prevent the incidence of child abuse and neglect; enhance parents' ability to create stable and nurturing home environment; increase parents' ability to develop positive parent-child relationships; promote child health and development; ensure that the families' social and medical needs are met; and ensure families are satisfied with services.
Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA)/Early Head Start	Private	Comprehensive child-development programs that serve children from birth to age 5, pregnant women and their families. The programs strive to increase the school readiness of young children in low-income families.
Youth Haven/Natural Helper	Private	Family strengthening, education, and support program for expectant parents and parents of young children. Assists families in overcoming obstacles and successfully achieving goals in order to ensure an enriched, healthy environment for their children.
Florida Dept. of Health /Healthy Start and Outreach	Public	Provides for universal risk screening of all Florida's pregnant women and newborn infants to identify those at risk of poor birth, health and developmental outcomes. Services include information and referral; comprehensive assessment of service needs in light of family and community resources; ongoing care coordination and support to assure access to needed services; psychosocial; nutritional and smoking cessation counseling; childbirth; breastfeeding and parenting support and education; and home visiting.
Collier County Housing Authority/Jump Start	Public	A family literacy academy that provides migrant farm-worker families of Farm Worker Village with English tutoring; adult basic literacy; parenting; school/reading readiness for pre-school aged children; tutoring and homework assistance for school aged children; and family counseling services.
Collier County Public Schools/Even Start	Public	A family literacy program designed to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy in low-income families. The program provides a unified program of adult education, parenting education, and early childhood education services, building on existing community resources where appropriate.

Each program had a different thrust based on overall agency mission. For example the agency goals variously included family literacy/education/school-readiness; child abuse prevention; and improved maternal and infant health outcomes. The commonality was that each provided parenting education to parents of young children through home visitors. In 2006 Immokalee

women gave birth to 796 babies (Children's Home Society Report, 2007). Families represented in this figure formed the pool from which potential clients for home visiting programs were drawn. The primary participant in each program was most often the mother in such households and home visitors were charged with doing outreach to engage these women into program services. Once enrolled in the parent education program, home visitors served as the principal liaison between the clients and their agencies and became the face of the agency to the participant.

Home Visitors: Migrants vs. Non-Migrants

Interviews with study participants were conducted from April 2008 through August 2008. Of the twenty-seven home visitors interviewed, eighteen identified themselves as former migrant farm workers. The remaining nine study participants did not have history of working in agriculture as migrant farm workers. As this study specifically sought to understand changes in parenting beliefs and practices among Hispanic women working in human services after having worked as migrant farm workers, analysis presented throughout this writing is focused on the eighteen study participants in this category.

Home Visitor Race and Ethnicity

The complexity of the issue of race was manifested when querying study participants about their racial and ethnic backgrounds. As these are highly subjective terms, a definitive answer to the question of one's race or ethnicity is illusive as it is a function of both individual interpretation and meanings ascribed to such terms. Seeking to categorize individuals on the basis of their physical characteristics, their place of birth, citizenship, their parents' place of birth, ancestry, etc. is complicated. The responses offered by study participants when asked about their racial and ethnic identity, exemplifies the subjectivity of this aspect of identity. To

provide a sense of their backgrounds, I offer both my observations as well as participant descriptions of themselves when asked about their race and ethnicity.

From my observation of their physical and linguistic characteristics, twenty-two of the twenty-seven home visitors interviewed were of Hispanic descent; four were Black which includes three who were Haitian; and one was White. Of the eighteen home visitors in the target population, one hundred percent were of Hispanic descent. I asked each a series of questions designed to prompt responses to their perceptions of their racial and ethnic backgrounds. I also wanted to get a sense of what each person considered her nationality to be. Questions 4, 5, 37, 38, 40 and 41 were designed to address racial and ethnic identity as well as nationality. Question #4 asked each participant to identify her place of birth. Question #5 asked the respondent to state the name of the place she considers to be her home town. Question #37 directly asked the respondent to state her racial and ethnic background. Question #38, asked where her parents were born. Finally, Questions 40 and 41 queried participants on any perceived connections to the country from which her ancestors came and the frequency of trips made to that country.

The variety of answers participants provided illustrate the complexity of the issue and the myriad ways in which humans construct racial and ethnic identity. Questions 4 and 38 were easier for participants to answer while Questions 5, 37, 40, and 41 required more consideration before responding. Of the eighteen home visitors in the target population, thirteen were born in the United States, four were born in Mexico, and one was born in Guatemala. Six had both parents born in Mexico and six had both parents born in Texas. The parents of two participants were born in Guatemala. Two participants each had one parent born in Texas and the other in Mexico. The remaining two participants had parents who were born in different places. The

first participant had parents born in Mexico and Puerto Rico and the second had parents born in Oklahoma and Texas.

When asked about their race and ethnic backgrounds, most participants paused to contemplate before answering. The response that was given most frequently was Hispanic and seven participants indicated this ethnicity choice. Some respondents were particularly reflective in their replies. Celia for example stated, “I am Hispanic but I am not from Mexico but my ancestors were from Mexico...my grandparents. But my parents were born in Texas so...I am Mexican American or Hispanic...I guess Hispanic.” Sara who had Mexican ancestry, likewise voiced ambiguity as she thought through the variety of terms that could be used to describe her ethnically. She said, “It really confuses me because a lot of people say you’re Hispanic. I know I am Hispanic. I am not Latina because to me Latinas are like Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other nationalities.” Nilsa likewise concurred stating, “I am Hispanic. I don’t like to be labeled Mexican. To me, Mexican means you are from Mexico. I don’t like Latino either. Hispanic means you are Spanish. Latino means you are mixed.”

On the one hand, these comments indicate respondents’ uncertainty in trying to define and place themselves ethnically. On the other hand, the seven participants who claimed Hispanic as their ethnicity seemed more certain in their choice after thinking about and then voicing it, than their peers who selected other names to define themselves. They also appeared confident in declaring the terms that did not accurately reflect who they were. The terms *Hispanic* and *Latino* were adopted into official use in 1976 by the U.S. government to describe U.S. residents who had origins in Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Central America, South America, and other Spanish speaking countries (Passel and Taylor, 2009). They are uniquely American expressions that came into widespread usage following years of lobbying led primarily by Mexican American

activists in the 1970s. Since then, individuals descending from Spanish speaking countries have used these terms variously to describe and identify themselves. While most U.S. residents who descend from Spanish speaking countries prefer to identify themselves by country of ancestry, the majority of those who choose a pan-ethnic identifier select *Hispanic* (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, and Velasco, 2012). Hence, interviewees' choice to identify themselves as Hispanic is consistent with national trends.

Three participants defined themselves as Mexican American and three described themselves as Mexican. Of those who stated they were Mexican, Anna was the only participant who was actually born in Mexico. Although she had been in the United States for more than thirty years and had given birth to and raised her children in the U.S., Anna asserted that she remained very much connected to her Mexican heritage. She stated, "Even if I am a citizen here, I am Mexican. Your parents are Mexican, wherever you go you are Mexican." Two participants stated they were American. Linda was one of the two who stated this choice when asked about her ethnicity. Her response similarly demonstrates the complexity of the ethnicity issue as she noted,

My dad is Puerto Rican and my mom is Mexican from Texas. I consider myself...I don't really know (laughs). I was born here in the U. S. Both of them were born in the United States. To be honest, I don't know. I work a lot with these Guatemalans and Mexicans from Mexico. I don't know. I consider myself an American, but when it comes to them, I could be just as much of Mexican as them or as much of a Guatemalan as the Guatemalans too.

The remaining three individuals had responses that were unique from their peers. Maria who was born in Guatemala but came to the U.S. during early childhood identified herself as Guatemalan. Perla was the sole individual to describe herself as White Hispanic. Finally, Erika was the only individual to respond without employing any terms that are typically used when

discussing race or ethnicity. Erika stated, “I consider myself to be human...period. I have always told my daughters I better never hear you say derogatory words about any ethnic groups. As long as you get along and respect each other. We are all humans.”

To gain a broader understanding of participants’ connections to Mexico or Guatemala, it was instructive to review their responses to additional questions on their parents’ place of birth; their sense of connection to those countries; and the frequency of visits made to Mexico or Guatemala. Several participants whose parents were from Texas indicated that their families lived in close proximity to the Mexican border. As such there was regular exchange between and among residents of both sides of the border. As Celia described,

I visit across the border, not all the way into Mexico. I enjoy going. It’s nice. I don’t have relatives in Mexico; I have relatives in Texas but you know the border of Mexico is like nine miles from where my family is so we often go there to buy stuff.

When asked about their sense of connection to Mexico or Guatemala, twelve respondents expressed little or no connection with these countries. Four participants who had relatives such as grandparents in these two countries, expressed some connection to Mexico or Guatemala based on the presence of those close relatives. Finally, two participants expressed particularly strong connections to these ancestral homelands. One of these included Maria who was born in Guatemala but came to the U.S. during early childhood. She is now a naturalized U.S. citizen.

Maria stated,

I have relatives in Guatemala. I still see it as being a very important part of me culturally. I guess I am one of the fortunate ones that did not lose the dialect. If you ask me where I am from or who I am, I would still say no matter what I am Guatemalan through and through.

Maria’s comments illustrate the link that persists and connects her to her Guatemalan heritage despite having lived in the U.S. for several years and even obtaining citizenship.

The number of trips made to Mexico and Guatemala over time also provided some insight into participants' connection to, or conversely their disconnection from these lands. Thirteen participants had made two or fewer trips to Mexico or Guatemala from the United States in their lifetimes. Although one home visitor stated financial reasons for not going more often, most simply saw no reason to take such trips with any regularity. A frequently stated reason for travel to Mexico or Guatemala was to attend the funeral of a loved one. Once such relatives were deceased, many participants expressed that there was no longer a reason to return to these countries. Conversely, there were five participants who expressed a more regular pattern of taking trips to these countries. Of those, three traveled about every two years and two traveled at least once per year.

Home Visitor Age, Gender, Marital Status, and Childbearing

Participants in this study were all women who ranged in age from twenty-six through sixty. The average age was thirty-seven. Four participants were in the age range between twenty-five and twenty-nine. Four participants were in the age range between thirty and thirty four and one was in the thirty-five to thirty-nine age category. The majority (seven) were between forty and forty-four years of age. One was in the fifty to fifty-four age grouping and one was age sixty.

The vast majority of study participants were married. Of the fifteen that had been married in their lifetimes, twelve were still married; two were currently separated; and one was widowed. Several home visitors reported getting married prior to age eighteen. This was a fairly common practice among this group as eight out of twelve of those who were currently married stated that they were wedded before age eighteen; some as early as age fifteen. Three study participants had never been married.

Fifteen participants had given birth to between one and four children. Two had one child each; four had two children; five had three children; and four had four children. The youngest among their children was age three and the oldest was age thirty-three. Four participants had children who were under five years of age and eleven had children who were older than five. Three participants had no children at all, but indicated that they had young nieces and nephews with whom they had regular interaction. Finally, in addition to being mothers, two participants indicated being grandmothers including one who had a two year old grandson and the other who had two grandchildren who were 10 and 13 years old.

Home Visitor Education

The minimal educational requirement for the Home Visitor position in each program in this study was a high school diploma or GED. When asked about their educational experiences, ten home visitors had earned high school diplomas. Of those, nine had completed their secondary education at Immokalee High School and one had completed at a high school in Brownsville, Texas. The remaining eight participants had earned GED certificates. Of the eight who did not complete high school, one reported that her highest level of schooling was completing sixth grade in Mexico. One stated regretfully that she dropped out of school one month before graduating from Immokalee High School. The remaining six participants dropped out of high school from ages fifteen to sixteen between ninth and tenth grade. Four participants reported that they were currently enrolled in college courses. Three of the currently enrolled college students were from the group who had earned a GED.

Length of Employment in Home Visiting and Socioeconomic Status

Two participants had been employed as home visitors for less than one year. Seven participants had been in their current positions from 1-5 years; six from 6-10 years; one for

thirteen years; and two had held their positions as home visitors for 16-20 years. The group's average number of years employed in home visiting was seven.

Participants were presented with a list of socioeconomic categories. Each was then asked to identify the one she believed best described her own family's current status. The categories included impoverished, working poor, working class, middle class, upper middle class, and wealthy. Six home visitors described their current socioeconomic status as working poor. One of these individuals, Griselda, was also separated from her spouse and was effectively functioning as a single parent to three children ranging in age from ten to fifteen. She said, "It has been a struggle. Not getting any child support is a bummer. I have been on my own for one year." Juana is another participant who believed that working poor best described her family. Unlike Griselda, she was not a single parent but was married with one young child and one pre-teen aged child living in the home. Although both she and her husband were employed full-time in relatively stable jobs, she still expressed concern about the family's financial standing. She said,

Up until the economy we are in now, I used to think we were middle class. But I think we are working poor (now). I used to think I will never need that type of help, I will be okay. But now it's gotten to be where you question whether to pay for gas or for food. And it's like, 'oh my God,' I never thought I would have to make that choice. Thank God we have food. There are times where the food goes very low and I have \$50.00 for the week and I need gas and I need food. I tell my husband that we used to be middle class but now we are poor. The good part is we're still here. And (another) good part is also my traits from when I was growing up to now taught me that you can do without meat. You don't need meat every day. You learn. I hated it but I am thankful that it taught me how to survive.

