



The Strangers

Our worst crime is abandoning the children. Many things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time bones are being formed, blood is being made, and senses are being developed. To this child, we cannot answer “tomorrow.”

GABRIELA MISTRAL, *Readings for Women*

A Day with Rosa

The Addison High counseling office is a wide and welcoming place. Its expansive reception area is dotted with pyramids made of broad carpeted steps, where students can sit and talk as they wait for appointments in the adjacent offices. The room’s posters and displays suggest to students how they might spend life after graduation. By far the most prominent display is the one set up by the armed forces, which I later learned send recruiters to the school several times each month. I sat on the first step of one of the carpet pyramids and studied the display looming on the top platform. A soldier, his face camouflaged by green and black grease paint, stared back. “Be All You Can Be,” read the caption beneath. Stacks of brochures in the rack below the poster explained how. A few feet away, shelves lined with the catalogues of scores of colleges and universities lay beneath strings of colorful pennants from many of these same schools. It was the first week after the winter break, and I was there to meet Rosa.

During the holiday break, I had had the chance to review some specifics regarding the struggles of Latino students in our nation’s schools. Although Señora Alvarez had cited poor study habits as the reason for poor performance by Latino students,

the statistics I had seen revealed disturbing trends that suggested larger, more complex causes. Among these figures are those indicating that Latino students are more likely to drop out of school than are students of other ethnic groups. According to a 1992 Department of Education report, dropout rates fell between 1972 and 1991 from 12.3 percent to 8.9 percent for Whites and from 21.3 percent to 13.6 percent for African Americans (McMillen, 1993). Among Latino students, however, this rate increased from 34.3 percent to 35.3 percent. Additional data show that although Latino students made up only 11.2 percent of the 1992 high school population, they accounted for 30 percent of all dropouts. Compounding this problem is the fact that Latino adults are less likely to complete high school later in life. While the number of twenty-eight-year-olds who had not completed high school in 1992 was 9.2 percent of Whites and 12.5 percent of African Americans, for Latinos that figure was 36.8 percent (McMillen, p. 169). Moreover, Latino students who leave school have lower education levels than their White or African American counterparts: just over one-half of Latino dropouts, compared with one-third of White dropouts and one-fourth of African American dropouts, have less than a tenth-grade education (McMillen, p. 127). Consistent with these national trends, Latino students in grades 9–12 in Michigan drop out at rates three to four times higher than the rest of the student population. Further, according to a 1986 Michigan Department of Education report, the K–12 Latino dropout rate is as high as 55 percent, making it the highest in Michigan of all identifiable racial/ethnic groups, with the exception of American Indians (Michigan Department of Education, pp. 1, 11).

As I later discovered from an annual report prepared by the Addison High administration, the overall average dropout rate at Addison High between 1992 and 1994 was allegedly 8.2 percent, with a retention rate of 91.8 percent. These numbers, however, are misleading due to flawed logic in their calculation.¹ In contrast, a local college administrator undertook a statistically sound close study of the dropout rate at Addison by comparing the number of students enrolled as first-year students with the number of those who graduated four years later (after adjusting for those who moved in and out of the district).² This more reli-

able approach suggests that the average overall Addison High dropout rate between 1990 and 1994 was actually 28 percent.³ Although the Addison High administration does not keep official statistics on dropout rates by race/ethnicity, the same college administrator extended his study to focus on Latino students. With the help of an Addison High staff member, he painstakingly reviewed student enrollment records and contacted members of Addison's Latino community to find out whether students who had left Addison High over a five-year period had transferred to other schools (as the official version claims) or had stopped attending school altogether. Based on these efforts, he calculated an average Latino-student dropout rate of 49 percent, with an additional 6 percent of these students not graduating with their class but still enrolled in school.

As Rosa walked into the reception area, Alvarez emerged from her office to reacquaint us, and as the bell rang calling us to first period, the counselor sent Rosa and me off with a cheerful "Have a good day." We made our way through the crowded hallways, Rosa walking a step ahead, appearing a bit embarrassed to be shadowed by a thirty-year-old stranger. I tried to strike up a conversation in Spanish.

"What did you get for Christmas?"

"A sweater and some tapes," she said. I waited to tell her about my new toaster, but she didn't ask.

First Period: Geography

Mr. Harry Morton is a jovial social studies teacher and wrestling coach who uses an old golf club as a map pointer and talks much more loudly than he needs to. Having received a memo in his mailbox from Alvarez warning of my arrival, he welcomed me with a firm handshake and escorted me to a desk behind Rosa's, asking the boy already there to move to an empty seat on the far side of the room. I had just settled into my chair when, across the aisle, a thin girl with big eyes and short hair finished saying something to a friend and turned to face me.

"Nice tie," she said. *"Are you a student teacher or something?"*

"Not really. I'm just here to help Rosa." I moved my desk

alongside Rosa, who lifted her hand to cover her eyes and slouched in her seat.

On the wall, among the requisite maps of a social studies room, was a large sheet of white paper—about three by four feet—with the heading “Mission Statement of the Addison Public Schools.” This document, I learned from Morton, was the result of nearly two years of work by faculty and administrators who had met during free periods and after school to draft a comprehensive list of “learning outcomes”—goals, articulated by department, that specify what the school hopes to accomplish by the time each student graduates. The statement, printed in bold letters, read as follows: “The mission of the Addison School District is to provide learning outcomes which challenge each student to achieve academic excellence, foster social participation, and promote development of self-esteem, all in preparation for becoming a contributing citizen in a world environment.”

Maneuvering among the rows of desks, Morton explained that the worksheet packets he was handing out were worth one hundred points each and were due on the days of tests, which were also worth one hundred points.

“The point here,” Morton paused to announce, “is that if you’re conscientious and do the homework, you have a good chance of passing the class regardless of how you do on the tests.” While Morton was still talking, I whispered this information to Rosa, drawing looks from several students for doing what would normally draw threats of a detention. Rosa shifted her weight and slid lower in her chair. Morton then began an introductory lecture on the political and physical geography of Latin America, in which he included everything from Tierra del Fuego to Mexico and the Spanish-speaking islands of the Caribbean. His voice was quick and animated as his golf club scanned the Amazon rain forest and the Andes Mountains on maps projected onto a screen at the front of the room. He pointed to borders and bodies of water, explained the climate of various regions, and tossed in anecdotes describing aspects of the cultures of selected countries. The students, including Rosa and a brown-skinned boy across the room wearing a cap decorated in front with a Mexican flag, listened quietly.

Copies of these maps, Morton explained, could be found in the homework packets and were to be labeled with the cities, countries, and other items listed on the back of each sheet. I leaned over and translated the instructions to Rosa, who suggested that we go to the library and work so as not to disturb the class.

“Well, Rosa,” I said, “*I think it would be better for us to stay here so that you can listen and practice your English.*” Rosa sighed, took a pencil from her purse, and wrote her name at the top of the first page in the packet. Every minute or so, I continued to lean over and whisper the gist of Morton’s lecture, but eventually Rosa seemed to lose interest and began doing the homework the teacher had said was to give her hope of passing the class. Rosa was able to find the correct chapter in the textbook, but then wrote the characteristics of the Brazilian economy in the worksheet box labeled “Physical Geography.” When I pointed out the error, Rosa faintly said, “*Thank you.*”

As Rosa copied the appropriate lists from her book onto the worksheets, I tried to follow Morton’s lecture, which somehow led to his telling a story about a Norwegian exchange student who had attended Addison High the previous year. This boy, according to Morton, was a “fine student,” a “great success,” who had worked very hard to learn English and was a star 800-meter runner for the track team. A student raised his hand.

