

EDUCATING LATINO CHILDREN IN GEORGIA: ACCOUNTABILITY,  
ACCOMMODATION, AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

by

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(Under the Direction of Linda Grant)

ABSTRACT

Using qualitative face-to-face interviews of twenty-two educators in Hall County, Georgia, I explore the impact of the recent influx of Latino students on Georgia schools. In this study, I focus on the two most demographically distinct schools in Hall County—Belmont and Parkdale. I analyze differences in proportions of Latino students, school contexts, accountability pressures, and accommodation strategies. These school factors, in addition to educators' perceptions of Latino educational barriers, are used to explore how and why Belmont and Parkdale have developed different models of school management—loosely-coupled and organic models, respectively. I speculate that Parkdale has adopted an organic model as an attempt to bolster student achievement amidst large proportions of disadvantaged students and mounting accountability pressure.

INDEX WORDS: Latino, Immigration, Georgia, Schools, Education, Educational inequality, Education organization, Loosely-coupled systems, Organic systems, Accommodation, Achievement, Accountability, *No Child Left Behind*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

According to Census data, in 2000, there were 28.4 million foreign born people in the US, including 8.6 million school-age children from immigrant families. Most of this immigration comes from Latin American and accounts for the 58 percent increase in the Latino population in the last decade. While immigration is far from being a new phenomenon in the US, Latino immigrant patterns are no longer primarily confined to a handful of southern states (eg. Florida, California, Texas). Increased immigration of Latinos<sup>1</sup> and young Latino families has been particularly salient in North Carolina, Georgia, Nevada, and Arkansas. Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population in Georgia alone nearly tripled to approximately 430,000 (Atilas and Bohon 2002). The dramatic increase has resulted in striking changes in the student populations of many Georgia schools. With increasing numbers of Latinos, schools and teachers are facing wider ranges of student needs, abilities, and challenges within their classrooms. My research in Hall County, Georgia, suggests that there are numerous methods being employed by teachers and schools to accommodate this population. Educators feel that this population faces certain barriers in the US education system, and they are responding to the perceived challenges they face as educators of this population. In schools with large Latino populations, their responses are resulting in an organizational shift that allows for the increased individual and collective authority of teachers in determining how Latino students will be responded to in schools.

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<sup>1</sup> For simplicity, the term *Latino* is used throughout the paper to include both Hispanics and Latinos.

While most Georgia school districts are seeing increased Latino enrollments, Hall County was chosen as the focus of this study because of the particularly radical changes in its proportions of Latino students. Many Latino families have moved to Hall County to work in the poultry plants, as well as within agriculture, construction, and landscaping positions, causing a dramatic increase in the general Latino population in this area (Gramig 1998). According to the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, the jobs in the poultry plants attract Mexican documented and undocumented workers who are able to “alleviate labor shortages caused by the industry’s high turnover rate” (Bixler 2001; Roach 1988). As evident from the low unemployment rate of 3.5% in 2002, as compared to 5.6% statewide, the influx of Latino workers is meeting the needs of this expanding labor market, rather than causing unemployment and competition among native workers.<sup>2</sup> In 2000, Latinos made up 19.5% of the county population, compared to only 0.7% of the population in 1980 (see Table 1). The 14.7 percentage point increase between 1990 and 2000 amounted to an increase of 22,684 Latino people. Of the Latino foreign born population in Hall County, 88 percent are from Mexico. In the Parkdale and Belmont school district zones—the foci of the current analysis—the percentages of Mexican Latinos are 98 and 99 percent respectively. Furthermore, Hall County has a significant proportion of Latino school-age children—24% of the public elementary school population, as compared to 6% statewide.

Table 1: Latinos as a percent of the total population

Census Data	1980 <sup>3</sup>	1990 <sup>4</sup>	2000
Georgia	1	1.7	5.3
Hall County	.7	4.8	19.5

<sup>2</sup> See Georgia Statistics System, Employment Analysis, at [www.georgiastats.uga.edu](http://www.georgiastats.uga.edu) (accessed April 2004)

<sup>3</sup> SOURCE: 1980 U.S. Census data collected from [www.nationalatlas.gov/census1980m.html](http://www.nationalatlas.gov/census1980m.html)

<sup>4</sup> SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000 and 1990)

Prior to the influx of Latino students, schools within the Hall County school system were stratified according to social class. Using Census tract data as a proxy for school district zones, the median household income for the Parkdale school zone in 1989 was \$20,554. The median household income for Belmont was significantly higher, \$30,544, even though they are both within the Hall County school district. According to a third grade Parkdale teacher of twenty-two years, before the Latino influx the school enrolled mostly “poor white kids” that she claims were of even lower socio-economic status than the current Latino children. While there is a growing Latino middle-class (Kaplan 2003), Latinos are disproportionately entering the US working class, and are consequently subject to the negative conditions associated with American poverty, such as poor living conditions, poor health care, crime, and poor schools (Bohon, et al. 2004). Thus, the pre-existing socio-economic imbalance in the district has been a key factor in the unequal allocation of Latino students among Hall County schools. This imbalance can be observed in the housing communities that surround the schools. Parkdale is surrounded by low-income housing units and trailers, while Belmont is surrounded by large suburban single-family homes. Hall County schools were divided by social class origins of students prior to the recent influx of Latino schools, but the social class compositions of neighborhoods from which each school drew had implications for the distribution of Latino youth to Hall County schools. Because most Latino youth who entered the area were poor, they ended up concentrated in the few schools that traditionally had served poorer socioeconomic students.

The federal *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001<sup>5</sup> was enacted to assure that every child has equal educational opportunities, regardless of his or her background. One component of this complex act is increased accountability requirements placed on local educators in regard to student performance. If schools do not meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) for more than one

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<sup>5</sup> see [www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html) for federal *No Child Left Behind Act* legislation and guidelines

year, they are deemed in need of improvement (NI; informally labeled “failing schools”). AYP is measured with a series of performance goals, relying heavily upon student standardized test scores to assess the performance of students, educators, and schools. Students not meeting minimum standards are retained, and their teachers and principals are subject to increased scrutiny, which can vary according to the proportion of students in this category. The “failing” schools are then subject to a list of consequences from public school choice for parents to restructuring of the school, depending on how many years the school has not met AYP. Due to the disadvantages that Latino students have within the US educational system and the recent Latino influx, many schools in Hall County are under accountability pressure. This pressure has been unequally distributed across the district, consistent with the unequal distribution across elementary schools of students of Latino origins. Some schools are already labeled “failing,” and many fear that they are teetering on the edge. The act helps to provide monetary and programmatic support to schools with high impoverished and Latino populations, yet holds teachers accountable for student academic performance without providing adequate instructional guidance for achieving these goals.

Most educators in the current study believed that inadequate English-language proficiency was a barrier to Latino educational achievement. While current literature favors bilingual education approaches for limited-English proficient students (eg. Rothstein 1998, Cummins 2000), educational policy and the recent US political climate have favored English immersion/assimilation tactics. According to Beck and Allestaht-Snyder (2002), until recently the Georgia state department of education has taken a strict “English-only” approach to accommodation of this population, often in the face of viable alternatives such as bilingual education programs. Georgia educators are left with conflicting evidence and suggestions on

how best overcome the language issues that they face daily in their classroom, yet with *No Child Left Behind* educators are held accountable for student achievement on English-written standardized tests.

The issues of academic inequality and Latino underachievement are particularly salient in Georgia because the state's poor educational rankings in comparison to most other states. Georgia has the lowest Latino graduation rate in the US, with only 32% of the class of 1998 graduating from high school. Of the four states with the worst Latino graduation rates, Georgia (32%), Alabama (33%), Tennessee (38%), and North Carolina (38%), all are Southern states experiencing similar recent influxes of Latinos including Latino immigrants (Greene 2001; Salzer 2001). Utilizing national data, Rong and Preissle (1998) note a severe drop-out problem among Latino youth, and particularly Mexican youth. Drop out rates were most extreme for non-English proficient Mexican youth, regardless of social class. Those Mexican youth who spoke both Spanish and English fared significantly better than both non-English proficient and English-only Mexican youth. These statistics are especially relevant for the Hall County situation, because of the large proportion of Mexican Latinos and the English-only approach to language education that historically has been the only option in Georgia.

Educators I interviewed appeared genuinely concerned about their students, desiring them to be successful academically despite perceived educational obstacles. Many educators within schools with high Latino populations have chosen their jobs and/or continue to work within their particular schools because of their concern for this specific population. With the *No Child Left Behind Act*, the concern about Latino underachievement has become politicized. Latino academic achievement, as measured with standardized tests, is now a professional issue

for teachers. Not meeting standards school-wide results in a “failing” label for the school and consequent greater scrutiny of the professional practices of educators working within it.

While we can speculate about the effects of the Latino influx on student achievement, the present study cannot directly address this issue because it is not possible to gather reliable evidence about the long-range academic progress of Latino-origin students in comparison to other groups. I have collected evidence about teachers perceptions at one period of time, thus I cannot assess the long range academic effects of the influx. However, I can gain an understanding of the different approaches to educating this population that emerge from differences within schools, as well as from external pressures. Presumably many other U.S. school districts are experiencing similar rapid influxes of Latino populations as is seen in Hall County. Therefore, this research can contribute to a more widespread understanding of school strategies to respond to demographic shifts and the effects of educational policy reforms on the education of Latino students. It can also explicate how efforts to meet the needs of non-US-born students become embroiled in issues of professionalization and professional competence for teachers and other educators.

In Hall County, I argue, the organizational result of the influx of Latino students and the perceived challenges faced by educators has been a shift from a loosely-coupled system to an organic system in schools with high proportions of Latino students. Many educators, researchers, policy makers, and community members believe that the system of public education in the U.S. is a decentralized, loosely-coupled system. The system has some centralizing, bureaucratic elements (formal hierarchy, formal structure of rules and regulations, division of labor), yet much educational authority lies in the hands of local educators and can be directed toward specific community and student needs. The goals in a loosely-coupled system are vague and

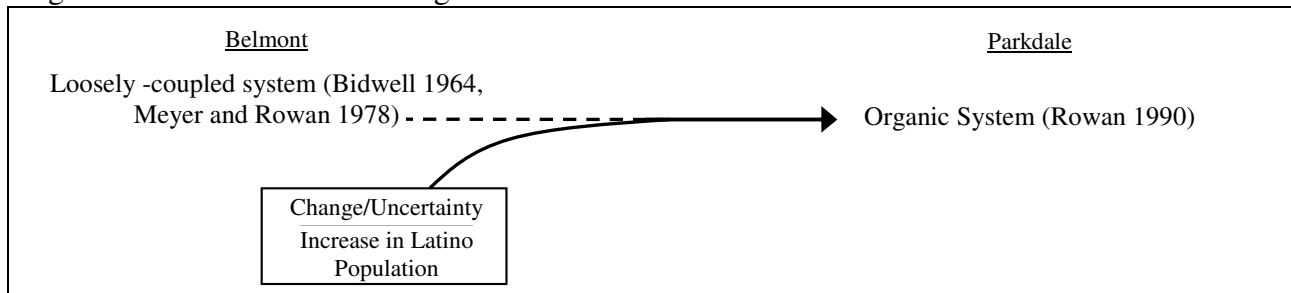
imprecise (Bidwell 1991 1964, Meyer and Rowan 1978). As a result of their semi-professional status, teachers are given a certain amount of autonomy over their classrooms so that they may respond to student variability and make “discretionary judgments about the procedures to be used during the time a student group is in his charge” (Bidwell 1964). However, this autonomy is not unlimited. Bidwell (1964) states that the school system, and larger bureaucratic structure, becomes a check to “insure the teacher’s adherence to universalistic criteria in these decisions.” Especially if problems arise (such as inadequate standardized test scores), educators are subject to increased supervision and scrutiny. Additionally, Wilensky (1964) and Lauglo (1995) argue that with the increased education of the public and political importance of education, the professional authority of teachers is likely to also be subject to increased questioning and scrutiny from those outside of the educational system.

Analyzing the Hall County school system as a loosely-coupled system addresses the variations that were found between and within the different schools; however, considering *No Child Left Behind* objectives the goals set for educators in schools with large Latino student populations are no longer vague. In later works, Rowan (1990) provides a new theory for analyzing decentralized educational systems. In analyzing the evolution of loosely-coupled education systems, Rowan synthesizes literature on the organizational effectiveness of “organic” forms of management and studies of teacher commitment and participation. The resulting organic system of education and organic approach to school management is a movement away from loosely-coupled educational systems as previously envisioned. In comparison to loosely-coupled theory, the important differences in organic theory are the following (1) a greater understanding and complexity of goals and (2) an expectation of teacher collaboration to solve problems (or achieve goals). Instead of the goals being vague and imprecise, the goals are



complicated and multi-faceted to account for the complex interests at play. I believe that this shift will be especially prominent in schools with diverse populations, or populations deviating from the white, middle class, English-speaking student norm. The education system will be decentralized, but goals no longer vague. Control over classroom instruction will remain in the hands of teachers, but the necessary means of attaining these goals will remain unclear.

Figure 1: Theoretical Model: Organizational Evolution



The participation of teachers in decision-making processes and the collaboration of teachers to solve emerging problems are central components to the organic system model of education organization. In regard to instructional and accommodation decisions, the educational hierarchy is of less importance than informal teacher networks. Control over the educational process becomes more school-based, eliciting the input of teachers in decision-making and initiating a professional community of educators (Rowan 1990). According to Byrk, et al. (1998), the effectiveness of such school-based, organic management strategies are dependent upon accountability standards upheld externally and support for the school unit from the centralized system. In the best of circumstances, teachers retain control over the functioning of their environment, while benefiting from the resources and programs allocated from the district, state, and federal levels.

The vast majority of organizational literature looks at the system level, rather than the individual schools. As such, it assumes that schools within a district experience a uniform impact

to system and/or district wide changes. My initial assumption was that the influx of Latinos would indeed have a similar impact on all schools. One of the immediate, important findings was that there were differences between schools. Because of the aforementioned institutional allocation of most Latinos into a few schools, there are organizational variations within elementary schools in Hall County school district. Through the eyes of educators, I am exploring how different forms of accommodation and organization have arisen and been defined as appropriate professional practices for dealing with Latino students.

While four schools were studied, two—Belmont and Parkdale (pseudonyms)—are the heart of the current analysis. Of the twenty-two face-to-face qualitative interviews that were conducted of educators in Hall County, fifteen were in these two schools. These two schools were chosen because they are the most opposite in terms of student demographics, parent involvement, English-language learner (ELL) resources, language accommodation, and, ultimately, organizational structure. Within the two schools, different strategies and legitimizing rationales have emerged given the different sets of circumstances faced. Data from two other schools—Sycamore and Lakeside—are used to validate my conclusions that a decentralized system exists within the county, as well as to provide additional information about the system and the Latino population. In discussing inequality and the education organizational structure, the following components will be explored through the data: (1) quantitative, demographic differences between the schools and school districts, (2) the perceived impact of the population on classrooms and schools, (3) the educators' perceptions of the challenges faced by Latino students, and (4) the strategies employed by the schools and teachers in order to meet these challenges.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the impact of the influx of Latino students in Hall County, Georgia, it is necessary to review portions of the literature on education organizational change, teacher professionalization, and Latino achievement. The focus of the analysis will be on organizational variations between loosely-coupled systems and organic systems, viewed as part of a larger tension between centralization and decentralization. This debate surrounding school organization has direct effects on the professionalization of the teaching occupation, particularly in terms of autonomy granted to teachers. Finally, a brief overview of literature on Latino achievement is necessary in order to understand the potential impact of the population and the challenges faced by educators.

#### *Education Organization*

“...this accountability, standardized testing, retaining kids, it’s just another trend. I have been teaching long enough that I’ve seen it before. It will come and go...”