Most participants identified themselves as working class. Eight home visitors stated that this category most accurately described their family's socioeconomic status. Hilda who was single with no children considered herself to be working class stating, "I don't make much money, just enough to get by." Celia's adult children were independent and living on their own

however, she voluntarily provided housing and financial support for her two young grandchildren. She also expressed that working class best described her socioeconomic status. She believed herself to be working class, “because I can pay my bills. It’s good but it is not quite...if I had more education I would be making more which would be helpful.” Others who identified themselves as working class expressed similar reasoning. Perla was married with four children in the home. Both she and her spouse were employed full-time. She remarked that she believed their family was working class because,

Me and my husband work. We provide for my family. We pay our bills. Every once in a while we have splurge money. The majority of the time we just pay our bills. We are not poor ‘cause we have a roof over our head, we have vehicles, and our bills are paid. But we are not middle class ‘cause we don’t have extra money where we could go out every weekend.

Two participants described themselves as middle class. Reyna who had recently separated from her spouse and who had one teen-aged child expressed that she was middle class because, “I have a job and a roof over my head. Yes I struggle from day to day but still manage to do it some way or the other. So yes, I consider myself middle class.” Ivellise who was married and had two children in college and one small child living at home said that her family was middle class because, “we are not that behind, we are just paying the bills.” Of the remaining two participants, one did not answer the question. The other respondent, Erika, interpreted the question differently than others and her answer did not address the tangible economics of her family. Erika was married and had two teen-aged children as well as two young children. Providing a unique response from her peers, Erika expressed, “I am wealthy...I think so. Like I said, I have learned a lot from these families and they have learned from me. All the ‘thank yous’ are worth more than money.”

Most participants identified themselves as either working poor or working class. In looking at their explanations for their choices, there does not appear to be a wide gap in the reasoning provided hence the dividing line between these two categories is fluid. The trait that stands out for those identifying as working poor is the sense of struggle and of having just enough at times to be able to meet basic needs for survival such as food and gas as exemplified in Juana's remarks. In contrast, those who said they were working class expressed a greater level of confidence in their family's ability to pay their bills on a regular basis without struggle. The two who were middle class expressed reasoning similar to those who identified as working class. They too expressed a level of certainty in their ability to regularly meet their family's financial obligations. The following table summarizes demographic characteristics of study participants.

Home Visitor Demographics

Demographics	Number	%
Home Visitor Birthplace		
- United States	13	72%
- Mexico	4	22%
-Guatemala	1	6%
Birthplace of Parents		
- Both in Mexico	6	33%
- Both in Texas	6	33%
- Both in Guatemala	2	11%
- 1 in Mexico and 1 in Texas	2	11%
- 1 in Mexico and 1 in P.R.	1	6%
- 1 in Texas and 1 in Oklahoma	1	6%
Self Described Race and Ethnicity		
- Hispanic	7	39%
- Mexican-American	3	17%
- Mexican	3	17%
- American	2	11%
- Guatemalan	1	5%
- White Hispanic	1	5%
- Human	1	5%
Connection to Country of Ancestry		
-Strong connection	2	11%
-Some connection	4	22%
-Little or no connection	12	67%
Frequency of Travel to Country of Ancestry		
-Annually	2	11%
-Biannually	3	17%
-Less than Biannually	13	72%

Demographics	Number	%
Age		
- 25-29 years old	4	22%
- 30-34 years old	4	22%
- 35-39 years old	1	6%
- 40-44 years old	7	38%
- 45-49 years old	0	0%
- 50-54 years old	1	6%
- 55-60 years old	1	6%
Marital Status		
- Currently Married	12	67%
- Separated	2	11%
- Widowed	1	5%
- Never Married	3	17%
Childbearing		
- Children	15	83%
- No Children	3	17%
Education Completed		
- High School Diploma	10	56%
- GED	8	44%
Length of Time as a Home Visitor		
-Less than 1 year	2	11%
-From 1-5 years	7	39%
-From 6-10 years	6	33%
-From 11-15 years	1	6%
-From 16-20 years	2	11%
Self Described Socioeconomic Status		
-Working Poor	6	33%
-Working Class	8	44%
-Middle Class	2	11%
-Wealthy	1	6%
-No Answer	1	6%

Discussion

This chapter provided demographic information on the eighteen home visitors who are the focus of this study. The unique experience of transitioning from migrant farm work into home visiting/family support work is a theme that is explored throughout this writing. Details on the participants outlined in this chapter include information on each one's place of birth, age, gender, race and ethnicity, marital status, number of children, length of time working as a home visitor, highest level of education completed, current educational status, and socioeconomic status. Also outlined was information on the town in which they lived and worked as well as on the organizations in which they were employed. These data were detailed to broaden understanding of the context in which home visitors operate and to provide a basis for analysis of their collective behavior including the decision each made to discontinue employment as a migrant farm worker in favor of employment in human services as a home visitor. This chapter served to introduce these former migrant farm workers turned human services practitioners, as a sub-population that has a growing presence in agricultural communities throughout the United States. Their experiences as home visitors are further explored in the following chapters.

CHAPTER III

CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES: FIRST LESSONS ON PARENTING

Introduction

Early childhood experiences have a role to play in laying the foundation for belief systems that develop as one grows into adulthood. Such experiences for example, inform and shape beliefs on the essential elements of parenting including expectations of what it is supposed to look like in practice. While we can be influenced by information we learn in formal settings, human beings are also creatures of habit hence experiences we have had with being parented often serve as a default position for raising our own children. When all available choices have been exhausted to no satisfaction, our tendency is to revert to the familiar. Experiences we have had with caregivers during early childhood are perspectives that we know, that we have lived, and that provide a level of comfort, certainty, and predictability in foreseeing outcomes. This chapter takes a closer look at home visitors' early childhood experiences. A review of this period sheds light on the trajectory that brought each participant to her current perspective on parenting issues.

Childhood on the Road

Migrant farm work is among the lowest paid and least esteemed occupations in the United States (Gouveia and Powell, 2007). The work features little stability or predictability and requires workers to be mobile and ready to relocate to various parts of the country as needed. There is little job security and no fringe benefits. The work itself is physically draining and the mental, emotional, and social toll inherent to this way of earning a living, is not easy for those engaged in the occupation. It is likewise no less difficult on children of migrant farm workers. The migrant farm workers way of life is not conducive to the maintenance of family stability in

any one community and is not generally recognized for being particularly child friendly. Yet study participants had a variety of recollections of what it was like to grow up as children of migrant farm workers in the United States as will be described in this chapter. These memories ranged from recalling with delight a childhood on the road that was interesting and wondrous, to the less romantic view of a childhood characterized by disruption and instability that was unduly challenging and at times outright miserable. Several participants recounted instances from childhood that evoked a sense of great adventure that easily defies most definitions of normalcy. Likewise others shared with regret, experiences of being forced to prematurely assume adult responsibilities at very young ages resulting in an abrupt end to childhood.

The Questions

Sixteen questions posed to study participants were directly related to childhood experiences. Each question was designed to get a sense of how each home visitor viewed her childhood. While participants generally were at ease with the interview process and were forthcoming in answering the questions related to childhood, certain questions elicited responses that were richer and prompted participants to provide greater detail on their experiences with growing up as children of migrant farm workers. Those questions included #10 which first asked participants to rate their childhood on a scale of 1-10 where 1 is extremely miserable and 10 is extremely happy; and secondly asked the reason(s) for their selected rating. Also included was #11 which asked participants to recall a memory from childhood either positive or negative that affected them deeply and that still stands out in their memories now as adults. Another was #12 which asked participants to describe their personal experience with K-12 education. Question #13 which inquired about the types of activities that participants engaged in when not enrolled in school, was another that elicited particularly insightful comments from study participants.

Finally, Question #14 which first asked participants if they believed their childhoods were similar to or different from that of their peers; and secondly asked participants to explain the reason(s) for holding that belief. The reporting, discussion, and analysis that follow are largely based on responses to these questions. Before delving into their experiences, the next section describes the variety of locations that the home visitors lived as they travelled the country with their families.

The Road is My Home

Each home visitor spent substantial portions of her childhood on the migrant trail traveling with her parents “up the road” as they sought to find work needed to sustain their families. As children, study participants had no choice in the matter; they simply had to abide by the decisions that their parents or other caregivers made and subsequently had to find ways to adapt to the conditions they found themselves in as they moved about the country. As migrant farm workers, their parents were also limited in their choices and their movements were subject to seasonal demands for their labor throughout the nation. As a result, the locations in which study participants resided during the course of any given year were diverse.

Many of the home visitors interviewed had roots in Texas. As such, their migration experiences often included trips through various towns in that State. Celia described her childhood of migration and her parents’ eventual decision to settle in Immokalee,

We used to migrate from Texas and go up north to Idaho. We did that for many, many years. We would only go and then come back...My uncles lived up here in Florida and in Idaho and they were telling him (my father) if you go to Florida, there are tomatoes here, you will make money. If you buy yourself a little truck, you can come over here. So we did.

Erika likewise recounted her experience with migrating in early childhood. She said:

I was 4 in Texas but lived all my life here (in Immokalee). My parents were migrants. Around July or August we would go to Texas for a month then we would come back to Florida. My parents worked in the fields. To this day, they still work in the fields.

A common pattern for Immokalee migrant farm workers was to travel the East Coast migrant trail. Several study participants reported that their parents typically travelled this route searching for work. Linda's description of the places to which her family migrated exemplifies this.

We migrated a lot. My dad followed the crops. We started from Georgia then to South Carolina for like six weeks. Then to Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware. Then in August we would pick apples in Pennsylvania. We would be back in Labelle (Florida) in November.

The instability of the migrant way of life is highlighted when looking at the birth places of study participants and their siblings. It was typical for study participants to report having siblings that were not born in the same town or State as themselves. Lorena for example recounted that her parents' six children were all born in different places because the family migrated so much. Her older siblings were born in Guatemala and the younger ones were born in various States within the U.S. She said:

They came from Guatemala then they were migrating. My sister was born in California, then we came down here (to Florida) and my brother was born in Tampa. Then me, I was born in Wachula, Florida. We were born in different places because we were migrating. But I recall that when my little brother was born, they decided to settle here in Immokalee.

Home visitors' descriptions of their early travels show that as children they regularly and frequently changed residences. They described migrating as far west as California; as far north as Idaho; as far south as Arizona; and as far east as Maine. The examples above serve to illustrate a level of insecurity resulting from living life as migrant farm workers. On the one hand, their recollections of moving from one State to another points to a sense of the uncertainty that participants had to contend with as they grew up. On the other hand, because movement around the country was an inherent characteristic of migrant life known to participants from the

earliest of ages, their way of life afforded opportunities for each to develop character traits such as resiliency and maturity that may not have occurred to the extent displayed were they not subject to living under the conditions described. From their accounts of their lives, these character traits have indeed proven useful to them throughout childhood and well into adulthood. The next section takes a closer look at home visitors' perspectives of life on the road.

Adventures and Dangers

In the United States, childhood is expected to be a relatively carefree season of life. Within the nation, different ethnic and cultural groups define for their members just what the appropriate length of time is for this stage of life. Despite the uncertainties inherent to the lives of migrant farm workers, many of the home visitors in this study recalled having childhoods filled with fun, adventure, and happy times with their families. Lorena offered the following when asked to recall either a positive or negative memory from childhood:

I think probably going back and forth, travelling to Maine, we had a lot of fun. That was a fun trip. It is something that we would do often but I was old enough to know what we were doing. But I think that was a fun trip.

While she refers to the trip as “fun,” Lorena’s response also indicates a level of awareness of the reason behind the trips which ultimately was for the family to find work. In their various recollections about growing up as migrant children, this reality did not escape the consciousness of study participants. Nevertheless, many had vivid memories of having good times on the road.

Maria also expressed a view of migrating as an adventure. Like Lorena, her perspective, also showed a level of maturity in her understanding of the circumstances under which her family operated. When comparing her life to that of her peers who did not have to migrate and who remained in Immokalee year-round, she stated:

You do what you’ve got to do. You just deal with it. It was just part of life. I saw it as you must be lucky to be stabilized but we get to have fun and go eat fresh fruits and

vegetables. We would head out and get into whatever little housing was there and the first thing we would do is hit the fields. The fields would be just a block away. We would go pick our strawberries and we wouldn't even wash them. We would eat them until we got sick to our stomachs. Then of course it would start all over. We did get the pick of the crop.

Some home visitors, whose family's migration was limited to the summer months, expressed satisfaction with the migrant farm worker's way of life. When summer was over, they would return to Immokalee and resume life as usual. Kayla for example said:

We used to migrate. We used to go up north and it's something that I think I miss now. We used to go to South Carolina. I thought it was fun. We got out of town for a few months. Even though we went to work, it was just nice getting away from town.

This description shows how this home visitor was able to positively adapt to her circumstances such that she viewed this aspect of her migrant experience as temporary and actually pleasant in that it afforded her the opportunity to leave her normal surroundings and experience something new if even for a short period of time. Her remarks also indicate her awareness that the trip was primarily one for work. Even so, she too was able to carve out a bit of enjoyment from migrating as evidenced by her expressed anticipation of the summer travel season as a child as well as her apparent nostalgia for those times as she looked back with fondness now as an adult. Not all of the participants had positive memories of migrating. The exposure to hazardous conditions and the chances of being involved in accidents were multiplied as a result of involvement in this occupation. Migrant farm workers are often subject to living conditions that may not be fully known until their arrival at the place of work. For their part, migrant farm workers were often so focused on work and on getting to the next town in order to get to work, that at times, other matters were secondary to this primary goal. This included issues pertaining to their children's health, educational, social, and safety needs. An extreme example of the lapse in parents' awareness of the needs of their children is seen in the case of Griselda as she

described an incident from her childhood that immediately came to her mind when asked to recount a positive or negative childhood memory.

