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A Study of How Low-Income Mothers Negotiate Paid Work

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**WORKING FOR WORK IN RURAL MICHIGAN:
A STUDY OF HOW LOW-INCOME MOTHERS NEGOTIATE PAID WORK**

VOLUME I

By

E. Brooke Kelly

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

WORKING FOR WORK IN RURAL MICHIGAN: A STUDY OF HOW LOW-INCOME MOTHERS NEGOTIATE PAID WORK

By

E. Brooke Kelly

Globalization and economic restructuring have fundamentally changed the nature and distribution of paid work, decreasing the job security of low-wage workers as the social safety net created by what we have known as welfare diminishes due to reforms initiated in 1996. Much of the scholarly work on welfare reform, poverty, and the implications of a changing economy for low-wage workers has focused on urban contexts. As a result, we know little about what is necessary for low-income mothers in rural areas to get and keep a job. Though welfare reform has initiated a dialogue about promoting employment among low-income mothers and what qualifies as legitimate “work,” a better understanding of the material conditions of low-income mothers’ lives is needed. This research is designed to fill a gap in knowledge by defining and exploring the *negotiation of work, that is, the invisible and taken for granted labor necessary to attain and sustain paid employment.*

To reveal such labors, I utilize feminist critiques of objectivity and standpoint theory to focus on the efforts of two diverse samples of mothers (one Latina, many of whom migrate to perform agricultural labor, the other white, settled, primarily employed in the service sector) who lived in two different rural county contexts to attain and sustain paid work. In-depth interview data with thirty-three Latina mothers comes from a longitudinal, multi-state research project (2000-2001), which monitors rural low-income

families in the context of welfare reforms. In addition, in 2002 I conducted in-depth interviews with twelve white settled mothers in a different rural county.

Analysis of the material conditions of these low-income mothers' everyday lives reveal that both groups of mothers undertake an inordinate amount of overlooked labors so that they can work at low-wage jobs, such as maintaining social networks, dealing with inadequate transportation so that they can get to work, improving education, training, and/or English language skills, dealing with inconsistent and inflexible working conditions and/or a hostile work environment, and managing family life so that it does not interfere with the schedule of low-wage employment. Such efforts are necessary on an everyday basis to *sustain* low-wage employment and are compounded by the conditions of the work itself. The nuanced data also reveal variations in the experiences and obstacles that rural low-income mothers face based on particular rural economies and life situations structured by race/ethnicity, residential mobility (migration), education, and family structure. Such findings on the everyday efforts of rural low-income mothers to get and keep employment challenge how we think about and theorize what qualifies as "work" and its implications for social policy.

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This dissertation focuses on the often invisible and taken for granted labors that are necessary to sustain paid employment. In that spirit, I would like to make visible those whose contributions were crucial to the completion of this project. Without the generous cooperation of forty-five mothers and their families who shared their time, insights, and experiences, this project would not be possible. This dissertation began with and was inspired by the circumstances of these mothers' everyday lives and their strategies for managing their lives and "work." Though I cannot acknowledge them by name, I am indebted to and admire each of them.

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mothers, driving me to our joint interviews, and providing me with crucial insights during the interview process.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Globalization and economic restructuring have fundamentally changed the nature and distribution of paid work and the job security of workers, creating what the Merriam-Webster dictionary has officially dubbed “McJobs, a low-paying job that requires little skill and provides little opportunity for advancement” (CNN.com 2003). As the social safety net created by what we have known as welfare diminishes due to reforms initiated in 1996, these low-paying jobs typically have been filled by women and people of color (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 1998). A growing body of research has emerged to assess the implications of such a change on the conditions and availability of employment for workers and families (see Barndt 2002; Rubin 1976; Stacey 1990; and Schor 1991). The existing literatures on economic restructuring and welfare reform are, however, primarily urban-based (for exceptions see Albrecht et al. 2000; Duncan et al. 2002; and Grengeri 1994). This dissertation begins to fill a gap in this literature by focusing on rural economies and employment conditions. Such economic shifts have been accompanied by changes in social policies, such as welfare, thereby shaping the context of low-income workers’ employment.

The aim of welfare reform, to promote the employment of mothers living in poverty, initiated dialogue and research about work, what qualifies as legitimate work, and the resources needed to assist low-income mothers in acquiring jobs. This dialogue included research and policies aimed at diminishing mothers’ barriers to low-wage employment, such as transportation and child care. Research that begins with the material conditions of low-income mothers’ everyday lives confirm that such resources are vital to making paid work a viable option (see Edin and Lein 1997 and Newman

1999). Though this dialogue of research and policy addresses barriers to attaining employment, I am aware of no research that systematically examines the material conditions and context of mothers' lives to assess what they need to do on an everyday basis so that they can work at low-wage jobs.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Therefore, this dissertation begins to fill this gap by focusing on rural low-income mothers' efforts to get and keep employment, i.e., *negotiating work*. More specifically, I address the following research questions.

1. What labors are necessary for rural low-income mothers to attain and sustain paid employment?
2. What are the implications of *context* for attaining and sustaining paid work?
3. How does the experience of negotiating work differ by race/ ethnicity? Residential Mobility (i.e., settled workers vis-à-vis migrant workers)? Region? Education? Family structure and marital status?
4. How does gender structure the negotiation of paid employment among family members?
5. What are the implications of the process of negotiating work for *family* life?

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

An additional gap in knowledge results from the way knowledge about low-income mothers and their families is acquired. Rather than beginning with the material circumstances of mothers' everyday lives, research and policies are often based on assumptions about them. For example, the time restrictions placed upon recipients of assistance under welfare reform rest on the assumption that low-income mothers are lazy and do not want to "work." Feminist scholars, such as Smith (1990: 6), suggest that "facts" produced by such research and policies are often separate from and even

dissimilar to the reality from which they originate, i.e., low-income mothers' everyday lives. Therefore, to reveal the labors necessary for rural low-income mothers to get and keep employment and shed new light on dialogues about work in a restructured economy, I rely on such critiques of attaining knowledge and standpoint theory. Standpoint theorists (Smith 1990; Hartsock 1983; Harding 1991; Haraway 1988) propose that beginning with the everyday lives of women (and those who are the least privileged in our society) yields new insights into our understanding of social life. For example, by beginning with the material circumstances of women's everyday lives, feminist and family scholars have documented a collection of invisible and taken for granted labors, typically performed by women, that are necessary to sustain family life, i.e., reproductive labor.

Similarly, the idea for and insights gained through this research project emerged from the material circumstances of a group of Latina agricultural workers. I became familiar with these mothers and their lives through my involvement in a multi-state research project, *Rural Families Speak*, aimed at assessing the well-being of rural low-income families in the context of welfare reform. The group of mothers interviewed in Michigan for this project were Latino agricultural workers, many of whom migrated from another state on a semi-annual basis to perform this labor. The striking amount of work that these mothers and their families go through so that they can work for pay initiated my thinking about and conceptualization of *negotiating work*, the work necessary to sustain paid work. Thus, the conceptualization upon which this dissertation is based began with the standpoints and everyday lives of rural low-income Latina agricultural workers.

To address the invisibility of the labors involved in negotiating paid work, I draw on Erving Goffman's (1959) distinction between "backstage" and "frontstage" behaviors. Goffman differentiates between the more public "presentations of self" from the unseen behaviors that take place "backstage." In a similar manner, the "backstage labors" necessary to support paid work often go unseen or unacknowledged as distinct from paid work, despite the fact that they are not part of the job description, but are essential to sustaining paid employment.

In my conceptual framework, several components characterize the backstage labors necessary to support low-income mothers' paid employment. Necessary self-maintenance, such as haircuts, uniforms, and/or training and education encompass **self-preparation**. Mothers must also manage transportation so that they can be available for paid work. **Interaction work** includes necessary interactions with others through networking to attain work, as well as the emotional labor (Hochschild 1983) necessary to deal with the conditions of low-wage employment. As mothers, women also need to manage **reproductive labor**, the work necessary to sustain family life, so that it does not interfere with their employment. Such work involves the **coordination**, or management of all of these labors or components, including paid work, within the context of everyday life. All of these labors involved in **negotiating work** are shaped by the context of economic restructuring and welfare reform. The research project, then, holds the potential to reveal previously overlooked and taken for granted labors necessary to low-income mothers' paid work and contribute to our understanding of how changes in the nature and distribution of paid work at the macro level implicate individuals at the micro level.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To investigate these research questions, this study takes an exploratory, comparative, and in-depth approach with two diverse samples of low-income mothers who live in two different rural counties. Through my involvement in the *Rural Families Speak*, multi-state research project, I gained insights into the work that sustains thirty-three Latino agricultural mothers' paid work. For analysis, I rely on in-depth interview data (2000-2001) with this group of mothers. I also conducted follow-up interviews, during 2002, with four of these mothers. These mothers' circumstances initiated my thinking about *negotiating work*. Therefore, I became interested in the extent to which rural low-income mothers engaged in other types of employment and potential employment work to support such efforts. To investigate distinctions between rural contexts in the labor necessary to get and keep employment, in 2002 I conducted in-depth interviews with twelve white settled mothers in a different rural county where low-income mothers primarily had access to low-paying service jobs. Interview questions were open-ended, focused on informants' employment histories, and addressed topics such as child care, transportation, self preparation, working conditions, community job context, and experiences of acquiring and leaving jobs. Mothers in both counties had at least one child and a household income that was two hundred percent of the poverty level. Qualitative analysis of interview data with these two diverse groups of mothers in two rural county contexts reveals insights into diverse experiences in negotiating work based on county contexts, work opportunities and type of work available, race/ethnicity, and residential stability/mobility.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is organized as follows. In Chapter Two, I review literature on the contexts of economic restructuring and welfare reform that shape the circumstances of the local rural economies in which low-income mothers live and labor to negotiate employment. Next, I outline the theoretical foundations of my study and my conceptual framework in Chapter Three. Here I focus on the ways feminist critiques of “objectivity” and scientific investigation and standpoint theory can potentially reveal invisible and taken for granted labors and inequalities. Then, in Chapter Four, I address my methodological approach to revealing such labors in the two rural county contexts with Latinas employed in agriculture and white mothers primarily employed in low-wage service jobs. I move in Chapter Five to the context of employment in the two counties studied, referencing Census data and data gathered from in-depth interviews with mothers in each county. Here I outline the employment options available in the county to the low-income mothers interviewed as well as their own work experience and histories. In Chapter Six, I use interview data from mothers in both counties to elaborate on all of the work they need to do to get and keep employment, i.e., to negotiate work. In Chapter Seven, I continue this discussion, focusing on the work of managing or coordinating family life around the inflexible demands of employment as addressed in mothers’ accounts of their experiences through interview data. Next, in Chapter Eight, I focus on the implications of mothers’ (and their partners’) efforts to manage paid employment for family life. Finally, in Chapter Nine, I conclude the dissertation with a summary of my findings and a discussion of the contributions and limitations of this study, and I provide recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two
Establishing the Context within which
Contemporary Work is Negotiated:
The Macro Structures of Economic Restructuring and Welfare Reform

This dissertation examines the backstage labors necessary for rural low-income mothers to get and keep employment. In this chapter, I lay out the macro structure within which employment is negotiated. To better understand the specific circumstances in which these women labor to get and keep employment it is necessary to examine the larger structures that shape local rural economies and, therefore, the jobs to which women have access. Large economic transformations influence the movement of industry, propelling jobs to some areas and expelling them from others. Similarly, radical shifts in the welfare system have implications for the potential employment of rural low-income mothers by dissolving a potential safety net and pushing low-income mothers into the least desirable and lowest paying jobs created by the restructured economy. Thus, forces such as economic restructuring and welfare reform shape the circumstances of the local rural economies in which low-income mothers live and labor to negotiate employment. In this chapter, I begin by addressing economic restructuring. Then I focus on reforms in the welfare system as they intersect with economic restructuring to structure the larger context in which rural low-income mothers negotiate paid employment.

ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

An Overview

During recent decades, the U.S. has witnessed a restructuring of the economy in which markets have become global, involving the movement of jobs, capital, and people

(Baca Zinn and Eitzen 1998; Sassen 1998). Faced with new competition from abroad which led to reduced profits, United States businesses began, in the 1970s, to lay off workers in manufacturing (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 1998; Harrison and Bluestone 1988), moving production overseas or to other locales in the United States—such as southern and/or rural areas—where there is a supply of low-cost labor and few regulations for businesses (Harrison and Bluestone 1988; Baca Zinn and Eitzen 1998).¹ These are generally areas with limited welfare systems (Pinch 1997). In addition to moving, manufacturers also are increasingly mechanizing production, and using strategies such as sweatshops and industrial homework characteristic of early competitive capitalism to cut costs (Sassen 1993).

The transformation and decline of manufacturing jobs in the U.S. has been accompanied by increases in work in the service sector and in information technologies. A number of reasons have been offered for the growth of service jobs. For example, as U.S. firms adopt customer-focused strategies to generate a competitive edge in the global economy (Macdonald and Sirianni 1996), workers (in jobs such as clerical work, customer service, telemarketing, and transportation) are required to support the manufacturing sector. As part of a global economy, technological advances such as the Internet as a distributor of goods and services allow for the exchange of information and require new skills and workers (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 1998; Harrison and Bluestone 1988; Mcdonald and Sirianni 1996). Another explanation for the increase in service sector jobs is the feminization of the workforce. “The entrance of more women into the [paid] workforce has led to increased demand for those consumer services once provided

¹ Recent research (McGranaham 1999, as cited in Gibbs 2002) suggests, however, that in the rural South, manufacturers are now favoring better educated—and presumably more trainable—workforces instead of low-skilled, low-wage workers (Gibbs 2002).

gratis by housewives ([e.g.,] cleaning, cooking, child care...), which in turn has produced more service jobs that are predominately filled by women” (Macdonald and Sirianni 1996: 2).²

Industrial jobs, traditionally filled by men, are being replaced by service jobs that are increasingly filled by women. In an economy based primarily on the creation and transfer of ideas and services, rather than the creation of commodities, workers with education and training in technologies and ideas benefit. Those with less education, who would have had access to a living-wage through a unionized manufacturing job, have less job security in a service and information economy. Between 1979 and 1985 about 30 million service jobs were created. About half of these are what most of us would consider “bad” jobs (e.g., clerks, cashiers, custodians, nurses’ aides, security guards, waiters, retail salespersons, and telemarketers) (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 2002). They are deskilled, non-union, poorly paid, with little autonomy and poor job security, and they are typically filled by teenagers, women, and racial minorities (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 1998; Hodson and Sullivan 1995).³ Many of these “newly created jobs also are part-time and temporary as companies shift to ‘no-commitment’ hiring” (Ryan 1999: 335) in a competitive global market. Thus, this economic transformation from manufacturing to service and information technology work leaves mothers who have little education with some of the least desirable job options in the nation.

While a growing body of literature addresses the implications of economic restructuring for inner-city areas, poverty, and families (see Wilson 1997, 1996;

² This explanation also sheds light on the low pay and temporary nature of many service jobs, since feminized sectors tend to be characterized by low pay and few benefits.

³ “Though the increase in service sector jobs has meant greater opportunities for black women and has allowed them to move out of domestic service into the formal economy, they have remained at the lowest rung of the service employment ladder” (McDonald and Sirianni 1996, 14).

www.urban.org [The Urban Institute]), less research is available on rural areas. Below I review some of the extant literature on economic restructuring and non-urban areas. I begin with a section on the implications of economic restructuring for rural economies, first addressing what is rural. Then, I address how these economic transformations affect family poverty in rural areas. Finally, I review various literatures to illustrate the ways race and ethnicity are implicated in a restructured economy with a focus on Latino agricultural and migrant workers.⁴ All of these sections serve to lay out one of the major macro contexts that structure the conditions and availability of the low-wage employment that rural mothers with limited resources must negotiate.

Implications of Restructuring for Rural Economies

What is Rural?

To address the implications of economic restructuring for rural areas, it is necessary to establish a working definition of what is meant by *rural*. There are many ways the term rural is defined. The most common Federal definitions stem from the Department of Commerce's Bureau of the Census and the White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB). According to the Bureau of the Census,

Metro/urban areas can be defined using several criteria. Once this is done, nonmetro/rural is then defined by exclusion—any area that is not metro/urban is nonmetro/rural. Determining the criteria used has a great impact on the resulting classification of areas as metro/nonmetro or urban/rural. The Census Bureau classifies 61.7 million (25 percent) of the total population as rural, OMB classifies 55.9 million (23 percent) of the total population as nonmetro. According to the Census definition, 97.5 percent of the total U.S. land area is rural; according to the OMB definition, 84 percent of the land area is nonmetropolitan. USDA/ERS estimates that, in 1990, 43 percent of the rural population lived in metropolitan counties....

⁴ In this section and others, I focus on Latinos and Latino migrant workers because they constitute one of the samples I address in this research.

The Bureau of the Census defines an urbanized area by population density. According to this definition, each urbanized area includes a central city and the surrounding densely settled territory that together have a population of 50,000 or more and a population density generally exceeding 1,000 people per square mile. ... [A]ll persons living in the urbanized areas and in places (cities, towns, villages, etc.) with a population of 2,5000 or more outside of urbanized areas are considered urban populations.
(as cited on <http://www.nal.usda.gov/ric/faqs/ruralfaq.htm>).

The White House's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) uses slightly different criteria to designate an urban area, and how much of that area and its surroundings are excluded from the designation as rural. A "metropolitan statistical area" is defined as a city or urbanized area with at least 50,000 inhabitants. The main distinction, which generates the differences in the percentage of rural areas and citizens, relates to how much of the areas and people surrounding a major metropolitan or urban area are designated as part of that area and, therefore, not rural. OMB includes the county in which the central city is located as well as additional fringe counties if they are economically and socially integrated.

These two common measures of designating an area as rural illustrate some of the complexities of defining a term, which, for all practical purposes, is defined by what it is not. The main differences in the definitions of rural have to do with how much of a fringe city or county of a major city, or how much population is necessary to designate a place as urban. Therefore, I adopt a more generalized working definition of *rural*, defining it as *areas and populations that are neither part of nor dependent upon a major metropolitan area/city*.

Economic transformations have specific implications for rural economies. Historically, rural communities have been characterized by small, sparse populations and economies based on natural resource-based extractive industries such as mining, forestry,

lumbering, fishing and farming (Gibbs 2002).⁵ Competition from overseas manufacturers pushed many traditional industries such as mining and logging out of rural areas (Dolan et al. 2003: F14). Between 1940 and 1992, the number of farms also rapidly declined and, by 1990, the proportion of farm people was less than two percent (Albrecht et al. 2000) and the number of job openings in all natural-based industries was small enough to make them unlikely avenues for entry-level workers (with the exception of international migrants in some cases) (Gibbs 2002:58). As has been the case for manufacturing, the decline of agriculture in rural areas is related to competition and technological developments. Advances in technologies increased farmers' production, leading to larger farms and, therefore, reducing the number of farms (Domer 1983 and Paarlber 1980, as cited in Albrecht et al. 2000); smaller family-owned farms were no longer able to compete. Loss of farm employment, however, was offset by increases in the number of manufacturing jobs and, more recently, by jobs in the service sector (Fuguitt, Brown, and Beale 1980, Hirschl and McReynolds 1989, Kassab and Luloff 1993, as cited in Albrecht et al. 2000: 91-92). Nevertheless, the proportions of sectors in which residents of rural communities find employment varies greatly from one area to the next.

The shift from manufacturing to a service economy in rural areas has "largely mimicked changes in urban American over the last quarter century, but with a lag" (Gibbs 2002: 58). In the mid-1970s, manufacturing employed about 19 percent of the

⁵ Although employment in these industries often involved mastering a complex set of skills, workers rarely required much formal education. This helps explain the historically low education levels characteristic of workers in rural areas (Gibbs 2002). "The ratio of adults without a high school diploma to college graduates are nearly two to one in rural areas, compared with near parity in urban areas" (Gibbs 2002: 56). Rural production is often routinized, demanding little training or education (Norton and Rees 1979, as cited in Gibbs 2002: 56; see also McGranahan and Ghelfi 1998).

rural labor force, declining gradually to 16 percent of employment in 1998 (Gibbs 2002). Since one strategy of manufacturing industries to reduce costs was to move their production sites to rural areas (Harrison and Bluestone 1988; Baca Zinn and Eitzen 1998), the decline in manufacturing in rural areas was not as dramatic as that experienced in urban areas. In many counties in the rural South, especially, manufacturing remains an important source of jobs for men and women without a college education.⁶

However, the restructuring of manufacturing has also entailed a re-organization of manufacturing work involving increased mechanization, sweatshops, and industrial homework (Sassen 1993). These changes have implications for the gendered distribution of jobs in rural areas. Some assembly plants moved from urban to rural areas, drawn by the comparatively low labor costs and lack of union organizing and regulations for businesses. Businesses also have been drawn to rural areas by popularized images of rural folk, such as their “strong work ethic” and “traditional values.” For example, plants may contract out some of their assembly work to be done at a piece rate in a worker’s home. Grengeri (1994) documents such a case in the Midwest in which rural women were specifically targeted to perform such labor because of ideas about rural women’s traditional place in the home and family. Defining rural women as secondary wage-earners cements their status as low-wage earners who do not require supplements such as health insurance or a living wage. Such ideas about gendered labor are also relevant to understanding the emergent service sector jobs that now predominate in rural areas and are most often filled by women.

⁶ Rural production work is often more routinized and demands less training or education than similar work in urban areas. Rural areas have retained a relatively large share of the nation’s low-skill, low-technology industries and less skilled occupations (Norton and Rees 1979, as cited in Gibbs 2002: 56; see also McGranahan and Ghelfi 1998).

Services are now the source of slightly more than half of all rural jobs.⁷ This growth of the rural service economy paralleled and reinforced the mass entry of women into the formal labor market. Today, services and trade provide 73 percent of rural women's total employment, compared with 39 percent of men's. In their analysis of the impact of restructuring on the gendered distribution of labor in rural areas, Albrecht et al. (2000) found a positive relationship between the percentage of men employed in a given area and the proportion of the labor force employed in agriculture and manufacturing. In contrast, the percentage of men employed was inversely related to the proportion of the labor force working in the service sector. Further, within rural service sectors, women are relatively concentrated in retail trade, which has the lowest average pay of any major industry (Gibbs 2002: 58-59). Service sector earnings in rural areas have fallen farther behind manufacturing since the early 1980s, increasing the chance of deteriorating wages for workers who might formerly have become machine operators, but are now sales clerks or cashiers. In some areas, jobs in the service industry may be the only employment available (Gibbs 2002: 71)

Gorham (1992) suggests that rural areas have been hit harder by economic restructuring than urban areas because rural economies are less diverse (Gorham 1992). Jobs are more dispersed in rural areas, with fewer employers in the local labor market and less variety of jobs than in urban areas (Gibb 2002). Rural workers are often dependant on a single industry or company for employment, which makes them extremely vulnerable to changes or downturns in local labor markets (Lichter and Jayakody 2002: 82). On average, unemployment rates and the share of employment in low-wage

⁷ This compares to about two-thirds of jobs in urban areas located in the service sector (Gibbs 2002). A study of rural, low-income families (Bokemeier and Wells 1997; Bokemeier et al. 1995) confirms that the majority of new jobs in rural markets are in the service industry.

industries tend to be higher in sparsely populated, remote counties than in those closer to cities (Gibbs 2002: 64) Nevertheless, the problem is not unemployment, but underemployment (Licher and Costanzo 1987, as cited in Lichter and Jayakody 2002: 82).

Restructuring in rural areas also affects migration patterns and poverty levels, following a sequence of events outlined by Fitchen (1995: 193-94).

Loss of employment in a rural community, especially if major or sudden, accelerates the pace of out migration of community residents, particularly young adults with completed high school education. Population decline creates a glut of unwanted housing and vacant commercial buildings, which the owners (often absentee heirs or outside investors) decide to rent out, either whole or portioned into apartments. At the same time, low-income people residing in cities both close by and distant, small and large, are being squeezed by rising housing costs and meager employment incomes or welfare support and are attracted to a rural town by its lower housing costs, better living conditions and schools, and in many cases by the presence of relatives. "Pioneer" migrants subsequently are followed by low-income relatives and friends in the familiar pattern of chain migration and by other non-related "push outs" from the cities, adding momentum and impact to the migration....To the extent that inexpensive rental housing rather than jobs is the chief attraction, the incoming population is apt to be poor and the community thus experiences a secondary rise in poverty following on the heels of poverty caused by the initial employment loss.

Thus, changes in job markets and urban economies are linked to the distribution of jobs, people, and housing in rural areas, contributing to the distribution of poverty by region.

Fitchen's (1995) work also illustrates the essential link between economies and the movement of people, and the potential link between immigration and the racial/ethnic composition of rural communities.

Economic Restructuring, Employment Opportunities, and Family Poverty in Rural Areas

The gradual shift from steady work in natural-based industries to manufacturing and then to service sector employment holds particular implications for the employment prospects of rural residents, and for the economic well-being of women with children

particularly. The increase in large retail chains such as Wal-Mart have led to more part-time and insecure jobs than those offered by the smaller businesses they have replaced. Managerial, professional, and technical jobs (the higher paying jobs of a service and information economy) are more likely to be clustered in urban areas, with low-income portions of service work outsourced to rural areas (Gibbs 2002). The share of workers in jobs that are low-skilled and at the low end of the pay scale is well above the nation's in rural America (Gibbs and Parker 2000, as cited in Gibbs 2002). "On average, it remains slightly harder to get a job, and much harder to get a good paying job, in a rural community" than in a city (Gibbs 2002: 52).

As a result, a "new poor" has emerged in the mid-west made up of young adults with no agricultural ties, farm operators, farm workers, and elderly women (Flora 1992). The "new poor" are wage earners, often working several low-wage, part-time jobs. Long-term poverty is actually higher in rural than urban areas. The rural long-term poor tend to "live by the rules," participating in the labor force and using welfare only for short periods of time. Thus, the rural poor are largely "working poor," but they remain poor because they lack access to well paying jobs.⁸ "The non-metropolitan residents who are not in poverty register higher rates of underemployment and greater proportions of discouraged workers than do metropolitan residents" (Albrecht et al. 2000:88).

Such an economic context may help explain why increasing numbers of single mothers pose a greater threat of poverty for rural children than urban children (Bokemeier, Wells, Gross, Imig, and Keefe 1995). Although the rural poor are more likely to be married than those in central cities, the number of female-headed families is

⁸ The large number of rural poor highlight the fact that labor force participation does not guarantee an income above the poverty level.

growing (Rural Sociological Task Force 1993). Among predominately female held, low-skilled occupations, the share of jobs that pay well is extremely low (2-4%) (Gibbs 2002: 70). The capacity of rural women to earn a good wage places an increasing number of single parent families (as well as two-parent families) at risk of living in poverty.⁹

Feminist scholars have coined the term “the feminization of poverty” (Pearce 1978, also see Folbre 1985; Albelda and Tilly 1997) to designate the increasing numbers of women and children living in poverty due largely to gendered inequalities in the labor market and the devaluation of care work.

Albrecht et al. (2000) find a relationship between the particular economic shifts in rural areas and family structure (i.e., the increase in single parent families). As noted above, the authors found that where the percentage of employment in agriculture and manufacturing was high, men were likely to be employed. On the other hand, when the proportion of the labor force working in the service sector increased, men were less likely to be employed. These trends in men’s employment are related to marital status and family formation. The percentage of married-couple households is highest where the sex ratio is high, the percentage of women employed is low, and the percentage of men employed is high. In contrast, female-headed households are most prevalent where female employment is high and male employment is low. Therefore, Albrecht et al. (2000) conclude, “The economic restructuring of rural America is tied closely to changes in the rural family, as reflected in a significant increase in female-headed households. This situation, in turn, is related to higher levels of rural poverty” (100).

⁹ The low earning capacity of women in predominately service sector employment combined with the unlikelihood of men’s employment outside of a slowly declining manufacturing sector clearly holds implications for the earning capacities of two-parent as well as single-parent families.

In sum, although the problems of poverty are certainly not limited to single-mother families, the particular manifestations of restructuring in rural economies contribute to the increasing numbers of single-mother families and an increasing likelihood that rural mothers and their children will live in poverty.

Examining Race/Ethnicity within a Rural Context: Latino Agricultural and Migrant Workers

Although whites make up a large proportion of the rural poor (Rural Sociological Task Force... 1993), discussions such as that above homogenize the poor and mask the implications of race for rural residents. Latinos, for example, have an increasing presence in many rural communities. In this section, I clarify some of the links between economic restructuring and the lives and work of migrant and non-migrant Latino agricultural workers. I begin with a brief discussion of how economic transformations have affected Latinos as a group. Then, I provide a definition of migrant, seasonal, and agricultural workers and present an overview of migration patterns and working conditions for agricultural workers. Next, I address research on gender, family, and farmworkers. Finally, I highlight the links between changes in the economy and the social implications of economic restructuring.

Latinos, Economic Restructuring, and the Midwest

People of Mexican origin comprise the largest group of Latinos in the United States and 70 percent of Latinos in the Midwest (Aponte and Siles 1994). Historically, this group has been concentrated in the Southwest. Mexican Americans migrating out of the Southwest have most commonly gone to the Midwest (Saenz and Cready 1997). Aponte and Siles (1994) document a “browning of the Midwest” in which Latinos contributed most to population growth there over the 1980s. Since early in the 20th

century, people of Mexican origin have been drawn to the Midwest to perform agricultural labor and, as part of economic shifts, for work in manufacturing and then service jobs.

In an overview of the implications of economic restructuring for Latinos as an ethnic group, Carnoy and his colleagues (1993) illustrate the polarizing effect of restructuring by race/ethnicity. Changes in immigration laws in 1965 and the prevalence of sweatshops made Latinos integral to the restructured labor market and economy. As restructuring entailed a quest for low-cost labor, industries drew on Latinos as a new source of labor where non-Hispanic populations were previously employed. For example, in an effort to cut costs, the meat and poultry processing industry in the Midwest relocated from larger metro areas to rural settings to reduce transportation costs. The industry also abandoned the higher-wage labor of non-Hispanic whites for lower-wage Latino and Asian labor, seeking immigrants in particular (Saenz and Cready 1997).¹⁰

Latinos' participation in particular sectors of the labor force also changed with economic transformation. With the declining prevalence of manufacturing jobs in the 1970s, Latinos gradually moved out of this sector of employment, but they were unable to acquire high-end service jobs to the same degree as Whites. Rather, many Latinos were relegated to low-paying sectors of agriculture, retail, construction, and restaurant work. Thus, Latinos have been crucial to the expansion of low-wage jobs in manufacturing and services. Moreover, the economic position of Latinos overall has been shaped by the polarization of the job market into high and low-income jobs. This

¹⁰ The case of the meat processing industries in the Midwest illustrates the ways economic transformation can shape racial and ethnic distribution of people by region.

transformation clearly affected Latinos' incomes. Contrary to the relative increase in the incomes of Latinos working in manufacturing in the 1970s, the income of Latinos declined during post-1973 restructuring. In fact, throughout the 1980s, Latinos sustained major losses in real income and a substantial proportion of Latinos (more than one in five) lived below the poverty line (Aponte and Siles 1994).

Despite these general trends, there is much variation in the incomes and experiences of Latinos. The remainder of this section focuses on a particular group of rural Latino workers, those employed in agriculture.

Rural Latino Agricultural Workers

Farmwork involves the various tasks connected with planting and harvesting, including irrigation, fertilizing, pruning, weeding, pest control, and harvesting.¹¹ ...*Seasonal farmworkers* are generally people who live and harvest crops in their own communities (Jasso and Mazorra 1984: 87, emphasis added).

Migrant farmworkers, in contrast, are “individuals who are employed in agriculture either seasonally or temporarily and are absent overnight from the permanent residence” (Public Law 97-470, 1983, as cited in Eastman 1997: 466). Thus, what distinguishes a migrant worker is whether or not he or she must spend a night or more away from his or her permanent residence for work (Rosembaum 2002).

The definition of farmwork above focuses on the labors of planting and harvesting. However, rural Latino migrants and seasonal workers are often employed in other agricultural work. This may include the mechanics of processing fruits, vegetables, and other crops such as sorting and separating the good from the bad, pickling, and preserving. With the increased mechanization of agriculture, workers are likely to find

¹¹ Though the term farmworker may be defined differently by various government agencies to include landowners, growers, and employers, here, like Jasso and Mazorra (1984), I focus on the men, women, and children who are hired to perform some aspect of farm work for a wage.

themselves performing a number of tasks beyond planting and harvesting.¹² Therefore, to account for the broad range of agricultural work done by rural Latinos, in this dissertation I use the term *agricultural workers* rather than *farmworkers*.

Migration and Agricultural Workers: There are several different “migrant streams,” which designate the movement of migrant agricultural workers on an annual basis as they move for work. Because of the seasonal nature of agricultural work, laborers often move along with the crops. One of these streams is supplied by Mexico. Migrants in this stream move north up the West Coast and across to the Midwest (Eastman 1997). Typically, migrant agricultural workers in Michigan only migrate twice a year, once to Michigan to seek work and then to Florida, Texas, or sometimes Mexico, where they spend their winters.

An oversupply of agricultural labor, shaped by immigration laws, can help explain the low pay and poor working conditions that make these workers one of the most disadvantaged groups in the United States (Rosenbaum 2002). Latinos, and Mexican origin Latinos, in particular, have been pulled into this work as a low-paid labor force. Farm workers have one of the lowest median weekly earnings by occupation and constitute the largest percentage of workers who belong to a minority group (Runyan 2001); most are Hispanics. Moreover, migrant farmworkers have the lowest incomes of all farmworkers. In addition, documentation issues contribute to the low wages of this group of workers. The high turnover in agricultural labor fuels the growing proportion of the workforce that is undocumented. “National statistics indicate that 52 percent of hired

¹² Moreover, a recent study of Latino farmworkers in Michigan, found that “over one-third of study participants had nonagricultural jobs during the preceding year” (Roeder and Millard 2000: 1).

farmworkers lacked work authorization, 22 percent were citizens, and 24 percent were legal permanent residents” (Department of Labor 2000, as cited in Rosenbaum 2002: 8).

Gender, Employment, and Families of Agricultural and Migrant Workers:

Studies of agricultural workers illustrate that family needs and women’s status in families combine with the race and sex segregation of the labor market to influence women’s employment in low-wage seasonal work. The Chicana cannery workers (seasonal fruit and vegetable) interviewed by Zavella (1987) chose seasonal work in a sex segregated occupation because they viewed this work as the best choice available to them if they were to reconcile family and financial obligations. Though the local economies conditioned the choices available to them, the women themselves and their families viewed their work as “temporary,” reinforcing their financial dependency on their husband’s income.

Similarly, Chavira-Prado’s (1992) study of Mexican migrant farmworkers in southern Illinois and Barndt’s (2002) study of the tomato’s trail from Mexico to Canada illustrate the ways the distribution of farmwork among family members places women in positions of the lowest status and pay, reinforcing their dependence on men, despite the importance of their work to the well-being of families. Women’s traditional role as field hand (often referred to as “helping him—the husband” [Chavira-Prado 1992: 57]) has been viewed as an extension of their domestic chores and as a supplement to men’s work. Undocumented women workers are at the bottom of a labor hierarchy that is shaped by the nexus of gender, race, ethnicity, and documentation status.

In this hierarchy farm owners and white locals are at the top as managers, followed by documented and other migrant or seasonal workers who may rise to foremen, followed by Mexican undocumented men as harvesters and maintenance workers, and finally Mexican women. . . . Packing fruit is viewed as “women’s

work.” Yet even within this work category, subdivisions exist that rank Mexican women lower than other women. . . . Standing, boxing, and washing are physically the hardest, are filled only by Mexican women, and are jobs from which workers are not recruited to supervisory positions. (Chavira-Prado 1992: 57).

Thus, the agricultural tasks, roles, and statuses women are assigned reproduce their subordination and the exploitation of their labor, particularly that of undocumented Mexican women. In addition, defining women’s paid employment as temporary and as subordinate (“his helper”) disguises the importance of their paid earnings and other unpaid work to family well-being, reinforcing women’s low status within the workplace and within families.

A recent study of migrant farm workers (Roeder and Millard 2000) in the state of Michigan suggests that the trends documented by Chavira-Prado (1992) may be changing, with women playing an increasingly important role in generating income for their households and increasingly doing so in jobs outside of agriculture. More than one-third of respondents in Roeder and Millard’s study (2000) had a job outside of agriculture in the year prior to the research, with an equal percentage of women and men working in non-agricultural jobs. In addition, women had higher status jobs than men, on average, although all the jobs of study participants were low-paying (Roeder and Millard 2000: 10).¹³ Although Roeder and Millard do not specifically address economic restructuring as part of their analysis, women’s shift toward non-agricultural jobs highlights the growth of gendered types of low-income service jobs that have resulted from shifts in the economy.

¹³ This difference may be attributed to women’s higher levels of English proficiency and education than those of men.

Social Dimensions of Economic Restructuring for Rural Areas and Latino

Agricultural Workers: Economic restructuring affects the racial and ethnic distribution of people in communities, and, in turn, ultimately influences the race relations that result. Latinos have had to migrate from one peripheral position to another, according to the whims of capitalism. The necessity of their migration for work as well as the ways local residents perceive their presence (often as “outsiders”) are components of what Naples refers to as “the social relations of economic restructuring” (1994). Lionel Cantú’s (1995) ethnographic research from the perspective of Latino residents in rural Iowa situates the recent influx of Mexican and Chicano laborers within the global context of economic restructuring, using a world systems approach. She suggests that “the development of Maquiladora industries along the U.S. Mexico border has created an employment situation where young women are in demand and men are forced to find jobs elsewhere” (Cantú 1995: 8). In this manner, Latinos in Texas were pushed by “bad [local] economies” and recruited to work at the food processing plant Cantú studied in Iowa. According to Sassen (as cited in Cantú 1995: 2), migrants (whether international immigrants or internal migrants), as a relatively powerless labor source, help employers accrue profits because many are willing to work for low wages, provide a flexible labor supply (e.g., willing to work overtime or at night, easy to hire/fire), and have high organizational flexibility (e.g., willing to work in substandard environments).

Cantú argues that the precariousness of Latino workers’ socio-economic positions is, in part, reinforced by the actions of the state. “Through the manipulation of citizenship regulations by the state, migrants can be kept permanently ‘marginal’ and dispensable” (Cohen 1987, as cited in Cantú: 403; see also Eades 1986). In the Iowa

community, selective enforcement of immigration policies by INS officials served as a mechanism of control by creating an environment of fear. This was accomplished through the harassment and intimidation of Latinos, regardless of their legal status. In this manner, assumptions about documentation, regardless of actual legal status shape the treatment of Latinos as community members and as employees. This is particularly the case for migrant agricultural workers, who often find themselves treated as “outsiders/illegals” by community members and the state.¹⁴ Cantú concludes that the contradictions of capitalism are evident in the social relations of “peripheral labor.” “Foreign labor is desired, but the persons in whom it is embodied are not” (Cantú 1995: 6, citing Kearney 1991:58).

Naples (1994) further elaborates on the treatment and racialization of “Mexican” “outsiders” from the perspective of White European American community members in rural Iowa.¹⁵ She documents the social implications of economic restructuring, which reshape race and ethnicity within rural communities at the micro level resulting in systematic racism.

The capitalist ideology of the work ethic used to attract industry has the contradictory effect of increasing the numbers of working poor within rural communities and expanding the demands for social and economic supports from the state. Factory owners and managers are turning to Mexicans and other nonwhite racial ethnic groups who are recruited or otherwise attracted to fill the newly created positions. The lack of employment options faced by Mexican workers and workers of color limits their job mobility and gives them favored status among employers who emphasize that racial-ethnic minorities are more committed, make fewer demands, and remain longer in positions than their white counterparts. These racial-ethnic patterns further highlight the racism of white residents and create schisms between workers that prevent addressing workplace issues across racial-ethnic lines (Naples 1994: 131).

¹⁴ While the influx of undocumented farmworkers has been a topic of concern in recent years, this group remains a minority among the migrant and seasonal farworker population (Lacar 2001: 1).

¹⁵ Naples (1994) conducted research in the same community as Cantú (1995).

In the Iowa community, Naples found that changing employment patterns were often viewed by White European American residents as a challenge to their traditional way of life. Her research documents cases of racism in Mexican and Mexican American's experiences in the workplace and at social service agencies such as a health clinic. The perception that these newcomers will take local jobs from community members is compounded with the false perception that they will use community resources in the form of social services.¹⁶ "The racism...implicit in the many comments about Mexicans is couched in discussions of the white residents' fear of increased crime, a growing underclass, and a rise in the cost of education and social services" (Naples 1994: 129). Many of the White residents assumed that Latinos in the area were all "Mexicans," i.e., "illegal outsiders." Naples illustrates how the ideologies of homogeneous White rural communities can reinforce the perception of low-income Latino immigrants as "outsiders," highlighting the social restructuring that occurs at the local level and accompanies larger economic shifts.

Summary and Implications for Rural Low-Income Women

Economic restructuring has reshaped the conditions in which rural low-income mothers negotiate paid employment, conditioning the jobs to which women have access and the community contexts in which they live and work. In a restructured rural economy, women are most likely to find low-skilled, low-paying, contingent work in the service industry. If they have male partners, these men may be employed in the shrinking manufacturing sector, or they may have lost their jobs. As a consequence of these shifts in men and women's employment options and circumstances, the number of single

¹⁶ Naples' interactions with staff in the local Department of Human Services suggests that these new community members are less likely to apply for and receive public assistance than White community members.

mothers in rural America is rising, and this increase is associated with growing poverty rates. Such consequences of rural restructured economies raise a number of issues relevant to a study of the negotiation of paid work. How does the job context created by rural restructuring affect what low-income mothers need to do to get and keep the low-wage jobs available? How does the gendered distribution of jobs outlined in rural economies affect what women and men need to do to get and keep employment? Since women disproportionately fill the growing number of low-wage service jobs, how do single mothers in rural areas maintain these low-wage jobs while also parenting? How do parents negotiate or manage contingent, temporary, or part-time employment?

Economic restructuring also affects the distribution of people by race and ethnicity and race relations in rural America. Although Whites remain dominant in rural America, an increasing number of African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans are being pulled into rural communities to fill jobs in an increasingly low-wage labor market. With the declining prevalence of manufacturing jobs in the 1970s, many Latinos were relegated to low-paying sectors of agriculture, retail, construction, and restaurant work (Carnoy et al. 1993). Though business owners desire the labor of these groups, they are often treated as “outsiders” by White community members and by the state. Particularly in the case of Latino agricultural workers, they may be treated as “illegals,” regardless of their documentation status. Farm workers have one of the lowest median weekly earnings by occupation with the largest percentage of workers who belong to a minority group, most of whom are Hispanic (Runyan 2001). Thus, economic restructuring holds particular implications for the employment options of Latino low-income mothers who must deal with the possibility of migration, institutionalized racism, and, possibly, issues

such as documenting their status as they negotiate paid employment. How do these conditions, affect what Latino low-income mothers need to do to get and keep employment? In other words, how do they manage attaining employment in the midst of institutionalized racism and/or how do they deal with such circumstances within the context of work? How do mothers manage the process of migration as a requisite for employment? More broadly, how do racial inequalities and racial restructuring affect what one needs to do to get and keep employment?

THE CONTEXT OF WELFARE REFORM: POLITICS AND POLICIES

In addition to the effects economic restructuring have on rural low-income families, social policies and, in particular, recent reforms in the welfare state, have implications for families. Reforms in the welfare system have effectively removed a potential safety net for low-income mothers. A system that once entitled low-income mothers to financial assistance in times of crisis, such as job loss, inadequate job options, and/or domestic violence, now restricts the options of low-income women, essentially pushing them into the lowest-paying contingent jobs in the restructured economy. In this section, I first address some of the intersections between economic restructuring and social policies, including immigration policies and the ideologies that undergird such policies. Then I focus on the implications of recent reforms for rural low-income mothers through the promotion of employment. I begin by outlining the basic premise of the 1996 reforms in welfare. Then, I address the focus in these reforms on “work supports.” (In this section I focus on what this tells us and what it leaves out about the backstage labors necessary for mothers to get and keep low-wage employment.) Finally,

I conclude this section with an overview of recent research on the implications of welfare reforms for rural low-income mothers.

Connections Between Economic Restructuring and Social Policy

In the past and currently, relief programs have been tailored to the particular needs of the labor market, perpetuating inequalities by race, class, and gender. In the contemporary context, the conditions of economic restructuring accompany reductions in some welfare states (Pinch 1997) and create the need for a low-cost labor force concentrated in the service economy. At the same time, reforms in welfare that diminish an entitlement to assistance to low-income women as an alternative to low-paying and undesirable employment create a reserve pool of cheap labor by removing a potential safety net for women in such circumstances. Thus, changes in welfare policies combine with economic transformations to create “a virtually indentured labor force” (Piven 1999: 91) for the growing service economy.

Tailoring relief programs to the particular needs of the labor market is not a new phenomenon. Gender and race have been central to the creation of policy in the past. Relief systems usually have excluded able-bodied men. Although Aid to Dependant Children (ADC) was initially instituted to allow and support the gendered norm of stay-at-home mothers, Piven and Cloward (1993), Abramovitz (1997), Quadagno (1994), and Neubeck and Cazenave (2001) have documented historical exceptions to this rule based on the structural inequalities built into and the fluctuations of labor markets shaped by gender and race. For example, states in the South often adopted “employable mother” rules or other loopholes that allowed officials to deny assistance to mothers who were “employable” if “suitable” employment was considered to be “available.” Such

restrictions kept African American's in the seasonal agricultural economy as their labor was "needed" (Piven and Cloward 1993: 134).

Not only is assistance tied to the needs of the labor market to free up a supply of labor, but, as a political tool, relief giving cycles serve to enforce work and to mute civil disorder in general. Through an analysis of the history of cycles of social support in the United States, Piven and Cloward (1993) find relief giving to be cyclical and utilized to mute civil disorder during times of depression or modernization. Relief is quickly withdrawn when social order is restored. During times such as those in which recent reforms were initiated, poor mothers, in particular, were held up as pariahs to enforce norms about work and to stimulate the labor market (Piven and Cloward 1993). Indeed, as Abramovitz asserts, "calls for welfare reform crop up at times when women are using the welfare system as an alternative to dirty, dangerous, and low-paying jobs" (1996: 29). Not only do cuts in social policies leave former recipients without a safety net, but Piven and Cloward (1993) suggest that such cuts serve as a control mechanism for the entire labor market. In more recent writings, Piven (1999) argues that current reforms potentially affect the job security and labor power of all workers (including those not previously utilizing assistance) by increasing competition for low-paying jobs and removing a potential safety net for all workers, whether or not they were actually using it at the time of reforms.

Thus, fluctuations in welfare are connected to variations in the labor market. These changes potentially threaten the security of many low-wage workers in the restructured service economy, but former recipients of aid are, perhaps, most directly affected. In documenting some of the jobs filled by workfare recipients under current

reforms, Piven (1999: 91) argues that workfare programs create a reservoir of an exceedingly vulnerable labor force.

The education and training activities that once often counted for work no longer do; and recipients are being assigned not only to public and nonprofit agencies, but also to private employers (who receive substantial tax credits and often subsidies paid for by welfare “grant diversions”) (Piven 1999: 90).¹⁷

In fact, Lafer (2002) argues that the work first approach accompanies a shift from education and training (improving the human capital of recipients so that they can get better jobs) to a focus on changing the attitudes of workers with the aim of creating a docile low-wage work force. In this manner, policies such as those enacted under recent reforms serve the labor needs of a restructured economy, creating a low-skilled “virtually indentured” labor pool of workers who have lost a safety net or an alternative to the lowest paying and least appealing service jobs.

Latino Workers, Immigration Policies, and the Regulation of Low-Cost Labor

For Latino migrants, immigration policies, like reformed welfare policies, regulate the need for low-cost labor in a restructuring economy. Changes in immigration laws in 1965 and the prevalence of sweatshops made Latinos integral to the restructured labor market and economy. As restructuring entailed a quest for low-cost labor, industries drew on Latinos as a new source of labor where non-Hispanic populations were previously employed (Carnoy et al. 1993).

Piven (1999) argues that welfare cutbacks are only the most public of a collection of cutbacks in social policies that systematically chip away at the security of workers. Reform policies, which prevent many legal immigrants from receiving Medicaid, food stamps, or cash assistance, serve to keep them vulnerable as low-wage workers, an

¹⁷ For a discussion of the obstacles welfare recipients face in trying to attain education, see Kahn and Polakow 2002.

historical function of immigrant labor in the U.S.¹⁸ Provisions to prevent immigrants (even legal immigrants) from receiving various forms of assistance were central to the original 1996 welfare reforms. In this manner, cuts in welfare programs other than cash assistance can affect groups such as Latino immigrant laborers, by creating a vulnerable labor pool.

To justify and meet the need for increasingly low cost labor in these areas, the ideologies that undergird immigration laws and welfare policy also are reshaped. For example, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1999) shows how an ideology that represents immigrants as “having babies and taking social services” serves to exploit a vulnerable labor force by separating laborers from families and refusing to subsidize family life. Racially subordinate groups have historically been denied access to the social supports and institutions that sustain family life. Most people of color were incorporated into the nation through coercive systems of labor. Maximizing labor productivity meant that few supports were made available for sustaining family life, and, in fact, exclusion laws were set up, for groups such as the Chinese and Japanese, to restrict the migration of women and entire families. Restrictions on the immigration of women and families

makes possible the maximum exploitation of the workers....The labor of prime-age male workers can be bought relatively cheaply, since the cost of reproduction and family maintenance is borne partially by unpaid subsistence work of women and old people in the home village (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999: 298, citing Glenn 1983).

The movement of women and children has been restricted not only to prevent settlement, but also to ensure that women do not anchor their families' homes within the U.S. through their reproductive labor. Historically, women have been the ones to seek out

¹⁸ For an overview of the components of 1996 reforms as they relate to and affect migrant farmworkers in Michigan see Lacar (2001).

subsidies to sustain family life. Hondagneu-Sotelo argues that policies such as Proposition 187, passed in California in November of 1994, target women and children as part of the new focus on “welfare reform” and demonize poor women and children.¹⁹ She suggests that such attempts to reduce potential family subsidies is an attempt to separate “family” from “work” as a means of decreasing the cost of labor. Thus, ideologies about welfare and immigrants coalesce and are revised to meet the need for of low-cost labor in the current economy.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity (PRWO) Act of 1996: Promoting the Employment of Low-Income Mothers

One of the stated purposes of the 1996 reforms in welfare is to promote the employment of former recipients of aid. Specifically, the original document states that one goal is to “end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage.”²⁰ The implementation of this latter reform has focused primarily on the goal of reducing “dependence” by promoting employment.²¹

Work Supports, Job Incentives/Training, and Welfare Reform

Research suggests that prior to these reforms, “welfare mothers” had already tried to negotiate the paid work that was available (Edin and Lein 1997). Aware of the amount of unpaid work involved in negotiating low-paid work, low-income mothers discovered that the inadequate pay from these jobs did not merit the labor needed to seek transportation, wardrobe, and child care. Research (both pre and post 1996 reforms) has

¹⁹ Proposition 187 “den[ied] public school education, health care, and other public benefits to undocumented immigrants and their children” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1999: 288).

²⁰ For an overview of all stated purposes of this act and the measures instituted as part of the PRWO, see Appendix A.

²¹ The stated purpose of promoting marriage and two-parent families was largely ignored until George W. Bush took up this issue as a goal.

documented that the work available to poor mothers does not pay (Albelda 1999; Bane and Ellwood 1994; Edin and Lein 1997; Kerlin 1993; McCrate and Smith 1998; Spalter-Roth et.al. 1995). Welfare, itself, has been a means of negotiating future work by attaining education and training (Dill 1998a).²² In addition, research prior to welfare reform showed that mothers utilized welfare as a means of supplementing the conditions of inadequately paid employment by packaging work and welfare (Spalter-Roth 1995, 15) and/or cycling back and forth between welfare and low-wage work in difficult times (Edin and Lein 1997; Harris 1996). Although some of the “work” programs introduced in the late 1980s as precursors to current reforms acknowledged the labors and supports necessary to paid work by providing a minimal amount of assistance with child care subsidies and, in some cases, transportation, most of these subsidies were temporary, maintaining the assumption that once one has attained paid employment it is self-sustaining and “negotiating work” is no longer necessary.

Though policies under the welfare reforms first implemented in 1996 differ from state to state, many states acknowledge the necessity of a number of “work supports,” such as child care subsidies and transportation assistance, in order to assist former recipients of aid in attaining and supplementing low-wage employment. In this section, I briefly review welfare reform research that addresses low-wage work and work supports with a focus on what it tells us about the extent to which reforms support the backstage labors necessary for mothers to get and keep low-wage employment.

Parents incur a number of employment “costs” not covered by low-wage jobs. Since average earnings from jobs available to former welfare recipients fall below the

²² Kahn and Polakow’s (2002) research illustrates the lack of support for those trying to acquire education under welfare reform.

poverty level (Anderson and Gryzlak 2002; Anderson, Halter, and Julnes 2000), work supports, such as child care subsidies, transportation assistance, food stamps, public health benefits, and the Earned Income Tax Credits, are needed to subsidize low-wages (Bernstein 2002; Monroe and Tiller 2001; Morris 2002; Taylor 2001). Research and scholarly work also suggests that the work supports provided under welfare reform policies are insufficient and often short lived (Albelda 2002; Bernstein 2002; Morris 2002). Albelda (2002: 73) argues that “short-term job training, work vans, poor quality child care, or even refundable earned income tax credits” will not resolve the “mismatch” that places

poor mothers who need the most support and flexibility into jobs in the low-wage labor market, which often are the most inflexible, have the least family-necessary benefits (vacation time, health care, sick days) and provide levels of pay that are often insufficient to support a single person, let alone a family (*ibid.*).

Most women who leave welfare work in low-wage jobs without benefits

(Corcoran et al. 2000). One study with a large sample in North Carolina found that

most of the positions that welfare recipients are obtaining ... offer...few prospects for wage mobility. Nearly 80 percent of all jobs obtained are within the service and retail industries where wages are low and wage growth is limited. In addition, many of these jobs are likely to be part-time and temporary (Morris 2002: 139).

Thus, Albelda joins numerous scholars of work and welfare reform in

emphasizing that the conditions of work (e.g., job insecurity and low-wages) are key to understanding recidivism rates and job instability among former recipients of aid.

“Although rural recipients are more likely to be employed than those in central cities, rural women leaving assistance have lower earnings than their urban counterparts”

(Goetz, Zimmerman, Tegegne 2001: 1).

As Albelda (2002) suggests, the low-wage service jobs that former recipients of aid are typically pushed into and reforms in welfare are inflexible to the demands of parenting. Albelda, Bernstein (2002), and Piven et al. (2002) suggest a need to reform the conditions of work by implementing an increased minimum wage and other mechanisms to improve the resources and rights of workers and working parents. In order for potential workers to manage and keep such work under current conditions, additional resources and support mechanisms are needed.

Though discussions of work supports and job training under welfare reform allude to components of negotiating work within the circumstances of low-wage working conditions, they do not address all of the backstage labors involved in getting and, more importantly, keeping a job. Further, critiques of reform policies suggest that these policies are severely lacking in facilitating and, in fact, may hinder the efforts of low-income parents to negotiate better employment for themselves. The “work first” approach presents barriers to advanced education and other efforts toward the betterment of recipients’ future labor market potential, pushing recipients into low-wage jobs and theoretically creating a docile labor force (see Kahn and Palokow 2002; Lafer 2002). As several other researchers (Acker 2002; Bernstein 2002; Morgan 2002; and Piven et al. 2002) stress, there is a critical need to invest in the education and training of low-wage workers. For example, the findings of Ng’s (2002) study of immigrant women in California suggest that training programs under the work first model provide limited

assistance to women desperately in need of language and education skills to improve their lot in the working world.²³

Overview of Recent Research on the Implications of Welfare Reform for Rural Areas

Since passage of the PRWO, a flood of research has attempted to assess the effectiveness of reforms to promote employment and the general well-being of low-income families and former and/or current recipients of assistance. Some of this research hints at the implications of these reforms for the efforts of rural mothers to negotiate low-wage work. Research that accounts for region reveals three important distinctions in the job contexts, barriers to employment, and social service supports offered to mothers attempting to negotiate low-wage work in rural versus urban areas. First, this research outlines some of the limitations of local rural economies for workers addressed in previous discussions of economic restructuring. Second, it highlights the fact that rural mothers face particular obstacles in their efforts to negotiate employment such as distance from employment and lack of public transportation options. Third, the research suggests that reforms in social services aimed at promoting the employment of mothers in rural areas do not adequately bridge the gap between the limitation of local economies and other barriers to work with adequate work support services (see Goetz, Zimmerman, Tegegne 2001; Lichter and Jayakody, 2002; Weber et.al. 2002; Weber et.al. 2001).

In addition to the limited employment options and low wages of jobs offered in particular rural economies caused by economic restructuring, mothers seeking low-wage work there face additional barriers to employment such as few job supports (e.g., day care and transportation) (Goetz, Zimmerman, Tegegne 2001: 1). Assessments of welfare

²³ Consequently, the earnings of this group barely exceeded the minimum wage. Ng (2002) also documents barriers to social services faced by immigrant women in the form of hostility and discrimination by social service workers.

reform at the state level suggest that barriers to the effective transition to work required by welfare reform can vary widely among labor markets. One source of such variation is the proximity of jobs (Whitener et al. 2002). Not only are fewer jobs available in rural areas, but those jobs that are available are also more likely to be located farther away from potential workers, making transportation a crucial barrier to employment. Long distances must be traveled to key services and jobs; access to automobiles is low, causing a need for reliable transportation.

In rural areas, child care options are few and difficult to manage, creating an additional obstacle for rural mothers attempting to negotiate low-wage employment (Weber et al. 2001). Formal sources of child care are difficult to find, so rural mothers are more likely to rely on informal sources for child care than are mothers in urban areas (Goetz, Zimmerman, and Tegegne 2001; Lichter and Jayakody, 2002; Walker and Reschke, 2003; Weber et al. 2002). Moreover, education presents an additional employment barrier for rural mothers. Although there are few differences in the effect of welfare reform in metro and non-metro areas for single mothers, the more disadvantaged group of low-educated single mothers in rural areas have not shared in employment gains with their urban counterparts since reforms in welfare have taken place (Weber and Duncan 2000). Educational services are often not available or difficult to access in rural areas and educational levels are generally lower than in urban centers (Weber et al. 2001).

Finally, mothers attempting to negotiate low-wage work in rural areas under welfare reforms have less access to social support services than do their urban counterparts. In many cases, long distances must be traveled to key social services

(Weber et al. 2001; Weber et al. 2002). “Urban centers offer more job opportunities and support a scale of auxiliary social services that cannot be matched in rural communities” (Weber and Duncan 2000: 8). An analysis of recidivism in Iowa, shows that “among welfare recipients, those in metro areas were less likely to leave welfare compared with those in nonmetro areas, but once they left, those in metro areas were less likely to return [to welfare] right away” (Weber and Duncan 2000: 9). Such comparisons suggest a lack of support for the efforts of rural low-income mothers to negotiate and maintain employment. Though the stated purpose of welfare reform is to promote work, the labor market in rural areas presents a particular set of obstacles to employment for rural mothers. Research suggests that the gap between the availability of jobs for rural mothers and the limited social services and other work supports needed to supplement/sustain employment, make the negotiation of low-wage work particularly difficult for rural mothers. Both changes in social policies and economic transformations overlap to structure the efforts of these mothers to negotiate low-wage employment.