- Mary, 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Belmont

Within public school systems, there have been competing tendencies toward centralization and decentralization. Richard Ingersoll (2003) outlines these two main organizational perspectives as the “disorganization perspective” and the “teacher disempowerment perspective.” Proponents of the former believe that the educational system is an overly decentralized, disorganized entity. The system can be considered loosely-coupled, thus much educational authority lies in the hands of local educators and can be directed toward

specific community and student needs. The goals in such a system are vague and imprecise. Educational reforms in such a system would entail increased centralization, placing more power in the hands of the larger educational bureaucracy.

The alternative perspective is that the educational system is too centralized. While there are different versions of this anti-centralization perspective depending on who is considered disempowered, the focus of the current discussion is on teacher disempowerment. According to proponents of this perspective, “factory-like schools unduly deprofessionalize, disempower, and ‘demotivate’ teachers—a situation that is dissatisfying to teachers and a source of school inefficiency and ineffectiveness” (Ingersoll 2003:8) Improvement of the education system would necessitate increased teacher professionalization, power, and autonomy for teachers. Ultimately, Ingersoll describes the benefits of increased teacher empowerment to the functioning of the school. He also points out the complexity and importance of balancing organizational control, including finding an adequate balance of teacher control and accountability.

To understand the organization of the current public education system, and the tension between centralization and decentralization, it is necessary to understand the development of organizational theory and educational policy since the advent of loosely-coupled system theory. Bidwell (1964) was the first to discuss the concept of loose-coupling in relation to schools. He describes the importance of the autonomy of the local educator to respond to the variability in the student population and student needs. The system is set up to respond to the uncertainty of the classroom. The establishment of an overarching, centralized set of criteria for the functioning of the classroom would not account for the “day-to-day fluctuations” or the differences in the student demands and needs. While accounting for student variability, there is also a demand for similar socialization of students. Bidwell (1964:974) notes that “procedures must be selected

universalistically on the grounds of variable student aptitude, for all students of given kinds and levels of ability must undergo similar forms of socialization.” It is up to the various, interdependent levels of the educational system to assure that this similar socialization occurs, for it is the system’s responsibility to assure a “uniform product of a certain quality” despite the difference in student input. Local educators are given autonomy to respond to local educational needs, while the system is in place to assure that uniform products of a minimal standard are produced.

The loosely-coupled systems model was used by organizational theorists to describe the educational system throughout the 1970s (Lortie 1975, Meyer and Rowan 1978, Weick 1976). The educational system was viewed as lacking “both tight bureaucratic controls over teaching and the kinds of organizational supports that encourage professionalized teaching” (Rowan 1990). The educational system has bureaucratic components similar to a complex organization, such as a formal hierarchy, specialized division of labor, and a formal set of rules and regulations (Ingersoll 2003). The formal system is set up for the benefit of educating students through classroom instruction, yet this main function is left largely in the hands of teachers, behind closed doors (Meyer and Rowan 1978). While instruction is the primary element, there is little overarching guidance as to how and to what ends this is to occur and goals were vague. Each level of the organization is variably connected and interdependent, yet subject to spontaneous change (Orton and Weick 1990). Thus, federal, state, and district levels of the educational structure are linked together and to the classrooms to varying degrees. If legislation or funding changes, they are still linked and interdependent. According to Weick (1976), loosely coupled systems are good for localized adaptation and maintenance of the larger system in times of

change. When change or breakdown occurs in one segment of the system, the entire system is not subject to the effects.

Also pointing to the lack of coordination and control over classroom instruction present in the loosely-coupled system model, Lortie (1975) suggests the prominent presence of the “egg crate school.” Each classroom functions largely on its own, side-by-side with other classrooms, yet largely independent. According to Lortie, “[t]his type of organization meant that each teacher was assigned specific areas of responsibility and was expected to teach students that stipulated knowledge and skills without assistance from others.” He argues that while deviations from this model exist, the “egg crate school” remains the dominant pattern and other models are still considered innovative. Such deviating models may include teaming and open classrooms. This model was set up to accommodate the historically high turn-over rate of the occupation. If teachers were to have functioned interdependently, staff turn-over would create more administrative problems than if teachers work independently.

There was a movement in the 1970s and early 1980s to reform loosely coupled systems based on current research encouraging tightened controls over teaching and more clearly defined and measured goals of schooling. In districts across the country, this new mentality manifested itself in standardized textbooks, standardized curriculum, specific grade-level objectives, and standardized tests—all limiting the decisions that teachers could make concerning instructional content. This attempt at increased centralization assumed that classroom instruction could be routinized and that classroom procedures could be standardized (Rowan 1990).

In the mid-1980s, when the pendulum swung back toward a decentralized approach, the view of teaching maintained some similar aspects to the former loosely-coupled systems theory, yet important differences developed. In describing the newly emerging decentralization model,

Rowan (1990) utilizes the organizational concept of organic systems and “organic” forms of management. Bidwell (2001) cites one important distinction between Rowan’s organic model and the loosely-coupled system model:

Schools instructional goals are multiple and changing, rather than vague and imprecise, reflecting the political decentralization of American education and the complex interests in curricular content, instructional methods, and academic performance that are at play in schools’ local political environments. (105)

Substantial authority is still in the hands of local educators and what occurs in classrooms is still very loosely directed, though a uniform output is expected. Yet, the goals are no longer vague. Since the ways to achieve these goals are still vague, educators are led to rely on each other for guidance and insight. Network structures of management replace hierarchal structures and faculties become “small, informal problem-solving social systems”—the key structure within organic systems (Bidwell 2001, Rowan 1990). Formal authority structures diminish in importance in favor of informal norms and networks to guide work and enhance commitment. Members are unified under the development of shared values and orientation toward a common explicit purpose.

The goal of the organic system model, or the “commitment strategy,” is to increase teacher commitment and satisfaction through increased teacher involvement. This is seen as potential pathways improving classroom instruction and student outcomes. In synthesizing previous literature on school organization and teacher participation, Rowan (1990) finds some evidence that teachers’ commitment is influenced by increased participation in decision making, increased collegiality, and participation in extended roles within the school. One assertion of the organic model is that faculty will look to each other for support and guidance when complex forms of instructional technology are introduced. Thus, faculty will come together in conditions

of uncertainty. While the organizational theory makes no direct claims about the effects of student population changes, I wish to use this theory to predict increased teacher networking in response to the Latino influx in Hall County and consequent necessary changes in instructional strategies.

### ***Teacher Professionalization***

The teaching occupation, now considered a semi-profession, lacks several traits that prevent it from being considered a profession. Among these are autonomy, self-governance, and the development of a collegium. Harold Wilensky (1964) views altruism (referred to as the service ideal) and autonomy as central components of both the professional model and analysis of the future of the professions. It would appear that the growth of bureaucratic structures within our society would not only undermine the service ideal or altruism of professions, but also inhibit professional autonomy. Autonomy will be further undermined through the increased education of the population. Discussing the effects of education on professions in general, Wilensky described an increase in proposed knowledge and skepticism about professional matters, as well as an increased use of professional services. In specific reference to teaching, Lauglo (1995) states:

[W]hen ordinary persons themselves are more educated, they will also more readily form their own confident judgments about the quality of pedagogy that they or their children receive, and they will assert their views with less deference to the teachers' professional expertise.

Thus, with the increased education of the general public, teachers are viewed as having less authority and autonomy over their practice. The already tenuous professional status will be placed into further question by parents and the general public.



Related to professional autonomy, teachers are also lacking in sufficient self-governance and control over their working conditions, in comparison to traditional professions (Ingersoll 2001, Abdal-Hagg 1992, Shanker 1996). If everything is running smoothly in classrooms, the professional authority of educators is not typically questioned. However, in the event that problems arise or accountability standards are not met, educators are subject to intense scrutiny from those outside of the teaching profession. Furthermore, decisions concerning working conditions are not made among teachers alone. According to Ingersoll (2003:222), “[w]hile teachers are allowed limited input into crucial decisions concerned with the management of schools and their own work, teachers are given a great deal of responsibility for the implementation of these decisions.” Thus, teachers maintain varying levels of control over their work and working environments. This is especially true in Georgia where there is no teachers’ union to unify and protect teachers.

Finally, the presence of a collegium is noted as a significant component to the professionalization of teaching (Abdal-Hagg 1992). The coordination of educators is important for asserting self governance, cultivating a collective voice over working conditions, and establishing professional norms. Ties to colleagues and the sharing of teaching knowledge has the capacity to “solve instructional problems in a way that creates a local base for teachers’ expertise,” therefore furthering their professional status (Bidwell and Yasumoto 1999).

The amount of autonomy necessary and appropriate for local educators has been widely debated and is reflected in the tension between centralization and decentralization. In loosely-coupled systems, educators are provided leeway for increased professionalization through autonomy over classroom instruction. However, the lack of networks among teachers provides limitations to such professionalization. Increased centralization limits the autonomy of teachers.

Under an organic model, the complex goals faced can include lingering centralization aspects, such as curricula and standardized test requirements. While these goals may limit autonomy over classroom instruction, the emerging networks of teachers to solve these goals may increase the professional status of teachers.

### ***Latino Achievement***

The achievement gap between Latino and non-Latino youth in the U.S. has been well documented (eg. Kao and Thompson 2003, Schmid 2001, Goldsmith 2004, Rong and Preissle 1998). Using standardized testing and grades as indicators of academic performance, Kao and Thompson (2003) find that Latino youth perform significantly lower than their white counterparts. Latinos of Mexican origin are noted as having particularly low rates of educational achievement. According to Rong and Preissle (1998), Mexican immigrant groups in particular face high drop-out rates. In 1990, Mexican children were the least likely of any other group to complete each level of school, with 93% completing through elementary school, 63% completing through middle school, and only 18% completing secondary school.<sup>6</sup> The fact that high school completion rates in Georgia are the lowest in the nation potentially compounds the statistical odds faced by the Mexican Latinos in Georgia.<sup>7</sup> In Table 2, I utilize 2000 Census data to show the continued disparity in Mexican and white attainment in the US, Georgia, and particularly Hall County. The percent of 18-24 year old Mexicans who have not completed ninth grade is particularly notable. While 2.9 percent of whites nationwide and (a still shocking) 14.6 percent of whites in Hall County have not completed ninth grade, 47.8 percent of 18-24 year old Mexicans in Hall County have not completed school through the ninth grade. The majority of the Latinos in Parkdale and Belmont are of Mexican origin, thus teachers are confronting the influx

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<sup>6</sup> According to 1990 National Census Bureau Data, as cited in Rong and Preissle (1998).

<sup>7</sup> The high school completion rate in Georgia for Latinos in the class of 1998 was 32%, as compared to 54% for the class as a whole (Greene 2001).

of a minority group that has been shown to perform and achieve at lower rates academically than their counterparts. How these teachers are able to respond to the changing student population—what professional authority they are granted—is linked to the organizational structure of school in which they work.

Table 2: Educational attainment of 18 to 24 year olds of selected racial/ethnic backgrounds within the US, Georgia, and Hall County, 2000

	US			Georgia			Hall County, GA		
	White	All Latinos	Mexican	White	All Latinos	Mexican	White	All Latinos	Mexican
<9th	2.9	15.0	18.1	3.9	31.7	36.1	14.6	46.3	47.8
9 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> no diploma	18.7	30.7	31.9	21.8	29.2	31.5	26.9	35.7	34.8
HS degree or equivalent	28.2	27.8	27.2	29.0	23.8	22.9	26.2	14.4	14.3
Some college, no degree	36.9	21.2	18.5	32.9	11.5	7.1	23.6	2.3	1.8
Associate degree or above	13.3	5.4	4.2	12.3	3.8	2.4	8.6	1.3	1.3

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000)

According to Schmid (2001), the low achievement levels of many limited English proficient students can be attributed to the combined influences of language, socioeconomic background and marginal schools. Focusing on the latter two influences, Riordan (2004) has noted that separating the effects of school experience from the family socioeconomic status on schooling outcomes is extremely difficult. His synthesis of a vast research literature on the effects of schools on disadvantaged (but not Latino) students suggests that although public schools usually are insufficient to overcome learning gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged students, these gaps are reduced when students are in school than when they are not. He bases his conclusion largely on research by Entwisle and Alexander (1992) that suggest

that learning gaps based on socioeconomic status widen more in the summers when students are out of school during the summer months. Furthermore, the study by Entwisle and Alexander (1994) shows the progress of first and second grade African-American students in segregated versus desegregated schools. The minority students in segregated schools make more progress in average reading comprehension during the school year than those minority students in integrated schools, yet students in integrated schools learned significantly more in the summer, leading to a more positive overall effect. However, few of the studies Riordan reviews covers schools with large enrollments of Latino, or any immigrant community, youth.

Tracking, grouping students by ability for differential instruction, has been widely used within schools as a method of addressing inequality and meeting the demands of ranges of student abilities in schools and classrooms. Studies show that racial and ethnic minority students are disproportionately assigned to low-ability, non-college-bound tracks early in their educational careers (Joseph 1998, Kao and Thompson 2003). Riordan (2004) presents an extensive argument against tracking, focusing on differentials in student Opportunity-to-Learn (OTL), defined as “the amount of potential curriculum content made available to students” (179). Those students in the lower skill groupings presumably have higher academic needs, yet are given fewer opportunities to learn and receive lower levels of knowledge. Some research suggests that tracking effects self-concepts as a result of the labeling process among peers, and that stereotypes associated with tracking levels are upheld by parents and teachers (see review in Riordan). Furthermore, student’s placement into a particular track becomes a fairly permanent arrangement in the educational career of the student—leaving minority students who are disproportionately assigned to low-ability groups cumulatively disadvantaged as schooling continues due to increasingly large discrepancies in OTL. Most research reveals that grouping

students by “ability” perpetuates educational inequalities by widening the achievement gap between students in high and low tracks (Alexander, Cook, and McDill 1978).

While the present study cannot directly address the effects of the Latino influx on student achievement, Latino achievement issues are central to understanding the circumstances faced by educators in Georgia. Under *No Child Left Behind*, educators are being held personally accountable for the achievement of their students, making working with any at-risk population problematic. Standardized tests are the current measures of achievement and, indirectly, professional competency of teachers. Teachers are attempting to improve the academic achievement of their Latino students, yet are given few guidelines on how to do so effectively. In terms of English language acquisition, educators are given mixed messages about appropriate methods of accommodation. Recent literature promoting bilingual education techniques (eg. Cummins 2002) has clashed with the historical immersion education stance of the Georgia Department of Education, as well as the national stress on English-written curriculum and standardized testing. Additionally, the relative effectiveness of these methods—immersion versus bilingual education—is also partially determined by the age of the students in question, the language skills of their families, their residential generation in the U.S., their citizenship status, and the socioeconomic status and resources of the schools they attend (Rong and Preissle 1998, Schmid 2001).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### *Setting*

Counties and school districts across the state of Georgia have experienced changes in their student population due to the influx of Latinos to the state. Hall County was chosen from a list of Georgia counties, ranked by percent of Latinos in relation to the total population of the county using U.S. Census data (2000). Hall County had the third highest proportion of Latinos, with Latinos comprising 17 percent of the county population. Of the counties with high proportions of Latinos, Hall County and DeKalb County (ranked 12<sup>th</sup> with Latinos making up 7.9 percent of the population) were reasonable choices due to location, a reasonable driving distance from UGA, and the fact that both had International Centers. International Centers have been set up in several counties in Georgia to assist with students of different nationalities, and initially seemed as though they would be a good starting place for making contacts within the county chosen. Hall County was chosen because a larger proportion of public school children, K-12, were Latino students—20.3 percent in Hall County, as compared to 6.6 percent in DeKalb County. Furthermore, I chose Hall County because the population of the county is primarily White and Hispanic. The diverse make-up of DeKalb County, with large proportions of African Americans and various non-Latino immigrant minority groups, didn't lend itself as well to my particular research interest of accommodation of Latino students. The large proportion of school-age Latino youth as the primary minority group made Hall County the most appropriate choice for examining the effects of the influx of Latinos on Georgia classrooms and schools.