The time that we were left behind at a gas station. Me and my brother. The way we used to travel in a pick-up with a camper with blankets and all the kids in the back. It was November or December so it was cold. We had a lot of blankets. There were five of us (kids), so my parents were not able to tell if we were in the back because of all the blankets. This happened in Toledo, Ohio when we stopped at a gas station to fuel up. Me and my little brother, we got off but my parents did not know it. So they left and when we came out, we did not see them. There were these two guys. I don't know how we approached them but they gave us a ride. They saw that my dad had left. They caught up to my parents. They caught up in about an hour. This happened in Michigan and they caught up (to my parents) in Ohio. My parents did not notice that we were not in the truck until we caught up to them. I was about eight, and I am the oldest one. I really remember that one.

Griselda expressed that she was not afraid at the time, although now looking back she was quite astounded by the incident when considering the many ways that this story could have unfolded differently. That young children were transported in the back of a pick-up truck as described and then inadvertently left behind as the family travelled from one State to the other, hints at a relatively relaxed standard for parental supervision within this family system. Additionally, in this instance the need to get to their ultimate destination in order to secure employment for the season may well have contributed to these parents' lack of awareness of their children's whereabouts.

Study participants described other instances in which they were afforded a greater than average measure of freedom as children when they were not working. While they did not project that their parents were intentionally neglectful towards them, they described instances in which their parents perhaps both underestimated risks and overestimated their children's ability to exercise maturity in conducting themselves in ways to ensure their own health and safety. From their descriptions of such childhood incidents, most study participants grew up with parents who employed *natural growth* parenting practices characterized by children having less parental

supervision and greater autonomy in directing much of their own leisure activities (Lareau, 2003). Nilsa described that after she and her siblings completed their work, they were allowed to go and play. She said:

He (my Dad) would tell us to pick five buckets and you could stop working. You could go to the water...it was pretty much a ditch, and we could take a bath (swim)...All four of us would have to pick five buckets and after we finished, it was water time. For us it was a swimming pool. Pretty much, I always remember that. It was a treat for us to be in the water and not in the sun.

Here again, the primacy of work for the migrant farm working parent is illustrated. They viewed each member of the family: man, woman, boy, and girl as an essential component of the work unit needed to generate income. Each person was valued for his or her ability to contribute to the economic viability of the family. This illustration also points out that children were rewarded for their contribution to the family's economic sustenance by being allowed to create their own leisure activity. As a child, permission to swim in the ditch was regarded by this participant as a privilege. The presentation by the caregiver of swimming as a reward to his children for a job well done, speaks to the primacy of work over the myriad health and safety concerns inherent in engaging in this particular water activity as described. Another point illustrated here is that as children, participants' leisure activities while migrating tended to be characterized as family-centered with siblings as primary playmates; self directed; and removed from the structures of formal organizations and institutions. This idea is explored later in this chapter. The main point is that participants often perceived these activities as fun and adventurous though now with hindsight, they acknowledged the inherent dangers in some of these activities.

Education System and the Migrant Child

The movement of participants as described above leads to questions on how they fared in K-12 educational systems. The demands of migrant life did not necessarily align well with K-12

education. In reviewing the work/life of the study participants' parents, it is evident that relocation to other parts of the country as the seasons dictated was a normal and necessary component of their working conditions. This movement did not correlate well with the workings of the school calendar. With the increase in the number of Latino migrant children enrolling in schools, they are more visible and their unique plight has come to the attention of the educational system (Martin, 1996). Over time, government and educational institutions have recognized the growing population of migrant school children that have specific needs to be addressed by various systems. Such assistance has been institutionalized with the enactment of legislation resulting in establishment of migrant education programs through Title I. Each study participant commented on her experience in K-12; some were favorable while others were less so.

Some participants reported that their parents supported their pursuit of education. These same participants also voiced that they had positive experiences in school. In addition to this, there are indications that some of their parents had aspirations for their children to get out of farm working altogether. These parents used a variety of means at their disposal to ensure that their children took advantage of K-12 education. In recalling her father's stance on discipline, Maria noted that he often connected discipline administered to her and her siblings with education.

He had us in a strict line and I think that is why all of us actually stuck with school and did not quit, drop out, or anything. That was one of his things. As an adult, I realize it was for our benefit because I have cousins that weren't that fortunate. It was more about the money. Let's get ahead now. Instead of encouraging their children, my aunts and uncles said you can make this money, why go to school? Of course the money spoke. He (my dad) expected at minimum for us to go to high school and graduate. He would make us work in the fields on the weekends as discipline. He made you work like there was no tomorrow. That was a life lesson. When you weren't in trouble, you were not expected to work the fields.

Another common experience among participants was spending the elementary and middle school years on the road and becoming more settled during high school. Several participants noted that their parents recognized the importance of them finishing school and many made accommodations to enable their children to complete the upper levels of secondary education and obtain a high school diploma. Nilsa explained the differences in the way that her parents managed her primary and secondary education.

Elementary for us as migrants...we were always in and out. I remember we would stay in Immokalee October to May and the rest of the months we would be in Georgia. It was really hard for us because we wouldn't stay long in one area. We would get all summer off because of moving. Our friends would be left behind so every time we moved we would have new friends. During middle school, my parents started staying more in Immokalee for seven months so that helped us. But in the middle of the school year we would go to Plant City, Florida and they would pull us out. So for pretty much a whole month we would be without school. So my education got lost pretty much...By the time I got to high school they stopped and my aunt would take care of us or we would take care of ourselves. My parents made a big effort to stay. They would leave early in the morning and go to Plant City and come back to Immokalee afterwards.

Though difficult given the constraints inherent to migrant farm work, this example shows that Nilsa's parents recognized the value in her earning a high school diploma. Her parents' quest for work was somewhat altered the older she got and they increasingly took measures to accommodate the goal of having Nilsa complete high school successfully. Kayla noted a similar experience of living in Immokalee during the school year while migrating during the summer; an arrangement that contributed to consistency in her educational programming and her eventual graduation from high school. She said, "If we migrated it was always at the end of the year when school was out and then we would be back before school started."

Another way that parents of some study participants expressed their concern for their children's education was through their efforts to coordinate the transfer of their children's school

records. As Perla noted when discussing the multiple schools she attended during the school year,

We migrated to Maryland, Indiana, Ohio, South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia. We would get here (Immokalee) between September and October. We would start school over there and go for a couple of months and then we would get transferred here and usually by May, we were gone again. So we wouldn't finish school here. My Dad would make sure to have our records transferred. My Dad pushed education. I graduated from Immokalee High School.

The accommodations that were made by their parents to allow study participants to complete their secondary education contributed to many reporting positive experiences in the K-12 school system. Several home visitors expressed satisfaction with their educational experiences in K-12. Olga, who graduated from Immokalee high school in the mid 1980's and whose children were students in the system at the time of this writing, bemoaned the state of education in schools now. Her parents curtailed her engagement in migrant farm work to an extent and allowed her to remain in Immokalee during the school year when she was in high school. According to Olga:

It was a lot more lenient then than it is now. But then again the kids, we weren't as bad as they are now. I think it was better than it is now. I think it was better. The teachers were great. They would sit and explain things to you. High school was great; I loved high school. All the teachers were wonderful. They were there for you if you needed anything. They were more like an older brother or sister. I loved high school. If I could go back I would do it all again. Maybe I would change one or two things... I graduated from Immokalee High School.

Olga was another participant whose parents' circumstances allowed them to make the choice to remain in one location, or at least to allow her to remain in one stable location throughout the years that she attended secondary education such that she was able to complete high school.

The fates of other participants were not as fortunate. The economic conditions under which their parents operated simply did not allow for the family to remain in one area so that children's education would have no interruptions. Farm working was their primary means of sustenance and as such, they had to move as necessary in order to remain employed. Several described the experience of regularly being pulled out of school at odd times of the year in order to travel with their parents to the next work location. The disruption to the educational process was a source of regret for many. Memories of their educational experiences were less than favorable for these participants. The pursuit of education was a proposition fraught with so many obstacles and avenues for failure that foregoing school became a more attractive option for some. Griselda remarked:

I really did not like it (school) because we did a lot of moving around. I hated going to school in Ohio because there were more white people and Tennessee I hated also. I just felt out of place. And changing schools, I didn't like that. When I had my kids, I would stay behind. My husband would leave but I would stay behind. I did not finish school but I got my GED. I dropped out in the ninth grade. One of the reasons I dropped out was I flunked twice so I was going to be 21 by the time I graduated. That was embarrassing for me so I quit.

Here we see how this participant reasoned that she would be better off not going to school at all. The additional struggles of trying to keep up with peers who had the luxury of attending school with consistency in a single school system throughout the year without the fear of being pulled out as parents work needs dictated, proved to be too much for her.

The experience of dropping out of high school before completion was common among participants. Others reported that they were unable to keep up with academics due in large part to the disruption in learning that came from migrating during the school year. As Erika noted:

In my high school and middle school years, it was very hard. I couldn't focus. To be honest I couldn't focus towards the end or at the beginning because in the beginning we would start in Texas at school and after we would go to Tallahassee and then we would go

to Immokalee and then Plant City and then I couldn't keep track. It was very confusing as we got older. As we got older it was hard... Only one (sibling) graduated, that is my sister after me.

Being uprooted and replanted on multiple occasions throughout the school year was chaotic for this study participant. Adding to the sense of incompleteness and personal failure expressed by many, very little was offered by the authority figures in these children's lives including family and the educational system, in the way of incentive or encouragement to stay the course. Celia provided an example of how complicated schooling became for her when she described her experience with attending school systems in Florida, Idaho, and Texas all in one year before finally dropping out. She remarked:

I was like fifteen or sixteen. I dropped out of school all because I didn't want to go. It reminded me of when I went to school up there (in Idaho) where it was all new. Of course back then you weren't forced to go to school. Now they enforce it more... When we migrated, we would leave from May through September, like the end of September or first week of October. We had to go to school up there for a month or so and then come back. In Texas where I am from, they had a migrant school that started from a month later. It helped out. I would have graduated at about nineteen if I had stayed in school back then.

Even when there were special migrant education programs present, some participants expressed that it was not enough to spur on the motivation to continue. Ivellise said, "I attended (high school) there until the ninth grade. I dropped out and got married."

Dalia had a common experience. She did not complete high school as a child but eventually got a GED through a work program. She stated:

I went to school in Mexico to the third grade and then I came here. When I went to East Naples, they had a migrant program. I liked the school but I would have appreciated being pushed a little harder. I finished ninth grade at Lely High. I got a GED from East Coast Migrant Association.

Linda similarly felt that the school system did not make much of an effort to engage her in the educational process. She acknowledged personal shortcomings and admits to behaving in ways

that were not conducive to scholastic achievement. Even so, her statements show that the system was not necessarily doing all that it could to ensure her continued participation. She remarked:

I was fifteen when I quit school. Back then, it didn't really matter because I was a trouble maker. I would fight a lot at school. The first week of sixth grade, I got into a fight and they started saying they were going to give me in-school suspension. I said "no." I told my dad I'm not going no more. They never said nothing and never looked for me or nothing so I stayed at work (in the fields).

Linda's comments point out that the systems in place to address the educational needs of migrant students were somehow not enough to result in her being retained in school. The combination of her own unhelpful behaviors; a punitive educational system that failed to give meaningful consideration to the fact that being a migrant might be contributing to her anti-school attitude and behaviors; and the school's lack of follow through on her poor attendance which sent a strong message to her about her worth and value in the system; all combined to subvert Linda's possibilities for attaining a meaningful secondary school experience.

It is not particularly unusual for adults to report having negative experiences with primary and secondary education. The accounts of study participants however, demonstrate that the additional factor of having parents who were migrant workers did in fact add a layer of complexity to the issue. In terms of readiness to partake in the rigors of the standard curriculum offered in primary and secondary school, children whose parents are migrant farm workers *are* burdened by that way of life and are subject to contending with disadvantages that their non-migrant peers are not. Working through the educational process was a challenge that in some cases proved too onerous for some to overcome. In recalling her time in primary and secondary educational settings, each home visitor made connections between her past experiences and her current views on education. This will be explored further in later chapters.

Leisure Activities

There were many unique attributes to migrant children's childhoods that differentiated them from their peers as they grew up. If there is such a thing as a "typical" childhood in America, those described by home visitors in this study do not fall into that category. Or do they? "Normal" is relative and is culture-specific so in reviewing the lives of study participants, some of their responses to questions posed leads to the belief that much of what they experienced may well be typical in the subculture of migrant farm workers of Latin American descent. Nonetheless, it is instructive to elaborate on the details of the migrant life as it played out for study participants.

As children, study participants appeared to be very much attuned to the aspirations and goals of their parents. Hence, much of what they did on a day-to-day basis and the activities they busied themselves with, were directly tied to their parents' need to remain continuously employed in the agricultural sector. Study participants were asked about their typical pastimes and leisure activities they engaged in as children. There was some commonality in the types of activities they participated in during their leisure time. Most of these activities were self-directed and not connected to formal institutions. Linda reminisced saying, "I was a happy child. I was spoiled rotten. Everything was mine. I loved fishing and swimming. In the back of our house was a big lake and we'd go fishing there." Study participants tended to come from families with two or more siblings. As such, playmates were primarily their own brothers and sisters or sometimes children of other migrant families that were travelling within the same circle as participants. Perla's experience illustrates this point. She said:

We were never into sports. There were four of us (siblings) and it was expensive. We were never here in the summer. We played amongst ourselves. We never got close to anybody because we would leave. The good thing about it was that when we would go up north the same people would go so we didn't have to meet new people. It was usually the

same group of people; the same families. So we would just talk to them; socialize with them. In Indiana, there was an old barn. (For fun) we would go in there and jump from the second to the first floor.