Welfare use patterns in rural and agricultural counties differ from those in urban counties largely because of differences in employment patterns and labor market structures. Because agricultural work is often seasonal in nature, farm workers sometimes combine seasonal work with welfare in the off-season when unemployment rates rise to high levels. The time limits instituted under welfare reform limit this strategy of negotiating seasonal employment in rural areas. Workers who have relied on agricultural work that is only available for part of the year face particular obstacles in negotiating employment without supplements such as food stamps and Medicaid (Brady et al., 2002). The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of

1996 also places specific restrictions on the abilities of agricultural workers who are *legal immigrants* to utilize such forms of assistance as a safety net and to subsidize their low paying, dangerous, and temporary work (Lacar 2001; Rosenbaum 2002). Thus, workers in agricultural areas face particular difficulties in getting by on the seasonal and low-paying work that is available within the contexts of increasingly unavailable supplements such as food stamps, Medicaid, and cash assistance. Cuts in assistance formerly used to supplement such work make such employment less of a viable option.

Summary and Implications

Thus, welfare reform policies aimed at decreasing “dependency” on public assistance and “promoting employment” combine with the forces of a restructured economy to push potential low-income mothers into low wage work that is typically inflexible to the needs of parenting and does not provide a living wage. Social policies then make an important contribution to the *context* within which rural low-income mothers struggle to get and keep employment. In rural areas, agricultural workers are left without supplements to their low-wages and often dangerous seasonal employment. Such research leads to the question of how mothers manage low-wage employment within such a context of shrinking safety nets. To fully examine what labors are necessary for these mothers to get and keep work, one must not only examine the larger contexts that shape their circumstances, but one must also begin with the material circumstances of their particular everyday lives in order to see the connections between the broader contexts and the labors necessary to manage those contexts. Though welfare reform policies in many states acknowledge the **resources** (e.g., work supports such as transportation and child care) necessary to attain and supplement low-wage work, research suggests that such

policies do not adequately address all of the backstage labors necessary to attain and, in light of low recidivism rates in rural areas, to *sustain* the employment of low-income mothers. Additional research is needed to reveal what labors are necessary to manage work within such contexts created by welfare reform and economic restructuring.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Although this chapter has focused on the context in which women negotiate paid employment, the research on which I drew suggests several gaps in knowledge that my dissertation addresses. More specifically, there is a gap in our knowledge about what labors are necessary to support paid employment from the everyday experiences of rural low-income mothers. The following research questions will develop data to fill such a gap.

1. What labors are necessary for rural low-income mothers to attain and sustain paid employment?
2. What are the implications of *context* for attaining and sustaining paid work?
3. How does the process/experience of negotiating work differ by race/ ethnicity? Residence stability (i.e., settled workers vis-à-vis migrant workers)? Region? Education? Family structure and marital status?
4. How does gender structure the negotiation of paid employment among family members?
5. What are the implications of the process of negotiating work for *family* life?

In the following chapter, I discuss how feminist critiques of the acquisition of knowledge and standpoint feminist theory can be used to reveal such labors by centering the particular everyday circumstances of two marginalized groups of mothers. Such a theoretical and conceptual lens holds the potential to fill gaps in our knowledge about what labor is necessary to support paid employment by revealing previously invisible and

taken for granted forms of labor and assumptions about the “work” rural low-income mothers do. The conditions of low-wage work in the current economy outlined in this chapter necessitate frequent job turnover and poor working conditions for potential workers. Thus, the standpoints of low-income mothers offer a unique position for revealing the invisible and taken for granted labors necessary to sustain low-paid employment.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Framework for Negotiating Paid Work

In Chapter Two, I laid out the macro contexts of economic restructuring and welfare reform within which low-income rural mothers must negotiate paid employment. The chapter concluded with a series of research questions that arose from research on those contexts and suggested limitations in our current knowledge about all of the labors necessary for rural low-income mothers to get and keep employment. Research and policies have addressed some of the barriers to employment within particular contexts, such as transportation, but they generally have not addressed all of the labors necessary to deal with limited resources and the everyday conditions of life and work. This dissertation serves to fill such a gap in knowledge. Revealing all of the labors necessary to get and keep employment also expands the notion of what qualifies as legitimate “work.” Such a project holds implications for theorizing about “work” as well as social policy. The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical foundations on which I build my analysis (the theoretical lens I adopt) and my conceptual framework for revealing all of the invisible and taken for granted labors that support low-wage-employment, centering the question, “What is necessary to attain and sustain paid employment within the context of economic restructuring and welfare reform?”

To provide a theoretical foundation for revealing these heretofore unrecognized labors necessary to support paid employment, I draw on feminist critiques of the acquisition of knowledge and standpoint theory, which begins with the material circumstances of low-income mother’s everyday lives. I address feminist standpoint

theory as a means of centering the material conditions of everyday life, and in particular, the circumstances of two marginalized groups of mothers. After addressing feminist theories and the insights from such theories I draw on in this research project, I outline my conceptual framework that illustrates the concepts or variables that interact to illuminate the process of negotiating paid employment, that is, *the invisible and taken for granted labor necessary to attain and sustain paid work*. Following this discussion, I address the ways paid work and all of the unpaid and invisible support work that is necessary to sustain that work are experienced simultaneously in practice, using Garey's (1999) conceptualization of "weaving" work and everyday life. Finally, I address the importance of context in examining the negotiation of work and introduce a model to further illustrate my concept of negotiating work.

FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF "OBJECTIVITY" AND SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

Feminist theorists such as Harding (1991) and Smith (1990) challenge the universality of scientific facts (see Lorber 2001 for an overview), critiquing "objectivity" and positivism or, as Harding posits, "science as usual" (1991). For example, Harding (1991) cites the presence of discrimination against women in the sciences as evidence to support her contention that such disciplines are neither "objective" nor "universalistic." If they were, gender would not matter because the social identity of scientists would be irrelevant to achievement. Harding suggests that science contains both progressive and regressive tendencies, and "all scientific knowledge is always, in every respect, socially situated. Neither knowers nor the knowledge they produce are or could be impartial, disinterested, value-neutral" (1991: 11). Such biases are true for the topics which researchers choose, the hypotheses and concepts they develop, the design of their

research, the way they collect and interpret data, and the agencies that fund their research. “Whoever gets to define what counts as a scientific problem also gets a powerful role in shaping the picture of the world that results from scientific research” (1991: 40). Harding references studies of the “uses and abuses of biology, the social sciences, and their technologies,” particularly in relation to reproductive technologies, to demonstrate how “the dominant culture has been willing to take far greater risks with women’s reproductive systems than it would ever countenance for those of men—or, rather, for those of men in the dominant classes and races” (1991: 34). Harding’s critique challenges the idea that all research should receive public funding because it increases knowledge and resources *for humanity*, but in reality, benefits are actually disproportionately distributed and science has provided resources for some people’s domination of others. Thus, science is not morally and politically neutral.

Smith (1991) also critiques the assumption of “objectivity” in “science as usual.” In her view, the objectivity of the scientific approach and scientific “facts” are located outside of the subjective world, the world of direct experience. As a sociologist, Smith proposes that the discipline needs to credit or acknowledge the experiential or subjective world in order to get a truly unbiased, non-ideological account of social life. Smith critiques the “objective” approach adopted by some sociologists, maintaining that such a stance (a) alienates and leaves out the experiences and realities of women who are more intimately tied to the subjective world of everyday experience than are men and (b) separates the discussion of social life (through its objectification) from social life as it is actually experienced (1990). In this manner, Smith argues that sociologists become alienated from the very subjects they presume to know. She argues that “the relations of

ruling”(11), which govern every aspect of our society lie within the realm of objective reality, separate from direct experience. Sociology is similarly situated as separate from the direct experience with which it supposedly deals. “We learn to discard our personal experience as a source of reliable information about the character of the world and to confine and focus our insights within the conceptual frameworks and relevances of the discipline” (Smith 1990:15).

Just as Marx’s conception of commodities begins as something grounded in the subjective world, and ends up as something objectified through the process of exchange, Smith shows how social life becomes objectified as “facts” which are often separate from and even dissimilar to the reality from which they originated. Thus, Smith proposes an “alternative sociology” that

would be a means to anyone of understanding how the world comes about for us and how it is organized so that it happens to us as it does in our experience. An alternative sociology from the standpoint of women makes the everyday world its problematic (Smith 1990:27).

Smith’s work expands upon previous critiques of “objectivity” by introducing the importance of subjective experience. Thus, from Smith’s perspective, she might argue that if we begin with the everyday experiences of the women at which policy is directed, we will likely get a very different picture than policies that begin with assumptions about them. In other words, Smith’s critique would suggest that “facts” produced by such research are often separate from and even dissimilar to the reality from which they originate (6). The “facts” (or assumptions) used to create policy may not be in sync with the reality of these women’s everyday lives. Thus, Smith would argue, beginning with these women’s subjective experiences of their everyday lives would yield a different

picture. In this manner, she and other feminist scholars have proposed an alternative approach to attaining knowledge that begins from the “standpoint” of women.

Standpoint Theory

Standpoint feminist theorists (Smith 1990; Hartsock 1983; Harding 1991; Haraway 1988) take issue with the limitations in knowledge created by the exclusion of women’s perspectives and experiences as researchers and as subjects (Lorber 2001). They argue that “beginning with the standpoint of women” (Smith 1990) yields a more complete picture of reality and social life because of women’s participation in subsistence activities and reproductive labor. As Harding asks, “Might our understanding of nature and social life be different if the people who discovered the laws of nature were the same ones who cleaned up after them?” (1991: 27). Thus, a standpoint carries with it the contention that “there are some perspectives on society from which, however well intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible” (Hartsock 1983: 117, cited in Heckman 1997: 343).

One of the first to map out standpoint feminist theory, Nancy Hartsock, utilizes Marxist and psychoanalytic theories to illustrate the ways women’s lives and experiences create a “deeper...vision of reality” than that available to men. Hartsock suggests that like Marx’s proletariat, “women’s lives make available a particular vantage point on male supremacy” (1983: 231). She argues that through the physical and social production of children and the reproductive labor of caring for others and households (through physical and emotional labor) women are grounded in material reality in ways that men are not (Hartsock 1983; see also Lorber 2001). Hartsock utilizes psychoanalytic theories (popular at the time she was writing) to further address the ways the material conditions

of motherhood put women in touch with the everyday material world and the connections among people, while men (and highly educated men in particular, cushioned from the everyday material world through the reproductive labor that women typically take care of) are more likely to concentrate on the abstract and intellectual, that which is detached from everyday material life. Thus, Hartsock argues, the vantage point of women provides a more complete vision of social life than that of men.

Since research on the division of household labor confirms that most women still do the majority of reproductive labor (see Shelton 1996 for a review of the division of household labor, and Coltraine 1996; Fernandez-Kelly 1997; Hardesty and Bokemeier 1989; Hochschild 1989), the everyday position of women provides a useful standpoint from which to think about all the labors necessary to get and keep a job that might otherwise be overlooked when one begins outside of that particular lived experience. As previously addressed, policies and research generated by policy often begin outside of the everyday lived experiences of the women they most affect and about whom they create “facts.” Nevertheless, some research reviewed in Chapter Two is, in fact, aware of the need to start from the standpoints of women. However, one can ask, as has been asked by feminist standpoint theorists, which women?

Feminist standpoint theory has been criticized for essentializing women and not adequately addressing the diversity of standpoints among them. Although Hartsock (1983), for example, acknowledges variation in women’s experiences and perspectives based on race and class inequalities, she suggests that all women have a unique standpoint because, whether or not we actually do, all women are forced to become the kind of people who can do both subsistence work and contribute to childrearing.

Heckman (1997: 349) suggests that for Hartsock and early standpoint theorists the issue has rested on the question, “If we abandon the monolithic concept of ‘woman,’ what are the possibilities of a cohesive feminist politics?” Thus, feminist theory has wrestled with the dichotomy of essentialism versus relativism. One response to and critique of a universalized “feminist” or “women’s standpoint” has been a body of work initiated with a focus on the particular standpoints of African American women.

Black Feminist Standpoint Theory

In her book, *Feminist Theory: from Margin to Center*, bell hooks (1984) challenges the assumptions behind such essentialized theorizing about the position and knowledge of women. “Much feminist theory emerges from privileged women who live at the center, whose perspectives on reality rarely include knowledge and awareness of the lives of the women and men who live in the margin” (hooks 1984: x). hooks, thus, challenges previous notions of a unified woman’s standpoint. She addresses the marginalization of Black women by the early feminist movement, stressing the importance of resituating and centering women who have knowledge of both margin and center. “[The] structure of our daily lives provided us an oppositional world view—a mode of seeing unknown to most of our oppressors” (ix). In mapping out a Black feminist standpoint, Collins (1990) illustrates how the material conditions of African American women’s lives, such as their inability to rely on another racial or class group to care for their children, have shaped their mothering practices of relying on members of their community or “othermothers.” In contrast to earlier standpoint theorists, who developed motherhood as a unifying experience for all women, Collins demonstrates the way racial inequities have shaped African American’s notion of motherhood as a

communal responsibility. Collins and hooks illustrate how African American women's standpoints raise new questions and contribute new knowledge and understanding due to the multiple axes of oppression they experience. Ultimately, Collins argues, "a Black woman's standpoint is only one angle of vision, a 'partial' perspective" (1990: 234).¹

Latina Feminist Thought

Though Black feminists have provided a guiding theoretical perspective for standpoint thinking, many Latina scholars have also made contributions, broadening this dialogue (see Hurtado 2003; Pardo 2002; Segura 1991; Zavella 2002). Pardo's (2002) analysis of an East Los Angeles group of Mexican American women's grassroots community activism demonstrates how beginning with their circumstances and actions challenges narrow conceptualizations of political activism and of motherhood. Segura (1997) further challenges unified notions of motherhood in asking whether the ideology of motherhood and "ambivalence" of employed motherhood depicted in American sociology and feminist scholarship are relevant to women of Mexican decent in the U.S. (276). She contrasts the ways Mexicans and Chicanas frame motherhood, highlighting the way time of emigration affects adherence to "culturally framed structures" of motherhood (284). Thus, rather than claiming *a* Latina standpoint, Latina feminist scholars demonstrate and reflect on the diversity among Latinas (also see Baca Zinn and Pok 2002). Zavella (2002) proposes that "beginning with historical material conditions" (108) and the structure in which women's experiences are framed helps explain

¹ More recent feminist scholars, such as Reynolds (2002), call for a re-thinking of "a Black Feminist Standpoint." Reynolds criticizes some early Black feminist theory and contemporary literature that deals with Black women's experiences for not being inclusive enough. She argues that many of these works privilege professional class positions because they are primarily the writing of academics and Black women with class privilege.

commonalities and differences among Chicanas. “We should construct feminist studies that reflect the myriad of social locations among Chicanas” (115). Indeed, Hurtado (2003) addresses Chicana feminisms, noting the ways young Chicanas embrace diversity and ascribe to many feminisms.

The work on African American and Latina scholars demonstrates the ways a Black or Latina feminist standpoint challenge the privileged position of white women just as earlier standpoint theorists suggested that *the* standpoint of *women* challenged the privileged and less complete knowledge of men. Thus, their work challenges some of the assumptions of earlier standpoint theorists, demonstrating how race (and class) intersects with gender to create multiple standpoints among women. Black and Latina feminist standpoints illustrate critiques of an essentialized notion of woman and show how new insights about motherhood and inequalities between women can be gained through a focus on a marginalized standpoint or everyday experience such as that of Latinas or African American women. Though some of the research on low-income women and their families has acknowledged the need to begin with women and their families’ everyday experiences, the discussion in Chapter Two suggests some important axes of difference or stratifying variables that have yet to be fully acknowledged or examined by researchers may be region and race/ethnicity. Feminist theory that begins with the experiences of Latinas and African American women are important because they illustrate the way new insights can be gained by further problematizing axes of difference beyond an essentialized notion of “woman.” In such a manner, one can visualize multiple “standpoints” from which new insights on social reality and new knowledge can be gained.

Situated Knowledge

Accordingly, standpoint feminist theorists have expanded, challenged, and built upon earlier work by engaging critiques of “science as usual” and developing other standpoint theories based on the notion of multiple standpoints. In Heckman’s (1997) critique of early feminist standpoint theory, she takes issue with the presentation of *the* woman’s experience as *the true* or better perspective on reality. She suggests that feminist standpoint theory is part of a “new paradigm of knowledge...[that] involves rejecting the definition of knowledge and truth as either universal or relative in favor of a conception of all knowledge as situated and discursive” (357). In her view, new approaches to acquiring knowledge incorporate the principle theme of feminist standpoint theory, that “knowledge is situated in the material lives of social actors” (357), but Heckman suggests that the “claim of privileged knowledge and one true reality, has been almost entirely abandoned” (358). Heckman presents Haraway’s conceptualization of “situated knowledge” as a key example of this new paradigm.

In contrast to earlier standpoint theory, Haraway rejects the idea of one standpoint. “There is no single feminist standpoint because our maps require too many dimensions for that metaphor to ground our visions.” (590). Nevertheless, despite the new paradigm that Heckman proposes, she does not throw out the idea of privileged knowledge entirely. On the contrary, Haraway (1988) suggests that “subjugated positions” are preferred, that there is reason to value and establish the capacity to see from “the peripheries and the depths,” but she cautions the danger of

romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their positions (584). ...There is no way to “be” simultaneously in all, or wholly in any, of the privileged (i.e., subjugated) positions structured by gender, race, nation, and class. And that is a short list of critical

positions...Identity, including self-identity, does not produce science; critical positioning does, that is objectivity (586).

Thus, key to Haraway's situated knowledges is her critique and reformulation of the notion of "objectivity." Haraway proposes a "feminist objectivity," which she equates with *situated knowledge* (581). She argues that the notion of "objectivity" as a vision of universality and transcendence is false, that "only partial perspective promises objective vision" (583). She proposes an "embodied objectivity" that

require[s] the object of knowledge [to] be pictured as an actor and agent, not as a screen or ground or resource....Indeed, coming to terms with the agency of the "objects" studied is the only way to avoid gross error or false knowledge of many kinds in the sciences (593).

Further, Haraway suggests that a critical positioning is necessary, rather than identity.

One cannot be all subjected standpoints and identity does not produce objectivity.

Rather, the challenge for Haraway is in learning how to see from below in a critical manner.

I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, position, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims....Feminism is about the sciences of the multiple subject with (at least) double vision. Feminism is about a critical vision consequent upon a critical positioning....Translation is always interpretive, critical, and partial. Here is a ground for conversation, rationality, and objectivity—which is power-sensitive, not pluralistic, "conversation" (589).

Thus, Haraway's proposal for an alternative approach to gaining knowledge critiques "objectivity" and a singular standpoint for women, yet she does not throw out these concepts entirely.

It is in this light that I draw on feminist standpoint theory and situated knowledge.

I do not propose that the particular standpoints of the women who I interviewed present "the best" or an ideal position from which to gain insights into the labors necessary to get

and keep work. In fact, I believe examinations from multiple standpoints are required to examine how various stratifying variables affect what employees and potential employees need to do in the current economy to get and keep employment. Nevertheless, I argue that these women help us to examine the labors necessary to get and keep employment and provide a particularly insightful vantage for doing so because of multiple facets of their particular social locations.

I have chosen to focus on two samples of low-income mothers, one of Latina, primarily migrant women, and one of white settled women, because I propose that their marginalized standpoints potentially reveal new insights into the negotiation of work. Because of women's (specifically mothers') reproductive labor and because the conditions of low-wage work in the current economy (outlined in Chapter Two) necessitate frequent job turnover and poor working conditions for potential workers, the standpoints of low-income mothers offer a unique position for revealing the invisible and taken for granted labors necessary to sustain low-paid employment. One would anticipate that these women might have more to manage to get and keep employment than do those with better job options. As Rubin (1976) has suggested, those at the bottom of the labor market feel shifts more resolutely than those at the top.

In addition, I have chosen to focus on their particular standpoints because of the policy debates and discourses about them. Smith (1991) addresses the power embedded in decisions about which "facts" are given credence, and the ways those in the dominant (ruling) group will label its perspective as "real" and reject other definitions. In a similar manner, I argue that those in power, i.e., those who create social policy and cultural discourses about low-income mothers, have not, in fact, begun with the material

conditions of their lives to gain knowledge and understanding about those conditions and experiences. Thus, knowledge is incomplete. I draw on these feminist theoretical perspectives as a tool for revealing the material conditions of two groups of mother's lives. Through such an approach, I hope to gain new insights and challenge conventional approaches and conceptualizations of "work" that begin outside of these mother's everyday experiences.

In the next section, I draw on previous studies and conceptualization of reproductive labor as an illustration of the potential invisible labors that feminist critiques of positivism and standpoint theories can reveal by focusing on the material conditions of everyday life. Such work also challenges dichotomies between "work" and "family," and calls for a broadening of the definition of "work" as commonly conceptualized.

Revealing Reproductive Labor through Feminist Standpoint Theory

As addressed above, feminist theorists have stressed the need to begin with the position of women and their everyday lived experiences. Such an approach initiated a plethora of research on housework, the division of labor within households (see Shelton 1996 for a review of the division of household labor, and Coltraine 1996; Fernandez-Kelly 1997; Hardesty and Bokemeier 1989; Hochschild 1989), and the conceptualization of reproductive labor as the labor necessary to sustain family life. Such efforts represent a concrete illustration of knowledge gained through feminist critiques of "science as usual" (Harding 1991) and insights from standpoint theory. This research also challenged conventional notions of "work," suggesting the need for a broadened definition to include unpaid and previously invisible and taken for granted labors. Along with the existence of such taken for granted labors, this body of work has problematized

inequities embedded in the distribution of such labors. Gerstel and Gross (1987: 5) suggest that this recent concern for the broadening of the definition of work stems largely from feminist's struggles to "incorporate into the concept of work the efforts that women undertake on behalf of family and household members" as well as changes in the nature and availability of paid employment. "For feminists, the issue has been to make visible the unpaid efforts and activities involved in 'house' and/or 'domestic' and/or 'family' work . . . extending the concept of work to include a range of women's responsibilities that had previously gone unrecognized—not only as work, but as effort of any sort" (1987:5). Beyond domestic labor and housework within the home, reproductive labor also includes child rearing as well as other labor not conventionally acknowledged as work. This includes Hochschild's notion of "emotion work" (1983) and "interaction work" (Fishman 1978; Hackstaff 1998) which serves to maintain marital relations. Further, others speak to "kin work," or the labor of maintaining kin relations by sending cards, telephoning, and organizing family gatherings (De Leonardo 1998; Stack and Burton 1998). DeVault (1987) also discusses the importance of meal planning and preparation as part of the work which (re)produces family.

Central to almost all of these works on "reproductive labor" is the idea that gender inequalities within families are reproduced and perpetuated through this type of labor which traditionally has been performed by women and been unacknowledged and unrewarded. Particularly with the increase in the number of women entering paid employment outside the home, conflicts surrounding the maintenance of reproductive labor become pressing for many families. Hochschild's notion of "the second shift," (1989) in which women coming home from paid employment typically encounter a

second shift of “reproductive labor” when they leave “work,” nicely illustrates the inequality in the division of labor by gender within families. Thus, gender is central to an examination of reproductive labor, not only in the logistics of who does what, but in how we conceive of whose job this sort of work is.

Further, reproductive labor is unequally distributed by class and race. For example, Dill (1998b) has addressed the ways women of color have been coerced and/or paid to care for other people’s children and perform domestic work in other people’s homes, complicating their efforts to care for their own children. Thus, women of color struggled with the “double day” long before White women. This unequal distribution of reproductive labor by race/ethnicity and class continues today on a global scale in which women from less advantaged countries are propelled out of their homelands, into the United States due to economic necessity to care for the children of more privileged parents in this country (see Chang 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Parreñas 2001), a phenomenon Hondagneu-Sotelo (1997) refers to as “transnational motherhood.”

Just as feminist standpoint theories and critiques of positivism revealed the previously invisible and taken for granted labor now known as reproductive labor and inequalities embedded in the unequal distribution of those labors, I intend here to reveal and examine the labor necessary to support paid employment. Neither reproductive labor nor negotiating work is visible with conventional methods of attaining knowledge that “deny the agency of the ‘objects’ under study” (Haraway 1988). In the remainder of this chapter, I outline my conceptual framework to examine the process of negotiating paid work.

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE NEGOTIATION OF WORK

I have defined the process of “negotiating work” as *the invisible and taken for granted labor necessary to attain and sustain paid work*. In this section, I outline my conceptual framework, explaining how I see different concepts or variables interacting to illuminate this process. After a brief discussion of the concept of negotiating work, I elaborate on four components of the process of negotiating work: self preparation, interaction, reproductive labor, and coordination. Then I include a sub-section addressing related research that suggests mothers attempt to “weave” paid employment with other elements of their lives, rather than viewing work and family as separate spheres. Next, I briefly address the ways the particular contexts addressed in Chapter Two may shape rural low-income mothers’ efforts to negotiate paid employment. Finally, I include a conceptual model that further illustrates the relationship between the various components of negotiating work addressed in this section.

The Concept of Negotiating Work

To address the invisibility of the taken for granted labors that are necessary for rural low-income women to attain and sustain paid work, I draw on Erving Goffman’s (1959: 111-113) distinction between “backstage” and “frontstage” behaviors. Goffman makes this distinction to designate more public “presentations of self” from the unseen behaviors which take place “backstage.” In a similar manner, the “backstage labors” necessary to support paid work often go unseen or unacknowledged as distinct from paid work, despite the fact that they are not part of the job description, but are essential to sustaining paid employment. Thus, Goffman’s (1959) distinction of “backstage” is useful for highlighting this labor as hidden and taken for granted.

It is easier to ask the *unemployed*, “What would have to happen in order for you to get and keep a job?” than it is to ask an employed person, “What do you need to do to keep your job or to keep working?” The first question elicits a number of necessary labors such as resumes, references, interviews, childcare, haircuts, and appropriate clothing. In an initial search for a paid job, the necessary tasks and processes to secure that job become apparent. At that point, it is easier to “see” the “work” that is necessary to attain paid employment than it is to see the work that is necessary to sustain that employment later. However, after one has attained paid employment he/she may not consciously separate the backstage labor necessary to sustain that paid employment on an everyday basis from the “work” he or she does as part of the job. All other forms of labor necessary to sustain it are obscured by the primary focus on paid employment. In the following sections I reveal this labor by elaborating on four components of the process of negotiating work: self preparation, interaction, reproductive labor, and coordination.²

Self Preparation

To attain and sustain paid employment one must engage in various components of self preparation, such as grooming one’s physical appearance, building credentials and skills, and making one self available by securing transportation and/or moving. As mentioned above, this process of self-preparation is more apparent when one is initially seeking employment. However, self preparation is necessary to sustain paid employment as well. Such self preparation can involve the purchasing of appropriate clothing and/or uniforms, getting haircuts, additional laundry expenses, and so on. Self preparation for paid work may also involve efforts to acquire education, training, or skills necessary to

² I have organized my discussion according to these components as a means of conceptualizing and operationalizing the process of negotiating work. However, these components should not be thought of as mutually exclusive.

getting or keeping a job. Moreover, skill and credential building may also be a condition of keeping work. In addition, to attain and sustain paid work, one must be able to physically get to work. Thus, part of self preparation is being physically available by securing transportation and/or moving. In a rural context, being physically available for potential paid work may involve commuting long distances and/or moving, whether this is temporary or permanent.

Interaction Work

Negotiating work also involves various forms of interaction and managing one's emotions. Hochschild (1983) and Pierce (1995) document the prevalence of "emotion work" as a previously unexamined component of paid work. According to Hochschild (1983: 7), emotional labor requires workers "to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others." For the flight attendants in Hochschild's study, this means that they are expected to hide their irritation with difficult passengers and instead display concern for their welfare. Pierce (1995: 3) has also documented emotional labor in contemporary law firms that takes the gendered form of "caretaking and deference for female paralegals. When trial attorneys lose their tempers...their paralegals are expected to stay calm and be comforting and deferential in the state of such outbursts." The work of managing one's emotions and interactions with others to achieve the expected result can also be applied to the process of attaining and sustaining paid work. In attempting to acquire paid work, one must carefully manage her or his emotional as well as physical appearance, and initiate interactions necessary to attaining and sustaining employment. Even after one is

established in a job, the “emotional labor” (Hochschild 1983) involved in presenting one’s self as a competent worker remains important.

To attain paid work, one must first find potential jobs and openings. This information may be obtained through formalized and impersonal sources, such as newspapers, want ads, and billboards. However, in most cases even formal sources of information are filtered through one’s interaction with others: a friend, a relative, a former or current co-worker. Thus, finding potential paid work involves the interaction work of tapping into one’s networks and/or expanding these networks. Realistically, this interaction work in the form of networking is also needed to sustain paid work in the current economy in which no job is guaranteed. Further, in the context of low-paying jobs, one may always be searching for a better job. Thus, making contacts with others in one’s field, or the practice of “networking,” can be essential interactions that help sustain one’s paid work as well as build bridges to future job opportunities.

As part of sustaining work, on an everyday basis, paid workers also need to manage relationships and interactions with their employers and co-workers. In some cases, workers must deal with unfavorable working conditions such as sexual harassment and/or other forms of discrimination in the workplace that may be based on race/ethnicity, and/or language of origin.³

Reproductive Labor

Reproductive labor is an essential component of the backstage labor and interactions that are necessary to attain and sustain paid employment. “Reproductive

³ These particular circumstances could require negotiation in finding a way to deal with the circumstances on an everyday basis or necessitate the negotiation of alternative employment.

labor” includes three components: (1) biological reproduction;⁴ (2) reproduction of the labor force (a necessary precondition for production); and (3) social reproduction (“the maintenance of basic structures...that ensure the continued existence of the means of production”) (Edholm, Harris, and Young 1977: 105). I focus on social reproduction, utilizing Brenner and Laslett’s (1986: 117) definition:

the activities and attitudes involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis and inter-generationally. Among other things, it includes how food, clothing and shelter are made available for immediate consumption, the ways in which the care and socialization of children are provided and the social organization of sexuality. The reproduction of life, thus involves various forms of work—mental, manual and emotional—varying strategies for getting the work done, and varying ideologies that both shape and are shaped by them.

Thus, reproductive labor becomes essential “backstage labor,” invisible work that supports and sustains paid work. Reproductive labor literally involves, the reproduction, or replenishing of the labor force. Workers must be fed, clothed, and cared for so that they are energized and prepared employees. This is part of the work of presenting oneself (and one’s family members who are paid workers) as competent employees. Further, despite the relationship between and dependence of paid work on this labor, which is often taken care of by families, most employers maintain a belief that work and family should remain separate domains.⁵ Therefore, workers are expected to manage their families and reproductive labor so that family does not interfere with the time and space partitioned off for paid employment. Childcare, appointments for the care and maintenance of children or oneself, parent-teacher conferences, a child’s illness, and

⁴ Biological reproduction is not an element of reproductive labor that I elaborate on here, though coordinating biological reproduction with paid work could be part of the process of negotiating work.

⁵ The dearth of family friendly policies in the United States which, when present, better enable employees to weave work and family demands (Gary 1999) illustrates this assumption on the part of employers. However, the availability of these policies varies by social class. Among employed women, there is an unequal distribution of “family friendly” policies with professional women receiving the benefits of such programs more frequently than women employed in low-paying jobs (Michel 1998). The issue of work and family as “separate spheres” is addressed below.

additional needs and demands of other family members must be dealt with on one's own time, that is, the time partitioned outside the time clock of paid work. This dichotomy and expectation is particularly prevalent for men, who are expected to prioritize work over family demands and concerns, as illustrated in Pleck's "work-family role system" (1977), a system that reinforces a traditional division of labor for work and family in which women are responsible for family and reproductive labor, and men are responsible for paid work. Thus, due to this traditional expectation about the division of labor, employed wives are expected to manage two jobs, that of paid employment and the unpaid labor of family work that is necessary to sustain paid employment.

Coordination in Negotiating Work: "Managerial Labor"

Thus far, I have primarily defined and explained some of the labors necessary to sustaining paid employment. However, part of the work of "negotiating work" is the larger task of coordinating all of these often disparate and contradictory labors and interactions within the context of one's everyday life. "Negotiating work" is a process, which often involves the reconciling of disparate constraints and resources.

Managerial labor (see Hochschild 1997, 1989) encompasses the backstage work of orchestrating and organizing. The scenario often given is that of a child's appointment with a doctor. Even though a father might take his child to the doctor's office, there is a certain amount of invisible labor and coordination necessary to make this happen. The child's mother might have been the one who called to arrange the appointment, called the school to arrange for the child to miss class, called the doctor's office to confirm the appointment, and reminded her husband on more than one occasion so that he did not forget the obligation. Similarly, negotiating work, not only involves all of the individual

backstage labors necessary to attain and sustain paid employment but, more importantly, “negotiating work” is the process of coordinating and managing all of these demands, such as transportation, child care, relationships with bosses and co-workers, managing poor working conditions and/or multiple jobs, within the context of one’s life on an everyday basis.

Negotiating Work in Practice: “Weaving” Work into Everyday Life

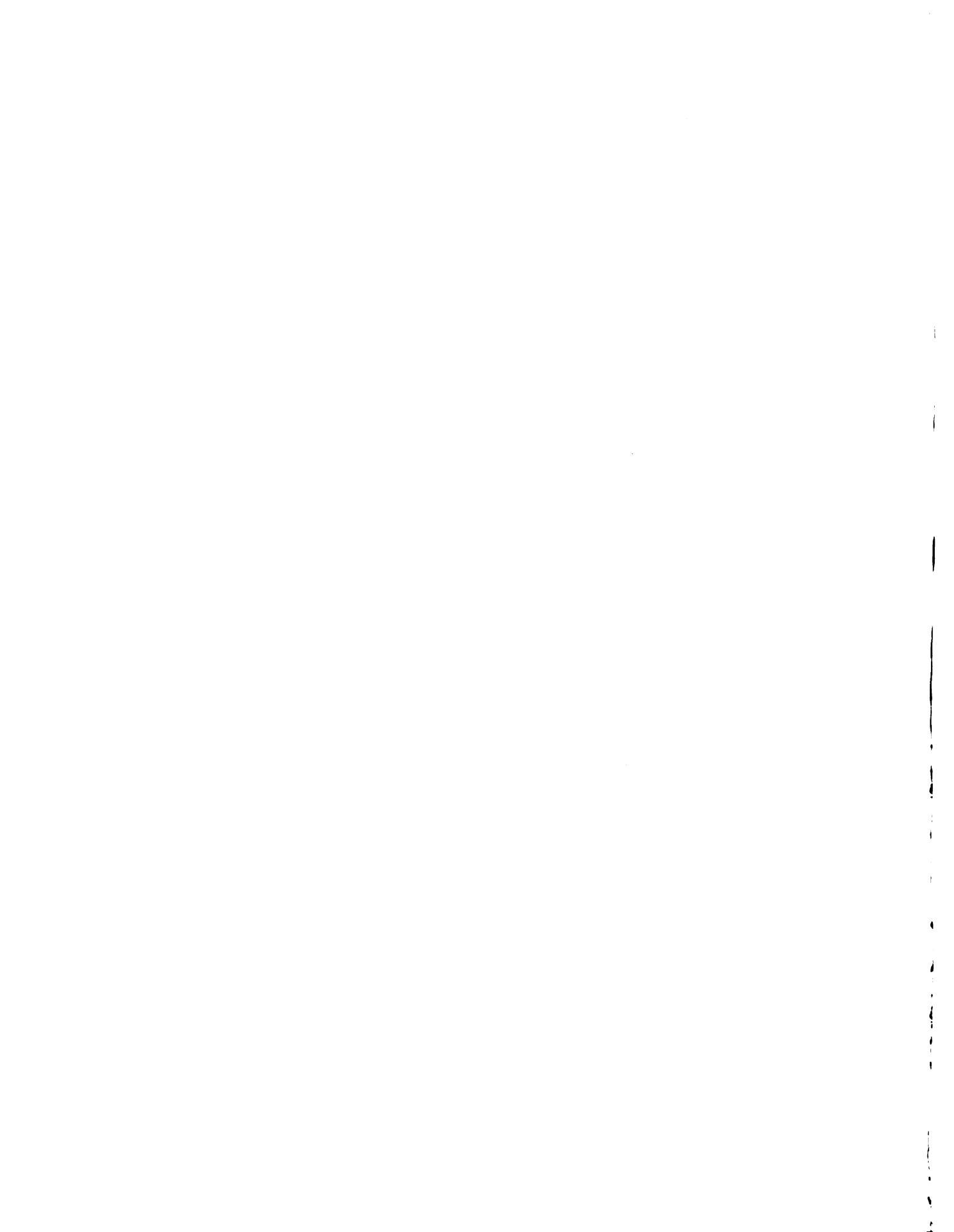
Traditionally, work and family, public and private, have been dichotomized as separate spheres of existence (see Blood and Wolfe 1960; Parsons 1955; Kingsbury and Scanzoni 1993). As addressed above, ideas about these “separate spheres” have also been gendered through a traditional division of labor in which men are deemed responsible for the public realm of paid work while women are considered responsible for the private, family realm. However, a growing body of work by feminist and family scholars has challenged the legitimacy of this “myth of separate worlds” (e.g., Kanter 1985). This work problematizes this dichotomy, demonstrating the complex ways in which the demands and obligations of work and family mesh, overlap, and conflict in everyday life.

Research that demonstrates the effects of economic conditions on family life challenge the independence of family and work as separate spheres. For example, using a case study of two White working-class families in the Silicon Valley, Judith Stacey (1990) demonstrates the ways unemployment, service sector jobs, and other structural constraints of a de-industrializing economy can configure family life, leading to new family forms as a result of post-modern conditions.



Hochschild's more recent study, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (1997), further demonstrates the complex interdependence of work and family for the employees of a Fortune 500 company. Her study aimed to discover why employees were not using the company's "family friendly policies." What she found was a complex interdependence between increasing hours at work and family stress, in which parents were fleeing homes invaded by the pressures of work, for the workplace, which felt more like a surrogate home. Hochschild's analysis builds on the foundations of earlier research that examine the effects of work spillover into family life (e.g., Menaghan 1991). However, most of these studies have primarily attended to the effects of work on family life (see Kanter 1985 for an early review of such research; Coontz 1997 for additional research on work/family overlap). Some examples of issues commonly addressed are increasing stress from work (Ryan 1999), the phenomenon of "moving for work" (Hendershot 1995), and the decline in time for families due to increasing work hours (Hochschild 1997; Schor 1991).

Similarly, the research addressed above demonstrates *the way paid work is dependent upon family work*. Problematizing and revealing reproductive labor also uncovers the interdependence of work and family as family work is needed to reproduce the labor force in a capitalist society. Women, in particular, do not experience paid work as separate and distinct from family work, because women are still expected to manage reproductive labor in addition to engaging in paid work itself. Thus, women, in contrast to men, may do more of the backstage labors that sustain paid work as well as the management of this backstage labor and its coordination with other elements of everyday life.



In fact, Garey's (1999) research on working mothers demonstrates that women do not experience work and family as separate and distinct spheres of their lives, but they, in fact, work to integrate them. She uses the metaphor of "weaving work and motherhood" to illustrate their efforts at integration.

Weaving is both a process (an activity—to weave something) and a product (an object—a weaving, something constituted from available materials). . . . The metaphor of weaving illuminates the meaning that the women I interviewed gave to their life stories by capturing the interconnectedness of work and family within their lives (Garey 1999:14).

In her book, Garey presents several strategies for weaving work and motherhood as detailed by her respondents. By choosing to work the nightshift, some women are able to construct an image of themselves as "stay at home moms," an ideal which connects good mothering with being at home. They stress the importance of being at home during the day for their children, constructing their own mothering within the image of non-working and full-time mothers. They attempt to reconcile contradictory ideologies about mothering and working for pay by "weaving work and motherhood."

In a similar manner, weaving, as a metaphor which stresses integration, is useful for thinking about "negotiating work." This process involves the management and coordination of the backstage labors of paid employment, which must be woven into the fabric of everyday life. In this sense, the notion of "negotiating work" centers the supports necessary to engage in paid work.

Grengeri (1994) illustrates how some mothers negotiate the conditions and backstage labors essential to paid employment in a rural context. She examines General Motor's efforts to hire rural women in a mid-western, farming community to perform industrial piece-work in their homes. These women talk about their choice to work out of

their homes, as a way of negotiating work by avoiding the need for paid childcare, transportation, and some of the costs of self-preparation such as clothing and haircuts. While male partners tended to designate their supplemental and/ or homework as distinct from family and home by working in a garage or work room, women tended to—and were expected to—integrate their paid work into their everyday routines of domestic labor and childcare. In this manner,

paid work in the home became invisible to spouses, friends, and other family members since these people could see the woman only in her primary role of homemaking, which eclipsed all other activities (Gringeri 1994: 150).

Research such as Gringeri's suggests gendered distinctions and inequalities exist in the negotiation of work.

The concept of “negotiating work” as I have defined it illustrates the interdependency of paid work on labors negotiated within, outside, and across family and work realms. Thus, this work problematizes distinctions and borders between work and family.

Negotiating Work within Context

In Chapter Two, I addressed the context of economic restructuring and welfare reform as these changes affect the particular conditions of rural settings. In this section, I briefly highlight some of the ways context can affect the process of negotiating work. Examining low-income workers (and potential workers) provides an opportunity to reveal these negotiations and backstage labors more readily than an examination of workers in middle-class positions since low-income workers in the current economy work within a context of job insecurity, contingent and/or part-time work, low-pay, few, if any, benefits, and a much more tenuous pool of resources. In such a context, paid employment hinges

on a thread in which the conditions of paid work change regularly. Thus, paid work and the labors necessary to support it, must be negotiated again and again. All of these conditions and potential resources for negotiating work are constantly in flux.

It is unlikely that families would need to re-negotiate the delicate balance of formal and informal household labors with each change in jobs. The odd hours and other elements of available low-income jobs are often incompatible with child rearing, making child care difficult to find during night shifts and/or multiple shifts of paid employment. In a rural context, such jobs may necessitate other supplementary sources of income, whether it be additional “bad jobs” in the formal market, or other sources of income through the informal market (Nelson and Smith 1999).

In addition, the context of welfare reform places further restrictions on the resources available to low-income families in negotiating paid work. Cuts in social services leave low-income families with fewer resources than they had prior to reforms. The networks on which low-income mothers may rely for help with transportation, childcare, and other financial help essential to negotiating work are also negotiated with fewer resources than what were available before cuts in welfare, since network members are likely to have reduced resources as well (Oliker 2000). Although some of the “work” programs introduced under the reforms acknowledge the backstage labors and supports necessary to paid work by providing a minimal amount of assistance with child care subsidies and, in some cases transportation, most of these subsidies are temporary, assuming that once one has attained paid employment, it is self-sustaining and “negotiating work” is no longer necessary. In the context of economic restructuring and

welfare reform in rural areas, paid employment hinges on a thread in which conditions of work and that work that sustains it change regularly.

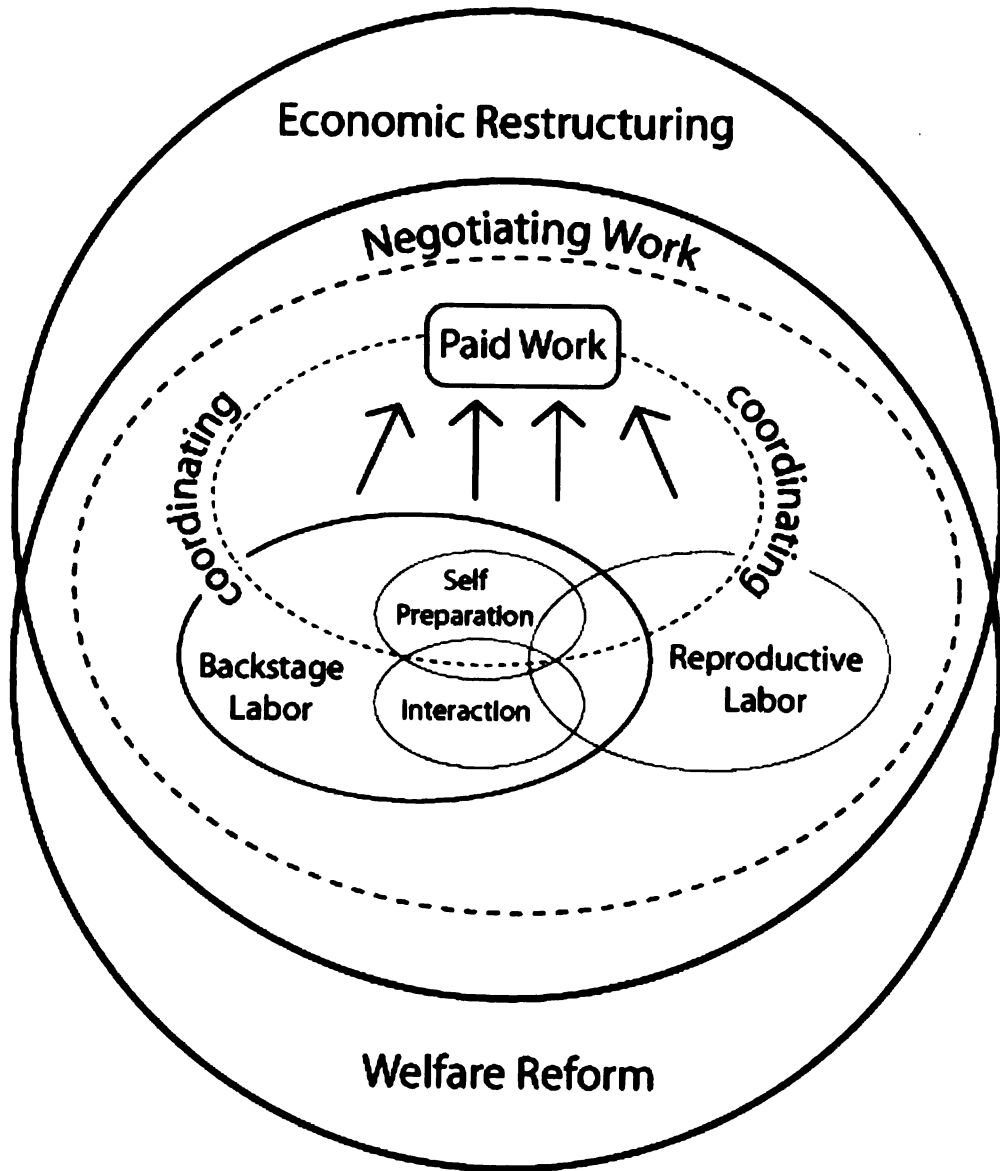
Conceptual Model for Negotiating Work

Having introduced the different concepts involved in negotiating work as well as the contexts within which the process occurs, Figure 3.1 illustrates the connections and overlap between the multiple concepts that I have addressed. In this figure, the overlap of economic restructuring and welfare reform provides a context in which paid work is negotiated by low-income families. The components of backstage labor addressed above provide a basis of support for paid work, designated by the arrows in the diagram, which extend from the various forms of backstage labor to sustain paid work. Self preparation and interaction are contained within the realm of backstage labor that supports paid work. Although reproductive labor overlaps with the backstage labors that support paid work, I have also designated a realm of reproductive labor that is not necessarily crucial in supporting paid work. (See my discussion of reproductive labor above.) The backstage labor of coordination is represented by a dotted line which connects paid work with all of the backstage labor that supports it. Though I have designated coordination as a “backstage labor” that supports paid work, I have differentiated this managerial work from other backstage labors in the diagram to demonstrate that coordinating is the managing of all of the other components, including paid work. Finally, the process of negotiating work links all of these elements within the context of economic restructuring and welfare reform.

My purpose in including Figure 3.1 is to highlight the interconnections between the labors subsumed within the process of negotiating work. I include welfare reform

and economic restructuring in this model because these are contexts in which all low-income families negotiate paid work. Nevertheless, this context will affect mothers differently based on stratifying variables, such as race and ethnicity, education, and residential stability. Although I do not include such stratifying variables in this diagram, it is obvious that these variables shape the experience of attaining and sustaining work, as I acknowledge in my research questions.

Figure 3.1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions introduced in Chapter Two will be addressed as I operationalize the conceptual framework outlined in this chapter.

1. What labors are necessary for rural low-income mothers to attain and sustain paid employment?
2. What are the implications of *context* for attaining and sustaining paid work?
3. How does the process/experience of negotiating work differ by race/ ethnicity? Residence stability (i.e., settled workers vis-à-vis migrant workers)? Region? Education? Family structure and marital status?
4. How does gender structure the negotiation of paid employment among family members?
5. What are the implications of the process of negotiating work for *family* life?

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have discussed feminist standpoint theories and critiques of “science as usual” (Harding 1991) as a theoretical lens to help me question assumptions about rural low-income mothers and begin my research with their everyday lived experiences. By doing so, I intend to reveal the backstage labors necessary for them to sustain paid employment, offering new insights for broadening the taken for granted definition of “work.” I have outlined a framework for thinking about the negotiation of paid work as a process involving self preparation, interaction work, reproductive labor, and the managerial work of coordinating all these components and labors in one’s life. Thus, after explaining how I have conceptualized the framework for negotiating work, in the following chapter, I outline what I did to operationalize this framework. Utilizing feminist theories and approaches, I outline my methodological approach to gather information about these women’s everyday lives.

Chapter Four: Research Methods

To address the research questions raised in the previous chapters, I developed an exploratory study that begins with the positions of low-income mothers, examining their negotiations of paid work within the context of rural economic restructuring and welfare reform. Feminist standpoint theory provides a theoretical frame as well as a methodological approach: beginning with the everyday lived experiences of low-income, rural mothers. This qualitative study is based on primary and secondary data in two rural mid-western counties: Delta County and Harvest County.¹ The purpose of this chapter is to outline my research design.

I begin by addressing some of the challenges of taking a feminist, reflexive approach. Next, I discuss my rationale for adopting a qualitative approach. Then, I discuss the sources of data upon which I rely for my analysis, addressing limitations of each. The data collection process is then covered, including a discussion of the interviewing process. Following this discussion, I outline my operationalization of the concept of negotiating work introduced in the previous chapter. In this section I address which specific interview questions are intended to yield insights into the various components of negotiating work. Finally, I discuss the process of coding and analyzing the interview data.

CHALLENGES IN TAKING A FEMINIST, REFLEXIVE APPROACH TO RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Feminist scholars have grappled with the complexities of presenting the active voice of the informant (“giving voice”), while also problematizing the power relationship

¹ Delta and Harvest County are pseudonyms, as are all names of subjects.

between informant and researcher (Gorelick 1991). Thus, feminist scholars critically examine the inequalities embedded in the researcher-informant relationship as well as their own biases and positions of privilege within the class structure. Anderson (1997) suggests that an examination of one's social location is particularly critical for white middle-class scholars studying across various axes of difference such as race and/or class. It is in this spirit that I reveal my own social location, as it relates to the research and analytic process, as well as my own thinking throughout that process.

In contrast to many of the women about whom I write in this dissertation, I have not had the experience of living in poverty or in a family that would be categorized as low-income. Though I was primarily raised by a single-parent for a significant portion of my childhood, the financial assistance and involvement of extended family members cushioned and elevated my life to the comfort of a middle-class position. Having the privilege of a college education after high school, my experiences with the low-income and inflexible work that is an everyday experience for the women described in this dissertation were fleeting and temporary. This background, and my current position as a white, academic in my late twenties, combined with the fact that I do not have children, creates an amount of social distance between me and the women with whom I spoke and about whom I write. This distance diminished and multiplied at times depending on the age, race/ethnicity, spoken language, and/or other axes of difference between us. At the same time, some mothers talked about how they benefited from the research process through the opportunity to talk and think more deeply about their lives.

As a feminist scholar I believe that I was cognizant and critical of the social distance between myself and mothers throughout the research process. Nevertheless, I

learned about my own assumptions and class biases through the research experience. One example serves to illustrate this point. One day on my way out to Delta County, I was thinking about the ways in which my experiences and those of the women with whom I spoke differed as well as the ways they were related. Over the course of the interviewing process in Delta County, I experienced a number of car problems, such as perpetual oil leaks, defunct car alarms, and a dead battery. I went to my interview with Brandy, feeling as if I could really relate to the transportation problems that many of these women reported. I too had experienced challenges in getting to my work—the work of interviewing. However, my interview with Brandy quickly put this matter in perspective, as she told me about the only vehicle to which she had access: a truck that was so defunct that it could only hold four gallons of gasoline at a time and needed to be parked on a decline in order to add this gasoline. This experience reminded me that, though I may *feel* financially strapped, the experience of financial hardship is relative. Thus, just as some mothers reported how talking about their lives and experiences was beneficial and informative to them, in a similar manner, I learned from the experience as well. Accordingly, the research experience becomes a reflexive process.

My analytic approach in Harvest County also involves a dialectic between my assumptions, and conceptualization of the process of negotiating work, and my revision of these ideas based on the experiences and insights of mothers. In this sense, my understanding of negotiating work has been a process in the spirit of a grounded theory approach (Strauss 1987). I began with assumptions about what negotiations mothers in Harvest and Delta County might make in order to get and keep work. After interacting with these mothers, however, I came to realize that some of my assumptions about their

negotiation of work were based on a middle-class rational choice model in which one makes a series of “choices” aimed at upward mobility based on improved job opportunities and income. The brittle and unyielding circumstances of the work involved, however, do not allow for such an assessment of “choices.” On the contrary, in some cases, women may be making a rational assertion of personal choice by breaking off from these jobs (Kelly *forthcoming* [2005]). It was not until I began to learn more about these women’s work and their lives that I realized the assumptions behind some of my initial thinking about how they might negotiate paid employment.

Thus, my approach is not only to problematize and reveal my own assumptions, but also to locate the voices and experiences of these women within a larger context of inequalities. In this manner feminist research moves beyond “giving voice” and simply reporting what women have to say, by locating their experiences and circumstances within a larger structural context (Gorelick 1991). Not only have I tried to problematize and critically examine my own standpoint and position in relation to those of the women with whom I spoke, but I also have tried to locate their standpoint within a larger social structure.

RATIONALE

As established in previous chapters, this research aims to contribute to an emergent body of research on rural low-income families. Given the dearth of research that centers the efforts of rural low-income mothers to negotiate work, this project is exploratory in nature and a qualitative approach was adopted. Qualitative research is ideal for the study of families because it focuses not on structural/demographic trends, but on “the *process* by which families [and individuals] create, sustain, and discuss their

own...realities” (Daly 1992, 4). Qualitative research methods lend themselves to an understanding of how some families and individuals give meanings to their experience rather than mapping out larger demographic trends. This proves especially useful for an exploratory examination of what I have defined as a *process* of negotiating work. In addition, qualitative analysis provides an avenue for revealing routine aspects of every day life that may be taken for granted (Daly 1992).

DATA SOURCES

To examine the way paid work is negotiated within the context of economic restructuring and welfare reform, I rely on four sets of data. The first and second sets are made up of secondary data from a longitudinal, multi-state research project² that monitors rural low-income families in the context of welfare reform. The sample from this project consists predominately of Latino agricultural workers, the majority of whom are migrants. The first and second waves of interview data from the longitudinal *Rural Families Speak* study constitute my first and second sources of data. Since these are secondary data sources with interview formats that were not specifically constructed to derive information about how mothers negotiate work, I also conducted personal interviews, which constitute the third and fourth sets of data. The third set of data comes from four follow-up, in-depth interviews with women who were interviewed in the *Rural Families Speak* project to explore further issues addressed in the earlier Harvest County interviews as well as to ask additional questions about negotiating work. To compliment these data, I developed a fourth data set, consisting of twelve interviews with mothers, some of whom had been subjects in a previous research project on rural low-income

² *Rural Families Speak* (NC-223), Rural Low-Income Families: Tracking Their Well-Being and Functioning in the Context of Welfare Reform

families in the mid-west.³ Rather than using secondary data from this project, I relocated and interviewed some of the women who participated in the original study as well as others who had not but who were similar women in the same county. These interviews with white settled families in a different county comprise my fourth source of data. The information in Table 4.1 outlines the number of informants and sources of data for each of the sets.

Table 4.1: Data Sets

Data Sets	Data Source
(1) Interview texts with 33 Latina rural low-income mothers	<i>Secondary data</i> from the <i>first wave</i> of interviews for the <i>Rural Families Speak</i> research project
(2) Interview texts with the 33 rural Latina low-income mothers in (1)	<i>Secondary data</i> from the <i>second wave</i> of interviews with 33 of the Wave I mothers for the <i>Rural Families Speak</i> research project
(3) Follow-up interview texts with four of the 33 rural Latina mothers who were comfortable interviewing in English	Four interviews as part of the <i>third wave</i> of follow-up interviews with Wave I & II informants from the <i>Rural Families Speak</i> project
(4) Interview texts with 12 white rural low-income mothers	Twelve interviews with former SAPMA informants and women in same county

In the remainder of this section I elaborate on the approaches I used to conduct interviews and analyze the data. First, I briefly describe the two studies from which I derived data or potential informants.⁴ Then I address the interviewing and sampling techniques used for the *Rural Families Speak* project as well as the approach that I utilized in the interviews that I conducted in Delta County. Finally, I address my analysis of the data.

³ SAPMA, Status and Potential of Michigan Agriculture, Survey of Children's Lives in Rural Michigan.

⁴ I address the NC-223 research project in greater detail than the SAPMA project since I relied on the latter project for potential informants only and utilized my own approach to collect data.

Rural Families Speak Project: Tracking the Well-Being and Functioning of Rural Low-income Families in the Context of Welfare Reform

This research project, funded by the Michigan Agriculture Experiment Station was a multi-state, longitudinal study designed to “document welfare reform impacts from the perspectives of rural family members, within their community context, and across communities with differing social support policies and provisions” (NC-223 Official Project Statement, 1). The *Rural Families Speak* study was carried out in rural counties of 15 states across the U.S. and included three annual waves of interviews.⁵ The interview schedule included a broad range and large number of open-ended and closed-ended questions covering topics such as work and work history, health and well-being, parenting, education, and use of community and public services. Data are being analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Standardized codes have been created for the national project, and researchers from individual states may create additional codes for their own analyses.

According to the sampling criteria agreed upon by the research team, rural low-income mothers with at least one child under twelve were targeted.⁶ The portion of this project that I utilize as secondary data focuses primarily on Latino migrant workers who are employed in Michigan agriculture for at least part of the year. Given the nature of a migrant population, it was important to work through inside contacts and networks to access this difficult-to-reach population and to establish credibility. The sample was

⁵ This research was supported in part by The Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station. Data were collected in conjunction with the cooperative multi-state research project NC-223 Rural Low-Income Families: Monitoring Their Well-Being and Functioning in the Context of Welfare Reform. Cooperating states are California, Colorado, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Oregon, New Hampshire, and Wyoming.

⁶ The Rural-urban Continuum Code (USDA, ERS) was used to assess the degree of ruralness of a county. The designation of “low-income” was agreed to be an income level two times below the poverty level. Eligibility for social services such as food stamps was used by many states as an easy way of determining eligibility by income.

drawn utilizing a snowball approach. The interviewers developed the sample through their connections forged in their community work and personal interactions, the referrals of other community/human service workers, friends, friends of friends, and eventually friends and acquaintances of other mothers. Initial contacts of approximately ten women were made through information from one returned postcard and recommendations through a community church and Family Independence Agency (FIA) employee.⁷ Additional referrals were made through the local church. Some of the women contacted lived at farm labor camps, where they introduced interviewers to additional women. The interviewers also made contacts by visiting labor camps. They would arrive at a camp late in the day, when workers were returning from a day in the fields. Though they may have come to a camp to pursue a pre-arranged interview, they would often find other willing participants during a typical visit.

Most interviews were conducted by two principal interviewers who traveled to labor camps and individuals' homes together. One interviewer was bilingual. Whether the interview was conducted in Spanish or English was left up to the informant. Some interviews were conducted at community buildings, such as a local church. The majority of interviews were conducted in women's homes. The interviewers were struck by the willingness of mothers to welcome them into their homes after a long, hot, and exhausting day of work in the fields. Two other community members conducted a small number of interviews for the research project. Both of these individuals were bilingual.