“I wonder how you’d teach someone like that English.”

Morton replied that the best way is to immerse the person in an English-speaking environment. I translated this to Rosa and asked if she’d found that to be true. She raised her eyebrows and shrugged her shoulders. “*I don’t know,*” she said.

I wondered whether Morton’s answer might be true for some people, like those who have the status and confidence that come along with doing well in school, being an exceptional athlete, or having the money to choose to study abroad for a year. But then I thought of Rosa, of her dozens of absences, of the fact that I had yet to see her speak to another student. I thought about how easy it would be to fall into a cycle of finding it difficult to connect with people because of shyness and/or an inability to speak their language, which would result in further lack of exposure to that language, which would result in even more withdrawal, and so on.

As the period drew to a close, Morton announced that the following week there would be a quiz on the maps distributed that day. I told Rosa about the *prueba*. She nodded and continued to draw on her notebook: hearts and a name I couldn't read.

"Who's that?" I asked. Rosa answered without looking at me.

"A boy in Puerto Rico." She had also drawn a face that looked like an alien as depicted in television shows like *The X-Files*—thin-limbed with a long face and large, glistening eyes. The English major in me loved the irony; the teacher in me was troubled that it may have been, in some ways, a self-portrait. By and by, I gave up on translating Morton's lecture, which jumped from class trips to Asian food in Detroit to finding a McDonald's in the Swiss Alps. Rosa told me where the next class was, but I did not walk with her, sensing that she preferred not to have me tagging along through the hallways.

Second Period: English as a Second Language (ESL)

Several days earlier, I had spoken over the telephone with each of Addison High's new ESL instructors: Alice Martinez, a certified ESL teacher, and Fran Soto, a part-time aide. As the first regular ESL teachers to work in the Addison system in several years, both Martinez and Soto had spoken passionately about the district's need for bilingual instructors and were eager to begin this, their first semester on the job. Martinez had been born in San Antonio and had moved to Addison when she was very young. Soto, born and raised in Mexico, had moved to Brownsville, and then to Addison after marrying. This experience of having been uprooted and transplanted to Addison—this process of having had to adjust to a new environment and language—was something Martinez saw as crucial to the work she was about to begin.

"It's not just the language," she told me. "These kids need someone who understands what they're going through." She then shared with me a story of her first day in kindergarten: "The teacher was going down the list of students, and when she got to my name, she didn't know how to pronounce it. She hesitated, fumbled a few times, and then said, 'Well, we'll just call you Alice.' From that point on, everybody has called me Alice. They

put it on the official school roll. All the kids, everybody, even my mother and my family, eventually called me Alice. I was only five, but I'll never forget it. It was the day they took my name away from me."

I arrived in the ESL classroom as the teachers were unpacking bags filled with books and papers. Martinez introduced me to the six students as they filed into the room: Vinita and Alex, Lebanese siblings whose first language was Arabic; a Mexicana named Elizabeth; a Chicana named Julie; Miguel, who had arrived from Guatemala two years ago; and Rosa. Martinez then took the time to have each of the students tell a bit about themselves, "In English if you can," she said. Vinita and Alex managed to explain that they had just moved from Detroit, where their family had lived with an uncle. Miguel was staying with his aunt while his parents were visiting a sick relative in Texas. Julie, speaking English without a Spanish-language accent, said that she wanted to be a cosmetologist when she graduated. With Soto translating, Elizabeth said that she missed her friends in Mexico. Rosa, too, spoke Spanish.

"My name is Rosa, and I'm from Puerto Rico."

"What else can you tell us?" Soto encouraged.

"I have six brothers and sisters."

"Rosita," Martinez said, "can you say that in English?" Rosa looked down at her hands. Martinez continued.

"Rosita, how do you say 'six' in English?"

"Six."

"Very good, *very good*, Rosa. Six children in the family, *like the six we have in our little family, this class*. Okay, Todd, your turn."

I told them my name, that I had been born and raised in a small town in western Michigan, and that though I had been a high school teacher for six years, I was now a student interested in learning about their experiences at school.

Martinez then distributed a sheet with dozens of small sketches of people involved in various activities, such as running, sewing, playing soccer, and riding a bicycle. Working in pairs, the students were to write as many verbs as they could that explained the drawings, which, as Martinez explained, the class would then use in a collaborative story. She repeated the instructions in Span-

ish. Vinita and Alex formed one pair; Julie moved her seat next to Elizabeth's. Martinez rested her hand on Miguel's shoulder.

"*Mi'jo, I want you to work with Rosa,*" she said.

As the students settled into their task, I moved to a seat near Miguel and Rosa. Miguel spoke first.

"*What do you think this one is?*" he asked.

Rosa crossed her legs and shrugged. "*She's cooking?*"

"*I think so,*" he said, and wrote "cook" beneath the drawing. Rosa leaned over to check the spelling and wrote the word on her paper.

As the students worked, I noticed the difference in the general condition of the two classrooms I had seen so far that day. Whereas Morton's room was decorated with colorful posters and maps, many of them drawn by students, the ESL room seemed cavernous and abandoned. The desks were in five rows, each with seven desks that faced a chalkboard extending nearly the entire length of the front wall. Centered at the front of the room was a large desk, which seemed to belong to no one; at least no one seemed to be responsible for its appearance, for the top was strewn with piles (not stacks) of accounting books, file folders, loose papers, and bits of chalk. Like the rest of the room's furniture, this desk was not just cluttered; it was dirty (a distinction my mother used to make): the finger I ran along the desk top came up dusty. A small table in the right front of the room held cardboard boxes containing papers dated five months before, coverless dictionaries, and several Styrofoam cups. Shadeless windows glared on the left wall, and on the cinder blocks between these windows several long marks scarred the paint. Trash littered the insides of the desks: a used facial tissue, broken pencils, and Kit Kat and Snickers wrappers.

Because Martinez was in the high school only one period per day, this space was not one she was at liberty to decorate and supply as she would have liked. Rather, this was a room designated for business classes. An adding machine and several copies of a textbook entitled *An Introduction to Accounting* rested on the big desk. On the front chalkboard were scribbled what to me were opaque phrases like "Name of annual dividend" and "Factors of supply and demand," as well as several math problems calculating the effects of such factors. On the floor between the

fourth and fifth rows of desks was a strip of electrical outlets used to supply power to the adding machines for an accounting class, and a faded poster advertising scholarships to various business programs hung on the bulletin board to the right of the door that led to the hallway. Taped to the wall in the back right corner of the room, beneath an American flag, was a brochure for Davenport College (a business school in Grand Rapids). The air smelled musty, like a grandparent's attic but without the pleasant memories.

Other than the teachers and students themselves, the only evidence that this was an ESL classroom was the list of vocabulary words Martinez solicited from the students and wrote on the chalkboard bolted to the right wall. At the top of this list she had scrawled the word "SAVE!"

The ESL classroom's back wall was made of glass from about three feet above the floor to the ceiling and extending the wall's entire length. On the other side of this large window was a narrow room used to store outdated and unused office equipment. Beyond this storage space, through yet another wall of glass, was a computer lab fully equipped with twenty IBM PC's, the screens glowing a vibrant blue in contrast to the ESL class's gray floors and pale yellow walls. From behind the two glass partitions, Martinez and her students could watch the computers as they might have window-shopped at Saks.