Within Hall County there are two school districts, Gainesville City school district and Hall County school district. Hall County school district was chosen primarily because it represents a much larger number of schools, providing a larger pool of participants and significantly more choice between schools and school demographics. Gainesville City school district only includes those schools in the Gainesville area—one elementary school for Kindergarten to first grade, one for second to third grades, one for fourth to fifth grades, one middle school, and one high school. Hall County school district encompasses eighteen elementary schools, seven middle schools, and five high schools, and includes a range of socio-economic settings, from the large suburban developments surrounding Lake Lanier to the low-income Hispanic housing surrounding Atlanta Highway.

I selected elementary schools because of the assumption that (1) teachers have the same group of students all day and (2) there is already a wide range of students inherently present, insofar as a range of social and educational backgrounds (i.e. students are not tracked by goals or abilities as they are in many middle and high schools). Additionally, elementary school student bodies will more accurately represent the young Latino population than in high schools that have become subject to high Latino drop out rates. Elementary school students are also more reflective of the young age of the adult Latino population—Latinos under the age of 30 make up 64.6 percent of Georgia's and 70.3 percent of Hall County's Latino populations (2000 Census). The particular schools were chosen because of their varied ethnic/racial compositions, as well as their differing poverty rates, as illustrated in percent free lunch (see Table 3). Parkdale and Belmont were chosen specifically because they had the largest and smallest proportions of Latino students in the county, respectively, as well as the biggest difference in SES between schools. I chose Sycamore and Lakeside because they fell at different points between these two

extremes and would perhaps be helpful in illustrating any organizational, professional, or educational trends associated with increasing Latino populations. If trends do occur, a focus on the extremes alone would be insufficient.

Table 3: Demographics of Four Elementary Schools in Hall County, 2003<sup>8</sup>

	Latino	White	African American	Asian	free or reduced lunch (%)
Parkdale	92	6	0	2	93
Sycamore	54	35	10	1	65
Lakeside	28	71	1	0	44
Belmont	3	94	1	1	18
State (K-5)	6	51	41	2	50

Race/ethnic distributions recorded as a percentage of total school population

### *Subjects*

To explore teachers' perceptions of the impact of Latino students on Hall County schools, I utilized qualitative interviews as my primary source of evidence collection. Avenues of solicitation took on different forms in different schools, with e-mails and personal contacts being the primary means of acquiring interviews. The Hall County school system's website contains links to individual school websites, all of which have a list of staff names and a common method of assigning e-mail addresses (Jane\_Doe@hallco.org). I utilized the lists of staff to randomly choose grade level teachers—initially every third teacher on the list—and to specifically contact assistant principals, ESOL educators, and migrant paraprofessionals via e-mail.

E-mails were sent to the assistant principals of both Parkdale and Belmont, both of which resulted in interviews. The assistant principal of Parkdale walked me around the school and introduced me to various staff members—two interviews were set through this set of interactions. I also spoke at the school's staff meeting about my research, and solicited a list of

<sup>8</sup> SOURCE: [www.greatschools.net](http://www.greatschools.net) (accessed March 2004)



eight additional names and phone numbers of potential participants—two of whom I interviewed. The other six were not contacted because they were all first and second grade teachers—grades that were already heavily sampled at Parkdale. For the additional four interviews at Parkdale, the assistant principal gave me a list of teacher’s planning periods and permission to interview any available teachers. At Belmont, the interview with the assistant principal resulted in my contacting the ESOL teacher at that school via e-mail, also resulting in an interview. For the three other interviews with classroom teachers at Belmont, the ESOL teacher solicited teachers who had Latino students, either in the past or presently, and gave me their contact information once they had agreed to be interviewed.

At Lakeside and Sycamore, participants were contacted without administrative involvement. Interviews were very difficult to set up at both Lakeside and Sycamore due to the relative ineffectiveness of e-mail solicitation at both schools. The two teachers that I interviewed from Lakeside both participated in a series of classes for teachers of English-language learners, associated with the UGA education department. In attending and assisting with these classes, my specific research was informally discussed and both teachers offered their participation. Other teacher contacts were recommended by these two participants, yet there were no responses to the nineteen e-mails sent to different teachers in Lakeside. Of the ten e-mails sent to educators at Sycamore, including an e-mail to the assistant principal, there was one response which resulted in a phone interview. Seventeen more e-mails were sent to faculty, resulting in one interview. Like the assistant principal at Parkdale, the participant walked me through the school and introduced me to several other teachers, which resulted in an additional interview. The interview with the Sycamore migrant paraprofessional was arranged through receiving her name off of the school website and calling her office. In general, even when I made face-to-face contact with

educators at these schools, there was a failure to respond to my follow-up e-mails and phone calls. This resulted in a small sample and limited ability to make generalizations at these sites.

While e-mails were an important tool for making initial contact with educators within the schools, face-to-face interactions were much more successful in acquiring interviews. As seen above, very few of the e-mails sent elicited responses. For the most part, once initial contacts were made within the schools, solicitation of further interviews became easier. The sample acquired is not random, but rather a convenience sample. Those who responded may be particularly interested in the topic, more proficient at using technology, particularly adept at working with this population, or are sympathetic to researchers or my graduate student status, perhaps due to their own advanced training. Due to the sampling technique and sample size, the results of this research are not generalizable to the larger population of Georgia schools or teachers.

Pseudonyms have been used for the schools and teachers in the study. However, due to the descriptions provided of the schools, and the use of the county name (as permitted by both the county and the university institutional review board), knowledge of this particular school district may make these schools and participants identifiable. Though compromising confidentiality, I feel that the county, school, and participant descriptions (as far as job title) are imperative to understanding the various educational perspectives that have emerged from the interviews.

### ***Methods***

I conducted a total of twenty-two face-to-face, semi-structured interviews of current teachers and administrators in Hall County, Georgia. Within the county, two assistant principals, one school counselor, one migrant paraprofessional, two full-time ESOL teachers, fourteen

classroom teachers (non-ESOL), one classroom/ESOL teacher, and the county ESOL coordinator were interviewed. With the exception of the county ESOL coordinator, the interviews were conducted within the four elementary schools. Individual interviews lasted from 20 to 120 minutes and were arranged at times and places convenient to the educators—all but one was held on school property, the other was held at her husband’s place of work. I audio-taped and transcribed each interview.

I collected additional evidence through one formal phone interview, three informal interviews, classroom observations of seven of the teachers interviewed, viewing one staff meeting, and attending classes and conferences for ESOL teachers (see Table 4). I utilized these additional methods as they were offered or as they emerged as options. For example, at Lakeside, setting up formal interviews was difficult to arrange due to the numerous meetings and responsibilities that the teachers had after school and during planning periods. However, a few of these educators invited me into their classrooms to observe and talked to me informally about the Latino population. Between August 2003 and March 2004, I drove from Athens to Hall County 28 times to collect my qualitative evidence—amounting to approximately 56 hours of driving. Additionally, I used census data to compare the Latino populations between the schools, as well as roughly confirm some of the teachers’ perceptions of the population, such as the socio-economic background, origin, immigrant status, and linguistic isolation of the population.

For the most part, the interviews focused on the teacher or administrator’s background, the changing demographics of the district/school, her/his experiences with Latino students and parents, challenges presented by the influx of Latino students, and the resources within the school to help with this population (see Appendix for interview schedule). I used these questions and answers to explore teacher, student, and school variations—shedding light on organizational

differences between the schools. Background questions included how long the teacher or administrator had been within the school system, grade levels taught, training received for working with ESOL students, and Spanish ability. Experiences were typically related to the increased Latino population in the school and district, and included how teachers communicate with Latino students and parents, what is being done in their classroom and school to accommodate the range of students present, and the advantages/challenges of working with this population. Questions concerning resources centered on both tangible resources, such as money and supplies, as well as non-material resources, such as administrative and staff support. Furthermore, a question concerning the effects of *No Child Left Behind* was added after the topic surfaced in the first few interviews, leading the way for discussion of educational bureaucracy and general teacher frustration.

### ***Analysis***

Open-coding has been used to analyze the data (Strauss and Corbin 1998). In carefully examining the interview transcriptions, certain concepts are identified within the data. It is through the identification and labeling of concepts that the researcher is able to group similar concepts, compare within and between conceptual groupings, and proceed with analysis in general. Coming from a more naturalist perspective, I believe that conducting and analyzing interviews will bring me closer to understanding the realities that exist in Georgia schools. Through interviewing teachers, I am attempting to “look inside the social worlds of real people as they experience those worlds” (Gubrium and Holstein 1997). Someone with similar sensibilities as me would draw similar conclusions from the data and witness similar things within the actual research setting. However, in tapping into teachers’ perceptions of the reality of the school and classroom, one finds that multiple realities may exist even within the same

setting—a stance that pushes me more toward a social constructivist view of reality. For example, a teacher’s belief that her Hispanic students know and understand English may be countered with a different “reality” from the students’ perspective, in that they claim to understand very little. An observer may have a different concept of the classroom language dynamic. My analysis, however, deals primarily with the teachers’ realities, which may provide various perspectives of the school, yet not classroom, environment.

Table 4: Participants in the Four Elementary Schools

	Parkdale		Belmont		Sycamore		Lakeside	
% Latino	92		3		54		28	
Formal Interviews	Tamara	Assistant Principal	Christina	Assistant Principal	Helen	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Betty	4 <sup>th</sup> grade
	Tracy	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	Elizabeth	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	Frances	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Sandra	ESOL
	Lynn	1 <sup>st</sup> grade	Mary	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Susan	4 <sup>th</sup> grade		
	Amanda	2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Nancy	5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Jennifer	Migrant Paraprofessional		
	Cindy	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Karen	ESOL/3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Matt (phone)	4 <sup>th</sup> grade		
	Amy	3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Julie	Counselor				
	Sarah	4 <sup>th</sup> grade						
	Rosa	5 <sup>th</sup> grade						
	Maria	ESOL						
Informal Interviews							Lauren	Assistant Principal
					Sharon	ESOL	Rachel	Kindergarten
Classroom Observation	2 hours		1 hour		1.5 hours		5 hours	

## CHAPTER 4

### LATINO INFLUX: DISTRIBUTION, EFFECTS, AND CHALLENGES

In this chapter, I first describe how the two schools, Parkdale and Belmont, have experienced different patterns of influx of Latino students. I draw upon interviews to explore how long-term teachers in the district perceive that the influx of these students has affected their schools and their everyday lives in classrooms. Finally, I discuss teachers' perceptions of the educational barriers faced by the Latino students whom they instruct.

#### *Parkdale and Belmont: Quantitative Distinctions*

The schools studied represent the range of schools within Hall County, from Belmont with only a handful of Latino students, to Parkdale with only a handful of non-Latino students. All four schools that I studied have experienced notable changes in their student population in the past ten years (see Table 5). According to Tamara, the Assistant Principal at Parkdale, “when I came back here in 1985, I had one Hispanic student in my class, I taught first grade and then, now 93 percent of the students are Hispanic. It’s quite a change.” Because of redistricting this year, even Belmont has had an increase from 10 to 43 Latino students, a much greater change than in any prior year.

Both schools have experienced increased numbers of Latino students, yet there are significant differences in the proportions and demographics of Latinos within the schools. While school districts do not necessarily correspond with Census tracts, tract data have been used in the past to analyze school SES and is used here to make approximate comparisons of student demographics (see Table 6). To start with, Latinos make up 4 percent of the Belmont census tract

and 69% of the Parkdale census tract confirming a disproportionate distribution of Latino families in Hall County. Secondly, Census statistics confirm that Latinos are indeed economically disadvantaged in comparison to others race/ethnicities, specifically white, non-Latinos. In this study white non-Latinos are used as the primary comparison group because there are relatively small populations of other ethnic groups among students enrolled in the schools studied. Both school district zones have racial/ethnic income disparities such that Latinos working full-time, year round earn a lower median income than similar workers of other ethnicities. Latinos are earning 32% less than whites in the Parkdale district and 37% less in the Belmont district. The fact that the median incomes for all race/ethnic groups are slightly lower at Parkdale than at Belmont indicates a lower SES for the Parkdale area in general.

Table 5: Number and Percentage of Latino Students in Four Hall County Schools, By School Year, According to Standardized Testing Statistics

	1994-1995	1998-1999	2002-2003
Parkdale	317 69%	451 83%	569 92%
Sycamore	97 15%	229 33%	360 60%
Lakeside	26 5%	66 13%	152 31%
Belmont	5 <1%	16 2%	28 4%

SOURCE: Georgia Public Education State Report Card, [accountability.doe.k12.ga.us](http://accountability.doe.k12.ga.us) (accessed July 2004)

Housing conditions, another indicator of economic status, are significantly poorer for Latinos than for white, non-Latinos. A larger percentage of Latinos in the Parkdale district live in overcrowded houses than in Belmont district—67% compared to 59%. Comparatively, five percent of white households in Parkdale and less than one percent of white households in Belmont are overcrowded. These statistics illustrate (1) the continued stratification based on SES within Hall County and (2) the SES disparity between whites and Latinos in the school district.



Table 6: Income and Housing Characteristics of Latinos and Others in Two Hall County Census Tracts as Compared to Overall County and State Characteristics

	Belmont Census Tract	Parkdale Census Tract	Hall County	Georgia	
% Latino	4.0	68.8	19.6	5.4	
Median income for full-time, year-round workers (dollars)	White, non-Hispanic Black Latino	31,861 25,139 20,089	25,859 20,057 17,587	31,752 23,509 18,140	34,646 26,552 21,101
% Latino families in overcrowded households ( $\geq 1.01$ occupants/room)	59	67	57	36	
% white, non-Hispanic families in overcrowded households ( $\geq 1.01$ occupants/room)	< 1	5	2	2	

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000)

Additionally, I have used census tract data to analyze immigration and linguistic isolation patterns in the two school district zones (see Table 7). Latinos in both schools (and Hall County in general) are likely to be recent immigrants from Mexico. This fact is significant in light of Rong and Preissle’s (1998) finding that Latinos from Mexico, in particular, have high drop-out rates, with the highest drop-out proportions among those who are not language proficient.

Additionally, Latinos at Parkdale are more significantly likely to be foreign born—93% of the Latino population at Parkdale versus 62% at Belmont—and significantly more likely to live in linguistically isolated households—57% as compared to 23%. If a household is linguistically isolated, all members of that household have at least some difficulty speaking English. Latinos at Parkdale are also significantly more likely to live in areas when all of their neighbors are Latino, further limiting Parkdale Latino exposure to the English language. These can all be disadvantages in an educational system that values US, middle class knowledge and language.

The data provided above suggest that the Latino population faces disadvantages in comparison to the white, native-born population in Hall County, including income, housing, and presumably English-proficiency distinctions. While stratification exists between ethnicities in

Hall County, there is also stratification within the Latino population. Differences between the Latino populations in the two schools include percentages of Latinos who are foreign-born, Latinos, linguistic isolation of the population, and a slight difference in SES. Belmont students are overall more affluent, more likely to have resided longer in the U.S., and less likely to be linguistically isolated.