⁷ Though employed by the FIA, this community contact utilized her personal connections to provide the interviewers with potential informants, rather than referring them to her clients per se. Like the primary interviewer, this community contact has been an active member in the surrounding Latino communities for many years, both personally and professionally.

A small number of interviews were conducted by the principal investigator and myself. Neither of us is bilingual.

A total of 43 face-to-face interviews were conducted during 2000, and 33 of these original mothers were relocated by interviewers and agreed to participate in a follow up interview during 2001.⁸ Interviews ranged from approximately one hour to three hours in length. They were tape recorded and later transcribed. Twenty-five of the 43 first wave of interviews were conducted in Spanish, although they were translated into English and transcribed. During July-December, 2001, interviewers spoke with 33 of the original 43 women. Eighteen of these second-wave interviews were conducted in Spanish and fifteen were conducted in English. Since some women migrated back to southern states early because of the effect of bad weather on crops, three of the English interviews were conducted long-distance over the phone. All of the interviews conducted during Wave II were tape recorded, translated, and transcribed in a similar manner as those in Wave I.

These interviews provide a particularly important source of information to examine the way rural low-income mothers negotiate paid work in the context of welfare reform. Few studies of low-income families and/or welfare reform have accounted for diversity according to region, race/ethnicity, or geographic mobility in the form of migrant work (for exceptions regarding race/ethnicity and/or region see Neubeck and Cazenave 2001; Urban Justice 2001; Weber et al. 2001). I utilize the data from the 33 Wave I and Wave II transcribed interviews to examine the way this unique and understudied population negotiate paid work within the context of welfare reform.

⁸ I only use interview data provided by the thirty-three mothers who were successfully relocated and interviewed both years.

Demographic Characteristics of Harvest County Informants

At the time they were first interviewed, the average age of the 33 mothers was 32.5.⁹ This compares to a median age of 36.9 years for Harvest County residents (U.S. Census PGDC 2000). Mothers' ages ranged from 17 to 49 years of age. Only one mother, a widow named Mercedes, was without a partner throughout the entire interview period. Three other women were effectively without partners at one time or another during the interview process.¹⁰ Thus, these two-parent families are reflective of Harvest County in which 60.4 percent of the population (15 years and over) was married in 2000 and 34 percent lived in families with children under 18 (U.S. Census PSSC; PGDC 2000). Despite the prevalence of two-parent households among the sample, these families remained low-income, with a household income of two hundred percent of the poverty level as a threshold for inclusion in the study.¹¹ Mothers had an average of 2.9 children at the time of the first interview. Some mothers had as few as one child and others as many as six. Twenty (69.6%) out of thirty-three mothers had at least one child age five or under at the time of the first interview in 2000. Thus, sampled families are generally larger in size than the average family size (3.09) for the county.

Limited education presented a significant barrier to employment for women in Harvest County. Seventy-eight percent (26) of mothers reported an educational level of high school or less, and 19 (59.2%) out of 32 mothers reported that they had an education

⁹ Age and other time sensitive demographic information in this section is given at 2000.

¹⁰ Two women were separated from their partners for part of the three-year span of interviews. Another woman was effectively separated from her partner during the first wave of interviews because her partner worked and lived in a state different from that in which she and her children lived during the work week.

¹¹ The median household income in Harvest County in 1999 dollars was \$35,307, with 11 percent of families and 17.8 percent of families with related children under 18 in the county living below the poverty level (U.S. Census DSSC 2000). However, since 70 percent of the Harvest County sample migrated to the county for work on a temporary basis, they—and others who performed similar temporary labor—would not be included in these statistics.

of eighth grade or less. Their educational levels fall well below those of the county in which 79.8 percent of residents have a high school equivalent or higher education. In addition, sampled mothers said language skills were a barrier to finding work in their home states in the South. Though mothers were not asked about their English language skills, the number of mothers (and their partners) who chose to conduct their interview in Spanish (17 or 52%) provides some indication. In Harvest County, 9.8 percent of the population in 2000 spoke Spanish at home (U.S. Census PSSC 2000).

Harvest County is one of ten Michigan counties that account for 80 percent of all migrant agricultural workers in a state highly reliant on agriculture (Rochin 1989; Rosenbaum 2002). Twenty-three mothers (70%) represented this county trend and regularly migrated with their families to work in Harvest County. These families usually resided in Southern states such as Texas, Florida, and sometimes Mexico and migrated to Harvest County for a range of months each year to perform seasonal agricultural labor.

Limitations of *Rural Families Speak* Data

The use of secondary data from the *Rural Families Speak* project limited my involvement in the construction of the interview format. Rather than constructing questions that address my specific research interests in the ways work is negotiated, I was limited to analyzing and trying to fit questions which were designated with other purposes in mind. Since *Rural Families Speak* is a large project facilitated by a diverse group of multi-disciplinary researchers from 15 different states, the interview format was necessarily lengthy and there was little time during a typical interview for follow-up questions based on an informant's responses. Further, since I did not conduct most of the interviews myself, follow-up questions that I would have pursued as part of my interest in

negotiating work are not likely to have been addressed in the depth to which I would like to explore this topic. This remains one of the disadvantages of secondary data analysis.

Despite such limitations, the purpose and intent of the larger project is related to my research focus and there are several topics and specific questions in the interview format for the first wave of interviews that address my focus on negotiating work. I also was involved in this research project prior to the first wave of interviews. Though I did not personally conduct the majority of the interviews, I was intimately involved in the interviewing process and conducted five of the first wave of interviews myself. Finally, I attempted to reduce the limitation by conducting four interviews myself as part of the third wave of data collection and use them in this dissertation.

**SAPMA (Status and Potential of Michigan Agriculture)
“Survey of Children’s Lives in Rural Michigan”**

Prior to the 1996 welfare reforms, the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station funded a research project to gain a better understanding of rural poverty and to assess family and community strategies available for children living in poverty in the rural mid-west. I introduce this project (SAPMA) because it provided the rationale and foundation for the *Rural Families Speak* multi-state project that followed. Though I do not utilize any of the original data from this project in my research, I did return to the same county (years after the original study was conducted) to conduct interviews using a snowball sample that began with some of the original SAPMA informants. Therefore, I provide a brief overview of the original project here.

“The purpose of [the SAPMA] study was to better understand the circumstances, contexts, and experiences of rural children and their families living in poverty” (Imig et al. 1997: 70). The project stressed the importance and uniqueness of the rural context of

economic stress with a focus on the well-being and school readiness of children. The researchers utilized connections with local community agencies in a small rural school district of a non-metropolitan county to formulate focus groups with direct service providers and limited-resource mothers. They also conducted surveys and individual semi-structured interviews with 30 mothers. In addition, they conducted a telephone survey with 300 households county-wide. The data for this project were gathered between October, 1995 and January 1996 (Wells 1999: 57-59).

Those involved in both (SAPMA and the *Rural Families Speak*) projects felt the sample of the *Rural Families Speak* project should provide a comparative population to the earlier SAPMA study. Thus, a Latino and primarily migrant sample was chosen to compliment the predominately white, settled sample from the SAPMA project.

DATA COLLECTION

***Rural Families Speak* Follow-Up Interviews**

To remedy the limitations of omissions in data discussed above, as part of the third wave of data collection in Harvest County, I conducted four of the third wave interviews for the *Rural Families Speak* project during the fall of 2002, including additional questions and probes that focused on my specific research interests. Prior to these interviews, I reviewed the original interview transcripts (from Waves I and II) and added questions that complimented and expanded on an informant's initial interview, exploring how mothers negotiated employment. Since all four of these mothers had returned to their homes in the South early in 2002 or had settled there, these interviews were conducted over the phone. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Conducting these interviews not only provided me with the opportunity to ask additional

questions beyond the standard interviewing instrument for the *Rural Families Speak* research project, but I was also able to inquire further about relevant issues that arose from that standard interview format. The data developed by these additional interviews provide important insights into my analysis of the first and second wave data because these interviews enabled me to probe for information on negotiating work.

Since the original mothers were part of a non-random snowball sample and the small sample does not attempt to generalize to a larger population, I did not attempt to randomly select these four women. Rather, it best served my purpose to select those women who articulated issues most relevant to illuminating how paid work is negotiated. Beyond the informant's original responses, the language in which the initial interview was conducted further restricted whom I was able to interview since I do not speak Spanish. Therefore, from the 18 interviews that were conducted in English during both waves of interviewing, I selected eight mothers whose first and second wave interviews addressed some components of negotiating work. I was able to interview four of those eight women.¹²

Delta County Interviews

During the summer/fall of 2002, I conducted twelve in-depth interviews in the rural county. I chose to conduct these additional interviews in Delta County because I wanted to explore how low-income mothers negotiate paid employment in different contexts. Delta County represented a context different from Harvest County, a restructured economy predominated by low-wage service work. Yet, the county still had

¹² Some women from the second wave of interviews were unable to be located and/or interviewed for the third wave of data collection for a number of reasons. For logistical reasons, interviewers other than I interviewed some of the eight women who I selected to potentially interview myself.

ties with industry. Thus, the county provided a different context of work, and, therefore, a contrast to migrant agricultural labor.

Developing the Sample

With permission from the principal investigators of the SAPMA project (Dr. Jan Bokemeier and Dr. David Imig), I began by trying to locate some of the informants from the project to create my sample. I was able to collaborate with another research team member from the SAPMA project, Dr. Barbara Wells, who planned to re-interview the original mothers from the SAPMA project during 2004. Dr. Wells helped direct me to those women who were categorized as low-income during their earlier interviews in 1995 and/or 1996. These women were the starting point for my entry into the county. I contacted seven potential mothers, reminding them of the previous study in which they were interviewed, and explained that Barbara Wells and I were trying to relocate some of the women to conduct follow-up interviews. Only one of the women I contacted in this manner refused to be interviewed.¹³ Dr. Wells and I conducted all six of these interviews together in informants' homes.¹⁴

The process of conducting collaborative interviews was immensely useful to me. Working with Dr. Wells, who was involved with and one of the original interviewers for the SAPMA project, gave me increased credibility with families. In addition, her experience and familiarity with the women, enabled her to ask follow-up questions that were useful to my interest. Thus, doing interviews together provided both of us with information we might not have discovered if we were interviewing by ourselves.

¹³ Since Barbara Wells was doing follow-up interviews, she asked this informant if she would be willing to answer a few questions over the phone. She agreed to the phone interview format. I felt it was important for my purposes to interview women in person. Therefore, I did not speak with this particular informant.

¹⁴ There was some overlap in our research interests, such as perceptions of welfare reform, job context, and family/work issues.

Not all of the women who Dr. Wells and I interviewed together are included in my sample of Delta County mothers. The household income of some of these women's families had changed since 1995-96. Therefore, some no longer fit the category of "low-income." Although these women's interviews are not included in my analysis, they served as pilot interviews at the early stage of the research process. The women interviewed also helped me to connect with other women in the county who might be willing to talk with me. In particular, I had hoped that one of these interviews, with a local hairdresser, would lead to other mothers who I might interview. I relied on Cori as a community contact and used portions of her interview to address community and job context, though she did not qualify as low-income and was not included in the eventual sample.

These collaborative interviews with original SAPMA mothers comprise only four of the twelve interviews from Delta County. To develop the rest of the sample, I utilized a snowball sampling technique, beginning with the women who were interviewed and their contacts in the community. At the end of each interview, I asked women if they knew anyone else in the county like themselves.¹⁵ These women connected me to two additional women. One of the four mothers told me about another woman, who introduced me to yet another mother to interview. Though I initially anticipated that I could find all ten targeted mothers through the original SAPMA mothers and their community contacts, these contacts were exhausted fairly quickly. Thus, I began

¹⁵ In some cases, if the informant did not qualify due to income, I would use wording such as the following: "We've talked a little bit about how it's hard to find good jobs in the area. I'm really interested in talking with folks who may be having a harder time than you are right now with that, maybe a single mom, and/or folks that are having to work more than one job or are having a hard time finding work...."

distributing flyers at local gas stations and businesses (see Appendix B).¹⁶ Although this approach did not directly lead me to any potential mothers, in talking with one of the attendants at a local place of business about displaying my flyer, I found someone who agreed to an interview. She, in turn, connected me with one other informant. I met the last four mothers through a community contact affiliated with the university.

Demographic Characteristics of Delta County Sample

The data in Table 4.2 provide some basic information on each informant. These mothers are slightly younger, on average, than Harvest County mothers, with an average age of 30.9 years. This compares with a median age of 31.9 for Delta County at large (U.S. Census PGDC 2000). Though higher than the sample in Harvest County, the educational levels of this group of mothers is low relative to Delta County, with 75 percent (9) of mothers having completed high school, compared to 83.8 percent of the county population (U.S. Census PSSC 2000).

Low education levels can help explain the low incomes of this group relative to the county in general. Half of the informants reported an annual household income of \$15,000 or less, compared to approximately 20 percent of the households in the county. (Four out of twelve mothers [33%] reported an annual household income of less than \$10,000, compared to 12.5% of county households.) The median household income in Delta County was \$33,849 in 1999 dollars, with 14.6 percent of families with children under 18 living below the poverty level (U.S. Census [PSEC] 2000).

Whether or not a partner is present can drastically affect household income and a mother's ability to negotiate paid employment outside of the home. Moreover, single

¹⁶ Since other studies (Bokemeier et al. 1995) have found that women do not like to be labeled low-income, I decided to target single mothers in these flyers since single mothers are more likely to fall to the category of low-income. I also wanted to include more diverse family forms in the sample.

motherhood has been strongly linked with poverty (Pearce 1978). All but three mothers (out of twelve) had a partner living with them at the time of the interview. In Delta County, 29.1 percent of households are family households with children. The number and ages of children in the household can make employment outside the home a challenge to negotiate. The number of children in the home ranged from one to five, with an average of 2.5 for this sample. This is fairly comparable to the average family size (2.95) for the county (U.S. Census [PGDC] 2000). Seven out of twelve mothers had at least one child age five or under in the household at the time of the interview.

Table 4.2: Demographic Characteristics of Delta County Mothers (2002)

Pseudonym	Age	Education	Partner?	Children	Household Income
Sue	47	HS	Y	2	\$20-30,000/yr.
Liz	39	SC	Y	4	unavailable
Tracy	38	SC	Y	1	\$25-30,000/yr.
Gail	43	HS	N	3	\$10-15,000/yr.
Abby	19	HS	Y	1	<\$10,000/yr.
Brandy	19	<HS	N	2	<\$10,000/yr.
Clara	21	<HS	Y	3	<\$10,000/yr.
Nancy	19	HS	Y	1	<\$10,000/yr.
Erin	25	<HS	Y	5	\$20-25,000/yr.
Jenna	44	SC	N	2	\$15-20,000/yr.
Ellie	24	HS	Y	3	\$10-15,000/yr.
Laurel	33	HS	Y	3	\$30,000+, R unsure

Age represents the age of the mothers at the time of the interview. **Education** is the highest level of education the informant had completed at the time of the interview. (<HS=less than high school diploma or GED equivalent; HS=high school; HS, SC=high school completed, with some college, but no complete degree beyond high school.) **Partner?** indicates whether or not a mother had a partner living with her at the time of the interview. **Children** indicates the number of children living in the household at the time of the interview. (This number includes, in some cases, partners' children from previous relationships. It does not include older children of R who are no longer living in the household.) **Household Income** is the estimated household income given by informants. Some mothers did not give an amount or were unsure. In these cases, I estimated household income based on the wage information provided by informants.

Limitations of the Delta County Data

There are several limitations in my approach to creating a sample. Because I did not generate a large and diverse sample, my data have certain biases. None of the women

with whom I spoke were working multiple jobs at the time of the interview. I heard a number of women and community contacts reference mothers they knew who had to work more than one job, but I was unable to secure an interview with these mothers. Two community contacts told me that they knew of women working multiple jobs with whom I should speak but later informed me that these women said they did not have time for an interview. In addition, I had intended for the women in the Delta County sample to more closely resemble those in the Harvest County sample in terms of children's age and income. Although the four women who were part of the original SAPMA project had children who qualified by age at the time of the initial interview, three out of four of the children in these families were over age twelve at the time I interviewed their mothers.

Interviewing Process

Interviews were scheduled over the phone or in person. All were conducted at an informant's home, at her request. Because this study aims to reveal taken for granted labors, I felt it was important to compensate mothers for their time as much as I could. Therefore, I gave a \$10 stipend to each informant upon completion of or withdrawal from the interview (see consent form, Appendix C). I conducted all in-depth interviews myself or in collaboration with Dr. Wells.

In contrast to the secondary data included in the *Rural Families Speak* data set, I created the interview schedule used in Delta County. I asked some questions from the *Rural Families Speak* project interview formats and some questions from the original SAPMA interview formats that were relevant to my interest in negotiating work. In addition to utilizing interview questions from the SAPMA and *Rural Families* interview format, I constructed other questions that focus on negotiating work. Since I conducted

these interviews myself, I was able to ask follow-up questions (based on responses) in accordance with my own research interests. Like the *Rural Families Speak* interviews, these interviews were tape recorded, with an informant's permission. I transcribed all twelve interview texts.

After some of the initial and pilot interviews, I made a few revisions in my interview format, including some note cards (see Appendix D) I used to ask about income and education levels. These were included at the advice of Dr. Wells based on her experience with the SAPMA project and mothers' reluctance to talk about these topics, especially in front of their children. Having the information on a note card allowed me to simply ask women to look at the card and select a category.

Challenges in Eliciting Information on Negotiating Paid Work

Not surprisingly, asking direct questions about "negotiating work" did not yield in-depth discussions of the multiple components in this process. Questions such as, "Is there anything that you think you and/or your partner need to do or take care of so that you can get to work every day or so that you can keep your job?" were met with responses such as, "Nothing" or "Just get to work on time and do what I'm told" and "I think there's jobs out there for people that want them. They just have to go for them...[and] be determined to work."¹⁷ Similarly, when asked how she manages taking care of her family and working Afra responded, "Oh I have to do it, and I do it." Jenna provided a similar response to such a question about managing family needs and employment, "Well, I was getting a divorce from my first husband, and I had two kids at

¹⁷ Some women did think about the questions a little more than others and talked about the need for day care. A few mothers also talked about the general need to schedule and one mother talked about food preparation as a necessary step to be taken care of before she goes to work. Some mothers simply needed further explanation and/or examples to answer such questions.

home and had to do what I had to do.” Marjorie DeVault (1991) addresses a similar experience in her examination of “feeding work,” another taken for granted form of labor. As DeVault acknowledges, these sort of answers have implications for understanding the meanings attached to paid and unpaid work as well as the invisible and taken-for-grantedness of this labor. For example, women addressed questions about feeding work with responses such as, “It’s just what you do” and “I don’t really do much housework” (1991: 29). Such responses suggest a devaluation of the backstage labors needed to get and keep paid work; it is taken for granted as something that people just do, just should do, and maybe should not even take credit for doing. These sorts of responses thus provide insights into what women think or do not think about the labor they do to support paid work.

Accordingly, to gain more information about this process, I had to take less of a direct approach and more of a conversational approach, asking about related issues and components that I had conceptualized as part of this process and/or that had come out in related conversations in other interviews. Feminist researchers have been critical of the amount of power that a researcher has to define a situation (Gorelick 1991; Stacey 1988). Nevertheless, like DeVault (1991), I examine discussions of related issues that I define as part of this backstage labor as well as direct responses like those above.

In a similar manner, C. Wright Mills (1940, cited in Wells 1999) makes a distinction between what people say and what people actually do. It is important to examine both the talk and the actions of individuals (see also DeVault 1991). In my interviews, after responding that they really didn’t need to do anything to get to work every day or that there really weren’t any conflicts between work and family life for

them, women would often relay stories about times when these realms of their lives did come into conflict or talk about the organizational labor that they did to get to work.

These stories and discussions became an important source of data.

Challenges of Social Class

The women also appeared hesitant to address any “problems” connected to work and family conflict and a common response in both counties to questions about conflicts or difficulties with work and family conflict was, “No. Everything is fine.” I speculate that their hesitancy may be related to social class and the restrictions and assumptions placed upon mothers from different class positions. Indeed, I can imagine middle-class women discussing their work/family dilemmas and strategies in detail. The context of welfare may help explain this hesitancy to report any “problems” with work/family conflict or difficulties “getting to work.” Low-income mothers are often portrayed as irresponsible, lazy, and inadequate parents and workers. Within such a context, a mother may be hesitant to report any problems that she has as a mother, since this may be viewed as reflecting negatively on her ability as a parent and/or worker. Since mothers often addressed specific dilemmas they had experienced in getting to work, balancing work and family life and so forth, a more indirect approach was useful.

In her study of working-class women’s paid work, Johnson (2002) addresses the methodological issue of contradictions or disagreements within various sources of data. In her case, she addresses disagreements—in her multi-method approach—between information presented in quantitative and qualitative data. In the case of Harvest County mothers, they sometimes disagreed with each other, as well as with themselves throughout the course of interviews. Johnson (2002) explains that both perspectives

presented by informants, and the fact that there is a discrepancy, are important and tell us something about the shifting meanings of events and details for women and their lives. I am suggesting that in this case, such contradictions may provide insights into the complexities of social class and motherhood.

OPERATIONALIZING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAME ON NEGOTIATING WORK

Information on how mothers negotiate paid employment was often best elicited with an indirect approach. Nevertheless, I attempted to create questions for the twelve interviews that I conducted and to use questions from the *Rural Families Speak* project that yielded information about concepts related to the negotiation of work. Below, I relate those interview questions to my conceptual definitions and my five research questions. I have organized my discussion around the five research questions first introduced in Chapter Two.

1. What labors are necessary to attain and sustain paid employment?

My primary research question focuses on the multiple components of negotiating work: self-preparation, interaction, reproductive labor, and coordination. However, many of these concepts overlap, and information was best elicited through more general questions about experiences at work and work history. (See Table 4.3 below for a reference guide to specific question). I asked each informant for a work history, outlining a minimum of the last three jobs held. In each case, I was careful to probe for information such as how she got the job, whether she had any problems with the job, and why she left the job. If mothers were not employed at the time of the interview, I asked them, “What would need to happen right now in order for you to be able to work for

pay?”¹⁸ I also asked employed mothers whether they were thinking of changing jobs and, “What would need to happen in order for you to get a better job in this area?” and what would help them get their ideal job? Much of my work as an interviewer was to listen for potential components of negotiating work and ask appropriate follow-up questions. This approach allowed for individual variation in experience and for informants to structure their own narratives.

The interview format for the *Rural Families Speak* project in Harvest County contained comparable questions to some of those I asked Delta County mothers. In fact, my previous involvement with the *Rural Families Speak* project provided a testing ground for many questions that I used or adapted to ask Delta County mothers. In addition to asking about current employment, *Rural Families Speak* interviewers asked about mother’s work history. If mothers were not employed at the time of the interview, they were asked if they were looking for a job and about how they were going about their job search. Mothers were also asked what their ideal job for supporting their family would be and what would help them get this job. Such questions yielded insights about the negotiation of work. Table 4.3 presents some of these more general questions on employment, employment history, and negotiating work.

¹⁸ The interview format from the *Rural Families Speak* project also contained questions about work history, though interviewers besides myself were not likely to elicit as much detailed information about all components of negotiating work as I have defined the conceptual frame.

Table 4.3: Guide to Interview and Research Questions

1. labors necessary to attain and sustain paid work: (GENERAL)

Appendix:	E*	F	G	H
Barriers to Work	p.304,#3; p.306,#1	p.326,gaps emp.; p.328,#6; p.330,#9-10	#s 5, 7, 11	#s 13,14, 15, 30, 41
Attaining Work	p.303, #2; p.303, #7; p.307,#5	p.330,#9	#s 4, 7, 8	#s 2, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15, 16,
Sustaining Work	p.303, #5; p.306,#1; p.304,#1b; p.305,#3,8,9 p.306, #1	p.325,#2; p.325,#1A; p.326,#2; p.327,#5; p.328,#1A p.329,#1/B,5-7; p.334,#1; p.335,#4	#s 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 13	#s 6, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 40

* For an explanation of appendices see cover sheet of each appendix. Tables 4.3-4.10 provide guides as to which interview questions in each interview format address my five research questions. However, many interview questions are likely to illuminate more than one research question. Therefore, the research questions and corresponding categories should not be thought of as mutually exclusive.

In addition to insights gained from more general questions, other interview questions address more specific components of negotiating work: self-preparation, interaction, reproductive labor, and coordination (managerial labor). I review each component individually and discuss relevant interview questions. I conceptualized **self-preparation** to include the following components: (1) grooming one's physical appearance (purchasing of appropriate clothing and/or uniforms, getting haircuts, additional laundry expenses); (2) building credentials and skills (efforts to acquire education, training, or skills); and (3) making oneself available by securing transportation and/or moving (i.e., getting to work). I asked mothers to talk about the last time they were looking for a job and think about all of the things they did to find and get the job.

In addition to ascertaining current education levels, both interview formats (Delta and Harvest Counties) inquire about recent efforts to attain education, training, or other skills. Interview formats for Delta County and Harvest County both assess transportation and issues related to getting to work. They ask about how mothers get around, whether they have a car, what they do when their car breaks down, how they get to work, and so on. In addition, the interview format created for migrant workers for the second wave of interviews in Harvest County integrated questions about mothers and their families' migrations to work each year and how migrating each year affected their family (see Appendix F). I also asked the four mothers who I interviewed for the third wave of interviews to tell me about all of the things they need to do to prepare for the trip (see Appendix G).¹⁹ In general, Harvest County mothers spoke about migration throughout the interviews as it related to many areas of their lives.

Table 4.4: Guide to Interview and Research Questions

1a. labors necessary to attain and sustain paid work? SELF-PREPARATION

Appendix:	E	F	G	H
1. physical self-preparation (uniforms, haircuts)		p. 329, #8	#8	#16
2. building credentials (education, training)	p.306, #1; p.307, #4-5;	p.326,#2; p.329,# 8-9	#5, 7-8	#9-11, 14-16
3. Getting to Work (transportation, moving)	p.304, #1-2; p.306, #5;	p.323,bottom; p. 328, #1-2 p. 329,#8-9	#5, 8, 12-13	#14, 16, 19-21

Several questions elicited information about the interactive labor that mothers engaged in for work. I conceptualized **interaction** to include (1) networking; (2) managing relationships and interactions with employers and co-workers (unfavorable

¹⁹ For the third wave interview protocol of the *Rural Families Speak* project, contact the author at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.

working conditions: hostile work environment, sexual harassment, discrimination); and (3) “emotional labor” (presentation of self, managing ones emotions to get or keep a job). To gather information about managing relations with employers, dealing with unfavorable working conditions, and the potential emotional labor needed to deal with such circumstances, I relied on general questions that asked mothers what they think of their work and whether they have any problems at work. I learned from my experience in the *Rural Families Speak* project that mothers often volunteered information about discrimination, sexual harassment, or problems with co-workers in answer to such questions. In addition, for the interviews I conducted in Delta County and the interviews that I conducted myself with Harvest County mothers, I created questions that specifically referenced and asked about sexual harassment, discrimination, and problems with co-workers.

Table 4.5: Guide to Interview and Research Questions

1b. labors necessary to attain and sustain paid work: INTERACTION

Appendix:	E	F	G	H
1. networking, i.e., who you know	p.309,#1		#7, 8, 13	#15-16
2. managing relations w/ employers and co-workers (unfavorable working conditions, sexual harassment, discrimination...)	p.303, #5; p.303, #3-4	p.329, #5-6	#1, 11- 12	#5-6, 24-25, 28
3. emotional labor (managing one’s emotions)	p.303, #5;	p.329, #5-6	#1	#5-6

Reproductive Labor is the labor needed to sustain family life (domestic labor such as house cleaning and food preparation, care work such as caring for children and elder family members) and the reproduction or replenishing of the labor force. First, workers must be fed, clothed, and cared for so that they are energized and prepared employees. This labor may be undertaken by a woman or other family members.

Second, families and reproductive labor (child care, appointments for the care and maintenance of children or one self, parent-teacher conferences, illnesses) often need to be managed so they do not interfere with paid work. The interview formats used for Harvest County mothers contain a number of questions that address child care needs and reproductive labors as they relate to and potentially interfere with paid employment. I included similar questions in creating the Delta County interview schedule and attempted to further draw out how mothers manage reproductive labor with family life through follow-up questions. See Table 4.6 below for specific questions.

Table 4.6: Guide to Interview and Research Questions

1c. labors necessary to attain and sustain paid work: REPRODUCTIVE LABOR

Appendix:	E	F	G	H
REPRODUCTIVE LABOR	p.306, #1; p.306,#6, 8	p.328, #6; p.329, #7-10;	#5, 7, 9, 11, 12	#14-17, 27-28, 29-30
Child Care	p.303, #3-9	p.329, #3-6		#22-26

Coordinating involves the coordination all of these often disparate and contradictory labors and interactions within the context of one’s everyday life; the process of coordinating and managing all of these demands, such as transportation, child care, relationships with bosses and co-workers, managing poor working conditions and/or multiple jobs, within the context of one’s life on an everyday basis. Insights about how mothers coordinate and manage these different labors within their daily lives are likely to arise out of their discussions of the above components of negotiating work. In addition, all interview formats asked mothers to talk about their routine in a “typical day” (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7: Guide to Interview and Research Questions

1d. labors necessary to attain and sustain paid work: COORDINATION

Appendix:	E	F	G	H
COORDINATION	p.306, #1	p.329, #7; p.335,#4	#9, 13	#13, 17

2. What are the implications of *context* for attaining and sustaining paid work?

Interview questions for Delta and Harvest Counties both contain questions to assess the economic and job context of the county/area and social service support in the area. Mothers in Delta and Harvest Counties were asked about their perception of the local job market. They were also asked about what sort of social services they receive, how accessible services in their area are, and their own and the community’s perception of welfare and welfare reform. I also anticipated that information about context would emerge in the analysis and comparison of cases and samples. (See Table 4.8 for appropriate questions.)

Table 4.8: Guide to Interview and Research Questions

2. What are the implications of *context* for attaining and sustaining paid work?

Appendix	E	F	G	H
Job Market		p.328,#7	# 2	# 7
Welfare	p.304,#8; p.307,#8	p.324,middle; p.328,#8-9; p.331,#2		#s 32, 35-38

3. What are the implications of the process of negotiating work for *family life*?

To assess how the process of negotiating work affects family life, I examined some of the same questions that deal with reproductive labor. For example, mothers in Delta and Harvest Counties were both asked about how/whether their work affects their

family life. Questions about a “typical day” and discussions of work history were also likely to provide insights into this research question. (See Table 4.9).

Table 4.9: Guide to Interview and Research Questions

3. What are the implications of the process of negotiating work for *family* life?

Appendix:	E	F	G	H
Implications for Families	p.305,#3,8,9; p.306, #1,8	p.328,#6; p.329,#5-7; p.334,#1	#s 9, 11, 12	#s 12, 17, ,22-25, 26, 27, 28, 30

4. How does the process/experience of negotiating work differ by social class? Race/ ethnicity? Residence stability (i.e., settled workers vis-à-vis migrant workers)? Region? Education? Family structure and marital status?

Though region²⁰ is constant across the samples, I asked for information that allowed me to compare women in the two counties according to their race/ethnicity, residential stability, educational levels, family structure, and economic circumstances (see listings of specific questions in Table 4.10 below.) Additionally, I illustrate variations between the two rural county contexts. (Though I have designated all mothers as “low-income,” I do examine variation in economic circumstances.) These differences are drawn out by comparison of the data, rather than through specific questions.

²⁰ Though I do not make comparisons within the sample based on region, the responses given in combination with current literature will yield insights about the negotiation of work for rural, low-income families (in these particular contexts).

overview of a grounded theory approach to analysis and explain my general approach.

Below I address the strategies I utilized in my analysis of the data. First, I provide an

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

above).

work that women do as well as their partners, when applicable (see questions in Table 4.3

information from a father's perspective. In addressing the labor market, I asked about the

fathers actively participated in the Harvest County interviews, thereby providing

own paid employment affected that of their partners and vice versa. In addition, several

work histories, I paid particular attention and asked follow-up questions about how their

asked Delta County mothers (and the Harvest County mothers I interviewed) about their

though this response might be affected by a woman's point of view. For example, when I

I asked about men's negotiations of work as they overlapped with the woman's, even

by all members in an informant's network. Therefore, when a woman had a male partner,

Although I did not interview men, I pay particular attention to the negotiation of work

members?

5. How does gender structure the negotiation of paid employment among family

Appendix:	E	F	G	H
Education	p.306,#1; #4-5	p.326,#2		#s 9-11
Race/Ethnicity	p.301			p. 1
Family Structure	p.301	p.324,B		p. 1
Residential	p.302,#5;	p.324,#1;	# 4	# 12
Mobility/Migration	p.305, #5	p.324(bottom)		

4. How does the process/experience of negotiating work differ by social class? Race/ethnicity? Residence stability (i.e., settled workers vis-a-vis migrant workers)? Region? Education? Family structure and marital status?

Table 4.10: Guide to Interview and Research Questions

Then I discuss how I coded the data. Finally, I address the process of analyzing coded data and interview texts.

Grounded theory is a form of qualitative analysis in which the researcher lets the theory emerge out of the data. Grounded theorists argue, “theory ought to be developed in intimate relationship with data, with researchers fully aware of themselves as instruments for developing that grounded theory” (Strauss 1987: 6). The focus of analysis is on “*organizing many ideas* which have emerged from analysis of the data” (Glaser 1978, as cited in Strauss 1987: 22). This is the case whether researchers generate data themselves or rely on data collected by others (Strauss 1987).

In this sense, I take a grounded approach in that my preliminary analysis began during my involvement in the *Rural Families Speak* project, leading to the formulation of the concept of negotiating work. Through my partial involvement in the interviewing process and my involvement in the processing of data for the larger research project (data cleaning and analysis), I became intimately involved with them and my interest in negotiating work began to emerge; I was struck by the amount of effort/labor that migrant families undertake just to maintain their employment. Thus, the concept of negotiating work first began to emerge out of my experience with the Harvest County mothers, their life circumstances, and my involvement with the larger research project. From there, I began to formulate the concept of negotiating work and to broaden the concept from the example of migrant workers to other workers.

Coding

To process and analyze the interview texts, I utilized a program called Win-Max. Like Nudist or Ethnograph, Win-Max is a program designed for qualitative data analysis.

Once interview texts have been imported into Win-Max, excerpts of the interview texts can be organized into codes logical to the research topic(s) of interest. The program also allows for ease in searching for a word or phrase and in organizing codes and themes. I used this program for coding and organizing the data from both counties.²¹

Although I had created questions for the Delta County interviews and chose relevant questions from the Harvest County interviews that operationalized the concept of negotiating work, I did not simply code the answers to the questions that corresponded with each concept. Some concepts emerged out of the data themselves. In addition, a mother's answer to one question sometimes yielded information about another concept. In other words, interviews did not move in a linear fashion. Because of this, I coded for concepts that emerged from the data as well as those I was looking for based on my research questions and conceptual frame. I created a number of codes such as barriers to paid work, child care/parenting, coordinating/scheduling, education/training, family, gender, health, job context, job related decisions, race/ethnicity, transportation/getting to work, work interactions, and working conditions. Some of these codes were anticipated based on my involvement with the *Rural Families Speak* project and my research questions, such as education/training, coordinating/scheduling, and transportation/getting to work. Other codes/themes emerged from the data, such as job-related decisions and working conditions.

²¹ Although the data from the *Rural Families Speak* project were already coded, for the purpose of this project I found it necessary to go back and start from scratch, coding these interview texts based on my own research interests and questions.

Creating Work Histories

Since these interviews were exploratory in nature and I tried to take a more informal, conversational approach (see DeVault 1990) whenever possible, discussions of family circumstances, work history, and the process of negotiating work did not necessarily follow a chronological path. Women moved back and forth in time as they talked about the jobs they had or currently held. Reissman (1991) has written about the ways women of color, in particular, may be more likely to answer a question by telling a story, a more indirect approach. Though these stories that women themselves initiate are important to examine in their own right, for the purpose of analysis, I found it necessary to create a “work history” as a supplement to each interview transcript. To create each “work history,” I carefully reviewed each interview and compiled a chronological summary of each mother and her partner or other family member’s work experience and negotiations of work. These “work histories” serve as a quick reference, from which to examine the coded segments that I derived through my qualitative analysis program. They serve as a supplemental resource from which I can see both a chronological overview as well as an informant’s approach and path for revealing her own life and experiences.

Analysis of Findings

To analyze my findings outlined in the following chapters, I utilized the transcribed interview texts, coded segments created from those texts, work histories, and relevant Census data for Delta and Harvest Counties. I continued my analysis by examining coded segments relevant to individual research questions, searching for further patterns and themes. Some of the codes I utilized were based on my operationalization of

negotiating work and what I expected to find in women's accounts, such as discussions of self-preparation: purchasing and maintaining uniforms, getting haircuts. However, additional insights that I had not anticipated derived from the data.

In some cases, I developed sub-themes within coded segments for a common category or theme. For example, within the interview segments coded as "working conditions," the sub-themes surrounding issues of "job stability" and "flexibility" emerged. Such characteristics of employment (inflexibility and instability) emerged as common themes across both county data and became crucial to my analysis of the context of employment within which these mothers negotiated work (research question 2). I also utilized Census data about the typical employment in each county to situate the qualitative data from interview texts. The context that emerged out of the themes and sub-themes surrounding the working conditions in each county also helps explain/contextualize mothers work related decisions, another theme that emerged out of the data. In Chapter 6, sub-themes within codes such as "job related decisions," "job loss," and "work interactions" are addressed as ways of negotiating or dealing with the conditions of work outlined in Chapter 5.

I also relied on the work histories that I created for my analysis. To address research questions (such as 4. How does gender structure the negotiation of paid employment among family members?) I relied more on interview transcripts themselves and work histories. From Delta County mothers' accounts of their work histories and those of their partners, gendered themes in the division of paid employment emerged. Such distribution of employment along axes of gender ultimately affects the negotiation of employment of women and men in those counties and within their families. Though

this analysis emerged out of the data, it was not derived from fragmented segments of text. Rather, the work histories provided an easy reference from which I could discern such gendered themes of paid employment. The coded segments and sub-codes relevant to the division of labor within families addressed in Chapter 7 were later contextualized within and in juxtaposition to the division of labor in paid employment.

In the chapters that follow, I discuss the findings of the exploratory and qualitative study described here.

Chapter Five: The Context of Paid Employment in Delta and Harvest Counties

In this chapter I address the structural forces that shape the negotiation of paid work for low-income mothers in the two rural counties: Delta County, in which informants are most often employed in the low-wage service industry; and Harvest County, to which mothers typically migrate to work as agricultural laborers. I focus on two questions: (1) What work is available to informants? (2) What are the conditions of this work? I answer these questions by describing the two counties and discussing how mothers talked about the conditions of their work in each county. In the conclusion, I provide a summary and comparison of the two work contexts.

WORK CONTEXT IN DELTA COUNTY

County Context¹

Delta County is a non-metropolitan county that was home to 40,553 people in 2000. The population increased by 8.7 percent from 1990 to 2000. According to the 2003 Rural-urban Continuum Classification Coding system,² Delta County is a non-metro county with an urban population of 2,500-19,999, adjacent to a metro area (USDA, ERS 2003). In 2000, 92.7 percent of the people living in the county were white, 3.6 percent black, 0.6 percent American Indian, 0.9 percent Asian, 0.4 percent some other race, and 1.3 percent of Hispanic or Latino origin. Persons under 18 made up 22.5 percent of the county population in 2000 (slightly less than the national percentage of 25.7), while 13.2 percent of the population was 65 years old and over (compared to 12.4% nationally) (U.S. Census “State and County QuickFacts: Delta County 2004).

¹ The organization of this section is modeled after a similar research project described in Wells (1999).

² This is “a classification scheme that distinguishes metropolitan counties by size and nonmetropolitan counties by degree of urbanization and proximity to metro areas...resulting in a 9-part county codification” (USDA, ERS 2003;also see Butler 1990 for history of the coding system).

Private sector employment in Delta County is strongly oriented toward the service sector (74.2%) and only about half (25.8%) of the employment in the county involves the production of goods. This difference reflects the trend in the U.S. economy of the shift from production of goods to the production of services (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1: Sectorial Distribution of Businesses, Delta County and the U.S. (2000)

Goods Production	County	U.S.
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	02.5%	1.9%
Construction	06.4%	6.8%
Manufacturing	16.9%	14.1%
Sub-totals	25.8%	22.8%
Service Producing		
Wholesale Trade	02.1%	03.6%
Retail Trade	12.7%	11.7%
Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities	04.2%	05.2%
Information	01.9%	03.1%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Rental and Leasing	03.1%	06.9%
Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services	03.9%	09.3%
Educational, Health and Social Services	29.6%	19.9%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	09.5%	07.9%
Other Services	04.3%	04.9%
Public Administration	02.9%	04.8%
Sub-totals	74.2%	77.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Table DP-3. Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics (U.S. and Delta County): 2000, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000.

The county differs slightly from the nation in the type of service jobs available to residents. Delta County offers less employment (11%) than the nation (22.9%) in high paying services such as (a) wholesale trade (b) information (c) finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing and (d) professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services. In contrast, Delta County has more

employment opportunities available (22.9%) than the U.S. (19.6%) in (a) retail trade and (b) arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services. The vast majority of employment in Delta County's service sector (1,549 employees out of 1,670) is employed in "accommodation and food services" (U.S. Census, 2000 [Delta] County Business Patterns). More county residents (16.9%) are employed in manufacturing than in the nation (14.1%). Manufacturing offers the lowest wages in goods producing industries, although jobs in this sector offer higher pay than do most common service industries in the county (see Table 5.2). It is significant that the service sectors with a high concentration of workers in Delta County, many of whom are women, are also those with the lowest national earnings. Retail trade, for example, yielded the lowest average hourly wage of any service industry nationally, with a difference in average hourly wages of \$4.30 or more (see Table 5.2; Gibbs 2002: 58-59).

Table 5.2: Average Hours, Earnings, and Weekly Earnings, by (non-farm) Industry: U.S. (1999)

	Hourly Earnings	Weekly Hours	Weekly Earnings
Service Producing			
Transportation and public utilities	\$15.67	38.7	\$606
Wholesale trade	\$14.59	38.4	\$560
Retail trade	\$9.08	29.0	\$263
Finance, insurance, and real estate Services	\$14.61	36.2	\$529
	\$13.38	32.6	\$436
Goods Producing			
Mining	\$17.04	43.8	\$746
Construction	\$17.13	39.0	\$668
Manufacturing	\$13.91	41.7	\$580

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstracts of the United States: 2000*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Table 682.

Thus, in keeping with economic trends (Chapter Two), Delta County is shifting to a service driven economy. As has been characteristic of rural counties (see Gibbs 2002), however, the decline of manufacturing there has been slower than it has been elsewhere in the nation (see Table 5.1). As a rural county, Delta County includes a heavier distribution of service jobs in the lowest-paying sectors than the nation at large. Such low-paying jobs are on the increase, as illustrated by recent discussion of the Merriam-Webster dictionary's adoption of the term *McJob* to designate "a low-paying job that requires little skill and provides little opportunity for advancement" (CNN.com 2003).³ Such jobs are predominately filled by women and racial minorities (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 1998; Hodson and Sullivan 1995), and these descriptions dominate women's accounts of their local job options. Before addressing these accounts, however, I describe the mothers themselves because their characteristics shape their access to employment.

Characteristics of Delta County Mothers

In Chapter 4 (see Table 4.1), I provided an overview of the demographics of the sample. Delta County mothers are young, with low education levels, and low incomes relative to the county at large. All but three mothers had a partner living with them at the time of the interview, and the average number of children they had was 2.5. Here I address their health problems, disabilities, and educational levels because these individual characteristics limit their job options.⁴

³ Scholars of low-wage work such as Ehrenreich (2001) would likely contest the designation of these jobs as "low-skilled."

⁴ Blank (2004) addresses the relationship between economic structure and the skills of a local work force. Though the variables addressed here, such as education levels, are attributed to individuals, what employment is available or unavailable in an area affects the skills and educational levels of the population. For example, Blank argues that with few job prospects in rural areas, those with higher educations are likely to migrate elsewhere and those who remain, forseeing limited earning opportunities, are less likely to invest in education.

Six mothers faced serious health problems or disabilities, had a partner with serious health problems, or were responsible for the care of an ailing family member at some point during their work histories. For example, Sue, who was born with one arm extending only to her elbow, had difficulty finding employment. Tracy's husband had suffered a serious back injury and had been unable to work for a number of years, leaving Tracy the breadwinner for their family. Three other women, Abby, Erin, and Ellie, either were unable to work themselves or had a partner who was unable to work for a limited time because of a health problem or injury. Laurel had to quit her job so that she could care for her mother, who was dying of cancer. All of these problems affected a mother or her partner's ability to work outside the home temporarily or on a more permanent basis.⁵

In addition, Erin, who had a learning disability since childhood, found it difficult to hold a job that required making change.

They put me on the till.... I can't figure out counting math, counting back the change. I couldn't. So they just said, we've got to let you go. I said, let me stack shelves. Let me do something else. I love stacking shelves. I love keeping the place clean.

In fact, Erin had a hard time finding work that did not require such math skills.

Level of education and/or training also affected access to the jobs. Mothers, such as Ann, often cited education or training requirements as a barrier to employment or to better employment. "I guess there's really [no job opportunities] around here.... They always want a bachelor's degree or an associate's degree or something, and like I said, all I have is a diploma. I don't have very much. [laughs]." While nine (out of twelve) mothers had a high school diploma or GED, three women did not. This made finding a job difficult. In fact, according to the women, a high school degree was a requirement for

⁵ Women also talked about health problems that may have made working more difficult, but may not have prevented them from working entirely.

factory jobs, which paid more than other minimum wage jobs, as well as some non-factory jobs in the county.⁶

Other jobs, such as those in medical offices and/or secretarial jobs, required specific training that the women did not have. For example, Clara was turned down for a job at a local newspaper because

...they says, "Well, you don't have all these skills so we can't hire you." The special computer skills that they needed. You know, I'm familiar with the computer, but I don't know everything.... But if they're willing to train me, I'll do it because I like the computer. I love it.⁷

Delta County also was home to a small college, and women students were major competitors for the low-wage jobs the women typically held and sought. Echoing the sentiments of several mothers, Liz explained, "When the college students were out on vacation, the job opportunities were a lot better, but now that they're back in, it's a lot harder."

Within the current economy, then, education and training are increasingly crucial gateways to better paying jobs in the service industry. But the women did not have these assets. In fact, Johnson (2002), found that a major barrier to "pink collar" jobs (more permanent, stable jobs with better working conditions) for working-class women was the lack of a high school education. Thus, not only do women's position within the shifting gendered economy place them in a precarious position, so too do their low levels of education and their responsibilities as caretakers.

⁶ In Johnson's (2002) study of working-class women and their work, she found that, "on average, the women who lacked a high school diploma had by far the worst job conditions" (42).

⁷ Clara's willingness to learn new skills belies the myth that women like her are lazy and unwilling to work.

Job Context

All but one mother spontaneously described the limitations of the local market. Their descriptions echoed those of Tracey, who said, "There really isn't a whole lot of jobs in this area. I think there is if you want to work at McDonald's or Burger King or something like that." Such service jobs are characterized by particularly low pay scales. Gail, who worked at a local branch of a discount chain, compared her salary with those of other employees working at other branches of the chain across the country and found that "the lowest hourly wage, let's say in...South Carolina was \$7.50 an hour...I was making five and a half an hour up here."

Moreover, the jobs that were available to women were not good, steady jobs. Jenna, a single mother who had what she considered to be a steady day job, commented on the unreliability of the opportunities available.

When I work weekends, I waitress. And so there's a lot of that out there. Um, but as far as really good steady jobs, there's like the county and there's [a local college] and that's about it....There's some industry, but right now I wouldn't trust a lot of that. You just don't know what's going to happen.⁸

Though a few mothers had worked in factories and chose not to return to that type of work, many talked about factory work as good employment, with some employers offering close to \$10 an hour. But, a local temp agency acted as a gatekeeper to many of these jobs, as Gail explained.

The factories, you have to go through like [a temp agency] to get into those. So, they pay [the temp agency] to hire you, and [the temp agency] actually gets your actual rate and out of that you only get so much because they have to pay [the temp agency]...because they don't hire you right off the street. ...And usually the 89th day [when you could become an employee of the factory rather than the temp agency], you're let go.

⁸ There was talk of layoffs in the factory where Jenna's son worked.

A new factory had recently moved into the community and there was some controversy surrounding its entry. As is the case in a restructuring economy, the company came from out of state and received tax breaks and incentives for bringing jobs to this rural area. However, many women lamented the lack of local jobs that were actually generated by the new plant. Hundreds of local residents applied for jobs. But Abby, echoing a common complaint, said, “They only hired forty-five people for that...which is kind of a rip[-off] because most of the forty-five people didn’t even come from this area.”

To deal with the sparse job options, some residents commuted to a nearby city. As Jenna explained, “There are a lot of people that commute....I could go down [to a city that’s an hour to an hour and a half drive from home] even as a waitress and make twice as much as I would make down here.” But, as Liz summed up, “If you don’t want to commute, you put up with the bad wages.”

In short, women’s perceptions of their job options mirror what we know from national data. The share of workers in jobs that are considered “low-skilled” and at the low end of the pay scale is well above the nation’s in rural America (Gibbs and Parker 2000, as cited in Gibbs 2002). Few good jobs are available; access to them is limited by low-paying gatekeepers such as temp agencies, or they require travel to neighboring areas.

Overview of Work Performed by Delta County Informants: A Gendered Economy

Table 5.3 includes data on the last three jobs that each woman reported. With the exception of one mother who had worked in a factory, and two mothers who held a job in plant care or agriculture, all the jobs were low-paying service jobs. (Brandy, however, did report having a previous job in which she was “one step” away from being a manager

at a major fast food chain.) In contrast to the low-wage service jobs that are predominately held by women and people of color, industrial jobs that predominated prior to the major shift in the economy were better paying, more stable jobs, and predominately held by men (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 1998; Hodson and Sullivan 1995). The strongly gendered phenomenon of this shift becomes apparent in Delta County when the details of women's work histories are compared to the work histories of their male partners. In contrast to mothers, male partners typically had better paying jobs in industries such as construction, car maintenance, and factory work (see Table 5.4).

Table 5.3 Last Three Jobs Held by Delta County Mothers

Pseudonym	Recent* Job (3)	Previous Job (2)	Previous Job (1)
Sue	grocery cashier	orchard harvest labor	none
Liz	bus driver	bus driving sub	restaurant server
Tracy	food service	party store cashier	grocery clerk
Gail	discount cashier	bar tender	home child care
Abby	restaurant server	restaurant server	child care
Brandy	gas station clerk	discount store clerk	fast food assistant manager
Clara	plant care	factory line worker	hotel housekeeping
Nancy	restaurant server	caregiver	dishwasher
Erin	grocery cashier	restaurant server	farm labor
Jenna	secretary	restaurant server	secretary
Ellie	convenience clerk	newspaper delivery	cashier
Laurel	meat cutting	meat cutting	head of housekeeping

* Recent Job (3) represents the most recent job held by the mother at the time of the interview. Previous job (2) represents the job that mother held prior to her current employment. Previous job (1) represents the job that the mother held prior to previous job (2).

Table 5.4 Last Three Jobs Held by the Partners of Delta County Mothers*

Mother	Partner	Recent Job (3)	Previous Job (2)	Previous Job (1)
Sue	George	mechanic	post office temp	lawn service
Liz	Leo	truck driver, gravel pit		
Tracy	Ernie	factory line work	metal fabricating	
Gail	-----			
Abby	Jasper	pours cement	cut and sells wood	discount clerk
Brandy	-----			
Clara	Al	cut and sell wood	sub bus driver	custodian
Nancy	Rick	construction	dead animal disposal	odd repair jobs
Erin	Gordon	construction	construction	farm labor
Jenna	-----			
Ellie	Ethan	mechanic	truck driver	
Laurel	Lenny	bridge builder	manager, water dep.	

* Recent employment (Job 3) represents the most recent job held by the partner at the time of the interview. Previous job (2) represents the job that partner held prior to his current employment. Previous job (1) represents the job that the partner held prior to previous job (2). Only information on a current partner at the time of the interview are included.

This difference shows that institutions are gendered in such a way that “advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” (Acker 1991: 167). Professions and/or jobs are gendered not only because of sheer representation, i.e., there are more women in one general category of job and more men in another, but this distribution by sex affects the status and pay of these jobs. In addition, the disparity in status and pay between “women’s” service jobs and “men’s” industrial jobs ultimately affects power within relationships (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983), other realms of family life, and the negotiation of paid work within families.

In short, women’s employment was shaped by their social location within the county’s gendered labor market and trends in rural areas in general. Services and trade provide 73 percent of rural women’s total employment, compared with 39 percent of

men's. In fact, Albrecht et al. (2000) found a positive relationship between the percentage of men employed in a given area and the prevalence of employment in agriculture and manufacturing. With few exceptions (see Table 5.3) mothers have not worked in manufacturing and do not conceive of these jobs as accessible to them.

Working Conditions of Delta County Informants⁹

The service jobs held by women offered low-wages and few, if any, benefits.¹⁰ When asked whether she received benefits at her current job, Nancy responded, "Oh, no." and laughed, suggesting, as did other women, that job benefits were unheard of. Only three mothers received a benefits package. One of these mothers, Jenna, indicated that the amount she had to pay out of pocket for health care had just increased significantly. Partners more often received benefits through their jobs than mothers. In sum, the women's working conditions were unstable and often inflexible.

Job Stability: Feast or Famine: Paid employment appears to be an issue of feast or famine. Six mothers (50%) were unemployed at the time of the interview, but all women wanted to be employed.¹¹ In some cases mothers had trouble finding work or the work that they found was only part-time, temporary, and/or did not offer as many hours as promised when they were hired. Seven mothers were employed part-time (i.e., 35 hours or less per week) at their most recent employment, five had been or were employed full-time, and four had jobs that were seasonal in nature. Five partners (out of 8) had most recently worked full-time or had been employed in a seasonal job, and three

⁹ This section and other portions of this chapter draw from and expand upon Kelly (*forthcoming*).

¹⁰ Recall Gail's discussion of the lower wages she received at the discount chain in her county versus those in other states.

¹¹ The high number of mothers who were unemployed at the time of the interview can be attributed, in part, to the difficulties I had locating mothers who were working, particularly those working full-time and/or multiple jobs. Unemployed women simply had more time available to give an interview. All mothers expressed a desire to work at some point in their lives, though some said that as mothers, they would rather not work outside of the home while their children were young.

partners had worked part-time. Thus, more mothers and partners were without work or underemployed than those who were able to secure full-time employment. Brandy, for example, needed more hours as a single mother than she was getting at her most recent job as a gas station attendant. “I was hired in, supposed to be full time and I was about 32 if I got lucky.” When I asked Brandy if ideally she would like to work full time, she responded, “Mhm. Financially that’s, I mean [laughs],” suggesting through her laugh and facial expression, “of course!”

At other times, however, jobs were plentiful, and women had more hours than they could handle effectively as parents or human beings. Several women worked 60-80 hour weeks during certain periods, either at one job or multiple jobs. According to Erin, “I worked seventy-two hours in one week and never got paid over-time, never...anything. I was supposed to be a part-timer.” Ellie, a mother of two, encountered different problems when she put in a lot of hours as a sales clerk. “When I started, I was working about forty [hours per week]. Around Christmas time, we had lost a couple people, so most of us were pulling like 60 to 65 hours a week.” Because partners were more likely than women to be employed full-time, mothers and partners could be working many cumulative hours.

Though partners were more likely than the women to secure full-time employment and to hold these jobs for a longer duration, their jobs were more likely to be seasonal in nature—with few or no hours during winter months—than those women held. Nevertheless, the most recent job of four mothers was seasonal in nature while the last three jobs of seven mothers were seasonal or temporary. For example, Clara watered plants for a local nursery, but she lamented, “It’s two, three hours a day and it’s not

enough. It's not enough....And I'm almost done with it because winter's coming and the end of September I'll be done. So, I need to find another job." Liz, a school bus driver, managed her finances carefully because her job was seasonal. "When school's in, I work. So, basically I work on an average, maybe six months out of the year."

Other mothers, in contrast, liked their seasonal jobs because they tended to offer flexibility. Laurel had worked for her neighbor who owned a small meat cutting business. In her view,

George was a really good guy to work for, I mean, if my kids were sick or they needed to go to the dentist, he always understood....The only downfall was George likes to hunt and fish too, so in the summertime...I was there with no job all summer.

Thus, while women may have liked the flexibility of seasonal jobs, they acknowledged that they entailed costs. Such jobs offered inconsistent hours and required an additional search for a summer job. Although in many cases, mothers happily negotiated some of these fluctuations around the needs of their lives, in other cases, fluctuations were less predictable and women found it difficult to supplement underemployment with other sources of income.

Flexibility/Inflexibility: Low-wage service work and factory jobs are often characterized as inflexible to family needs. Nevertheless, as noted above, some women praised the flexibility that their job allowed them, such as Jenna, a single mother who had held her job as a secretary in a unionized position for eleven years.

I'm lucky that I've got this job here that's really flexible, you know. I'm able to take time off when I need it. ... I was here one day, I was here maybe half an hour, it was before she was in school and day care called [and said], "Ah, Lee just threw up." [And I said], "Okay, I'm on my way. Sorry guys, see ya. Be back in tomorrow, I hope." Like I said, they're really good here about that.

Other women were not as fortunate and talked about problems they experienced because of an inflexible work situation. Six women (50%) gave at least one specific example of such a circumstance. Laurel talked about the difficulties she had in trying to take her mother to chemo-therapy during her unpaid lunch break.

Right in the middle of my mom's illness, new [management] had come in and decided that, you know, I couldn't take an extra half hour on my lunch to take my mom to chemo, even though I wasn't punched out. I didn't get paid for my lunches, but the new people who had come in decided that that wasn't going to happen no more.

Brandy, a single mother with two children, found her employer reluctant to accommodate the difficulties that an inflexible job as a gas station attendant created.

Well, there were a couple of days where I had to call in because the kids were sick or transportation didn't work out and they didn't like that at all. They didn't want to work with me. And even though hiring in they knew that I was a single mother and had quite a few problems with stability because of transportation and things like that....

In sum, focusing on these women's particular standpoints reveals the brittle and unyielding nature of their work conditions and their efforts as parents and to their efforts to negotiate paid work. An examination of the working conditions of mothers in Harvest County resonates in some ways with the Delta County mothers, but also reveals significant differences in their work and working conditions, as I show in the following section.

WORK CONTEXT IN HARVEST COUNTY

County Context

Harvest County is a non-metropolitan county with a population of 26,873 in 2000. The population increased by 19.7 percent from 1990 to 2000. The 2003 Rural-urban Continuum Classification Coding system designates Harvest County as a non-metro

county completely rural or less than 2,500 urban population, adjacent to a metro area (USDA, ERS “Rural-urban Continuum Codes). In 2000, 90.4 percent of the population was white (85.8% white persons, not of Hispanic or Latino origins), 0.3 percent Black, 1 percent American Indian, 0.2 percent Asian, 6.1 percent some other race, and 11.6 percent Hispanic or of Latino origins (U.S. Census, “State and County QuickFacts: [Harvest County]”).

A core feature of Michigan’s rural economy and life is agriculture. “More than one in five state jobs stems from agriculture” (Rochin 1989: 1). The state ranks ninth in the nation in terms of the total number of workers employed in the food and fiber system. With about 45,000 migrants (laborers and their dependants), Michigan is the nation’s fourth largest employer of transient migrant workers (Roeder and Millard 2000). Ten counties in Michigan account for 80 percent of all migrant agricultural workers in the state (Rosenbaum 2002). As one of these counties, Harvest County has experienced a growing Latino presence over the years.¹² Over time, a number of migrant workers have settled permanently in the area (Harvest County Historical Society 1991: 3).