In this setting, Martinez and Soto circulated among their students, offering advice, answering questions in both English and Spanish. The teachers seemed to know just what their students could understand in English and challenged individuals according to their abilities. However, what struck me most about Martinez's and Soto's teaching was their demanding yet gentle demeanor. While insisting that students remain focused on their work and that they speak English whenever possible during classroom exercises, these teachers also were quick with their praise, encouragement, and demonstration of their affection for their students. This was, it appeared to me, an affinity born from empathy, and even though this was only my first day in the ESL classroom, Martinez shared with me a candid example of what she seemed to view as the struggle she and her students faced together.

She told me that a couple of days before, the computer class had been supervised for a day by a substitute teacher who had a reputation for being unable to control her students. The regular computer teacher, Mr. Dautermann, fearing that his students would somehow damage the PC's in the lab while he was gone, gave instructions that the substitute conduct class in the ESL room. Rather than having the ESL students simply move into the lab for the day, Dautermann insisted that they not be allowed near his expensive and fragile machines. Thus displaced, the ESL class was forced to meet in the narrow and dusty storage area between the two classrooms. Mimicking what she perceived to be Dautermann's attitude, Martinez said that her "little brown-skinned kids" decided to relocate to the cafeteria, which even as early as second period is expansive and noisy, with people setting up tables and shining the food counters. Martinez recalled that the ESL students were upset with what they saw as a flagrantly racist incident. "You have rights. You're just as much a teacher as they are," Martinez said they had told her. She added that in theory, of course, her students were right, but that in reality there was little that she, a first-year teacher of Latinos, could say to resist a White computer teacher with thirty years of seniority. Martinez had grown angry as she told the story: "No offense, Todd, but the Anglo students walk in here and get whatever they need, but not my kids."

After I heard Martinez's story, the appearance of the "ESL" room seemed to take on meaning that it hadn't carried before. The more I looked around the room, the more I sensed that this space conveyed what I believed to be the clear and consistent message that those students huddled over their worksheets really didn't matter, that they were second-class citizens who did not have the right to participate fully in the opportunities available in this school community of alleged equal opportunity. For although other students passed through the room each day as they attended one of their many classes, that fact that this had been designated as the ESL room suggested to me that of all places in the school, this should have been the one sanctuary where the ESL students felt that their lives and what they had to say were genuinely important. Sadly, despite the efforts of Martinez and Soto, what they were likely to "hear" from this site was quite the

contrary. No posters celebrated the students' heritages and homelands, no shelves contained books in their native languages, and no bulletin boards held work which told the stories of the students' lives in the United States and around the world. To the contrary, it seemed that the ESL students were intruders in a place designed for others—that though they were there, they didn't truly belong. This room was the educational equivalent of a vacant lot, a ghetto neglected by the community's more affluent and influential members, the "margin" we read about in our professional literature.

Third Period: Math

Ms. Dolgan taught Transitional Math, the department's most basic course, from a bunker formed by her desk and a large lab table at the front of the room. That day, behind this barricade, coming no closer than about eight feet from even the first row of students, she was discussing the concept of prime numbers. Dolgan explained that any prime number "X" only has two factors: "X" and 1.

"What's the letter for?" Rosa whispered.

"It can mean any number," I said.

Rosa looked at me from beneath crinkled eyebrows. To illustrate what are not prime numbers, Dolgan asked the class what factors could be divided into 24. Receiving no response, she answered her own question.

"Well, 1 of course. What about 2?"

A boy spoke up, *"Yeah, that would work."*

Dolgan continued. *"How about three?"*

"Yup," another student called out. As the class generated the list of factors, *"4, 6, 8—no, not 8, no, wait, yeah—12,"* Rosa waited to copy the numbers in her notes until Dolgan had written them on the board. This hesitation concerned me, making me suspect that she did not understand what I learned from the boy behind me was review for her classmates.

"Rosa, do you understand what Ms. Dolgan's doing?" I asked in English. *"Do you know what a 'factor' is?"* Rosa gave me a puzzled look. I repeated my questions in Spanish.

"I think so," she said. Unconvinced, I wrote "8" in my notebook.

“*Can you tell me what are the factors of 8?*” Rosa did not say anything. “*What numbers can be divided into 8?*” Rosa looked at the number on the page for several seconds.

“*I don’t know,*” she said. We took it a number at a time. I was encouraged when she said that 1 and 2 would both work, but when she also guessed 3, I suspected this would take some time. Dolgan announced that there would be a quiz on factoring and identifying prime numbers in two days.

Fourth Period: Science

A substitute was in charge of the class that day, so a student walked on the counter and reached up to open a window. Even after the bell rang, several students strolled around the room, talking to friends. A boy grabbed the cap from the head of a friend, who threw a pencil at the thief, hitting me in the shoulder. “*Sorry, sir!*” the boy said. “*I was aiming at that kid in the blue shirt.*”

The teacher, who looked a bit haggard even though it was still only about 10:45 A.M., announced the assignment: Working individually, students were to read two sections in the textbook on electrical circuits and answer the questions on a worksheet, which was to be collected at the end of the hour. We had about forty minutes. Rosa and I turned to the appropriate pages—nine in all. I pointed to the first paragraph and asked Rosa to read. She stared at the page for a moment, then shook her head.

“*I don’t understand.*” Seeing little chance of reading the entire assignment and completing the worksheet in the allotted time, I scanned the pages and suggested to Rosa that we begin the worksheet, with me trying to explain things as best I could as we went along.

“*That would be good,*” she said. “*I failed this class last semester. The homework is very hard.*”

Until that point in the day, I had been fairly pleased with my ability to communicate with Rosa. My lack of Spanish fluency had been a concern for me, for though I had recently attended some university review sessions designed for graduate students who needed to pass their language exams, my last Spanish class

had been in undergraduate school, twelve years before. Nonetheless, I had practiced, and the first three periods of the day had been manageable. Summarizing and translating the language of even a basic science text, however, was an entirely different project. I struggled to convey concepts of circuitry, current, and resistance, finally relying heavily on metaphors and sketches. Rosa copied the diagrams I drew, asked pertinent questions, and was able to explain to me in her own words the answers she wrote on the worksheet. We nearly finished the assignment, but the bell rang with two questions to go. Rosa said, “*That’s good,*” walked to the front of the room, and handed the worksheet to the teacher.

Fifth Period: English

Mr. Robbins’s lesson was on expository paragraphs. There are three types, he said: those that define, those that explain a process, and those that give reasons. Examples of each could be found in the textbook. As I had already seen a couple of other times that day, the class was chaotic—students talking loudly while Robbins tried to discuss the notion of a topic sentence. A boy sitting across the aisle told me that “this is a bad class.” With the students occupied by their own conversations, Robbins asked and answered his own questions. The assignment, due the next day, was to write three expository paragraphs, one of each type. Students were to fold a sheet of paper in half, do their “prewriting” on the top half, and their “writing” on the bottom half. Three pages, three unrelated paragraphs.

Rosa asked that we begin with a paragraph of definition, so I asked her to suggest a topic.

“*I don’t have any ideas,*” she said. I remembered that she had spoken to me of her uncle, so I encouraged her to define what a “good uncle” is. I asked her questions about what he does.

“*He helps around the house,*” she said.

“*How? What exactly does he do?*”

“*Helps with homework, translating. He plays with my brothers.*”

“*What games do they play?*”

“*Basketball and soccer.*”

“*How else does he help?*”

“He washes dishes and cooks.”

“What are your favorite foods that he cooks?”

“Rice, beans.”

In English, I wrote in sentence form the details Rosa had provided; I asked her to read them to me, and then she copied what I had written onto her paper. While most of the students finished the assignment during class, Rosa and I completed just one paragraph.