Here we see that a hallmark of this participant's childhood was creating her own leisure activity. Her statement also indicates her awareness that discretionary income was limited in her family's budget and her parents were unlikely to allow her to get involved in activities that would be costly to the family. She noted that given the number of siblings in her family, the budget would not allow for participation in extracurricular activities, hence she and her siblings made up games that they could play outside amongst themselves.

Like Perla, several other study participants' childhoods involved imaginative play that often occurred outdoors. Maria likewise described a childhood filled with lots of outdoor adventures. She had two brothers and three sisters who were her primary playmates. She recalled:

I was very tomboyish. It didn't matter if there was a tree, I would be up there. My mom would say, 'get off that tree.' I got into almost anything. If there were races, climbing trees, playing with cars, wrestling, I was a typical tomboy. You wouldn't see me playing with dolls or being upset that my dress got dirty.

Here again we see a participant expressing that she created her own leisure using resources that were close at hand that did not require her parents to expend any additional family funds. Lorena remembered that she too spent much of her time playing outside with her siblings:

I remember we (my siblings and I) would always go outside and play kick ball and like baseball. We would make our own little games. I feel that we enjoyed just being outside. We would get home, do our homework, then go outside just a little bit, then we'd come back inside. We would always do our own little games. I played with my siblings and a couple of neighbors.

This participant likewise relied on her siblings for playmates and they regularly created their own games.

Despite contending with the challenges inherent to being the child of a migrant worker including living with the financial constraints as described above, some in this study reported being able to participate in more traditional activities that are typical of school age children in the United States. At the same time, others reported the desire to be involved but being unable to do so due to being a migrant. Celia for example said:

When I went to high school, I wanted to be in cheerleading or the band. Back then they had majorettes. I always wanted to be that but I was so shy and of course we would always come late and they would start in the summer practicing and whatever.

While Celia was unable to participate primarily due to returning to Immokalee after school and its other activities had already begun, others reported that their families made accommodations such that they were able to engage in extra-curricular activities offered after school. Juana noted:

In high school, I was into drama; the yearbook committee; I was into several committees. I was very active in school. I was also working. When I didn't go to the electives in the afternoon, I was in the packing house or I would go after the activity. My aunt and uncle (who raised me) were okay with it since it was school related.

From this example, we see that although Juana was able to do after school activities, in the backdrop was the reality that she also had to go to work at the packing house. To the extent that the activities selected did not interfere with her work there, she was allowed to engage accordingly.

The idea that the childhoods of the study participants were stunted is a common theme throughout most of their stories. While many recalled pleasant memories from childhood and in some cases even reported that this period of their lives was marked by a great deal of happiness, most expressed that the actual time span was relatively short. The following section looks at the

ways in which participants moved from childhood into adulthood in a somewhat swift and abrupt fashion.

From Girlhood to Womanhood

The majority of women in this study readily admit that their childhoods did not last very long. They described events in their teen years that rapidly marked the end of the childhood they knew and the beginning of the rest of their lives as adults. Early marriage is an example of such an event. Of the eighteen home visitors with backgrounds as migrant workers, most were teenagers when they first married or had their first child. It was also commonplace among this group for all but the very youngest members of the family to be involved in economic production for the larger family unit. Hence this ethos greatly influenced the speed with which study participants transitioned from being little girls to young women.

A vivid example of a child being made to take on adult responsibilities was found in Nilsa's experience. She described that her father would require her siblings and her to pick five buckets of tomatoes each after which they could stop working for the day. She said:

The buckets were about thirty-seven to forty pounds. For us being little kids it takes you a long time. Each bucket had to be green, orange, pink or red. We had color coordinated buckets. I started working when I was around six or seven years old. We were born in the fields pretty much. I remember when I started thinking it was fun I started picking at five or six.

From this we see the initiation into the world of migrant farm working and how the stage was being set to make this aspect of life the norm for study participants. Her description of the differentiation made in tomato selection and sorting demonstrates how she was being acclimated and taught at an early age about the tools and techniques associated with agricultural work. Nilsa's response demonstrates an introduction to migrant farm work in early childhood that would later render this a normal and expected vocation for her to engage in as an adult.

Other participants gave accounts of taking on adult responsibilities as teens. Ivelisse described her childhood as particularly harsh because of her father's substance abuse. She said, "Our childhoods, we had it rough. We had to work in the fields to buy our clothes, to get food, even to pay the bills that we had for our mom because our dad would drink all the time and he wouldn't even have enough money." Another participant disclosed experiencing taking on more than usual responsibilities due to personal shortcomings of her father. Olga recalled:

From ages twelve to sixteen, my dad was in jail so it was just my mom and us kids. Five of us. So vacations like Christmas and Easter vacations, we worked in the fields with my mom. In the summers we went up north to work. It wasn't like other kids who would say, "Oh we are going to wherever for vacation." It was kind of hard.

Another participant described having an extraordinarily difficult time which she attributes in some part to fact that her father was absent from her life. She was raised by an uncle and aunt.

Juana said:

It was hard to grow up without a dad except I lucked out because I had my uncle. But it wasn't the same...My childhood was miserable. At the same time, I am thankful now. I remember working on Christmas vacation, Easter vacation, summers, weekends. I hated working; I hated working in the fields. It's like why can't we just... You come back and you hear your friends saying, "We went to Walt Disney; we spent the whole week over there with my mom and dad." I never had that. I went to the fields. I never had that nice moment, that real perfect childhood that you see in the movies or read in the books or see in the cartoons.

Juana's comments illustrate the difficulties that many experienced as they tried to balance demands for them to work in order to make financial contributions to the family, with maintaining themselves academically as well as socially with peers at school. While it was typical for participants to work in the fields as teens and even as young children, most expressed an understanding of their parents' motivation for requiring them to engage in this work. Most

empathized with their parents' plight and expressed the belief that their parents adequately compensated them for their contributions to the family budget. Reyna remarked:

We would work out in the fields but as a reward after work he (my dad) would take us to go get ice cream or to the beach on the weekends or take us to the movies or stuff like that. Even though we were out working, we still got rewarded. We were such a big family (ten siblings) he couldn't afford to give us our wages and stuff because we had bills and stuff. But he would find the time to take us as a family to places and get us things. An ice cream to me was a big deal back then because to me it was a reward because I did something good. An ice cream before dinner was a big deal.

These remarks illustrate that despite apparently difficult conditions, participants were still able to identify some positive attributes to their lives as children. They also exhibited maturity and strength of character that allowed them to see a larger picture that was beyond their own individual interests. The belief that there was a need to make personal sacrifices on behalf of their families was common among participants.

In addition to working out in the fields at early ages, participants reported taking on other adult responsibilities early in life. One common practice among this group was to engage in gendered tasks that are traditionally associated with females. This includes housekeeping and taking care of children. It also included selling produce and cooked meals; a common form of supplemental employment among many farm workers. Dalia's family ran a small eatery from their home when growing up. She stated:

When I was in Lely (high school) I had to work...help my parents, my mom. I used to go to school, come to the house, and get ready for the restaurant. I used to wash dishes and then get up at 12:00 at night and go to the market. I liked school and all that but I needed to work.

Perhaps the most common example of them taking on adult roles was when participants became caretakers of younger children. The number of children living in the households of study participants when growing up ranged from two through thirteen. The average family had six

children. Celia, who had eight siblings was called upon to assist with rearing her younger siblings. She recounted,

Being a helper babysitter all the time for my mom at a very young age. I was ten years old when my mom had gotten really, really sick and I did the laundry and a lot of things that ten year old girls wouldn't do. It really sticks out to me. It was happy in a way but kind of negative. The fact that I wasn't like a normal ten year old playing and stuff because I had to be more responsible; I kind of think about that all the time. That has stuck to me that I was always acting older than I was.

Like Celia, Maria also recalled being thrust into adulthood at a relatively early age and being given the responsibility of taking care of siblings. She was the second oldest of six siblings.

Maria stated:

When we got older we were more responsible for the younger siblings. I guess that was hard having to grow up a little faster than you really wanted to. But then again I guess my personality just took to that and I was more the one that was more responsible for them because they were my younger siblings.

In this instance, Maria expressed an understanding and acceptance of the fact that she had to take care of her siblings. Within her remarks however, one also senses the regret she felt for her own childhood being shortened in order for her to fulfill the adult responsibilities of taking care of her siblings. For one participant, the experience of investing a portion of her own childhood into being a caregiver to younger siblings appeared to be somewhat satisfying to her. When recalling her role as caregiver, Ivelisse expressed with pride that,

I was really like helping my mom. I was really into helping take care of my siblings. I enjoyed it; helping my mom cooking or whatever. It was like I grew up so fast. You never had the time to really enjoy playing dolls or whatever. I was the oldest child. They admired what I did because they would always say, "you're helping your mom, you're not letting them down and this and that."

Again, although this participant expressed a level of contentment with her role as caregiver, there is still a sense that she understood that she had to play that part and that any personal desires or

goals of hers would have to be secondary to the wishes of her parents and the needs of her family.

Several home visitors relayed that they took on the ultimate in adult responsibilities when they became wives and mothers as teenagers. This too was a relatively common occurrence among study participants. Erika said, "I got married very young at fifteen."

Linda had a similar experience of early marriage and childbearing. She said:

I became a mom at seventeen. I had my other daughter at eighteen. They are eleven and a half months apart. I had a rough life. I was always working. My husband and I are still together but it was really hard because he used to drink a lot and do drugs and stuff like that. I kept staying because of my children. My mom and my dad always stayed together. I didn't want to give them another father. We are still together. Thirty years.

In addition to early marriage, a number of study participants had the experience of living on their own as teenagers. As noted earlier, some home visitors in this study were able to remain in Immokalee during the latter portions of their secondary school years while their parents continued to migrate. This was done so that they would be able to attend high school with consistency and earn a diploma. Participants described this period of time as bittersweet. On the one hand, they felt lucky to be able to live in one place for the year where they could focus on school absent the prospect of having to leave prematurely because of the family's need to move to the next work location. Olga had the experience of remaining in Immokalee during the school week with her younger siblings for a season while her parents migrated to another part of Florida that was well over 160 miles away. She recalled:

By tenth (grade) me and my sister and brother would stay and my mom and dad would go. We stayed by ourselves. On Friday right after school we would leave to go to Tampa. We would pack everything Thursday night, put everything in the truck and I would drive to Tampa. On Sunday around 12:00 we would come back. I took care of the other two. I was sixteen and had a restricted license. I wouldn't let my seventeen year old drive now. Weekly we would do that. When school was out, we would have everything packed, lock up the house, and board up the windows. Last day of school and right after school we

would head up to where my parents were at. I liked being in charge. It wasn't like I was the only one in charge; we all had input. We knew that if we did something that we weren't supposed to do like invite people over, we would have that privilege taken away. The neighbors would tell. My mom and dad would call at all hours. So if you weren't home when they called, they would not have let us go back. They would have come and taken us out of school. They also knew that we needed to stay and finish the school year in the upper grades. This would happen only during the end of the school year.

Her remarks show that at sixteen, Olga embraced the responsibility of being the head of household during the school week and of taking care of herself as well as her younger siblings for a sustained period of time while her parents were working elsewhere. Getting an education was important to her and for Olga, accepting the adult responsibilities of managing a household with two younger children under the conditions described, was a necessary means to achieving that end.

On the other hand, living on one's own as a teen also brought on feelings of fear and loneliness among some participants. While Nilsa appreciated being able to stay in Immokalee to finish high school as the rest of her family migrated, her comments point to the downside of not having daily access to her parents.

In eleventh grade, I stayed by myself because I had to finish school. Everybody was grown. It was scary. School started at 7:00 and ended at 2:30 so after then, I would be lonely. I was on my own for like five months. I had my own car. I had to go grocery shopping which I did... I really wouldn't because I would just eat sandwiches. I lost weight for about five months. My aunt was here (in Immokalee) but I didn't want to stay there because there were too many people at her house. She had twelve kids. Imagine one more would have been too much. I think it makes you stronger and you learn to appreciate a lot of things like cooking, cleaning, and even talking to someone. The T.V. doesn't work.

One gets a sense of the loneliness that Nilsa felt as she learned how to take care of herself in this period of her teen years when she first had to live alone without her parents. Like others in the study whose parents gave them the responsibility of taking care of themselves, she was not

completely disconnected from authority figures as there was at least one adult nearby who was aware of her circumstances who she could have called upon if needed. Even so, having to rely primarily on one's self during the teen years as was the case of many children of migrant farm workers, differentiates their experiences from that of their peers who did not have to be as self-reliant until much later. The various situations outlined demonstrate that at very early ages, study participants were subject to taking on more adult responsibilities than is typically expected of young children and teenagers.