In comparison to the U.S., private sector employment in Harvest County is more strongly oriented toward manufacturing (27.3% versus 14.1% U.S.) and agriculture (6.7% versus 1.9% U.S.), with only 57.8 percent (compared to 77.3% for the nation) of jobs in services (U.S. Census, [PSEC] 2000; see Table 5.5). It is likely, however, that a number of the county’s manufacturing jobs may involve processing the products of agriculture.

¹² This growing presence is a product of migration from the South. Seventy to seventy-five percent of migrant workers in Michigan consider Texas and Mexico their place of origin (Rosenbaum 2002).

Table 5.5: Harvest County Business Patterns with U.S. Comparisons (2000)

	County	U.S.
Goods Producing		
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	06.7%	1.9%
Construction	08.5%	6.8%
Manufacturing	27.3%	14.1%
Goods producing sub-totals	42.5%	22.8%
Service Producing		
Wholesale Trade	02.3%	03.6%
Retail Trade	09.9%	11.7%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	03.3%	05.2%
Information	01.0%	03.1%
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Rental and Leasing	02.9%	06.9%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	03.8%	09.3%
Educational, health and social services	18.3%	19.9%
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, accommodation and food services	07.3%	07.9%
Other Services	04.8%	04.9%
Public Administration	04.2%	04.8%
Service producing sub-totals	57.8%	77.3%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Table DP-3. Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics (U.S. and Harvest County): 2000, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000.

Characteristics of Harvest County Mothers

The average age of Harvest County mothers was 32.5 years, and they were less educated than people in the county at large. While sixty percent of mothers had less than a high school equivalent, 79.8 percent of Harvest County residents age 25 or over were high school graduates (U.S. Census PSSC 2000). The number of mothers who chose to conduct the interview in Spanish (17, 52%) provides some indication of English language skills. Two-parent families predominated with an average of 2.9 children.

Given their limited education and English language skills, labor was the only type of work available to many women and their partners. This was the case in their home

state as well. For example, even though work was scarce in Harvest County, Acacia returned to seed work there because

If we stay in Texas, there is no work there, and even less for us that do not have any education. I only completed 3rd grade, my husband the same. Then, in Texas if you do not have a degree, what kind of job are you going to work? There is not labor work.

Those who did not speak English found it even harder to find work, as Bonita explained.

I don't have any GED or anything. So I need to come all the way over here. ...Because we, first of all, we do not know English, and most of the time the lady looks for a person that knows [English] and here she takes advantage selecting the people she wants and leaves many people out of work.... Even here...it is becoming very difficult to find a job.

Thus, low education levels and lack of fluency in English were crucial barriers to work (in their home counties for those who migrate) as well as in Harvest County. In fact, mothers who regularly migrate each year for work (roughly 70% of mothers during the first wave of interviews) maintained that lack of education and language skills was the major cause of their difficulties finding work in their home counties and, therefore, a major factor in their decision to migrate to Harvest County to work as agricultural laborers.

Twelve mothers (36.4%) reported serious health problems or injuries of their own, their partner, their children, or another family member.¹³ Noemi's partner, Fernando, for example, was unable to work during the second season of interviews because of a shoulder injury that he incurred while working during the previous season. Not all Harvest County informants, however, stopped working because of an injury or illness. Six mothers and/or partners continued to work with an illness or injury, such as a

¹³ In seven cases (21%) these were injuries related to their own or a partner's work. This count does not include more generalized discussions of aches and pains acquired by long hours of labor. Injuries included hernias, swollen legs that turned purple, back injuries, sawed fingers, and infections due to injury.

hernia, because their employer told them to do so and/or they could not afford to miss work. According to Ines, her partner, “worked years...and they never gave him [worker’s compensation]...and he keeps working with his hernia, and it hurts him a lot because he has the big bulge.” Eight mothers or their partners missed work due to an injury or illness or the need to care for another family member. Juanita, for example, was unable to work one season because she had to make repeated trips back to Texas to care for her ill mother. All of these health issues complicate the negotiation of employment, for Harvest County mothers and their partners, particularly since their employment involves physical labor.

Job Context

Like mothers in Delta County, the particular standpoints of Harvest County mothers affected their perceptions of the job opportunities available to them. The majority (70%) of mothers and their families migrate regularly to Harvest County for employment. Other mothers and families also had been involved in the same migrant stream before deciding to settle there. In keeping with other migrant workers in Michigan, the majority of families who worked in Harvest County considered Texas or Mexico their homes (Rosenbaum 2002). Therefore, migrant and settled workers interviewed in Harvest County often addressed two job contexts: that of their hometowns (most often in southern Texas), and that of Harvest County in the Mid-West.

Hometown Job Context

The lack of work available in their hometown led them to migrate or to move long distances to seek employment, as Calandra explained. “The problem is in Texas where we live it’s a very small community. It’s just becoming a city. There is not enough work

for all of the population that we have....” Calandra reported a growth in businesses and potential jobs in her community during the second interview (“There is a lot of things being built like a Best Western Motel...Radio Shack; there is a lot of new business.”) However, she stated, “we haven’t found [a job there.]” Extant jobs were typical of the economic shifts addressed previously; many new and low-paying jobs were in the service industry. According to Queta, “You don't see many job openings. ...If you are going to get hired,...I would say like...Burger King... like working in restaurants.” In addition, many low-paying factory jobs exploit labor close to the Mexican border, thereby lowering pay rates in the local job market (Cantú 1995).

As part of Latino migration trends documented by Saenz and Cready (1997), families are pushed out by “bad [local] economies” in Texas (Cantú 1995: 2), and migrate elsewhere to seek employment. Afra’s explanation of her migration is typical. “Well, I couldn't find a job over there in Texas. That's the reason I have to come all the way up here.” Other mothers, such as Francisca migrated to Harvest County for the same reason, but decide to “settle out” and remain there permanently.

I did not move [back to Texas] because there is no work in Texas. I mean, I had a job in a needlework company, but the work...is scarce. I was not making enough money and my husband was not able to find a permanent job. For this reason we decided to move [here].

Thus, even mothers who had settled in Harvest County, and remained there year round, viewed their job context in light of the hometown context from which they migrated.

Harvest County Job Context

Viewed from such a perspective, many mothers spoke positively of the local work context in Harvest County because work was available. They also acknowledged,

however, the limitations of the work available. Afra, for example, explained that although many jobs were available, they were, “Well, only like labor.”

Eleven mothers had been migrating with their families to work in Harvest County for ten years or more.¹⁴ Often, they spoke about changes that had occurred over this period. Bonita, for example, described the difficulties created by increased competition for jobs in Harvest County.

In years before, you submitted an application and after one or two days you had a job. Now, you submit an application and you need to wait and beg, and beg to get a job. And when you get one, it is the most difficult one that you get....That is the kind of work I am doing. Doing celery, with an apron, and it is not a good paying job but it is a difficult job to throw celery in a machine, all day long.

In keeping with larger trends in agriculture, some of these changes were the product of increased mechanization, as Hector and Francesca, who lived in Harvest County year round, explained in a joint interview.

Hector: The harvest was very meager, very meager. And there were few hours due to the fact that there were no fruit....

Francesca: And they have bought more good equipment.

Hector: Too much good equipment.

Francesca: And there is less work to do. They collect the fruits, and what it used to take them a whole week....

Hector: It takes them one or two days now. They have bought a lot of equipment, very powerful.

In summary, to understand mothers (and their partner's) perceptions of working conditions in Harvest County, it is necessary to begin with their standpoints as migrant workers who move a great distance to work as farm laborers and in agricultural manufacturing jobs or who settle in Harvest County and remain there year round. Both groups (migrant and settled mothers) evaluated Harvest County's employment options for

¹⁴ Six of these mothers or their family members had been migrating to work for the same farmer in Harvest County for 10 years or more. This and other counts in this chapter may be underestimated because this information emerged during an interview rather than being elicited by an explicit question. Other numbers in this and the following chapters may also be underestimated because of this problem.

themselves by comparing them with the job context in their home counties from which they migrated or moved. Thus, beginning with these mothers' standpoints allows us to see their particular and individualized circumstances within the larger context of rural economic restructuring.

Overview of Work Performed by Harvest County Informants

The majority of mothers (23 or 70%)¹⁵ migrated with their families, usually from Texas, to seek work. Over four-fifths (27 or 82%) of women and/or their partners (28 out of 29)¹⁶ were employed in agricultural labor in Michigan. Most women (21 out of 27 or 78%) worked outdoors preparing the land and harvesting crops as did their partners (23 out of 28 or 82%). Women (12 of 27 or 44%) and their partners (10 out of 28 or 36%) also worked in-doors, processing crops such as sorting fruits and vegetables, picking out rotten fruit, and, in some cases, canning fruits and vegetables, often on an assembly line.¹⁷ Not only is much of this work seasonal, and therefore, temporary, in nature, but it is also contingent on weather conditions. As such, periodic layoffs during any given season are not uncommon (see Table 5.6).

¹⁵ Quantitative data on Harvest County mothers and their partners addressed in this chapter represent the first wave of data collection (2000), unless otherwise stated. I report the first wave of data since there was little difference between the two years.

¹⁶ During the first wave of interviews one mother was widowed and the exact work of three mothers' partners is unknown.

¹⁷ It was not uncommon for mothers and their partners to work at outdoor (field work) and indoor (processing work) in a given season, sometimes for the same farmer. Therefore, these categories are not mutually exclusive and were difficult to differentiate with separate counts. In addition, the count is a rough estimate since mothers and their partners were not always questioned about the details of their everyday work and some simply talked about working for a farmer. The fact that these counts are rough estimates may help explain the difference between the first and second year data for these counts. In general, the number of mothers employed in agriculture who worked outdoors decreased, while the number who worked in-doors increased. The differences from one year to the next ranged from 10-20 percent.

Table 5.6: Conditions of Mothers' and Partners' Paid Work in Harvest County*

Year 1 (N=33)	Migrant	Seasonal Employment	Laid Off	Unemployed
Mother's Employment	23 (70%)	27 (82%)	11 (33%)	4 (12%)
Partner's Employment	23 (70%)	28 (85%)	8 (24%)	0 (0%)

*Table 5.6 provides information on the working conditions reported at the first interview (2000). During the second wave of interviews, there was little difference. The number of migrants slightly decreased (by 1-7%) and the number of mothers and their partners employed in seasonal work decreased by approximately 12%. This decrease in mothers and their partners migrating may explain some of the decrease in seasonal employment. **Migrant** designates whether a mother or partner regularly migrates with her/his family for work. **Seasonal** is the number of women who reported work that was seasonal or temporary in nature for them and/or their partner. The percentage of seasonal workers is the number of seasonal workers divided by the number of employed mothers. **Laid Off** is a snapshot count of those mothers who were employed for a season, but experiencing a temporary lay off from that work or were in between crops at the time of the respective interview. (This number includes workers with seasonal and year round jobs.) **Unemployed** includes women who were not employed. For example, women who defined themselves as stay-at-home moms or were not working because of pregnancy were characterized as unemployed. The unemployed category is mutually exclusive from those laid off.

Even informants who live in Michigan year round are employed in jobs similar to those of migrants. Of the ten mothers who were living in Harvest County year round at the first interview (2000), seven (70%) were employed in agricultural labor with their partners; four of these mothers and their partners (40%) worked outdoors harvesting crops while six mothers (60%) and four partners (40%) worked indoors sorting and/or packing vegetables and/or fruits. In 2000, four mothers and two partners out of seven employed in agriculture were laid off (57% and 29%, respectively; see Table 5.6 for percentages of the entire Harvest County sample).¹⁸ These numbers suggest that living in

¹⁸ Two mothers did not know about their partner's employment. Two mothers were unemployed at the time of the interview (temporarily stay-at-home mothers). One mother was employed at in-home child care. The number of unemployed non-migrants was greater than the number of mothers unemployed in the Harvest County sample as a whole, suggesting that, perhaps, migrant mothers are more likely to be employed in agriculture, at least during the time they are in Harvest County. This disparity could also be related to child care issues.

Harvest County year round does not guarantee year round employment, as Celina explained. "Sometimes we...work...all year long, sometimes we do not. ...There is that fight of finding a job."

Only three mothers who regularly migrate for work were employed during the time they were not working in the Mid-West. (In two of these cases, the women performed agricultural labor in another state.) Seven (21%) mothers, however, had participated in an educational or training program during the interview period (2000-2003), often during the time they were not working in their home states. Education and training proved to be a highly gendered phenomenon, with only one male partner working on education during the interview period. This phenomenon may be explained, in part, by the subtle division of labor revealed in the paid employment of women and their male partners.

Subtleties of Gendered Labor for Harvest County Informants

According to previous studies of Latino agricultural farm workers, women and men perform different tasks and are paid different rates (Barndt 2002; Chavira-Prado 1992). The findings from Harvest County, however, suggest a more subtle gendered division of labor. Harvest County mothers and their partners often performed the same work for the same pay, for at least part of the season, typically working for the same employer.

Despite the general tendency of mothers to report that the paid work they and their partners did was the same, further discussion occasionally revealed more subtle distinctions in the division of labor by gender. Women often worked side by side in the fields with their partners harvesting crops. However, men, but not women, also

performed additional odd jobs for farmers, thereby bringing more money into the household than their female partners. “He gets paid a little more when it is carpentry time. Because that's what he knows; that's his skill.... Ah, asparagus season we all get paid the same. But when it is carpentry time, ...he gets paid a totally different rate” (Calandra). In addition, it was not uncommon for male partners to work seasonally at construction or carpentry for at least part of the time they spent in their home county. Eight partners (out of 23 migrant informants with partners) worked in construction or as mechanics outside of Harvest County (most often in Texas). In contrast, only three mothers were employed outside of Harvest County.¹⁹ Thus, male partners in migrant families were much more likely to be employed during the time they spent in their home counties than were mothers.²⁰

A gendered division of labor also prevailed in processing plants and/or canneries. For example, Engracia and her partner both worked in a warehouse, but her partner drove the forklift and she sorted cherries, “pulling out the rotten ones.” Nine mothers described a similar division of labor when they worked with male partners in processing, with women involved in sorting and/or packing, and men often working at maintenance of equipment, driving equipment, and/or lifting and loading. Such a division of labor led to a difference in pay for women and men.

Therefore, mothers’ (and their partners’) experiences reflect some of the gendered trends of the restructured economy (Chapter 2). First, despite the Harvest County

¹⁹ This distinction in job status and pay may help explain the larger number of women than men who were working on education or training at some point during the interviewing period. Some women worked on this education or training after completing seasonal agricultural labor in Michigan and returning to their home states.

²⁰ Though men’s employment patterns resemble those of men in Delta County, the construction/carpentry work performed by male partners in Harvest County appears to be more seasonal, inconsistent, and less stable employment than that performed by male partners of mothers in Delta County.

workers' origins in agricultural labor, only women but not men were involved in service related jobs. Six mothers worked in the service sector at some time during the interview period. Four of these mothers were child care workers; three provided child care in their homes, while Serafina was employed at a child care center for migrant workers throughout the interview process. Second, more women than men were attaining education and training, in many cases to secure service-related work. During the course of the interview period, two mothers gained training and started working in the service industry. Tomasa secured a job in her home state as a certified nurse assistant while Calandra paid for a clerical certificate and began working seasonally for her neighbor, a small business owner. The gendered trend in which men are more likely to work at odd jobs in construction allows women the flexibility to attain education or training when they are not employed in agricultural labor.

This finding suggests a new trend for Latino women in Harvest County who, as they increase their education and training, are pulled into service jobs that are increasingly filled by women and people of color. This trend parallels Roeder and Millard's (2000) findings, with a similar sample of migrant farmworkers in Michigan, and indicates the increasing involvement of women in non-agricultural employment. More than one-third of the women in Roeder and Millard's study had a job outside agriculture and, as a result, a higher financial standing relative to that of their partners. Nevertheless, although women had higher status jobs than men, on average, all their jobs were low paying. Thus, despite women's lower earnings in agriculture than that of their partners, women's educational attainment and increased involvement in the service sector

may indicate a potential increase in their power and income generating capacity relative to men.

Working Conditions in Harvest County

As noted, mothers' agricultural labor, often was done in packing and processing plants. Isabel, for example, sprayed a chemical on the fruit that helped to remove the skin. Bonita, washed and discarded rotten celery on an assembly line, and she described the work as dirty, explaining that this was the reason she had to change her shoes before the interview, and, Jacinto, Juanita's husband, processed chocolate covered cherries. "It is a very fast-paced job, [he reported]. ... You need agility...a lot of agility. And it's a constant job of ten hours, and it doesn't even give you a chance even to rest."

Many mothers (21) and their partners (23) also worked outdoors harvesting crops, work that was performed for long hours in very hot weather. As was the case with the low-wage service work in Delta County, rarely did any benefits, such as health care or sick leave, accompany agricultural labor. Over-time was one of the few "benefits," but even this was inaccessible to many field workers because they were paid by the box or pound of produce harvested, rather than by the hour. Yet some informants qualified for unemployment compensation for at least part of the time they were without work in their home states, and they considered this compensation a job benefit. In addition, a number of farmers offered migrant workers housing at reduced or no cost.²¹ Such housing was a crucial job benefit, a necessary supplement to the cost of migrating for work (see Rosenbaum and Willie 2003).

In addition to heat and long hours, work in the fields had other disadvantages, as Aida illustrated.

²¹ The state government provides funding for some of these migrant services.

The restrooms, the way they do it ...it was so dirty, so we don't know what kind of animals there are under there. ...And they didn't bring no water so we could wash our hands and actually they are supposed to, because we used to go when they would have a meeting and tell you they are supposed to have everything in the restroom and bring you the water and the cups, so you could drink water and wash your hands. ...And they didn't have that.

In addition to inadequate hygiene, some agricultural workers complained about their employers' poor treatment. For example, Gitana said she had worked for eight hours without being given a break. Rafaela disclosed, what she considered, one of her and her partner's worst experiences. As they worked, the farmer circled around them on a motorcycle yelling at them. "He said that we have to work harder. ...When you are working you do not have to kill yourself working, but also you don't go slow. You establish a routine...and he always was there asking us to work harder." Echoing others, Rafaela reported that he and his family were kicked out of the housing a farmer had provided while they were working for him. Although many farmers provide housing at no or little cost, such a "benefit" is conditional on whether employees are actually working, and it may be terminated with little or no notice.

He kicked us out, without reason. ...Because that boss lied to us. He said...come [I] need you. That was last month. ...After he called me, [saying that] the job was ready. ...Now he says he doesn't need us, ...And he laughs and he says, look elsewhere; I don't have anything to offer you. You go to the trash, the dump. ...Everything [all of our belongings] he got rid of...everything. ...For two days, we had to sleep in cars, ...because yes there are bosses, but not everyone has houses available.... Some do, others don't (Gregorio, Alita's partner).

The fact that workers migrate in the absence of a guarantee of work upon arrival, combined with their reliance on employers for housing, makes them a particularly vulnerable labor force. In addition to their status as temporary, or gray collar workers

(Johnson 2002), documentation issues contribute to their vulnerability and low wages.²²

Regardless, of documentation status, the assumption that such workers are undocumented also contributes to their vulnerability as a group of laborers (Cantú 1995; Naples 1994).

Despite such exploitative working conditions, women also discussed positive experiences with employers. For example, several received loans from their employer, often to make the trip from Texas. Gregorio and Alita's next employer was strikingly different from the farmer who fired them.

Frankly I needed some money, I told the boss what happened, that we were left without anything, ...and he made me an offer for a loan if I wanted. In other words, for me he's a great boss because for being the first year, without knowing me, he loaned me money. (Gregorio).

Alita also pointed out that their new employer treated them with greater respect than previous employers. "He doesn't treat us by yelling at us. If he wants us to do a job, he treats us with words without yelling, and without lifting himself up [by denigrating us]." Nevertheless, such accounts were exceptional in worker's reports.

Job Stability: Feast or Famine

Mothers and their partners contend with—and in some cases travel significant distances to contend with—unstable and inconsistent working conditions.

You could say there were good times and bad times [during the year]. They stop us, they give us one or two weeks and then they come two or three days and now there isn't any [work] and that is how it is. (Yesenia, non-migrant agricultural laborer).

²² Some Harvest County mothers and their partners suggested that some farmers solicited the labor of undocumented workers, as a lower-cost, more vulnerable labor force. The high turnover in agricultural labor fuels the growing proportion of the workforce that is undocumented. "National statistics indicate that 52 percent of hired farmworkers lacked work authorization, 22 percent were citizens, and 24 percent were legal permanent residents" (U.S. Department of Labor 2000, as cited in Rosenbaum 2002).

Agricultural labor is seasonal by definition. Even women who live in Harvest County year round (approximately 30%) are often employed as seasonal agricultural laborers. (Only two women employed in Y1 were not employed seasonally [see Table 5.6]). The work lasts only as long as a given crop. “When the food runs out, the work ends” (Calixio, Minnie’s partner). The availability of work, however, is also conditioned by the weather and the whims of employers (see below). The number of women (33%) who were laid off at the time of the interview (see Table 5.6) illustrates the prevalence of periodic layoffs in this type of work. Agricultural labor in Harvest County thus is characterized by feast or famine. When work is available, agricultural workers are expected to, and generally prefer, to work long hours at physical labor. However, often at unpredictable times, precipitation ceases, affecting the quality of crops and decreasing the demand for agricultural labor.

Seasonal and Temporary: Eighty-two percent of mothers and eighty-five percent of their partners were employed in seasonal work. As Octavio, Celina’s partner, explained, “Almost all of the jobs are seasonal: two, three months....” In fact, most migrants worked about six months out of the year on seasonal crops, though the amount of months varied for individual informants. In addition, the amount of work available and the length of any given season varied from one year to the next. “It used to be from four to five weeks. Now it was only three weeks,” Acacia reported. Thus, mothers (and their partners) could not rely on a previous year’s experience to predict the next. As Francisca explained, “Well,...last year we worked seven months. I do not know about this year.”

Moreover, agricultural workers did not work consistently throughout any given season. Temporary layoffs were common. Gitana reported, “Well, right now we're not working at all.... Sometimes we work forty hours per week; sometimes we work up to eighty hours per week. Sometimes we work twelve hours a day; sometimes ten...hours.”

Thus, agricultural work was characterized by not only interim work, seasoned with periodic layoffs, but also variations in hours when work is available. Even those who characterized their work as “year round” experienced periods without work. “I just started there but they say it is a year round job being there. [So then it will go into the new year, huh?] We don't know. We don't know yet. Let's see.” Antonia's hesitation in accepting their employer's word that the work will last through the year highlights the instability of agricultural employment.

Variation and irregularities also occurred from one season to the next.

The work is very bad. I am not going to blame this person or the other, it is the work itself, because ... right now a lot of people are looking for jobs, not only me, a lot of people are looking. They said that they were fired from the warehouse, a lot of people ... but, it is the season I believe and it is because not all the years are the same (Rafaela).

Despite these erratic and often unpredictable conditions, some women, like Columba, suggested that the work, moving from one crop to the next, was “pretty steady.” It is possible that on some level, mothers and partners who have performed this work over a number of years grow accustomed to the irregularities of the work and are better able to predict and/or deal with such conditions.

Weather and Work Shortages: The erratic nature of agricultural labor sometimes is a product of shifts in the weather, such as late freezes and lack of rain. In fact, almost one-third (30.3%) of informants spoke about the effects of poor weather conditions, and, in turn, decreasing crop yields, on the work available to them as migrant agricultural

workers. Alita's partner, Gregorio, was well aware that his ability to work was dependent on the rain. "What I do here isn't permanent, because it depends on the climate. It depends on the water... That's it....If it doesn't rain,...[the farmer] doesn't call me."

In [Harvest County] work didn't go very well.... We had a lot of freeze....We didn't start 'til real late because it kept freezing.... So that was something that really hit us kind of hard because...Michigan...[is] our only means of work. So that's really hard for us...since the season didn't go very well (Calandra).

But other irregularities in the weather can be equally as devastating. In 2001 and 2002 (the second and third wave of interviews in Harvest County), the weather was extremely hot and dry. Mothers and their partners expressed concern about the decrease in available work due to such conditions.

Pay: Variations and irregularities in hours and work schedules ultimately affect earnings, as suggested by some of the excerpts from interviews. Forms of payment vary. Hourly wages are paid for most indoor processing work, while workers are paid by how much they harvest when they work outdoors in the fields. Therefore, informants struggled through questions about how much they made per hour or per week. "Sometimes we do seventy or eighty bucks a week; sometimes we do five hundred, or six hundred a week. ...It all depends on the weather and the crop" (Sancho, Aida's partner).

[My husband] earns three hundred if he works Monday through Saturday. . . .And since lately there hasn't been much work, he is making two hundred. . . two hundred fifty, two hundred twenty- five depending on what he earns and what they take out here (Antonia).

Instability in pay also was a product of employers who reneged on their obligation to pay employees. For example, Calixio explained that he was not working for the same farmer as they had the previous year, "because [the farmer] didn't pay me.... They didn't have

the credit or money at the time. ...They were signing checks...and the people went to cash them and they didn't have it.... One thousand dollars [we lost].”

Employers and Instability: The choices that employers make also affected the instability of informants' jobs. These choices ranged from what and how much to plant to when to call on labor, and to the decision to mechanize. Ines, for example, a non-migrant agricultural worker, reported that “In July [my husband and I are] gonna be hoeing for [a farmer] but this year he planted less pickles than last year and he has other people that he also gives hoeing to, so this year is gonna be much less work for us with him.” Further, employers sometimes reneged on offers of employment. Tomasa and her husband, Mariano, left jobs in Florida to come to Harvest County.

We've been coming with this farmer, I think since '84. So it's been a long time. Sometimes he calls us too early, that he wants us to come and we're working and we say, you know, do you really need us. You know, right now because we have our jobs, you know, down there [in Florida]. And then we come here and he might give us only like three days and then we have to wait like two weeks until the asparagus is ready and we lose all that time, you know, when we could have been working down there.

Duration of Time with Employers: Despite the built in irregularities of seasonal agricultural labor, some informants had been working for the same farmer for ten years or more. For example, Imelda, Mercedes, Queta, and Zolia have worked for the same farmer for 12-20 years. Further, although Zolia worked for her current employer for sixteen seasons, she also worked for three other employers.

Others worked for several employers during one season, as Rafaela explained.

We been moving around like ... how can I say it? Like pilgrims...because the past year we worked in the asparagus season and also we worked at [other crops] waiting to work...and then [another farmer] gave us work until September...the middle of September when the peach season ended.

Stability of Work in Texas: Work in Texas was also seasonal and temporary.

Mothers' descriptions of the hours their partners typically worked there resemble those of agricultural labor in Harvest County.

He works on odd jobs, it is not a full time thing. If someone calls him and tells him I have a leaky faucet, will you please come and work at it.... He'll go and he'll do it. The only time he gets a four-month [job is] if somebody needs a remodel, a room in their home, ...that's when he'll have something good. Other than that, it is off and on, off and on. So I can never say he has so much income per month, because one month he can have good all day work every day and the other month, it is just two days out of the month, three days out of the month. You understand what I mean? (Calandra).

Flexibility/Inflexibility

When work is unavailable, mothers cannot do much about it, but when work is available, they have to do their best to work as much as possible. Eleven mothers suggested that getting off work was not a problem if a child became sick or there was a family emergency. Others maintained, however, that their employers were insensitive to their plight as parents and workers. According to Rafaela, "There are some employers that say that because we are at work, we cannot leave." Still others were unable to agree on their employers' reaction to the case of a family emergency, as the following excerpt from an interview with Zolia and her husband illustrates.

Zolia: My boss, he would say that, he would say either your job or your family. You choose.... He doesn't have a heart.

Lucio: But I think he would let her come if somebody was sick.

Zolia: Yeah, maybe because he knows he's got good crops, he's got good fields, so he said, "I'll get another family."

Even those allotted leave during an emergency, pointed out how subjective "emergency" may be.

They told us that we could leave only if it is an emergency. And I said like if my daughter has the flu, I said I'd go to see how she is and take her to the hospital or the clinic. And they told me, "You can't ask for permission, only in the case of an

emergency.” And I said to them, “What is an emergency only if someone dies?”...I said, “No. An emergency is if someone gets sick” (Antonia)

In addition to such inconsistencies, a new policy was instituted during the 2001 season to penalize employees for leaving work for any reason. According to Candida, “If it is an emergency they let you go home, but right now they are saying if you go home early you can't come back [and work] the next day.” But this policy was not consistently enforced by all employers.

To me most of the time they say that it is fine [if I need to leave work]. But they get angry with my husband. They say he cannot be absent more than one day per week. And if he has an appointment, even for a half of an hour, he will miss the whole day. He does not get permission very easy....It is due to a lack of people. They are very strict. Because, when they had a lot of work to do, and you came late, it did not matter that you came late, you started to work at once. Not now. If you come five minutes after 5:00 a.m. you cannot do any work at all (Gitana).

Gitana and others suggested that this new policy was related to the shortage of work.

To ensure that workers do not leave during the day, employers sometimes withheld information about emergencies.

[Our caregiver] called to say that our daughter was sick and the supervisor didn't tell us. After [work] I called to find out about [our daughter] because I knew that she was getting a little sick. The lady that takes care of the children then told me that she had called me, that she spoke with the supervisor and she didn't tell me. (Flavia)

Similarly, Engracia's husband, Santos, was not informed of a death in the family until after his shift. “That's one of the things I have against the supervisor...because they didn't tell me until I finished picking.... Emergency news...and my sister was waiting for me to call back, and until I finished picking the pickles....” Such incidents illustrate the exploitative nature of agricultural labor.

The six mothers who had integrated service work into their lives over the course of the study experienced some of the highest levels of flexibility in their working

conditions. For example, Serafina who worked caring for the children of migrant agricultural laborers in a Head Start program, indicated that

One time, ...my daughter I had to take to the hospital,...and I was almost all night over there. And I didn't call nobody, and I had to get to work that day because I start to work at five thirty in the morning. And I told them...I had to leave in two hours because I had my daughter in the hospital, and they told me, "Oh, we didn't know you took her to the hospital." ...And they say, "Oh, if you have to leave, just forget it, and forget about the job for now. You're daughter's more important." They look for somebody else, and I leave.²³

Thus, the standpoints of Harvest County mothers illuminate some of the subtle shifts occurring among farm workers. Many women remarked that they did the same agricultural labor their partners did, suggesting a shift from the more strictly gendered division of labor documented in past studies of agricultural labor (Barndt's 2002; Chavira-Prado's 1992). Upon closer examination, however, a more subtle gendered division of labor emerged, in which men, rather than women, worked more hours, held slightly more lucrative jobs, and were more likely to be employed in seasonal labor, such as construction or maintenance work when they were not employed at agricultural labor. Although this division of labor led to more pay for men, another subtle trend suggests the potential for a gendered reconfiguration as women are pulled into the growing service economy and potentially off of the migrant track. Though women tended to secure less work and less pay at agricultural labor, their increased involvement in education and service work holds the potential to improve their lot and provide them with more flexible employment options than agricultural labor affords.

²³ Despite these positive reports by Sarafina, the following year when she was interviewed, she spoke about how her supervisors had become less lenient with her and other employees' needs to leave work for family or personal reasons.

COUNTY COMPARISON AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has described the local contexts in which the mothers of Harvest and Delta Counties negotiate employment. Those particular contexts can be viewed within larger trends of rural restructuring (Chapter 2), such as a slower shift from manufacturing to services than in urban areas. Therefore, Harvest County remains reliant on manufacturing, agriculture, and the production of goods. Compared to Delta County, Harvest County is more strongly oriented towards agriculture, construction, and manufacturing (see Table 5.5). The concentration of low paying service jobs in Delta County is typical of rural restructuring, as is the increase in mechanization in Harvest County.

Beginning from the standpoints of low-income mothers in two distinct counties reveals how they experience the rural economies that shape their circumstances. Fluctuations in the demands of capitalism (from manufacturing to a service-based economy, to increasingly cheaper sources of labor) hold consequences for real lives and create employment circumstances that are often unyielding and unstable for low-wage workers and their families. Mothers in both Delta and Harvest Counties experience some similarities in the everyday experience of work, such as “feast or famine” job instability and seasonal or temporary work. Both sets of mothers (and their partners) are pulled and pushed in various directions by shifts in their respective restructured rural economies. Delta County mothers are pulled into the growing number of low-wage service jobs, while their male partners remain in manufacturing and construction, the remnants of better-paying jobs traditionally filled by men in rural areas. These women work in “gray-

collar” jobs (Johnson 2002), characterized by impermanence, unpredictability, insecurity, and poor working conditions.

The Latino mothers who work in Harvest County, however, have been pulled a greater distance; and at greater cost, to work under less desirable conditions than many of the Delta County mothers. Harvest County mothers’ accounts confirm Latino migration paths from the Southwest to the Midwest. The poor job context in Texas pushes families out while the demand for labor in Harvest County pulls them in (Saenz and Cready 1997). Historically, Latinos and other racial-ethnic groups have been forced to move at the whims of capitalism and to perform the least desirable work (Carnoy et al. 1993; Dill 1998b; Saenz and Cready 1997). An example of such working conditions can be found in the health issues faced by Harvest County mothers and their partners. In contrast to the health issues with which Delta County mothers dealt, the health issues of Harvest County informants were more closely linked to the conditions of their labor, and sickness was a more frequent occurrence. In addition, Harvest County informants were more likely than Delta County mothers or their partners to continue working with an injury or illness.

Examining distinctions in the gendered division of labor between the circumstances in each county further illustrates the differences in the employment circumstances of mothers and their partners in each county. The gendered division of labor in Harvest County was more covert and less obvious than was the case in Delta County, where women tended to work distinct and separate jobs from their partners. Nevertheless, in both cases, the gendered division of labor tips income-generating capacity in favor of men. Men in both contexts tended to acquire more hours of work and receive more pay for their gendered employment than did their female partners. Such

divisions of resources can potentially affect power within relationships, an issue addressed in Chapter Eight (also see Blumstein and Swartz 1983).

As Harvest County mothers gain further education, they begin to enter some of the service sector jobs typically held by Delta County mothers. Beginning from mothers' standpoints helps explain this shift and draws an important distinction between the employment circumstances of Harvest County and Delta County mothers. Mothers who worked in Harvest County typically considered service jobs, such as working at Walmart, an ideal job to support their family. From their standpoint as agricultural laborers, these jobs were appealing because they were indoors and allowed them to spend weekends with their families. Some also acquired additional education, that typically prepared them for "pink collar jobs." Thus, some of the women in Harvest County are attaining the types of jobs that many Delta County mothers viewed as inaccessible to them. What does this small shift mean in terms of the larger economic shifts outlined in Chapter Two? Are female Latino migrant workers going to be pulled into service jobs along with those in Delta County? Will they manage to attain better jobs than Delta County mothers? What factors are related to their ability to negotiate better employment for themselves? In Chapter Six I turn to these questions as I examine the backstage work involved in getting employment, keeping employment, and getting better employment for both sets of women.

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**WORKING FOR WORK IN RURAL MICHIGAN:
A STUDY OF HOW LOW-INCOME MOTHERS NEGOTIATE PAID WORK**

VOLUME II

By

E. Brooke Kelly

A DISSERTATION

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Chapter 6:
Negotiating Paid Work:
Revealing the Backstage Labors of Paid Employment

In this chapter, I illustrate how the conditions of work discussed in Chapter Five shape the process of negotiating work, addressing my primary research question, “What labors are necessary to attain and sustain paid employment?” I divide my discussion by counties and provide a comparison of them and conclusions in the final section of the chapter.

THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATING WORK IN DELTA COUNTY

Getting Jobs

The taken for granted efforts involved in getting and keeping a job are most obvious in women’s efforts to secure a job. The patterns found in these efforts also reveal the labor market trends of their county.

Networking/ Making Contacts

People often are key to securing a job, and mothers frequently provided examples of family members, friends, and acquaintances who connected them with employment opportunities, either directly or indirectly. For example, Liz was encouraged to become a bus driver by drivers she met at her son’s school and, eventually, one of them taught her how to drive. After being a “temp” bus driver for a period of time, Liz secured a full-time job, in part because of who she knew. “...I seen the ad in the paper...and then when I went in there, the girl that I was acquainted with worked in the office and I went, ‘Oh so you work here?’ So that's how I got hired there.” In fact, many mothers found and secured jobs through a combination of “official” means (ads in the paper, submitting an application, and/or interviewing) and more informal connections.

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Nevertheless, family or informal connections often were most influential, and most jobs were acquired because of “who you know” rather than on “what you know” (i.e., skills). In fact, some jobs were virtually inaccessible unless you “knew someone,” as Tracy maintained about a local factory. “They’re like...a family-oriented shop. You have to have some type of family in there to get pull to get in there.” Delta County was not unique in this regard. According to Brandy, you need to “know someone”

I think in the smaller towns. [This area] isn't as bad as some of them that I have seen. Like [where I'm from], they have [this factory]. There's no way to get into [the factory] unless you know someone, and you know someone higher up. [In another town], when I got into McDonald's, I was trying like Rite-Aid and the video stores. No way. They would tell you straight out; you have to know somebody.

Surprisingly then, even hiring for low-paying service jobs was governed by community gate keeping. Such a system puts new residents and younger women at a disadvantage, since they are unlikely to have had the time to establish networks with other community members.

The centrality of “who you know” to secure work challenges the emphasis on “skill building” that is stressed in work first programs initiated by welfare reform. This is not to say that education and training were not valued and used as a way to secure better employment but, interviewing skills may not be as crucial as some policies suggest. Only three mothers had any association with such social service programs,¹ and only Nancy, one of the youngest women and the least experienced, found job searching skills useful. “I went to Work First for a while. They taught us how to shake hands and look people in the face and a lot of good things like that.” Mothers with more work experience,

¹ Tracy was required to look for work each summer and checked into a work first program in order to receive unemployment while her seasonal job at a nearby college was not available. Brandy was interested in getting involved with a work first program to enable her to complete her GED, but was ineligible because she quit her job. Nancy had voluntarily become involved with the work first program.

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however, found they already knew the skills taught. In fact, Brandy was interested in this program solely because she knew it would provide her with much needed transportation assistance, her greatest barrier to employment.

Being Persistent

Faced with few community networks, little education, and/or physical or mental disabilities, some women (6) found it difficult to get employers to give them a chance. Given employers reluctance, three mothers secured jobs by being persistent. For example, Brandy got a job at a discount chain when it was opening and competition was high because she

- ...went to the open interviews and kept calling them and calling them and calling them. And they wouldn't call me back, and they'd tell me, "Well, we'll give you a call or we'll give them the message." It was a hassle getting in there. ...They had been...open for about a month and a half before I got the job. I finally just had to push and tell them, "Hey, bring me in for an interview and I'll prove to you that I'm the kind of worker that you want." And she said, "Okay, come in tomorrow." At that point, then she was willing to bring me in for an interview, but I had to push.

Brandy's persistence belies the myth that low-income mothers do not want to work. Thus, beginning with the everyday circumstances of mothers provides insights into the things they need to attain employment, thereby calling into question basic assumptions embedded in policies that potentially affect them.

Self-Preparation

Though networks in small rural towns often helped women bypass the "official" channels of the self-preparation involved in getting and keeping paid work, mothers still took efforts to prepare themselves as workers, grooming their physical appearance, building credentials and skills, and making themselves available by securing

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transportation or moving. Getting a job involved expense and was a challenge as the following account of a local hairdresser shows.²

I'll see people [that say], "We want to come over and see you, but I don't have the money right now." And they're people that I'll help out. Like somebody that's going for a job interview and they know me well enough and I've cut their hair long enough and [they'll ask], "I don't have any money right now, would you take me, cut my hair and I'll pay you when I get some money?" And I mean, for a job interview, it's an important thing. You know, and you've gotta....

Self-preparation was also important to keeping a job. Liz, Jenna, and Clara were required to monitor their appearance at considerable expense to remain employed at a current or previous job. According to Clara,

When I worked at McDonald's...you had to buy your uniform. The hat, the shirt, and the pants. ...It cost \$40 for the whole set and when you ain't got the money and you need the job, that's why you're going to get a job because you don't have money.

Further, Jenna complained that the restaurants she had worked for "[were] always switching uniforms around and all," requiring that she purchase new uniforms more than once. Though Nancy was not required to wear a uniform, she incurred a clothing expense from her job at a pizza restaurant because she "...wrecked a lot of clothes. They get greasy, and sometimes grease gets on me." Though not all restaurant work required a uniform, other rules involved expenses and maintenance. As a server at a bar and tavern, Abby was required to come to work with a minimum amount of cash on hand. Sometimes amassing this money challenged her tight budget. Following a shift in management, the bank at which Liz worked demanded that their employees adopt a new image. Liz, however,

...couldn't dress the way they wanted me to. I couldn't act the way they wanted me to. ...They were presidents and executives and human resources, loan

² This interview became one of my pilot interviews since she did not meet my income requirement. However, I rely on her insights as a community member and contact person.

officers. They could afford the \$60 dresses. I was just the lonely little proof operator that did good if I had a \$12 dress to my name. I'm raising two kids by myself. You want to buy my wardrobe? Be my guest. [Her employer said], "Well, we'll give you a \$100 loan so you can go buy clothes and then we'll just take it out of your pay check every week." No, you're not. I need my pay check. I have kids to raise.

Not only did her job place a financial strain on Liz, but she also resented new demands to act more professional. Self-preparation thus is necessary both to get and to keep work.

Getting to Work: Transportation Problems and Commuting in a Rural County

Part of self-preparation involves the act of physically getting to a job by securing transportation and/ or moving. Transportation, however, is a particular challenge in rural areas where public buses may not be readily available and jobs are dispersed over a great distance (Gibbs 2002; Lichter and Jayakody, 2002; Weber et al. 2002). Indeed, while driving around Delta County, I never encountered a bus or sign of one.

Transportation Problems as Potential Barriers to Employment/Dealing with

Inadequate Transportation Options: Getting to work was difficult for low-income parents who typically were unable to keep cars in good working condition. For example, some families had multiple cars, but only one (or none) was in working order. Keeping cars registered and insured also presented problems. Clara, for example, was afraid to drive her car into town because she could not afford to insure her car. Other mothers did not have a valid driver's license due to suspension or not passing the driver's test.³ Brandy and Clara thought they could pass the test, but they could not afford to retake it.

The cost of gasoline was also a significant work-related expense, an issue compounded in rural areas where great traveling distances are necessary for something as simple as filling a gas tank. For example, Liz had to drive to a neighboring town to get

³ Three partners or previous partners also had a suspended license at one time or another due to driving under the influence of alcohol.

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gasoline because the station in her town had closed, thereby causing her to "...spend all the gas to go get the gas."

In a rural mid-western county, weather also presents challenges to mothers' efforts to get to work. Laurel had to drive up a very steep unpaved hill to get from her home to the road that she took to work. Ice complicated her half hour commute. She came up with a creative strategy to deal with employers' complaints when she could not make it to work.

I don't like to get out on bad roads. ... You know, a lot of employers don't understand that, but that was a problem sometimes for work.... I try to drag my bosses out here, and let them know where I live, that way they can understand. [laughs]. ...In fact, ...a few times [when I was working at the discount chain]...I had to call in and the boss would give me a hard time on the phone and, you know, I would just say, "Well, you know, I would be more than willing to come to work if you wanted to come out here and get me. ...So, then they were like, no, we'll let it slide."

A major obstacle to getting to work was dealing with an automobile that was unreliable and, in some cases, unsafe, or not having a vehicle at all.⁴

Well, I think like the biggest thing that holds me back [from getting a job] right now is transportation issues. ... It's hard. I've got a big junker piece of truck out there that I'm borrowing from my mother and I do not have a license. ...[The truck] is pathetic. Pathetic! ...The air won't come out, so it won't let the gas go down, so I can't just pull up at a gas station and get gas. I have to fill a can up. The can only holds four dollars. I have to park somewhere where the car will be tilted enough so that the air will go out, to put [in] the four dollars in gas...which...doesn't go very far in a big older truck. ...I've run out [of gas] quite a bit. (Brandy)

In short, dealing with inadequate transportation such as poorly maintained and/or improperly registered vehicles made driving not only difficult, but also risky and expensive.

⁴ Six mothers had problems with unreliable and unsafe cars, or they lacked a vehicle in the past.

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Scrambling to Get to Work: Faced with inadequate transportation, many mothers and their partners missed work or “scrambled” to get there. Brandy was not alone in taking risks, given her transportation options.

Actually like last week or so the brakes went totally out of my car. ...I almost got hit. I couldn't stop at a stop sign. ...I just rolled. I put the car in neutral and turned it off and rolled...[laughed]...I went right past the stop sign. A truck went right [by], it was really close. ...I called my mom, but she wasn't going to bring me to work. I mean, she would have, but she wouldn't have picked me up, so I wouldn't have had no way home. So, I couldn't go that day. (Nancy)

Moreover, Nancy's partner “got fired from a job because the car wouldn't run and he couldn't make it [to work].” Thus, unreliable transportation also made it difficult for mothers and their partners to keep jobs.

When unreliable transportation failed, mothers “scrambled” to get a ride or they missed work, as Jenna explained.

Oh, well. [My car is] reliable for the moment, for as long as it lasts, you know. Yeah. I've had problems with vehicles, you know, where I've had to get rides back and forth to work sometimes or, you know, scramble to find something that I can drive because it died or whatever. You know, I had a car that I bought, and within a month after I bought it the transmission went out. ...At that time I was married and my husband was able to bring me back and forth. ...But if it was to happen now, I don't know what I would do. [laughs] You know.

As a single mother, Jenna was unsure who she might turn to for a ride or back-up transportation. Like other mothers, she was forced to deal with “the moment,” “as long as it lasts.” Women's low-paying jobs did not provide sufficient cash to invest in more secure sources of transportation.

I was having a lot of car trouble. ...And it was a constant. My paychecks were going into my car constantly...because I was commuting [about a half an hour away] and my car wouldn't hold up. I didn't make enough money to keep my car running. I couldn't afford a car payment because I was paying child care (Liz).

Liz's circumstance clearly illustrates the relationship between the conditions of low-wage, inflexible work and the difficulties employees face in getting themselves to those jobs. Without better pay, workers must deal with erratic problems and unreliable and, sometimes, unsafe transportation. The inflexibility of these jobs does not allow leeway in such circumstances. Thus, mothers "scramble," as Jenna put it, to deal with inadequate transportation and circumstances that are constantly in flux.

Commuting: Driving to nearby cities where work is better paying and more plentiful was a common strategy for negotiating better work or any work at all (Chapter Five). Eleven mothers and/or partners out of twenty-one mothers and partners (52.4%) commuted at some time during their working history. I defined a commute as a drive 20 minutes or greater, but mothers reported driving as much as an hour, on a daily basis, to work. The most common destination was, Pleasantville, a city located about an hour's drive away, though distance varied depending on where a person lived in Delta County.

Mothers and their partners make decisions about whether to commute and how far to commute based on the work available in the county and the surrounding area as well as on the particular conditions of their lives. Although an individual could increase her or his earnings by commuting, the returns in the form of increased wages did not necessarily merit the potential "costs" such as the cost of gasoline, having to deal with mid-west winter weather conditions, and the time that commuting consumes. Tracy commuted about 45 minutes to an hour each way, five days a week, to work in food service at a nearby college. "I mean when you go there, it's quick. You're there quick. It doesn't seem like a 45 minute, hour drive. It's the way home, you know. You get there and it's getting dark out, and you're like, I just want to get home. It seems forever." Although

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Tracy said she spent about \$20 per week on gasoline, at the time of the interview, other women and/or their partners spent more. In addition to gas, commuting involved other expenses. While Ellie's partner, for example, drove a truck, he had to pay for room and board and laundry along the way. Laurel's husband traveled extensively and he occasionally had to pay for overnight lodging. His long hours, however, also brought in a higher salary, which justified the commuting and travel costs for him and for Laurel. In Ellie's case, however, she was frustrated with her partner's commute.

The kids' dad [commuted to Pleasantville] when we first moved up here. He was driving sixty-five, almost seventy miles a day back and forth to work, and the gas prices were just...horrendous. So, what he was making and what we were shelling out for sitters' cost, because I was working at the time. It just, it wasn't giving us anything of an edge at all. So, it just kind of, really wasn't worth it.
(Ellie)

Indeed, Ellie's and her partner later made a decision to move in order to decrease the costs of a commute to his co-worker with whom he drove a truck during the day. Thus, part of the backstage labor necessary to negotiate paid employment involves scrambling to get to work, commuting to get to work, and/or even moving to make getting to work feasible.

Organizing the journey to employment involved time, effort, and money. It also involved decision making about transportation options that were often in flux. However, decisions and efforts to "scramble" to get to work also were related to specific circumstances. Tracy's decision to commute to a better paying job was related to her position as the family breadwinner because of her husband's severe health problems. In her case, the increased pay (she said she believed she makes \$3 more per hour than she could without the commute) and the job benefits she received outweighed the potential costs of commuting.

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Thus, mothers and their partners make difficult decisions about negotiating employment, and the process is part of the labor they do to sustain employment. The conditions of employment (low-pay and inflexibility) create and compound the labors necessary for low-income mothers and their partners to sustain their employment. Though being without a car or having an unreliable vehicle compound the difficulties mothers and their partners experience in getting to work, the labors involved in the process are not limited to the need for a better car.

Education, Training, and Experience

Self preparation for paid work may also involve efforts to acquire education, training, or skills. Credential building may also be a condition of keeping work. The educational levels of mothers interviewed in Delta County were quite low, with three mothers having less than a high school education or GED equivalent. Most women acknowledged that education was a barrier to better employment in their area.

Education and Training Valued as an Advantage for Negotiating “Better” Work:

Ten mothers wanted to further their education or training. For example, Abby planned to go to college and obtain a nursing degree, and she explained that her husband supported her plan because he'd

like to have something to fall back on. ...If nothing else, I would be a college nurse. You know, I can go to any place and work. There's a hospital every fifty miles.... across the United States. We can live anywhere, and I will have a job, which makes me feel better.

In a rural context in which many jobs are unstable and widely dispersed, job security is critical. Women considered education and training as a leverage that could help them negotiate a more secure job or at least provide them with better options than were currently available to them. This view of education and training applied to their partners

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as well. Though Erin's partner was not using his truck-driving license at the time of the interview, she still thought his license represented an option that enabled him to deal with the inconsistencies of available work, "Well that way, he's got one more thing underneath his belt too. He's got the option of what he wants."

Barriers to Education and/or Training: Mothers, however, faced many barriers in their efforts to attain education and training. As a single mother, Brandy faced financial barriers. "I mean, I really would like to go back and get my GED and get an education, but I can't financially. It's kind of hard to go to school when you don't have an income coming." Brandy, Clara, and Erin's husband were all contemplating taking the GED test(s), but the cost of the tests held them back. In addition to this problem, Clara considered taking the test a gamble. As she put it, "...if you fail, they take your money." Brandy hoped that social services would provide her with some financial assistance so that she could go back to school, but she was denied such assistance because she quit her job. "So, if I was going to school 20 hours a week for my GED and working 20 hours a week, they would be able to help me out financially also." Nevertheless, Brandy was unhappy with this scenario because she had been brought up to believe it was wrong to rely on government assistance. She also admitted, however, that the low-wage jobs she had had were not helping her support her family. "Doing it the way that I've been doing it [i.e., working entry level jobs], just is not working."

Because of her learning disability, Erin faced, perhaps, the largest barrier of the women. Admitting that her eight year-old daughter was better equipped to read to her younger children than she was, Erin was aware that improving her education would be difficult and require one-on-one attention. A mother with five children and unable to

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afford day care, Erin planned to wait until her youngest child was in school to begin training at an individualized program.

As one of two Delta County mothers with computers in the home, Ellie was, in the interim,

...looking into the courses on the internet. A friend of mine out in Washington. She does the courses where she just, she goes to class at like eight o'clock in the morning and it goes to like ten or ten-thirty, but she does everything on the computer. You know, they send her materials and things like that, and she does it on computer. So, I figure, with him [youngest son], I don't want to leave him anywhere, you know. And that way I'm home.

Ellie thus devised a strategy to improve her education and work circumstances that fit her life.

Training and Licenses: Some mothers and their partners needed to acquire other types of training either to keep or to get a job. In many cases this involved attaining some type of license such as a license to drive a semi-truck, which Ellie's husband acquired hoping to get a job as a truck driver.⁵ "He tried the trash pick up for a little while and it just wasn't paying enough. A recruiter called him for the schooling, and he says okay, that sounds like a good opportunity. So, he went to school for three weeks for it." Ellie also acknowledged that gaining certification as a mechanic would improve his current work prospects. "Because he's not certified...no big companies will hire him." When asked how much the certification would cost, Ellie responded, "...that's why he hasn't gone yet [laughs]."

Moreover, although Liz talked about driving a bus as if it were easy, she invested time and energy so that she could become certified. "In '96 it took me from November til

⁵ Ethan worked as a truck driver, although he had some problems with employers not paying him consistently and was no longer employed in the profession at the time of the interview.

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On the Job Training and Experience: Education, training, and experience also were necessary to negotiate better work, as Ellie acknowledged. “You know, it's kind of hard when nobody will give the chance to prove yourself and everybody wants the one year or two years of experience, and if you don't have experience, you're not getting in anywhere.” Ellie referred to jobs that she did not have the specific experience to perform such as secretarial work in a doctor's office. In general, however, women's jobs offered them little training or experience to better position them for other jobs. Those who did have some sort of special training or experience, such as Laurel whose family members taught her how to cut meat, were at a clear advantage. When a local discount chain opened in the area, there was a tremendous amount of competition for jobs. Nevertheless, Laurel “...went in to fill out an application. I had an interview the same day. ...But I had had experience in meat cutting, ...so [that] really put me in there.”

Ellie summed up the “job training” of most low-paying service jobs. “They'll hire ya and... have you stand there and watch for two to three days or take tests to see what you know or things like that, but nothing really, no schooling.” Nevertheless, Tracy gained some useful training and experience at a previous job.

I gained a lot of knowledge by working [grocery store] because I went from running the cash register to running the shift, like a shift leader. Like the management team was there during the day, and then towards the afternoon...they would all leave. So they had to have like, somebody had to be in charge. ...So, then that's what I worked my way into was that. And then from there, I went into the office part of it. I still run cashier, overseeing part of the store, but I also learned how to do the books there. ...They'd done it on the computer, which I had no knowledge since college. ...So, I got to learn the Excel and... Word, and all that. So I learned a lot there.

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In sum, Delta County mothers' experiences confirm the trend in rural areas that "who you know" and being persistent holds more weight than "what you know" in securing low-wage jobs. Maintaining social networks, monitoring one's physical appearance and emotions, building credentials and skills, and making one's self available by securing transportation, commuting, and/or moving are essential not only to securing a job, but also to keeping employment and/or securing better employment. Mothers expend time, energy, and financial resources to get and keep employment.

Managing the Conditions of Work

Once mothers get a job, the labors involved in negotiating work are not complete. Paid employment must be managed on an everyday basis. A common characteristic of the jobs mothers typically held were their inconsistency; they were temporary, offered fluctuating hours, and/or were seasonal. In addition, sometimes their work environments were hostile, involving sexual harassment, discrimination, or other mistreatment from co-workers, bosses, and/or customers. Women used a variety of strategies to manage such working conditions and environments.

Managing Inconsistencies in Employment and Pay: Quitting, Juggling Multiple Jobs, and Supplemental Work

Faced with jobs that did not pay a living wage, did not pay at all, and/or did not provide enough hours or the hours promised when hired, some mothers and/or their partners decided to leave jobs. For example, Nancy planned to look for another job because the owner of the pizza place where she worked had reduced her to twenty hours per week due to seasonal business fluctuations. Similarly, Ellie's partner, Ethan, chose to leave a job as a truck driver because he was not getting the hours anticipated and needed to support his family. One employer also failed to pay him by writing a bad check.

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Nancy and her partner also decided to leave jobs because they felt their employer was taking advantage of them. “They didn’t pay very much. They like used us.” As caretakers at a home for persons with disabilities, they “...had to stay over night for a while, but he only gave us like twenty-five dollars a day. ...[We were] cooking them up three meals and all that stuff.” Thus, in cases in which mothers and/or their partners felt they were being exploited, they were more likely to quit a job and look for another than try to supplement their wages with other sources of income. But replacing a job inevitably required additional labor.

Another way to manage underemployment, inconsistencies, and/or low pay is to secure a second job. For example, Jenna juggled multiple jobs throughout her work history. At the time of our interview, she worked one job, a stable full-time job with a regular schedule.⁶ Nevertheless, she was considering taking on an additional job on the weekends for financial reasons. When her oldest daughter turned eighteen, the child care subsidy she’d relied on to send her five year old to day care decreased and her out-of-pocket insurance premiums increased.⁷ Despite the stability of Jenna’s employment, as a single mother, the income from her job no longer supported her and her daughters. Rather than search for another full-time job with better pay, however, Jenna decided to keep her job and to look for a second one.

So, to sort of think of switching jobs and trying to get into a place where I could get more money, which I don't know if that would happen, um, it's just too iffy right now. ...As long as I've worked here, you know, ...as far as union seniority and everything else is concerned, to go somewhere else, you start at the bottom

⁶ At the time of our interview, Jenna was employed as a secretary, one of the jobs that Johnson (2002) characterizes as a pink-collar job. This job offered her full-time work (with flexibility when she needed time off as a parent) autonomy, and a regular work schedule.

⁷ Her oldest daughter’s adulthood decreased the number of qualifying children she supported, and, in turn, the amount of her child care subsidy. Jenna was one of three women who received any health benefits with her job. Only Tracy’s employer covered insurance for her other family members (including her children) at no extra out-of-pocket cost.

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again. There's no place I can get another job starting at what I'm making now. ...And who knows if [my salary would] climb back up, if you'll be there long enough. You know. The ones that come in last are the ones that go out first usually. ... At least here I've got my insurance, my benefits, my retirement, you know, I'm [in]vested so, I might as well stick it out.

Mothers, however, often found it difficult to juggle multiple jobs, perhaps, because the jobs offered little consistency and flexibility. Abby worked two jobs as a waitress until she lost one of the jobs over a conflict with her employer about her pregnancy. Liz juggled multiple jobs on two occasions as she gradually shifted from her job processing checks at a bank to driving a school bus. When she first began driving buses, she moonlighted as a substitute driver, maintaining her job at the bank. She managed the inconsistent scheduling of driving a bus, by occasionally calling in sick to the bank. Once she quit her job at the bank, Liz took another job waitressing to supplement her inconsistent work as a bus driving sub. But, according to Liz, working the two jobs together was too much, primarily because the waitressing job was too inflexible to accommodate her bus driving schedule. The inconsistency of work such as waitressing, thus made juggling jobs an unmanageable long-term strategy for many mothers. It created extra work by not only increasing the total number of hours worked (in many cases over 40), but also by demanding additional work to manage both jobs.

In addition to jobs with inadequate hours and pay, mothers and/or their partners also had to devise ways to manage seasonal employment. Mothers such as Liz and Tracy held jobs that offered consistent hours during the school year. But, during the summer, they attempted to find a job to supplement their incomes.⁸ Both were unable to find work, however, because no one wanted to hire them for the summer. Therefore, Liz

⁸ In fact, Tracy was required to look for work during the summers through her local "work first" program as a condition of receiving unemployment compensation.

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made efforts to carefully manage and save her money to deal with the period during the summer in which she was not employed. Abby's husband, Jasper, had better luck, securing a part-time job at a local discount store for sixty dollars per week. Tracy and Laurel's husband, who was employed seasonally and out of work during the winter, relied on unemployment during the times they were without work.⁹

To deal with the inconsistent conditions of primary employment, mothers and/or their partners also engaged in **supplemental work**, that is, *paid or unpaid work that is done to supplement or in substitution for the low wages, inadequate hours, and/or seasonal nature of regular or primary employment*. Such informal work may include working for cash at odd jobs, bartering, and/or self-provisioning (Nelson and Smith 1999).