LUNCH

Although the Addison High teachers’ lounge is located adjacent to the cafeteria, a piece of paper taped over the small window on the door keeps students from seeing what’s going on inside. When I entered the room with my backpack over my shoulder and my tape recorder in hand, a few eyes regarded me with suspicion but quickly returned to the brown bags and Tupperware containers scattered across the linoleum tables. Most of the teachers were seated at a long table that ran nearly the length of the room, while a group of men gathered at a round table, discussing the professional football playoffs. Harry Morton waved me over to the group of football fans and introduced me to the others.

“This is Todd. He’s going to be around helping one of our Hispanic kids.”

“That’s great,” a man said. “Who you working with?”

I told him. “Oh, Rosa,” he said. “I had her in my class last semester. She misses a lot of school.”

“Yeah, I heard,” I said. The man continued. “You know, I didn’t hear her speak until the very end of the term. One day I was handing back assignments, and she said ‘Thank you.’ Before then, I didn’t even know what her voice sounded like.”

“She doesn’t talk in my class either,” Morton added. “I wish I could help her, but I don’t speak Spanish—well, I can say ‘taco’ and ‘enchilada,’ but that’s about it.”

I ate my sandwich, pretzels, and apple and drank my coffee, listening to a conversation that wandered from sports to the weather to the teacher union’s labor negotiations with the school board. By the time the bell rang, the coffee had left a stale taste in

my mouth, so I slipped in a piece of gum as I made my way out into the hallway.

Sixth Period: Study Hall

I had arranged to meet Rosa in the library, and as I navigated through the security turnstile, I spotted her waiting at a table near the back. I paused to introduce myself and state my business to the librarian, a short, thin woman with glasses, who welcomed me and then asked, “So you’re another tutor?”

“I guess so,” I said.

“I’ve seen Rosa in here last year with other tutors—students, I think, from Addison College. Well, good luck.”

As I pulled up a chair beside Rosa, she asked, “*Do you have gum?*”

“*Yes. Do you want some?*”

“No,” she said, “*You’re not allowed to chew gum here.*” I threw the gum in a nearby trash can and asked Rosa what she’d like to work on. *Geography*. She already had out on the table the textbook and the worksheets Morton had passed out during first period.

“*Okay, let’s try to read some of this,*” I suggested. “*Do you think you can understand these sentences?*”

Rosa shrugged. “*I don’t know.*”

“*Well, let’s try.*” In English, Rosa read the first of several paragraphs about different geographical regions of Brazil. “*Can you tell me, in general, what that paragraph said?*”

“*No, I don’t understand it.*” I sat for a moment, wondering what to do next. I thought of beginning a list of vocabulary words from the text that she could study on her own. I thought of trying to find a geography book printed in Spanish. I looked at the clock and thought of Morton’s admonition to keep up with the homework.

“*Okay, this first paragraph says that there are many different regions of Brazil. . . .*” We skimmed through the assigned reading, with me translating the general information, pausing to point out the specifics that Rosa needed to copy onto various boxes and blanks on the worksheet. By the end of the period, we

had finished two sections of the worksheet—about half the assignment.

Seventh Period: Introduction to Computers

When I arrived, the second-floor computer lab was already filled with students seated in front of the twenty-six Macintosh “Classics” that had been brand-new the previous September. Students glanced from workbooks to screens, inputting information and printing documents, and then scurried to a sheet of paper taped to a wall that listed the sequence of upcoming assignments. Rosa had taken, and failed, this course last semester. While she retrieved a file from the hard drive, the teacher, Mr. Pearson, showed me a printout of the assignments students had completed over the course of the previous term. Beside the list of names, small numbers indicated the assignments completed and the points awarded for each. The totals were impressive: Just about all the students had completed all their work, with Rosa being the exception. Beside her name were three numbers—points, Pearson explained, for having completed introductory lessons on basic skills like “clicking” and “dragging.” The rest of Rosa’s numbers, about twenty in all, were zeros.

“After the first couple of weeks,” Pearson said, “she didn’t finish any of the assignments. Even if she had,” he continued, pointing to the column marked “attendance,” “she would have lost credit for being over the ten-absence limit.” According to Mr. Pearson’s chart, Rosa had missed thirty-six of the school year’s first ninety days.

I found a chair and set it next to Rosa, who, in spite of not having mastered the skills taught the semester before, was trying to get through the most recent assignment: a spreadsheet that required students to arrange sales and purchase information for a fictitious auto parts company. With each click of the mouse, the computer “beeped,” indicating an error. Pearson was occupied with another student, so I tapped the kid next to me.

“Excuse me, do you know how to do this?” The boy leaned over and looked at Rosa’s screen.

“Oh, yeah. I did that a couple of days ago. Here.” He clicked and scrolled with impressive speed. “There. Now it’s all set up.

All you gotta do is type in those numbers. Don't forget to hit 'Return' after each one." After I relayed the information to Rosa, she began slowly transferring the data, leaving me with time to review the workbook. There, printed clearly in plain English, were the instructions Rosa needed to complete the assignment on her own.

Eighth Period: Child Development

Beth Reinstra stood in the hallway outside her classroom, greeting passersby and everyone who walked into her room. Several students paused to chat, one boy giving Reinstra a "high five" as he walked through the door. I waited until she finished asking a student about his performance in a basketball game the previous night and shook her hand.

"Oh, yes, Ms. Alvarez sent me a note about you. Glad to meet you. I'm really glad you're here. I don't speak a word of Spanish, and Rosa seems very shy."

Reinstra began the class with a review of the students' names and by asking each of them to repeat the individual goals they had set for themselves at the beginning of the semester. The first wanted to graduate from high school; another, noticeably pregnant, wanted to have a healthy baby; a third, his head resting on the table in front of him, wanted to sleep. Reinstra introduced me to the class, explaining that I was going to help Rosa, who, confronted by the extra attention, slouched a little bit lower in her seat as she had in geography.

"Rosa," Reinstra asked. "Where are you from?" I translated, and Rosa spoke quietly:

"Puerto Rico."

A loud voice echoed from across the room: "I'm from Puerto Rico, too!"

Her name was Daniela. Reinstra asked Daniela if she could speak Spanish. "I spoke Spanish before I knew how to speak English; that's all we speak at home." Reinstra seemed relieved.

"Well, when Todd's not here, maybe you can fill in and help Rosa."

"No problem," Daniela said. Rosa shielded her eyes with her left hand and drew circles on her notebook.

Reinstra walked over and stood next to Rosa. “Rosa, the other day I don’t think we heard what your goal is.” Rosa looked at me.

“*Your goal,*” I said.

“*I don’t know—to pass this class.*”

“She wants to pass your class,” I said to the teacher. Reinstra nodded.

“That sounds like a pretty good goal to me,” she said.

Reinstra’s assignment for the day was to cut out magazine pictures that illustrate characteristics the class members wished to foster in their own children. Rosa wrinkled her nose.

“*I don’t want to,*” she said. For the second time that day, I didn’t know what to do, for, in this case, Rosa’s resistance was not merely a matter of her not understanding English. Speculating that Rosa had finally had enough of being shadowed by a conspicuous stranger, and not wanting to let the opportunity with Daniela slip away, I called her over and asked her to explain the assignment and discuss it with Rosa. Daniela carried her books to our table, sat next to Rosa, and asked her what part of Puerto Rico she was from. Rosa told her but then looked away. Daniela, however, persisted, explaining to Rosa how her family moved to the States when she was very young and how every couple of years they return to the island to visit relatives.