Table 7: Immigration and Linguistic Characteristics of Latinos in Two Hall County Districts, as Compared to Overall County and State Characteristics

	Belmont Census Tract	Parkdale Census Tract	Hall County	Georgia
% recent immigrants (1995-2000)	51.3	53.1	47.6	49.9
% foreign born immigrants	4.5	58.0	16.2	6.8
% of foreign born from Latin America	62	93	87	52
% of Latin American foreign born from Mexico	99	98	88	63
% Linguistic Isolation (Hispanic households)	23	57	45	24
% total households linguistically isolated	< 1	32	6.5	2.4
Isolation index of segregation—odds of all neighbors being Latino	8.0	72.2	----	----

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000)

***Teaching Environments: Differential Impact of Latino Students on Belmont and Parkdale***

Belmont and Parkdale have both experienced changes in student population, but the changes at Parkdale have been more extreme because of (1) the larger proportion of Latino students and (2) the socioeconomic backgrounds and home environments of their Latino population. As a result of the distribution of Latinos within the schools and the SES of the Latino population in Hall County, the comparison between Belmont and Parkdale becomes a comparison between a majority non-Hispanic white, middle and upper-middle class dominated

school versus a majority working-class or poor, Latino student population school. The effects of social class, ethnicity, and language ability are entangled, an effect that is most evident in descriptions of the Latino population provided by long-term teachers in the district. Teachers at Belmont provide very different characterizations of the Latino student population and its effects on daily life in schools than the accounts provided by Parkdale teaching staff.

### Belmont

While educators throughout Hall County recognize that Parkdale has had the most extreme change in student population, they frequently identify Belmont as the school most resistant to change. Teachers at other Hall County schools refer to Belmont as “the Academy,” and one Belmont teacher who was interviewed commented that Belmont’s demographics were similar to those of a private school. According to one respondent, this is the first year that Belmont has had more than one black student in the school. Belmont is currently three percent Hispanic, with 43 Latino children this year. This is an increase of 33 Latino students, the result of redistricting.<sup>9</sup> This number is regarded as “a large number right now because that hasn’t been the population we serve... the socioeconomic clientele at their schools [the ones from which they are receiving the students] is a bit different than ours” (Christina, Assistant Principal at Belmont). The use of the word “clientele,” which occurred several times, denoted the more formal, businesslike atmosphere that contrasted with the climate of Parkdale. Every educator I interviewed at Belmont noted that the school did not have many Latinos, although they all speculated that the school would have more in the future.

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<sup>9</sup> These statistics were reported by Belmont school administration and differ from publicly available statistics. According to [www.greatschools.net](http://www.greatschools.net), Latino students make up 3 percent of the total school population (684 students), thus there would be approximately 21 Latino students in Belmont. Standardized test demographic reports available from the Georgia Public Education Report Card show that in 2002-2003, Belmont had 28 Latinos that made up 4 percent of the student population.

The ways in which teachers described parents of their students were quite different at the two schools. Teachers at Belmont described parents as being very involved in the education of their children. The assistant principal, Christina, stated that “Our school is mostly upper middle class, a lot of stay at home moms, a lot of really involved parents in PTO, that’s the majority of our clientele.” When educators at Belmont discuss parent involvement, they are referring to upper-middle class, white mothers, not to Latino parents, who are viewed as generally absent and nonparticipating in school affairs. Even though the parents involved in the school are not typically Latino, discussion of parent involvement at Belmont is important (1) to the framing of the comparison between Belmont and Parkdale and (2) to the accommodation of Latino students. The different socioeconomic levels of parents and levels of parental involvement in the two schools provided a somewhat different mix of resources available to Latino students in the two schools. Although Parkdale had more need-based formal programming to assist Latino students, Belmont had an active PTA that raised funds for instructional resources and a wealth of parent volunteers who provided assistance and support to Latino students. Karen, the ESOL/third grade teacher at Belmont, commented on these effects:

Karen: ...if you have enough people who qualify for free lunch the federal government has some title money that they give schools to help these students, extra money that we don’t get, Belmont doesn’t get any of that, if you go into another school that has a lot of that Title I money you may see more computers, more materials to work with, that kind of thing because they have this money to buy extra, where Belmont doesn’t have that, some schools even have laptop computers for their students because they have that Title I money to purchase that where we don’t.

Interviewer: Is there anything that you feel that Belmont is lacking?

Karen: No, because our parents are so well off that the PTO has a \$35,000 budget that they work with, they raise that money... we have some GREAT parent volunteers... Last year I had two parents, three parents, who would come on different days and help me with that mixed class [ESOL class]. And they would pull off one or two of the kids, but it gave that one kid a little bit of extra help, one on one.

As parental involvement with their own children is key to the individual child's education (Senechal and LeFevre 2002; Edwards and Warin 1999), parental involvement in the school can also be imperative to the functioning of the school and classrooms. While Latino parents are not typically involved at Belmont, the Latino students nevertheless are able to benefit from (1) the extra money and resources brought into the school by these parents and (2) the extra one-on-one educational time that an extra set of hands in the classroom allows when parents volunteer within the class. Research suggests that such one-on-one time is especially effective in reading and language learning (Zarate 1986). While Parkdale receives the monetary compensation of this assistance with Title I funds, they are presently unable to obtain everyday parental involvement comparable to that at Belmont. The current clientele at Belmont thus allow for the influx of Latino students to have a minimal impact on the school environment.

### Parkdale

Parkdale Elementary was the first school within Hall County to experience an influx in the Latino population, with the increase beginning in the late 1980s and well surpassing the Vietnamese population, formerly the largest minority group. Three Parkdale educators remarked that the student body was primarily "poor white students," prior to the influx of Latinos. The fact that educators identify the population prior to the Latino influx as poor indicates that the school historically has grappled with the educational effects of social class. Currently, Parkdale has

619 Latino students and 626 children on free or reduced lunch. The proportion of children with free or reduced lunch, an indicator for social class, classifies Parkdale as a Title I school. As indicated above, this classification qualifies Parkdale for Title I money—money granted under federal programs to try to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Despite the monetary resources made available through Title I, Parkdale educators do not believe that these funds completely level the playing field, due in part to the impoverished conditions these children live in outside of school that negatively affect their in-school performance. Tamara, Assistant Principal at Parkdale, describes the living conditions as:

...very substandard housing for the most part, truly shacks, dilapidated, run-down conditions BUT they are better than a lot of conditions that these families were living in Mexico, it's a move up for them and they come here they can rent those houses by the week, or the trailers, no deposits, they can move right in to one. And the tendency is to stay there for a while, some less than a year, some a lot longer, until they get a better job, learn a little English, can get better housing, and then they move. So we are really in effect an in-take center at this school, we have a lot of coming, going, transfers, and the ones who do stay in those neighborhoods are kind of trapped in the culture of poverty and so they tend to be uneducated, don't spend a lot of time with the children, they are left to their own devices a lot of times, and so they have problems in school.

Thus, the school is working with a population that is transient and lives in an environment that is not conducive to academic success. The students at Belmont may live in similar conditions, but at Parkdale students that fit this description seem to be the majority rather than the exception, according to accounts by Parkdale educators.

At Parkdale, teachers saw advantages and disadvantages to the typical pattern of limited parental involvement. Latino parents grant teachers a great deal of professional authority. In some sense they are more supportive of teachers than are parents who persistently raise questions about the teachers' instructional decisions and classroom management. One teacher stated that the "parents are fantastic...they don't question whether or not we know what we're doing, whether or not we're making the right decision for their child. They put their child's life in our hands and they say 'Help us. We want them to learn, help us'" (Lynn, first grade). The parents want their children to do well in school; they are unquestioningly supportive of their children's education.

However, consistent with other studies that address Latino parent involvement in schools (eg. Bohon, et al 2004, Ariza 2000), Parkdale Latino parents rarely are able to be actively involved in the school. As discussed further in the next section, the parents work during the day, don't speak English, and often lack much formal education. This results in disadvantages to both the student and school, especially in comparison to the support at Belmont. In discussing parental involvement at Parkdale, Tracy, a first grade teacher at Parkdale, states:

...the PTO can raise money for things, but most of the work was done by teachers.... [the Hispanic parents] are working these jobs in the chicken plant, long hard hours, they're tired, they're in a strange country, they're away from their families, they don't have much left to give to like a PTO fundraiser, so it's a whole different mindset.

Another Parkdale teacher commented:

Well, the parents are pretty much non-existent. I shouldn't say non-existent because they are present, but they are so uneducated themselves. Most of our parents don't have a high school education, most of them have quit in elementary school, so they are grateful

and they are so willing to help, but they don't have it, they don't have the resources to help. (Amy, third grade, Parkdale)

Lynn, a first grade teacher commented on the education levels of the parents in her class. Only three parents, three fathers, had above a 6<sup>th</sup> grade education. Most parents were unable to help their children with their homework or any other skills when teachers felt that students need extra assistance. More parents are beginning to come to the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings, translated into Spanish, and are slowly getting involved in fundraising efforts and leadership positions.

The social class discrepancies parallel differences in the mean achievement of student populations on Criterion Referenced Tests in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Reading. In 2002, the most recent year for which test scores are available, Belmont students consistently scored above the state mean, while Parkdale students scored consistently below it. Such achievement differentials between the schools have long persisted.<sup>10</sup> These differences are important to address because (1) educators at Parkdale believe that the low standardized test scores are connected to the educational disadvantages of the Latino population, (2) educators are being held accountable for the scores that their students receive, and (3) the differences in population and accountability contribute to the employment of different instructional and accommodation strategies between the schools.

Language surfaces as the primary barrier to high achievement, especially considering English-written standardized tests that currently are used in assessments both of student achievement and teacher competency. Students at Belmont perform well above state averages on standardized testing, while the majority of students at Parkdale are performing below average.

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<sup>10</sup> The Georgia Public Education Report Cards from 1994-2003 illustrate the trend of intra-school differences in standardized test scores. They are available at <http://accountability.doe.k12.ga.us/> (accessed July 2004).



For example, the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) measures how well students are mastering certain skills in English-language arts, math, and reading as defined for each grade in the state of Georgia. Table eight illustrates the testing disparity between the schools. As a result of favorable standardized testing scores, teachers at Belmont are relatively unconcerned about increased mandates for standardized testing, except for the hassle of administering the tests themselves. Test scores do not raise questions about the quality of teaching and administration in the school. However, prior to this year, data has not been available to assess the standardized test scores specifically for the Latino population, because the Latino proportions were so small. Educators at Parkdale already have large proportions of Latino students, therefore they are concerned about these tests and the quality of the teachers, administrators, and instruction is questioned. Each Parkdale educator interviewed noted that language was a barrier for Latino student success on these tests.

Table 8: 2002 CRCT Scores: Standardized Measure of Student Performance in Two Hall County Elementary Schools and in the State of Georgia Overall

Scale: % meeting or exceeding standard		Belmont	Parkdale	State Avg.
2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	English Language Arts	91	42	83
	Math	94	66	83
	Reading	95	44	84
3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	English Language Arts	93	36	82
	Math	93	51	82
	Reading	92	45	84
4 <sup>th</sup> grade	English Language Arts	86	34	77
	Math	84	20	66
	Reading	87	39	78
5 <sup>th</sup> grade	English Language Arts	89	34	79
	Math	85	34	77
	Reading	93	35	82

SOURCE: CRCT scores for schools collected from [www.greatschools.net](http://www.greatschools.net) (accessed March 2004)

The above description of each school assists in setting the stage for describing the emergence of accommodation strategies and corresponding organizational models. Social class, language proficiency, and parental involvement in schools all work to advantage students at Belmont, compared with those at Parkdale. Teachers who have taught in Hall County school system for more than five years believe that their jobs as educators have changed dramatically over that period. Changes noted include increased paperwork, the increased importance of standardized testing, and generally more stress surrounding accountability measures. These measures have a particularly powerful impact on educators at Parkdale, since Parkdale is identified as a failing school under *No Child Left Behind*. Educators believe the provisions of the act intensify the challenges of working effectively with immigrant populations and meeting the accountability and achievement standards mandated by the act in schools with high ratios of poor and English-language limited student populations. Achievement and accountability standards embodied in the act, they believe, are insensitive to the realities of schools with high proportions of Latino immigrant student populations.

The majority of the educators that I interviewed were well established within Hall County school system. I conducted twenty-two of twenty-six formal and informal interviews with educators who had been within Hall County schools for over five years. Six of these respondents had taught within the county for twenty years or more. The most detailed descriptions of the changes in the district and schools came from these tenured educators. In contrast, the relatively new teachers with less than five years of experience who were interviewed in Hall County see teaching in classrooms with large proportions of Latino students as simply “what teaching is.” However, all educators saw distinctive challenges to educating this population. These challenges

were based in perceived educational obstacles faced by Latino students—obstacles that they desired to overcome within their schools and classrooms.

### ***Perceived Latino Educational Barriers***

Issues of low-socioeconomic status, insufficient English language abilities, Latino “culture,” and inadequate parental involvement surfaced repeatedly throughout the interviews as barriers to Latino educational success. According to Betty, a fourth grade teacher at Lakeside, “they’re certainly not dumb children. They are bright children, they can do a whole lot, but it takes extra effort on the teacher’s part to modify things so that they can do it.” Teachers recognize that the barriers faced are not due to a lack of intelligence or capability of the student, but are reflective of the disadvantages that are faced by Latino youth and their families both inside and outside of the school setting. The system has defined educational achievement according to universal standards. These standards place arguably unrealistic expectations on teachers and students considering the above “barriers” that differentiate Latino students from more privileged student populations.

### **Socio-economic status**

Consistent with the literature, low socio-economic status is noted by educators as a significant variable in explaining poor educational performance (eg. Portes and MacLeod 1996). Many teachers made a point of clarifying that the challenges of working with the population were primarily a class, rather than an ethnic, issue. They stated that the “problem” is not that the children are Latino, but rather that they are poor. Latinos are overwhelmingly entering the working class, thus they are subject to the negative conditions associated with American poverty, such as poor living conditions, poor health care, crime, etc. (Atilas and Bohon 2002). In the words of one fourth grade teacher:

...I don't think they're eating properly at home, maybe they don't have the right clothing, I've seen that quite a lot this year, maybe they're cold, so that's a difficult thing to have to deal with when they come in and I expect them to care about long division. It's not happening! (Sarah, fourth grade, Parkdale)

According to teachers, the students don't have the basics, such as food, clothing, and adequate living conditions. They often lack books within their homes—educational tools that are found frequently the homes of middle class students. Few students have adequate space for quiet, uninterrupted study, and many have other responsibilities, such as assistance with housework or childcare, that interfere with school work. Furthermore, parents from working-class backgrounds are often unable to assist their children with their school work because of their own limited education and/or their limited English abilities.

#### Latino “culture”

Several educators discussed “cultural” issues and “cultural” differences of Latino children. While these distinctions may be valid, most seem to be more appropriately defined as social class distinctions between the working and middle classes. Often, the two cannot be easily disentangled. An example of this is the recurring theme that Latino culture does not “value education.” When I asked respondents to clarify what they meant by this, I received a variety of responses. Examples include: they are busy making ends meet, more “concerned with putting food on the table,” or that they are working class and value labor intensive rather than intellectual work. Others pointed out that parents did not attend the school, but then noted that this was probably because of transportation, childcare, or language issues (see Bohon, et al. 2004, Ariza 2000). Furthermore, some teachers pointed out that their Latino students had never

been to the museum, zoo, or public library, important parts of middle class, U.S. culture to which many Latino students haven't been exposed.

Teachers continually pointed to a lack of cultural capital on the part of Latino students, especially in comparison to white middle-class students in the Hall County district. This lack of exposure is likely due to an intersection of social class and culture. One Latina teacher commented that Georgians have a skewed vision of the Latino “culture” because of the social class of Latino immigrants who have settled here. The immigrants that come to the United States, that Georgians see working in the Hall County poultry plants, have entered these impoverished conditions for a better life. Thus, Georgians see only a segment of Latino, typically Mexican, society—the working class—and deduce what is Latino “culture” from this segment. Few teachers suggested that there were aspects of Latino culture that were beneficial for the educational attainment of Latino youth.