Discipline

Study participants were queried on the methods their parents employed to manage the behavior of the children in the household. Given that children in migrant farm working families were integral to production and directly contributed to sustaining the family economically, socially, and emotionally, questions arise as to how the family was governed and what rules were in place to ensure functionality of the system. When asked about how they were disciplined by caregivers, one out of eighteen participants stated that her parents used verbal communication exclusively to correct her when she did something wrong. Ana who spent her earliest years in Mexico before moving to the United States as a teenager said, "I never remember my father hitting us. My mother was vocal and explained to us not to do bad things." Ana's experience was unique among her peers in this study in that her counterparts all reported experiencing some form of physical punishment when they misbehaved. In fact, sixteen participants noted that they were disciplined through spankings with a parent's hand or with a variety of implements including shoes, brushes, twigs, sticks, cords, bushes, and whips. When thinking about who disciplined her in childhood and how this was done Bella stated, "With my mom, her way of disciplining was spanking. It was hitting with a shoe; a brush; anything that was nearby. This

was the way it was up until I was about seventeen.” Most participants had similar experiences where their mothers were likely to be responsible for administering discipline to the children. Olga, the sole participant who was physically disciplined but not through spankings also indicated that her mother was in charge of discipline. She said, “We never got hit. We were put in the corner on our knees. My mom was always the one who enforced the rules.”

Although their mothers took the lead in the area of discipline in study participants’ childhood homes, there were instances where participants recalled being disciplined most vividly by their fathers or other father figures present. This measure was most often reserved for particularly egregious offenses. Maria recalled:

If it was something extreme, my father was more of the one that disciplined. I hated the fact that I could not talk my way out of it. My mom would discipline us but it was nothing compared to my dad. It was like, is that all you have? When it comes to my dad it was the fear and thought of it that made it much, much worse.

Erika voiced similar fears of her father’s physical and verbal discipline. She stated, “With my dad, just his look would say it all. I mean when he was mad his tone of voice would put me in tears.”

Study participants had a variety of opinions on the effectiveness of the discipline measures their parents used on them as children. In the contemporary context many of the specific acts of physical discipline that they recounted could arguably be classified as child abuse. Even so, the majority verbalized beliefs that their parents were simply using the strategies most familiar to them in disciplining their children. Additionally, most did not believe they were harmed by the experience in any significant way. In fact some of their responses indicate that participants felt a shared sense of responsibility for the punishment meted out believing that the physical discipline their parents administered was warranted based on their own behavioral shortcomings as

children. For example, in reference to her siblings and cousins who would often play together, Perla said:

My dad used to spank us with the belt. My mom never really disciplined us, it was my dad. My grandpa would discipline us (also). He had a whip, like the ones you use for horses. He would spank us when we were bad because we were bad as kids. We were called the gremlins when we were little because we grew up together but when we would go up north I wouldn't see my cousins and stuff so when we would come down, we'd be the gremlins. We were a bunch of little kids around the same age doing bad stuff; everybody doing bad stuff.

On the other hand, a few participants verbalized disapproval of their parents' choice of physical disciplinary methods. In recalling her experiences with being disciplined physically as a child, Dalia held that her mother's actions were wrong. She further expressed:

I couldn't talk back. I was afraid of my mother. If I did something wrong I would be punished very, very, very, very bad. I know my mother knew that it was wrong. I think she did it to me because she would get mad at my stepdad and would take it out on us.

Dalia's comments show the variation in experiences. Some participants believed then and now that their parents' methods for discipline were faulty. Their comments and beliefs about discipline as adults are explored in greater depth in Chapter V.

Discussion

This chapter reviewed many elements of the childhood experiences of study participants; children of migrant farm workers in the United States who grew up in the last three decades of the twentieth century. Events from their childhoods are not a part of the general collective consciousness of the average American and their experiences are not regularly brought to our attention. Migrant farm workers are integral to the U.S. economy performing work that most Americans simply will not do. Their labor, which includes work production of entire family units, literally feeds the nation. As such, it is instructive to pause and examine their lives. In this case, I have looked specifically at the lives of migrant children. In so doing, it is clear to see that

many of the occurrences from their childhoods were rather unique and very specific to their subgroup. For example, the combination of travelling throughout the country during the school year for the purpose of finding work; working in the fields alongside other family members; changing schools frequently during the school year; early marriage and child birth during the teen years; and living on one's own as a teenager, are some of the ways in which their childhoods differed from that of their non-migrant peers. Despite the presence of challenging conditions in their early lives most were able to create a level of contentment within the bounds of their social worlds. This was a common theme that came through their comments and the stories that most told of their childhoods. When asked for example how they would rate this period of time on a scale from 1-10 where 1 was extremely miserable and 10 was extremely happy, fifty percent ranked their childhood between 9-10; twenty-eight percent ranked their childhood between 7-8; and twenty-two percent ranked their childhood as 6 or less. At first glance, one might assume that the life of a child of migrant farm workers must be marked by suffering and want because of the poverty and the other outward signs of despair that come with the image of this group. There is no denying the poor economic conditions under which these families operated. However, the fact that more than half of the study participants expressed that they had happy or very happy childhoods lets us know that there are other sides to their story. The migrant girls in this study became women who would eventually go on to become paraprofessional family support workers engaging in the work of teaching parenting skills to other women with backgrounds similar to their own. Gaining some understanding of what took place in their early lives helps to explain the choices made later on that brought them to their current occupations.

CHAPTER IV

OCCUPATIONAL ACTIVITY: FROM AGRICULTURE TO HUMAN SERVICES WORK

The Road to Human Services

The path to one's future is greatly influenced by childhood exposure and experiences. The previous chapter provided details on the early experiences of home visitors in this study. A common feature of each participant's childhood was the experience of living in families that were highly mobile. As a matter of course, their families relocated to various parts of the country in order to maintain employment in agriculture and sustain their livelihood. Migration played a role in shaping each study participant's primary and secondary school encounters and consequently her ability to develop academic skills needed to function within such environments and beyond. Their early childhood experiences provide insight into the many barriers that they encountered as they sought to attain even the most basic education. Migration as an ever-present factor in study participants' lives made the prospect of acquiring education to facilitate a move from the occupational track of migrant farm worker to a more skilled and stable vocation such as paraprofessional family support worker, an extremely challenging goal to achieve. Given the limited educational attainment described by most, the path seemed to be set for participants to continue along the track towards becoming migrant farm workers themselves just as had been done by their parents and other role models in previous generations.

The first form of paid employment for the women in this study was in farm work and several participants report having been employed in the fields in the period immediately preceding their work in home visiting. Erika commented on her spouse's and her work lives prior to starting home visiting. In thinking about the nature of her life just before becoming employed as a home visitor, she recounted:

I worked in the fields. My husband still helps my parents (migrant farm workers). In the summer since we don't go up north he works as a construction worker but he still works in the fields. He just finished not too long ago. Since the season is over he works in construction.

Erika's experience was not unique among women in this study. The question of how they were able to move from the occupational track of migrant farm laborer to that of paraprofessional Family Support Worker is explored throughout this chapter.

Early Ambition: Helping Professions

Study participants were asked about their career ambitions as children and the type of employment they were engaged in prior to starting work as home visitors. They were also queried about their current aspirations as well as their long-term career plans. Questions 18, 28, 29, and 49-55 specifically address issues related to career.

When looking at their earliest recollections of their ambitions, the majority of participants had envisioned themselves working in occupations in health and human services traditionally associated with women. Specifically, twelve women indicated that as children, they dreamed of going into nursing, teaching, and counseling occupations. Of those, six indicated teaching; four indicated nursing; and the remaining two indicated art therapist and "helping profession" as their intended career choices. Some participants had made strides toward their desired occupation.

Sara for example shared,

I wanted to be a nurse. As soon as I graduated, my guidance counselor surprised me with two scholarships to go into nursing school. I completed my CNA and it just recently expired because I never used it.

Sara's sentiments show that the pursuit of an entry level *nursing assistant* career was a real possibility that she could have explored as a young adult. In her case the educational preparation she garnered in high school was sufficient to enable her pursuit of a career in nursing that would

have taken her off of the migrant farm working track. Celia also had aspirations of a career in nursing as a youngster but was never able to fulfill this dream. She said,

I wanted to be a nurse. I always wanted to be a nurse partly because my grandma always would say I should go to school and be a nurse and that way I could take care of her. I remember being 8 or 9 and her saying those things. So that's what I wanted to be. But after I dropped out and I was working in the field with my dad and then I got married and then my husband never let me go back to school and I had to work in the field. That's not what I wanted...I wanted to keep going to school.

Celia's description shows that she imagined a life for herself beyond that which she had come to know as the child of migrant farm workers. Such aspirations were typical of the women in this study. On the other hand, her description also illustrates that *not* being able to actualize their early ambitions was also fairly common among this group. Constraints including limited exposure to alternative occupational choices as well as the dominance of male influences in their lives and the tendency toward being subject to the will of both fathers and husbands, seemed to preclude the expansion of the occupational horizon for most study participants. In Celia's case, the issue of being subject to the will of others in general is illustrated in her commentary on the reasoning behind selecting nursing as a career option. Her grandmother's rather direct prompts for her to choose nursing as a career so that Celia would in turn be positioned to assist her grandmother in later years, is a theme that is echoed throughout discussions with study participants. Practicality of career choice rather than free selection of a field of study, in which one has organically developed an interest, was common among interviewees.

The remaining six participants aspired to other careers outside of human services. While three indicated interest in the relatively low-skilled vocations of beautician (2 participants) and secretary (1 participant), the other three described having interest in very high-skill occupations in which they had even less exposure and thus were ill-equipped to attain. These included

ballerina (1); lawyer (1); and doctor (1). According to Dalia, “I wanted to be a ballerina; somebody important.” Like their counterparts described earlier, they faced barriers of both limited exposure and inadequate preparatory education as they approached young adulthood. In addition, the opportunity to attain their dreams was thwarted by early marriage and subsequent teen pregnancy. This was the case with each of the three participants who expressed ambitions of entering very high skilled professions. Griselda for example aspired to be a lawyer but got married as a teenager. She remarked, “I had three kids. I had my first daughter when I was seventeen. The youngest is ten years old.” Perla’s dream of becoming a doctor was likewise hampered by early marriage and childbirth both at age seventeen. Finally, Dalia’s aspiration to become a ballerina ended when she married and had her first child at age twenty-one.

Childhood Dreams Deferred: New Opportunities Presented

The preceding discussion showed that one hundred percent of study participants were not working in the occupations they imagined for themselves as youngsters; a phenomenon that is by no means unique to this group. While it is true that none had achieved career goals initially conceived in childhood, it is equally true that all had successfully transitioned out of migrant farm working. This is significant because migrant farm working is the occupation in which their parents and other adults in their world were fully engaged. As participants observed the adults around them working in this arena throughout their early lives, it was expected that they too would follow along this occupational path. The consuming nature of migrant farm working was such that it came to dominate so many other aspects of their early lives. Thus, it is instructive to look at the various pathways that each forged to move away from migrant farm working and ultimately into home visiting as adults.

While all of the women worked in the fields at some point before becoming home visitors, some experienced employment in other occupations in the period immediately before starting work in home visiting. Seven participants reported that just before commencing work as home visitors, they were employed in entry level jobs elsewhere that required less formal training and skill than was required for home visitor. These include hotel housekeeping, retirement home aide, cook, office clerk, retail sales clerk, child day care provider, and school aide. Two were in skilled occupations in other fields that required them to be able to demonstrate a level of expertise and job knowledge prior to employment. Included in these occupations are paralegal and hospital lab technician. The remaining nine participants entered home visiting directly after working in the fields. Additionally, several women in this category were also clients enrolled in social programs offered to migrant farm workers by the agencies in which they were employed at the time of the interview. Thus in some cases, their present employers were formerly their service providers. For example, prior to becoming a home visitor with the agency in which she was employed, Celia worked in the fields and became a consumer of home visiting services after giving birth to a baby who was born with disabilities. Though she had been working with her employer as a home visitor for twenty years, her introduction to the agency was as a client. She noted:

I worked in the fields for nine years. I had to learn that work. I got to be a pretty good tomato picker. I picked over two hundred and thirty-four buckets once; that was the highest. We made good money. When I had my third child, I stopped working. I had to be with her all the time because she was on like eight different medications and had tube feedings every three hours. I couldn't work. After that, the agency provided for me; they sent a Family Support Worker to my house and they had a home based program for children with disabilities. I started meeting people here and they told me that if my child ever gets better I could come into one of their centers and maybe work for the agency. They recruited me. After I passed my GED and my baby died, they needed another outreach worker so that is how I got the job. I didn't want to go back to the fields after working and knowing that I could do better.

The experience of being recruited as Celia described, was common among the other women who similarly moved from being an agency client to a home visitor. Another noteworthy point is her belief that the move into home visiting work was of greater advantage to her than remaining employed in agricultural field work. She expressed that she earned “good money” as a field farm worker. Celia and other participants noted with consistency that the low salary they earned as home visitors was one of the least desirable aspects of the job. Despite the fact that her earnings would have been greater as a farm worker than as a home visitor, Celia expressed a belief that overall she was better off working in the latter occupation; a sentiment that was likewise voiced by other participants. The extent to which they believed they were better off as home visitors than as farm workers is explored further in the next chapter.

Similar to Celia, Ivellise was working in the fields and was simultaneously enrolled in an educational program operated by the agency in which she later became employed. The program provided child care to farm working mothers who were working towards earning their GEDs. She remarked of her experience moving from client to employee that,

They opened this program where I could come and stay with my son and have him here while I was trying to get a GED. This was like a door that opened for me and I was just building on that. Because of him I got my GED and I went to school. Here I am now.