“*Do you think you’ll ever go back?*” Daniela asked. Rosa said that she hoped so, that she missed her friends and grandparents very much, but that such a trip was difficult because of the expensive airfares. The conversation was one-sided, as Daniela spoke volumes in effortless Spanish while Rosa continued to keep her eyes fixed on the cover of her notebook, usually replying in single words and never asking Daniela any questions.

Eventually, Rosa relented to Daniela’s energy and began flipping through the magazines looking for pictures. Even as she worked, though, she told me she didn’t like this class, that she’d rather be in “*computers.*” I wondered what made the computer lab, a class in which she didn’t complete an assignment all last semester, more attractive than this.

“*I don’t know; I just don’t like this teacher.*” Was it that there she could isolate herself with the screen and not interact with people, whereas here she had little or no excuse not to con-

verse with others? Isolation, I supposed, was easier with computers. Here Rosa had a teacher who seemed to be willing to make an extra effort to include her in the activities of the class and a peer who could be her liaison with the rest of the students—just what she needed, I thought. That Rosa had clipped only two pictures by the end of the period and had stopped talking to Daniela didn't make sense to me at the time.

As I drove home to Ann Arbor at the end of the school day, I worried about Rosa and all that she would be expected to do before I returned the following week. I thought of the geography book she couldn't read and the packet of worksheets that would most likely remain incomplete. I thought of her struggles to do even the basic division Ms. Dolgan assumed she knew. Would Rosa be able to keep up in her science class? Would she get the help she mentioned her uncle sometimes found time to give her when he came home from work? Or would I arrive next week to find her still puzzling over electrical circuits while her classmates had moved to the next chapter? Would Mr. Robbins give Rosa credit for the one paragraph she had completed in English class? Even if he did, what about the next time he asked her to write in a foreign language? And then there was the computer class. Never mind that Rosa had not learned the skills that had been introduced during first semester; she would have, Mr. Pearson had said, a "fresh start" this term. But she was already behind, and likely to be more so by the time I returned to ask the boy next to us for help. Child Development had been modestly encouraging, but given Rosa's dislike for this class, I wondered whether even Reinstra's attentiveness and Daniela's charisma would be enough to offset the disheartening effects of the rest of Rosa's school day.

Although it occurred to me that it would take a while to assess just how much English Rosa did or did not know, it was clear that one of the principal causes of Rosa's difficulties in school was that she often had little idea what was going on. We had made enough progress for me to suspect that most of what Rosa had been asked to do was not beyond her ken, that she was not "slow" in the sense that a learning disability kept her from understanding features of the Brazilian economy or how to record the monthly expenditures of an auto parts store. Nonetheless, in every class I had attended that day, the teachers' instructions and

the assigned readings had been met with the same response: “*I don’t understand.*”

The fog had burned off beneath the afternoon sun, but even though I now had no trouble seeing the road and the fields, many things about Rosa’s situation at school remained unclear to me—things that led me to say, with Rosa, “I don’t understand.” I had little doubt that Rosa’s inability to speak English presented some challenges for her teachers. But it seemed to me that this challenge could be met in one of two ways: Either Rosa’s teachers could despair about the fact that it was difficult for them to communicate with her and leave it entirely up to Rosa to overcome her lack of English fluency and whatever other “deficiencies” she was presumed to have, or these educators could accept Rosa as one of the students they were called upon to teach and then work toward meeting her needs by drawing upon the knowledge, abilities, and experiences she brought to their classes and by seeking to make her learning relevant to her life outside of school (Poplin & Weeres, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 1991). This second option, though in some ways inconvenient, was not impossible. Research has shown the positive effects on language-minority (LM) students’ performance of instruction that incorporates attention to linguistic and cultural differences, as well as the differences that accompany social class (Abi-Nader, 1993; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Moll & Diaz, 1987). Such attention might take the form of ensuring that LM students are exposed to a rich and demanding curriculum in a language they understand, that they are challenged by high expectations, and that their parents are welcomed and encouraged to participate in the life of the school (Lucas et al.; Moll, 1992). More specifically, in, for instance, an English class, teaching methods that signal an appreciation for students’ languages and cultures might include having students record oral histories of family members, conduct peer interviews, and write for interactive journals (Nieto, 1994).

Given the fact that such options existed for creating a better learning environment for Rosa than what she currently experienced, I wondered about several things I had observed that day: Why was there no one in the school to help Rosa learn her content-area subjects in her native language as she grew more comfortable with English? Why had none of the teachers offered Rosa

corresponding texts in Spanish? Why had no one explored alternative ways of assessing Rosa's progress? Why had no one other than Reinstra arranged for her to receive help from some of Addison's dozens of bilingual students? I remembered the hand that shielded Rosa's eyes, and I decided that if I were in her shoes, uprooted from my home, taken away from my friends and extended family, I, like she was, would be "shy." In fact, I began to wonder not so much why Rosa missed so many classes, but why she came to school at all.

The City of Addison: A Tour and Brief History

It is difficult to say what led to the mutual interest that evolved between Roger and me. For weeks we sat across the aisle from each other in the back of first-period geography, where, when I wasn't helping Rosa, he told me several times that he couldn't understand my interest in a class that bored him senseless. While I watched, listened, and scribbled in my notebook, Roger would often turn up the collar of his camouflaged jacket, pull the bill of his Dallas Mavericks baseball cap down over his eyes, and, arms folded, slouch into a nap. A White student with pale skin, curly dark hair, and sharp, uneven teeth, he was, as the social studies teacher and wrestling coach Harry Morton described him, a "problem" in class. I had seen him kicked out of the room twice, once for repeatedly talking out of turn, once for telling the teacher to go to hell. By and by, though, Roger and I began to talk, and during these conversations I learned that he worked nearly every day after school on a dairy farm, that the scar on his cheek was the result of his having driven a snowmobile into a barbed wire fence, and that he and his family were, in his words, "country—we like to listen to Garth Brooks, Randy Travis, stuff like that." Sometimes, my questions for Roger focused on school: who his favorite teacher was and why, which classes he found most difficult, the names of the student cliques that gathered in the hallways and cafeteria. At other times, I asked him about the community in which Addison High is situated.

Having been in Addison now for several weeks, I had gained a general familiarity with the city and the surrounding Huron

County—fragments, mostly, from conversations with teachers and students, written histories of the area, and errands I had run around town during lunch period. Addison, located about sixty miles from Detroit and with a population of about 20,000, is supported by an economic base of agriculture and small industry that had attracted migrant workers, primarily from Texas and Mexico. These people now formed the base of Addison’s Latino population, which, at about 16 percent, is the second largest per capita in Michigan. One day as I quizzed Roger on details of the geography and demography of Addison, he seemed to tire of my questions.

“Look,” he said. “If you want to know about the town, why don’t I just show you around after school. I ain’t working today, so I got time.”

I had convinced two brothers, Esteban and Juan, Latinos recently arrived from South Texas, to accompany Roger and me on the tour. The four of us met in the school lobby a few minutes after the final bell and headed out to my car.

“Hey, Todd,” Esteban said. “You got a low rider? That’s what I want—a ’62 Impala, just to cruise around in.” Roger called “shotgun,” and I apologized to the brothers for not having a car with a bigger back seat. Before we left the parking lot, all three were smoking Marlboros.

“Todd, you want one?” Esteban held a cigarette in front my face. I hesitated, remembering my plans to go jogging as soon as I returned to Ann Arbor. “No thanks,” I said. I put a cassette by the Mexican pop group Maná into my dashboard tape player and, handing my notebook to Roger, explained that he was in charge of recording what we saw while I drove.