#### English Language Proficiency and Testing

According to Kao and Thompson (2003), grades and test scores are two widely used indicators of academic achievement. Latino youth have traditionally fallen behind white student achievement (see also Rong and Preissle 1998). If educational success is being judged by English-language standardized testing, immigrant Latino children have a huge barrier to overcome in order to be considered successful. Many Latino families are concentrated in areas that are predominantly Latino immigrant, where little English is spoken inside or outside of the home. In Hall County, 45 percent of Latino households are linguistically isolated. This hinders the ability of students to learn and maintain English, since they do not speak English outside of the school setting. In schools with high proportions of Latino immigrants, educators expressed

frustration with the lack of English proficiency of the Latino students as it relates to the standardized goals set for both students and educators. According to one ESOL teacher:

We haven't figured out how to grade these children, like this *No Child Left Behind*, from what I understand about it, they're expecting exactly the same thing out of these children as they are of anyone else. In a lot of ways it's good because of the accountability level, but in a lot of ways its unfair, because if it takes a child 7 or more years to acquire this academic language...if they've only been in this school a year or two what are their chances, unless they're exceptionally brilliant, even if they're really bright their chances of passing those tests are not good, and that's a concern. (Sandra, Lakeside)

Thus many of these children enter the school system knowing little to no English, yet they are expected to succeed within an English-only curriculum and pass standardized tests in English. Provisions of *No Child Left Behind* make this high stakes testing, for students who may not be promoted and for teachers who may be stigmatized if students perform poorly.

The statistics in the first section of this chapter show that more than half of the Latinos in Hall County are *not* recent immigrants and that a significant portion of the Latinos in Hall County Latino are *not* linguistically isolated. The teachers do not make a distinction between immigrant and non-immigrant Latino populations, among which there may be different English-language capabilities or different needs in general. Teachers also place considerable stress on language issues, implying that this is the main barrier for all Latinos. One may argue that social class, ethnicity, immigrant status, language ability, and even achievement capability are more than intersecting categories in the minds of teachers, but that the categories overlap in a static way. They perceive, or at least discuss, very little variation within the Latino population. From

talking to educators, one may identify Latinos as underachieving, low socioeconomic status immigrants with poor English-language ability.

### Parent Involvement

While the parent-school relationship is important for all students within the educational system, this relationship is seen as particularly important for immigrant and minority students (Goodwin 2002). There is a constant stress on the importance of incorporation of these parents into a larger educational network of educators, professionals, and administration in order to decentralize the decision-making process (Beck and Murphy 1999, Gardner and Talbert-Johnson 2000). Educators I interviewed consistently referred to parental involvement as necessary for schooling success but deficient in the education of Latino students. The ESOL Coordinator for the county, Debra, states:

I don't feel that we're going to make the impact that we could with these students until we reach the parents. Many of the parents have limited education and they're dealing with that, they are not familiar with our culture, they certainly are not familiar with our school system and how it works, and they don't speak English, so they have huge obstacles in how they can support their students in being successful in school.

All educators noted that the Latino parents were supportive of their children's education, but did not have the resources needed to help their children. According to Lynn, a first grade teacher at Parkdale, "it's very difficult for them to read with their students because even if they do speak English, they don't typically read it and so the students go home and read to the parents, but the parents don't know if they're reading correctly." They are lacking in the educational background and language skills to help with homework or reading skills. Moreover, work schedules,

transportation issues, childcare issues, and language barriers often kept parents from directly interacting with the school with any frequency.<sup>11</sup>

This chapter has explored differences between the schools and distinctions in the Latino population. Hall County school system has been historically stratified based on socio-economic status, which has led to the large disparity in the proportion and characteristics of Latinos allocated to Parkdale and Belmont. Educators within the county perceive that Latino students face disadvantages in the educational system based on social class, culture, language, and parental involvement distinctions. These interrelated issues disadvantage individual Latino students, yet large proportions of Latino students with these barriers also make a significant impact on the larger school environment, as evident at Parkdale. At Belmont, where Latino students are not as numerous, educators do not perceive that the Latino population has had a powerful impact on the school overall. Belmont educators express concern about the potential effects of increased proportions of Latinos within the school—focusing on how the Latino population will be adequately incorporated into Belmont classrooms and how such incorporation would affect the elite status of the school. The case is quite different at Parkdale, where teachers are generally sympathetic toward Latino students but also feeling challenged about successfully meeting their needs in a climate of increased standardized testing and expanded accountability. In the next chapter, I explore how different accommodation strategies and different models of school management have emerged out of these distinct school environments and in response to perceived Latino educational barriers.

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<sup>11</sup> Evidence for this point comes from supplementary research in Hall County published in Bohon, Macpherson, and Atilas 2004.



## CHAPTER 5

### BELMONT AND PARKDALE: ACCOMMODATION AND SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

In this chapter, I explore how and why two schools in Hall County developed different strategies for dealing with the influx of Latino students. One school, Belmont, developed a strategy consistent with loosely-coupled models of school governance, while the other, Parkdale, used a strategy more consistent with an organic model. I explore how factors beyond the school level influenced the accommodation strategies that emerged in each school.

To understand why two schools in the same school district dealt with the influx of Latino students in different ways, it is first important to understand how various programs outside the school designed to aid disadvantaged, immigrant, and non-English proficient students affected local school options. It also is necessary to understand how new demands for standardized testing and teacher accountability, emanating at the state and federal levels, affected schools in Hall County. In the final section, I utilize the evidence from Sycamore and Lakeside to further explore the relationship between proportion of Latino students and organizational structure.

#### ***Hall County School District: Programs and Resources***

Many programs and resources to assist Latino students and families are available to the Hall County school system. The major contribution of the State of Georgia is through the allocation of ESOL funding and establishment of a state ESOL curriculum. The primary means of language education instruction in Georgia is through a pull-out ESOL (English for Students of Other Languages) program, in which students are pulled out of mainstream classes for a portion of the day to receive intensive instruction in English. Elementary schools, for example, receive

funding to provide one 45-minute period of instruction per day for each child qualifying for services.

Educators whom I interviewed, however, questioned the adequacy of funding levels and curriculum. Teachers believe that too few students are involved in the program, and that the ESOL curriculum is not carefully designed to coordinate with learning activities in mainstream classrooms from which the students are drawn. According to Sandra, the ESOL teacher at Lakeside:

One thing that would help me personally is to try to figure out a curriculum where I don't feel like I'm constantly trying to grab things for six different groups. You know, a regular homeroom teacher has their science curriculum, their reading, their math, and they have been really good at getting me some ESOL curriculum, but it doesn't go with what teachers are doing necessarily in the classroom, so it's kind of scattered.

Rather than draw upon a curriculum that blends well with regular classroom lessons, ESOL teachers feel they are left on their own, attempting to pull curriculums from various sources that do not always appropriately fit the needs of their students.

Educators mentioned several other district and federal initiatives as important to the schooling of Latino youth. Among the most important was funding received from the federal Title I ("Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged") and Title III ("Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students") funding programs. Title I funds are based largely on proportions of limited income students, and they provide money to schools with high proportions of students who receive free or reduced lunch. The Title I program also funds Even Start, a family literacy program for low income families. Even Start programs

integrate early childhood education and adult literacy, and help to bridge the gap between family and school by involving parents in the educational system.

The Title III grant funds programs for limited-English proficient and immigrant students, and has been the main source of funding for the district-level implementation of several key programs in Hall County. The Newcomers Academy, Migrant Education, and Parent Liaisons have all been created to assist the Latino population and are all funded through this grant. The Newcomers Academy has been established in the five Hall County schools with the largest Hispanic populations. If a child arrived in the US after March 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous year, he/she is eligible to receive special instruction in Spanish in a pull-out program at the school that lasts typically for 2 ½ hours and includes an introduction to cultural distinctions. The program utilizes both bilingual teachers and materials, and is meant to provide scaffolding between first and second languages. The Migrant Education Program provides tutoring to children and family outreach through migrant paraprofessionals. Of the eligibility requirements that apply to this population,<sup>12</sup> the child must have a parent or guardian who is a migrant agricultural worker or migrant fisher as his/her primary means of livelihood. The child must also have moved from one school district to another within the preceding 36 months with a parent or guardian who is seeking to obtain temporary or seasonal work. Temporary work may include work that is available year-round, such as poultry plant employment, because of the high rates of turnover, frequent layoffs without pay, or limited opportunities for permanent full-time employment. This program also assists the children with a lot of the basic necessities, such as assuring the children receive basic medical and dental care. Parent-liaisons are another link between the home and

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<sup>12</sup> For full eligibility requirements, see [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov), U.S. Department of Education, No Child Left Behind: Title I, Part C, Education of Migratory Children, “Draft Non-Regulatory Guidance”

school. They carry the bulk of the translating responsibilities, such as translating for conferences and newsletters.

To gain a sense of how much autonomy local school staffs have in dealing with Latino students, I asked Debra, the county ESOL Coordinator, what the protocol would be for a teacher who wanted to implement a new idea or program in his/her school. She said that “sometimes the administration will call the district office to be sure that it doesn’t violate any guidelines,” but that generally the schools have a good bit of leeway in how they serve their populations. While many large programmatic decisions, such as establishing the Newcomer’s Academy, are made at the district level, many programs have been started by teachers in local schools. Furthermore, according to Debra, the district is “working towards being more site-based in the way of staff development and funding....more instructional funding goes directly to the schools and then they allocate it.” School staffs are gaining increased autonomy over assessment of their needs and the allocation of the proper resources and methodology to meet these needs. As the needs in the county become more diverse, the district is moving toward increasingly localized control at the school level. Resources for instruction and for professional development of staff come from external sources, but they are managed by the school in a manner consistent with local school-based management and decentralization (Byrk, et al. 1998).

Schools such as Parkdale draw upon larger programs, curriculums, and funding sources designed to improve educational opportunities for Latino students. Schools, such as Parkdale, with high proportions of Latinos are able to utilize many, if not all, of these resources. Belmont and other schools with small proportions of Latino students receive fewer of these external funds. Thus, educators within these two schools have different starting points from which to develop strategies for aiding Latino students.

### ***Belmont: A Loosely Coupled System***

Belmont is managed in a manner consistent with Lortie's concept of the "egg crate school." Lortie (1974) uses this metaphor to describe a loosely-coupled organization of schools. Teachers are given the responsibility of instructing their group of students within the confines of their classrooms, and do so with relatively little assistance from others.

Elizabeth, a first-grade teacher at Belmont, described her work with Latino students in a way that was largely consistent with the egg-crate model. She met with other teachers in her grade level and discussed how to meet the range of student abilities in the classroom. Yet she had no knowledge as to what else was occurring in the school or county. None of the other Belmont teachers interviewed knew what other teachers in the school were doing to accommodate Latino students specifically. The resources for disadvantaged students, language accommodation, accountability, and accommodation strategies of Belmont will be discussed to elaborate the loosely-coupled organization structure and its effects on the education of Latino students.

#### **Resources for Disadvantaged Students**

As one might expect given the smaller Latino population, there are fewer resources allocated explicitly for the 43 Latino students in comparison to schools with large proportions of Latinos. There is one ESOL teacher, Karen, who is actually a third grade classroom teacher who gives up her 45 minute planning time each day to work with ESOL children. This is her third year of teaching this "extended-day" ESOL class. She has nine students from first through fourth grade, though she potentially might also have students ranging from grades K-5. Even though most of the Latino students at Belmont perform at or near grade level, in contrast to Parkdale where most perform lower than grade level, educators at Belmont believe the school would benefit from a full- or part-time ESOL teacher who could serve a greater number of students.

Additionally, Belmont shares with several other schools in the district a paraprofessional who works with migrant students. Nine children in the school qualify for these services, which include not only academic support but also community outreach for students and families (e.g., insuring that they get medical care and transportation to medical appointments). The school has no regular bilingual staff and only two staff members who are ESOL certified, both of which I interviewed. Most materials sent home to Spanish-speaking parents have been translated into Spanish, and the school has a translator/parent liaison that is shared between three schools. She is “on-call,” meaning that Belmont must set up an appointment for her to come to the school when she is needed, such as for parent-teacher conferences. While Belmont educators desire to get Latino parents involved in Parent Teacher Organizations, the school does not provide a Spanish translator for these meetings.

#### Language Accommodation

Latino students at Belmont have limited access to other Spanish-speaking children and adults. Educators note that the students at Belmont are immersed in English-speaking contexts, and are able to pick up English very quickly as a result. According to Karen:

I have discovered at Belmont, the children that we get, they come to us with no English at first. Very quickly, within three months are able to communicate and they want to communicate so badly that they pick up bits and pieces faster than they do—now this is just a theory of mine—faster than they do at Parkdale, where they do the announcements in both languages and stuff like that. (ESOL/third grade, Belmont)

She additionally said that “survival kicks in, because they don’t want to be different.” The students can’t speak in Spanish in the classroom, because they are typically surrounded by people who only speak English. According to the demographics in Table 6, they are also less

likely to live in homes that are linguistically isolated. Thus, the Latinos youth at Belmont are motivated to speak English more regularly, making English language learning more necessary and academic success more feasible. Assimilation works within Belmont in part because the Latinos are a small minority, and in part because of the parent volunteers. With more educated adults in the classroom, it is possible for teachers and volunteers to devote more time to students who need extra help. In contrast, at Parkdale there are many students who that need extra help, but typically only one teacher within the class. The students cannot be immersed in English, because Spanish is the language of the vast majority of within the school.

### Accountability

As discussed in the previous chapter, students at Belmont perform well above state averages on standardized testing. Consequently, teachers remain relatively unconcerned about standardized testing, except for the hassle of administering the tests themselves. At this school, poor test scores do not call into question the quality of teaching and administration. Passing standardized tests for these students is not an unusual feat. The educational system is arranged more to the benefit of these white, middle- to upper-class, English speaking students than to benefit of impoverished Latino students. Though debatable, I do not believe that the quality of instruction is the central component to these students' success, but rather the advantage that these students bring to the classroom and continually build upon within the educational system.

Beyond getting students to pass these tests, which are described as more of a hassle than a challenge, educators' goals for Latino students at Belmont are vague. The guidelines for how these educators manage their egg-crate schools and classrooms are largely undefined. Belmont is only loosely tied to the larger educational hierarchy. Belmont receives local funding (typical of all US schools) and supplementary assistance from PTO fundraisers. Belmont receives grade

level curriculum from the state, yet the specific skills needing to be mastered (as tested by the CRCT) are arguably less urgent and take up less of the instruction time than in schools that are well below mastery of these goals. For the few ESOL students within the school, the school draws on state ESOL funding and curriculum, but in a small way. With only nine Latino students in the school, Belmont devotes responsibility for their education largely to a “specialist” for a small portion of the day. This teacher functions largely on her own, and few outsiders monitor programs she designs and implements for Latino students. A few students receive support through Title III for services of the migrant paraprofessional, and there are occasional visits to the school by a translator. These connections tie the school to the larger system, yet do not typically conflict with teacher authority and autonomy over her/his instruction and classroom.

The Hall County system takes a hands-off approach to programs for Latino students at Belmont, in part because these students achieve successfully and do not create problems requiring district-level intervention. Teachers are nevertheless accountable. Accountability comes not from the state or district but from parents of the students. Elizabeth, a first grade teacher at Belmont, describes her experiences with non-Latino parents as follows:

The parents are more demanding here...I guess, you know, this kind of sounds bad, but if something doesn't go their way they're up here in a hurry to see why 'my kid...' at [a school with a lower SES population] the parents are more supportive of the teachers 'Oh Johnny didn't do what he was supposed to? Ok, we'll get on that tonight, we'll talk to him and that won't happen again' whereas here its like 'Johnny didn't do anything wrong, it couldn't be his fault' and not all. And I can't really say that as a majority for the whole school, its probably stereotyping, but I've seen more of that here than there.