While all participants expressed a belief that getting out of the fields would be beneficial, not all started out as consumers of program services offered by the agencies in which they were later employed. Griselda for example said, “At first it was an opportunity to get out of the fields so I gave it a shot. I like what I do. Some parents are so appreciative of the things you do for them.” Nilsa voiced both practical as well as altruistic reasons for entering this field. “I needed insurance. I needed a job that was year round. I love helping people. This job was new and was helping people.”

As a group, women in this study believed that embarking on a career in home visiting was a better career option than farm working. Despite the lower income typically offered for this paraprofessional occupation, they believed they would be better off pursuing work in this field than they would be if they continued on with farm work. The choice to work as a home visitor for many also seemed to satisfy a desire to engage in work that involved helping people in a direct way. This tendency is consistent with the early aspirations of sixty-seven percent of the participants who indicated a childhood interest in becoming employed in a “helping profession.” The experience of being a migrant farm worker’s child, sensitized participants to concerns that were peculiar to the clients they encountered as home visitors. Their affinity for the unique plight of migrant farm working families perhaps harkens back to aspects of their own early childhoods. On addressing her motivation for becoming a home visitor Linda said:

I like to work with families. When I was out in the fields working, I would see these mothers pregnant and they would be out there and I would tell them, ‘no, no, no.’ They would come and talk to me and ask me questions and I already had my children. I would tell them, ‘you know that there is a daycare center.’ They would have the other children in the back in the field, and I told them it is not good for them. Ever since then, I wanted to help; be a social worker. I didn’t have the education so I couldn’t do it. I heard they were hiring at this agency to do what I am doing now. I applied and at night I worked on getting my GED and got it in 2001. I started at the agency. I have been learning different things about children. I wanted to learn more so I could help them.

Longevity on the Job: Home Visitors’ Reasons for Staying

Lengths of time in an occupation as well as longevity of employment with a single employer are two factors associated with an individual’s level of job satisfaction. In the United States, the median time that the average worker remains employed with a single employer is between four and five years and is even less for low-income workers (Holzer and Martinson, 2005). With rates of pay ranging from \$9.00 to \$10.00 per hour, study participants were considered low-income workers and given national employment trends could reasonably be

expected to be retained on the job for less than four years. Question #27 inquired about the length of time the participant had been employed as a home visitor.

Their responses show that half of the women had been employed as home visitors for five or less years and half had worked in this capacity for more than five years. Among the group that had worked between one and five years, one third were at the upper end of that time frame and reported working as a home visitor for a full five years. Among the group that had been employed for more than five years, five had been home visitors between six and ten years and four had been home visitors for ten, thirteen, eighteen, and twenty-three years respectively. The majority of study participants (67 percent) had worked in home visiting for five or more years thus as a group, job retention among home visitors was higher than expected for the job category. This raises questions about factors influencing their decision to remain employed in this line of work for relatively long periods of time.

When reviewing their responses to questions on their perceptions of their jobs, the strong desire to be of assistance to their clients, was a theme that consistently emanated as a primary motivator for remaining on the job. Celia remarked on her experience with helping migrant families and in particular, those who had children with special needs. She said:

I can think of things we can do that make a difference; that really, really make me feel helpful. Some of the other things, when they have a child with disabilities, because I had one... and I would tell them 'hey, this is what's happening and this is her diagnosis.' I have had more than three or four in my years and it makes me feel good that I am part of helping them get something they deserve and they need.

The sense of personal satisfaction derived from engaging in home visiting work was echoed by Dalia who said, "I know the families; I know their needs and sometimes I help them out. I see the achievement. You feel like you did something good." This sentiment was expressed in various ways by the remaining study participants. As a group their personal commitment to their

clients which may have stemmed from their affinity to and sense of connection with the migrant farm worker experience, played a part in each woman's decision to remain employed with their agencies in spite of the relatively low wage associated with the work. The extent to which participants viewed themselves as connected to their clients is explored in greater detail in the following chapter. From their responses to queries on job satisfaction however, home visitors as a group derived great self satisfaction from being of assistance to their clients and from the mentoring role they played as their clients navigated various systems and institutions encountered throughout the community.

Looking Ahead: Projections for Future Employment

Along with looking at why home visitors had remained on the job, another question of interest pertained to their long-term commitment to the occupation and length of time they expected to continue working as home visitors. Participants were asked about home visiting specifically as well as their projected career expectations more generally.

Eleven women expressed intentions of continuing in the home visiting field well into the future.

Kayla's view summarizes the thoughts of her contemporaries. She said:

I think I enjoy what I am doing; I don't have any plans to go anywhere. I think I want to just learn more about what I am doing now. This is an experience, I mean it really is. Going into people's homes; seeing the way they live. I see places that like...wow, make you count your blessings for what you got. There are some situations with people with bad homes. I think I am learning a lot.

Three participants said they liked home visiting but intended to branch out into related occupations. Ivellise for example said, "I want to get more educated. I am happy as I am right now. Maybe work in the school system or have my own day care. Something different...a challenge." The four remaining participants stated they did not intend to continue with home visiting. Each expressed a desire to pursue career options unrelated to home visiting that

required additional education. Each of the four women similarly voiced concern over not having the resources needed to pursue such options. For example, time and finances were barriers to each woman's ability to pursue the continuing education required to gain entry to alternate career paths. Reyna for instance wanted to be a physical therapist. Since separating from her husband and becoming a single parent to her teen-aged daughter however, she felt constrained in her ability to seek further education. She remarked:

I always said when my daughter is in high school I would go back to school and finish. But now when she got into high school, my marital status changed so that was two steps forward and one step back. That is where I am at. I want to get myself situated first where I can have some help like child support and stuff like that where I can have a little more to continue school.

The desire to return to school was a goal expressed by those who intended to remain home visitors as well as those who did not. In fact, fourteen participants voiced ambitions of furthering their education and attaining Associate and/or Bachelor degrees. Of those, most expressed the desire to advance in the social work field to become professional social workers. While fourteen women expressed a desire to attend college, six were actually enrolled. In thinking about herself in the near future, Juana who was enrolled in an A.S. degree program said:

I want to be a licensed social worker. I am taking education now. I take one class per semester. Five years from now, I envision being at least half way through continuing to go get my Bachelors and then taking more Social Work and Counseling courses. I would like sooner or later to be an Area Coordinator (supervising home visitors).

Because of her experience in higher education, Juana and the five other participants who were currently enrolled in an educational program were better positioned to complete their educational goals than the eight other women with similar goals who were not enrolled in school. As a group, their expressed educational goals were more clear and specific than those voiced by their counterparts who were not enrolled in an educational program. While those who were not in

school stated vague and general intentions to enroll at some point in the future, those who were currently in school tended to be more definitive in their expressions for example stating the numbers of courses they planned to take in a given semester and having a certain date in mind for program completion. Perla's intentions illustrate this point. She was working as a home visitor while enrolled in an unrelated A.S. degree program in Crime Scene Investigation. Perla said,

Now I am finishing my CSI degree. I want to get my BA in Forensics and take it from there...The CSI is a two year degree. I don't foresee doing DIS (home visiting) forever. I should be finished the CSI by spring semester. I figure it will take me another three years to get my BA in Forensics. I am now taking general education classes to transfer to FGCU (local State University). I am trying to stay at Edison (local two year college) as long as I can then transfer.

Study participants who were in school appeared to be more likely to continue with education and complete degrees, thus further improving their career options and ability to engage in employment unrelated to farm working.

Discussion

This chapter illustrated the ways in which study participants made the shift from the migrant farm working occupation into the field of home visiting. Their actions and their stated goals for the future show that as a group, they had made definite moves away from farm working that they intended to maintain. For each home visitor, occupational changes also ushered in cultural changes that marked a point in their respective family histories where the way of life shifted dramatically from one generation to the next. The parents of study participants were not only migrant workers who routinely travelled throughout the United States year-round in search of work, but in most cases were first generation immigrants from Latin America who were not firmly rooted by geography or culture to any particular place in this country. Central to their parents' motivations and day-to-day life were meeting basic family needs and finding ways to

survive as best they could in the United States. The picture changed however for their children; the study participants; who in most cases were born and raised in the United States. They had greater exposure to American institutions, most notably the education system, which expanded their understanding of a wider variety of options and opportunities to which they could avail themselves. Additionally and perhaps most importantly, they had greater facility with English as the dominant language used in the United States, than did their parents. These factors contributed to home visitors' movement from agricultural work to human services work. The change in their occupational track also brought about shifts in other areas of their lives. In keeping with the theme of transformation, the next chapter further explores changes in the culture of study participants related to the work they engaged in as home visitors and to their ideas on parenting.

CHAPTER V

WORK AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG HOME VISITORS

Introduction

The previous chapter illustrated participants' transition from agricultural work to social work. When they entered the home visiting occupation, participants became engaged in human services work that directly involved changing ways of life of new immigrants. Upon closer examination, many of their clients' folkways were similar to those of study participants as experienced throughout their childhoods while living with their families of origin. As social work endeavors to assist clients in elevating themselves from one state of being to another more improved one, a metric of success in this field is the ability of practitioners and programs to facilitate such positive transformation among their clientele. In moving from migrant farm working to home visiting, study participants were on a journey of learning and growth that not only effected change among their clientele but also ushered change into their own lives as well.

Socialization of recent immigrants from Latin American countries such as Mexico and Guatemala is a cornerstone of the home visiting projects in this study. This chapter explores home visitor self-perceptions and the role that their work has played in shaping their identity. The chapter also looks at home visitor/client relations and the emergence of home visitors' awareness of similarities and fundamental differences between the two groups. Lastly, in looking at their work worlds including the training they received from their employers and typical encounters they had while in the field working with clients, this chapter illuminates home visitors' understanding of the roles they play in their clients' lives; how the status of educator had become a significant part of their identities since commencing home visiting work; and home

visitors' personal embrace of the parenting ideas taught to their clients, into their own lives.

Perspectives on Preparing for Home Visiting Work: Training

The idea of transition is prevalent in the training that one encounters upon entry into the home visiting field. Home visitors articulated the importance of training and talked at length about the number and quality of training opportunities they had to help them in their work of acclimating immigrant parents to acceptable parenting practices in the United States. Maria for example remarked,

I think it is really, really intense here. It keeps you up-to-date with new things that are coming out for you to be able to better do your visits and conduct yourself. I think if you would have just thrown me in here with no training here where I am working, I don't know how far I would have gotten. It would have been so frustrating because we do come upon issues; it's like 'good Lord, what have I gotten myself into.' The trainings are something that prepares you for what could possibly happen and gives you a better understanding of what you could come upon and how to handle it and what kind of way to go about addressing certain issues and presenting information and just being able to do your home visits. This (work) truly believes in having somebody that knows what they're doing and talking about; being up-to-date and having the materials to go out and do it. I believe that all the training, although sometimes it is frustrating, is very helpful and gets you out there doing what you need to do.

Bella concurred stating that the trainings were, "very informative. It helps with doing the job.

As the years go by things are different from generation to generation. It is important to know the new information. Definitely helpful on the job."

All of the home visitors expressed that the training they received was important for them to be effective at work. Indeed the training that each received was significant. Once employed, home visitors spent much of their first year of employment completing employer sponsored training. First year training topics for home visitors in Healthy Families for example were extensive and included Community Resources; Boundaries; Confidentiality; Child Abuse and Neglect Indicators and Reporting; Infant Care; Substance Exposed Newborns; Child Health and

Safety; Maternal and Family Health; Infant and Child Development; Role of Culture in Parenting; Supporting the Parent-Child Relationship; Ethics; Personal Safety; Family Issues; Mental Health; Family Violence; and Substance Abuse (Children's Home Society, 2007). The length of training time allotted for each topic ranged from one to fourteen hours. One hundred percent of study participants voiced that the training they received was very helpful to them in interacting with program clients. Their comments on the training received illuminated their awareness of the role they played in passing on crucial parenting information to their immigrant clientele in order to facilitate their understanding, acceptance, and ultimately acculturation of prevailing child rearing paradigms found in contemporary United States.

Cultural competency and respect for cultural diversity are among the chief characteristics of an effective home visitor (Klass, 1996). In reviewing the job descriptions for the various home visiting programs in this study, the ability to work with diverse populations was a consistent trait sought in applicants for the home visitor position. Culture was one of the subject areas for home visitor training. Given that most of their clients' native tongue was not English, language was one aspect of culture that was significant in the work lives of study participants. One hundred percent of home visitors had proficiency in one or more languages other than English. Specifically, participants indicated fluency in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and other languages indigenous to regions of Latin America such as the Guatemalan dialect *Kanjobal*. Bilingual skills were indeed a requirement for employment as a home visitor in the Immokalee community. Hence language was an important cultural component that study participants shared with their clients and was often the basis for initial interpersonal connections upon which rapport and trust were established between the two groups.

Distinctions from Clients

While they were connected to their clients by language and other cultural characteristics, home visitors' perceptions of their work likewise demonstrated their awareness of some fundamental differences between their clients' ways of conducting life activities as compared with their own. In the process of focusing attention on their clients and on program goals to effect change among this collective group, changes in the ways of thinking and behaving among study participants were also illuminated. Home visitors in this study expressed awareness of the characteristics that made them different from their clients. These traits included their role as service providers as compared with their clients' role as service recipients; their ease with navigating the various institutions in the community as compared with the discomfort their clients had with negotiating these same systems; their loyalty and connection to the United States as contrasted with their clients' tenuous connections to the U.S. and strong bonds with their countries of origin; and their understanding of modern child developmental psychology and child rearing practices as compared with antiquated ideas held by many of their clients on methods of raising children and correcting errant child behavior. Home visitor perceptions of differences between themselves and their clients on these measures are detailed in the sections that follow.