“What. I don’t know what the fuck to put in here.”

“Just write down what I tell you,” I said. “Words, phrases. I’ll remember the rest when I get home tonight.” I slid a fresh tape into my minicassette player, pushed “record,” and wedged it between the front seats. As we pulled away from the school, Juan and Esteban sang along with the music: “*Like a bird would like to be able to fly without wings, like a fish would like to be able to swim without water, I’d like to be able to live without you. But I can’t; I feel as though I’m dying; I’m drowning without your love.*” The music was slow and sad, and the boys sang

better than I expected—in tune and not straining too much on the high notes.

“This music reminds me of the clubs we used to go to in Texas,” Esteban said between drags of his cigarette. “We would go there and they’d play this music. There were lots of really sweet girls there.” I had first met Esteban in January, when he showed up in the geography class a few weeks into the term. At age seventeen, he was two years older than his brother, with callused hands and powerful build. He had quickly earned a reputation among the students as an accomplished artist. One day as the class worked on a group project, I strolled over to talk to him and found him putting the finishing touches on a striking drawing of a woman he identified as his girlfriend, Nancy. Esteban confessed that he missed her very much, and that if he had the \$160 for a bus ticket, he’d have made plans to return to Texas to be with her during spring break. Juan, a bit heavier than Esteban, his face appearing slightly swollen, had impressed me as a hard-working student from the times we had worked on math homework together during his study hall. He had asked many questions during these tutoring sessions, especially about adding and subtracting negative numbers, and had carefully recorded each step of the calculations, refusing merely to write the answers that were listed in the back of the textbook.

I asked Roger to make a note of the small but neatly kept houses that extend along the streets in the neighborhood immediately to the east of the high school. The driveways were cleared of snow, with the clean, even edges made by gasoline-powered snow blowers.

“Why did you move here to Addison?”

“Hey, Todd,” Esteban said, “you better speak English or Roger won’t understand what the hell you’re saying. Well, we were working in Virginia, but we came here to work in the fields.” Esteban continued, explaining that they had worked from August through October harvesting tomatoes and pumpkins. “We worked the tomatoes for about a month, but only about two to five hours a day. When we were picking pumpkins, though, we worked about ten hours a day. It was pretty good money; we were making five dollars an hour.” While their families had resolved to remain in Addison for a year because they didn’t have

the money to return to Texas, they planned to go south in November of that year and to return again in April to help with the spring planting.

My guides were chain smoking and giving me directions as we made our way through the streets of Addison. After a few minutes we crossed M-62, a state highway that widens from two to four lanes and is called “Main Street” as it bisects the town—Addison’s version of the “tracks” some folks live on the wrong side of. Mike, an Addison High graduate and a student in one of my courses at the university, had explained in an interview how the town is divided racially and economically by this very tangible line:

MIKE: Well, it’s like Main Street [M-62] goes through town, if you’re going south, to the right of it, that would be the West Side, that would be the wealthier side of town. The East Side is the more poor sections of town.

TODD: Can you describe a bit more about how the West Side is different from the East Side?

MIKE: Bigger houses, my mom’s boss one time was a dentist, and he lived on the West Side, on Stephen Street, which, if you had money, I mean lots of money in Addison, you were on Stephen Street or these little boulevards out through there, and these houses are just very luxurious. I mean, with the pillars in the front and the upkeep is very nice, nice big lawns. And then on the East Side, I mean, the houses are right next to each other, the lawns are small, you know, not kept up as much. There’s more factories and businesses out towards the East Side; on the West Side as you go out there’s more farms. So, the one side’s more “inner city” whereas the other side is like a city but then it spreads out. It’s more relaxed.

Mike’s description confirmed what I had heard from some of the Addison students, who had described the East Side as “trashy,” “run down,” with “houses about to fall over,” and populated by “welfare people.” Charlie, who sat near Roger and me in geography class, had described this area even more dramatically. A thin White boy with black hair combed in a tall pompadour, long sideburns, and an obsessive fascination with Elvis Presley,

Charlie had leaned toward me, his elbows resting on the table between us.

“Watch out for the East Side,” he had said. “It can be a terrible place.” Then Charlie’s eyes had grown wider, and he had lowered his voice, almost to a whisper. “In 1956, the year that Elvis hit it big at the Suncoast Record Studio in Tupelo, Mississippi, a guy was murdered under the Center Street Bridge. Stabbed fifteen times. He was going to play football at Michigan, but he never made it.”

But if the East Side of Addison is characterized by its dilapidated housing, equally remarkable is the impressive presence of industry. Roger pointed out a large dairy processing plant consisting of red brick buildings and tall blue holding tanks.

“Make a note,” I said. “‘Dairy plant.’ How tall do you think those tanks are?”

Roger looked up from the page. “I’d say about forty feet.” He recorded the figure in my notebook.

“Take a left,” Juan said. “That’s a Mexican party store there on the corner. Lots of Mexicans buy their booze there.”

Appearing on the right was a Ford plant that extends for three blocks, which Roger explained makes parts like bumpers for pickup trucks. The plant is Addison’s second largest factory, employing over 1,000 people in 1989 at an annual payroll of nearly \$42 million. I turned right as directed, and a state correctional facility came into view. Two prisoners were sweeping the driveway. I turned to Roger.

“Make a note of those prisoners.”

“Got it,” he said. I’d never seen him write a word in class, but by the time we passed a factory that makes convertible automobile tops, Roger had begun to fill the pages of my notebook without prompts from me.

“Okay, now check this out,” Roger pointed. “They make cupboards for your kitchen in there.” The DeHaan Industries Addison plant, one of eleven nationwide, sprawled to our left, enclosing more than 400,000 square feet. Founded by a World War II veteran in 1946, the corporation has earned a local reputation for philanthropy, as its owners have contributed generously to the construction of churches and Christian schools and

colleges. According to the curator of the Huron County Historical Society, DeHaan Industries' vice president of finance and treasurer "believes that the same principles of hard work, honesty, and Christian concern the DeHaans have applied in their personal lives have been central to the success of DeHaan Industries."⁴

Immediately beyond the plant, Roger ordered, "Turn here." We made a left into the Royal Mobile Home Court, a series of small side streets lined by rusting trailers. I had heard of this place; it had been described by a few Addison High students as the site of "a lot of drugs," and "where the Mexicans hang out." The edges of the street were dotted with old pickup trucks. A Ford Pinto was up on blocks, its front wheels removed and lying on the asphalt.

"This is a pretty nasty place, lots of drug deals and a shooting every once in while," Roger explained, making a note about a screen door torn from its hinges. "My girlfriend used to live in that trailer right there. One time her dad came over—he lived in the one there—and started giving me shit, like I'm no good and shit like that. I finally got sick of it and went up to him like I was going to kick his ass. They had to pull us apart and stuff. Another time there was these three big Mexican girls who were hassling a friend of mine. I went over there and one of their boyfriends was there. I chased him down this street—yeah, this one right here—with a metal pipe, but then when I got into my truck to take off, they started grabbing at me. I had to, like, kick at them to get away. It was crazy."

We left the trailer park, turned right onto Ontario Street, and drove through a neighborhood of small houses huddled close together, their siding in need of paint, their porches sagging. Most of the cars were badly corroded; the luckier ones had primer spots on the fenders. Mike had told me about Ontario Street: "It's the street you don't want to go down if you don't know nobody. When I first moved there, I heard the stories about Ontario Street, like, that's not the area you want to go to. It's just known for its drugs. I mean, people have seen a lot of crack deals and stuff like that. A lot of gangs. From what I've heard it's spreading out more around that area. Always lots of fights."