Parent involvement is undoubtedly a positive influence at Belmont, but this involvement does not always favor the autonomy and authority of the educator. The teaching “profession” is granted a relatively low level of prestige within our society. As Wilensky (1964) argues, higher levels of education in the population elicit “greater sophistication about matters professional [and] more skepticism about the certainties of practice.” Many of the parents at Belmont are highly educated and many are professionals themselves. They thus feel confident to question or contest the teacher on classroom instructional and disciplinary matters.

### Accommodation Strategies

Some of the strategies that Belmont teachers were implementing in their classrooms for these students were received at student support team (SST) conferences. Student support teams are created for children who are having behavior or academic difficulties. The group meets at least twice a year in order to discuss possible strategies for addressing the needs of the particular student. For Latino children, the team typically consists of (at least) the assistant principal, ESOL teacher(s), classroom teacher, and parents. Other methods are devised by the teacher alone. Two educators noted that since they do not regularly deal with this population, they do not know what resources are out there to help them. For example, unaware of county or school resources that may assist them, some teachers reported spending considerable time on their own trying to seek out appropriate ESOL reading material for these students.

At Belmont, teachers decided on their own what methods to use to instruct the Latino students in their classrooms. Some strategies they used successfully included using more manipulatives, more hands-on and visual examples in lessons. Most teachers had different sets of class work or expectations for different sets of students. Often teachers paired students to work on reading skills, or students having trouble would be given extra time to work on the computer

or with other language-learning tools. Mary, a fourth grade teacher at Belmont, explains the classroom accommodation for her one Latino child:

Mary: ...we try to do different things in the classroom, right now the biggest thing that [the student] does is he reads to the other children, he reads to me, they read to him

Interviewer: Do you just pair off kids to do that?

Mary: Yeah, different ones, he doesn't have any particular person, one certain buddy, he does it with different ones. I have a tape recorder over there that he listens to. I have a whole series, the old series that the first grade used to have, we got a new reading series this year. I went and got the whole series of book for first grade, he's taken all of them home and listened to them and tape, now he's going back through them a second time, and he's listening to them on tapes.... He does that during our self selected, silent reading. He either listens to the tapes, or he reads to somebody or they read to him, and then they help him with the accelerated reader tests, and he takes the tests over the books, they read together, and they are allowed to read the tests with him, so that he can understand the test.

Teachers who use these strategies pair students for reading across and also within language categories. In classes and grades that utilize ability grouping, I witnessed pairing of native Spanish-speaking students assigned to read to each other in English. Finally, students who were struggling with the language and/or academic material had one-on-one time with a teacher, parent volunteer, or paraprofessional when this was possible. However, these strategies typically were developed individually by teachers, based on their own experience or knowledge. There was relatively little formal sharing of strategies among teachers, and no written guidelines about how to work effectively with Latino youth.

The lack of communication among teachers concerning instructional strategies, with individual teacher autonomy over the strategies chosen, indicates that the organization fits more closely to a loosely coupled, rather than organic model. Belmont's adherence to a loosely coupled organizational structure is effective because of its clientele. These upper-middle class parents are able to assure stability in a decentralized educational model. These students are more likely to succeed in the educational system due to their privileged backgrounds, and their parents are able to provide extra monetary and time resources to assure the perpetuation of that privilege. At Belmont, the Latino students benefit from the resources and resultant stability that these parents provide. Although Latino parents are not particularly active in the school, Latino youth benefit from resources such as computers and parent volunteers that enhance their learning experiences.

### ***Parkdale: Organic System of Management***

While Belmont most closely fits a loosely-coupled model of school management, the organization at Parkdale is more aligned with an organic model of management. Consistent with the organic systems model, the teachers at Parkdale function more as a collective than Belmont teachers. Facing multiple challenges and complex goals, educators work together within a common community in which informal norms and collaboration help to guide their work. The teachers maintain significant autonomy over decisions, and the educational hierarchy is of less importance than informal teacher networks in regard to instructional and accommodation decisions.

In discussing the collaboration of fellow educators to help the disadvantaged Latino population, Maria states, "We are so aware of the problem that we work together, this is like to me, this is a family, and the children feel that, the children sense it, the teachers here, we are

extremely together, we work together... we have such an open communication, its amazing” (ESOL, Parkdale). Parkdale has developed an organic approach to school management, I argue, in part as a response to the multiple disadvantages faced by Latino students and their families. As a result of these disadvantages, school staff has a complex set of goals for this population, requiring collaboration within the school and coordination with other community-based groups that deal with Latino populations. In addition, the pressures for accountability faced by Parkdale teachers have also supported the development of an organic approach to school management.

The evolution of Parkdale toward this model of school management will be explored in relation to resources for disadvantaged students, language accommodation, accountability measures, accommodation strategies and teacher autonomy.

#### Resources for Disadvantaged Students

To try to meet the needs of its students, Parkdale has implemented many programs to work with language minority students (see Table 9). This includes utilization of Title I funds, ESOL classes and curriculum, Even Start, the Newcomers Academy program, and Migrant Education. Parkdale has 10-15 bilingual staff, full-time bilingual translators, and nine ESOL teachers. Thus, the staffing of Parkdale differs substantially from that at Belmont. Parkdale not only has more staff specifically devoted to the needs of Latino youth, but the school has more formalized liaisons with other persons and agencies in the community focused on serving the needs of Latinos.

Even with this proportion of ESOL teachers, many Parkdale educators press for still-more resources for Latino students. If all of the Latino students required ESOL services, each ESOL teacher at Parkdale would have approximately 69 students, as compared to 43 students for the one Belmont ESOL teacher. Amy, a third grade teacher, comments:

I feel that there are children in our school that don't get served in ESOL classes because they are the top, and they could use it too. If they were in another school they would probably be in ESOL classes, but they have to serve the lowest and go up, and so many are served.

Despite the many resources for ESOL within Parkdale, classroom teachers still believe substantial responsibility for educating Latino students falls on them. Many have sought further professional development and education aimed at improving their abilities to deal with Latino students. Thus, the teachers are further connected to other professionals and community resources in accommodating this population. Describing her own professional development, Tracy (first grade) states:

After I started working here, a year after I started, I went back and got my masters and when I was doing that I think I was more conscious about what I wanted to take to help me here with this population. I took two of the ESOL courses. When the county offered ESOL certification I took the other course that was lacking so I got my ESOL certification... I have my Georgia Rise certificate. If I have an opportunity when staff development comes up I try to take things that are more pertinent to this population.

The majority of Parkdale's staff are ESOL certified, meaning they have taken three courses—linguistics, methods, and culture—to help with ESOL students. Many have or are working on Masters' degrees, and many are involved with the Georgia Rise, an 80 hour training program on phonics through a federal "Reading First" program. Several of the teachers have also taken "crash courses in Spanish" in order to better teach their students. The only educators at Belmont who responded that they had participated in training for language-limited or disadvantaged

populations in general were the two staff members who had received their ESOL certification. None of the Belmont educators mentioned training beyond a bachelor’s degree.

Table 9: Resources for ESOL Students: A Comparison Between Schools

Parkdale	Belmont
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 619 Latino Students</li> <li>▪ 9 ESOL teachers</li> <li>▪ Newcomers academy</li> <li>▪ 10-15 bilingual staff</li> <li>▪ Full time bilingual translators</li> <li>▪ Migrant Paraprofessional</li> <li>▪ Majority of staff ESOL certified</li> <li>▪ Even Start program for pre-K students</li> <li>▪ Georgia Rise for teachers</li> <li>▪ Summer migrant program</li> <li>▪ Tutoring after school (NCLB)</li> <li>▪ Program for gifted students</li> <li>▪ “crash courses in Spanish”</li> <li>▪ Leveled books</li> <li>▪ PTO meetings translated</li> <li>▪ Supportive administration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 43 Latino Students</li> <li>▪ one ESOL teacher for one 45 minute period/day</li> <li>▪ No bilingual regular staff</li> <li>▪ Shared translator—on-call</li> <li>▪ Shared migrant paraprofessional</li> <li>▪ 2 staff members ESOL certified</li> <li>▪ Leveled books</li> <li>▪ PTO meetings not translated</li> <li>▪ Parent volunteers</li> </ul>

Teachers’ efforts to support Latino students and families often extends beyond the classroom. Many Parkdale staff members assist with a summer migrant program in order to help to eliminate learning, as well as English language ability, that is lost during the summer months. Staff members also help with after school tutoring for students, to help students with both academics and English. They also support a special program for gifted Latino students who don’t qualify for gifted services according to ordinary tests, but who are recognized by teachers as having gifted qualities that need nurturing. Many of my respondents referred to the supportive administration at Parkdale, described as willing to help wherever needed, giving the teachers a lot of autonomy, and being very understanding about the barriers to passing accountability measures. In talking about the assistant principal, an ESOL teacher at Parkdale commented:

I wouldn't hesitate to go to her and say, "I've got this problem with this child, what do you suggest I do?" or "I need your help with a parent, can you be there?" Immediately its not "this is the administration and this is the teacher." No. The help is there completely and "let me tell you what I can do" and "Let me find out what's going on," so I feel that I have the support and we're supporting each other, you know you're not in this by yourself.

There is a strong support system among the staff, they work together closely to help the children, and they refer to themselves frequently as "like a family." Occupationally, this cohesion and support among staff is important for the grounding of expertise and increased professionalization (Bidwell and Yasumoro 1999, Lortie 1975). This support among staff also provides evidence for an organic system of management. Many of the educators working there have chosen to work at Parkdale because they want to work with this specific population. The connection among the staff is evident upon visiting the school, and arguably contributes to the comfort and success of the students there. Tamara (Assistant Principal) and Maria (ESOL) both noted that the students often do not want to leave at the end of the day and are disappointed when they are not able to come to school, such as on weekends and holidays.

### Language Accommodation

As previously mentioned, one of the main educational issues in accommodating these students is trying to teach an English curriculum to Spanish-speaking students. The students also are tested on English-language standardized tests. The teachers at Parkdale are enmeshed in a primarily Spanish-speaking subculture, and this challenge is particularly salient. Sarah, a fourth grade teacher at Parkdale noted:

...then we saw more Hispanics moving to the area, what we've seen now is they are not learning English like they used to, they speak to each other in the room all day long in Spanish, they speak to each other at home in Spanish and its just not developing as quickly as it used to.

The more that the Latino population grows and the more that the growth is concentrated in predominantly Latino areas, the less the Latino residents need to speak English outside of formal settings, such as schools. Since the students are constantly around others who speak Spanish, in their homes, neighborhoods, and classrooms, they are able to speak in Spanish (rather than English) frequently. In discussing standardized testing, Amy (third grade) expressed her belief that the testing was unfair for a school of their demographics, stating that "it would be fair if it was 20% [Latino] and they were submerged in English in the halls, and on the bus, and in the bathroom, and in the library, and everywhere else, the lunchroom, the playground, but every time they walk out of my class they regress into Spanish."

Although one might quibble with this teacher's characterization of the use of Spanish language as "regressive," she is speaking to a realistic difficulty imposed by state and district-level policies that require standardized testing to be done in English. If students rarely use English outside of the classroom, their performance on these high-stakes tests are likely to underestimate their abilities.

### Accountability

Unlike Belmont, Parkdale cannot rely upon the resources and participation of parents for stability or accountability. The school is much more connected to the larger educational system. The majority of these connections are related to the allocation of money and programs to help their disadvantaged population. At Parkdale, the threat of accountability beyond the local school



is greater than at Belmont, because Parkdale students have considerably poorer performances on standardized tests in comparison to Belmont. For example, on the CRCT in 2002, the vast majority of students were not meeting standards, thus not adequately mastering specific grade-level skills.

As a result of standardized test scores, the school has not met adequate yearly progress (AYP) according to *No Child Left Behind*, and has been labeled a “failing school.” Tamara describes being published on this list and labeled “failing” as “demoralizing” to the teachers. Teachers, administrators, and students have become subject to increased NCLB accountability measures. When school-level scores are consistently low, administrators may lose their jobs. Teachers are forced to complete more paperwork and are subjected to more public scrutiny, despite their dedication and advanced educational qualifications. Students face the risk of repeated retention until these skills are mastered. This year, third grade students who do not pass standardized tests in April will not be permitted to move on to fourth grade. One third grade teacher, Amy, expresses her frustration as follows:

I do prepare them for the inevitable, that a lot of them will repeat third grade because this is new. This is the first year that we are under pressure in third grade, but they won't go onto fourth grade, so there's really no easy way to put that to them, when they're doing so well. When they come in and they've moved a grade level in reading, which is wonderful, absolutely wonderful, and you have to praise them, and reward them, and make them feel like a million bucks for it, but at the same time then they get left back, and so I tell them.

Many Parkdale teachers are critical of the way in which standardized testing is used in public schools today and see policies guiding its usage as inappropriate and insensitive for schools with

high enrollments of poor and LEP students. They firmly believe that it is more appropriate to measure the progress of individual students, rather than judge students against general grade-level standards. In the words of Lynn, a first grade teacher:

I'm glad we're spending more time on trying to figure out more ways to help these students, but I would prefer that it would be reasonable[. We] should not necessarily be compared to other schools that do not necessarily have our same population.... So, I have three this year that came in on Kindergarten first month, so I'm expected to gain two years on these children. And I'm not saying I can't, but I'm not a miracle worker. It's so frustrating, so instead of—it's very simple, if they would just give us a test at the beginning of the year and give us a test at the end of the year and monitor growth. I can show a year's growth with no problem, for 90% of my students I can show a year's growth, but I can't show to second grade growth, so I shouldn't be expected to get them to a grade level when they come in so far behind. And a lot of people say, "they shouldn't come to first grade if they're not on first grade level," well, 70% of our students are not on a first grade level when they come to first grade. What do you do? You can't retain that many children. It's difficult, but what can you do?

Teachers are caught between a system that (1) needs centralized aspects to assure relatively similar forms and stages of the student career, and (2) requires decentralization to account for student differences. The recurring focus on progress may be used by teachers to account for this tension, especially when centralization checks are not met. This rhetoric of progress is again utilized in the following quote by Cindy, a third grade teacher at Parkdale:

I feel like on the whole we all care very much about our students and work very hard to get them somewhere, and we may not get them where the state, the legislation, everybody

says we should have them, but we all know that we have gotten them somewhere and we have made a difference and that's all you can do.

Teachers are focusing on progressive movement toward achievement of complex goals, and their professional autonomy and images of themselves as competent professionals are being threatened when they fall short of these goals. Thus, teachers who have true concerns about the needs of their students also are forced to develop a rhetoric that is self-protective. Ingersoll (2003) sees job motivation and commitment as threatened by too much organizational control. By focusing on progress, rather than standardized measures of academic achievement, these teachers are able to retain both traits—motivation and commitment—despite being labeled as “failing” in light of externally-imposed standards. The fact that this is the general mentality throughout the school reinforces both the rhetoric and the unity among the staff members. Progress has become the common goal, upheld and established informally within the school community. Consistent with the organic model, this informal goal becomes more salient than the formal goals.

In trying to get Latino students up to grade level, teachers are often held accountable for more than their allotted nine months of instruction time. The teachers have autonomy over how to achieve this within their classroom, yet they often complain about not being able to have fun or be creative in their classrooms due to these academic expectations. They all cited having to “constantly drill them” and worrying that they “push them too hard.” The teachers also put in extra effort, such as their voluntary involvement in tutoring programs and migrant education programs in the summer.

In the organic system of management seen at Parkdale, in contrast to loosely coupled systems, the goals are not vague. The goals of the teachers are complicated, multiple, and

changing, as expected in organic systems. Educators work with students with multiple disadvantages to overcome within an academic setting. Teachers' goals for students are multiple and include helping them to adapt to a new environment, learn English, learn English language curriculum, pass appropriate measures of academic success, and reassure them if or when they "fail." What is not clear is how these goals should be met.