The majority of supplemental labors reported by mothers consisted of **odd jobs** or **side work** (Nelson and Smith's [1999] term) for cash. Such work was most often done by partners, was sporadic in nature, and took place when primary seasonal employment was not available. Since many partners worked in construction, collecting, chopping, and selling wood was a commonly reported¹⁰ form of side work during the winter when such work was unavailable and/or slow. "Well, in the summer time he's always at work doing construction, and then in the wintertime we've got to go haul wood. We haul a lot of wood and we sell it for thirty...dollars a [bundle], which is all profit in our pocket" (Abby). Partners also worked at odd jobs in construction, such as putting up dry wall, additions, basements, plowing snow, mechanical work and repair, farm maintenance, and

⁹ Abby's husband had recently talked his boss into paying him "over the table" so that he can cash in on this "benefit," and Gail was relying on unemployment at the time of the interview so that she could spend the summer with her children while between jobs.

¹⁰ Four mothers talked about cutting and selling wood during the winter.

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caring for the elderly. Though a few mothers described some of this work as something that “we” do, most often partners completed the work alone.¹¹

Women did less side work or odd jobs than their partners, but when they worked, their jobs were different. Jenna, for example, moonlighted for “under the table” wages at a restaurant where she used to work, “Right now I’m not on their payroll, but if they need somebody, they’ll call me up. ... ‘Somebody called in sick, can you come in and work?’ And they’ll pay me cash for that.” Many partners also worked odd jobs for cash under the table, but their pay was more lucrative than women’s. For example, Jenna sold Avon products and Tupperware at different times, though she admitted when asked if it brought in extra money, “No, not really. I just get my stuff cheaper [laughs].”¹² Abby said she cleaned house for her uncle occasionally for some cash, and Laurel cared for her mother. Both earned no or little funds from their endeavors.

Mothers did not report bartering, a practice commonly associated with rural communities.¹³ Ellie’s husband worked on their landlord’s cars in exchange for a reduction in rent. Sometimes mothers and/or their partners performed odd jobs for cash, such as housework for family members. Erin’s husband helped her brother out with snow plowing and split the profits. No mothers, however, talked about cash-free exchanges.

Finally, mothers managed inconsistencies in their own and their partner’s employment by self-provisioning, i.e., “the efforts that household members make to provide, through their own labor (and for themselves), goods and services they would

¹¹ A few mothers reported involvement with their partners in side work such as cutting wood, raising pigs (Laurel), and Sue and her husband’s lawn service.

¹² Nelson and Smith (1999) have documented the decreasing market value of women’s self-provisioning work.

¹³ Nelson and Smith (1999: 11) address the practice of “non-monetary interhousehold exchanges.”

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otherwise have to purchase in the (formal or informal) market” (Nelson and Smith 1999: 10). Some of the side work described above can be considered self-provisioning, e.g., collecting fire wood, snow plowing, building one’s own house, and/or house cleaning. In addition, mothers’ engaged in traditional forms of self-provisioning based on their employment in the formal labor market (see Chapter Seven).

Interaction Work

Keeping work sometimes involved dealing with a hostile or unfavorable work environment or situation. Even after securing a job, mothers engaged in interaction work to maintain their jobs and/or to secure better working conditions or hours.

Dealing with Bosses and Co-workers: One example of such interaction was the strategy Laurel used to deal with her employer’s insistence that she come in to work on days when the weather did not allow her to do so. Insisting that her employer come and get her effectively showed him how difficult and impossible it would be for her to make it to work under such circumstances. Abby used a different strategy to negotiate the hours she worked.

When I first started at [the restaurant], I was [full-time] and then they put me on a couple days a week, and it really made me mad, and I told them if they didn't give me more hours I was going to go find a job somewhere else. They gave me more hours, and I still went and got a job some place else.

Interaction work, then, requires the management of relationships with employers.

It also involves dealing with co-workers. For example, Liz injured her shoulder while driving a six-speed school bus. Instead of going on disability, Liz insisted she have access to a school bus with an automatic transmission so that she could keep driving while her shoulder recovered. However, she overheard some of her co-workers talking about her behind her back, accusing her of “faking” her injury. “It was frustrating

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because here you think that they're your friends, and then they're back stabbing you." To deal with her co-workers' false accusations, Liz minimized contact with them.

They don't matter; my kids on my bus matter, and that's what I like to do. ...I just walk in grab my keys, grab my clip board, check my mailbox, check the board to see if there's any new notices and out the door I go. And I do the same thing when I come in. ...I don't talk to anybody. I just keep to myself because that way it saves on bad blood.

Though Liz admitted that her co-workers' accusations hurt her feelings, she managed her emotions and interactions, dealing with them in a way that would produce the least possible conflict.

Managing Hostile Work Environments: Managing gender discrimination, such as sexual harassment, or mistreatment by co-workers and/or employers on an everyday basis can involve emotional labor (Hochschild 1983), or, as I label it, interaction work. A number of examples illustrate the type of hostile environments mothers encountered as well as the ways they dealt with such circumstances.

Clara's co-workers sexually harassed her on an everyday basis while she was pregnant and working on an assembly line in a local factory. "I'm trying not to cry right now," she commented as she told me about what happened. "They just say things like what they want to do to you, and, you know, I don't want to get really into it. ...Things that made me come home and cry and, you know."

Another mother, Ellie, described mistreatment by a new manager who constantly criticized her and her co-workers.

...And he had never had a managing job before, but yet he came in thinking that he knew everything.... There would be customers in line, and he would come up and yell at you for something, you know, the popcorn not being made or, you know, things like that, and you've got customers right there, and it's like...say, "Hey, can I talk to you for a second?" Don't reprimand me in front of the customers, especially when you have a lot of regulars that come in there.... And

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Brandy faced mistreatment by a manager and her co-workers. She had recently moved out of a domestic violence shelter, where she had been living while she was working at a discount super store. Brandy confided in her manager and told her that she was living at the shelter. Her manager then told a number of Brandy's co-workers, who accused Brandy of getting "special treatment."

So, every time that [I did] one little thing...wrong, [the manager] was forced to bring me into the office every time and tell me that my job was being threatened, and I couldn't handle it. I mean, she had me in tears at times because things were very very rough at that time.

Mothers dealt with or responded to such hostile environments (i.e., sexual harassment and/or mistreatment by employers and/or co-workers) by (a) putting up with the harassment and/or (b) quitting. Clara, Ellie, and Brandy all remained in such circumstances before deciding to quit. Clara put up with sexual harassment from her co-workers for almost a year because she liked her job, and "I just kept hiding and crying. You know, hiding in a corner....I didn't think I needed to tell anybody else because it would just make me look like the bad person. That's all."

In each case, these three mothers addressed a point at which the emotional toll of "putting up" with such treatment was too great. Clara explained, "And I just, I said, I've had enough. I quit." When Brandy's manager "brought me in in front of...all the top supervisors [to scold her for the fifth time].... I broke down in tears and took my badge off, and walked out."

Dealing with such hostile work environments clearly is an emotional challenge and strain for mothers who need their jobs. Managing their emotions at work to deal with

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such treatment on an everyday basis requires work, i.e., emotional labor, and takes a toll, as illustrated by Ellie's account, "The stress level before was sky high. ... There [were] many days I'd come home...crying because I was so upset with [my employer's treatment]." Making a decision to leave (and not return to) such environments represents a protest to such treatment.¹⁴ Despite varying levels of economic necessity,¹⁵ these women made a decision about their lives and their work, but the decision to quit demanded that they do additional work to find another job (also see Kelly *forthcoming* [2005]).

Negotiating Better Work

Popular images and stereotypes about low-income mothers represent them as lazy women who do not want to work. Beginning from these women's own perspectives provides a different picture. Mothers not only wanted to work for pay, but they also held the same conflicted feelings about working for pay as middle-class mothers (see Chapter 7). They had plans and hopes for getting better jobs that would improve their circumstances, and some were already on their way to improving their lot. Tracy, for example, found out about her food service job at the university where her sister lives and started commuting on a daily basis for increased wages and health benefits needed to support her family. Gail acquired a license so that she could care for children in her home. Jenna implemented one of the most deliberate long-term strategies for negotiating better employment by getting her foot in the door to a better job.

¹⁴ For example, Brandy later contacted a lawyer with whom she had been working through legal aid, and through that effort her former manager was fired.

¹⁵ None of the three women above had another job lined up. Ellie and Clara both had partners at the time who were employed. At the time she left the job, Brandy was able to fall back on some limited assistance from social services until she found another job.

My mother worked for the county. And the first job that came open in the county...I applied for. ...And it got me in the union. And then I was able to get, more jobs came open, and move on up. ...The people that I interviewed with, I knew personally. I knew that if I could get into the county, I could eventually work my way into a full time job with benefits and everything, which is what I was looking for. ...Because at the time I was working three jobs.

Thus, Jenna had a deliberate, long-term strategy for getting better work: juggling multiple jobs and utilizing her networks to secure a full-time job with benefits. Even after she secured a full-time job with benefits and held a position in a labor union, she still found juggling jobs necessary.

In many of these cases, women relied, at least in part, on their own networks to find out about or secure a better job for themselves. These are not cases in which mothers stumbled into a better job or were handed a job through a social program. Rather, women made a concerted effort to negotiate a better job for themselves. As Jenna's need to acquire a second job to supplement her regular job illustrates, the better jobs for which women strived were not necessarily their "ideal jobs." Thus, mothers' expectations about better and ideal jobs, in other words their "options," were shaped by the structural conditions of their local labor market (what jobs are available) and their own credentials (such as education) as well as their obligations as care givers (see Chapter 7). Nevertheless, the path to "better jobs" required a considerable amount of planning, effort, and coordination. Thus, focusing on these mothers' standpoints and experiences with low-wage jobs reveals the multitude of labors involved in getting and keeping such employment.

NEGOTIATING PAID WORK IN HARVEST COUNTY¹⁶

Like Delta County mothers, Harvest County mothers and their partners labored to get and keep employment within their particular circumstances. In many respects, Harvest County mothers' negotiations resemble those of Delta County mothers. However, beginning with their standpoints as Latino agricultural laborers reveals important distinctions in what they need to do to get and keep employment and/or acquire better employment.

Getting Jobs

Mothers and/or their partner's work histories often began in their teenage years or earlier, working in the fields with their families, harvesting crops out of economic necessity. Thus, getting jobs in agriculture is imbricated within family networks and histories.

Utilizing Networks of Family and Friends

Those who migrated regularly, often moved with extended family members (see Chapter 8). In fact, family members or friends were often mentioned as conduits to work. For example, Ines' brother first came to Harvest County and later encouraged family members to join him. Noemi's Texan friends invited her and her family to join them in Harvest County to work at agricultural labor when "I was very little...." Other mothers had been migrating to work with their families for so long that they did not remember or had never heard the story of how the job(s) was initially acquired. Finally, five mothers or partners, linked into family migration and/or labor streams through marriage. According to Columba, "Well, my in-laws have been coming [to Harvest County] for

¹⁶ Because seventy percent of mothers and their families who worked in Harvest County migrated from Texas or Florida, their efforts to negotiate paid employment in both contexts are addressed.

years, so basically I'm just helping my husband. And after that we just liked it." Zolia brought her husband Lucio into the migrant track to work with her family, "I...brought him...like we got married and [I said], 'This is gonna be [our] honeymoon.'" This finding confirms those of other studies of migrant workers, suggesting that such networks are far more crucial in bringing workers to Harvest and other Michigan counties than formal recruitment policies (Rosenbaum and Willie 2003).

Mothers and/or partners who settled permanently in Harvest County gave similar accounts about how they acquired work. Paloma talked about migrating "from Michigan to Florida and back and forth...when I was just a little girl." When she married, she stopped moving, settling in Harvest County to perform the same work as she had in the past. Even when settled in Harvest County, mothers and their partners acknowledged the salience of networks and "knowing someone" to get work. Flavia and her partner had been able to obtain jobs in warehouses and packing plants because they knew families and other community members who helped them, although this was not the case in the past. "Now it's better [than in the past] because we know about the warehouses.... We had the hope that someone would tell us about the warehouses, [but] we only knew when people called us...[to] tell us" (Flavia's partner). The importance of networks in attaining employment, means that those without networks or new to the area find getting work difficult. As Janae and her partner reported, "It's hard [moving to a new city] because when we get there, no one is there to tell us where we could go and someone there to tell us, 'Here's where you could go and get training.' That's the problem."

Celina and Bonita had difficulty acquiring work in Harvest County. "We fought a lot to get a job. ... We have to drive long distances to come and earn...very little." Those

who remained in Harvest County year-round also had difficulty finding employment during the winter, as suggested by Celina. “There is that fight of finding a job, but sometimes the storages are busy, or my husband looks in other places.”

Maintaining Contact/Networks with Farmers

Once mothers and/or their partners established a relationship with a farmer, maintaining these ties was critical to finding work and/or attaining a different job.

According to Tomasa,

We were working for Bob Smith...and he...went bankrupt, and he...sent us with Joe Anderson so that we could pick pickles for him. And we were talking to Frank Kerry, ...telling him that we didn't have [an employer for the] asparagus [crop] for the next year, and he said, “Well, I know a farmer who is not happy with some people, ...and he's not gonna hire them the next year. Are you interested?” And we said, “Okay,” and...my parents talked to him and they agree, and we came that year and we kept on coming with him.

In addition, because of the seasonal nature of work, maintaining relationships with farmers was crucial for migrants who need to know when to come for the next crop.

Getting Jobs Outside of Agriculture

Family networks also were important to getting a job outside of agriculture. Partners of Harvest County mothers sometimes worked in construction and/or maintenance work in addition to agricultural labor and/or during the winters when agricultural work was not available; they were taught these trades by family members, and often worked at construction with family members in their home states.

Being a member of a family network was not as critical to obtaining work outside of agricultural labor in the service sector, although sometimes it helped. For example, by volunteering at a program in Harvest County aimed to improve the health of migrant workers, Tomasa learned some basic medical skills (e.g., taking vitals). This training

helped her to secure employment as a certified nurse assistant in her home state. Queta cared for her nephews during one season while other family members worked in the fields in Harvest County. Her aunt, the children's mother, suggested she use the child care subsidies offered by social services in Harvest County to care for children of their extended family members.

Self-Preparation

Harvest County mothers did not report self-preparation work for their current employment, such as purchasing and wearing uniforms and/or getting haircuts, as was the case with some Delta County mothers. Nevertheless, Serefina complained, "Right now I don't have no washing machine, so I had to go to wash clothes in [a town that is twenty to twenty-five miles away]. Every weekend I went there. ...[It] takes almost one quarter of a tank [of gas]." The gasoline required for the self-maintenance of mothers and their families, however, was an expense, and the work required time and effort.

Transportation: Getting to Work and Migrating for Work

During my involvement in the *Rural Families Speak* project, I was impressed by the amount of work that migrant workers needed to do just to get to work. Relocating a family at least twice each year involved a great investment of time, money, and planning. Like Delta County mothers, women who worked in Harvest County experienced problems with transportation such as a lack of public transportation, cars that broke down and required maintenance, occasional lack of transportation, and problems associated with "scrambling" to get to work. For example, when asked if her car had broken down in the last year, Yesenia, a mother whose family lives in Harvest County year-round responded, "All the time."

Getting to work also involved expense. Serafina, and her husband, who recently had settled in Harvest County, faced financial difficulties and challenges in getting to work as a result of two ice-related car accidents during the winter. Only one of their vehicles was insured, placing a great financial strain on the family and making getting to work a challenge. Serafina and her husband had to pay to rent a vehicle for a while; although they also asked friends for help in getting to work, they ultimately missed some work. Keeping the gas tank filled also was a problem.

The gas is so expensive now. I think I'm going to start working nights for six hours. I don't know how much I'm going to spend in a week to pay to get over there for gas. ...So, if you're just going to work for the gas...what are you going to bring to the house? (Serafina)

To deal with the exorbitant cost of transportation, some mothers, like Bonita, coordinated work and errands.

We live in the countryside that is away from town and for us, to do our errands we do not have enough money to put gasoline in the vehicle. We do not have enough for coming to work and doing our errands. If we come to work, we cannot do our errands separately. We need to do both things in the same trip.

Reliable vehicles become increasingly important when public transportation is not available, and its absence presented particular obstacles to mothers who did not know how to drive.¹⁷ Antonia, a mother who lives in Harvest County with her family year-round, explained, "Like mom says, 'If you don't know how to drive [in Harvest County], we stay...all closed up.' ...I can't move around....If there's a car you move, if not, no." Not only was Ines unable to drive a car, but the fact that her husband used their only vehicle to commute to a neighboring state and stayed there to work for a week at a time, made it difficult for her to get to and secure employment.

¹⁷ Four mothers were unable to drive, although one of these mothers, Tomasa, acquired her driver's license over the course of the interview period.

To deal with transportation expenses and obstacles, migrant families tried to live **close** by to their employment. Zolia and her family, for example, refused offers to work **another** crop far away, “We’d rather stay here close by...because you are going to spend **that** gas going down there.”

The Planning, and Expense of Migration: The majority of those who worked in **Harvest County** planned and endured significant journeys to migrate for work. **Approximately** 70 percent of mothers who worked and/or whose partners worked in **Harvest County** migrated annually to seek jobs. Such migratory journeys involved **planning**, great investments of time and resources, and a gamble for some families.

For example, Calandra reported.

When it gets to begin the new year...then I start with everything. I start thinking about my bills, send them up there [to Harvest County] and then...as soon as our income comes, we save the money for our trip, for the gas and all that. ...The food that we need to go on the trip. And...then I start preparing the school for the kids. I start telling them we are going to be leaving such and such. ...So, I start kind of early. I like the school to have everything ready because there are four kids. ...So, I begin with a school and then I begin with our money, the income. And then I tell [my husband], start preparing the vehicles, the change of oil and make sure everything is running well. ...And that is something we do every year. ...So once January is here, it would be time for us to start preparing.

The labor involved in planning thus begins before the trip itself, and involved days of **travel**, time, money, and often complications, as Tomasa explained.

This year, I spent \$400 just to get here [to Harvest County].... Gas, food, things that we needed to drive like changing the oil on the truck and, well,...if I actually add up all that I have to do to come over here this year, I paid more than \$400. ...We had to put tires because the old tires were worn out. The brakes had to be fixed before we came because they were awful. They hadn't been changed for five years,...and since we were gonna come all the way over here, it's just like 1500 miles, we had to have them fixed. We didn't want to have an accident on the way over here. So,...I just count, you know, like the gas when we come, the hotel where we stopped to rest for a while, to take a bath 'cause we were tired and everything, and then when we stopped for breakfast and lunch, dinner. So it's a lot of money you spend coming [up] here.

To deal with the expense of making the trip, many families borrowed money from family, friends, and, in some cases, employers; most families earned the bulk of their annual income while they were working in Harvest County. Bonita and her family borrowed money from her son-in-law. “We came and worked, and we sent it back because it was a loan.” The first thing Afra did every year to get ready to migrate to Harvest County “...is call [my employer and]...ask him for some money for the trip.”¹⁸ Migrant workers thus sometimes arrived for the first season of agricultural labor in debt.

Problems with cars breaking down along the way or before the trip were not an uncommon occurrence, sometimes forcing families to borrow money to make the trip. Rafaela and her partner, for example, borrowed \$1,000 to make the trip to Harvest County because their transmission broke down. Gemma and her partner left their car in Texas because it broke down. They had to borrow her mother’s van. Tomasa explained, “We have repaired [our] truck so many times. I think we have spent like close to...\$5,000 [about half the cost of the vehicle].”

The frequency with which transportation problems occurred and the difficulties such problems created forced families to invest a significant portion of their resources in a reliable vehicle. In addition, mothers such as Rafaela, rightly pointed out the importance of a reliable vehicle to their journey. For example, when asked if the increasing cost of gasoline was affecting their mobility, Rafaela responded, “If we need to move, it does not matter if the price is up or down, cheap or expensive...because without the truck, you cannot do anything.” In the following excerpt, Rafaela defends

¹⁸ The fact that some families borrowed money from farmers reiterates the importance of maintaining a good rapport with employers.

her and her partner's decision to purchase a second car that was in better condition than the one they left in Texas to make the trip to Harvest County.

I told [the social worker], "Excuse me, but I will give [my old truck] to you. ...And you will go with a truck like the one we have, an old one, to Texas. Then you will look for a house to rent, look for a job, with family."

Like six other mothers who found it necessary to have two vehicles, Rafaela and her partner experienced difficulty qualifying for assistance, e.g., food stamps, because they owned two vehicles. According to Calandra,

Migrants are allowed only one vehicle. ...But...if I do not have that second vehicle, how does my husband go out to look for work, and how do I go pick up the kids from school? ...There is no bus transportation...where I'm at...so I need two vehicles. There is no way I can make it with only one.

Though Calandra was talking about her circumstances in Texas, applying and reapplying for assistance is another part of the planning related to migration. Not only do parents need to coordinate their children's exit from one school and entrance into another, but social service cases must be closed in one place and opened in Harvest County. This process takes planning and effort, but families often experience a delay between the application and receipt of assistance during a time when they are in most need of assistance, after they have arrived following an expensive trip but before they have begun to gain income. According to Queta,

I receive Medicaid for my daughter here in Texas. When I go to [Harvest County], it only takes like a while before I get Medicaid for her. ...So during that period of time if she is sick or something, I do have a difficult time taking her to the doctors and I have to wait a certain period of time in order for her to get Medicaid. Whenever we receive food stamps,...we also have to wait to go buy [food]. [When] we are traveling from Texas to [Harvest County], you know, you usually don't have any money. So you have to wait to go shopping for groceries.

Thus, not only must cases be closed and reopened, but families also must find ways to deal with delays in assistance in times of the most need.

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Families also must make sure they have a place to live after they have made the long journey to Harvest County. Finding housing can be a challenge.

This is what I have to say, and I could say it yelling or slowly, whatever. I would say, this is a good place to be out here working, but then sometimes when you come from all the ways [from] Texas...or California, or whatever places they all come, to come and work and stuff, you end up not having a home to stay in. You're in your car. You don't know where to go, and...that's hard. (Zolia)

There was a time when we arrived that we were up to a month sleeping in the car because there was no house here; they didn't give us a house because we didn't have papers, nothing was documented and for that reason they didn't give us a house. ...We had to come to searching (Gitana).¹⁹

Even though some farmers provided their employees with housing, such sources could not always be relied upon. Not only did some families have trouble finding housing when they arrived, but housing, once secured, could also be lost. For example, if a woman chose to work for another employer, she would usually have to find other housing. "Usually like towards the end of the working season, you have to look for [another] place [to live], you have to go out of there" (Paloma). Relocating families thus requires a lot of effort, and housing appears to be just one issue potentially in flux during the process of migration and seasonal employment.

Migrating for employment is not only an investment of time, energy, and planning, but it is also a gamble. Sometimes families traveled the long distance and work was not yet available when they arrived or was delayed (Chapter 5). Such delays in employment are beyond planning, as Tomasa explained.

We...call the farmer, like in April, and he would tell us when asparagus season was going to start. So he would, you know, let us know [when] to be there, ...but it seemed like every time they called us, ...we would start the next day and then for some reason, it would freeze and we had to be off work for probably a couple of days until the asparagus came out again.

¹⁹ Gitana is referring to their previous status as undocumented workers. She said that after they became documented, they were able to secure subsidized housing.

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Education, Training, and Language Skills (for Negotiating Better Work)

Harvest County mothers consistently cited limited education and language skills as reasons for their own restricted employment options. This was particularly true in cases where mothers were unable to secure better employment “indoors.”

Barriers to Improved Education or Training (and Negotiating Better Employment): Mothers told compelling stories about why they did not complete high school or why they dropped out of school. Juanita’s story was typical: “We were...brought up in Mexico. And in Mexico, either we ate or we went to school.” Afra explained how her father’s house burned down, so she and her siblings were needed “to build another house...because we didn’t have a place to live.” Nazario, Carlota’s partner, had to drop out of school to help support his nine siblings. “Our parents were very poor. When one is growing up, he starts working...to take care of the littler ones, so the rest could eat.”

Mothers, such as Mercedes, Tomasa, and Zolia maintained that leaving school at an early age had a lasting effect on their ability/confidence to seek further education or training as adults. Mercedes’ father used to take her and her siblings out of school so that they could work. “So we used to go to school like two days out of the week, and, I mean, who’s gonna learn? And so I figure that now, I mean, it seems like it’s harder for me to learn.” Tomasa had difficulty remembering skills she barely used in school long ago. “I went and got my [GED] when I was...31, ...and I quit school when I was 14. ...And then...having to remember math...stuff when I hardly used it very much because I was working in the fields.” Zolia wanted to take the GED, but was “afraid [that] when I get to

the essay thing, I don't know how to...write. And I tried it, and I think, I know I can, but then I get all nervous and...my mind says, 'No, no, no.'”

Other barriers prevented mothers from advancing their education or acquiring additional training. For example, as an adult, Yesenia had been taking English classes, but she was unable to finish the course because the woman who gave her a ride to school moved to Texas. (Yesenia had no other means of getting to the classes.) Others, like Ines' partner, Alejandro, were unable to further their education for the same reason many did not complete their schooling as children and adolescents; they had to work. Ines explained that her partner was not able to go to school or take classes “because when he is not working, he is sleeping during the day.”

Education, Training, and Language Skills Valued as Leverage for Negotiating (Better) Work: Mothers valued education and considered it a leverage for better work “indoors” and a better life. For example, Paloma and her mother tried to teach her younger brother the importance of finishing his education. “I dropped out of school, so I could go and work in the fields. I told my brother, ‘That is not good. Doing that all day in the sun and the hot weather.’” Thus, Harvest County informants consistently linked low education levels and/or limited English language skills to their lack of job options. Afra came to Harvest County to work in agricultural labor because she did not have her GED. “If I would have a GED, at least maybe they would give me a job or something, but they ask for a GED first every time.” Nevertheless, some mothers (and sometimes their partners) tried to negotiate better employment options for themselves by pursuing training and education.

English Language Training: Serafina acknowledged how getting a degree would place her in a better employment position. “I want to go to the college to get a degree in something, like for Spanish or English, because around here they need a lot of people who speak both languages.” Nevertheless, access to classes, difficulties finding time around work schedules, and/or cost were all barriers to completing English training/education. For example, Rafaela explained that “Back down in Texas I asked if we could learn a little bit of English...because it is really hard here that ... we do not know when they talk to us in English. ...They only stare to us, but ... they told me that no, that they only had sewing classes.” The following year, Rafaela tried again. “I saw on TV a program to learn English,...and I wrote the telephone number down. ...I called, and they were very nice with me. But what I didn't like was the price....One thousand and nine hundred dollars!” Despite such challenges, informants wanted to improve their English language skills, and six mothers made efforts to do so.

Education and Training to Negotiate Better Employment Options: Like English language education, completing GEDs and/or seeking higher education such as college or other certifications were also important assets in negotiating better employment options. “It helps a lot. Any job you want, even for a secretary, you need at least a GED” (Mercedes). Four mothers or partners had recently worked on or completed their GED.

In addition, seven mothers worked on education or training beyond a high school degree or equivalent. For example, Imelda and Columba were both working on accounting certificates, and Calandra was studying to become a clerical worker. Janae was “...planning [to] find a job in a bank because I’m going [to school] for business administration. So, I’m hoping...after I finish my two years...to get a job in a bank.”

Though several partners who worked at a trade learned their skill through family members, Queta's partner, Tomas, sought formal training in construction to provide him with more job opportunities in Texas. "[Tomas] is going to start [technical] college in January. ...He wants to [be a] building construction technician. ...He is going to be able to be employed by the big companies in the valley."

In addition to meeting educational requirements as a pre-requisite for employment, workers were sometimes required to receive further on-the-job education or training to maintain employment. Serafina was working on some required courses to maintain her employment as a child care worker.

Dealing with the Conditions of Work

The unavailability of work in the southern states in which most Harvest County workers resided helped shape families' decisions to migrate for better employment opportunities. However, the seasonal agricultural labor that most of the Harvest County informants participated in was also plagued by fluctuations, such as periodic layoffs due to weather or the whims of an employer.

Managing Seasonal Work: Odd Jobs, Side Work, Unemployment and Education

One characteristic of agricultural labor in Harvest County is its temporary and seasonal nature. Migrants adopted a number of strategies to manage these conditions.

Supplemental Work: Odd Jobs and Side Work: One strategy for dealing with the inconsistent conditions of their employment was to take on another job during the off-season or periods of layoffs. For example, Columba's husband, brothers-in-law, and father-in-law all built apartments (housing) for their employer when there were no crops to be harvested. "They built from the bottom up. They did all the plumbing, the flooring,

the shaping, ...the framing, ...everything.” Since in these cases, the partners were employed by one employer for both types of work, negotiating their supplemental labor was not an issue.

Partners who migrated also negotiated similar types of odd jobs after they left Harvest County. Gregorio, for example, started a small mechanic business out of his home in Texas to supplement his and his wife’s unreliable income in agricultural labor while in Harvest County. Afra’s husband Cleto, mowed lawns for extra money, and Calandra’s husband, Augusto, became certified in taxidermy to bring in some extra cash. After working on the Christmas tree crop in Harvest County, three partners brought back some trees to sell in Texas. Such employment was marked by irregular hours and pay, similar to the erratic nature of their Harvest County employment. However, Calandra explained how important this and other side work was in off-setting the low income caused by a bad season of regular agricultural labor in Harvest County. “I’m kind of hoping we can either get us a small part-time job or something, or my husband does carpentry work, or hopefully, during Christmas tree season it will go a lot better.”

Supplemental work was a gendered phenomenon. No women worked as a carpenter or mechanic, though two women helped their partners. But mothers sometimes cared for children in their homes as side work or instead of laboring in agriculture in Harvest County (see Chapter Seven). While her partner mowed lawns and did maintenance work, mothers, such as Afra, also worked on the side, intermittently cleaning houses. Such side work was not as common for women as the odd jobs that

their partners typically performed, supporting Nelson and Smith's (1999) finding about the decreasing prevalence of what has traditionally been women's supplemental work.²⁰

Unemployment Benefits: Another strategy for dealing with the inconsistencies and seasonal nature of agricultural labor in Harvest County was to draw on unemployment benefits after mothers and their families returned to Texas or Florida. Because those who remain in Harvest County year-round are not always able to find year-round employment in agricultural labor, they also relied on unemployment at times. Twenty mothers and/or their partners depended on unemployment compensation to supplement their sporadic earnings from agricultural labor and odd jobs. Calandra's family, for example, relied on a mixed set of resources. "Ah, right now my husband does carpentry work because he cannot open his unemployment, so he's doing ah, off and on he has little jobs to do. But me and my daughter is in school, and I don't work at all. I get unemployment."

Coordinating Education with Seasonal Employment: Rather than care for children or clean houses for pay, seven women and one man worked to improve their education or language skills when they were not employed in Harvest County. Janae, for example, pursued a degree in business during lulls in work. She usually migrated with her extended family, but coordinated her migrations around her education. "My parents, they leave [for Harvest County] about...mid-April, and I need to wait until I get out of school. [Then] we leave." She resumed school in January, when she returned to Texas. Celina's partner, Octavio, went to school for a period during which he was unemployed. "When he is working, sometimes he does not have time, but when the snow

²⁰ Nelson and Smith suggest that this trend can be explained, in part, by the replacement of women's crafts by cheap textiles and other inexpensive market substitutes.

comes, then he goes to school.” In this manner, women (and sometimes their partners) took advantage of the seasonal schedule of the agricultural labor performed in Harvest County to improve their education, and ultimately, to improve their employment options.

Negotiating Better Work (and Settling Out)

Many informants made a distinction between “outdoor” and “indoor” work, and, in general, working indoors was viewed as more favorable.

Well, I worked once in a packing fruit, and I think it is easier being there than under the sun and getting all dirty. There you are going to get dirty, but not that much, you know, getting all the dirt in your face and everything. ...I think it is better working inside than outside (Aida).

But one pre-requisite for such “indoor” agricultural labor is documentation.

Beyond the indoor/outdoor distinction, when asked about their “ideal jobs,” mothers talked about a range of desires including better pay, a 9-to-5 year round schedule, and/or benefits. Mothers “ideal jobs” were typically service jobs: “office job,” “in a store,” or “a nurse.” One mother even specified Wal-Mart. Most mothers acknowledged that they needed to attain further education (such as a GED) and/or improve their English to acquire such jobs. Attaining at least one year-round job for a minimum of one partner was considered a pre-requisite for “settling out” (leaving the migrant track) and/or agricultural labor. Asked what would make life better for her family, Queta responded, “get[ting] a permanent job, so that we can stay here.”

Negotiating better employment and/or “settling out,” however, was not always simple. Zola, for example, echoing the dilemma expressed by other families who wanted to stop migrating, lamented, “[We say we are going to stop migrating], but we always come back. We say we’re not gonna come no more, but we have to.” Thus, the decision is shaped by economic insecurity, on the one hand, and the cost of making a migration

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and the availability or prospect of full-time/year-round employment in Texas or Harvest County, on the other. Tomasa entertained the idea of staying in Florida to work at agricultural labor year-round rather than migrating from Florida to work in Harvest County during the summers. “We're thinking that next year we're gonna try and see if we can find a full-time job in Florida. That way, I mean, it's so expensive to come [up] here and, and, then we don't have all this work, like in this month, and I mean, it's hard.” Nevertheless, Tomasa did not think that jobs would be steadier in Florida than in Harvest County “‘cause there’s too much people. ...And if I were to stay down there, I probably would be in worse condition than if I come over here.”²¹

Interaction Work

To deal with a hostile work environment, women invested a great deal of labor in their interactions with employers and co-workers.

Dealing with Employers: Mothers expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their employers and previous employers. Without a written contract, mothers and their families often relied on their employers to let them know when to migrate for work. As Tomasa explained, “No. Every year, just verbally we come with him. ...Usually he calls us ‘cause we tell him...let us know when the weather starts getting warm...[and] the asparagus is getting ready...” Despite this informal contract, sometimes families arrived to find that employment was delayed. Nevertheless, Tomasa and her family maintained their relationship with their employer because they needed the work.²²

He has good asparagus, you know, and he gives us apple[s to harvest]...too.
...And even though, you know, sometimes we don't like the way he treat us, ...we

²¹ Tomasa later found a permanent, year-round job outside of agriculture in the health profession and settled out.

²² Tomasa and her family later left the migrant track when she acquired a year-round job as a nurse aide in Florida.

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have to support our family. We have payments to make and everything, and, you know, we have to work.

Not all mothers and their partners felt powerless in the face of unfavorable treatment by employers, however, and sometimes mothers or others close to them made decisions to stop working for an employer because of discrimination or unfavorable treatment. For example, Zolia's father had a disagreement with his employer and said, "Uh, I'm outta here. I can't take this." Similarly, Engracia, who had a problem with a farmer in Harvest County the previous year, quit and went to Minnesota. Quitting, then, choosing not to do that interaction work, is one way of dealing with mistreatment and disagreements. Switching employers also was a strategy adopted to deal with perceived unfair treatment.

I changed apple growers. ...I changed pack houses, because...they had all the people they needed and they did not give work to me. And I have worked year after year there. Therefore, I told them that if they did not want to give me work, I would look in another place. And I receive better pay there, for cherries, for the night shift at \$6.15 while it was \$5.25 at the other place (Celina).

Thus, interacting with employers not only involves maintaining a relationship and potentially putting up with unfavorable treatment, but it can also involve confrontation and the severing of ties. Ultimately, switching jobs involves interaction with a new employer.

Managing Hostile Work Environments: Race/Ethnicity and Discrimination:

Harvest County mothers and partners who encountered hostile work environments²³ described a division of labor structured by racial/ethnic inequities. A number of

²³ Five mothers and their partners spoke highly of their employers' treatment and their environments at work. On the other hand, ten mothers and/or partners addressed poor treatment from one of their employers, supervisors, or co-workers. Because mothers and partners often worked for more than one employer over years or within one year, they typically expressed a range of experiences with different

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examples illustrate the type of hostile environments mothers encountered as well as the ways they managed such discrimination and/or mistreatment by employers and co-workers.

Mothers and their partners described a division of labor structured by race/ethnicity and maintained by the actions of employers and co-workers. According to Gitana, for example, the farm at which she and her partner worked had no Latinos in management, “The managers are American.”²⁴ Further, Juanita explained, “There is a lot of racism [at work]....They prefer the white people over the Mexicans.” To support her contention, she told how a Latina was fired for a work-related problem that was ignored in the cases of two white employees. Similarly, Gitana and her partner, Joaquin, maintained that their employer discriminated by allowing white, but not Latino, employees privileges during the work day. “They leave [us] without a break up to eight hours. ...Many hours that they leave [us] without a break.” In addition, Gitana and Bonita suggested that managers and others involved in hiring used English language skills as a measure to discriminate between which employees were consistently called upon to work.

People that [get] work...there all week, it's because they know English. ...There are people that just have one year since they came, and they already have work every day, every day. And we already have [come here] since...ninety-six, but they almost give preference to the people that speak English.

employers or even with the same employer, disclosing both “good” and “bad” treatment or treatment that falls in between such dichotomous categories.

²⁴ Naples similarly found (1994) that some mothers and their partners conflate race/ethnicity and nationality, referring to white people as “Americans.” This may be, in part, because the same women refer to themselves as Mexican (versus a racial-ethnic marker). However, contextually, it is clear that “American” designates a white person.

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Such mistreatment by race/ethnicity was also reinforced by the actions of co-workers. Juanita and Jacinto explained how the behaviors of their white co-workers intimidated their Latina supervisor, jeopardizing her ability to negotiate on their behalf.

The supervisor that is there with us, ...she's Hispanic.... Well, yes she defends us, ...but not like it should be. ...She has a certain fear [of] the white boys because the white boys give us indelicate signals. In other words, bad gestures, with the...mouth, with the hands they make a lot of indelicate signals. ...It grabs your attention. ...They come and make such a scandal, and still they are shouting things. They say to you, "Fuck you" and this and that...shouting (Jacinto).

Documentation or perceptions about documentation also are conflated with race and discrimination in hiring. In many cases, Latinos are assumed to be undocumented regardless of their actual status. This perception is something with which all Latino agricultural workers must contend, and it potentially shapes the social and economic landscape for them. Other informants suggested that workers with documentation also faced employment-related difficulties.

(Alita): He only hires just single men, just those without papers. ...And...poor things, they aren't to blame. ...They come to work and he gives them a job, but...we are the family with documents here. ...And he told us that he was going to give us employment. ...Then a lot of people say that is the reason that he fired us, because he doesn't pay anyone. ...We have seen with our own eyes when he goes and takes the suitcases from the houses. He puts them on [the highway] and says go. Run.

(Gregorio): This man...says he doesn't want anyone with papers because they are very problematic. And he doesn't want...people that have documents. ...Right now he has like sixty illegals, just illegals. Everyone without papers because he doesn't pay...them.

Though Alita and Gregorio's past employer was, perhaps, one of the worst accounts provided, other informants talked about the relationship between an influx of newer workers who were willing to work for less pay essentially flooding the market and replacing workers who had been migrating to Harvest County to work for years. In this manner, documentation issues do serve to structure the flow of labor and access to

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employment for all workers. In Alita and Gregorio's case, all workers—documented or not—were disadvantaged.

Through interactions with co-workers and employers, mothers and their partners navigate the circumstances of their employment, making decisions about whether to deal with mistreatment by (1) remaining silent (out of fear of losing a job), (2) speaking out and resisting (either individually or collectively), and/or (3) quitting. For example, Gitana explained that despite discrimination in hiring by English language skills and nepotism, "You don't say anything because maybe you think they will put you out." Similarly, Gregorio said that his former employer, "...mistreats...[undocumented workers]; ...he insults them. The men don't say anything because he fires them. They are afraid [of] that." Such responses are, undoubtedly, a strategy adopted by people who are powerless to defend their rights as workers. Tolerating discrimination and a hostile work environment on a daily basis requires a certain amount of emotional labor and effort, such as that required to tolerate the intimidating environment created by the "white boys" that Jacinto described above. Nevertheless, looking for another job may require more effort, and actually seem hopeless to many Harvest county mothers, and the threat of job loss is always present in such circumstances, adding another uncertainty to the conditions of work addressed in Chapter Five.

Not all accounts provided by informants suggested a sense of powerlessness, however, and mothers and their partners sometimes challenged comments made or actions taken by a supervisor or co-worker, either individually or collectively. For example, Juanita spoke of a time she contested one of her co-workers.

On one occasion...we were picking strawberries and, uh, we were speaking Spanish. One of [my co-workers] was annoyed that we were speaking Spanish,

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and he told me that I was throwing a lot of strawberries. And I said calmly, ..."Pardon me?" ...I said I was surprised because I didn't know that I was throwing the fruit. So then, about five minutes later I said something to him and he... understood...me to be telling him to get the strawberries together, right, and he told me, "I'm not a Mexican to be doing that." And I got mad and I...said, "Well here Americans and Mexicans work the same, for me we are all workers, right?" And it's not the first time that I got mad at a white person.

Moreover, Juanita's action was supported by her supervisor. As she explained, "Well, in that moment he defended me, right? He told me that I could speak all the Spanish I wanted and that nobody had the right to silence me, right? Since they were speaking English, we can speak Spanish." However, her clarification that "*in that moment* he defended me," suggests that Juanita is not confident that such support would always be forthcoming. Nevertheless, her interactions with her co-workers and supervisor in this case proved to be constructive.

Gitana and her female co-workers on the night shift at a packing plant were able to promote a policy change in their work environment through collective action. The women were required to punch out on their time cards, even though they did not have a break during that time. "Sometimes we were twelve hours in the packing house to work seven...or six hours because the rest we spent punched out." They tried to talk their supervisor into speaking with their boss about the issue. At first she did not want to out of fear for her own job security, but finally, she talked to their boss "and he wasn't aware of all that. Now we don't punch. Now, yes, we have ten hour, ten hours we work." The following year Gitana reported that they were receiving regular breaks at work as well.

Gitana and her co-workers dealt with their fear of job loss, by collectively organizing. "We were in agreement with what we were saying. That way, they couldn't fire everyone." Nevertheless, the difficulties Harvest County mothers faced in securing

and maintaining regular employment were exacerbated by racial/ethnic discrimination, making quitting an uncommon way of dealing with mistreatment. For example, mothers and their partners continued working in many cases with work related injuries, often at the insistence of their employers. Within the context of such a vulnerable labor force, only two mothers talked about examples of quitting a hostile work environment voluntarily (see discussion of Celina and Zolia's father in previous section).

Each approach to managing hostile work environments characterized by racial/ethnic discrimination requires different types of labor, such as the emotional labor of dealing with a hostile work environment on an everyday basis, interaction work to organize and potentially promote change, and/or the labor of finding another job to replace a job loss. The work environments that Harvest County mothers and their partners encountered and their reactions to those environments are a product of their vulnerability as a work force and their shortage of alternative employment options (Chapter Five).

Thus, Harvest County mothers and their partners do a great deal of work in order to perform agricultural labor. Families often serve as units of migration and means of securing employment, but maintaining contact and a good rapport with farmers is crucial for migrant workers, in particular, to maintain employment from one season to the next. Semi-annual migrations require much planning, preparation, and cost, and are a gamble for families with few resources. Mothers and their partners manage the conditions of seasonal and irregular employment by taking on supplemental work in the form of odd jobs and side work, unemployment compensation, and education or training during off-seasons.

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COUNTY COMPARISON AND CONCLUSIONS

Beginning with the standpoints of the mothers of Delta and Harvest Counties reveals a multitude of invisible and taken for granted labors necessary for them to get and keep employment. Such an examination also illustrates important similarities and differences in the work they have to do so that they can work.

The salience of social networks in acquiring jobs in low-wage service work and agricultural labor suggests that “who you know” may be more important to securing such employment than “what you know.” The relative insignificance of self-preparation (such as grooming one’s self), particularly in the case of acquiring agricultural labor, also challenges assumptions embedded in many programs aimed at building self-preparatory skills, such as resume building, interviewing skills, and advice on grooming and preparation of self, as key to securing the employment of low-income mothers.

Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that securing and keeping low-wage employment requires little or no “skills.” The lion’s share of labors revealed in this chapter are often taken for granted and overlooked, but require ample skill to execute and manage. The lives and experiences of mothers in both counties, for example, illustrate that getting to work requires more than simply having access to a car. After women secure a job, they face commutes, “scrambles” to find a ride, and/or all of the planning, coordination and cost involved in migrating for employment. Transportation problems can make it difficult for rural parents to get jobs and/or cause them to lose jobs and they increase the costs of working.

Despite the apparent insignificance of “what you know” to securing low-wage jobs, mothers’ experiences confirm that acquiring education and training is a crucial step

to securing **better** employment. A high school equivalency is a crucial gatekeeper to jobs with greater autonomy and stability among mothers in both counties (see also Johnson 2002). Additionally, English language skills prevent some Harvest County mothers and their partners from getting better jobs, but accessing English education appeared to be more of a challenge for them than securing a GED or college education. In contrast to the stereotypes about them, women were eager for the opportunity to learn, and many of them put great effort into coordinating education and training around the schedules of migration and paid employment.

Both Delta and Harvest County mothers engaged in emotional labor to maintain employment, making decisions about whether to quit jobs that were embedded in hostile working environments and to search for alternative employment or to invest emotional labor and deal with such working conditions on an everyday basis. The difference in their labors and experiences at work present, perhaps, the most striking contrast in the nature of their opportunities and working conditions. Some Delta County mothers dealt with hostile work environments and the emotional labor of dealing with mistreatment on an everyday basis. Harvest County mothers and their partners, in contrast, dealt with a work context structured by assumptions about documentation status and inequities based on race/ethnicity. Thus, gender was paramount in structuring hostile work environments for Delta County mothers, whereas race/ethnicity was primary for Harvest County mothers and their partners. Assumptions about documentation limited opportunities for all agricultural workers, and language skills were often used to determine eligibility for jobs that Latinos were pulled into because they could not find other work due to their limited English language skills and education. Thus, Harvest County mothers had less

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leverage in negotiating low-wage agricultural labor and/or better employment than Delta County mothers. However, those who were able to coordinate education or training around seasonal employment placed themselves in a better position.

The work necessary for paid work outlined in this chapter also begins to reveal the complexities and embeddedness of such labors within mothers' everyday lives. For example, not only must mothers "scramble" to get to work due to unreliable transportation, but a mother's journey to work often needs to be coordinated with a partner's as well as child care arrangements. In the following chapter, I turn to the *coordination* necessary to manage a multitude of variables in one's everyday life to be able to work for pay.

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Chapter Seven: Coordinating Family and Paid Work in Delta and Harvest Counties

In Chapter Six, I focused on the process of negotiating work, that is, all of the efforts necessary to sustain employment on an everyday basis. My discussion suggested the way mothers' efforts to get and keep employment are intertwined with the lives of others, such as their children, partners, friends, and other family. Thus, central to the labors of negotiating employment are the management of family and other components of everyday life around the demands of employment. This coordination is an important part of the backstage labor necessary to sustain paid work. In this chapter, I focus primarily on the effects of family life on the negotiation of employment. I begin by reviewing some of the family demographics of mothers. Then I address how family structure and circumstances affect the negotiation of employment. Finally, I focus on the ways mothers coordinate and manage family demands, such as child care, other care work, and consumption work around/in conjunction with the demands of employment. My discussion confirms the theoretical literature addressed in Chapter Three that the presumed dichotomy between "work" and "family" is, in fact, false and arbitrary.

COORDINATING FAMILY AND PAID WORK IN DELTA COUNTY

Delta County Families

All mothers had at least one child living at home at the time of the interview. The average number of children was 2.5, with a range of one to five children at home. Nine out of twelve mothers had more than one child (see Table 4.2). Ages of children ranged from less than a year old to nineteen. Seven out of twelve mothers had at least one child age five or under in the household. All but three mothers (out of twelve, 75%) had a

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partner living with them at the time of the interview. Of mothers with a partner, five (out of 9, 55.6%) were married, and four (44.4%) were living with a partner. These numbers, however, merely represent a snapshot at the time of the interview; mother's family circumstances shifted and changed throughout their work histories.

**Family Structure:
How Family Characteristics Structure the Negotiation of Paid Work**

The presence of more than one adult in the household can affect an individual's efforts to get and keep employment on an everyday basis. Single mothers face a "triple whammy" in their efforts to generate enough income to support themselves and their children through their employment. First, as women, they receive lower wages than men. Second, as mothers, they must juggle paid and unpaid work. Third, as single mothers, they must juggle earning income and taking care of children without the help of another adult (Albelda and Tilly 1996: 80). Given the low-wage service work typically available to Delta County mothers, full-time work was a financial necessity. Child care, however, was a challenge without the income or assistance of another adult, as Liz illustrated, when she reflected on her past circumstances.

I had a lot of child care problems. I had a lot of car problems because I was commuting...and my car wouldn't hold up. I didn't make enough money to keep my car running. I couldn't afford a car payment because I was paying child care. ...I'd make \$175 a week and \$100 of it went to the babysitter. ...But I wasn't going to live with my ex-husband either. We didn't get along, and it was a lot of marital problems. I had to be on my own to get away from him.

Brandy also reflected on her circumstances as a single mother who needed to work full-time, noting that "Just being a single mother, there are a lot of responsibilities and, you know, I'm the only one that can hold up to that now."

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In general, the presence of two-parents in a household offered more options for negotiating child care around the demands of employment and for generating income than did the situation of a single parent. Nevertheless, simply having two adults in the household did not always make the negotiation of employment easier. In some cases, having a partner actually complicated mother's efforts to get and keep employment.

Partners as Impediments to Negotiating Work

Three mothers (Gail, Jenna, and Brandy) had previous partners with substance abuse problems and/or were physically abusive to them, thereby making it difficult for them to negotiate paid employment. Gail, for example, attributed the loss of two jobs (one in housekeeping at a nursing home, another in in-home day care) to her "soon to be ex"¹ whose drunken outbursts affected her ability to get to work and to work effectively.

He'd come in at like two, three o'clock in the morning drunker than a skunk...come home, gripe at me, wake up the kids...He'd come in and wake me up just to fight. ...I had to be up and out of here by six, and there were some mornings I went into work still crying and [my employer would] send me home.

After neighbors reported such an outburst to the authorities, Gail lost her license as an in-home day care provider, an employment arrangement that had worked well for her and her neighbors who needed child care at unconventional hours. Although some of her children's friends were spending the night, Gail was not caring for children for pay during the incident that led to her license being revoked.

Brandy's previous partner was physically abusive and prevented her from working outside the home through threats. "He did not want me to work. ...I almost had a job at McDonald's. Actually, I had the job, but I only went to the orientation, and he

¹ Gail was in the process of divorcing her husband, from whom she was separated. She was having trouble coming up with the money for the lawyer, however, and received no financial help to do so from her husband.

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Not only did these partners interfere with women’s efforts to get and keep employment, but they also failed to secure stable income themselves through employment. Brandy contended that, “We moved from house to house. Town to town because he kept finding different jobs that he thought he was going to love.” She later explained that they were running from evictions, in many cases, and even if he had “let” her seek employment, their constant moves because of his job shifts would have made this difficult.

Absent Partners due to Employment

Several male partners held jobs in construction, truck driving, and in farm labor that required extended hours away from home. Though their partners’ work was a source of household income, their absence complicated mothers’ efforts to negotiate their own paid employment and to manage child care and other reproductive labor. With her partner “on the road for three weeks at a time” driving a truck, Ellie was left to negotiate child care and employment on her own. “So, like by the time he got home. He was only home for like five days at a time.” The rest of the time, Ellie managed by taking her children with her on her paper route, utilizing paid day care, and “doing everything on my own.” Laurel’s decision to quit her job so that she could closely watch her teenage daughters was directly related to the unavailability of her husband due to the time demands and distance from home that his job required. “He builds bridges, so he’s out of town quite a bit. ... There’s days we don’t know if he’s coming home or not, you know, depending on the job. ... Yeah, pretty much all year, he’s at least three or four hours

away.” Thus, work-related decisions of partners are intertwined with each other and shaped by the gendered conditions of paid employment as well as reproductive labor.

This was even the case for Clara and Al, who were both working on improving their education. Al attended a local college for a technical degree, while Clara took night classes to get her GED. Because Al was inaccessible when he was on campus, whenever one of his children were sick, Clara was called. As a result, she was unable to finish her GED. “They won't even let me back in the school. ...[my child] had bronchial pneumonia for a whole week. ...I'm not allowed to come back because I have too many absences.” In all of these cases, the circumstances of a partner's employment or education made them inaccessible. Though their partners generated income to which their families would not otherwise have access, their absence challenged mothers' abilities to negotiate their own education or employment around their primary child care responsibilities.

Pregnancy

Given mothers' largely inflexible working conditions, pregnancy was associated with job loss/turnover, making it more difficult to get and to keep jobs.² For example, Nancy “went to five interviews...at McDonald's and KFC, stuff like that...and they all said no. They didn't say it was because I was pregnant, but I'm sure it was.” Three women (Abby, Clara, and Ellie) reported instances in which they experienced complications due to pregnancy or needed some time off during pregnancy. When they

² Brandy's time employed at a fast food restaurant outside of Delta County was an exception. She marveled over how flexible and accommodating her employer was during her first pregnancy, and she was able to work there throughout the entire pregnancy.

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returned they were told that their jobs had been filled, that they were no longer needed,³ or, in the case of Clara, that they were fired.

I was a housekeeper. And I had a big old black out, and that's when I found out I was pregnant.... I had nothing to eat that day because I was in such a hurry to get to work. Yeah, I got real dizzy all of a sudden and down on the floor I went, and they were rushing me to the hospital....I called back [to work] to see if I could come back and they told me, "No. We have to let you go." So, basically they fired me.

Such job loss can ultimately affect one's employability, as Abby described. "I had two job terms that were really short [because of my pregnancy]. ...So now all the places that I put in applications...are like, well, why did you only work there for so long?"

Job loss due to pregnancy was not limited to women. Clara's fiancé also left his job during the same pregnancy because the factory that employed him would not permit him to take a couple of days off when the baby was born. In this respect, involved fathers (Gerson, 1993) may also find themselves in brittle and unyielding work contexts that threaten their job security.

Ages of Children

Mothers of older children commonly changed child care and work arrangements when their child or children reached first grade. Mothers with younger children sometimes projected ahead to this as a point when they could more easily work outside the home or pay less for day care. Sue, Abby, Laurel, Ellie, Erin, and Gail recalled periods when they did not work because of their children's ages. Sue had recently begun looking for work for the first time in years because her children were getting older.

³ Although the Family Medical Leave Act may protect some mothers from circumstances such as this, exceptions based on the scale of the place of employment, the amount of time a woman had been employed, and a woman's lack of awareness of the policy prevented most mothers from being covered by this act.

Laurel “didn't start working until all my kids were in school, so I never really had to worry about day care.” Ellie decided to resume her employment due to financial need and her son's age, “He was getting a little bit older.” Gail's predicament with an unexpected pregnancy illustrates the critical role children's ages play in mothers' negotiation of employment.

When I moved up here, my whole plan was shot. ...I found out I was pregnant with the youngest one. My whole goal was to come up here, get a job, because [my youngest son] was half days at school, kindergarten. ...I was going to work part time for a year and the following year, he'd be in first grade. He'd be in school full time. I could go to work full time. Hopefully days. And we could just be, mom goes to work, you guys go to school, you guys come home, mom comes home. Something normal. It was everything but normal. Two weeks before I move up here, I [found out] I was pregnant with her. ...So, it all got screwed up for three and half, four years.

Not only did Gail and other mothers' particular predicaments with young children complicate their negotiation of employment, but mothers' desire to spend time with their young children left them ambivalent and conflicted about negotiating employment. As she talked about her efforts to look for work and coordinate child care with her mother-in-law, Abby admitted, “I don't want to leave my baby yet. And I think me not wanting to leave my baby, I'm holding back [in seeking employment] a lot more than what I could be. You know?”⁴ Erin also insisted that she would “rather be home. My goal is to raise my kids until they're five years old and get them off to school.” Thus, the ages of children affected mothers' negotiation of employment.

⁴ Though such conflicted feelings are common for mothers in general, only middle and upper-class mothers are allowed to express such feelings and desires, legitimated through the relatively positive connotations of a stay-at-home mom. On the contrary, the equivalent sentiments expressed by a low-income mother are colored by rhetoric about laziness and welfare dependency (see Chapter 8).

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Coordinating Family Life

Not only did mothers (and their partners) face irregularities in hours and availability of employment, but the conditions of their work were inflexible and did not yield to their needs as caregivers. Such inflexibility creates burdens and obstacles in managing caregiving and family related needs. How do mothers manage the demands of family life around such working conditions? In addressing this question, this section focuses largely on what I defined in Chapter Three as “coordination.” In dual-earner families, both partners must coordinate the often unpredictable schedules of both of their jobs. Such coordination is complicated by fluctuating circumstances such as unreliable transportation and changing work schedules and child care arrangements. Therefore, the work of coordination is constant for many of these parents.

In addressing the coordination of family life, first, I focus on child care and issues related to the care of children. Next, I address other categories of care, such as caring for an injured partner or parent. Then, I address consumptive work or feeding the family as mothers work to sculpt this labor around the time clock of employment. Finally, I focus more generally on the work of coordinating multiple demands, labor Tracy designates as “family scheduling.” All of this coordination of family life around the demands of employment is necessary for mothers’ sustained employment.

Coordinating Child Care around Employment Demands

Mothers (and their partners) managed working conditions that would not yield to their needs as parents in a number of ways that involved a great deal of coordination. As Clara pointed out, “When [children are] sick, they’re ain’t nothing that you can do about it. You just have to be home.”

Split shifts in two-parent families: Tracy, Nancy, and Ellie and their partners utilized this arrangement at some point during their employment history. Though this arrangement usually allowed one parent to be present at all times, it required a lot of coordination, including a brief formal child care arrangement into their routine.

We had a lady in town that did in home child care that watched [my daughter]... while I was at work for a couple hours. She was only there for like three hours by the time [my husband] got home from work. He'd go pick her up and then by the time I was home for a couple hours, he'd turn around and go to his other job.

Such coordination complicated two already complex work schedules, adding to the costs of employment.

Negotiating with Paid Child Care Arrangements: In most cases, mothers (and their partners) relied on formalized/paid arrangements and/or assistance from a relative or friend for child care. Managing paid child care with paid employment was a financial struggle.

The money I shelled out on day care was ridiculous because you drop them off at 8 o'clock in the morning and you didn't pick em up until 7 o'clock at night because that's when proofs got done. Granted, the bank closed at 5 o'clock, but we still had two hours of checks to be processed and balanced to get out of there (Liz).

Thus, extended workdays necessitated additional hours of child care, increasing the cost of that care. Such economic dilemmas were not limited to single mothers, however.

Ellie, a mother of three, expressed similar concerns about the cost of child care, given the income she derived from her employment.

Two dollars an hour per kid. And it wasn't bad when [one child] was there, but if they had breaks for the schooling, the Christmas break, or anything like that where the kids were off, Suzy would be there, so it would be four dollars an hour and then with him [youngest son], it would be six, so I'd only be making, you know, fifty cents an hour and that wouldn't even pay for gas back and forth.

Jenna, who relied on a child care subsidy from the state, faced a dilemma “because my oldest daughter is now eighteen or over eighteen, um, they can't count her as a member of the household. And so that dropped it from [social services] paying ninety five percent to them paying forty percent.” This left Jenna with the difficult decision of getting a second job and/or leaving her daughter with a family member, with whom she did not feel entirely comfortable. With her daughter out of the household at college, she also lost a source of child care. Thus, part of managing child care around the demands of employment involved finding ways to manage the cost of child care.