The Strangers

A small African American girl wearing a pink coat, the white fur around the hood framing her face, rode a tricycle on the sidewalk. She paused to watch us go by.

“Where do you guys live?” I asked Juan and Esteban, glancing in my rearview mirror. Juan glanced to his right and answered quietly.

“Over that way a few blocks.” Esteban flipped the tape in my recorder.

We made a left onto Maple Street, heading west back toward the M-62 dividing line. As we crossed the highway, we passed between the two courthouses which seemed to form a gateway that reminded me of the INS checkpoint separating the destitution of Tijuana and the affluence of San Diego. On the left of this passageway stood Addison’s old courthouse. A striking architectural landmark, this Romanesque-style Victorian structure, built between 1884 and 1886, boasts classical columns, terra-cotta reliefs, and a frieze of colored tiles. On the right, the new building, sacrificing elegance for utility, is an efficient glass and steel box. The homes just beyond the courthouses are small and well-kept and grow larger with each block. By the time Roger instructed me to turn right, the houses were massive, reclining about fifty yards from the street, their bulk made graceful by slender white colonnades and foreign luxury cars parked in circular driveways. Roger made a note: “Country club down that road. It’s kind of rich there.”

It was time to head back. We made our way back across town and pulled onto Esteban and Juan’s street, a narrow one-way alley on the East Side. I got out of the car and thanked the boys for their time.

“That’s okay,” Esteban said. “This time of year we don’t do anything after school anyway. Just watch T.V.”

On the way to Roger’s house, I asked him about his family.

“My mom and dad usually go there on weekends,” he said as we passed a country-western dance club. He wrote the name of the bar in my notebook. “I usually hang out with my girlfriend. She dropped out of school to take care of our daughter.”

“Oh, yeah? What’s your daughter’s name?”

“Melissa. When my girlfriend’s mom comes home from work

at about one, she goes to her job. She was working at McDonald's, but she hated that. Her boss was an asshole. Now she's a cashier at the mini-mart just before you get to River Road."

"I have a daughter, too," I said. "She's ten. I can hardly believe it. She lives with my ex-wife in Cleveland, but I go pick her up and bring her to Ann Arbor every other weekend. Long drive."

Roger smiled. His gums were dark red. "Yup, they're a lot of work. The farm that I work at is out that way." He pointed to our left. "I told my boss that I'd like to get to be a veterinarian. He said if I did I could take care of his cows."

As we pulled into Roger's driveway, I bottomed out the car in a pot hole. I thanked Roger for his help.

"Aw, I'm glad to do it. My girlfriend will be happy that I made it home coherent. Usually when I go out after school, I come back pretty fucked up. I'm a party animal, man. I can party with the best of 'em. I'll see you next week at school."

"So long," I said. I backed out of the driveway, tuned my radio to NPR, and headed north for home.

My tour guides represent a new generation of workers in Addison and the surrounding Huron County. Since the first White settlers began to arrive in the 1820s, the history of the area has been marked by spurts of growth followed by periods of consolidation—with the constant productive influence of agriculture made possible by the flat and fertile land the area's early Irish and German settlers cleared and drained. Growth was encouraged by the construction of a railroad connecting Addison and Toledo, Ohio, in 1836. This was the first railroad in America west of Schenectady, New York, eventually establishing Addison as an important link between Chicago and the East. But in recent years, the types of agricultural jobs Roger dreams of are dwindling. While farming in Huron County remains a significant economic force, this segment of the economy fell from 4.6 percent of the county's earnings in 1971 to 2.7 percent in 1981 (Community Problem-Solving Committee Report, 1992, p. 6).

A more powerful sector of the Huron County economy is manufacturing, which first grew sharply in the latter portion of the nineteenth century, when the area became the nation's leading producer of wire fencing, using the railroads to ship its products. In the twentieth century, while the area never became a

producer of cars like Dearborn or Flint, it was and continues to be home to a number of companies manufacturing parts for automobiles. The area's industrial capacity again grew significantly in the 1930s, when Huron County became a center for the manufacture of refrigeration and air-conditioning equipment and components. Today, the refrigeration company in a neighboring town remains the largest employer in the county, with over 2,000 workers on the payroll. This industrial growth has been prosperous for a segment of Addison's population. The city has a thriving and newly renovated downtown area. Turn-of-the-century Victorian homes add grace and elegance to the city's historical district, and Addison boasts a small symphony orchestra and the third oldest continuously operating opera house in the United States.

Despite this prosperity, fluctuations in industrial production in recent years have led to a sense of underlying instability in the area. Huron County unemployment was 14.5 percent in 1980, peaked in 1982 at 18.1 percent, and fell to 7.2 percent in 1989. Although area employment has increased in recent years, it has done so primarily in the service sector, where many people are underemployed or working at minimum-wage jobs. According to the most recent statistics available, the service sector accounts for a slight majority share (51 percent) of Addison's total employment. Relatively well-paying manufacturing jobs, however, declined from roughly 50 percent of all employment in 1981 to 36 percent in 1994 (Bureau of the Census, 1994). Reductions in the availability of industrial jobs have resulted from the closing or downgrading of several important local employers such as the Anderson Spring Division, which made seats for automobiles and employed over 800 workers but closed in 1982. According to Tom, an Addison High security guard, Great Lakes Chain and Cable, an important employer in the automobile industry, downsized its workforce in the 1980s from over 1,000 to about 200 before closing its Addison operations completely in 1992 and moving to less expensive labor markets in Arkansas. In the 1980s the Ottawa Furniture Company also joined the migration of companies to the South. The loss of about 2,000 jobs at these three companies—in addition to the loss of another 1,000 jobs at Addison's Ford facility—made the 1980s a very difficult time.

Tom, who uses his security employment to supplement his job in a small local factory in order to put his three daughters through college, explained: “It used to be that you could just go from one job to another. You can’t do that anymore.”

Tom’s story was corroborated by a conversation I later had in a local coffee shop called the Pit Stop. The booths and tables being full, I had found a spot at the counter, where an elderly man wearing a Cat Diesel cap and a black jacket sat to my right. Between sips from his mug of coffee, the man told me that he had moved to Addison in 1952, when “there were a lot of good jobs.” Soon, though, layoffs and union breaking become a recurring theme of his story. The man explained that companies would hire people to work for \$14 an hour and then “come out with a take it or leave it” offer of \$7 and a discontinuation of benefits. If the union refused, the company would either hire new employees or move the plant out of state. After the company he worked for moved to Indiana in 1982, he drove a truck for a canoe manufacturer until his retirement a few years ago. He spoke with a sense of pride of the “long hauls” to Maine and Missouri. Last year the canoe company went bankrupt. “Yep, there were lots of jobs here in the ’40s and ’50s,” he said as he finished his coffee and stood up to leave. “Not so many now.”