Unlike at Belmont, the teachers' professional status and authority are treated with unquestioning respect by parents. Parents, and especially the parents of Latino students, rarely raise challenges to teachers' instructional practices as do some professional parents at other schools. This may be attributable to several factors. One may be a greater respect for the staff due to their increased "professional" status incurred through increased education, professionalization, and specialization. Secondly, the education level of parents may influence the perceived authority of teachers. Wilensky (1964) argues that increased education leads to increased questioning of teachers' professional authority. His argument has been used above to justify the increased involvement of the Belmont parents, and can be inversely used to explain how the lower education levels of the parents at Parkdale result in less questioning of the authority of teachers. Also, the culture of these parents may have an influence, as Latin American culture has been noted as having greater respect for teachers than currently is common in most parts of the US. This aspect of parental interaction is not always preferable, however. While the teachers frequently note the support of parents, some also note frustration that parents who attend conferences "just sit there" rather than contribute their insights and perspectives.

One threat that teachers face from externally-imposed demands for accountability is that a team of educators from outside the district will be sent in, under state guidelines, to "fix the problem," showing the teachers how to appropriately educate their students. Teachers doubt the

ability of such outsiders to show them a better way to teach these children. Thus, they claim to be willing to give up some authority over instructional autonomy, if they are being held accountable for the supposed poor quality of that instruction. If they are linked to the larger system, they want real help in the way of money and programs, rather than more paperwork and negative consequences from an accountability system they view as largely illegitimate. Though according to Byrk, et al. (1998) both resources and accountability are necessary ties to the larger system for the success of a management model that is school-based.

### Accommodation Strategies

Many accommodation strategies are being utilized within Parkdale, both within classrooms and across classrooms. Since the strategies to meet complex accountability goals are unclear, the network of support among educators within the school becomes a valuable resource for teachers. Consistent with organic systems of school management, teachers are working together as a community toward a common purpose. The cohesion among Parkdale staff in order to better meet the needs of Latino students is evident in the following quote from one ESOL teacher:

I talk to my teachers all the time, and all of us do and even in passing on the hallway, five minutes saying “let me tell you about your child, how can we help him?” You know things of that nature, we’re always helping each other, “well let me tell you what he’s doing, what do you think?” and they are listening! We listen to each other, its not like “you’re the classroom teacher, I’m the ESOL teacher” or “I’m the fifth grade teacher and you’re the first grade teacher,” NO. If I have a problem with a first grader and maybe he has a brother in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I will go to that teacher and say “Well what do you think? What can we do? How can we work this out? Do you think we can send the bigger one

to help with the...” So its just cooperation between all of us, and to me that makes us very unique, its not just that we’re involved with our classroom that we are all involved with everything that goes on, and not just that we are involved, we cooperate. (Maria)

The education of Parkdale students does not lie in the hands of the classroom teacher alone. Other educators are relied upon for support, insight, and direct services—potentially increasing the status of the educators. The responsibility of educating students is shared with migrant paraprofessionals, ESOL teachers, and Newcomer Academy teachers—at least for portions of the day. Informal help comes from teachers within and between grade levels and administrators, who are frequently noted as being willing to step in and help whenever and however necessary.

Within the classrooms, many methods are utilized in attempting to accommodate this population. Several Parkdale teachers, especially teachers in lower grade levels and ESOL teachers, incorporated Spanish language and culture into their classrooms. Four of the educators interviewed utilized some Spanish in the classroom, and those four noted that the practice was not uncommon within the school. These respondents noted attempting to utilize some Spanish in lessons, speaking the language themselves, while some utilized students as translators for their class lessons. The main problems with the latter method were the extra time that the constant translation “wasted” and the fear that some students would just listen to the translation, not attempting to learn and understand the English.

The additional in-class methods that were utilized corresponded with those utilized at Belmont. Teachers in both schools utilized more manipulatives, paired students together to work on reading skills, used language-learning tools such as computers, allotted extra one-on-one time with an adult for struggling students, and had separate sets of work and expectations for certain

students. Especially at Parkdale, it was not unusual to see two sets of spelling words or two separate homework assignments for students with different language and academic abilities.

Additionally, some teachers at Parkdale organized “flexible skill grouping,” a method that was the primary means of accommodation at Sycamore Elementary. Flexible skill grouping is conducted between classrooms. The students within a grade, or portion of a grade, are ranked according to skill level in particular subjects and placed in classrooms according to their rank. This grouping can occur for just certain subjects, such as reading and math, or for entire school years (as it does at Sycamore). In Parkdale, the fifth grade students switch classes for math and reading into their skill groups. Half of the third grade switches classes, while half of the teachers have chosen to keep their group of students for the whole day without grouping them. What many of the teachers do, however, is grouping within the classrooms, or “team time.” For example, they may divide the kids into different reading groups. Some teachers even have paraprofessionals come in for this time to be sure that someone is monitoring and working with each group.

Teachers who utilize this method within Hall County schools stress that these temporary groupings are based on ability levels, rather than racial or ethnic divisions. However, Riordan (2004) argues that the groupings are in practice quite permanent. The differential curriculum taught to these different groups of students is providing variations in students Opportunity-to-Learn (OTL). The Latino students in the lower groupings are not presented an equivalent amount of material, and in Hall County are often even using lower-ability level books. The likelihood of a student passing tests to excel into higher ability groups considering the diminished OTL is very slim. Furthermore, as noted by Joseph (1998) racial and ethnic minority students are disproportionately placed in lower-level ability tracks early in their educational careers. In

schools that utilized ability groups, the lower ability groups were primarily, if not completely, composed of Latino students who are being tracked as early as seven years old.

The fact that the groupings at Parkdale are flexible and used for only a portion of the day, and the fact that they frequently are re-evaluated, attempts to minimize some of the negative outcomes that have been associated with ability grouping, such as pejorative labeling of lower-track students and persistent differential curriculum covered by groups of differing designated ability levels. Since groupings are fluid and frequently re-evaluated, students are able to move up in group levels as their skills improve. Similar skill grouping is used at Lakeside, yet the grouping utilized at Sycamore is less flexible. The students at Sycamore stay within their group all day long and are only evaluated between school years, potentially increasing the negative effects of tracking.

#### Teacher Autonomy

In accordance with that organic system model, the administration at Parkdale has allowed the teachers to determine appropriate accommodation methods for their students—utilizing the “problem-solving units.” For example, the aforementioned division in third grade instructional methods, with half of the teachers doing “flexible skill grouping,” is indicative of teacher decision-making autonomy within the school. The school administration, rubber stamping all instructional decisions of this nature, trusts that the teachers are conducting their classrooms in an appropriate manner for the benefit of their students. According to Sarah (fourth grade), “we have a wonderful principal who allows us a lot of flexibility. That’s the key to this school, flexibility.”

The autonomy granted to the teachers is arguably applied in accordance to their professional knowledge in the area, their unofficial status as specialists themselves. Thus, the



practice underscores the professional status of teachers and perhaps counteracts the negative effects on morale of the stigma of teaching in a “failing” school. The teachers interviewed have a substantial amount of knowledge and education that is being (1) applied toward helping these children and (2) collectively shared. All have their ESOL certification, all have or are working toward a Master’s degree, three had their sixth-year degrees (a higher professional degree), and all had attended extensive professional development sessions to better serve the underprivileged, Latino population found in Parkdale. This self-motivated push for further training and education is a further emblem of professional status (Shanker 1996). Teachers remain motivated to improve their skills, despite the externally imposed label of a “failing school.”

These methods of accommodation do not just vary by school; there are variations within schools and even within grade levels. The fact that these different methods and organizational patterns have emerged within the same school system gives further indication that the system is largely decentralized—giving teachers autonomy over instructional methods. Trying to create a centralized system that would dictate and inform classroom processes would seem unreasonable due to the range of schools and student instructional needs that often exists even within districts, as is evident with Belmont and Parkdale.

### ***Loosely-coupled and Organic Systems: A Continuum?***

The evidence presented in this study supports the existence of a loosely-coupled system in Belmont and an organic system of school management in Parkdale. The organic system at Parkdale has arguably emerged in response to the increase in the disadvantaged Latino population and consequent increase in accountability threat from *No Child Left Behind* legislation. This argument assumes that organic systems of management emerge in conjunction with increases in disadvantaged students; therefore, a continuum may exist between loosely-

coupled and organic systems. I can make no broad generalizations about school organizational evolution based on the evidence collected, yet the additional evidence collected at Lakeside and Sycamore suggest that a continuum exists between these two organizational models.

There were fewer interviews done at Lakeside and Sycamore, yet the data collected at these schools seems to confirm my generalization that an increase in the Latino population results in a movement towards a heavier reliance upon other educators for support, assistance, and shared decision making power. The samples in the schools are too small to be generalizable, but provide insight as to what is happening in schools that fall between the two population extremes.

Latino students at Lakeside Elementary make up 28 percent of the student population. There is a Newcomers teacher, migrant paraprofessional and parent liaison, yet the teachers I spoke with were unsure of their exact roles within the school. The school is currently under new administration—a female principal who is beginning her second year at Lakeside. According to Betty, a fourth grade teacher there:

She's really encouraging us to share what works, whereas before we were all on our own island—you know, I always do what's best for me and I don't talk to anyone else. So she's really encouraging us to do that and we're going to have some lunch-and-learns where we share different strategies.

The administration is encouraging increased cohesion among the staff as a response to the growing Latino population and resultant increased threat of accountability measures with *No Child Left Behind*. The difference is that staff unity is not a result of teachers banding together to problem solve of their own accord; rather, the attempts are seen as part of an administrative technique—hierarchical, formal control rather than informal networking. According to Sandra, the

ESOL teacher at Lakeside, “Sometimes I think we have too much administration, I mean, why are we here? We’re not here to have meetings and all that—we’re here to work with the kids. But then again, you have to have some direction; you have to have leadership, so it’s a complex problem.” The changing population has begun to incite change, but the school does not yet appear to be working as a “collective problem-solving unit” truly controlled by the staff.

At Sycamore Elementary, Latino students make up 54 percent of the population. There is a greater sense of the staff cohesion and problem-solving among teachers within grade levels, as well as between classroom teachers and other professionals (migrant paraprofessionals, parent liaisons, etc.). According to one third grade teacher, “as a grade level, we have met a lot and discussed a lot what to do.” As in organic systems theory, the goals are multi-faceted and methodology vague, so they are meeting of their own accord to come up with collective strategies for the classroom. These meetings are seen as beneficial to their goal of teaching their students, rather than as a deterrent from the goal. The migrant paraprofessional reiterated the theme of working as a collective to help the Latino students:

There’s a lot of things that we’re all doing, and we’re working together as a team. I can say that at Tadmire we are a big team and we are pushing to work as a team to help these students adjust. Also, a lot of the teachers are contemplating taking Spanish classes, some of them have already, some of them I’m impressed because a lot of them know a lot of words in Spanish that they have learned to communicate with the kids that come in that don’t know any English.

Thus, the teachers are collaborating as a school to meet common goals. One other indication that the school fits the organic system framework is that the teachers assist in allocating resources.

One fourth grade teacher relayed the story of the principal allowing her to help make the decisions about how to spend the math and reading money for the grade level.

Teachers in both Lakeside and Sycamore have created similar self-protective rhetoric as Parkdale teachers to account for student “failure.” According to the ESOL teacher at Lakeside:

I’ve learned through all these years, and it took me a long time, that their failure is not necessarily an indication of my worth. My first year, if my kids didn’t do something right, it was my fault and so it took me a long time to get through that, I mean I want them to do well, but if they don’t that’s what happens sometimes. And sometimes you just have to look at what you have done and not worry too much about what you haven’t done. (Sandra)

Rather than concentrate on failure to meet complex goals, the teachers focus on progress. This allows them to focus on student needs, as well as protect themselves from the damaging psychological and motivational effects of “failing” status. The development of such a response to potential criticism appears strengthened and reinforced in schools with greater Latino populations and greater staff cohesion.

The educators at Parkdale Elementary have a strong staff support system, with ever-present reminders of the complex educational goals they are working toward. The teachers at Belmont Elementary work largely on their own in order to meet more loosely defined and loosely evaluated goals. The additional data, from the other two schools, suggests that the organizational models are not coincidentally tied to the schools. There does seem to be a pattern: increased change in the student population, such as the influx of Latinos, results in more complex goals and greater staff cohesion and involvement to meet those goals. Furthermore, cohesion among staff in decision-making can also be seen as part of a self-protection emphasis

for schools with high Latino populations. Not only do they form and share a rhetoric that focuses on student progress, the responsibility for educational decisions is shared among a collection of educators.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS

Schools in Hall County, Georgia, have undergone substantial changes in their student populations in the past two decades. Historical inter-district stratification based on socioeconomic status has resulted in the unequal allocation of Latino students among Hall County schools. Belmont and Parkdale were chosen for concentrated analysis in this study because they are the most demographically opposite schools in the district. Belmont has the smallest proportion of Latinos in the county, while Parkdale has the largest. The majority of students at Belmont come from upper-middle class backgrounds; the majority of students at Parkdale are from working-class backgrounds. Most students at Belmont are meeting or exceeding standardized requirements; most students at Parkdale are not meeting minimum standards. I have argued that these interrelated differences have contributed to the emergence of differential accommodation strategies for dealing with the influx of Latinos at the two schools, with Belmont fitting more closely with a loosely-coupled model and Parkdale with an organic model.

The educators I interviewed at all Hall County schools were similar in their assessments that Latino students faced educational barriers—based on socioeconomic status, culture, language, and parental involvement. Educators in both schools in this largely decentralized system had devised a number of strategies to deal with Latino students in their classrooms, in light of few specific directives on the part of the system about curriculum or pedagogy. However, there were also distinctive differences between the schools in the types of strategies

that teachers employed. For the most part, teachers at Belmont employed various in-classroom reforms to meet the needs of Latino students. In contrast, at Parkdale, where the influx of Latino youth was much greater and where more state and community resources were available for Latino students and their families, coping strategies were more apt to be school-wide or community-wide. Instructional strategies adopted within and between classrooms were part of a larger system of support.

Teachers in both schools feel free to approach instruction of Latino students as they deem appropriate. At Belmont, teachers have few Latino students, and few institutionalized resources for meeting those students' needs. However, they are able to utilize resources and assistance from upper-middleclass parents in accommodating Latino students. At Belmont, the Latino students are forced to learn English rapidly through immersion. Few Latino households in the Belmont district are linguistically isolated, and Census data suggest that Latinos attending Belmont may be slightly more affluent than those attending Parkdale. With extra assistance and intensive English immersion, the students at Belmont are arguably better equipped to succeed academically in the short run and to perform better on standardized tests in comparison to Parkdale Latino students. However, the school has not analyzed standardized test scores of Latinos compared with other students because of the small proportion of Latino students enrolled, so this expectation is merely speculative. Latino students exist beneath the radar of those outside the classrooms in which they are enrolled and attract no special attention at the district or community level. Latino students at Belmont are presumed to be making adequate educational progress, although no specific evidence on their performance has been gathered. The situation potentially could change as larger proportions of Latino students enter the school, a change that can be anticipated by recent redistricting efforts in the system.

Nevertheless, because Belmont students are doing well academically overall, teachers in the school do not face threats from accountability concerns prevalent at the district and state level. There is little reason for scrutiny of their curriculums or classroom practices with regard to Latino students. Although parents at Belmont are active in school matters and sometimes scrutinize and criticize classroom practices, parents of Latino youth are not generally among this group. The classroom teachers function essentially on their own, within their classrooms and without much assistance from other teachers, and the management patterns and professional autonomy patterns observed at the school are consistent with those of a loosely-coupled, decentralized school system.