Service Provider vs. Consumer

Study participants were very comfortable with articulating their employment duties and expectations and with discussing the day-to-day occurrences of their work. The role of teacher and of one charged with acclimating new immigrants to alternate ways of handling their children, came through strongly in discussions with each participant. While some had moved out of Immokalee at the time of their interviews, study participants had all lived in this community at one point and so had occasion to encounter the clients they served in many different settings.

Hence, their insight into Hispanic immigrant culture was rich and came from both experiences during actual home visits as well as from observations made outside of the work setting in the course of day-to-day community life in venues such as at grocery shops, religious institutions, schools, community parks, and laundry mats. These settings provided occasions for home visitors to observe their clients carrying out parental duties. In speaking of the ways in which her views on parenting differed from those of immigrant women, Erika recounted an incident that she had recently experienced when a woman unknown to her and her family sought their help with tending to her young child.

Not too long ago, there was a lady in my neighborhood knocking door-to-door. She wanted my daughter to take care of her son and I said, 'you really don't know her.' I don't know if they have it in their minds that it is safe here because they would just leave their child anywhere. That is one thing that I don't understand. I know that they have to work but they need to be more educated about that.

Other study participants had similar experiences in which they articulated displeasure with the ways they saw their clients, or in this case their potential clients, handle child rearing responsibilities. As they voiced their opinions, a pattern of their view of themselves as educators to the population of new immigrant mothers, began to emerge. This idea came through in Griselda's comment on information sharing that routinely occurred between her clients and herself during home visits. She said,

The families are getting more information from us than them giving to us. I feel that they are benefitting more from us right now because where they come from, their way of thinking and lack of education, lack of stimulation; I see that they (without intervention) are the same way with their kids.

The role of knowledgeable facilitator shown in this response was a very common self-perception embraced by study participants. Additionally, the assumption that home visitors knew more than their clients and that the relationship while respectful, was one in which the home visitor held an

authoritative position to the client, also came through home visitors' descriptions of their work with their immigrant clientele. These illustrations shed light on the ways in which home visitors had drawn boundaries to separate themselves from their clients.

While participants were clear on their position as the authority figures in relation to their clients and were able to provide multiple examples of the ways this was displayed in their interactions at work, there were instances in which they articulated mutuality with their clients whereby the home visitors learned from the service recipients. In so doing, home visitors were acknowledging a level of respect for and recognition of the valuable contributions their clients made to the relationship. Nilsa detailed her awe for one of her clients.

One woman amazed me. She is poor; she had a baby. She barely had one of the car seats given to her. But the way she took care of this baby; she didn't need diapers, she didn't need a pacifier. She said with the food that I eat, I give my baby breast milk. She made a quilt off of patches of clothing. So to me, I took that as 'wow, you don't have to have anything (material) to be a mom. You don't really have to give them WIC milk when you have breast milk.' She lived in the bushes so she made a house out of the bush. She eventually moved into a trailer. You can be the poorest person but have the mindset of a rich person. She cherished life. She was a vegetable eater. She grew her own beans. She taught me and showed me that you don't have to have everything in life to be happy. She was happy. It was her and her husband and her baby. They were eating nothing but vegetables; once in a blue moon chicken or meat. They were making their own tortillas. She taught me a little bit more about that.

Nilsa's respectful admiration of her client came through in her comments. This showed that although the relationship between the provider and client was one in which the home visitor expressly held a position of greater authority, there were also times when clients took the lead in providing useful information to home visitors. It also demonstrates that home visitors were receptive to learning from their clients. Another participant articulated a sense of respect for the manner in which one particular client living in extreme poverty operated her household. When recalling a visit with the family, Lorena was impressed by how the mother, "rewarded her kids

by doing something with them because the family could not afford to buy them gifts.” A sense of marvel at the ingenuity of the clients and their ability to innovate and to stretch resources in meeting their basic needs was a common source of praise that home visitors offered to their clients.

Role with Community Institutions: Negotiator vs. Victim

Notwithstanding the admiration of their clients described in the examples above, home visitors articulated many more examples of ways that they assisted their clients with navigating community institutions as contrasted with ways they had learned from their clients. As many as 45 percent of Immokalee residents were born in Latin America (Pemberton and Dow, 2007). Of this group, many were undocumented residents and as such had mastered ways of blending into the existing social fabric and averting attention away from themselves in order to avoid being singled out. The deliberate attempt to live life unnoticed is a reality with which home visiting clients, many of whom were undocumented, contended on a daily basis in this community. Home visitors were very aware of this tension as well as of discriminatory practices in Immokalee and in neighboring communities towards individuals of Hispanic descent. For the most part, study participants expressed empathy for the plight of their clients stating a belief that their clients indeed faced more discrimination than most other groups. Seventy-seven percent of study participants believed their clients were treated unfavorably by others in their immediate and/or surrounding communities; 11 percent felt they were treated the same as other groups; and 11 percent were not certain.

Study participants told many stories of witnessing acts of discrimination against their clients and others in the community similarly situated. Even home visitors who initially stated that they did not see any differences between the treatment of their clients and themselves,

eventually conceded as they thought and talked through the issue. Olga's recollection of an incident is one such example. When asked how her clients were treated when they were out in the community, Olga said,

I guess they are treated good. I see them just like regular people. Just because they were coming from somewhere, a different place, they were just people that came here to work.... Well actually yes. One time I was at Winn Dixie and there was this lady and her husband. The cashier was a Spanish person, and she was just talking to them in English and they would just look at her. So it was making me mad so I intervened. I said, "look, you are Spanish because I know you. Talk to them in Spanish," and she wouldn't. That made me mad because other people treated them different. She knew Spanish so why not talk to them in a language that they were going to understand: I never treated them different but there were people that I knew who did treat them different. A lot of times I intervened if I was around.

While other participants shared similar stories of poor treatment in Immokalee, many talked of discriminatory behavior clients experienced in the larger cities of Naples and Ft. Myers. Several home visitors expressed that that they too had encountered discrimination when others assumed that they did not speak English and that they perhaps were undocumented immigrants. Hilda is one such participant who expressed empathy for her clients knowing precisely how it felt to be stereotyped. When asked about how her clients were treated, she said,

Not very good. They are treated like they are ignorant. There have been situations when they go to the grocery in Ft. Myers or Naples and automatically when they see you with a different skin color they automatically start making comments. There was once when we were in the line to pay and there were these young American girls who started making comments and saying stuff in English and I didn't say anything; I pretended that I didn't know what they were saying so I just let them say what they were going to say and I turned around and I said something to my brother. They looked at me and got out of the line and went to another line to pay. I have seen where our families from here have been treated like that. I don't like it.

Others recounted times where they too were mistaken for someone who did not understand English and thus were subjected to verbal abuse by random members of the community with

whom they had no personal connection other than occupying shared community space at a moment in time. Maria, who was born in Guatemala but raised in the U.S. and who graduated from Immokalee High School, expressed that she regularly had encounters in which her language ability and status as a U.S. citizen came into question. She said:

I have dealt with being stereotyped as being illegally here because of how I look. I know my legal status is 'legit' as I became a citizen last year. I have dealt with questions like, 'Do you speak English?' because my skin color is that of Hispanic. I have come to learn not to be offended by it. I don't think there has been a week that has gone by recently where I haven't heard, 'do you speak English?' I don't take it as offense anymore. People coming to Immokalee visiting are the ones asking. They say, 'Oh you speak perfect English, where did you learn?' I have come to learn to accept it and just explain.

Maria had taken a more optimistic approach to what could be perceived as unduly invasive questioning of her right to reside in the United States. The fact that she was fluent in the English language and that she was in fact a U.S. citizen most certainly provided a level of comfort and protection from certain harms that she might otherwise be subjected to as an undocumented resident who was not conversant in the English language. The fate of someone in the latter circumstance was most often unfavorable. The fear of arrest and deportation was an ever-present threat among clients of study participants. Linda tearfully told of an incident that had occurred during the weekend preceding her interview.

This Saturday night, one of my clients went to see one of her cousins in jail. They arrested her (the client) there when she already had paper work...That gets me so upset. People are not being treated fairly...they are ruined. The little boy (client's son) was crying. This happened around 7:30 p.m. and they didn't let her out until around 12:00 a.m. They are really ruined.

This example shows the regularity with which people in Immokalee find themselves interacting with the criminal justice system. It also shows that even those with legal residency status were subjected to situations where their rights to freedom were usurped until they were able to prove

their innocence or legitimacy. Study participants were aware of their clients' fear of institutions and they expressed their understanding of the reasons for such fear. They also understood that their own ability to negotiate these same institutions were superior to that of their clients. This recognition showed one of the ways in which they fundamentally differed from their clients.

Some home visitors had incorporated this learning into lessons they passed on to their clients during home visits. Such teachings then became a latent component of the established curriculum provided by their employing agencies. Maria for example discussed advice she regularly gave to her clients to help them get better service at the local health clinic. She said,

I have learned to teach my families that the squeakier wheel will get the attention. It doesn't matter if you speak only Spanish or English. The louder you get they will do whatever is needed to hush you up. Whether it be to give you an appointment right away. Families think it is a privilege to be attended to in the clinic; they don't think it is a right. Being able to get them to understand they have equal rights is something that I am possibly teaching them.

Identification with the United States vs. Country of Ancestry

As previously described in Chapter II, regardless of home visitors' and/or their families' country of origin, they identified closely with U.S. culture in many ways. Some manifestations of this are seen in their connection to the important institutions of the United States such as the systems of education, politics, and employment. Additionally, their facility with the English language was instrumental in cementing their cultural ties to the United States.

The direction in which energy and resources are expended sheds light on what an individual deems to be important. One way of gauging participants' connection to the U.S. was listening to descriptions of their future plans for themselves and for their children. When asked about their plans five years from now, one hundred percent of home visitors indicated their intention to continue residing in the United States. Moreover, most participants expressed their intention to continue residing in Immokalee. Eighty-three percent planned to remain in

Immokalee for the rest of their lives. Maria was one who expressed strong convictions for this choice stating,

I don't think I will ever leave Immokalee. I don't know why. If you were to ask me this when I was 15 or 16 I would have said hell yes, (I plan to leave). But honestly, I think leaving the area completely is not something that I could possibly do. Maybe if I found another community that was similar...I don't know. Five years from now hopefully I will be enrolled in school and have gotten some kind of degree. Children...maybe a couple. First I must get married or adopt. Have my dog. Have my own place. Being financially stable and in good health. Other than that, I don't think I could ask for anything more.

Celia concurred with this sentiment stating, "I think I am going to stay here forever."

Other participants expressed intentions to reside in close proximity to Immokalee. For example, eleven percent planned to reside in the neighboring town of Lehigh Acres. Finally, one person expressed uncertainty on the exact place of her future residency. Nilsa was a U.S. citizen whose spouse was an undocumented resident from Mexico at the time of her interview. She was also enrolled at the local community college. She expressed the most ambivalence about remaining in the area in the long-term stating,

Honestly I don't want to stay in Immokalee for five more years. I want to stay here for a year or two. As soon as I get my husband's immigration papers, I am out of here. Immokalee is not progressing. It progresses then someone puts it back down. It is becoming too expensive. As soon as I finish college, I will go to Georgia.

Nilsa's uncertainty over continued residency in Immokalee was related to the immigration status of her husband. Having a spouse whose immigration status was tenuous broadened her insights into the life of the undocumented and shaped her thinking on immigration in ways that differed from other study participants who were perhaps less intimately involved with the issue at the time than was Nilsa. Indeed, home visitors expressed wide ranging views on the issue of illegal immigration. Most were in favor of liberal immigration policies and were empathetic to the plight of those who came to the United States simply to work to improve the economic status of

their families. Seventy-two percent of home visitors expressed unconditional empathy towards the circumstances of undocumented immigrants. According to Bella, “They should be legal. They should be allowed to come in and work. I understand American fear but I feel they should have the opportunity to come to the United States.” Other home visitors expressing empathy towards undocumented immigrants voiced similar sentiments. Some held even stronger views based on their own experiences as undocumented immigrants in their early lives. Dalia for example, related personally to the life of undocumented workers stating,

I really don't have an issue. I understand. I was here illegally also so we worked ourselves until we got legalized. I am a citizen. People come because it is a necessity. They know that once they get here, they have to work. They send money to Mexico.

While none of the participants expressed anti-immigrant sentiments, some were ambivalent about what they perceived as benefits accruing to undocumented immigrants that were not available to others. These study participants expressed displeasure with the unfairness in undocumented workers gaining a privilege over citizens and legal residents who were similarly situated economically but who were ineligible for certain help, i.e. legal and financial, made available exclusively to the undocumented population. Twenty-eight percent of home visitors raised concerns of perceived unfair resource distribution that favored undocumented immigrants. Perla for example remarked,

They get a lot more financial help. There are a lot more not-for-profit organizations that help them out. I have actually had American citizens complain that they can't get help. I kind of see where they are coming from. They (undocumented immigrants) can get Medicaid and they can get Food Stamps, and this and that; yet someone (legal resident or citizen) who can't afford it but is working doesn't qualify. I get both sides coming in and venting about this. There is a lot of help for them out here.