In addition to dealing with cost, inconsistent work hours often forced mothers to negotiate with child care providers and employers about their schedules, as illustrated by Brandy's account of her former job as a gas station clerk.

I switched day cares and the day care provider told me that she does twenty-four hour care, but about a week later she told me that they wanted their family time after five o'clock so I had to switch my hours, which was really hard because they didn't want to work with me on it. Because I was only there for like a week, but I ended up getting, I got off at like seven, which she worked with me on that, she decided that was okay. And then [at work], they gave me pretty much the hours that I needed for day care, but they put me on weekends, and I didn't have day care on weekends, so that was a hard spot.

Gail resolved this issue for herself and for other parents in her neighborhood for a time by securing a license to provide day care in her home. This situation worked well as long as it lasted, because she was one of the only providers to offer 24 hour care.

Making sure children get to and from child care providers also involved preparation and planning: packing a bag ahead of time, getting children ready, coordinating times with the child care provider. This presented a particular challenge for mothers, like Gail and Ellie, who had to be at work at seven and six a.m, respectively.

Both prepared a bag the night before to send with their children to the sitter or child care provider with clothing and other things they would need.

[I'd] usually come home and get [the bag] right then. Take the dirty stuff out and put it right by the door. ...I had to be out of here at six because I had to start at seven. So, I was up, nine out of ten times the bag was packed. ...[My daughter] went in her jammies, wrapped in a blanket, and then I had to talk...the day care provider into getting up early to take her, because she didn't start til seven, and I had to be at work at seven. (Gail)

Bringing Children to Work: Two mothers took their children with them to work.

Clara enjoyed being able to take her daughter with her while she watered plants as a part-time job at a nursery. While Ellie was delivering newspapers and her husband was absent as a truck driver, she took the children with her on her route; the children slept in the car while she delivered papers at night. Though both mothers contended that such an arrangement eased their negotiation of employment by defraying the necessity for and cost of formal child care arrangements, bringing children to work required investments of time and energy to plan and care for children so that mothers could accomplish the tasks for which they were paid.

Negotiating with Extended Kin for Child Care: Nancy and her partner regularly relied on both of their parents to watch their daughter while they were working; Nancy transported her daughter to and from houses. Abby also relied on her mother-in-law for child care. Nevertheless, she felt this would be too much of a burden if she were to secure full-time employment.

I'm sure my mom would watch him, but I don't want to burden her. You know, I don't want to be like, will you watch my baby again? Will you please watch my baby again, because she didn't ask for no help when she had her three kids.

Even those who relied on extended kin for child care needed to negotiate with family members, as irregular work schedules shifted and family members' circumstances

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changed. Laurel, for example, had a parent in the area who worked and her father-in-law was often busy when she needed someone to take her children to school because they missed the bus. “Quite a few times I would get lucky and maybe catch my father-in-law at home, you know, and grandpa would go get them, but that didn’t happen all the time.” Thus, extended family provided invaluable assistance with child care for some mothers, but like other factors in their lives, could not always be relied on when unexpected child care issues arose. Such inconsistencies in child care arrangements required constant re-negotiation on the part of mothers, a circumstance that could potentially conflict with their inflexible and erratic work schedules and jeopardize their jobs.

Multiple Approaches and Turnover in Child Care Arrangements: Child care arrangements, like other circumstances in mothers’ lives, often changed. For example, Jenna chronicled shifts in child care arrangements that occurred over her history of work. “[My older daughter] would watch her on weekends...when I worked at the restaurant. ...I’ve gone through different day care providers at different times.” She also had a friend who watched her youngest daughter for a time. In addition, mothers (and their partners) did not always rely on only one child care arrangement at a time, but negotiated a combination of strategies, such as Ellie and her partners coordination of a split-shift schedule with formal child care addressed above.

Managing the Care and Supervision of Older Children: Planning and coordination are not limited only to mothers with young children. Though mothers, like Jenna, relied on older children—in this case her eighteen year-old daughter who had recently started college—as a source of child care assistance (see Dodson and Dicken 2004), planning for the care of and coordinating supervision of older children required as

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much effort, and, perhaps, more emotional labor than coordinating child care for younger children (see Kurz 2002). Older children often were left in their own care, causing their mothers concern and worry. When Gail was at work, for example, her children would “terrorize my house. ... Yeah. The older they get, there’s always more worries.”

One common concern of mothers was ensuring that children got on the bus to school. This was a particular problem for mothers, like Laurel, who had to leave for work before their children’s school bus arrived.

I’d have to be at work at sometimes five, six o’clock in the morning. Well, then there was nobody here for my kids when they got on the bus, so. And teenagers you kind of like to pay attention to what they’re wearing to school,...and make sure they’re getting on that bus. Several times I was getting phone calls [at work].... “Mom I missed the bus.” Well, mom can’t run all the way home now to get you. ... They would miss school. Yeah, so that got frustrating.

Even Sue, who was not employed at the time of the interview, talked about the work of getting her children out the door to school. She occasionally had to give her children rides to school because they missed their bus and, she mentioned, they would have to “change their ways and make sure they got up in the morning if I got a job.”

To deal with issues such as this, on days Gail had to be at work early (5:30 a.m.), she relied on her oldest son, who was in high school. “I’d have to get my oldest one up, and he’d take me to work and he’d come back home and cat nap for an hour then get everybody else up and himself...off to school.” In contrast, Liz and her partner, a school bus driver and gravel pit worker with a blended family, relied on a combination of kin to make sure their children get to school.

Because we’re afraid of them sleeping in in the morning, we take them elsewhere. My boys go to their dads [Liz’s ex husband] because their dad only lives three doors down on the corner. And [my partner’s] kids go to their grandmas because it’s on his way to work. So he drops them off at their grandmas; I drop the boys off at their dads.

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Nevertheless, this arrangement required effort and coordination on the part of Liz and her partner. “We have a routine pretty much. It’s get up, get the kids up, get dressed. ...Make sure the kids are ready to go. Wait a little bit. Check to make sure the kids are ready to go. It’s a constant, making sure the kids are ready to go. Getting the kids out the door.”

In addition to soliciting the help of older siblings, ex husbands, and grandparents, mothers adopted other strategies to monitor their children while they were at work.

[My husband and I] would make plans, Well, when you get to work, you call home and make sure the kids are up. I’ll call home right around bus time to make sure they’re ready for the bus. ...But then there was times, you know, where you’re at work and you just can’t take that time. You’re busy at the time and you can’t get to the phone to check and by the time you did get to the phone they were all gone. And then you kind of sit there and wonder how their day started out (Laurel).

The conditions of their employment—Lenny’s lengthy time away from home and Laurel’s inflexible schedule as a meat cutter at a discount superstore—made such monitoring difficult, and eventually contributed to Laurel’s decision to quit her job. In addition to problems making sure their children got on the bus, their oldest daughter was skipping school. When Laurel had to leave work to go and find her daughter, her boss “wasn’t too understanding” even though Laurel had told him that “my family comes first” when she took the job. “So I ended up having to give my notice...and try to deal with the kids.”

In addition to the coordination involved in monitoring older children, mothers also had to coordinate transportation for them as they become involved in after school activities. Sporting events, Girl Scouts, and parent-teacher conferences all required

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coordination. This presented a challenge to Ellie, a mother of three, who was seeking work.

I mean, you've got so many kids, so you've got each one that's got different things going on and a lot of jobs will look down on that, thinking okay she's got to have time off work for this or she's got to leave early for this, so it just doesn't look too good. ... Thinking that they can't rely on you to do the things you need to do.

Coordinating Care for Other Adults

Mothers (and some partners) not only struggled to coordinate and manage the care of their children around the demands of their own and their partners' employment, but they also managed the care of adults such as parents and partners. They attempted to squeeze the care of family members into lunch breaks, cared for parents during off-seasons, coordinated doctor appointments around work schedules, and utilized the Family Medical Leave Act when they could.

Nevertheless, such carework (see Cancian and Oliker 2000) was not always easy to coordinate around the demands of employment, and the need for care, such as in the case of illness, could not always be planned and scheduled. Laurel took her mother to chemo-therapy during her lunch breaks, until her employer would no longer allow it (see Chapter Five). On the other hand, her husband, Lenny's seasonal employment enabled him to care for his own parents who lived nearby during the winter when he was not employed: checking in on them and doing chores for them such as shoveling snow. Erin lost a job even though she tried to coordinate time off for her husband's surgery in advance (see Chapter Five). While working full-time in a factory, Tracy came home during her lunch breaks to care for her husband, who was immobilized by a severe back injury.

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After he got hurt...[my employer at the factory job] was really good. They let me take some time off [through the Family Medical Leave Act]. ... They gave me an extra long lunch hour because I'd come home and I'd have to...[take care of him]. There would be nobody here. So, I'd have to get him out of bed. Help him take his shower; get him all dressed again. Then he sat in a reclining chair...all day until I got home. I mean, he basically couldn't do nothing. And it just got so stressful. So I left [my job] there. ... And I took a little bit of time off in between jobs. It was only just a few months. Got my family back together, and then I went to work [as a clerk at the grocery store].

Thus, even though Tracy's employer accommodated her, allowing her time off and long lunch breaks, the stress involved in caring for her husband in his debilitated state was too difficult to manage around the demands of full-time employment.

Feeding the Family

Another example of family carework entails the planning, purchasing, and preparation necessary for feeding families and sustaining family life (see DeVault and Stimpson 1991). The circumstances of mothers' (and their partners') employment conditioned what and how families eat, as mothers labored to coordinate provisioning with their families' schedules.

In their study of two-parent rural families survival strategies, Nelson and Smith (1999: 10) addressed the decreasing prevalence of self-provisioning ("the efforts that household members make to provide, through their own labor (and for themselves), goods and services they would otherwise have to purchase in the (formal or informal) market" among rural women. Such self-provisioning includes feeding work such as growing one's own vegetables and/or hunting.⁵ Two mothers (Erin and Jenna) talked about self-provisioning. Erin, who was not employed at the time of the interview and had

⁵ Partner's were most often involved in self-provisioning that also generated money, such as chopping and gathering wood. These activities were addressed as supplemental work in Chapter Six. Such a gendered distinction confirms Nelson and Smith's (1999) discovery of a decline in women's provision work due to increasingly inexpensive market substitutes and women's increasing presence in formal paid employment.

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previously lived on a farm with her family, managed and canned from an extensive garden to save money for and feed her family.

When you have ninety-seven plants of tomatoes out there and they all turn red at the same time. ...you're busy. I've canned forty seven quarts at night. ...I start it in the morning. ...Takes me almost a half a day, if not a full day to do a kettle full of tomatoes. ...Then I let them sit till eight o'clock. Between the peeling and the cooling, and the putting them away, getting them started, I didn't start them until eight o'clock at night when my kids were in bed. I don't can unless my kids are in bed. I try not to. And the one night, I stayed up for two days straight.

Erin also canned and preserved meat and fish that her husband hunted and caught. “You should see my back porch. It’s full of canning jars.” She engaged in consumptive work to save her family money by buying meat in bulk, carefully wrapping and freezing it.

“October and November [some local stores/restaurants] have a special, ...and they have hamburger [at] 99 cents a pound. And you buy it...by a twenty five pound box.” At that time, as a family of seven, they were able to survive on \$75 in food stamps, without purchasing any groceries beyond that amount. But Erin was only able to invest such time and energy into provisioning work because she was not employed outside of the home.

In contrast, Jenna, who also had a history of self-provisioning, was unable to afford to continue such money saving labor, due to the time demands of her employment as a single mother. “Oh yeah. I did a lot of canning. I don’t can anymore; don’t have time for it.” In the past, she also cooked and baked more and “didn’t have to do quick things as often,” like convenience foods. “The crock pot is a very good friend. [laughs] You know, I use that a lot. ...I just go through a day at a time.” Jenna now coordinates food around her own work schedule and her children’s activities.⁶

⁶ Jenna’s work schedule—one of the most flexible of Delta County mothers—did not afford her the time or flexibility to breastfeed (“Thank goodness for WIC [Women, Infants, Children provides assistance with formula],” she remarked.) or to make her own baby food. Recalling a conversation she had with a mother

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Mothers also planned and prepared food and snacks for their children in advance so they would have them while their parent(s) were at work and they coordinated meals around their children's activities and their partners and their own work schedules.⁷ Liz, for example, wove her meal planning into her bus schedule. "I'll have stuff laid out for dinner in between my runs so that when I get home I can start dinner." Tracy and Laurel coordinated meal preparation and scheduling around two work schedules, which made eating together as a family impossible (see Chapter Eight). As Laurel explained, "As it is now, I do two dinners. You know, I cook dinner for the kids when they get home, and then [my husband]'s usually not rolling in until nine, ten, eleven o'clock at night, and I cook another dinner for him." Laurel bore the brunt of managing and preparing food around their schedules, getting little sleep in between.

I'd get [my husband] up at two o'clock [in the morning]. ...and make his lunch. ...He would leave, and I'd turn around and get the kids up at five and get their lunches all together. ...Normally, like I said, I would have to leave before they got on the bus, but most of the time...I didn't leave until they were all up and had their eyes open and a bowl of cereal or something.

This routine left Laurel little energy for her own job. "By nine o'clock at work, you know, it was like, Ah, I'm just drained, I'm exhausted." The demands of feeding the family, then, have the potential to jeopardize women's ability to keep jobs when this labor makes them less than adequate employees.

who complained she "couldn't afford the cost of baby food in the store," Jenna replied, "My time is worth more than thirty-two cents a jar."

⁷ I did not systematically ask mothers about the planning and preparation of food. I simply asked more general questions about what they need to manage so that they can work for pay (see Chapter Four and Appendix H). The fact that mothers initiated these discussions about food planning and preparation illustrates the significance of this labor for them.

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“Family Scheduling”

Thus, much of the work of negotiating paid work involves the coordination and planning of one’s life around the demands of employment. For example, getting family members to work (Chapter Six) must be managed in conjunction with the need to get children to school and/or to child care. Mothers (and sometimes partners) manage all of this work within a situation of fluctuating and changing child care and transportation arrangements. Tracy referred to the coordination of family needs as “family scheduling.” As she explained it, this involves scheduling, planning, and making sure her children and husband make it to doctor appointments and other errands and obligations. Given Tracy’s husband’s medical condition, getting to doctor appointments became a pivotal concern in their family. In some cases, even after they had scheduled appointments and made arrangements, the doctor’s office contacted them to change the date. Tracy’s husband’s, Ernie, physical well-being varied and had to be managed.

You know my husband doesn't drive too far, and getting him to the doctor, which I mean with the hours that I have is sort of a conflict. So, I got to try to find somebody to get him [to the doctor]. ...I don't like to take time off unless it's an absolute emergency because I need that extra money. ...So, it depends on, if he's capable [of driving himself]. Like I said, he has good days and bad days. Some days he can't even hardly get out of bed. ...So when...I'm at work, and he...feels that he can't go there on his own, then we make sure that there's somebody around that he can call and say, you know, I need the ride. ...My sister and brother-in-law, they live next door, and...we've been in this area, right here at this spot, since eighty five. ...I mean we have family.

Mothers (and their partners) squeezed errands, appointments, household chores, and other family business around the schedules of their paid employment. Liz utilized the break in her schedule between bus routes to clean house, run errands and take the children to appointments. She and Tracy both took advantage of their seasonal employment, to spend time with their children during the summer. Liz liked not having

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to leave her children with a sitter. She and her partner, Leo, managed to coordinate a family vacation around both their work schedules.

Last summer we would take the camper and go with him. And while he was [working], we stayed at the camp ground. We just closed up the house and went... because he was only there for like two or three weeks. So, we packed up the camper. Here we go.

However, mothers' accounts of their everyday efforts more often involved "madness" than tranquility, as Jenna described.

Well, I have to get up at five every morning, so that I can have a cup of coffee before the madness starts. You know, I have to get my little one up and get her on the bus to go to school or sometimes I take her to school...if I can't get her up. ...I do all my shopping on my lunch hour, because otherwise if I want to do it after work I have to pay extra [for day care] or else run all the way down there to get her and then come all the way back to town. You know, and that's ten miles home. ...[and] once you get into these stores and start shopping, ...Oh I can't get out of there in ten minutes. ...So I have to organize [my day] that way.

To squeeze all of this activity into her lunch hour, Jenna eats her lunch in the car or at her desk. Scheduling, such as that illustrated by Tracy and Jenna, is the act of trying to manage the tasks of family life, dealing with circumstances that are constantly in flux. This is particularly the case for these low-income mothers, whose conditions of employment are so irregular, but who have to juggle a myriad of jobs to keep work.

Coordinating Transportation with Partners: In Chapter Six I discussed the ways mothers (and their partners) "scrambled" or attempted to negotiate their journeys to work. For financial reasons, many mothers with partners had to find ways to negotiate both of their journeys to work with only one working vehicle. In some cases this scenario generated problems for one or more partner's employment. Gail recalled having to drive her ex-husband to all of his work sites when he was working as a handyman because he had a suspended license. She had to take their toddler with them. This arrangement

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made it virtually impossible for Gail to negotiate employment for herself. Jenna faced a similar circumstance with her ex-husband while she was working a full-time job herself.

There was a time frame when he first moved up here, ...I drove him [a half an hour one way] every morning to work before I would come to work. ...Then I had to go pick him up too, after I'd [finished my work day]. That was before we had the youngest [child]. ...My kids luckily were old enough to get on the bus by themselves.

Not only does the transportation of partners have to be arranged, but this often needs to be coordinated around child care arrangements. Nancy dropped her husband off at a designated area from which he would get a ride to the construction site where he worked. Then she took her daughter to her mother's and began her half hour commute to work.

Other mothers worked out more complex transportation plans that involved family members and friends.

At my second job, [my husband] would drop me off.... Well, his mom would bring me there, but he'd get out of work around six... and by the time he got out, he'd want the vehicle. And we only had one vehicle, so I couldn't drive it to work, ...so he had to come and pick me up. But it was nice, because when I closed, he'd come in and vacuum the floors for me, so I could get out of there sooner. ...Oh, God. We go through a lot of vehicles (Abby).

Although Abby describes this arrangement as beneficial in some ways, the backstage labors of getting to work in such a scenario become most apparent when we consider the extent to which that scenario changes. For example, jobs as well as shifts of work at a job may change for one or both partners from time to time, as Erin explained.

I went in there and my cousin worked there. ...And she says, "Hey Erin, why don't you get in here and work with us in the deli? If you need to I'll transport you." ..And her and I never worked the same shift. Never. She'd be getting out of work, when I'd go in or I'd be getting off of work, and she'd be going in. So, it never really worked out like we wanted.

Since Erin had transportation difficulties, not being able to work the same shift as her cousin made it difficult for her to get to work. Thus, even when mothers, partners, and

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family members devise creative—and sometimes time consuming—strategies for coordinating their journey's to work, the irregularity of their work schedules and other life circumstances can put such plans in jeopardy.

Summary

Family structure matters in mothers' efforts to negotiate paid employment, but not exactly as family rhetoric suggests. For some mothers, the presence of a partner, whether employed and absent or barely employed and/or abusive, impedes mothers' efforts to negotiate their own employment. Pregnancy and having young children at home also complicate mothers' efforts to negotiate employment. Coordinating family life around the demands of paid employment necessitates the management of circumstances (such as irregular work hours, child care, and transportation arrangements) that are constantly in flux. Thus, the need for coordination is insatiable, requiring constant attention, complicating and potentially jeopardizing mothers' and their partners' efforts to negotiate paid work.

COORDINATING FAMILY AND PAID WORK IN HARVEST COUNTY

Harvest County Families

All mothers had at least one child living at home at the time of the interview, with an average number of 2.9 children in each household. The number of children at home ranged from one to six, with twenty-six (78.8%) mothers having more than one child.

Ages of children living at home ranged from less than a year old to twenty-one.⁸ Twenty (out of 33 mothers, 60.6%) had at least one child age five or under in the

⁸ In some cases, adult children of families employed as migrant agricultural workers were temporarily living with their parents while working in Harvest County.

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household at the time of the first interview (2000). The same number (and percentage) of mothers had at least one child age ten or over in the household.

All but one mother, Mercedes, had a partner living with them at the time of the first interview. Another mother, Paloma, was separated from her husband and was in the process of getting a divorce during the second interview. Thus, the majority of mothers (93.9%) had a partner during the interview period. Most mothers with a partner (28 out of 31, 90.3%) were married, while three mothers (9%) were cohabitating.⁹ One possible explanation for the high rate of partnership among mothers is migrant status. Migrating for agricultural work may be less feasible or less of an option for single mothers. In fact, “Chavira-Prado (1992) suggested that female-headed households do not exist among migrant farmworkers because farmers prefer to hire men as workers and an undocumented Mexican migrant woman cannot survive without being attached to a man” (cited in Roeder and Millard 2000: 3).

**Family Structure:
How Family Characteristics Structure the Negotiation of Paid Work**

Though single-parenthood was less prevalent among Harvest County than Delta County mothers, the presence of a partner did not always ease mothers’ negotiation of employment.

Absent Partners due to Employment

Partners sometimes migrated to another state on a weekly basis for work (as in the case of Ines and Alejandro and Paloma and her husband while they were married) or migrated to another state to perform seasonal employment. Engracia’s husband, Santos,

⁹ It is possible that the number of women with partners, who were cohabitating is under-reported due to interviewer bias. In some cases in which a mother defined her relationship as living with a partner, one of the primary interviewers referred to her partner as her husband throughout. In such cases, mothers may have not corrected such errors due to the stigma surrounding cohabitation.

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explained, “The company pays for the hotel and everything. For the little time I go to Florida, I go for a few weeks, and they, [my wife and children], go to Texas.” Similarly, Calandra reported,

We've always come back home in August...so that the kids can all start school again. ... We come home, the boys get ready, all men, all brothers get back, head back to [Harvest County] because they do Christmas trees. They bring the family down, back home, ...they are here with us for about a month, ...and then in October they go back to [Harvest County], they work Christmas trees and then they come back in November.

Though such arrangements minimize the amount of school children miss in their home states, they leave mothers with few employment options.¹⁰

Pregnancy

Because Harvest County mothers were most often employed in physical labor, mothers typically stopped working for a period of time while pregnant. As Juanita explained, “I’d like to work, but with my pregnancy, I can feel a little sick. And I probably won’t work this year.” Seven mothers were unemployed at some point during the interview period due to pregnancy. In contrast to some Delta County mothers who reported job loss as a result of pregnancy (see Kelly *forthcoming*), Harvest County mothers often utilized the seasonal nature of their employment to transition in and out of employment. Though they were less able to manage work as physical laborers during a pregnancy, mothers had few problems re-negotiating employment following a pregnancy. For example, when asked if she thought she would have trouble finding employment again after her pregnancy, Paloma, a settled Harvest County resident, responded, “No. I usually go back [to work for the same farmer]. I was laid off in March, and after that, you know, I went on unemployment. And by the time...they usually start back in

¹⁰ Recall the dearth of employment options in their home states served as the rational for migrating to Harvest County to work.

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September...my baby will be big enough, you know, for me to go to work.”

Nevertheless, for a period during pregnancy, mothers’ families lost the income they previously earned. As Noemi explained, “Last year I was employed, but...my pregnancy was...high-risk..., so I had to stop working. It was like three months I don't work.”

Noemi received no income or unemployment during that time.

Ages of Children

Mothers with young children were more likely to refrain from working outside of the home than those with school age children and/or older children who could monitor their siblings. For example, Antonia was working for pay for the first time because her “husband didn’t let” her seek employment previously “because the children were still small.” In this case, a partner’s ideas about ages of children and mother’s employment affected her ability to negotiate employment outside of the home.

Mothers, however, also took into consideration the age of their children when they talked about employment. Columba’s future plans are illustrative.

Since [my son]'s already three, he'll be going into school this year, so that's probably when I'm going to go and finish...college up. That way I can get a full time job and I know that they are at school, and by the time I'm out of work they are more or less old enough, you know, and one can take care of the other two and so forth.

Calandra also carefully considered the ages of her children in planning for future work by securing a clerical certificate. “I think ahead. ...I said, well, my youngest is not going to stay young forever. So...if I had the opportunity to get this clerical [certificate]..., if I have it now, when my son is a little older, then I already have that to back me up.”

Calandra did secure a certificate and a part-time, flexible job working for her neighbor in

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Texas. In thinking about eventually securing a full-time job later on, she continued to consider her children's ages.

Maybe once my kids get into higher grades, or actually the smaller ones get into higher grades, maybe I can get myself a full-time, 40 hour a week job. ...The smallest one is five. ...He's the one that comes out [of school] earlier. So he is the one I have to have more time. ...I'm kind of thinking maybe two years from now.

Thus, the ages of children affect mothers' negotiations of employment.

Coordinating Family Life

Many of the labors migrants engage in involve coordination such as planning, money, transportation, children's schooling, and social services (Chapter 6). But the conditions of their work also compel them to engage in backstage labor. Mothers and their partners coordinated their work on multiple crops, which they sometimes performed for different farmers. They also coordinated side work, odd jobs, unemployment, and education with seasonal work. Partners, such as Janae and her husband, attempted to coordinate year-round work and education toward the goal of settling out: a permanent job for him, her school and a job for her so that they could stop migrating. All of these labors and needs must be managed and coordinated with family life.

Coordinating Child Care with the Irregular Schedules of Agricultural Labor

Irregularities and changes in work schedules makes managing child care so that they can get to work a challenge for parents, as Rafaela illustrated.

Sometimes we worked in the morning or in the afternoon or in the evening.... [Another employer] called us...to work only at night from 5 p.m. to 3 a.m. in the morning. Then I couldn't make it because of [my daughter], because I was at home at 4, because you take time to punch out and then go to my house, I was at home around 4 and then the girl woke up very early ... and with all this, I woke up with bad headaches, and then we started at [another farmer's] and like this ...

Moreover, inflexible work circumstances made bouts of unemployment not uncommon.

According to Flavia's husband, "When the two of us work, how nice, right now no

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because of the problem that there isn't anyone to take care of the children, but when there is someone to take care of them both of us work.” Mothers (and their partners) dealt with such a disjuncture between the inflexibility and irregularity of their employment schedules and the demands on them as parents and caregivers in a number of ways that involved much coordination on their part.

Split shifts in two-parent families: The predominance of two-parent families among Harvest County informants helps explain the high use of split shifts, or different shifts, by parents to manage inflexible working conditions. Eight mothers (24.2%) and their partners employed this child care strategy at some point during their work history.¹¹ Though such an arrangement allowed one parent to be present at all times, this strategy required a lot of coordination, as illustrated by Francisca, a married, non-migrant agricultural worker with three children.

I get up at four thirty in the morning, I make lunch for my husband, because he works at night and arrives at five in the morning or five thirty. ...At six I get the children up and when he comes I have lunch, tortillas and everything. [In the evening, I get the children ready for school], and then in the morning I just get them up so that they stay awake and I go to my job. ...[My husband] arrives, eats lunch, gets the children up and takes them to the bus and in the afternoon he picks them up and when I arrive, the children already ate dinner and they are just waiting for me to arrive to bathe them and everything. ...They are never alone, that's why we put him at night and me in the day.

Negotiating Formal Child Care Arrangements: Mothers experienced difficulties managing formal child care arrangements, such as day care, because of its inflexible hours and exorbitant cost. Those who utilized formal child care arrangements struggled with changes in their work schedules and a lack of evening and weekend hours. “6:30 [a.m.] I would drop her..., and I think the day care close also by 6:30 [p.m.]. So I would

¹¹ Since mothers were only specifically asked about their current child care arrangements at each interview, only a few mothers talked about child care circumstances outside of that time period. Therefore, this discussion most often reflects child care arrangements over the last two years.

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just be there, just barely on time to get her and then I would still have to take her for a couple of minutes more to the field until I finished.”

The cost of child care presented additional obstacles for mothers and their partners’ in managing formal child care arrangements given the low pay of agricultural labor. To deal with the exorbitant costs of child care, parents relied on Head Start programs and other subsidized child care arrangements. Nevertheless, mothers (and their partners) often encountered problems qualifying for assistance for one or all of their children. For example, Flavia reported that

For two children I have to pay because they don't qualify for the government to pay; for two of them they pay and for two they don't. ...I had to pay a lot if I worked Saturday and Sunday, [yet] I had to work Saturday and Sunday to be able to pay [for child care costs].

Thus, Flavia and other parents found themselves in a catch-22, in which they had to work more hours to cover the costs of care, but the more hours they worked the more care they needed. Such dilemmas resulted in periods without work due to child care deficits.

Mothers also encountered problems acquiring child care assistance due to long waiting lists and unavailability of care. Calandra, who was improving her education in Texas so that she could acquire clerical work, explained that her biggest obstacle to future employment would be child care.

If I find the work, ...Ah, it's a chance that hardly anybody gets, but if I do find it, the only problem I think I'll have is someone to watch my kids. ...Because there isn't any baby-sitters down here [in Texas] and if you want to qualify for a program, you have to be on a waiting list for a long time.

Obstacles in coordinating formal child care with employment helps explain the relatively low reliance on such child care arrangements among mothers (6 mothers, 18.2%). Thus,

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to ameliorate the inflexibility of employment conditions, many mothers turned to members of their social network for help so that they could continue to work.

Relying on Family, Friends, and Neighbors: In rural areas, informal child care arrangements, such as reliance on family and friends, are very common (see Goetz, Zimmerman, and Tegegne 2001; Lichter and Jayakody, 2002; Walker and Reschke, 2003; Weber et al. 2002). Indeed, 15 (45.5%) of Harvest County mothers relied on family or friends to manage child care needs at some point during the interview period. One explanation for the prevalence of this strategy may be the availability of stipends issued by the state to neighbors, friends, or extended family members who care for children. Uttal's (2002) research on families of color also suggests that such families may be likely to rely on such care to avoid issues of discrimination. Finally, it may be easier for migrants, in particular, to tap into people who they know and potentially who migrated with them for care instead of seeking formal arrangements on a temporary basis. According to Columba, for example,

My mother-in-law takes care of them; she takes care of six [children] really[: my brothers-in-law, their kids too]. ...Sometimes they are in [my apartment], sometimes they are in my sister-in-law's. ...During the day, ...we go in [to work] at 6 in the morning and sometimes we are out at 2, sometimes we are not out until 5. Depending on...the day.

In a similar vein, Zolia's disabled mother filled the gap between her son's arrival from school and when they get off of work, a time that varies from one day and one crop to the next. In this manner, the flexibility afforded by family, friends, and neighbors can mitigate the inflexibility and irregularities in the schedule of agricultural labor, thereby enabling women to maintain employment.

Nevertheless, such arrangements also required negotiation and were not always seamless. For example, after a separation from her husband, Paloma needed help from her mother to care for her daughter, but her mother's ability to help was limited by her own employment obligations. Because of this predicament, Paloma had difficulty attending the work training sessions required as a condition of her assistance through social services. "You have to go to meetings.... It's kind of difficult because my mom works, and they said no kids allowed at the meeting."

Reliance on family and friends through the use of child care subsidies from the state also benefited both parties: those who provided care for pay and those who were able to work for pay at agricultural labor. However, the payment provided through stipends was minimal, making changes in child care arrangements common, as extended family members returned to agricultural labor due to financial need.

In keeping with Uttal's (2002) research findings about the prevalence of family care among families of color, Harvest County mothers tapped into such networks as a means to monitor and secure their children's safety and well-being. As Noemi explained, "Like if I go anywhere, my mother-in-law can look after them while I'm out, so I feel safe." Moreover, while Janae left her children so that she could further her education, knowing that they were with her mother calmed her anxieties. "I don't feel that bad...leaving my kids here with my mom, but yeah, it's hard." A few mothers sought help from family members after a bad experience with formal child care arrangements. When her two year-old daughter's arm was broken while she was under a babysitter's care, Afra turned to a series of family members to care for her children. Similarly, out of concern for her teenage daughter's safety, Tomasa enlisted her own parents to ensure her

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safe return home. “She has to walk and um, I don't want her walking, so I asked my mom and my dad and they said that they would take her to school and pick her up.”

Though Tomasa's parents are not paid by a state child care subsidy for their assistance, she “give[s her mother] some money, ‘cause um, my dad is not working and my mom is the only one working. So, I give her \$50 per week for taking care of my daughter.”

Thus, such arrangement benefit both parties, providing stipends in some cases for family members and flexible care that puts mothers at ease, enabling them to conform to inflexible working conditions.

Migrating with Relatives: One way of managing needed child care around irregular work schedules was for an extended family member, such as an informant's mother, mother-in-law, or a niece, to migrate with the family and provide care while parents worked in the fields or packing house. Of the 15 (45.5%) families who relied on an extended family member for at least part of their child care arrangements, all but one migrated for work, suggesting that this strategy works well for and/or is characteristic of migrants. Though not explicitly asked, four of those mothers mentioned that the family member who cared for their children also migrated with them. “My mother-in-law is a daycare provider that the Social Services provides for us. She's been my provider since about maybe four or five years now. So they're in good hands with my mother-in-law” (Calandra). For migrants, who are only in an area temporarily and, therefore, have less of an opportunity to develop ties in the community, migrating with family members is one strategy for assuring a flexible child care arrangement around inflexible and irregular working conditions.

Bringing children to work: Only one mother, Tomasa, talked about bringing her six-month-old child to the fields with her. This arrangement, however, was not her first choice, “There was no day care for her. There was nobody I knew that could take care of her so I would take her to the fields.”¹² Such an arrangement required coordination and planning on her part.

I would...fix it up for her and I'd put her there [in the fields] to sleep and sometimes my aunt would lend me her daughter. She was...eight years old and she would keep an eye on her. ...We'd find a place that looked safe, you know, for them to stay there and we would take her, you know, formula and everything.

Tomasa speaks of this time with great sadness because she wonders if the time her daughter spent in the fields is related to the serious health problems she developed later in life. “I didn't want her in the fields 'cause I knew how hot it was and, you know, they would spray stuff and I didn't want to have her there in the fields.” Nevertheless, in the absence of an alternative arrangement and in the presence of a demanding employer, she had to adopt this strategy to ensure her job.

Unemployment and/or In Home Child Care: In some cases negotiating child care and/or pregnancy around the demands and irregular schedules of agricultural employment became too difficult for mothers to manage. For some periods of time during the interview period, six mothers went without employment and cared for their children in their home. Unable to work at physical agricultural labor due to a serious health problem, Afra planned to care for others' children in Harvest County during the following year. After addressing the exorbitant cost of child care, (“I would be working just for the babysitter and that would be it”), Paloma planned to care for additional

¹² Tomasa also explained that this arrangement would not have been possible when she worked at agricultural labor in Florida where fields were located close to busy roads and farmers, out of concern about liability, did not allow children to come unless they were working.

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children along with her own children in home for a small fee or through a state child care subsidy. Two mothers (6%) reported such an arrangement. Nevertheless, the low pay of such an arrangement compared to agricultural labor resulted in a high turnover rate among care providers, as Afra explained. “[My niece no longer cares for my children] because she wanted to work in the fields.” Thus, such informal in-home child care arrangements proved to be unstable and inconsistent both as sources of child care and as sources of employment, requiring mothers to constantly re-negotiate their employment.

Children Monitoring Themselves/ Leaving Older Children in Charge: One of the most common child care arrangements, after having a relative or friend care for children, was to have older children monitor themselves, each other, and/or to have no arrangements because parents only worked while children were in school (11 mothers, 33.3%). Such arrangements were possible only for families in which at least one child was old enough to supervise her or his siblings and/or children were old enough to attend school.

Relying on children to monitor themselves and/or their siblings requires monitoring and preparation of children for such responsibility, creating what Dodson and Dicken’s (2004) characterize as “mini-moms.” For example, when asked how she combines her work and family responsibilities, Columba explained, “I started, you know, with my kids teaching them a little bit of responsibility like throwing out trash, picking up their stuff. So they get the feel of responsibility and help me out.” In some cases, this may involve partial responsibility, as was the case for Calandra’s oldest daughter who “helps out [her] mother-in-law with the small ones that my mother-in-law takes care of when we are [in Harvest County].”

Some mothers, however, were ambivalent about such an arrangement.

My older daughter is going to get her driver's license and it's going to be more easy, but I don't feel comfortable. She drives very good, but you never know what's going to happen because even [my husband and I have] got a lot of experience in driving, and even we got in an accident. So sometimes I don't feel comfortable with the three [children]...together (Serafina).

Thus, coopting the assistance of older children proved to be a mixed blessing; in some cases such help eased mothers' negotiation of employment, though, as mothers, they sometimes worried about giving their children too much responsibility.

Multiple Child Care Arrangements: Because of the irregularities and inflexibility of the conditions of work for mothers (and their partners), child care needs were constantly in flux, changing throughout mothers' work histories and throughout the sequence of seasonal crops. In reality, mothers (and their partners) relied on multiple child care arrangements, and the strategies addressed above should not be thought of as mutually exclusive. As Engracia explained, "Sometimes my daughter in-law takes care of [the children], sometimes my daughter, sometimes we take them to the Headstart..." In addition, migrant families often used different child care arrangements while they were in Harvest County than they did in their home states. For example, Candida's niece took care of her children while she and her husband worked in Harvest County, but when she was in Texas her mother-in-law and sister-in-law helped her with child care. Tomasa's work history illustrates a range of child care strategies. "Sometimes I would work from seven in the morning, and sometimes I would come out at seven p.m. or ten p.m. ...but [my husband] would get home earlier to care for [our daughter]. ...When she was younger, I wasn't working here in Florida. Only my husband would work."¹³ When they

¹³ Tomasa and her husband migrated from a home base in Florida to work in Harvest County. Tomasa's husband also worked when they returned to Florida.

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were both working in the fields in Harvest County, Tomasa took their young daughter with her for a period of time, then she coordinated that strategy with formal child care arrangements, and later relied on her parents to monitor her daughter's safety after school.

Nevertheless, despite the regular changes in employment and child care conditions due to the conditions of seasonal employment and (in about 70% of families) migration for work, some families managed to maintain some consistency from one year to the next because a few families worked for the same farmer for ten years or more. Similarly Calandra's mother had been migrating with them and caring for the children while in Harvest County for the past four or five years. Thus, despite regular fluctuations in schedules, mothers and their partners managed to sustain some stability and regularity for their children as they attempted to maintain their employment.

Caring for Other Adults

Because mothers were likely to live with and rely on extended family members such as their parents and in-laws for child care, it is not surprising that Harvest County mothers (and their partners) were likely to be called upon or felt obligated to care for their parents or in-laws. Such obligations sometimes complicated efforts to negotiate paid agricultural labor, particularly when extended family members did not live nearby. For example, Juanita and her partner, Jacinto, moved from Mexico to Harvest County in 1998. During a period of time in which Juanita's mother, who lived in Texas, was ill and in need of assistance, Juanita made two trips to Texas and Jacinto traveled there three times. Because of these trips, Juanita and Jacinto had to miss work, and Juanita quit her job so that she could spend time caring for her mother in Texas. In addition, the expense

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of their travels and Juanita's withdrawal from employment necessitated that Jacinto take on more work.

It's very expensive for me because so many trips we took to Texas, right. We wouldn't have gone in these years, but because of the sickness of my mother we had to do it. ...and later I don't work. ...From the expenses, for this reason [Jacinto] has been working extra hours.

Juanita and Jacinto also had to borrow money from friends and relatives during the time of Juanita's mother's illness. Other mothers, such as Yesenia, sent money to their parents in Mexico. Celina's partner, Octavio, went to Mexico and brought back his mother to live with them. Columba's great grandmother had knee surgery and her son was ill. If needed, Columba was ready to leave her seasonal employment in Harvest County and return to Texas early to help her grandmother.

I told my husband if something happened...I was going to go because I couldn't leave my grandma alone. She needs me and my other grandma, my mom's mom, had knee surgery and stuff, so she can't do all of that stuff, help with her and back and forth, it would be too stressful. So, I need to be there to help her out.

Thus, in some cases, physical distance from family members in need of care and assistance complicated mothers and partners' efforts to get and keep employment.

In other cases, a partner's or a woman's own health problem necessitated an alteration in employment circumstances for one or both partners. Due to a fall that injured his shoulder, Noemi's partner, Fernando, was unable to work for pay. Thus, Noemi had to return to work after time away for a high risk pregnancy, although her new job was more lucrative than her previous in-home child care. Afra's very serious health problems not only prevented her from working at agricultural labor, but also precluded her family's migrating to Texas, thereby forcing her husband to give up his usual employment and source of income. Instead, Afra and her husband moved temporarily to

another area in Texas where their adult son lived so that her husband, Cleto, could find work with their son and Afra could be cared for by other family members. Afra did not want to be left alone in her home in Texas, while the rest of her extended family in the area migrated to Harvest County. Thus, the need for care can reconfigure a network of care and employment circumstances.

Mothers (and partners) also made efforts to coordinate such care with employment demands. For example, as a nurse's assistant in Florida, Tomasa was able to administer her diabetic mother's insulin shots twice a day. She went by her mother's house on her way to work to administer the first shot, then stopped by again for the second shot on her way home from work, before her mother, who worked a night shift left for her own employment. Flavia and her husband integrated the care of his parents into their future employment plans. According to Flavia's husband, "My idea is to go one day to Texas and put a shop, I mean where they install tires. ... You see I have my parents that are old and they both are ill and had surgery and I need to be there to watch over them."

Coordinating Family Meals

Harvest County mothers prepared food as part of their daily routine, organizing meal preparation around their employment schedules.¹⁴ Acacia's account is a typical one. Before she and her husband leave for work at six a.m., Acacia begins preparing lunch. She and her husband return from work at noon; Acacia prepares their meal and they eat. Then they return to work until 5 p.m. and Acacia prepares dinner.

¹⁴ Harvest County mothers were not explicitly asked about food preparation; their discussion arose from general questions about work and parenting.

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Mothers gave high priority to the preparation and availability of food for their children when they worked outside the home, as illustrated in the following response by Serafina to a question about what she needs to accomplish before she goes to work.

Clean the house, but more important is the food. Make the food for [the children for] when they get home. If they're hungry, sometimes they complain about food at school, they doesn't like. So they come home hungry and tired, so they want to eat and go to sleep. That's more important. The food is important for me to do. It's easy for me to do. I do it before [I go to work], and clean a little bit what I need to clean.

Serafina not only wanted to make sure that her children had food, but that they had appropriate food that they enjoy eating. Like other mothers, Serafina also talked about the way food preparation fit into her daily routine and involved planning around her employment schedule.

Like the day before, if I know what we're going to do, in the morning, now, I start working at eight, so I wake up a little bit early and I try to make food for them, so at least I've got something in the refrigerator when they come home, something easy they can eat. I always try to arrange before.

Similarly, Bonita talked about the preparation of food as something that needed to be done before she worked outside the home. "I prepare some tortillas for dinner, and I do the laundry so I can go back to work the very next day." In keeping with Dodson and Dicken's (2004) depiction of "mini-moms," however, Bonita also taught her children to prepare their own food.

They wake up and prepare their breakfast and clean the house, and the girls do the laundry. She is old enough; she is 17 years old, and she helps me a lot. She knows how to do everything. She knows how to cook, to make tortillas, how to cook beans, to do everything I taught her. She knows how to do it.

Thus, the preparation of food is yet another task that must be managed around the schedules of paid employment, though older children can ease the burden on parents.

Family Scheduling and Coordination

Much of the work of negotiating paid work involves the coordination and planning of one's life around the demands of employment. For many mothers such coordination and planning is woven into the erratic schedules of migration and seasonal labor. As Calandra explained, "I do a lot of thinking and I always try to think ahead, because we never know if [the work we do in Harvest County] will no longer be there for us."

As noted above, the number of two-parent households among Harvest County families allowed some partners to coordinate child care. Jacinto, Juanita's partner's description of their routine, illustrates the coordination involved in shared parenting.

In the morning I get up. ...I start work at three o'clock, and I get out around one thirty; I get home like at two o'clock. I get up at six thirty, quarter to seven, to take [my partner] to work because she starts at seven, and then I take the boy at seven thirty to daycare, and then on the way back I take the girl to school at quarter to eight, and if there is someone that needs help at work a little, he calls me and I go to work. And I return at one o'clock. I bathe, I eat, I make lunch and I go to work.

In practice, partners coordinated child care efforts on an everyday basis using multiple strategies. Unexpected events, such as a child's illness, necessitated such coordination, as Yesenia's account illustrates.

I get out of work when they are sick, I get out and [my husband] picks me up and I take [the children] to the [health] clinic. They give me the prescription; we pick it up, and he takes them home again and then he drops me off at work again. ...They let us [have time off of work] when it is an emergency.

Because Yesenia and Basilio work different shifts, they coordinated this plan without both missing work.

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Mothers also planned ahead in scheduling appointments, and tried to squeeze family scheduling into lunch hours and breaks in employment. The stress of such juggling is apparent in Yesenia's depiction of how she begins her day, "Racing. I get up for the race." Serafina, one of the few mothers not employed in agricultural labor explained her own planning efforts around her schedule as a day-care worker.

And like appointments to the doctor I always ask, sometimes I ask my supervisor if I don't take a lunch break so I can leave early. And I try to make my appointments after work when I can. If they can't have appointments after work, I have to miss work. Sometimes, if they need me, they give me a chance to [make up] my hours... This year they are very strict. I don't know what's going to happen.

Thus, in addition to creating stress, the work of "family scheduling" can, at times, put jobs in jeopardy.

Coordinating and Monitoring Children's Education

Mothers invested great effort coordinating their own and/or a partner's education and/or training around the demands of seasonal agricultural work (Chapter 6). Such labor to improve their own education was matched and exceeded by the amount of energy they exerted in coordinating, monitoring, and worrying about their children's education as it was affected by the conditions of their employment. Mothers were concerned about their children's future and the connection of that future to their education, as Celina insisted. "I want them to finish school and to get a job that...they will not suffer...so they will not work in the fields. It is burdensome to work in the fields." Thus, mothers commonly talked about the link between their children's future lot in life and their concern about them finishing school or missing schooling. This link between education and migration for seasonal work resonated in their own work and educational histories as well as the

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experiences of their children, who missed school and had to contend with transitions from one school system to another. Tomasa, a mother who stopped migrating, explained,

[My daughter] would always complain that they would be doing something different [at her school in Florida than in Harvest County] Or she was repeating the same things that she had already done [in Florida] earlier and that would upset her. I said to myself, if I don't stop migrating, she's not going to finish her school. She's going to give up like I did.

Unable to secure an alternative employment option as Tomasa eventually did, most mothers who migrated for work labored to coordinate their children's schooling transitions from one place to another in a way that was least traumatic for them. This was not always an easy task, Calandra reported.

The school requires for my kids to be here to a certain date in order for them to get their credits for that year. And it is really hard, because we got to be [in Harvest County] in April to start our work, so that really throws me off sometimes.

Thus, parents who migrate not only needed to plan and organize the trip to Harvest county and find ways to coordinate child care while they worked there, but they also labored to coordinate children's education around migration schedules, as illustrated by Calandra's discussion of what she does to prepare for the trip to Harvest County.

"...Then I start preparing the school for the kids. I start telling them we are going to be leaving such and such. ...So, I start kind of early. I like the school to have everything ready because there are four kids."

Out of concern that their children not lose interest in school, three families considered and/or amended their employment and migration schedules to accommodate their children's education.¹⁵ Not only did such re-negotiations of employment require effort and coordination, but their circumstances also illustrate the way family

¹⁵ These families maintained involvement in migrant agricultural labor, however.

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circumstances affect the negotiation of paid work. Engracia and Santos did not plan to return to Harvest County to work in 2002 “because [we] have [a daughter] that’s 15 and [we] would like her to go to school and not have to take her out every time [we] have to come. ...that affects her a lot, so I prefer that she finishes school.” Trella and Humberto also revised their migration and work schedule to accommodate their children’s education.

Well, this year we started to work at the storage. Last year we came to do labor work, but this year we could not come because the children, like the ones in high school, they need to have all their grades, to have everything up to date for the credits they receive. For this reason we came late and we stayed about two months without work. And later they started to work in the warehouse, and we started and never stopped.

By delaying their migration to Harvest County, Trella and her family decreased their potential earnings and had to look for work elsewhere (the storage where produce is processed and packaged) instead of harvesting crops in the fields.

Thus, re-negotiations of migration schedules were accompanied by risks and potential losses in income, as further illustrated by Calandra’s family’s change in migration routine. “Well my older girls, they want to participate in so many things at school, and they have to be [back in Texas] early enough so that they can maybe try out for cheerleading and things like that.” To accommodate her children’s school schedule, Calandra and her husband, Augusto, decided to leave Harvest County (and their work) and to return to Texas earlier than they usually did. This meant that they worked less crops than in the past. To make up for this loss, their oldest daughter started working in the fields with her parents.

At the beginning, [in] early April, we had to split up. My daughter was going to school for a few days and then coming to work with me planting..., but once asparagus season started all three of us worked in the same...group, same field.

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...[My daughter] helped us out a lot. ... We had enough [income] to expand as if we had stayed for the zucchini season.

Nevertheless, such a change was a financial gamble for a family who relied heavily on the work they did in Harvest County to get by during the year, as Calandra's account illustrates.

Thank God everything worked out okay. 'Cause this is the first time we come on our own [at a different time than our in-laws], and we were kind of...worried that our bills were going to get behind or we weren't going to have enough money. ...But...everything went okay in spite of us not being able to work the last three months in Michigan.

In Calandra's and other mothers' view, such risks were worth their children's happiness and future well-being.

...I will do it again because my kids, to me my kids are number one.... So, if that makes them happy, and if I see that that changed really, um, their grades were really well, [then] it was worth my time and my leaving that other job.

Similarly, mothers, such as Tomasa and Celina, decided to stop migrating out of concern for their children's safety and their future. Tomasa, whose family left the migrant track when she secured a year-round job in health care in Florida, indicated that concern about her child's future and continued education was a reason for her and her partner's decision.

I knew that she was going soon into high school, and I didn't want her going, you know, back and forth, back and forth, so that was...the reason I wanted to stop migrating. ...I said to myself, if I don't stop migrating, she's not going to finish her school. She's going to give up like I did.

Tomasa's decision to take a permanent job in Florida and leave the migrant track was closely related to her concern for her daughter's schooling. Fathers also were concerned about their children's safety, well-being, and future. Trella's husband, Humberto, was looking for alternative ways of making a living that paid less than agricultural labor, but "I prefer, it's better to be with my children....here with them, then...earn[ing more

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money].” Thus, Harvest County mothers and their partners attempted to re-negotiate their often inflexible and erratic employment in agricultural labor (by changing their migration schedule or settling in one place) to better suit the needs of their children.

In addition to coordinating migration schedules with their children’s educational needs, parents, such as Serafina, devised innovative ways to monitor their children’s education, steering them toward completing their schooling, while managing their own employment. In an effort to teach their children what hard work agricultural labor is, Serafina and her husband decided to have the children work in the fields with them one summer. Serafina explained the effect this experience had on her children’s dedication to their education.

It was hard. They didn't want to go again. I told them, when they don't want to go to summer school, I say, "Okay. You don't have to go to summer school, then you have to go picking more pickles." Then they say, "No, Mom, please." I told them "If you don't get good grades this year, you have to go again to the fields." They say, "No, Mom, I promise. I'm going to get good grades, Mom." So it works.

Thus, some of the carework involved in monitoring children’s behaviors (Kurz 2002) centers around the concern that their children complete and do well in school in order to improve their life chances. This was not an easy task. Candida said that one of the biggest challenges for her family was keeping her children in school. Rafaela was having trouble with her older daughters because they did not like school. Calandra carefully monitored her children’s school work when she was in Texas. “Cause my kids to me I need to be on top of everything. I need to know what’s going on in school with them. ...Down here in Texas, school is really bad, so I would like to be on top of what’s going on.” In Calandra’s case, concern with monitoring her children’s schooling limited her employment options because she insisted, she could not work full-time at an

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inflexible job and track her children's progress in school. Thus, mothers (and their partners) commonly linked their children's education to their future well-being. Like many parents, they wanted a better life for their children, but they faced dilemmas in coordinating the schedules of the work they need to do to feed and clothe their children with their children's school schedules. As parents who valued their children's education, such attempts at coordinating and re-negotiating their employment to accommodate and ensure their children's education were necessary backstage labor to their paid work.

Summary

Harvest County families were typically two-parent families with extended kin either living with them or nearby. Such characteristics combined with their working conditions as agricultural laborers (and in many cases migrant laborers) to structure mothers' (and their partners') negotiation of employment. Most often, mothers (and their partners) negotiated child care arrangements around the demands of employment by relying on family or friends, relying on children to monitor themselves and/or each other, and/or working split shifts. Nevertheless, having a partner did not necessarily ease mothers' efforts to negotiate their own employment, since the absence of partners was not uncommon. The conditions of migration further complicated the negotiation of employment, necessitating coordination as child care, children's schooling, transportation, and other life circumstances changed with each move and between moves. Thus, the work of coordination was constant in order to sustain paid employment in agricultural labor.

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CONCLUSION

Mothers in both counties put forth an extraordinary amount of effort to coordinate their family lives with the irregular schedules and circumstances of their paid employment. Inconsistent conditions of work, such as irregular hours, seasonal work, temporary work, and migration, combined with unstable and changing child care arrangements and other life circumstances to make the need for coordination constant. The accounts of mothers' lives and their efforts to coordinate family demands and the unyielding conditions of their employment illustrate the tenuous connections between work and family life, refuting the "separate worlds" argument addressed in Chapter Three. Work and family life are inextricably linked for these mothers as illustrated by the difficulties mothers faced in separating their families from their employment. Like other reproductive labor, the carework, such as child care and feeding work, mothers attempted to coordinate with the schedules of their jobs only became visible when it was not accomplished or coordination failed, making mothers or partners unable to get to their jobs and revealing the relationship between such coordination and women's sustained employment.

A comparison of women's efforts to negotiate family life with paid work reveals important differences between the two groups of mothers. Harvest County mothers had slightly more children than Delta County mothers, were more often living with a partner, more likely to be married to their partners, and more likely to have access to extended kin than Delta County mothers. Accordingly, Harvest County mothers were more likely than Delta County mothers to be called upon to care for a sick relative or friend, more likely to rely on family or friends to care for their children while working, and/or to work a split

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shift. Though mothers in both counties had to deal with partners who were absent due to the circumstances of their employment, the separation of Harvest County families tended to be more drastic and entail a greater distance, though seasonal and temporary in most cases, while the separation Delta County families experienced tended to be more permanent and sporadic. These distinctions illustrate the significance of family structure in conditioning the negotiation of paid employment.

Mothers' accounts in both counties support the contention that informal child care arrangements are common in rural areas. The high prevalence of care by family members among Harvest County mothers in contrast to Delta County mothers may be explained by Uttal's (2002) discussion of reliance on family and friend care by families of color. Though a few Delta County mothers also were relieved knowing that their children were with family, concerns about children's safety were more prevalent among Harvest County mothers than those of Delta County. In addition, the greater proximity to and reliance upon family care among Harvest County families may also be related to the conditions of migration, impelling mothers to bring kin with them. Nevertheless, race/ethnicity structures the pull of these and other Latinas and their families to Harvest County for work (Chapters Two and Five) and, according to Uttal's (2004) findings, could also explain their need to maintain and bring members of their own networks as a safe and flexible child care option.

In general, accounts from mothers in both counties support Dodson and Dickert's (2004) contention that older children in low-income families are increasingly being pulled into the role of caretaker as their parent(s) negotiate paid employment. Mothers in both counties taught older children responsibility and enlisted their help in easing the

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negotiation of their irregular work schedules. Nevertheless, Harvest County mothers were not only more likely to rely on children for self-monitoring than Delta County mothers, but they also did not report the problems with this arrangement and the need to monitor older children that Delta County mothers did (see Kurz's [2002]). Thus, Harvest County daughters more closely resembled the "mini-moms" addressed in Dodson and Dickert's (2004) review, while the results of Delta mothers' attempts to enlist their older children's help were mixed. This distinction between the accounts of mothers in Harvest and Delta Counties could be explained in a number of ways. One, the difference could be related to different interviewing conditions. In the interviews that I conducted in Delta County, I asked and probed more about issues such as these than interviewers did in Harvest County. It is possible that Harvest County mothers experienced similar problems monitoring their older children's behavior, but that information was not elicited in the interviewing process. Two, it is also possible that this difference is due to other distinctions between the two samples such as migration, race/ethnicity, and/or type of employment. More research is needed to investigate this issue.

Nevertheless, interview data from both counties suggest that mothers engage in the work of monitoring and preparing children to monitor themselves and each other. When parents' efforts to monitor and prepare their children for greater responsibilities backfire, as in the case of some Delta County mothers, they need to exert additional efforts into monitoring their teens' troublesome behavior around the demands of employment. In some cases older children presented impediments to their mothers' negotiations of employment, complicating Dodson and Dickert's (2004) simplistic depiction. Older children are increasingly relied on for assistance, but such scenarios

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present additional monitoring labors and worries for parents of teens who do not willingly take on the role of “mini-mom,” an interactive struggle between parents and children, supported by Kurz’s (2002) research on teens.

Though mothers in both counties labored to ensure their children’s education, (e.g., Delta County mothers made efforts to creatively monitor their children’s bus ride to school), the conditions of agricultural labor and migration created additional burdens for many Harvest County mothers’ negotiation of their children’s schooling around their migration schedule. Though some mother’s were successful at re-negotiating the terms of their employment (i.e., migration schedules) to better suit their family’s needs, they are not representative. Race/ethnicity explains the pull of Harvest County families into such work and the reasons they have few alternatives.

Thus, to get and keep paid work, mothers must engage in herculean efforts that challenge their incomes, sap their energy, and demand difficult decisions that more affluent women will never experience. Moreover, in so doing, they often must give up employment to sustain themselves and their families. In the following chapter, I address the ways mothers’ and their partners’ efforts to negotiate their paid work—such as split shifts, child care arrangements, and the separation of families due to employment—affect families and family life.

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Chapter Eight: Implications of Negotiating Work for Family Life

In the previous chapter, I discussed mothers' and their partners' efforts to coordinate reproductive labor and family needs around the demands of paid employment, thereby highlighting the connections between family and paid work. There, I alluded to the ways the negotiation of paid work affects families and family life. In this chapter, I address this issue explicitly, focusing on my fifth research question, "What are the implications of the process of negotiating work for family life?" In other words, how do commutes, migrations, split-shifts schedules, and the energies and arrangements mothers and their partners coordinate to manage paid employment affect family life and families? In contrast to previous findings chapters, I organize this chapter by themes common to families in both counties: (1) family separation, (2) fluidity of family boundaries, (3) gender and power within families, and (4) economic insecurity. As I address these themes, I also show how these families' life circumstances challenge and reinforce ideologies and myths about low-income families and family life.

FAMILY SEPARATION

Negotiating work within families often requires the separation of their members. Such separation can be a product of an absent working father, split shift work schedules, and/or the negotiation of agricultural labor through migration.

Absent Fathers/ De Facto Single Mothers

Partners in both counties worked long hours, often far away from home, and/or in another state (see Chapter 7). Such employment arrangements limited mothers' ability to negotiate their own paid employment by necessitating their greater involvement in reproductive labor and child care. In such circumstances, mothers often functioned as

single parents. As Ines, a non-migrant Harvest County mother whose husband worked five days a week in another state explained. “He’s always working. He’s never here.” She likened her current situation to the time after her first marriage when she raised her older children alone. Ellie, a Delta County mother, described a similar circumstance. “So I was leaving here at 5:30 in the morning, taking the kids to day care, being to work at six, and not getting home until between four and six at night....And then Ethan was over the road too, so I was doing everything on my own.”