The general picture of Huron County, then, is of a working-class region extremely vulnerable to economic trends and characterized by below-average income. In the city of Addison, the 1989 median household income was \$24,788 compared to a state level of \$31,020 (21 percent lower). Moreover, in the same year, more than 25 percent of the city’s 1,925 families with children under 18 were living below the poverty line.⁵

Despite the hard times brought on by shifting economic winds, a prominent role in the development that has occurred in Addison and the surrounding area has been played by Latino laborers, who arrived in two primary waves to meet employment demands of prosperous business ventures. The first Latino workers arrived in 1919, when the Continental Sugar Company recruited workers for the area’s sugar beet fields to replace the labor force that had previously come from Eastern Europe but had been interrupted by World War I. In 1940, responding to the labor demands of wartime industrial production, the second wave of

Latino workers arrived. This was the first time Latinos were hired for such jobs, and it was these men and women who stayed in large numbers; their children and grandchildren now form the base of Addison's Latino population. This second wave of immigrants, arriving from Texas and Mexico, created housing shortages so acute that manufacturers sought to solve the problem by billeting many Latino families in barns at the county fairgrounds. As a local historian has noted, "The quarters here were crowded, poorly ventilated, and generally unattractive."⁶ An Addison Latina resident who recalls living in these quarters as a girl said that "people there lived like horses." As I had learned from my tour, the situation hadn't improved nearly as much as one would hope. Nonetheless, Latino immigrants have continued to move to Huron County, with their numbers increasing 20.6 percent between 1980 and 1990 (Bureau of the Census, 1990).

But if Latino workers have been used in the past to satisfy periodic labor demands, more recent competition for jobs in the manufacturing sector has led to tension between working-class Whites and Latino immigrants. The man with the Cat Diesel cap had told me that he worked most of his adult life in an office furniture plant, which "back in the '60s" received a lucrative government contract to supply thousands of offices with desks, chairs, and file cabinets. The situation grew complicated, however, when someone the man described as a "government civil rights worker" came to town and notified the company that it would lose the contract unless it agreed to lay off Whites with greater seniority before more recently hired Chicanos to achieve a more racially balanced work force. Rather than either forfeit the contract or comply with this requirement, the plant managers decided to cut back to a four-day work week for everyone, which meant that all employees kept their jobs, but with a 20 percent pay cut. Tom, the Addison security guard, had also implied that vying for employment contributed to racial tension in Huron County: "With all the immigrants moving to the area, there's more and more people going after the same jobs."

In Addison, where so much of the quality of life is tied directly to small industry, the struggle for sustained employment is one that Latino residents are clearly losing. In 1989, the median income for Addison Latino families was \$19,942, compared to

\$29,910 for Whites, with more than 30 percent of Latino families living below the poverty line (compared with 15.2 percent of Whites). Of Latino families with children under 18 years old, the percentage of those living below the poverty line was 37 percent. Moreover, the percentage of Latino individuals living below the poverty line was 33.8, compared with 18.1 percent of Whites. Latino households receiving some type of public assistance income constituted 27 percent of all Latino households, compared to 12 percent for Whites. Even this meager security, however, is threatened by the current political climate. General Assistance was one of the numerous cuts in welfare during Michigan Governor John Engler's first year in office as he erased a \$1.8 billion state budget deficit. Programs to pay utility bills were cut 42 percent. A general program to help poor people with emergency situations was slashed 72 percent. In all, \$315.5 million, or 13 percent of state welfare spending, was cut from the Department of Social Services budget during Engler's first year in office—a trend he has since continued.⁷

Mirrored in scores of communities throughout the country, the bleak economic situation of many of Addison's Latino residents is both commonplace and ironic. Encouraged by corporate recruiters' promises of a better life, immigrants from Texas and Mexico came to the area and were exploited for their labor as they helped build the wealth of the community, only to be shut out from the prosperity their work made possible. Since the first years of this century, Latino workers and their families have, to a large extent, remained "outsiders," sufficient to fill a position in a sugar beet field or on an assembly line, but kept from sharing in the affluence that abounds on the city's West Side.

Ideally, as members of the public that Addison High School is entrusted to serve, Latino students might find substantial hope for improving their lot through education. However, as integral parts of our communities, schools are both implicated and invested in the ideologies and life circumstances those communities establish and perpetuate. Indeed, Addison High does more than reflect the city's dominant discourses and desires; it constitutes a dimension of the structures that reproduce the values and privileges of existing elites, actively sustaining divisions among people that—in the case of Addison and so many other commu-

nities—fall in large part along racial lines. Addison as a community has relegated its Latino residents to its lowest socioeconomic level; Addison as a school district helps maintain this condition by jettisoning nearly half of its Latino students.⁸

In order to reverse this trend, Addison High would have to live up to its stated democratic mission—the one I had seen displayed on Morton’s bulletin board—and “challenge *each* student to achieve academic excellence” (emphasis added) by creating circumstances in which students like Rosa could succeed; it would have to “foster social participation” by respecting Latino students as valuable agents in the school community; it would have to “promote development of self-esteem” by being attentive to the complexity of Latino students’ particular needs and by including and celebrating their cultures in the curriculum. In short, Addison High would have to struggle against the trends of the larger community that hinder the ideals of freedom of choice and equality of opportunity. It would have to engage in an institutional effort to create conditions wherein Rosa could participate meaningfully in the activities of the school community and in the decisions that affect her life. It would have to become, in other words, what Peter McLaren (1995) has called a “counterpublic sphere,” a democratic space dedicated to understanding, critiquing, and striving to rectify the types of injustices chronicled in the city’s history and current census data (p. 33). Harriet Romo (1996) has argued that schools can work toward achieving these ambitious aims through measures such as school leadership that makes immigrant and migrant students a priority, instruction based on such students’ previous educational experience, outreach and communication in parents’ home language, and staff development to help teachers and other staff members serve language-minority students more effectively. Though I was hoping to find evidence of something resembling these measures in subsequent visits to Addison High, my further experience attending classes with Rosa and my growing sense of the many causes of her difficulties in school soon made me see that such measures had not yet been taken.

NOTES

Chapter Two

1. These statistics are misleading due to the way they are defined. In the high school's report, the dropout rate is defined as "the percentage of students who leave school in any one year, adjusting for those who move in and out of the district." The retention rate, in turn, is defined as "the percentage of ninth graders who graduate from high school within four years, adjusting for the students who move in and out of the district and to alternative programs." The problem with these data is that the retention and dropout rates, as they are calculated in the report, are measuring student retention and attrition over two different time periods. To calculate the percentage of students who leave school in any one year and then subtract that from 100 percent is not going to indicate accurately the percentage of students in a given class who graduate after four years. Rather, the retention rate—again, as it is defined in the report—should be based on a *cumulative* dropout rate; that is, the retention rate could be determined by subtracting from 100 percent the cumulative percentage of students in a class who left school between grades nine and twelve.
2. I have withheld this administrator's name in order to ensure confidentiality.
3. This 28 percent dropout rate accords with the 1990 census data for the City of Addison, which indicate that 71 percent of Addison residents aged twenty-five years and over had completed high school.
4. This quotation is taken from a history of Huron County published in 1990. I have withheld the title and author's name to preserve anonymity.
5. This number compares with 22.8 percent at the state level and 13 percent at the national level. (Source: Michigan Database Census Tract Information, 1994.)
6. This quotation is taken from the source referred to in Note 4 above. It is worth noting that this history of the area was "produced in cooperation with the Huron County Chamber of Commerce." Because this collaboration may have required that the author depict the county's development in the most positive possible light, references to the negative experiences of Latino workers and their families have been largely ignored. Also, despite the significant number of Latino residents in the area and the important role they have played in the county's development, this 216-page book mentions Latino individuals only three times—once in the actual text and twice in photograph captions.
7. Source: Addison's daily newspaper, October 24, 1994 (I am withholding the newspaper's name to protect the anonymity of people depicted in my account of Addison).
8. The 1990 Census reveals a correlation between poverty and educational attainment. In Huron County, 60 percent of the families living below the poverty line had heads of the household who had not graduated from high school.