This somewhat surprising response aligns with general perceptions and narratives on illegal immigration found in the larger U.S. culture that suggests undocumented immigrants unfairly take resources away from citizens. Perla's remarks on government resources are in fact unfounded as eligibility requirements for these benefits have become more stringent over time and as such, undocumented immigrants are less likely to be deemed eligible for government services. Moreover, the climate of fear that exists among the undocumented discourages them from calling attention to themselves hence they are less likely to come forward to apply for benefits even if eligible (Fix and Zimmermann: 2001). Nevertheless, the perception that this group was somehow advantaged over others was alive in the minds of some home visitors. Two home visitors whose own parents were undocumented when they first arrived in the United States, were among those expressing ambivalence about undocumented immigrants receiving government benefits. Reyna for example said,

I see pros and cons. They want to come here to better their lives but, take me for example. Now that I am separated I tried getting Medicaid. They couldn't help me because I was way over budget. But then again, I am struggling because I am a single parent. They (undocumented immigrants) come in where they have no papers and they get all the help they can get. That's where I see pros and cons. Yes, I understand they are here because they want to better themselves; they don't want to stay over there, but then again when they are here getting the benefits that I think we should...well at least I am making the effort...I want to get help because I can't make it on my own and I don't get it. I don't have any problems with them being here. They are working and doing what they have to do.

Reyna's remarks show a tension between empathy and resentment over the issue of illegal immigration. Her personal experience as a single mother struggling to survive, seems to have brought to the surface perceptions of unfairness of others gaining access to scarce resources by breaking the rules while those who operate within the bounds of the law, are systematically overlooked and afforded little or no assistance. Nilsa referenced previously, made distinctions of

subpopulations found within the group of undocumented immigrants. She voiced agitation with behaviors she had observed among a segment of this group saying,

My husband is from Mexico and we are going through immigration. It's a pain in the butt. But the thing that bothers me is we pay taxes for my husband. I get upset as a Family Support Worker when you walk into a house and there's a lady from Mexico and she doesn't have any papers and she is not doing what she is supposed to do for her kids and not providing; gets assistance from the government and uses and abuses our way. They have the mentality that, 'I don't have to work 'cause I don't have papers and anyhow, the government pays for our services.' Then I think why am I paying social security...for them? That kind of stuff bugs me. I think there should be a limit for how many people get in. If you drink and drive or have killed somebody because you were drinking and driving or you sold drugs or you beat your wife, you don't need to be here. Let your country deal with you.

Similar to Reyna, Nilisa was very close to the issue of immigration. Perhaps their proximity to the process contributed to the strong and seemingly contradictory stances both expressed in opposition to undocumented immigration. Whether they were pro-immigration or somewhat ambivalent, home visitors' comments are yet another illustration of the ways in which they distinguish themselves from their clients and point to another boundary that they have drawn to differentiate themselves from immigrant women. Whether they were strongly pro-immigration or hesitant on the issue, the idea that study participants had been immersed in U.S. culture and had thus broadened their understanding of the immigration issue incorporating views held by majority populations into their thinking, came through in their comments.

Parenting: Changing Thoughts on Child Rearing Beliefs and Practices

Child rearing beliefs/practices is another area in which home visitors articulated differences between themselves and their clients. Their thoughts on parenting were explored through a variety of questions designed to prompt each respondent to reflect on her own personal childhood history; adulthood experiences raising children; and current role as a parent educator conducting home visits with immigrant clientele. Indeed from descriptions of their childhoods

previously outlined in Chapter III, most experienced conditions that were less than idyllic and that focused on the family doing that which was necessary to meet basic economic needs. As children, they were expected to contribute directly to the economic output of the family and while education and recreation were allowed, they were viewed as optional features of childhood secondary to the family's work regimen. Their parents took more of a laissez-faire approach to children's education and leisure activities and their childhoods were characterized by natural growth as opposed to concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2003). Throughout childhood, women in this study were being prepared to work in the fields just as their parents had done before them. As described in the previous chapter however, study participants managed to escape this fate when they ventured into human services work as paraprofessional home visitors.

In their adult lives, fifteen out of eighteen home visitors (83 percent) were themselves parents. Three home visitors were also grandparents. Of those who were parents, 80 percent had young and/or teenage children who were still living in their homes and two of the three grandparents stated that they had primary care giving roles with their young grandchildren. Thus parenting was a subject of interest to each participant personally as well as professionally. Participants provided their current perspectives on parenting in Questions 33, 34, 35, and 36. Additionally, Questions 58 and 59 queried participants on their aspirations and expectations for their children's present and future education and careers. One hundred percent of home visitors said that their ideas on parenting had changed and that they had also changed the way they interact with children since becoming home visitors. Whether or not they had children in the home, study participants overwhelmingly voiced a belief that the information they learned and passed on to their clients on parenting was valuable to them personally. One area in which they expressed changes in point of view was education. Dalia for example noted that she had a

greater appreciation for education and better understood the necessity for children to obtain a good education in order to live life productively as adults. The highest level of schooling that she had completed was ninth grade and she noted, “I know that without an education they won’t get far. I was in a little bubble before thinking you don’t need to go to college or you don’t need to get more education. I know now that more education is better.” This is in contrast to the thinking and ideas of their parents from the preceding generation who as described previously, viewed children’s education as secondary to family work needs. The expectation that their children should obtain education was a thought articulated by most study participants. Questions 58 and 59 queried participants on their definitions of success for their children and on their beliefs on how they could be instrumental in facilitating such success for their children. Eighty-nine percent of the women explicitly stated a definition of success that started with their children graduating from high school. Not only was high school completion an expectation, but for most there was an implicit recognition that high school completion was a minimal requirement to get one started on the path towards a good life. Griselda said that she expected her children, “to be independent, hard working, and to finish high school to begin with.” Beyond the recognition of the importance of high school, ten participants voiced that they believed the minimal level of education needed for their children to achieve success was a college degree. Sara was very strong in this conviction and went to great lengths to demonstrate to her children, the value that she placed on education. She elaborated on her methods for communicating the importance of education to her son.

When my nineteen year old wanted to quit school at age sixteen, I brought him out to Immokalee to the packing house and told him if you quit, this is the lifestyle you are going to be living. Nowadays you need an education. Now not even with the diploma can you get a pretty decent job. You need an actual college degree now if you want to get something you can live off of. He signed up for college in the fall. I am pushing him and I still got two more (children) to go.

Participants' reflections on their own experiences working in agriculture along with their experience of getting out of this work and into paraprofessional social work, directed most to develop another vision of life for their children. Moreover, exposing their children to the life of those who labor in agriculture as Sara had, was a common tactic used by participants to motivate their children towards pursuing educational goals.

Child discipline was another area in which participants voiced changes in perspective since becoming home visitors. Most had grown up in households in which corporal punishment was the prominent form of discipline employed, yet the programs in which they worked all promoted alternate, non-physical forms of positive discipline for children. All of the women expressed that information on child discipline that they learned in the course of their employment as home visitors was useful to them personally. Lorena was one of the home visitors who expressed that the information she learned was timely for her as she was raising a young son. She said, "When I started I didn't have too much to work with but with my job, I learned a lot of stuff. Like the importance of setting limits. Limits is not hitting it is talking to your child. That was one of the biggest things. I try to talk to him and not spank him." Others echoed similar sentiments of being pleased to learn about and to subsequently try new tactics to elicit cooperation from their children as opposed to resorting to the physical punishment that had been used on them as children. Attaining success with using these techniques served to reinforce their beliefs in such methods and also strengthened their presentation of this material to their clients.

Some participants remarked that not only had their beliefs on parenting and child discipline personally changed, but they were also able to influence a shift in the parenting ideas held by their spouses. Juana for example said,

Because of all the trainings I've had then and even currently, I am who I am right now. I see life in a different perspective. I remember back then my mom she said 'don't ask' and when I asked I would get slapped. Now, they have taught me to have more patience and talk to my kids. My husband says to me, 'don't explain to them, they just have to do it.' I say no, it's not fair to be told something that is confusing. I always tell him to compare yourself to them...to those little feet. We step one, they step two or three to catch up. When I told him that he understood. He's come a long way.

Like Juana, Bella who is grandmother of a toddler, believed that her ideas had evolved since beginning work as a home visitor and that she had likewise influenced her daughter's parenting practices. She said, "I am a grandparent of a two year old. Everything I learn, I discuss with my daughter. I feel like my grandson is extremely smart: can count to five, knows his colors, and can turn pages of a book. I think it has a lot to do with me and my job."

While most home visitors were parents all did not have small children in the home or in their day-to-day lives upon whom they could practice the new parenting techniques learned.

Nevertheless, those without children also expressed that the information was valuable and had changed their ideas on parenting. Anna for example said, "I was thinking that if I only knew what I know now when I had my daughter when I was working in the fields. We didn't play with her or have fun. I would change that if I could start again." Kayla who had two sons in their twenties concurred stating, "I wish I would have had the program when I had my babies because I have learned so much. Sometimes I wish I could just go back and do it all over."

Whether or not they were still parenting children in their homes or had no children at all, one hundred percent of study participants commented that they were more knowledgeable on child rearing after becoming home visitors than before commencing this work and that the materials on parenting and child development provided by their employers had influenced their current thoughts and behaviors on these issues.

Discussion

This chapter illustrated how home visitors' work was instrumental in sharpening their awareness of themselves as second and third generation Hispanic-American women, separate and distinct from the population of new immigrant women for whom they provided services. It also showed how study participants' involvement in the parent education profession, played a part in their developing consciousness of the differences between themselves and their clients. Home visitors were former migrant workers who were very familiar with the livelihood of their clients. While empathetic to the plight of their clientele, study participants articulated many contrasts between the two groups. Their comments demonstrated the extent of their comfort with and connection to various American institutions including the legal, health care, and educational systems. The ease with which they navigated these systems and their familiarity with the tools of the culture such as English language, were unmatched by the capabilities of their Hispanic immigrant clientele, and thus demonstrated a significant gap between the two groups. Their beliefs on parenting were yet another way in which they differed from their clients. From their descriptions, home visitors had adopted much of the educational material on parenting that they were passing on to their clients, as valuable to their professional and personal lives. Overall, this chapter served to provide a glimpse into the lives of second generation Hispanic women as they had moved from migrant farm work to paraprofessional social work. Their affinity to the worlds of both the Hispanic immigrant community and that of second generation America, showed the development of a unique subculture with its own identity within the Hispanic/American community.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. Where do you reside and for how long have you lived there?
4. Where were you born?
5. What place do you consider to be your home town?
6. Who lived in your childhood home?
7. Who was your primary care taker when you were a child?
8. Name a person or persons from your childhood who had the greatest positive impact on your life.
9. Please explain the choice from question #8.
10. On a scale of 1-10 where 1 is miserable and 10 is very happy, please rate your childhood.
Please explain your choice.
11. Please describe a childhood memory either positive or negative that stands out in your mind today.
12. Please describe your experience in the K-12 education system.
13. Were you involved in any extracurricular activities while in school?
14. Thinking about your childhood, do you believe your experience was similar to or different from others in your peer group at the time?
15. Thinking about your family growing up, do you believe your family life was similar to or different from that of your neighbors?
16. How were you disciplined as a child?
17. What were your parents' occupations?

18. When you were a child, what were your career aspirations?
19. What is your current marital status?
20. Do you have children? If so how many and what are their ages?
21. At what age did you first become a parent?
22. Where did you get information on parenting when you had your first child?
23. Who was your primary source of information on parenting when you first had a child?
24. Who was/were the primary care giver(s) to your child(ren)?
25. What is your opinion of the role of caregivers in the lives of children ages 0-5 years?
26. What is your current occupation?
27. How long have you been employed in this role?
28. Prior to working in this field, were you employed? If so, what work were you doing?
29. Please describe how you got involved with your current line of work?
30. What if any training did you have before becoming a home visitor?
31. What is your opinion of the training that you have received since becoming a home visitor?
32. Are there trainings that were provided by your employer that you did not find useful?
33. Are there trainings that were provided by your employer that you found to be particularly useful?
34. After working in your current position, have your ideas about parenting changed or remained the same? If they have changed, please describe.
35. After working in your current position, are there aspects of your own child rearing practices that you have changed or that you would like to have changed when you were raising your children?

36. After working in your current position, are there aspects of your own child rearing practices that you have changed as you interact with other children to whom you provide care?
37. What is your racial and ethnic background?
38. Where were your parents born?
39. Where were your grandparents born?
40. How connected do you feel to the place where your parents and/or grandparents were born?
41. How often do you visit this country? (For those with foreign born parents or grandparents)
42. What is the ethnic background of the clients you serve?
43. Does your ethnicity play a role in your daily life in Immokalee? If so please describe.
44. How often do immigration issues come up in your line of work?
45. How do you think your clients are treated in the community?
46. Do you think that your clients are treated the same way as you are in the community?
47. In what ways are your clients treated differently from you?
48. What are your thoughts on the issue of undocumented immigration in the United States?
49. What are your career aspirations?
50. Do you expect to remain in Immokalee?
51. Do you intend to continue working with your current employer?
52. Where do you see yourself five years from now?
53. How would you rate the level of support you get from your supervisors?
54. What is the best part of your job as a home visitor?

55. What is the least favorable aspect of your job as a home visitor?
56. Of the following categories, which best describes your family's current socioeconomic status? The categories included impoverished, working poor, working class, middle class, upper middle class, and wealthy.
57. Thinking about your current SES in comparison to your parents' SES at this same age, do you believe you are better off or worse off than they were at this age?
58. Thinking about your children how would you define success for them as adults?
59. What do you believe you can do to help your children achieve the success you have in mind for them?

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