Popular rhetoric portrays low-income women-headed households as a deficient family form, unable to achieve economic security and, therefore, in need of marriage to alleviate poverty (see Chapter 2). Similarly, “absent” low-income fathers are often depicted as “deadbeat dads.”¹ Beginning with these family members’ everyday lives and circumstances as “absent fathers” and “de facto single mothers” complicates and refutes such rhetoric/mythology. First, the presence of two partners does not diminish the need for family separation or, as addressed below, does not alleviate family poverty/economic insecurity. In fact, these families’ circumstances illustrate that, rather than a sign of “dysfunctional families,” absent fathers and de facto single mothers are products of attempts to sustain families through low-wage work. Rather than the image of laziness and unwillingness to “work” implied by low-income single mothers and absent low-income dads, beginning with these families’ lives and circumstances shows that such family forms represent an adaptation, an attempt to negotiate the paid employment to which they have access.

¹ On the other hand, middle-class fathers’ absence has been revered through the “breadwinner” model.

Separation and Children

Mothers and partners' efforts to negotiate paid work not only necessitated a division of labor that separated partners/fathers from other family members, but such circumstances also separated children from mothers and/or fathers. For example, during the harvesting season, the long hours worked and sporadic schedule of both parents in Harvest County often necessitated extensive separation from children, as Calandra explained.

Sometimes I wouldn't even get to see the kids. You know, because I would leave so early in the morning, they were still asleep. Or they were getting ready to go to school, and I was already gone. And when I would come back home, they were already taking a bath and almost going to bed.

Not only did such working conditions necessitate the separation of parents or a parent from children, but also, as addressed in Chapter Seven, they pulled older children, in particular, into positions of self-care or greater responsibility for their younger siblings.

Self-Care and "Mini-Moms"

Asking children to assume responsibility for themselves and/or younger siblings involved costs and benefits. For example, in the case of Laurel's teenage daughter, rather than initiating greater responsibility, increased separation, i.e., decreased monitoring, led to the child's delinquency from school, among other problems. In contrast, recall the case of Bonita's daughter, who cooked, cleaned, and made tortillas, as Bonita had taught her. Moreover, some children were unwilling to respond to the call for their increased involvement in reproductive labor. In fact, Harvest County children more closely resembled the "mini-moms" Dodson and Dickert (2004) described than Delta County children, and they were more often pulled into the management of family life or self-care.

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If Dodson and Dickert's (2004) argument is correct, than "mini-moms" will be less likely to achieve upward mobility through their own educational advancement and employment. At first glance, this argument appears to support the popularly held assumption that children of low-income women repeat the cycle of poverty. Beginning with the material circumstances of mothers' lives, however, reveals that such circumstances are a product of mothers' efforts to negotiate low-wage work that cannot support the exorbitant costs of child care. Given such costs and the material resources they derive from low-wage employment, women have little recourse but to rely on older children. Such an examination of mothers' material circumstances refutes arguments made by Murray (1984) and others, citing "deficient values," such as laziness and a deficient "work ethic," as explanations for inter-generational poverty. In addition, the fact that young Harvest County mothers who grew up on the migrant track were pursuing higher education calls into question the generalizability of Dodson and Dickert's contention about the future circumstances of daughters.

Emotional Toll of Separation on Adults and Children

The separation of family members through negotiations of work, such as those that place partners physically apart and "absent" from family life, not only affect the division of reproductive labor, pulling mothers into the role of primary caregiver and children into increased self-monitoring, but such negotiations also take a toll on family members emotionally. Family separation, such as in the case of absent working fathers, was difficult emotionally for children and for mothers like Erin, whose husband worked long hours on a farm.

He didn't get home 'till eleven o'clock at night, and the kids were in bed sleeping. They would ask, "Where's Dad? Where's Dad?" It was hard. ...Six thirty in the

morning, he would see the kids up, but never have time to play. ...For five years of our marriage, you know, that you don't have one another. You do, but you don't. The kids don't have him.

With such separation in mind, Abby and her husband evaluated a job switch for him to construction that would generate a significant increase in income, but decided against it.

“That means he would have to be out of town six days a week. ...[The] over-time, ...would be lovely, but...neither one of us could handle [the time apart]. ... We just got married.” Thus, family circumstances and concerns also affect decisions about parents' negotiations of paid work.

Parental Discontent with Separation

Erin, Laurel, and Ellie's partners all disliked being physically separated from their children. “But now like, this job he has now, he gets frustrated because he's not home with the family all the time, ...when he can't come home and see the girls at night, you know.” (Laurel). Ellie's partner, Ethan, had switched to a more regular scheduled job as a mechanic.

I think he likes to do the mechanicking work because he's...home every night, but I think he likes to do the trucking because it's more money. So, it's kind of like a toss up. You know. If he could get more money doing the mechanicking, I think he'd like that, but yet if he could find a trucking job that paid well that was in town, I think he'd like that too. [laughs]

Such accounts of fathers' frustration with being separated from their children challenge popularized images of low-income fathers as “deadbeat dads.” Examining the material conditions of their lives reveal the ways the conditions of employment and the efforts of fathers/partners to negotiate available employment shape family life, leaving fathers with few options. Ironically, these fathers were grasping at the breadwinner role, but their employment options did not support a family wage, thereby necessitating separation.

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Mothers were also upset about the extent to which negotiating paid work required separation from their children. Their negotiation of paid work, and their feelings about such circumstances, were shaped by the gendered labor market that draws partners away and pulls mothers into a predominate role in child care and reproductive labor. Accordingly, their feelings about their separation from their children—necessitated by the low-wages and inflexible circumstances of the paid employment to which they have access—were shaped by ideologies about traditional stay at home mothers as “good mothers.” Mothers, whether single or with a partner, often expressed guilt about separation from children because of their employment outside of the home, as a result and, in turn, reinforcing ideologies about stay-at-home mothers as an example of “good mothering” (see Hayes 1996).

A common theme in the interviews was mothers’ feelings of being torn between the need to be separated from their children to financially support them and their desire to be with their children. Brandy, a single Delta County mother explained, “It’s kind of a guilty conscience for me, bringing my kids to day care half a day and only being able to spend nights with them.” Serafina, a mother who worked at a seasonal day care facility for the children of migrant families, but lived in Harvest County year-round, had the following to say.

I don't have a lot of time because I'm working. In the afternoons, I just spend with my kids, because I feel that they still need me. ...Last year I was working a second job, and when I come home, [the children would] say, "Mom, we need you." ...And I'd always say, "Well, you know. You guys need things, so I need to work so hard, so we can get those things."

Thus, when asked if she would like to be employed, Ellie, a mother who was unemployed at the time of the interview, expressed a common sentiment, “I do, but I don’t.” Jenna, another Delta County mother, completed her thought, “I really wanted to stay home and

be a mom; ...it just wasn't going to be feasible.” Continuing, she explained, “Well, my kids needed me at that time. The divorce was really hard on them. Ah, especially my son. I had him in counseling.”

Thus, the necessity for and conditions of the employment to which mothers (and their partners) had access, as well as the labors necessary to sustain such employment, made the idealized breadwinner/stay-at-home mother family form inaccessible.²

Nevertheless, mothers were held accountable—by others as well as themselves—to such an ideology, resulting in frustration and exhaustion. Laurel, who was having problems with her seventeen year-old daughter acting out, explained the toll that her efforts to manage family demands around her and her husband’s employment had on her children. Recall that Laurel got up early in the morning to make lunches for her children and husband so that he could get to work on time, and by nine a.m. she was exhausted at her own job.

It wasn't fair because then the kids would get home from school and I was just exhausted. ...I was just too exhausted to even talk to them about school. You know, it was frustrating.

Laurel decided to stop working in order to attend to her children, if only for a temporary period of time, as did Gail who explained,

I decided I want summer and time with my kids because they're all growing up. ...I'm on unemployment. I'm enjoying the kids and it's a good thing. ...As soon as school starts back...I'll go looking for a job, but I wanted to spend time with the kids. It's been a long time coming. Seems like.

Liz and Tracy, who worked seasonally, both also enjoyed spending their summers with their children. Tracy said that time made up for the commute and long hours she had to

² See Baca Zinn and Eitzen (2002) for additional explanation of the predominance of an idealized traditional nuclear family as a myth, unachievable by the material circumstances of most contemporary socio-economic groups.

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put in during the rest of the year. In contrast, Harvest County mothers typically were able to spend more time with their children during the winter months after their work in Harvest County was complete. Thus, these mothers were able to be “stay-at-home” mothers for part of the year.

Nevertheless, despite ideologies about “good mothering” as “stay-at-home” mothering, negotiating arrangements in which mothers were “at-home” for some period of time sometimes resulted in boredom and alienation. Clara, for example, reported that “I hate being trapped in this trailer all the time. I hate it. ...Three kids when Al's in class. About ready to rip my hair out sometimes.” Laurel concurred. “There’s days where it drives me crazy. ...Nothing to do. The kids are all in school.” Such responses to an arrangement in which mothers “stay-at-home” for at least part of the time challenge idealized images of motherhood and of “home as a haven” (Baca Zinn and Eitzen 2002).

Though these low-income mothers expressed a range of ambivalent feelings about their work outside and inside the home that resembles the dilemmas of working mothers from other socio-economic backgrounds, popular rhetoric about low-wage mothers (outlined in Chapters 2 and 3) paints a different picture. Low-income mothers who feel torn about working outside of the home or would rather not do so are depicted as lazy and unwilling to “work,” while middle-class mothers with similar sentiments are depicted as “good mothers” and as “stay-at-home mothers.” Simply considering the contrast between the imagery depicted by “stay-at-home mother,” i.e., a middle-class model of “good mothering,” and “welfare mother,” i.e., a lazy woman who has babies so she does not have to “work” for pay, illustrates the point.

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Family Cohesion/Family Problems

The conditions of paid employment and the particular ways mothers and/or partners negotiated paid employment resulted in varying degrees of cohesion and separation of family members. In turn, family separation led to problems, such as the alienation of members from each other due to disruption of family rituals, such as family meals, and communication problems for couples.

As a mother who worked as a migrant agricultural worker and later in healthcare, Tomasa's experience illustrates the ways these different negotiations of paid employment affected family cohesion and separation. Though the schedule of the harvesting season often necessitated the separation of parents from children for long periods of time,³ as illustrated by Calandra's discussion above, according to Tomasa's account, the conditions of agricultural labor placed adult family members who worked in the fields in greater proximity.

Most of the time we were all together, ...it was me and my mom and my dad and my husband. We were all working in the same group together, and then even though we didn't pick together, we were in the same field, you know? Everybody had their own row and everything, but you know, when we stop for lunch, they would stop for lunch, and we all ate together (Tomasa).

Thus, the conditions of and organization of this work enabled some couples and extended family members to work side by side, an anomaly in today's non-agricultural working world. Tomasa contrasted the sense of closeness to her extended family that she experienced while working in Harvest County with the effect of her new work schedule on her ability to spend time with her adult family.

I really enjoyed working in the fields. I would spend more time with my husband and, you know, I liked that. And now that I'm working in the clinic, well I hardly

³ In some cases, however, children gained greater access to extended family members due to close proximity and the prevalence of family care.

get to see my husband until he gets home. ... We go and visit our other family members that we get to see only once...a week because they also work. And they have different schedules. ... It feels like when you migrate, you're closer to your family.

Tomasa worked full-time as a nurse's assistant, her husband worked in construction, and her mother worked nights in a laundry. The conditions of their new paid work made her feel estranged from them. Her feelings of alienation from her family members were so profound that she contemplated returning to migrant agricultural labor.

Communication Problems between Partners

Tomasa also attributed some of her marital problems to her and her husband's lack of time together due to the conditions of their new paid work. "Sometimes you feel like you're being pulled apart. ... You don't communicate enough, and then we argue for something that's you know, it's nothing." This problem was not limited to Harvest County mothers. In addressing the time in their marriage when she and her husband were working split-shifts, Laurel, a Delta County mother, echoed Tomasa's account.

[We were] just like, not connecting. ... You know, it was like a case when "I thought I told you that yesterday," and, you know, "No you didn't." It was, "Got a lot going on." ... Or it was like, "I thought you paid that bill." "No, I thought you paid that bill." You know, it was like, Ah! You know, we need to connect more often.

Disruption of Family Rituals

Though working opposite shifts often allowed one parent or the other to be home with a child or children at all times, eliminating or virtually eliminating the need for child care arrangements, it often prevented mothers and their partners from seeing each other, as Tracy explained.

Well, ...I worked days, and my husband worked third shift. ... So we never seen one another. ... When he got ready to go to work at night, ... we'd make dinner. Me and the kids would eat while he slept, and then when he got up, ... we already

had his plate made. He ate, got ready, and he was gone. So, it was basically. "Hello. Good-bye. See ya later."

Tracy's example illustrates how family separation complicates and/or eliminates important family rituals, such as family meals. DeVault's (1990) research on the work that mother's do to feed their family shows how the family meal, and the significance of that meal as a time for families to come together, is central to ideologies about good family life. The material conditions and employment options available to mothers and their partners that necessitated separation, made such an image of idealized family life inaccessible. Nevertheless, as I showed in Chapter Seven, mothers typically labored to coordinate their feeding work around work schedules and obligations by getting up early to make lunches and preparing food in advance so that it was available when they were not around, thereby attending to the perceived needs and preference of family members. For example, Jenna accommodated her family's mealtime to her own work schedule and her children's desires to participate in after school activities.

[My daughter] has been involved in 4-H, so ...there would be nights when we wouldn't make it home for supper, you know, it would be sandwiches packed, grab 'em out of the fridge real quick and eat 'em in the car on the way or whatever because 4-H meetings would always start at six thirty, and when you get out of work at five, it doesn't leave you a lot of time.

Not all parents, however, were able to accommodate their children's need for play and recreation through family outings. Antonia, a settled Harvest County mother explained, "Well, I go to work and my husband sleeps a while and now he goes and returns again and we don't have an opportunity to take them out to go to the park or to the lake because well I start at five in the morning to work." Antonia not only missed the opportunity to take her children to public places, as a family ritual, due to her and her

husband's split-shift work schedule, but she was also concerned about her youngest child's social development because he was not exposed to other children.

In sum, the conditions of employment and mothers and their partners' particular negotiation of that employment, such as a split-shift arrangement, affected the potential for family cohesion, resulting in conflict and miscommunication among couples and/or complications or eliminations of family rituals, such as meals. Nevertheless, despite such obstacles to idealized images of family life, mothers labored to reconfigure family life and family rituals around the demands and schedules of paid work.

FLUIDITY OF FAMILY BOUNDARIES

The separation and movement of families due to the negotiation of paid work through seasonal migration or moving created fluid and changing family boundaries across time and space. The reliance of mothers in both counties on extended families, friends, and neighbors for child care and other assistance to manage the inflexible conditions of low-wage work challenged traditional notions of "family," i.e., the traditional nuclear family. The material conditions of mothers' and partners' lives necessitated migration and movement as a means of negotiating available employment options, thereby making the idealized traditional family form inaccessible and reconfiguring alternate family forms or adaptations (see Moen 1992).

Migration, Separation, and Fluid Family Boundaries

Negotiating paid work through migration conditioned the fluidity of family boundaries for many Harvest County families, creating and sustaining a state of flux and change. Family boundaries were fluid because family migration could encompass more than an isolated conjugal unit. Nine households in Harvest County (27% of all

households in 2000, 66.9% of those families were migrants) included extended kin, such as parents and in-laws, adult children who lived and migrated with their parents only during the season in Harvest County, and other kin, such as nieces. In addition, other families transcended household boundaries in Harvest County when mothers, their children, and partners migrated with extended kin who then lived next door or very close by in the same migrant camp. Five mothers migrated with and lived (and often worked) in close proximity to extended family.⁴ As Calandra explained, “At that migrant camp, um, there’s three building units and they are all our family. It’s my mother-in-law, my father-in-law, and the rest of my brother-in-laws with their wi[ves].” Afra’s family also migrated together as a group, “My ah, my sister and...her family, my brother and his wife and his daughter and my nephews that are married. ...Yeah it is like around six families.”

Migrant mothers often inhabited a different family household when they returned to their home bases in Texas or Florida than they did when they were in Harvest County. In addition, the family households migrant mothers and their children formed while in Harvest County were subject to change from one year to the next. Despite such fluidity and change in family arrangements, families maintained a sense of cohesion. Such circumstances of mobility and changing family configurations challenge the conflation of “family” with “household” embedded in idealized images of traditional nuclear families. In this case, “family” and family boundaries transcended household boundaries as members moved in and out of households. In fact, Calandra’s depiction of her family’s living arrangements above is a good illustration of Rapp’s (1999) discussion of family versus household boundaries and social class.

⁴ This does not include the nine families previously addressed who live with extended family members.

Finally, families' attempts to manage migration for work so that they could support their families not only created fluid and mobile families, but also "families" that spanned state and national borders.⁵ In addition to the examples of absent fathers due to employment addressed previously, mothers and their partners talked about sending money to Mexico to support children or other family members. For example, Jacinto, Juanita's partner, sent money to his children in Mexico. Minnie was unable to return to Harvest County during the second year of interviews (2001) because of her pregnancy and complications with documentation, so she remained in Mexico with her extended family and children while her partner, Calixio, migrated to Harvest County for work with his extended family. Such examples further illustrate the fluidity of family boundaries across state and national borders as members attempted to manage migration for work so that they could support their families.

Post-modern Families

Judith Stacey (1990) characterizes "postmodern families" as fluid, with changing gender roles, no family wage, unclear boundaries, and divorce extended kin.⁶ Stacey (1990) describes working-class families shaped by the changing conditions and availability of paid work. Similarly, families in Delta and Harvest Counties were shaped by their efforts to manage inconsistent and inflexible low-waged employment. Negotiating such fluctuating working conditions produced families characterized by change and shifting boundaries, such as those who migrated to Harvest County. In

⁵ Hondagneu-Sotelo (1997) coined the term "transnational families" to designate the ways families that include migrants transcend national borders. Her work focuses on employment circumstances that pull a parent across a national border different from their partners and children so that they can earn money to contribute to their families.

⁶ Stacey (1990) defines "divorce extended kin" as extended kin from a previous marriage who remain kin following a divorce. In her study of working-class families, Stacey found mothers maintained such networks and relationships with ex-husbands' relatives.

addition, Delta County families represented an array of family forms of which marriage and a “modern” nuclear family form were not central. For example, Ellie had reconciled and was living with her ex-husband. After struggling for years as a single mother with two children, Liz was living with a partner who brought two more children to their household from a previous marriage. (They maintained separate finances, and relied on her ex-husbands parents for help with child care.) Brandy had recently separated from an abusive partner. Clara lived with her fiancé, caring for two of his children from a previous marriage and two of their own. They lived in a trailer paid for by her fiancé’s grandfather. Though not all of these “post-modern” families were a direct result of how mothers negotiated paid work, the low-pay and inconsistencies of their potential employment resonated with changing family histories.

Extending Family Boundaries through Reliance on Extended Kin

As mothers and their partners attempted to negotiate the inflexible conditions of low-wage employment, they drew from a patchwork of extended kin and friends for assistance with child care and, sometimes, transportation (see Stack’s [1974] research on the importance of social networks to low-income African-American families). Such efforts created extended families beyond the traditional nuclear model, fostering fluid and changing boundaries. In the case of migrant families, extended family members, such as mothers-in-law, sometimes migrated and lived with a mother, partner, and their children for the purpose of child care. When they returned to Texas, child care and housing arrangements sometimes differed. Such changing family configurations were not limited to Harvest County families. For example, both Nancy and her partner and Abby and her husband, among the youngest Delta County mothers/couples, had recently moved into

their own housing (a rented trailer) for the first time. Both couples had been living with parents and still relied on extended family for help with child care and meals. Both discussed doing odd jobs for extended family members for some extra cash from time to time. In this manner, families transcended the traditional nuclear family model and family circumstances were as fluid and changing as the conditions of employment were for mothers (see Kelly *forthcoming* [2005]).

GENDER AND POWER WITHIN FAMILIES

Research on marital power proposes a relationship between power and status derived from paid employment outside of the home and power and status between a woman and her partner (Blumstein and Schwartz 1983). The gendered local economies in Delta and Harvest Counties differentially structured the jobs to which mothers and their partners had access, leaving men with greater economic resources, on average, within families and reinforcing some elements of the breadwinner model of fathering by pulling partners away from families. On the other hand, the lower paying jobs to which mothers had access, ultimately reinforced the imbalance of power within households and ideologies about “good mothering” by pushing mothers into the role of caregiver and coordinator of family labors necessary to sustain paid employment. Thus, the conditions of the employment to which mothers and their partners had access reinforced the breadwinner/stay-at-home mother ideal, while simultaneously making such an idealized family form inaccessible.

Mothers’ accounts, such as those of Antonia, Brandy, and Laurel, of their withdrawal or abstinence from paid employment due to their partners’ insistence illustrate an imbalance of power and a relationship between pay and status of

employment and caregiving. “My husband didn’t let me [work outside the home] because the children were still small” (Antonia). While she was with her children’s father, who was physically abusive, Brandy was not permitted to work outside the home, leaving her with no control over family finances and few resources to properly care for her children. “While I wasn’t working there was pretty much no way that I could save money because it was all up to him. I did not see the money. ... We never sat down and said, ‘Hey we need to save on this;...let’s see how we can do it.’” According to Laurel, “Lenny decided that maybe I should just spend the time with the kids and keep track of them. ... At first I didn’t want to quit my job, but then...with my seventeen year-old...acting out...I thought, you know, maybe he’s right.” Such accounts of partners as impediments to mothers’ ability to negotiate their own paid employment and, in some cases, to manage their finances, challenge popular conceptions that marriage can improve family life and ameliorate family poverty. Nevertheless, mothers were not powerless, and their accounts reveal a more complex distribution of power within families.

Though some partners, such as Calixio, Minnie’s partner who migrated to Harvest County while she remained in Mexico with their children, identified with the breadwinner ideology of fatherhood, identifying himself as “the provider” for his family, others wrestled with an ideology that failed to reflect their division of labor and financial resources. Gail said of her previous partner, “He just couldn’t get the concept that I was making more money than he was.” Tracy’s partner, Ernie, suffered depression because his back injury made him unable to work for pay, making Tracy the breadwinner for their family. Tracy utilized the breadwinner ideology to console him.

I’m like, “It’s okay that you don’t work, you’ve taken care of me many years.” It’s been really stressful on our family. And even though I’ve come beyond that point

[in adjusting to our new division of labor], he's sort of like still there. You know, he's the man..., and he thinks that men should....

Thus, the pay and status of mother and partner's employment shaped the distribution of power within families. Though the scale did not always tip in favor of male partners, "breadwinner" ideologies continued to shape partners' actions. Just as mothers' perceptions of their parenting and employment were shaped by ideologies about a traditional family form, so too did partners wrestle with the gendered equivalent: the breadwinner model.

Though influenced by them, mothers also challenged traditional ideologies and power by participating in crucial decision-making. In fact, Harvest County mothers played a crucial role in decision-making about migration. Decisions such as those of Celina and Tomasa to stop migrating or to limit the migration of children were largely motivated by concerns about children's safety and their continued education, cementing mothers' roles as caregivers and, in some cases, increasing the time partners spent as absent breadwinners.

I told my husband...you know, if I get a job year around, I'm not going to follow you to [Harvest County]. If you want to go work up there by yourself, you are going to go up there by yourself. I'm staying here with my daughter. I told him, so you know, you need to start looking for a job (Tomasa).

Thus, not only did mothers play a central role in coordinating family migration but, contrary to gender stereotypes about Latinas, at least some mothers initiated decision making about migration, as further illustrated by Celina.

We used to go to Florida [to work] a lot, something my children do not know. For this reason I used to say to my husband, "What are we going to do because you spent the money and do not have any left?" And I talked to him about ugly accidents that have happened on the highways, and, "Look at this rain that is falling and me with my children." So I told him that I better stay in [Harvest

County] because the children do not know anything about the language or how to speak in English. And now, thanks to the Lord, they know both languages.

Celina and Tomasa's insistence that they and their children stop migrating to Florida both challenged and reinforced traditional notions of marital power. In Celina's case, her bold assertion led to her husband's lone migration, reinforcing a breadwinner model. Nevertheless, the source of these mothers' declaration, their role as caregivers, further reinforced a traditional division of labor, although it challenged the corresponding distribution of power. Delta County mothers' decisions about commuting also reinforced such a division of labor. Clara, for example, limited the distance she was willing to look for work from their home because of her concern about being available in case of an emergency involving her step-children. Partners were more likely to commute for their work, thereby necessitating mothers' close proximity. Mothers further reinforced the breadwinner model by assuming the role of primary caregiver, though their resistance challenged a traditional division of labor as they asserted their autonomy through decision-making. Thus, such incidents and decisions served both to challenge and reinforce gendered ideologies about paid work and family.

Delta County and Harvest County mothers also challenged gender ideologies about family life through their actions. Harvest County mothers who coordinated education with seasonal employment increased their earning potential and leverage within families. This was the case for Tomasa, who presented her husband with an ultimatum about settling out after she secured a full-time job through her training as a volunteer (above). Tracy, a Delta County mother, was pulled into the role of breadwinner when her husband was injured. Mothers, like Gail, Brandy, and Jenna, left partners who were abusive and/or barriers to their own efforts to negotiate paid

employment. After her divorce Liz cohabitated, creating a blended family in which she and her partner maintained separate finances, though they shared living expenses. Such an arrangement enabled Liz to maintain her own money and autonomy in their relationship. Such examples illustrate the complexities of gender and power within families in both counties, as mothers and partners actions reinforced and challenged traditional distributions of paid and unpaid work and ideologies about a traditional family model, work, and family life.

EFFECTS OF NEGOTIATING LOW-WAGE WORK ON FAMILY POVERTY/ECONOMIC INSECURITY

Mothers' efforts to negotiate low-wage employment around their demands as caregivers were related to economic insecurity within families. This is not to suggest that mothers caused their family's poverty by negotiating paid work. Rather, attempts to manage the low-wage employment to which Delta and Harvest County mothers typically had access could compound their families' economic insecurity.

The particular conditions of the employment to which mothers had access, i.e., irregular and inflexible to the needs of parents, compounded the need for labors to sustain employment. For example, such working conditions necessitated job turnover as a condition of employment (see Kelly *forthcoming* [2005]). Thus, extra efforts to look for new jobs and periods without employment were not uncommon. Such circumstances seem to be linked to family poverty/economic insecurity. Mothers in both counties described periods of their greatest economic hardship as those in which they and/or a partner were unable to negotiate their own employment due to a severe health problem, pregnancy, periods of layoffs, and/or caregiving needs. Abby, for example, explained that the month in which she was interviewed was "going to be our hardest month because

[my husband] was laid off for two weeks.” Afra and her husband lost the land they had been purchasing and suffered financially because of her severe illness, which prevented them from migrating for work in Harvest County. On the other hand, Janae suggested that their economic circumstances had improved due to her husband’s employment situation. “He had a part-time job, ...but...now this year he got a full-time job, and it’s better.” However, even when both parents were able to negotiate low-wage work, families were not immune to economic difficulties. The subsidized rent of Yesenia’s family, for example, increased almost four times when both partners were employed.

Thus, due to the particular conditions of employment, the *costs of negotiating low-wage work* can exceed the benefits, compounding family poverty/economic insecurity. Recall that Liz was expected to purchase new clothing with her salary at her bank job that she needed to support her children as a single mother. In addition, her salary did not cover the exorbitant costs of child care, commuting to work, and maintaining her vehicle. Similarly, Celina’s husband explained that he needed a “good job” to avoid financial difficulties for their family “but if I get a good job I don’t qualify for...childcare [assistance], and there are four [children]. ...It already happened to me, ...the job didn’t work out [because of the cost of child care]. ...Two thousand dollars in one month is a lot, and that’s just part-time with the children.”

Brandy explained how “what she was doing,” i.e., working “entry level jobs,” just wasn’t working to support her and her children. She owed her day care provider \$800 and her \$214 pay check every two weeks “wouldn’t even pay my rent.” “I would like to go back and get my GED, ...but I can’t financially. It’s kind of hard to go to school when you don’t have an income coming in.” Ellie’s husband had difficulty getting the

hours that he needed as a truck driver. In an effort to negotiate employment with the hours he needed to support his family, he left a few jobs, but his strategy of switching jobs backfired. “He’s had like three companies really screw him up on not paying him, and things like that. And now his, the job stability is in question, so none of the over the road truck driving companies will hire him.” Ethan had to sue his former employers for back pay and declare bankruptcy.

The costs and potential gambles of migrating to perform agricultural labor were considerable. The money it cost to make the trip and the added costs of housing did not always balance out with the potential economic benefits during a bad season in Harvest County. Though mothers, like Francisca, a permanent resident of Harvest County, said their families struggled less financially while working in Harvest County than they had in their previous location, families were not always better off by migrating. Many migrant workers owned a home or lived with a family member who owned a home in Texas. Though some employers provided housing, for others, it became an added expense, as Noemi explained. “In Texas, I own my place, and when we go to Florida, we have to rent like the hotels.” Calandra maintained that “Michigan is what we do to last us when we come back home. That’s our only means of work. ...So that’s really hard for us...pocket-wise...when the season didn’t go very well for us.” The crops were so bad that Calandra and her family decided to return to Texas earlier than usual. “That was a decision that we had to make because we didn’t know how the other half of the season was going to be.” Not only did they lose potential income but, because they made less, they did not qualify for unemployment compensation. Alita’s family returned to Texas after a bad season in Harvest County, still unable to pay their bills. “This year didn’t

come out good. The other years were better. ... There are more payments that are behind, and there isn't money to do it."

Decisions that mothers (and their partners) made in the effort to coordinate their caregiving around the demands of inflexible, low-wage employment could exacerbate family poverty. The decision to revise their migrations schedules and work less in Harvest County to ensure their children's schooling placed families in a precarious situation economically. Similarly, in attempting to address caregiving needs, Delta County families made difficult decisions. For example, Erin's husband withdrew from farm work because the hours prevented him from seeing his family. However, he had difficulty securing full-time employment. Similarly, needing to care for her husband, Tracy left her factory job for more flexible, but lower-paying employment. "I...went from making \$12.75 an hour to making \$5.25. But I got to spend more time at home. ... We learned to go from making, you know, having two or three hundred dollars every week extra after we paid all of our bills, to having nothing." Thus, the inflexibility and low-wages of the employment to which mothers (and their partners) typically had access made coordinating employment with family needs challenging, ultimately leaving mothers and their partners with difficult choices between family care and economic insecurity.

Beginning with mothers' experiences negotiating low-wage employment reveals interconnections between their efforts to get and keep employment, the conditions of that employment, and the economic insecurities their families experience. In addition, the potential costs of negotiating low-wage employment challenge the myth that "work" can pull people out of poverty and that poverty or economic insecurity is a result of laziness

or unwillingness to “work.” On the contrary, the women’s accounts suggest that the conditions of low-wage and inflexible employment compound the need for backstage labors and can potentially exacerbate economic insecurity/family poverty.

CONCLUSIONS

The energies that mothers and partners invested in getting and keeping employment (Chapters 6 and 7) were ultimately linked to the particular conditions of the employment to which they had access (Chapter 5), shaping their families and family lives. The irregularities and inflexibility of employment options available to mothers make coordinating such employment with their needs as caregivers a challenge, resulting in the separation of families and compounding family poverty.

Hondagneu-Sotelo (1997) documents the effects of one parent’s migration and separation from her children on family life. Similar separations occurred among Harvest County parents. However, the theme of family separation extended to Delta County families as well, as fathers were “absent” because of their employment, whether on a daily or weekly basis. A comparison of families in Harvest and Delta Counties reveals important similarities in their experiences of family separation. In both cases, family separation was gendered, with male partners more likely to work for extended periods of time away from children and mothers. A gendered labor market reinforced such trends, pulling male partners into distant jobs and, in turn, mothers into the role of primary caregiver. In turn, some mothers made the decision to end their own and children’s migration and gave up commuting long distances, thereby asserting their autonomy but reinforcing a gendered division of labor. Thus, gender and power within families are complex and structured by the gendered labor market, ideologies about gender, work, and

family, and individual's actions. Such examinations reveal complex relationships between "work" and "family."

Nevertheless, in negotiating low-wage employment, mothers (and partners) were also pulled away from children. Children, and older children in particular, were increasingly relied upon to care for themselves and/or to care for their younger siblings, particularly in the case of Harvest County families. Their experiences illustrated the effects of migration for seasonal agricultural labor on children's schooling. As some families made efforts to remedy such circumstances by revising their migration and employment schedules, they placed their families in a precarious economic position.

The efforts of mothers and their partners to get and keep employment on family life were not always negative. Mothers' efforts to secure education and training, for example, paid off with better jobs and economic security for women like Tomasa and others who were on their way to attaining college degrees. Such negotiations of potentially better employment seemed to reconfigure the distribution of power within families and, ultimately, to improve families' economic standing. The potentially harmful effects of mothers' negotiation of work on family life can be explained by the conditions of the employment to which they have access. Low-wage, irregular, and inflexible employment, ultimately exacerbated the need for labors to get and keep employment due to high turnover, making the negotiation of *better jobs* difficult.

In this chapter, I have illuminated how focusing on rural low-income mothers' efforts to get and keep employment challenges and complicates stereotypes, assumptions, and myths about low-income families and family life. Rapp (1999) theorizes about the relationship between ideologies of work and family life and social class. She argues that

ideologies about work and family life, such as those addressed here, disguise the class based (economic) relations of families. Family members must work for the sake of family, and having family is the pay off for working. Poor families are often criticized, through popular rhetoric, for having “bad families” when it is their economic circumstances that prevent them from measuring up to ideal notions of “family,” such as the “traditional nuclear family model” and idealized images of family cohesion through family meals and family rituals. Thus, the circumstances of families in Delta and Harvest Counties were shaped by the conditions of the employment to which they had access, their efforts to negotiate such employment, and their attempts to adhere to ideologies about family life. Beginning with the material circumstances of mothers’ everyday lives reveals the ways their circumstances and actions simultaneously reinforce and challenge ideologies and myths about family life and low-income families.

Chapter Nine: Conclusions

This dissertation has brought together research and theorizing about economic restructuring, welfare policy and poverty, and work and family life to examine a new research topic: the work necessary for work. Beginning with the everyday lived experiences of two groups of low-income mothers in two different rural counties revealed a multitude of invisible and taken for granted labors necessary for them to get and keep employment given their particular life circumstances. Their everyday efforts to sustain paid work, however, were shaped by larger global economic and policy shifts as these macro forces (re)configured the labor markets of the rural counties in which mothers and their families resided and sought employment. These larger shifts affected the type of work available in the gendered and racialized labor markets of Delta and Harvest Counties, which, in turn, structured the efforts necessary for women to sustain work. I begin this conclusion with a summary of my major findings. This summary is followed by discussion of the theoretical and substantive contributions of the research. Next, I speak to the limitations of the study and finally I suggest areas for future research.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

To refine my comparison of the two counties and to highlight the distinctions alluded to in my research questions, I have organized this summary of findings according to axes of difference. Similarities and differences in the work necessary for mothers to get and keep employment were shaped by (1) rural county context, (2) race/ethnicity, (3) residential mobility (i.e., migration), (4) education, and (5) family structure. Because mothers in Delta and Harvest Counties differed according to multiple axes of difference,

it difficult to isolate one of these, e.g., race/ethnicity versus family structure, as the cause of differences in their experiences negotiating paid work. All of these layers of difference intersected to shape the efforts necessary for mothers to get and keep employment. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, I address each of these separately.

Rural County Contexts

Gender, Race, and Local Labor Market/Employment Options

In keeping with some of the gendered trends of economic restructuring, Delta County mothers' employment options were largely relegated to the growing number of low-wage service jobs, typically filled by women, while their partners typically held jobs in construction and/or manufacturing, the remnants of better paying jobs traditionally filled by men in rural areas. In contrast, as a racialized group, Latinos were relegated to low-paying sectors, such as agriculture, and, in a restructured economy, were increasingly pulled into rural communities to fill jobs in low-wage labor markets. In keeping with a history of movement for work and faced with few job prospects in their home states and communities, Harvest County families (whether migrant workers or settled) relocated to Harvest County to perform farmwork, employment with one of the lowest median weekly earnings by occupation and the largest percentage of workers who belong to a minority group (Runyan 2001). Though not as blatant as previous research suggests, the gendered division of labor which Harvest County mothers encountered was subtle, offering men, but not women, greater opportunities to work at more specialized tasks for higher pay. Such gendered distinctions in pay and status had implications for the distribution of resources within families, and the efforts necessary for mothers to

negotiate paid work. Their employment options, and the conditions of their work, ultimately affected mothers' efforts to get and keep employment.

Despite the differences in work available to mothers in Delta and Harvest Counties, their accounts reveal similarities in the conditions of their work: low-wages, instabilities, such as temporary or seasonal work, irregular hours, and inflexibility to their needs as caregivers. Such working conditions required efforts to manage other life circumstances. Mothers (and their partners) attempted to supplement seasonal, temporary, and/or unstable employment by taking on odd jobs and side work, unemployment compensation, and education or training during off-seasons (in the case of seasonal work). Mothers in both Delta and Harvest Counties engaged in emotional labor (Hochschild 1989) to maintain employment, making decisions about whether to quit jobs that were embedded in hostile working environments and to search for alternative employment or to invest emotional labor and deal with such working conditions on an everyday basis.

In addition to structuring the particular type of work to which mothers had access, the contexts of the two rural counties further conditioned the efforts necessary for mothers to get and keep employment by shaping the distance they traveled to get to work on an everyday or semi-annual basis, and the resources to which they had access to educate and/or train themselves and to manage family life (i.e., extended family, friends, or formal child care arrangements) around the demands of their particular employment. Social networks also were crucial to acquiring jobs in both rural county contexts.

Race/Ethnicity

Inequities in the distribution of resources, status, privilege and disadvantage, based on the socially constructed categories of race/ethnicity, differentially structured the efforts of mothers in Delta and Harvest Counties to get and keep employment. Although both groups of women were disadvantaged, because of their position in the race/ethnic hierarchy, Harvest County mothers were more disadvantaged than those in Delta County. More specifically, their position in the hierarchy that structures opportunity was lower than that of white mothers in Delta County. This distinction can be illustrated by the distance mothers in each county typically had to travel to negotiate paid work (a commute versus a migration or move) and the conditions of the low-wage jobs they held (low-wage service work versus agricultural work involving physical labor more commonly associated with health problems or injury).

Global racialized labor markets structured Harvest County mothers and partners' job options within their local labor markets in the South, propelling them north to seek employment. There, mothers and partners encountered a work context structured by assumptions about their documentation status and inequities based on race/ethnicity. Though some mothers in both counties dealt with hostile work environments and the emotional labor of dealing with mistreatment on an everyday basis, for Harvest County mothers, race/ethnicity was paramount in structuring such conditions. In contrast, Delta County mothers who reported a hostile work environment were more likely to depict an environment structured by gender inequalities, such as sexual harassment. Thus, as a more vulnerable labor force, Harvest County mothers had less leverage in negotiating low-wage labor than did Delta County mothers. Accordingly, Harvest County mothers

more often invested emotional labor in putting up with mistreatment and/or resisting collectively than quitting and having to invest labor in finding another job, the strategy Delta County mothers adopted (see Kelly *forthcoming* [2005]).

Harvest County mothers' greater reliance on and access to family support networks than Delta County mothers for assistance and child care can be attributed, at least in part, to race/ethnicity. Although Delta County mothers relied on extended family for help with child care, such a practice was more prevalent among Harvest County mothers. Latino families' reliance on kin-based social support networks is a well-documented trend and an adaptive family strategy (see Baca Zinn and Kelly [2005] *forthcoming*; Kelly et al. 2002). Uttal (2002) found a higher prevalence of informal child care arrangements among families of color. She proposed that such an arrangement reflected parents' attempts to protect children from discrimination. In the case of Harvest County mothers, migration likely intersected with race/ethnicity to explain such differences in family support. Migration and the irregular and inflexible conditions of agricultural labor may have created the need for family migration and family care. On the other hand, one could argue that the prevalence of family support enabled migration.

These findings raise questions about "cultural" versus "structural" explanations of social life. Prominent stereotypes or images of Latino families, and Latino men in particular, are those of machismo and patriarchy, considered to be a value or attribute of Latino culture. Mothers' accounts in Delta and Harvest Counties, however, complicate such a stereotype. Race and gendered labor markets differentially structured employment opportunities for each group of mothers, and thereby power relations within families. Though Antonia's husband forbid her to work outside the home, so too did Brandy's

physically abusive ex (Delta County). Moreover, Tomasa and Celina's determined decision to withdraw themselves and their children from the migrant track calls into question the myth about patriarchy and machismo in Latino families. Perhaps one could argue that their assertion represents a "patriarchal bargain" (Kandiyoti 1997) because these mothers acted within their role as mothers and caregivers. Nevertheless, their actions challenge stereotypes that characterize Latinas as passive.

Thus, race/ethnicity structured labor markets thereby affecting mothers' negotiation of paid employment. Though cultural explanations are not irrelevant and may help explain, at least in part, the prevalence of family social support among Harvest County mothers, stereotypes about Latino "culture" such as machismo do not always hold up when one begins with the everyday experiences of mothers.

Residential Mobility (Migration)

Though often a strategy for negotiating employment, migration affected the labor required for mothers to get and keep employment. Though less mobile than Harvest County families, mobility had an effect on two Delta County mothers and/or partners' ability to negotiate paid work. Brandy's ex-partner's frequent moves to try out new jobs made it impossible for her to secure and maintain her own employment. Ellie's partner's decision to move closer to his truck driving partner was part of his strategy for negotiating his journey to work because the move minimized his commute. Though moving became part of a strategy to ease his work of negotiating work, it required Ellie to switch jobs. Moving, and migration in particular, required effort and coordination. Harvest County mothers and their partners who migrated did a great deal of work in order to perform agricultural labor. Families often served as units of migration and a means to

secure employment, but maintaining contact and a good rapport with farmers was crucial for migrant workers to sustain employment from one season to the next. Semi-annual migrations required much planning, preparation, and cost, and were a gamble for families with few resources. Mothers made arrangements for children's schooling, closed and opened social service cases, and borrowed money from friends and family to make the trip.

Mobility also affected mothers' ability to establish and maintain networks, though not in a zero sum way. Brandy, the most recent resident of Delta County, attributed her difficulty securing employment to her inability to establish community networks. Her account, however, resembled those of younger mothers who had grown up in Delta County. Thus, mobility and age may be obstacles to establishing networks in such circumstances. Similarly, a few Harvest County mothers without networks encountered difficulties when they first arrived in Harvest County because they did not know where to find employment or who to ask. Thus, changing residence complicated a woman's ability to establish networks crucial to securing employment in rural areas. Nevertheless, accounts of mothers' who regularly migrated with their families to Harvest County suggest that, in general, they were able to create and sustain relationships with employers and other relationships crucial to sustaining employment. The fact that Harvest County families often migrated with their family ameliorated many of the potential obstacles to the formation of networks. Indeed, those who migrated often relied on existing extended family networks to make decisions about whether and where to migrate for work. Nevertheless, if employment arrangements and/or relationships with employers soured, those most recently arrived or with less established networks were likely to have greater

difficulty negotiating future employment than those with a history of migration to a particular area.

Finally, mobility, in this case family migration for employment, affected children's education by interrupting their schooling. Though the establishment and maintenance of networks with extended family and long-term employers challenged the association between mobility and instability, despite mothers' efforts to minimize interruptions to their children's education, migration schedules generally caused children to miss some school and to be forced to deal with the inconsistencies involved in straddling two different school systems. Mothers lamented the way such circumstances discouraged their children, but low-paying employment contributed to the cessation of children's education and the employment of children and young adults. In fact, as youths, mothers and their partners' typically had to work to support their families and were unable to complete school. (Brandy also dropped out of high school to support her siblings.) Economic necessity and interruptions to schooling made educational advancement and upward mobility a challenge.

Education

Lack of a high school degree or equivalent was a barrier to attaining employment or better employment. Insufficient English language skills were an additional barrier for Harvest County mothers, preventing them from gaining employment in their home counties and necessitating their migration north to seek employment as agricultural laborers. According to Delta County mothers, a GED was a ticket to better paying factory jobs and pink-collar office jobs in their county. Thus, lack of a high school equivalent decreased a woman's employment options, increased the work necessary to

attain employment, necessitated migration for employment, and/or relegated employment to a job with lower-pay, less regularity, and flexibility than alternative jobs, thereby requiring additional labors to sustain employment.

Family Structure

Family structure also affected mothers' efforts to negotiate paid work, and much of the work of getting and keeping paid work involved the coordination of family needs with the erratic schedules and conditions of low-wage work. Single mothers had one less adult with whom to potentially share the burdens of income generation and the coordination and maintenance of reproductive labor and child care, complicating and magnifying the labors necessary to get and keep employment. Though the presence of a partner affected mothers' negotiation of employment, whether a woman was married to her partner did not appear to affect her efforts to negotiate paid work. Nevertheless, the presence of a partner did not always ease mothers' negotiation of paid employment. In both counties, abusive and/or absent fathers, by creating additional reproductive labor, were an additional obstacle to a mother's negotiation of her own employment. Two-parent families were more common in Harvest County than in Delta County, and the presence of a partner facilitated a split shift schedule, easing the need to coordinate child care arrangements and the potential costs of negotiating work. In addition, fluid family boundaries, including extended support networks among many Harvest County families, sustained a greater amount of informal and flexible child care support for Harvest than among Delta County families. As a result, Harvest County mothers less often reported interruptions to their employment due to problems with child care than did those in Delta County. The age of children also structured the need for coordinating child care

arrangements around the demands of employment. School age children required less child care (formal or informal), and older children could be pulled into self-monitoring and/or caring for their younger siblings.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Revealing the labors necessary for rural low-income mothers to get and keep employment can make several theoretical and policy-based contributions as well as reveal some of the assumptions upon which current research, theory, and policy rest.

Theoretical Contributions

Broadening Conceptualizations of “Work”

This research makes a theoretical contribution by broadening the notion of “work” beyond conventional definitions of paid employment. In doing so, the study joins a conversation with a growing body of feminist and family scholars who have called for a rethinking and expansion of the notion of work (De Leonardo 1998; DeVault and Stimpson 1991; Gerstel and Gross 1987; Glazer 1987; Hochschild 1989; Cancian, and Oliker 2000). These scholars have revealed the previously invisible and taken for granted labors necessary to sustain family life by beginning with women’s everyday lived experiences. By taking an approach grounded in women’s everyday lives, they have named and problematized the unpaid and taken for granted labors necessary to sustain family life: reproductive labor. Revealing such labor as legitimate work also exposed inequalities in the division of labor within households. When reproductive labor is considered we see that many women work a “double day” or “second shift” (Hochschild 1989) of work after their paid work outside the home. Thus, a market-based definition of work masks inequalities by shrouding from view the labor necessary to reproduce

workers. Feminist and family scholars revealed a multitude of unpaid labors necessary to sustain family life. Theoretical lenses such as a feminist critique of positivism and, more specifically, standpoint theory uncovered taken for granted labors and produced new insights.

In a similar manner, beginning with and centering the everyday lived circumstances of mothers who work at low-wage jobs reveals the previously unrecognized and taken for granted labors necessary to sustain paid work. This study has shown how two groups of rural low-income mothers (and their partners in many cases) undertake a multitude of labors that are not part of the official job description, but are, nevertheless, necessary to sustain their paid work. This research, then, calls into question narrow, market-based definitions of work that focus only on official, frontstage work, thereby negating, and in the case of low-wage workers often impeding, backstage labors, such as education and training, necessary to secure (better) employment.

In addition, beginning with these mothers' everyday experiences and efforts to get and keep low-wage employment defies common conceptions of paid work and calls for additional questioning of a narrow conceptualization of "work." Not only is a market-based definition assumed, but so too is a linear career path that incorporates the time-line and characteristics of professionals. In contrast, the conditions of mothers' employment in Delta and Harvest Counties were often seasonal and/or temporary. For example, Harvest County mothers were confused by questions such as "Which job have you held the longest?" and "Why did you leave that job?"¹ In addition, the brittle and unyielding conditions of their employment, i.e., low-pay, irregular hours, and inflexibility to

¹ Such questions were created by a multi-state team for use across states, most of which did not include agricultural and/or migrant workers.

mothers' needs as caregivers, cemented job turnover into the sequence of employment (see Kelly *forthcoming* [2005]). Accordingly, such low-wage work necessitates getting new jobs. Yet, despite a restructured economy that compromises previous assumptions about job "stability," employers still frown upon turnover as an indicator of a potential workers' inadequacy or insufficient work ethic. Broadening our definition of "work" would help acknowledge and address the labors necessary to get and keep employment in a restructured economy.

Complicating "Work" and "Family" as Separate Spheres

This research on "negotiating work" also contributes to an ongoing conversation about the inaccurate depiction of work and family life as "separate spheres" (Kanter 1984). Mothers' efforts—and inability—to keep the demands and needs of their family life separate from the schedules of their paid work illustrate the fallacy of such a myth. For example, Laurel had to quit two inflexible jobs, first so that she could take her mother to chemo-therapy, and second, so that she could monitor her teenage children's behavior. Neither of her jobs enabled her to manage the needs of her family around the conditions of her employment. Similarly, Harvest County parents encountered great difficulty in ensuring their children's continued education around the schedule of seasonal work. Mothers invested enormous energy, trying to coordinate disparate life circumstances, such as child care and transportation arrangements with inflexible and erratic employment conditions. Ultimately, the conditions of women's employment compounded the amount of work they needed to manage family life. Thus, these mothers' lives suggest a direct relationship and interdependency between "work" and "family."

Limitations on Weaving Work and Family for Low-income Mothers: Based on her research on mothers in nursing, Garey (1999) coined the phrase “weaving work and motherhood” to illustrate mothers’ attempts and desires to integrate family and work (see Chapter 3). Mothers’ lives in Delta and Harvest Counties support and challenge such a notion. Mothers expressed a desire to better integrate family and work. For example, Gail wanted to work third shift at Wal-Mart so that she could be an “at home” mother during the day. Mothers who were able to integrate family and work by taking their children to work with them, such as Ellie and Clara, and/or by securing flexible schedules such as Calandra’s secretarial job and Liz’s job as a bus driver, expressed great satisfaction with their work. Nevertheless, the conditions of these mothers’ work and lives often did not allow for such “weaving” as mothers made attempts to piece together a constantly unraveling thread. The combination of the conditions of their work (low-pay, irregularity, and inflexibility) and their family and other life circumstances (such as exorbitant child care costs), left mothers with few resources to work at such “weaving.”

Mothers’ lives in Delta and Harvest Counties necessitated more of a patchwork approach. Though they struggled to reconcile the demands of their paid employment with the demands of caregiving, weaving implies a smooth and consistent process that the conditions of their lives did not enable. Rather, visiting the circumstances of their everyday lives brings to mind an improvisational patchwork, pieced together with materials not intended for use in a conventional tapestry. Duct tape and other random items come to mind in recalling Jenna’s description of “scrambling.” Such a metaphor is also useful in further illustrating the material conditions of mothers lives (i.e., what they

have and/or do not have to work with) as well as the work necessary for them to attempt to piece it together and fill in the holes.

Indeed, Garey (1999) acknowledges and provides a framework for thinking about the significance of *resources* to mothers' lives and potential weaving. "Employed women with children base their actions and weave their life strategies from the materials available to them." She proposes a potential list of such "materials": income, wealth and class background, education, occupational field, job security and seniority, marital or relationship status and security, support from other family members, racial-ethnic privilege, public support programs, neighborhood context, transportation options, family size and ages of children, and physical health. Thus, according to Garey, individuals are embedded in a "constellation of resources" that "change over time and, with them, the options that are available" (53-54). Such a framework is useful for thinking about the fluctuating circumstances of Delta and Harvest County mothers, and the effects of such resources on their attempts to strategize about negotiating paid work. Nevertheless, the material conditions of mothers' lives, a constantly changing "constellation of resources," place such constraints on their efforts and abilities to negotiate employment, that they test the limits of such a "weaving" metaphor. Though Garey's (1999) conceptualization of "weaving work and motherhood" acknowledges the significance of the *resources* women have—or do not have—available, "weaving" may be a more plausible metaphor for women with more, rather than less, resources.² *Resources*, or lack thereof, fundamentally affect the conditions of Delta and Harvest County mothers' lives and their "work," as illustrated in previous chapters, and, in turn, their efforts and abilities to integrate, weave,

² To further address the limitations of such a metaphor for these women's lives, it is noteworthy that mothers employed at low-wage work were unable to engage in traditional self-provisioning trades (see Chapter 7).

and/or manage “family” and “work.” Accordingly, these mothers’ lives do not hold up to idealized images of “family” or “work,” or even what have come to be conventional revisions of integrating work and family life. In this sense, then, these mothers truly resonate with Stacey’s (1990) notion of post-modern families. They are unconventional, improvisational, and revisionist as a result of the material circumstances of their lives and their employment options.

Contributions of a Comparative Approach

As a comparative study, this research illuminates the labor of two groups of mothers in two different rural Michigan counties to get and keep employment. Such a comparative approach illuminates how variations in rural context shape negotiations of paid work. In addition, because of the particular county contexts and characteristics of these two groups of mothers, this study suggests the implications of race/ethnicity, migration, and/or type of employment on the efforts necessary to negotiate paid employment. Though both samples of mothers’ were small and non-random, thereby limiting the generalizability of my findings, the comparative approach lends credibility to them. In fact, considering the variation between the two groups of mothers, the conditions of employment with which they dealt and their efforts to maintain employment reflected surprising parallels. Though additional research is needed to explore further other potential contexts and variations in experiences of negotiating paid work, this comparative study makes far more of a contribution to understandings of variations and parallels in the work necessary for low-income mothers to get and keep employment than it would have if I had only studied one of the two groups of mothers and counties.

Diversity in Rural America: The comparative approach adopted also increases knowledge of rural America by illuminating understanding of its diversity. Though both counties were located in the same region and state, mothers' accounts and Census data revealed two diverse rural economies that differentially structured the labors necessary for low-income mothers to get and keep employment. Though the macro forces of globalization and economic restructuring have impacted rural economies differently than urban economies in general (see Chapter 2), such trends have affected individual rural economies differently. While Delta County has shifted from industry to a service economy, with a concentration of low-paying, insecure jobs, agriculture remains prominent in Harvest County. Nevertheless, the competition for low-wage labor exceeds the boundaries of the local economy, state, or even national borders. Thus, despite the general differences in the impact of economic shifts on rural versus urban economies, at the local level, rural America is very diverse. The conditions of particular rural labor markets differentially shape the availability and conditions of employment, the characteristics of the local labor force (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, and class) (see Naples 1994), and the labors necessary for workers to get and keep employment. The contrast between out-of-state migration and the local commutes necessary for some mothers in Harvest and Delta Counties to negotiate work illustrates the different impact of local conditions on their necessary efforts. Thus, the result of my comparison of mothers' efforts to negotiate low-wage employment in two rural counties destabilizes images of a homogeneous rural America and illustrates the ways two different rural economies structure the work necessary to get and keep employment.

Implications for Social Policy

This research also has implications for policy and policy-related research. Much research on low-income families has been instigated by recent social policies and funded through efforts to test the effects of such policies. Beginning from the standpoint of these mothers' everyday lives reveals some of the inaccurate assumptions upon which policies are based, such as low-income mothers' laziness and unwillingness to "work." Such assumptions dictate policy demands in the interest of filling low-wage jobs in a restructured economy and promote a narrow definition of work that does not acknowledge mothers' caregiving responsibilities (see Albelda 2002; Mink 1998). Accordingly, broadening the definition of "work" has implications for policy as well as theory. Though welfare reform policies in many states acknowledge the resources (e.g., work supports such as transportation and child care) necessary to attain and supplement low-wage work, my research suggests that such policies do not adequately address all of the backstage labors necessary for low-income mothers to attain and sustain employment.

Beginning with these mothers everyday lives clarifies other basic assumptions upon which policies are based. By defining low-income mothers as "workers" versus "mothers," work mandate policies view them in isolation. On the contrary, these mothers' lives demonstrate that their efforts to get and keep employment are inextricably linked with partners, children, and many life circumstances, all of which are in flux. To get to work on an everyday basis, for example, mothers not only need access to a vehicle, but they often need to coordinate their journey to work with that of their partner and/or their child care arrangements. Thus, mothers' efforts to get to work are wrapped up with their families. If one of these life circumstances, such as transportation, partner, child

care arrangement, and/or irregular employment circumstances, changes, as they often did in the case of mothers in Delta and Harvest Counties, then women need to reconfigure and coordinate their lives so they can get to work. Thus, to get and keep employment, mothers need to manage many fluctuating life circumstances. The backstage labors necessary to support employment do not end once a job is secured, but continue on an everyday basis so that mothers can *keep* employment.

This research revealed the inordinate amount of “work” mothers undertake that is unpaid and unacknowledged so that they can work for pay. If policy makers truly want to promote the paid work of low-income mothers, the unpaid labor that supports that work must be rewarded or, at least, acknowledged through reduced paid “work requirements” and “work supports” that account for such labor more inclusively than do current programs. Further, these mothers’ lives suggest that the conditions of paid work compound the work necessary to sustain it. If this is the case, the best way to support low-income mothers efforts to get and keep employment, in addition to acknowledging and rewarding their unpaid labors, is to decrease the need for backstage labors by improving the conditions of paid work and promoting a family friendly workplace that does not rest on the assumption that family should remain separate from and not interfere with paid work. Acker and her colleagues (2002: 353-4) propose some potential reforms to the low-wage labor market:

1. raising the minimum wage and tying its level to inflation
2. establishing refundable, state earned-income tax credits and federal and state refundable childcare tax credits
3. guaranteeing the right to unionize...
4. instituting measures to achieve comparable worth, or equal pay for work of equal value, for jobs held primarily by women or by men of color...
5. strengthening Affirmative Action to continue to combat discrimination and expand opportunities

6. increasing efforts to abolish sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as other forms of discrimination
7. enforcing existing labor standards, including prohibition of involuntary overtime and safety and health standards.

In addition, policies must account for the work-family needs of low-income families, and families in general, as all workers are affected by decreasing job security. Restrictions on the Family Medical Leave Act, for example, prevented some mothers and partners from taking advantage of this policy. Additionally, my research suggests that Harvest County families benefited from state child care programs that allowed the child care provided by a friend or relative to be subsidized by the state. These programs are particularly important in rural areas and for racial/ethnic minorities because of the limited formal child care options available and the prevalence of informal care arrangements among such groups.

Additionally, the relative insignificance of self-preparation challenges assumptions embedded in many programs aimed at building self-preparatory skills, such as resume building, interviewing skills, and advice on grooming and preparation of self, as key to securing the employment of low-income mothers.³ Nevertheless, mothers' experiences confirm that acquiring education and training is a crucial step to securing *better* employment. GED programs, for example, that penalize mothers for absences do little to improve their education because mothers who are most often responsible for child care frequently are unable to meet strict attendance requirements. Harvest County mothers were unable to find low-cost and accessible English language training, a key barrier to improved employment options for them. In contrast to the stereotypes about them, women were eager for the opportunity to learn, and many of them put great effort

³ Only one young Delta County mother with little work experience found such programs helpful.

into coordinating education and training around the schedules of migration and paid employment. Accessible—that is, family friendly—and affordable English language and GED programs would greatly benefit mothers' efforts to secure and sustain *better* employment for themselves and, ultimately, improve their economic security. Counting efforts to enhance education or training as legitimate “work” under welfare reforms are also necessary if policy makers wish to promote self-sufficiency.