The issues that Belmont teachers confront in working with individual Latino students also manifest themselves as larger, school-wide issues at Parkdale. If a Latino parent is not able to be involved in the child's school, the child is at an educational disadvantage. If the 92 percent of Latino parents at Parkdale are unable to be involved within the school, the student and school are disadvantaged in comparison to schools where parent involvement is prevalent. I have argued that the disadvantaged clientele of the Parkdale, in conjunction with federal accountability pressure from *No Child Left Behind*, have led to the emergence of an organic system of organization. The goals faced by educators—overcoming student and school disadvantages in order to succeed on standardized testing—are not longer vague, but multiple and complex. Yet, teachers lack sufficient guidelines on how to meet these goals. In response, teachers at Parkdale are collaborating and creating an environment where ideas, insights, suggestions, and the responsibility of educating these children are shared. Administration has given them considerable leeway in deciding how to best manage their classrooms and help their students. This has led to a number of outcomes. Teachers work collectively, rather than individually, to



devise strategies to help students, as well as rationales to explain their efforts to others. They reach beyond the school to seek further training and resources for coping with Latino youth, when they discover resources available to them through the district and state to be inadequate. They support and even volunteer their time for community-based programs, such as summer programs and after-school tutoring sessions, that can bolster the performance of students facing educational disadvantages (Riordan 2004).

One of the consequences of these efforts is that educators at Parkdale embrace a rhetoric of focusing on “progress” rather than standardized measures of success. This makes them as a group resistant to standardized testing and other state-mandated measures of accountability, which they see as inappropriate measures for assessing both the competence of their students as learners and themselves as teachers. The resistance comes about both as a reflection of sincere concern for the students and self-protection for themselves. Teachers want to maintain an image of themselves as competent and effective, and they want to protect themselves from the negative professional consequences of being labeled “failing” teachers in a “failing” school. The resistance also serves to unite the staff under a common ideology, to contribute to the creation of a support system among educators who see themselves as carrying out an important job that is often unappreciated.

### ***Effects of Organizational Practices on Student Achievement***

The presumed goal of the strategies employed by Hall County educators to accommodate Latino students in their classrooms is to improve the achievement and schooling experiences for these students. How the different strategies for accommodating Latino youth used in the two different schools affects these outcomes is not known, either on the national level or in Hall County. Since the schools are so sharply divided in the socioeconomic status of their student

populations, it is hard to disentangle ethnic status for socioeconomic status effects. However, I can make speculations based on my evidence and previous literature.

Latino students at Belmont appear more likely than students at Parkdale to succeed in the short run, in part because they are immersed in an English-speaking school environment. The immersion strategy may encourage rapid-English language learning on the part of Latino youth, but it may be the case that their more affluent (in comparison to Parkdale) families have better English language skills. Additionally, Latinos struggling in Belmont classes have more opportunity to receive supplementary assistance, partially due to a greater likelihood of parent volunteers in the classroom and partially due to the number of children in the class who will need extra assistance. The rapid acquisition of English and the supplementary assistance received will likely result in higher scores on standardized testing than students at Parkdale, indicating higher academic success.

However, there are several alternative viewpoints. First of all, the number of Latino students in the school may work to the detriment of Latino educational success. The students may not receive the assistance they require when they are part of the minority in the classroom, for teachers may choose to focus on the majority. Secondly, the Belmont Latino students who are primarily speaking English are in threat of losing their Spanish fluency, since only English is being spoken in their school environment. It is possible that English immersion encourages in-school isolation and loss of cultural ties, perhaps in part supporting the extraordinarily high dropout rates of Latino youth, particularly those of Mexican origin. Therefore, total immersion may have long term costs farther along in schooling.

The Latino students at Parkdale are significantly less likely to experience isolation and cultural loss, yet the school environment at Parkdale carries other risks. According to educators

at Parkdale, Latino students within the school have struggled on standardized testing. As discussed at length above, educators attribute this primarily to language barriers, in addition to SES and parental involvement challenges that are realized on individual and school levels. In line with literature on student achievement (eg. Kao and Thompson 2003), Latino students perform poorly on standardized testing in comparison to their white counterparts. Many Parkdale teachers admitted to developing separate, often less challenging, curriculum for Latino youth on the grounds that the students were coping with language acquisition. On result—likely an unintended one—is that Latino and other students in the same classroom differ systematically in what Riordan terms OTL, or Opportunity to Learn. If students are presented with a less intense, or less challenging curriculum, or if they are given the same curriculum but miss portions of it because of language limitations, they will be less well prepared to do well on standardized tests and may subsequently be tracked into less-demanding curriculum.

However, Goodsmith (2004) suggests that black and Latino students in segregated schools—such as Parkdale—are more likely than minority students in separate white schools to have positive attitudes about teachers and classes. They are additionally more likely to maintain great optimism about their educational and occupational futures. This pro-school attitude was evident with Parkdale students who, according to educators, enjoy being at school to the point that they did not want to leave. If high aspirations and optimism are indicators and motivators of long-term academic success, the Latino students may have more long-term success at Parkdale than at Belmont. The networking and community of support under the organic model creates a family-like atmosphere that is more conducive to pro-school attitudes and the fostering of optimism. Furthermore, following the evidence of Entwisle and Alexander (1992) that African American students in segregated schools experience detrimental educational regressions in the

summer, the summer migrant program that Parkdale educators and many Parkdale children participate in may help to bolster the knowledge retention of students. If the same pattern occurs in segregated Latino schools and Latinos students, and the summer education deterioration is diminished or reversed through summer programs, Latino students in the segregated school of Parkdale may even surpass integrated Latino Belmont students in achievement.

What is important to realize in this study is that strategies used to address the needs of Latino youth were not typically well-coordinated efforts based on solid research or firm guidelines on curriculum or pedagogy from the district or state level. Rather, they were pastiches of strategies worked out by caring educators given clear mandates to achieve “results” with Latino students but little specific assistance in how this could be done. The strategies teachers used were those they deemed practical and workable in the everyday realities of their lives in schools.

Thus, this study points to a pressing need for further study on the effects of variable strategies of accommodation on the short-term and long-term outcomes for Latino youth, as well as the effects of these strategies on the job satisfaction and career growth of teachers. Since Hall County has not only variable proportions of Latino students enrolled in different schools, but also divergent approaches within the school systems to educating these students, it is an ideal locale for further research.

### ***Contributions to Education Organizational Research***

Within this study I have intensively explored the organization of two schools. I am able to align Belmont with a loosely coupled model of school management and Parkdale with an organic model. I can speculate that there may be a systematic relationship between the proportions of Latinos in the schools and the management style employed within a decentralized

school, although my evidence is not sufficient to make such a claim definitively. My interviews with a small proportion of the staff in two other Hall County Schools—Sycamore and Lakeside—suggest that this might be the case. The small samples of teachers whom I interviewed from Lakeside and Sycamore suggest that a continuum might exist and that as schools acquire a larger population of Latino students, they move toward a more organic model of school management. The transition in school population may be related to a more collegial model of relationships among educators in the school, as well as greater efforts to coordinate school and community activities. Some of this shift may come about as a result of structural changes, such as the larger share of staff and other resources flowing to schools with larger Latino enrollments and the greater contacts with other state and community agencies. However, some may also emerge from shifts within the school itself, where teachers who face what often are unexpected demands as a result of student population shifts seek the professional assistance of their colleagues to develop effective instructional strategies. Such a conclusion, of course, requires longer and broader study, including study of other school systems experiencing rapid influxes of Latino students. Movement to an organic model of school management likely is possible only in school systems that already are largely decentralized.

I have been able to shed light on what is happening in select Hall County schools as they accommodate the increasing Latino population. Since the Latino population in Georgia and the US continue to increase, exploratory research is valuable for understanding the effects of this influx not just on districts, but on individual schools. I can also contribute to an understanding of the effects of *No Child Left Behind* on schools with high proportions of disadvantaged students, and how the three—student population, legislation and organization—are connected. The influx of Latino students into Hall County schools has produced what may be an unanticipated shift in

school-based management and organizational strategies. The consequences of this shift—both positive and negative—are not yet entirely clear. The shift has been affected by other changes in educational policy and management beyond the Hall County district. The interrelationships of these factors—population shift, state and federal policies regarding public education, and school organization—are seriously under-explored in sociology of education. This is the first that the presence of the organic systems model has been explored in relation to changes in the Latino population.

### ***Teacher Professionalization***

As a result of complex goals faced by the educators at Parkdale, many have taken steps toward increased professionalization. Consistent with Rowan's organic model (199), the teachers are collaborating to figure out how to meet these complex goals. They are becoming “informal, problem-solving social systems” (Bidwell, 2001). Such systems are a step toward professionalization in that they are building a common local base of expertise (Bidwell and Yasumoto, 1999; Lortie 1975). While both groups of teachers have autonomy over classroom instruction, the instruction given to students at Parkdale is more enmeshed in collective efforts and the sharing of knowledge. This building of expertise is enhanced by the extra training and education sought out by Parkdale educators. As mentioned above, all of my respondents had their ESOL certification, all had or were working toward their Masters degrees, and three had sought educational degrees beyond that. Three had been or were involved in the Georgia Rise 80 hour training program, and many wanted to take the program, though it hadn't been offered to their grade level yet. This extra education and specialization has not been imposed upon them. These teachers are self-motivated, seeking out this extra knowledge in order to better their work performance—a symbol of professional status (Shanker, 1996).

While shifts in school enrollments, low test standardized test scores for Parkdale students in comparison to other schools in the state, and lack of adequate resources for instructing Latino students all have been challenges for Parkdale educators, their responses to these challenges have sometimes been empowering and supportive of professionalization. Teachers in the school have developed not only a set of professional practices for dealing with Latino students, but they have also articulated a collective rationale in defense of these strategies. They have been energized to work with other community agencies to improve the lives of Latino students and their families. Whether such outcomes have occurred in other systems with large influxes of Latino students remains to be seen.

### ***Limitations and Directions of Future Research***

The generalizability of this study is compromised by the limited sample size. I am unable to make any claims about school organization outside of those schools studied. Since Parkdale was the only school with a large proportion of Latino students that was extensively studied, I do not know if Parkdale is representative of other schools with large Latino populations. Likewise, I can not determine if Belmont is representative of other upper-middle class, predominantly white schools. Furthermore, Hall County was chosen in part because Latinos are the primary minority group within the district. In schools or districts with multiple minority groups, different accommodation strategies and organizational models may be adopted. Questions raised in the current study could be used to construct a survey, expanding the sample size, generalizability, and scope of the research.

Future research could more directly address links between organization and inequalities in student achievement. How do different accommodation strategies and organizational models affect student achievement? Are students in schools such as Parkdale able to make more annual

progress than students in schools like Belmont? What are the long-term effects of current *No Child Left Behind* legislation on students who are retained? Are teachers within organic systems more committed to their work? If so, can links be made between school organization, commitment, and student achievement?

Additional research can address issues of professionalization. Tidwell (1993) suggests that teachers within impoverished school settings are the most poorly trained of educators, which doesn't apply to educators at Parkdale. To unpack this contradiction, a comparison between teachers in schools with different types of disadvantaged populations would be interesting. Are there differences in teacher professionalization in schools with disadvantaged African American students versus in schools with disadvantaged immigrant and/or Latino students? Or, are differences dependent upon the level of the school? Are their differences in professional preparation between elementary and high school teachers of disadvantaged students? In short, the scope of the current qualitative study is limited, though it lends itself to further studies on educational organization, student achievement, and professionalization.

### ***Policy Implications***

In terms of policy implications of this research, my suggestions follow those of many of the teachers in the more disadvantaged schools studied. Many said that they understand and agree with the precepts of *No Child Left Behind* and the need for accountability, yet they feel that it is unfair to grade these children against universalistic standards. After all, the inputs are not equivalent—student backgrounds and school contexts vary. Since completion of my interviews, there have been federal amendments made to *No Child Left Behind* as a result of this criticism. According to National Public Radio's Claudio Sanchez (2004):



Students who are still learning to speak English will no longer be required to take tests in reading and writing during their first year in an American school. And schools will now be allowed to categorize students as having limited English for two years after they are declared proficient in English. The No Child Left Behind law has come under increasing criticism in recent months as states have complained that its rules are too inflexible and too expensive to implement.

While this is an improvement, I doubt that this will pacify teacher concerns or significantly impact the gap in Latino achievement as measured by these tests. As the teachers know well, studies show that it takes up to seven years to achieve academic language proficiency (Hakuta, et al. 2000). Thus, the extra leeway provided does not adequately address the perceived needs of this group.

The teachers suggest measuring student progress, how much the students improve within a school year. Many are convinced that they “can show a year’s growth with no problem” (Lynn, first grade, Parkdale). First of all, school-wide resources may be needed to help students and teachers meet their goals. If a year of progress can be shown for children, but this year is not adequate even for first grade students, perhaps these schools need more resources put toward the creation and funding of Head Start and/or other public early education programs. Additionally, perhaps the educational system needs to explore altering their measures of accountability, at least for schools with high proportions of disadvantaged students. While measures of accountability may be necessary for decentralized education systems, the system is in place in part to account for variations in local environments. It would seem that these variable inputs would need to be taken into further consideration when evaluating the outputs. Thus, the professional authority of the teachers needs to be recognized. Instead of undermining their professional authority through

unreasonable accountability measures, utilize their expertise and suggestions, allot them a larger say in the decision making processes, and reform accountability to better suit the educational challenges at hand.

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## APPENDIX

### SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- When did you begin teaching?
- What systems have you taught in?
- What grade levels have you taught?
- Have you held any other kinds of jobs in addition to teaching (since college)?
- Why did you decide to go into teaching?
- Tell me about the make-up of your current (or most recent) classroom? (SES, race, etc.)
  - In the time you've been in Hall County has that changed? If so, how?
- Of the Latino students in your classroom, what proportion are US born?
- What proportion of the students come to households that are primarily Spanish speaking? Of those, about what proportion of parents can understand English well enough to communicate within a parent-teacher conference?
- What resources do you have in the school for ESOL students?
- What are the criteria for the ESOL program in your school? (all have ESOL pull-out programs for 2-3, 45 minute periods a day)
- How would you rate your reading/speaking ability in Spanish?
- How do you communicate with students who speak little English?
- How do you communicate with parents?
- Talk about your relationships with Latino parents. Can you give me some examples of some successful interactions? Can you give me some examples of problematic interactions?
- What is a typical day in class for you and your students, starting with the first activity in the morning? Is this schedule the same each day?
- Hall County School System has one of the largest enrollments of Latino students in the state.



How has the make-up of students in the system affected your experiences as a teacher?

- What have been the advantages of working in this system?
- What have been the disadvantages of working in this kind of system?
- Have you had any training that has helped you work with Latino students? (student teaching experience, in-service training, mentoring programs, etc.) Are there any adaptations that you have made in your approach to the classroom as a result of having an increased proportion of Latino immigrant students?
- Would you say that your approach to the classroom has changed as a result of having a larger proportion of Latino students? If so, how?
- How would you characterize the relationships between Latino students and the other students in the class? (i.e during group projects, informal/playground interactions, out of school friendships, etc.) Do you think that gender makes a difference in these interactions?
- What resources, formal or informal, help you deal with Latino issues in the classroom? (eg. Do you talk about diversity issues in faculty meetings? Do you talk about these issues informally among teachers?)
- Since you've had considerable experience dealing with Latino students, do you believe that there are other things that could be done in the school to help you with increasing proportions of Latino students? Thinking more generally, what do you think can be done or should be done to assist teachers in systems with increasing proportions of Latino enrollment?
- Is there anything else that has been important in teaching Latino students that we haven't talked about?