Finally, my examination of mothers' everyday lives revealed the magnitude of energy they invested—in some cases unsuccessfully—into ensuring their children's education and, therefore, their potential for a better life. Migrant laborers faced difficult choices between the income necessary to feed their families and interruptions to their children's educations. Delta County mothers, such as Laurel and Liz, tried to coordinate their work lives to ensure their children made it onto the school bus. Mothers' accounts also suggested that older children were pulled into the role of self-care and reproductive labor, providing some support for Dodson and Dickert's (2004) contention that such labor could jeopardize their future aspirations. Policies aimed at promoting long hours at low-wage employment are likely to exacerbate such educational barriers for children and mothers' work, thereby compounding economic insecurity.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

In addition to primary data (Delta County), this study incorporated secondary data (Harvest County). Interviews with mothers in Harvest County were not constructed to identify the work that they do so that they can work. Had I conducted all of the interviews myself, with this research project in mind, I would have included additional questions and pursued topics not addressed, potentially producing more nuanced data on

negotiating work than that available. Perhaps, however, Latina mothers might not have been willing to share the detailed anecdotes about discrimination they faced based on their ethnicity with a white graduate student from a university than they did with a Latina community worker (who conducted most of the interviews in Harvest County). Additionally, it was my experience with and exposure to Harvest County mothers' lives through these secondary data that led me to think about the notion of "working for work." Thus, my conceptualization and operationalization of variables did not follow the conventional positivist path.

In addition, the diversity within and across the samples in Delta and Harvest Counties restricted my ability to isolate particular variables for comparison. For example, though all Harvest County mothers were Latina and all Delta County mothers were white, differences between the two samples, such as Harvest County mothers' greater reliance on informal child care arrangements, cannot be entirely attributed to race/ethnicity, since the two samples differ in other significant ways, such as the greater prevalence of two-parent and extended families among Harvest County mothers. Nevertheless, some of these variables are related. For example, the residential mobility of Harvest County mothers and their families is directly related to race/ethnicity, as I have indicated throughout. Family structure may also be related to residential mobility, since single mothers were less likely to migrate for labor. Finally, like all qualitative in-depth research projects, the results of this study are not generalizable to workers at large or even rural low-income mothers as a group. Rural represents a range of contexts; two examples are presented here, but others are needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Additional research is needed to supplement and expand upon this exploratory, in-depth study by continuing to examine how negotiating work varies by context and social location. Even within the realm of “rural,” much variation exists. How do rural low-income mother’s efforts to negotiate work in the Mississippi Delta, for example, differ from that which is necessary for mothers in Delta and Harvest Counties to get and keep employment? How do such efforts differ for mothers in an urban setting or for other racialized groups, such as African Americans? Variation in the work necessary to get and keep employment by gender also needs further exploration, with research that specifically addresses men’s labors from their point of view relative to women’s. Do women, in fact, take on more of this work as a result of their uneven share of reproductive labor within families?

This research supports Roeder and Millard’s (2000) finding (with a larger sample of rural Michigan migrant agricultural workers) that Latinas are being pulled into non-agricultural jobs, and, more specifically in the Harvest County case, jobs in the service economy. Additional research is needed to verify and document such trends and their implications. Is such a shift increasing women’s labor power? Are the Latinas acquiring an education in the Harvest County sample an exception or part of a larger trend? As these women are pulled into the service economy, is this change actually increasing their labor power, earnings, and status? What are the implications of such changes for the division of labor and power within families and family life?

Revealing the labors necessary to sustain employment within the current economic context may also have broader implications for future research on the changing

nature of work across the class spectrum and the implications of such changes for workers and their families. As paid work becomes less secure in all sectors of the labor market, are workers taking on an increasing amount of unpaid labor to sustain employment? Additional research on negotiating work across socio-economic groups and professions is needed to answer this question. Masking such labors places an undue burden on workers and potentially hides inequalities among workers. Thus, additional research could make an important contribution to a dialogue about the changing nature of “work” (paid and unpaid).

Additional research on the work necessary to sustain employment across job sectors could also further reveal inequalities. Do women, people of color, and those at the lowest tiers of the job market not only bear the brunt of the lowest wages, but also endure the lion’s share of labor necessary to manage exploitative employment conditions? This research suggests that the conditions of mothers’ low-wage employment may actually exacerbate the work necessary for them to get and keep employment as well as their families’ economic insecurity.

Such research agendas also hold potential for enhancing our understanding of changes in family life. Changes in the circumstances of paid work, such as increased hours, leave less and less time to manage family concerns. With fewer benefits and less flexibility, increasingly part-time and temporary working conditions, and less job security, must employees engage in additional labors to sustain employment? In other words, research such as that presented in this dissertation contributes to current studies that document the increasing amount of time employees spend on paid work (and the labors necessary to sustain that work) and the dwindling amount of time left for families

(see Hochschild 1997; Schor 1991). Thus, examining the labors necessary for workers across sectors of the labor market holds the potential to illuminate the state of families in the U.S.

APPENDIX A

The Stated Purpose of The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity (PRWO) Act is:

to increase the flexibility of States in operating a program designed to—(1) provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families (H.R.3734 as cited on www.welfareinfo.org/tanf_reauthorization).

To implement these goals, the PRWO Act instituted the following measures.

1. Eliminated Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).
2. Provided states with a fixed sum of money through Federal Block Grants and flexibility in how they spend that money.
3. Required states to demand that parents work within two years. (Required Work)
4. Mandated a five-year life time limit on receipt of assistance (which states can reduce if they wish).
5. Required unmarried teen parents to live with an adult and attend school to receive assistance.
6. Cut substantial funds from assistance programs such as food stamps and child nutrition, totaling \$54 billion in cuts, and tightened qualifications for coverage of disabled child.
7. Denied a broad range of public benefits to legal immigrants. (Though there is some variation by state, all legal immigrants were cut off from food stamps and those entering after the bill was signed are ineligible for federal programs like Supplemental Security Income and state programs like temporary welfare and Medicaid).
8. Provided no adjustment for inflation or population growth (Eitzen and Baca Zinn 2000, 54-55).
9. Enforced Paternity and Child Support (Mink 1998, chapter 3, pp 69-102).⁴

⁴ Under these guidelines mothers are penalized through loss of benefits if they do not declare paternity and help social services track down their children's biological fathers.

APPENDIX B

Flyer for Delta County

This is a flyer that I distributed in Delta County in an effort to locate additional mothers. Though the flyers did not lead directly to any mothers, (i.e., no one called my number I'd included on the flyer), one attendant at a store expressed interest in talking with me when I asked if I could hang up a flyer.

Are you a single mom?

Having trouble finding work in the area that supports you and your children?

My name is Brooke Kelly. I am a graduate student at Michigan State University. I am talking with rural mothers in the area about their work experiences. I have heard from others in this county that it can be difficult to find work in the area. I am interested in talking with rural mothers about all of the things they need to do, to organize in their lives, so that they can get and keep a job. The interviews usually take about an hour and a half, sometimes two hours. Because your time is valuable and as a thank you, \$10 is given at the end of the interviews. If you are willing to talk with me about your life and work or you have questions about the interviews, please call me collect at (734) 997-0340. (If you get a machine, please leave a number where I can reach you, and I will call you back.)

**Thank you,
Brooke Kelly**

APPENDIX C

Consent Form for Study on Rural Mothers and Paid Work (Delta County)

My name is Brooke Kelly. I am a graduate student in sociology at Michigan State University and I am conducting research as part of my dissertation to get my doctoral degree. You have been contacted because of your participation in a previous study. I am talking with mothers in rural communities about their life experiences working for pay. I am interested in all of the things that you need to do, to organize in your life, so that you can get and keep a job. I am going to ask you some questions about the work that you have done, what you think about that work, what you think about some of the jobs in the area, and all of things that you need to do to be able to work for pay and/or get a better job. So, there are questions about work, but there are also questions about things that you need to take care of so that you can get and keep a job, like transportation and child care. I also want to know how your family is doing overall, how you are managing with the income from you and/or your partner's work.

What will happen?

- The interview will take about an hour and a half to two hours of your time.
- You will be asked questions at a place chosen by you and I.
- The interview will be tape recorded, so that I have your words and not the words I think you told me.

How will your confidentiality be protected?

- Your name will never be associated with the tapes.
- You will never be identified by your name with anything you tell me.
- No report of the study will ever identify anything that can be traced to you.
- The tapes will be transcribed. They will be destroyed after the study is completed.
- The information from your transcribed interview will be put together with those in other people's interviews. This information will be used to report about what people like you need to do to be able to work for pay. Only the researchers will have access to these interviews.

These are your rights.

- Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.
- You can choose not to answer questions at any time. You will be given a copy of this consent form.
- At the end of the interview you will be given an envelope with \$10.00 in cash. This is to thank you for taking part in the research project and to cover any costs, should there be any, for child care or transportation during the interview. You can end the interview at any point you are uncomfortable with the questioning. You will receive the cash when you end the interview.
- After the interview, you may be asked to take part in an additional interview or to answer a few more questions about what you told me. These would be questions to make sure that I understood what you meant and/or to make sure that I have a complete picture of what life and work are like for you. You have the right to refuse to talk with me or answer any additional questions.
- If you have questions or concerns, you can call Brooke Kelly at (734) 997-0340, leave her a message at (517) 355-6640, write to her at 316 Berkey Hall, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824, or e-mail her at kellyeL1@msu.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, contact Ashir Kumar, Michigan State University, Chair of University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (517) 355-2180, or mail at Michigan State University, 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI48824.

Statement of Consent:

Please sign below if you have read this information, asked questions and received answers to your questions. By signing this consent form, you are voluntarily agreeing to be in this study.

Your signature _____

Date _____

Signature of interviewer _____

Date _____

APPENDIX D

Content of Note Cards

The questions on this appendix were printed on notecards and utilized in conjunction with the interview protocol for Delta County mothers (Appendix H). This approach allowed mothers to respond about personal information, such as education and income, without having to disclose that exact information out loud.

Which category would you say your annual income falls?

- a. below \$10,000
- b. between \$10,000 and \$15,000
- c. between \$15,000 and \$20,000
- d. between \$20,000 and \$25,000
- e. between \$25,000 and \$30,000
- f. \$30,000 or more

Which category would you estimate for your household income?

Which category represents your education level?

- a. some high school
 - b. completed high school or GED
 - c. some technical training or college
 - d. a technical degree
 - e. college degree
-

APPENDIX E

Rural Families Speak Interview Protocol Year I

This is the interview protocol used to conduct the *first wave* of interviews in Harvest County for the longitudinal *Rural Families Speak* (NC-223) research project, “Rural Low-Income Families: Tracking their Functioning and Well-Being in the Context of Welfare Reform.” This interview format was administered to 43 Latina rural low-income mothers. I utilized interview transcript from the 33 mothers who were interviewed again during the following summer. (Interview transcript from those 10 mothers who were not relocated for the second wave of interviews were dropped from my analysis.)

Interviewer: _____

ID: _____

Date: _____

PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

YEAR 1

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this important research on family life. As you probably know, we are part of a big study that is looking at how families living in rural parts of the country are managing on a limited income. We are talking to families living in small towns and rural areas all over the United States. Not all of the families we will talk to are currently receiving welfare. In fact, we will talk to some families who have never received cash assistance from the government, but nevertheless have trouble making ends meet each month. There are no “right” answers to any of our questions; we just want to hear what life is like for you and your family. Remember, this interview is voluntary. If you don’t want to answer a question, you don’t have to. All information you give us will be kept confidential. **(Do not proceed unless you have a completed informed consent document.)**

Let’s begin by talking about who lives in your household. Besides you, who lives in your house?

CURRENT HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

A. Mother's 1st Name _____ DOB _____ Marital Status* _____
 Ethnicity** _____

B. Partner's 1st Name _____ DOB _____ Ethnicity** _____

Child (First Name)	Sex	DOB	Relation to A ***	Relation to B ***	Contact w/ bio parent (Y, N)	Receives child support (Y.N)
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

* Key to codes S= Single M= Married LWP= Living with partner D= Divorced SEP= Separated	**Key to Codes W=Non-Hispanic White H=Hispanic/Latino AA=African American N=Native American A=Asian M=Multi-racial O=Other	*** Key to codes A= Adopted SC= Stepchild B= Biological child F= Foster child NR= Not related O= Other
---	--	---

Do you have any children not currently living with you? (If yes) Who are they, and where are they living?

OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

Relationship to A	Length of Time in Household	Permanent or Temporary Arrangement
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Interviewer Notes: _____

LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Tell me about how this neighborhood/area is as a place to live. Does this neighborhood/area have everything that you and your family need? If not, what sorts of things are missing? (Probe if necessary: Do you have easy access to a grocery store; a mini-mart or convenience store; other household shopping; medical care; a gas station; church; school; child care; a library?)
2. Families may need to know how to find many different services available in the community. The services needed are different for each family. I have a list of resources that are often available in communities. I'd like to know about the kinds of community services you know about. Shall I read the list to you, or would you like to fill this out yourself? (*Administer: Knowledge of Community Resources Measure*)

NOTE: IF THE INTERVIEWEE ASKS YOU TO READ THE MEASURE, ASSUME THAT ALL FURTHER SURVEY MEASURES SHOULD BE READ ALOUD.

3. What's the best thing about living where you do? The worst?
4. Is your housing adequate for you and your family's needs? Why or why not? (**Probe: size, quality, price, landlord.**)
5. Have you moved in the past two years? If so, why? How does this place compare with where you lived before? (**If not addressed**) How has your family responded to these changes? How do you feel about this?
6. (**Optional, ask if not addressed in #5**) Have you ever had a time in the last two years when you and your family were homeless? For how long were you homeless? What did you do? How did you get housing again?

EMPLOYMENT/CURRENT WORK

1. Let's talk about your employment situation. Are you currently working? (**If not employed, skip to Question #2**) What do you do? How much are you paid? When did you start working there? How many hours do you generally work each week? How many weeks do you work during the year? Have you ever had a raise? When? How much? (**List only current employment; space provided for up to three jobs.**)

Participant's Current Employment

	Wage/Salary	Date Started	Hours/week	Weeks/Year	Amount Raise
Job 1	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 2	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 3	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

- (Ask only if not currently employed)** Are you looking for a job now? **(If yes)** How are you going about it? Have you ever worked for pay? **(If answer is no, ask the appropriate questions in this section, but skip work history section)**
- What about your partner? What does your partner do? How much is your partner paid? When did your partner start working there? How many hours does your partner generally work each week? How many weeks does your partner work during the year? Has your partner ever had a raise? When? How much?

Partner's Current Employment

	Wage/Salary	Date Started	Hours/week	Weeks/Year	Amount Raise
Job 1	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 2	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 3	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

- Is there anyone else in the household who has a job? **(If yes)** Tell me about that.
- (Ask if currently employed)** What problems, if any, do you currently face at work?
- (Ask if currently employed)** Do you get any benefits from your job(s)? How about your partner? What about health insurance...

Benefit	Provided by Mother's Job(s)				Provided by Partner's Job(s)			
	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Health insurance for self	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Health insurance for children	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Sick leave	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Vacation pay	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Overtime	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No
Retirement plan	Y	Yes	N	No	Y	Yes	N	No

- What would be your ideal job for supporting your family? What would help you to get that kind of job?

8. In the last several years welfare regulations have changed. There is now more of an emphasis on getting a job, and there are now time limits (**talk about specific state programs, if appropriate**). What do you think about these changes? Has your family been affected by them?
-
-

WORK HISTORY

1. We also want to know about the kinds of work that people have done in the past. Tell me about your work history. How old were you when you got your first job?
 2. About how many jobs do you think you've had since then? Have you been more likely to work full-time or part-time? Why?
 3. What kinds of jobs did you have? What were some of the reasons you left these jobs?
 4. Tell me about the job that you held the longest, not counting your current job. When did you have this job? What did you do? What did you like about it? Why did you leave?
-
-

TRANSPORTATION AND CHILDCARE

1. What about transportation? How do you usually get around? (**If not addressed: Do you own a car or have one you can borrow? How do you and your partner get to and from work?**)
 - a. (**If the family has no car**) How do you get your groceries, take your children to the doctors, run errands?
 - b. (**If the family has a car**) How reliable is your car? When was the last time your car broke down? What happened?
2. What do you do when you really need transportation and it's not available to you?
3. When you are working (or participating in a job training program or the state's welfare-to-work activities) who takes care of your children? Tell me how you get them there, and about how long they stay every day. Is it different if you have to work evenings or weekends?
4. (**If appropriate**) What about your older children? What do they do after school? What about school holidays and summers?
5. How many childcare arrangements do you have each week/month? Overall, how much do you pay for childcare each month?

6. How do you like your childcare provider? Why do you feel this way? Have you ever changed providers? Why?
 7. Is there ever a time when you need someone to take care of your children outside your time at work? Who does that? How does it go?
 8. Tell me about a situation when you needed emergency childcare. What did you do? Have you ever had to miss work or a training program because of a childcare problem? How did your supervisor react?
 9. What do you do for childcare if your child gets sick? What happens if your provider is sick?
-
-

FAMILY OF ORIGIN CHARACTERISTICS

1. Tell me a little bit about your background. What was your family like when you were growing up? Who was in your family? Where did you live? What do you remember about your childhood?
 2. Did your parents work? What kind of work did they do?
 3. How much education did your mother have? _____ Your father? _____
 - 1 = 8th grade less
 - 2 = some high school
 - 3 = high school or GED
 - 4 = specialized technical, business or vocational training after high school
 - 5 = some college, including AA
 - 6 = college or university graduate
 - 7 = one or more years beyond college
 - 8 = graduate degree
 - 9 = don't know
 4. Do you know if your family ever received welfare or other assistance? Y Yes Y No Y Don't Know
 5. How often did your family move when you were a child? Why did you move?
 6. **(Optional)** How much contact do you have with your family now? Who are you in contact with? Where do they live? What is your relationship like now?
-
-

FAMILY WELL-BEING

1. Tell me about a typical day (a working day, if appropriate). What time do you get up? When do your children get up? Then, what happens next? And then...? **(The goal here is to get through a typical weekday for the family.)**
 2. What sorts of things do you do for fun with your family? How often do you get to do them?
 3. Overall, how would you say things are going for your family right now? **(If not addressed)** How are things going for you personally? **(If appropriate)** How are things going between you and your partner?
 4. Here is a checklist that asks about how things have been in the last week.
(Administer: Feelings About How Things Are Going)
 5. Parents need lots of skills to help their families get by. Everyone has certain skills and abilities, but it's usually not possible for someone to have every single skill needed. We'd like to know what sorts of skills you have. *(Administer: Life Skills Assessment)*
 6. Family members often have health problems. Sometimes these problems don't have much of an impact on day-to-day life, while at other times they can be a big problem. We'd like to know about any health problems the members of your family might have. *(Administer: Adult Health Survey; Administer: Child Health Survey; use more than one if needed to get info about all children)*
 7. **(If there are other people living in the household)** Do any of the other people in your household have any health problems? **(If yes)** What kinds of health problems?
 8. **(If applicable)** Do any of these health problems affect everyday life in your family? If so, how?
 9. What things about your family make you proud and happy right now? What are the biggest challenges for your family as a whole?
-
-

EDUCATION AND INCOME

1. What is your current educational level? _____ (use scale below)
 - 1 = 8th grade less
 - 2 = some high school
 - 3 = high school or GED
 - 4 = specialized technical, business or vocational training after high school
 - 5 = some college, including AA
 - 6 = college or university graduate
 - 7 = one or more years beyond college
 - 8 = graduate degree
 - 9 = don't know

2. How much education did you have when you first became a parent? ____ (use scale)
3. **(If no high school diploma)** Why did you leave high school before finishing?
4. **(If appropriate)** What about your spouse/partner-how much education does he have? ____ (scale)
5. In the last few years have you had the opportunity to get further education or develop new job skills? What kind? How were you able to do this?
6. We'd like to know a bit about your family's sources of income. Remember, all of this information is completely confidential. From which of the following sources do you receive income?

Source of Income	Take Home Pay	Weekly	Bi-Weekly	Monthly
Wages and salaries (self)	_____	Y	Y	Y
Wages and salaries (partner)	_____	Y	Y	Y
Tips, commissions, overtime	_____	Y	Y	Y
Social Security Disability	_____	Y	Y	Y
Social Security Retirement/Pensions	_____	Y	Y	Y
SSI (Supplemental Security Income)	_____	Y	Y	Y
TANF	_____	Y	Y	Y
Unemployment Compensation	_____	Y	Y	Y
Worker's Disability Compensation	_____	Y	Y	Y
Veterans' Benefits	_____	Y	Y	Y
Child or spousal support	_____	Y	Y	Y
Children's wages	_____	Y	Y	Y
Food Stamps	_____	Y	Y	Y
Regular gifts from family/friends	_____	Y	Y	Y
Other:	_____	Y	Y	Y

7. Housing is usually the largest expense for families. Tell me about how much you pay per month and what utilities, if any, are included. Is this a rental or do you own? What utilities do you pay each month? How much? What happens when you can't pay for utilities?
8. Families sometimes receive assistance from a variety of government or private programs. Do you receive assistance from any of the following?

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Y WIC | Y Transportation Assistance |
| Y School Lunch Program | Y Diversionary Assistance (only some states) |
| Y EIC (Earned Income Credit) | Y Educational Grants or Loans |
| Y Child Care Assistance | Y Medicaid/ MA |
| Y Housing Assistance | Y Other |
| Y Energy/Fuel Assistance | |

9. Is there any other assistance you're getting, such as help with healthcare, food, meals, clothing, holiday gifts, furniture, baby goods, day care, or school supplies?

Type of Help	Amount	Type of Help	Amount
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

10. Compared to two years ago, would you say your family's economic situation has:

- 5 = Improved a lot
- 4 = Improved a little
- 3 = Remained the same
- 2 = Gone down a little
- 1 = Gone down a lot

11. (Optional) To what extent do you think your income is enough for you to live on?

- 1 = Not at all adequate
- 2 = Can meet necessities only
- 3 = Can afford some of the things we want but not all we want
- 4 = Can afford about everything we want
- 5 = Can afford about everything we want and still save money

12. In past year, has there been a time when you had a hard time making ends meet or paying for necessities? What did you have trouble paying for? Food? Clothing? Healthcare? Credit payments? Personal care or non-food items? (If appropriate) Diapers? What did you do?

Item	Yes	No
Food	Y	N
Clothing	Y	N
Medical Care	Y	N
Dental Care	Y	N
Medicines	Y	N
Credit Payments	Y	N
Personal Care Items	Y	N
Diapers	Y	N
School Fees or Expenses	Y	N
Past Bills:	Y	N
Other:	Y	N

13. Have you or members of your household ever gone hungry or been close to going hungry? Please describe the situation as fully as you can. What led to it? How did you deal with it?

14. What do you need most to prevent this situation from happening again? (*Administer Food Security Module*)
 15. When you've gone for help from an agency, how were you treated? (**Probe for specific agencies.**)
 16. In the past year, have you sold or pawned anything you owned?
-
-

PARENTING

1. Let's talk about being a parent. What do you enjoy most about being a parent? What are your strengths as a parent? What is the hardest part of being a parent?
 2. (**If appropriate**) How does your partner help you with parenting?
 3. (**Optional**) Here's another checklist that asks you to describe how you feel about yourself as a parent. (*Administer: Parent Ladder*)
-
-

SOCIAL SUPPORT

1. Who are the people who are most important to you and your family? By this, we mean friends or relatives who are important to you for one reason or another. **For each person ask:** Who is this person? Why are they important to you? (**If appropriate**) How did you meet them? How often are you in contact with them? Is there anyone else?
 2. Is there anyone who makes things hard for your family? How so? Tell me about that.
 3. Do you ever get to go out with your friends? Have you been able to find the time for any outside activities? What sorts of things do you do?
-
-

SUMMARY

1. When you look back over the past few years, what do you think are the most important things that have happened to you and your family?
2. Looking ahead into the future, what are you most looking forward to in the coming year? What do you most worry about? What do you think things will be like for your family in three years?

3. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life right now? (Use scale below) Why do you feel that way?

- 1 = very dissatisfied
- 2 = dissatisfied
- 3 = mixed feelings
- 4 = satisfied
- 5 = very satisfied

4. Is there anything else that you think we should know about how your family is doing right now? Is there anything we've missed?



ID: _____

Date: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION: TO BE REMOVED AND KEPT IN STATE FILES

As you know, we would like to visit with you again in a few months to see how your family is doing. To make it easier to contact you in case you move and forget to tell us, will you share the name and phone numbers of three people who will always know where you are? Please be sure to tell them that we may contact them.

Name	Phone Number
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Thank you so much for your time.

NOTES

APPENDIX F

Rural Families Speak Interview Protocol for Migrants Year II

This is one of two interview protocols used to conduct the **second wave** of interviews for the **Rural Families Speak research project** in Harvest County. After conducting the first wave of interviews, the researchers realized that the standard interview protocol, collectively constructed by researchers in several states, did not fit the experiences of migrant workers. Therefore, this alternative interview format was constructed for use in the second wave of data collection. Based on their responses during the first wave interview, mothers were given the standard protocol or this interview protocol, which contains additional interview questions adapted for migrant workers. (Thirty-three of the original 43 women from Wave I were re-contacted and interviewed as part of the second wave of data collection. For additional interview protocols, contact the author at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.)

Interviewer _____ ID: _____ Date: _____
Interview Wave I: Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL *FOR MIGRANTS*

YEAR II

I want to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed again this year. Just like last time, there are no right or wrong answers to any of our questions. We are interested in hearing what life is like for you and your family. I want to remind you that the interview is voluntary. If you do not want to answer a question, you don't have to. All information that you give us will be kept confidential. **[DO NOT PROCEED UNLESS PARTICIPANT HAS SIGNED THE INFORMED CONSENT FORM.]**

{NOTE TO INTERVIEWER – ALWAYS ASK QUESTIONS IN OPEN-ENDED MANNER FIRST, DON'T JUST READ OFF A LIST OF YES/NO QUESTIONS. USE THEIR ANSWERS TO THE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS TO FILL IN THE YES/NO BOXES AND THEN PROBE WHEN NECESSARY TO GET INFORMATION. PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU FILL IN ALL BLANKS AND CHECK ALL BOXES ON THIS FORM.}

CURRENT HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Mother's 1st Name _____

We'd like to catch up on any changes in your life and in your family since the last time we talked with you. ***{PULL THE APPROPRIATE INFORMATION FROM THE WAVE 1 INTERVIEW.}***

Last year, you said that _____ were living in your household.

Is this still true? Yes No

Is there any one new living in your household? Yes No

Who? {FILL IN CHART FOR NEW CHILDREN, FILL IN SECTIONS BELOW FOR PARTNERS AND NON-PARTNERS}

[IF CHILD MOVED OUT]

When? Why? Where is child living now?

New Child (first name)	Sex	DOB	Relation Mother	Relation Partner/ Spouse	Contact w/ bio parent (Y, N)	Receives child support (Y, N)
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

* Key to codes	**Key to Codes	*** Key to codes
S = Single	W =Non-Hispanic White	A = Adopted
M = Married	H =Hispanic/Latino	SC = Stepchild
LWP = Living with partner child	AA =African American	B = Biological
D = Divorced	N =Native American	F = Foster child
SEP = Separated	A =Asian	NR = Not related
	M =Multi-racial	O = Other
	O =Other	

B. Last year you told us you were {married, separated, divorced, single, living with _____}.
Has that changed? Yes No **[IF NO, SKIP TO NEXT SECTION]**

[IF YES] What is the change? _____

Did partner moved out? (PROMPT: When? Why?)

Yes No

Did a new partner moved in? (PROMPT: How long has partner lived here?)

Yes No

New Partner's 1st Name _____ DOB _____ Ethnicity** _____

Did a non-partner move out (PROMPT: When? Why?)

Yes No

Did a non-partner move in (PROMPT: When? Why? Is it a permanent or temporary arrangement?)

Yes No

What is this person's relationship to you? _____

LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Are you living in the same place as when we talked with you last year? Yes No

***How long have you been coming here [or living in this community/state]?**

How many different places have you lived since we last talked? _____ How many of these moves have been for work? [IF LIVING IN THE SAME PLACE AND HAVE NOT MOVED IN THE LAST YEAR, SKIP TO Q2]

Tell me what has happened with the places where you lived?

(PROBE: How far did you move? Had you lived in any of these places before? Why did you move [each time]? How does where you are now compare to the other places you have lived this year? Why do you think that?)

Are there services close by to where you live now? Yes No
How close?

Are there services close by to other places you have lived this year? Yes No

There are many community services that families need to know how to access, and what each family needs may be very different. I would like to know about the kinds of community services you know about.

[ADMINISTER KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES MEASURE]

How do you find out about local community services when you arrive in a new community? Is it easier or more difficult to get help in Michigan or in other states? Why do you think that is?

****How many times have you applied for help this year? How did that go?***

Do you have easy access to:

Grocery store	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Medical care	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
School	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

If not, what is missing or far away?

Tell me about how your move[s] affected your family.

PROBE: How does your family respond to the changes? Is the place where you are living now adequate for your needs?

PROMPT: size, quality, price, landlord.

What about other places you have lived this year? Was that housing adequate?

PROMPT: size, quality, price, landlord.

What's the best thing about your current place (and/or community)? The worst thing? What about other places you have lived this year?

Were you without your own housing at any point in the last year? Yes No

[IF YES] What happened? How did you find housing again?

Did you live with a relative or a friend during that time?

Yes No

[IF APPROPRIATE] Sounds like you've been moving for work for a while. How do you feel about this situation? Has it gotten more difficult since welfare has changed? Has it gotten more difficult in the last year?

[GO TO Q3]

2. **[IF THEY ARE LIVING IN THE SAME PLACE]**

Last year you told us that you migrated for work. Why didn't you move for work this year? Have you decided to settle here permanently? **[IF YES]** What made you decide to stay here permanently?

PROBE: stable job, family, health problems, other reasons?

Has anything changed in your neighborhood this year? Can you tell me about that?

What is the best thing about living where you do (community or neighborhood)? What's the worst?

Do you feel safe where you live? Yes No

Why or why not? What makes it safe/not safe? (Physical safety or otherwise.)

[If appropriate] What about other places you have lived?

Do you feel that your children are safe? (**PROBE to fill in chart**)

In your home Yes No

The neighborhood Yes No

At their school Yes No

Why do you feel your children are safe (or unsafe)? Who (relationship) or what is it that makes you concerned for their safety? Is there anything you can do about it?

3. Why do you choose to live in this area? In this particular unit/apartment/house? In this town? In this neighborhood? (**PROBE:** Are family and friends in the area? Yes No)

4. Our house or apartment can sometimes have problems (such as plumbing problems or a leaky roof) that can make things difficult for us and our families. Can you tell me about any housing problems that you have experienced and where you were living when you experienced these problems? (**IF NEEDED, PROBE WITH FOLLOWING**)

	[IF YES] Previous or Current Housing			
Leaky plumbing	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faulty electrical system	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Exposed wires	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broken heating system	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pests (such as mice, rats, fleas, or cockroaches)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leaky roof or ceiling	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No hot water	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stove or refrigerator that would not work	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environmental problems (such as asbestos, lead paint, radon, or mold, broken stairs, doors, etc.?)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

[IF YES TO ANY] Were you able to fix it? Yes No

How did you pay for it? How long did the problem last? Did this pose a difficulty for you and your family?

EMPLOYMENT/CURRENT WORK

1. A. Last time we talked you said you were working at _____.
Are you working there again this year? Yes No

[IF YES] How is your job/work going for you? Has anything about your job changed? Such as....

Different responsibilities Yes No

Different hours Yes No

Have you had a raise or promotion? Yes No

When? How much? _____

Has the promotion changed your family life in any way (such as new hours or longer hours)

Is this your only job right now? Yes No

[IF NO] Tell me about your other job(s).

Why did you need another job right now?

[IF NOT WORKING AT SAME JOB] Why didn't you return to the same job this year?

Are you currently working? Yes No

[FOR ALL RESPONDENTS] Tell me about all of the work you have done this year starting with your current job if you are working now.

{RECORD THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION FOR EACH JOB BELOW.}

What is that you do/did? Were you working full-time or part-time?

	Job Description	Dates worked	Hours per week	No. of Weeks/Yr.	Pay Rate
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

[IF THERE ARE ANY GAPS IN EMPLOYMENT OVER THE PAST YEAR]

It sounds like there were times during the past year when you were not employed. How many weeks/months out of the past year were you not employed?

Were you looking for work during these times? Yes No

[IF YES] How did that go?

[IF NO] Is there anything that kept you from looking for or finding work during those times?

Did you receive unemployment during those times? Yes No

Do you get any benefits for any of the jobs you had in the past year? **[IF YES, SPECIFY WHICH JOBS APPLY]:**

Health insurance for yourself	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Health insurance for children	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Sick leave	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Vacation	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Overtime	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Retirement plan	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

2. In the last year, have you had the opportunity to get further education or training? Yes No

[IF YES] Tell me about that. What kind was it and where did you do it? (**PROBE:** How did you pay for it?)

[IF EMPLOYER-SPONSORED] Who else was sent to the training?

3. **[IF THERE IS A CURRENT PARTNER/SPOUSE]** Tell me about the work your partner has done in the past year. Have you both done the same work?
PROBE: *[IF RESPONSE IS YES, PROBE FOR SLIGHT VARIATIONS.]* Did he/she do any work on the side that you did not do? If only slight variation in work patterns, make notes of differences, otherwise record all of the work the partner has done below.

	Job Description	Dates worked	Hours per week	No. of Weeks/Yr.	Pay Rate
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Does your partner get any benefits for any of these jobs **[IF YES, SPECIFY WHICH JOBS APPLY]:**

Health insurance for yourself	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Health insurance for children	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Sick leave	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Vacation	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Overtime	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Retirement plan	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

4. Does anyone else in the household have a job? Yes No

[IF YES] Tell me about the work he/she has done in the past year.

Does he/she get benefits with this job?

Health insurance for yourself	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Health insurance for children	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Sick leave	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Vacation	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Overtime	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Retirement plan	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

How about a child or children? Yes No

[IF YES] What is done with the child's/children's earnings?

5. How many different employers did you work for in the last year? Were some better than others? Why?

Has the past year been a typical year for you in terms of work?

[IF NO] What is a typical year like for you? What time of year would you start working? What type of work would you do first?

How has this past year been different from a normal/ average year? How was this past year different from the previous year (the year we talked about last time)?

What would a really good working year be like for you? How much would you make in a good year? Has this last year been a good year for you? Why/ why not?

What is a really bad year like for you in terms of work? What would make it a bad year? How have bad years you've had compared to this year?

6. **[IF NOT CURRENTLY WORKING]**

Since you are not currently working outside the home, is there anything in your life that makes it more difficult for you to work at all or participate in a training program? (**PROBE to fill in the chart**)

Childcare	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Health issues	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Family issues	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Your partner	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Can you tell me more about that?

7. What is your opinion of job opportunities in this area? *{ALTERNATIVE WORDING}* From last year until now, what do you think of the job situation in this area? Have there been any changes?

8. Sometimes people express strong opinions about people who are receiving welfare. What kinds of opinions have you heard? Have you heard different opinions in any of the different places you've lived?

What do you think of these opinions?

[IF EVER RECEIVED WELFARE] Were any of these things said to you? To your children? What was the situation? Have you ever felt that you or your children were treated differently or unfairly because you were on welfare? (**PROBE to fill in chart:** Have you or your family ever been....

Refused service	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Made to wait	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Treated rudely	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

9. In the last several years, welfare regulations have changed. There is now more of an emphasis on getting a job, and there are now time limits. For example, families who have received assistance for five years in a row will not be able to get cash assistance any longer. Five years will be over for some families at the end of this year. In Michigan, single parents without children under 6 are required to work at least 30 hours per week. These changes also apply to immigrants from other countries. New legal aliens are not able to receive government help for the first five years after they arrive.

Do you feel these rules have affected your family in any way? Yes No

Do you talk with anyone about these changes? Family? Friends? *{ALTERNATIVE WORDING}*

Do you hear things on TV or radio about these changes? Yes No

[IF YES] What have you heard?

TRANSPORTATION AND CHILD CARE

{USE INFORMATION FROM WAVE 1 TO CONSTRUCT QUESTION 1.}

{IF HAD VEHICLE IN WAVE 1, ASK 1A.}

1. A. Last time we talked, you said that you had a (reliable car/ unreliable car*{INDICATE WHICH}*). Have you had a situation in the last year when you had a problem with your car/truck*{OR WHATEVER TRANSPORTATION SHE HAS}*? Yes No

Tell me about what happened. What did you do?

Has a friend or relative helped you out? Yes No

How do you get around if your car breaks down or is not available to you?

{IF NO VEHICLE IN WAVE 1, ASK 1B.}

1. B. Last time we talked, you said that you usually get around by _____ *{USE INFORMATION FROM WAVE 1}* Do you still depend on *{THIS PERSON/ THIS TYPE OF TRANSPORTATION}*? Yes No

(PROBE: How do you usually get around? How do you get to work? How do you get groceries?) **(PROBE IF NECESSARY:** Has a friend or relative helped you out? Yes No

2. This year the price of gas has gone up and down. Did this change anything in how you get around? Yes No
(PROBE: Have the increases caused you any problems? Yes No What have you done?)

{USE INFORMATION FROM WAVE 1 TO CONSTRUCT QUESTION 3.}

3. **[IF APPROPRIATE]** Last time we talked, you said that _____ provided care for your children. Do you still have the same arrangement(s)? Yes No **[IF YES, GO TO Q4]**

[IF NO] What brought about the changes? Do you have a new child care provider? **(PROBE:** How is this working out? How do you like your new child care provider(s)? How does your child like the provider(s)? **(IF MORE THAN ONE PROVIDER, PROBE:** How many? Why more than one?)

When you lived in other communities and worked at other jobs in the past year did your childcare arrangements differ from your current arrangements? How so?

{IF RESPONDENT HAS OLDER CHILDREN, ASK QUESTION 4, OTHERWISE OMIT.}

4. **[IF APPROPRIATE]** What about your older children? What do they do after school? What about school holidays and summers?
5. Tell me about a situation when you needed emergency childcare. What did you do? **(PROBE:** Have you ever had to miss work or a training program because of a childcare problem? Yes No **[IF YES]** How did your supervisor react? **(PROBE IF NECESSARY:** Has a friend or relative helped you out? **PROBE:** Is there a time when you needed someone to take care of your children outside your time at work? Who does that? How does it go?
6. What do you do for childcare if your child gets sick? What happens if your childcare provider is sick? **(PROBE IF NECESSARY:** Has a friend or relative helped you out?) **(PROBE IF APPROPRIATE:** How did your supervisor react?
7. **[IF RESPONDENT IS CURRENTLY WORKING]** How is it combining work responsibilities and family responsibilities? Do you have any problems at home because of work? Or do you have any problems at work because of family?
8. **[ONLY FOR MI RESPONDENTS]** We have been talking about childcare, transportation, and a lot of other issues. Can you think for a moment about a list of all of the things that need to happen in order for you [and/or your partner] to be able to work for pay. What would you need most to be able to work for pay? What would come next? *[Continue with the list as far as they can.]* Is there anything that you have not already told us about that you need to have or you need to happen in order to be able to work? **(PROBE:** Moving for work, commuting, carpooling, child care, housekeeping, new clothing or uniforms, odd jobs to make enough money, education for a better job, help from friends or family, ...)

9. **[ONLY FOR MI RESPONDENTS]** Last time, you told us about what your ideal job would be, the sort of job you would most like to have. What would be an ideal job for you right now? What would you need to happen for you to get that job and be able to keep it? (**PROBE:** moving, commuting, carpooling, child care, housekeeping, odd jobs, education, training, help from friends or family, ...)

10. **[IF RESPONDENT IS CURRENTLY WORKING]** Is there anything in your life that makes it more difficult for you to hold down a job (or participate in a training program)? (**PROBE to fill in chart**)

Childcare	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Health issues	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Family issues	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Your partner	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Can you tell me more about that?

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

1. Last year we talked a bit about your family background. In the past year, have there been any important changes in your relationships with your parents or your brothers and sisters or other relatives?
2. Has your family experienced any important events in the last year, or is there any family news that you think we should know about? (**PROBE:** births, deaths, marriages, illnesses, etc.)

INCOME AND MAKING ENDS MEET

1. We would like to know about your family's sources of income in the past year. Remember, all this information is completely confidential. From which of the following did you receive income this year? (**PROBE for changes in TANF, child and spousal support, food stamps, wages:** Has that been the same all year? Tell me about the change.)

{THE PURPOSE IS TO RECORD ALL SOURCES OF INCOME FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR. REFER TO EMPLOYMENT SECTION ON PAGE 4.}

	Pay Rate	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Duration [# of weeks/months/yr.]
Wages & Salaries (self)					
1. Current Employment _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2. Previous Employment _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3. Previous Employment _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4. Previous Employment _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5. Previous Employment _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

	Pay Rate	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Duration [# of weeks/months/yr.]
Wages & Salaries (partner)					
1. Current Employment _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
2. Previous Employment _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
3. Previous Employment _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
4. Previous Employment _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
5. Previous Employment _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Tips, Commissions, Overtime _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
[Self and Partner]					

	Amount	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Duration [# of weeks/months/yr.]
Social Security Disability _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Social Security Retirement/pensions _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Supplementary Security Income _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
TANF _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Unemployment Compensation _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Worker's Disability Compensation _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Veterans' Benefits _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Child or Spousal Support _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
*When it doesn't come, what do you do? How do you manage?					
Children's wages _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Food Stamps _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Regular gifts from family/friends _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Others _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

2. Did you receive assistance from any of the following sources over the past year? [TRY TO RECORD THE CASH VALUE IF POSSIBLE.]

	Monthly Amount	No. of Weeks/Yr.	Location (FL, TX, etc.)
WIC _____	_____	_____	_____
What do you get from WIC?			
School Lunch/Breakfast Program _____	_____	_____	_____
Do your children eat the food? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Earned Income Tax Credit _____	_____	_____	_____
What did you do with the money?			
Childcare Assistance _____	_____	_____	_____
Housing Assistance _____	_____	_____	_____
Energy/fuel Assistance _____	_____	_____	_____
Transportation Assistance _____	_____	_____	_____
Education Grants or Loans _____	_____	_____	_____
Medicaid _____	_____	_____	_____
Diversionary Assistance {IF APPLICABLE} _____	_____	_____	_____
Other [describe] _____	_____	_____	_____

3. Housing is usually the largest expense for families. Tell me about how much you pay per month and what utilities, if any, are included for each place you have lived this year.

	Rent	Duration	State Resided in
1. Current Housing	_____	_____	_____

What utilities, if any, are included in your current rent. About how much do you pay each month for the utilities that are not included in your current rent?

	Included in Rent	Pays	how much per month?
Electricity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Gas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Cable TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Garbage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

2. Previous Housing Rent Duration State Resided in

Utilities:

	Included in Rent	Pays	
Electricity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	how much per month? _____
Gas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	how much per month? _____
Cable TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	how much per month? _____
Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	how much per month? _____
Garbage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	how much per month? _____

3. Previous Housing Rent Duration State Resided in

Utilities:

	Included in Rent	Pays	
Electricity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	how much per month? _____
Gas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	how much per month? _____
Cable TV	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	how much per month? _____
Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	how much per month? _____
Garbage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	how much per month? _____

This year energy prices have gone up. Has anything happened to you over the past few months that has changed your housing costs? (**PROBE:** Rent gone up? Utilities shut off?) What did you do?

(PROBE IF PAID UTILITIES IN THE PAST YEAR) In the last year, did you ever have a difficult time paying for the utilities? Yes No

[IF YES] What did you do? Was anything disconnected? Yes No [IF YES] What did you do to get it turned on again?

Who helped? Did you have more trouble in one state/county/ city than another?

3. Tell me about telephone service you have. About how much do you pay each month?

_____ What services does this include? (**PROBE:** Internet connection, long distance, cell phone, pager?) Have you had a problem paying for phone service in the last year? Yes No

4. In the past year, have you had a problem paying for any of the following?

[FOR EACH YES] Where and when did you have trouble [example, Michigan, Texas, etc.]? What have you done when this happened?

Food	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Medical care	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Dental care	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Medicines	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Credit payments	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Personal care items	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Diapers	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
School fees or expenses	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Rent or house payment	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Anything else	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>



5. [OPTIONAL] What other monthly bills do you have? (PROMPT: rent-to-own?) How much do you normally spend on these? Have you ever had trouble paying any of them? Yes No [IF YES] What did you do?
Do you have more trouble providing food for your family during certain times of the year or when you've lived in certain places?
6. Since we last talked, have you, or any members of your household, been close to going hungry or ever gone hungry?
Yes No [IF YES] Tell me how this happened? What led to your being hungry?
7. Tell me about any strategies you have to help make the food last until the end of the month. (PROMPT: Do you or your children ever eat at a family member's or friend's house? Yes No [IF YES] Tell me about this.) (PROBE: How often does that happen? Do you ever cook together with some other family to make enough for both families? Yes No (PROMPT: Have you gotten food from a food bank or soup kitchen during the last year? Yes No [IF YES] Tell me about this. How useful was the kinds of food you got?)
8. [ADMINISTER FOOD SECURITY MODULE]
9. When people are having a hard time making ends meet, sometimes they will work for cash by doing different kinds of odd jobs. Have you ever done anything like that? Yes No (PROBE: Cleaned homes? Collected bottles/cans? Mowed lawns? Shoveled snow?) [IF APPROPRIATE] Has your partner ever worked for cash? Yes No

[IF YES] What did you do? How long? Have you done this in the last year? Yes No
How much did you earn? _____ Did you like doing that work?
[IF NO] Do you know other people who do this? What do you think about it?
10. Compared with last year, would you say that your family's economic situation has...
[CIRCLE NUMBER OF RESPONSE]
5 Improved a lot
4 Improved a little
3 Remained the same
2 Gone down a little
1 Gone down a lot
11. To what extent do you think your income is enough for you to live on?
[CIRCLE NUMBER OF RESPONSE]
1 Not at all adequate
2 Can meet necessities only
3 Can afford some of the things we want but not all we want
4 Can afford about everything we want
5 Can afford about everything we want and still save money
12. During the last year, did you ever borrow money from a relative or friend? Yes No
[IF YES] Why did you borrow it? How much did you borrow? _____
Have you been able to pay it back? Yes No
[IF YES, PAID BACK] How were you able to do that?
[IF NOT PAID BACK] Has anything happened because you have not been able to pay it back?
Yes No
13. If you got \$20 tomorrow, what would you do with it?
14. If you got \$200 tomorrow, what would you do with it?

15. What if your child needed a new pair of shoes, how would you get them for him or her?
16. Birthdays are often times for celebration. Tell me about how you celebrate your child's / children's birthday(s). (**PROBE:** How much would you usually spend on a gift?)
17. When you think about your bills and the things you need to buy, how do you decide which comes first if you don't have the money for them all?
18. What are your favorite money-stretching techniques?
19. How has the health of your family been this year? Has the health of any family member changed? How? (**PROBE:** Has a health problem affected your family life at all? How?)
20. **ADMINISTER CHILD HEALTH SURVEY & ADULT HEALTH SURVEY.**

PARENTING

1. **[IF LIVING WITH PARTNER/SPOUSE]** What sort of parenting tasks do you typically do? And what parenting tasks does your partner/boyfriend/spouse typically do?
2. Do you (and your partner/boyfriend/spouse **IF APPLICABLE**) get help or advice in parenting from anyone else? What sort of help do they provide? How do you feel about this help?

In the past year has your partner/spouse left to work outside the country or live in another city/town without the rest of the family? How did this change affect your family?
3. **[IF RESPONDENT IS NOT LIVING WITH FATHER OF CHILD/REN]** During the past 12 months, how often did your child(ren) see their father(s)? Why? **[MAKE SURE THAT QUESTION IS ANSWERED FOR EACH NON-CUSTODIAL FATHER.]**

Overall, what is your relationship like with _____'s {INSERT NAME OF CHILD/CHILDREN} father? Why do you say that?

Do you think that _____'s {INSERT NAME OF CHILD/CHILDREN} father wants a close relationship with his child? What makes you say that? **[ASK FOR EACH FATHER IF MORE THAN ONE.]**

Do you ever have conflicts with _____'s {INSERT NAME OF CHILD/CHILDREN} father about the child? Yes No

[IF YES] What are the conflicts about? (PROBE to fill in chart)

Custody	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Child support	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
How child is being raised	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Visits	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Other	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

How do these conflicts get resolved?

4. **[OPTIONAL]** What is your number one wish for your child/ren? Why do you feel this way? Has this changed over the last few months? Yes No **[IF YES] Why?**
5. **[ADMINISTER PARENTING LADDER.]**
6. About how you responded to the last question on the Parenting Ladder, why do you feel that way?

FAMILY WELL-BEING

{USE THE INFORMATION FROM WAVE 1 TO CONSTRUCT THE NEXT QUESTION.}

1. Last year, you said that the thing that you were looking forward to the most was _____.
How is that going? *{OR WHATEVER THE APPROPRIATE FOLLOW-UP QUESTION(S) MAY BE.}*

{IF THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE FROM WAVE 1 THAT YOU WISH TO FOLLOW UP ON WITH THE RESPONDENT, USE THE NEXT QUESTION AS A GUIDE. OTHERWISE OMIT.}
2. Last year you mentioned _____ (or you were _____). Is the situation still the same? Have things changed? Gotten better? Gotten worse? *{OR WHATEVER THE APPROPRIATE FOLLOW-UP QUESTION(S) MAY BE.}*
3. A. [OPTIONAL] Would you describe yourself as a person with religious or spiritual beliefs? Yes No [IF YES] Does this play a role in your everyday life? Yes No How so?

B. *{ALTERNATIVE WORDING}* What do you rely on when times are difficult? Religion? Family? Friends? How does this/do they help you?
4. Tell me about a typical day. (**PROBE:** What time do you get up? When do your children get up? What happens next? And then? **[THE GOAL HERE IS TO GET A PICTURE OF A TYPICAL WEEKDAY FOR THE FAMILY.]**)
5. What sorts of things do you do for fun? [**PROBE:** Do you have any hobbies?]
6. What things about your family make you proud and happy right now?
7. What are the biggest challenges for your family as a whole?
8. How are things going for your family right now? Tell me about that. How are things going for you personally?
9. [**IF HAS PARTNER**] How are things between you and your partner? Tell me about that.
10. Is there any one who is making things harder for your family right now? Tell me about that.
11. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life right now?
[CIRCLE NUMBER OF RESPONSE]
 - 1 Very dissatisfied
 - 2 Dissatisfied
 - 3 Mixed feelings
 - 4 Satisfied
 - 5 Very satisfied
Why do you feel that way?
12. **[ADMINISTER FEELINGS ABOUT HOW THINGS ARE GOING MEASURE.]**

SOCIAL SUPPORT

1. Have you made any new friends over the past year? What has made that possible?
2. Are you able to get together with friends? What kinds of things do you do? How often?
3. Are there any old friends that you have lost contact with over the last year? Tell me a little about that.

SUMMARY

1. What is the most important thing that happened to your family in the past year? Did something good happen to you or one of your children? Did something not so good happen to you or one of your children?
 2. Thinking ahead to the coming year, what are you looking forward to? What worries you? What do you think things will be like for your family next year at this time?
 3. What do you think things will be like for your family in three years? Why do you think this?
 4. Is there anything else you think we should know about how your family is doing right now? Is there anything we have missed?
-

[PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT THE CONTACT PERSON IS STILL THE SAME, AND THAT PERSON'S INFORMATION IS STILL THE SAME.]

5. The last time we talked, you said that _____ would know how to find you if we were unable to contact you. Has this changed?

Contact Information from Wave I:

**PLEASE MAKE ANY CHANGES OR WRITE NEW CONTACT INFORMATION BELOW
BEFORE ENDING THE INTERVIEW:**

This is the end of the interview. Thank you so much.

APPENDIX G

***Rural Families Speak* Additional Interview Questions Year III**

As addressed in the methods section above, I conducted four of the follow up interviews for wave three of the Rural Families Speak project myself, asking additional questions to gather information on my research interests in negotiating work. ***For these four interviews with selected Harvest County mothers, in addition to the standard interview questions for the third wave of the Rural Families Speak research project, I also asked questions similar to those in this appendix to further explore the topic of negotiating work.*** Some questions were based on the content of these informant's previous interview texts from wave I & II, so the questions used and the follow-up questions based on questions and responses vary. (For the third wave interview protocol for the *Rural Families Speak* project contact the author at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke.)

Additional Questions on Negotiating Work

[addendum to the regular NC-223 Wave III interview formats (Appendix C)]:

1. Think about your current job or a previous job. Have you had any problems at work? Has there ever been a problem at work that made it difficult for you to keep working? Difficulties with co-workers, with bosses? Sexual harassment? Discrimination? Health problems from work? How do you deal with these problems? Do they affect your ability to work? Have you thought about changing jobs or not returning to this employer next year because of these problems? Do they affect your life at home in any way?
2. What do you think of the job opportunities in this area? Has that changed since you started coming here to work [or since you first moved here]? Are there any jobs around here that you think would be better for you? for your partner? Have you been thinking about changing jobs/farmers for this season or the next season? Why or why not? What would need to happen in order for you to get a better job in this area? (Pay special attention to local job market barriers as well as more personal and family related barriers, relationship between partners work and respondents work.) Do you think that job opportunities will be better or worse in [this] county in the next 3 years? Explain?

WORK HISTORY

4. [Before asking this question, review transcripts from previous interviews with this respondent and use that information to structure more specific questions.]

Systematically go through the work history of the respondent [and her partner's history since they've been together]. (Pay particular attention to moves for work, child care arrangements, networks to attain work, work history/credentials, education and training, job changes or losses and how this affects negotiations *within families*. If partner lost a job, how did that affect her work/ negotiations? Child care? etc. If extended family cares for child and she/he got a job, how does this reconfigure the negotiation of work? changes in transportation? changes in availability of work in the community context (a plant closes down, crops are bad...)

Tell me about your work history. How old were you when you got your first job? Why did you start working? Where has work taken you? How often have you moved for work?

NOTES ON WORK HISTORY:

For each job (or at least the last three years): How did you find the job? What did you do to get the job? (moves, finding out about farmer, contacting farmer, etc. Find out everything involved in contacting employer and the coordination of this work in advance. Also find out about the logistics and labors involved in migrating for this work.) What kind of job was it? What did you do? Problems with this job? If a seasonal job, what sort of work do you do in between agricultural jobs? Do you receive unemployment?

5. Think about times in your life when you were not working or you were working less hours than you wanted to be working? Why? Was there anything that made it difficult for you to work or to participate in a welfare to work program? (your own or a family members health problem, pregnancy, child care issues, transportation, your partner...) What would have made it possible for you to work then or to work more (full-time versus part-time)? (education or training, transportation, child care)

6. Are there things you do to save money [while you are in the South and/or not working] that you wouldn't have time to do if you worked? (**Example:** Sewing, cooking from scratch, baking bread, hanging out laundry)

Do you exchange babysitting with other mothers, or help each other out in other ways?

ATTAINING WORK

[QUESTION FROM ORIGINAL SAPMA INTERVIEW FORMAT]:

7. [PARENT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED OR W/ A SUBSTANTIAL WORK EXPERIENCE]

Finding and getting a good job is a challenge for some rural parents. What things have made it hard for you—(or challenged you)—(or have you had to overcome)?

I'm going to read you a list of things that other people say sometimes keep them from getting good jobs. Please tell me if these things have been important in keeping you from getting really good jobs.

- a. How about family responsibilities? **[If yes]** In what ways have family responsibilities interfered with getting a good job?
- b. How about because you are a woman? **[If yes]** In what ways has being a woman interfered with getting a really good job?
- c. How about not having the right education or training? **[If yes]** Why didn't you get more education or training? (1) You didn't have the chance. (2) You didn't use the chance you had. (3) The education or training wasn't available.
- d. What about not having enough ability? **[If yes]** What skills or abilities do you feel employers are looking for?
- e. How important has not trying hard enough been in keeping you from getting good jobs?
- f. What about not having the right connections with people (who are hiring) for good jobs? **[If yes]** Are there any ways you could increase your connections with these people?
- g. What about living in this area? **[If yes]** Is it because this is a rural community? (**Probe:** Difficulties with transportation to jobs in other areas? commuting?)

[MAY NOT APPLY TO MIGRANT AND/OR AGRICULTURAL WORKERS]

8. I'm interested in all of the things that you need to do, to organize in your life, so that you can get and keep a job. Think about the last time that you were looking for a job, maybe for your previous job. Tell me about all of the things that you did to find and get the job. (**If already addressed in history, ask to elaborate on one of the job searches.** Probe: How did you find out about the job(s)? Did you need to acquire any skills, training, or education for the job? Did you work on a resume? Did you need to buy any clothes? Haircuts? Find child care? Transportation?.. Pay special attention to related shifts in a partner's job, local job markets, working conditions, etc.)

SUSTAINING WORK

9. **[If not already included in standard interview protocol]** Tell me about a typical work day for you. What time do you get up? When do you get your children up? Then, what happens? What do you do next...(The goal here is to get through a typical weekday for the family. Pay particular attention to role of partners, children, and significant others, social services, and other forms of support.)

10. **[If not already addressed]** What do you think are some things that you [and your partner] need to do in order to keep finding work? to keep working each year?

11. **[If not already addressed]** Have you had any health problems because of work (injuries, illness, etc.) Have these problems affected your family life? Your ability to continue working?

12. **[If not already addressed]** Does your work/job affect your family? (Examples of child care problems, inflexible workplace) Can you think of a time when you had trouble getting to work? What happened? What did you do? Have you ever had to miss work because of a child care emergency or health problem? What happened? How did your boss react?

PLANNING FOR WORK/ ANTICIPATING WORK

[SPECIFIC TO MIGRANTS AND/OR SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS]

13. What do you plan to do for work next year? Have you thought about that yet? How did you/are you deciding what you will do? What are all the things that you will need to do between now and then to make sure you have work next year?

This is the end of the interview. Thank you so much!

APPENDIX H

Delta County Interview Protocol

This is an *interview protocol that I constructed and administered to twelve mothers in Delta County*. (See methods chapter for further explanation.) Since I compare the secondary data from the Rural Families Speak project with the interview data from these twelve interviews that I conducted, I selected *some questions from the Rural Families Speak interview format as well as constructed some of my own interview questions based on my research questions*.

ID: _____

Date: _____

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Negotiating Work (Delta County Interview Format)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. I am talking with mothers in rural communities about their work. I am interested in all of the things that you need to do, to organize in your life, so that you can get and keep a job. I am going to ask you some questions about the work that you have done and all of things that you need to do to be able to work for pay. So, there are questions about work, but there are also questions about things that you need to take care of so that you can get to work, like transportation and child care. I also want to know how your family is doing overall, how you are managing with the income from you and/or your partners work. There are no "right" answers to any of these questions; I just want to hear what working or not working is like for you and your family. Remember, this interview is voluntary. If you don't want to answer a question, you don't have to. All information you give me will be kept confidential. (Do not proceed unless you have a completed informed consent document.)

Let's begin by talking about who lives in your household. Besides you, who lives in your house?

CURRENT HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

A. Mother's 1st Name _____ DOB _____ Marital Status* _____
Ethnicity** _____

B. Partner's 1st Name _____ DOB _____ Ethnicity** _____

Child (first name)	Sex	DOB	Relation Mother	Relation Partner/ Spouse	Contact w/ bio parent (Y, N)	Receives child support (Y, N)
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

* Key to codes	**Key to Codes	*** Key to codes
S = Single	W =Non-Hispanic White	A = Adopted
M = Married	H =Hispanic/Latino	SC = Stepchild
LWP = Living with partner	AA =African American	B = Biological child
D = Divorced	N =Native American	F = Foster child
SEP = Separated	A =Asian	NR = Not related
	M =Multi-racial	O = Other
	O =Other	

Do you have any children not currently living with you? (If yes) Who are they, and where are they living?

OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

Relationship to A	Length of Time in Household	Permanent or Temporary Arrangement
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EMPLOYMENT/CURRENT WORK

1. Let's talk about your employment situation. Are you currently working? (If not employed, skip to Question #2) What kind of work do you do? That is, what are your main duties on the job? How much are you paid? When did you start working there? How many hours do you generally work each week? How many weeks do you work during the year? Have you ever had a raise? When? How much? (List only current employment; space provided for up to three jobs)

Participant's Current Employment

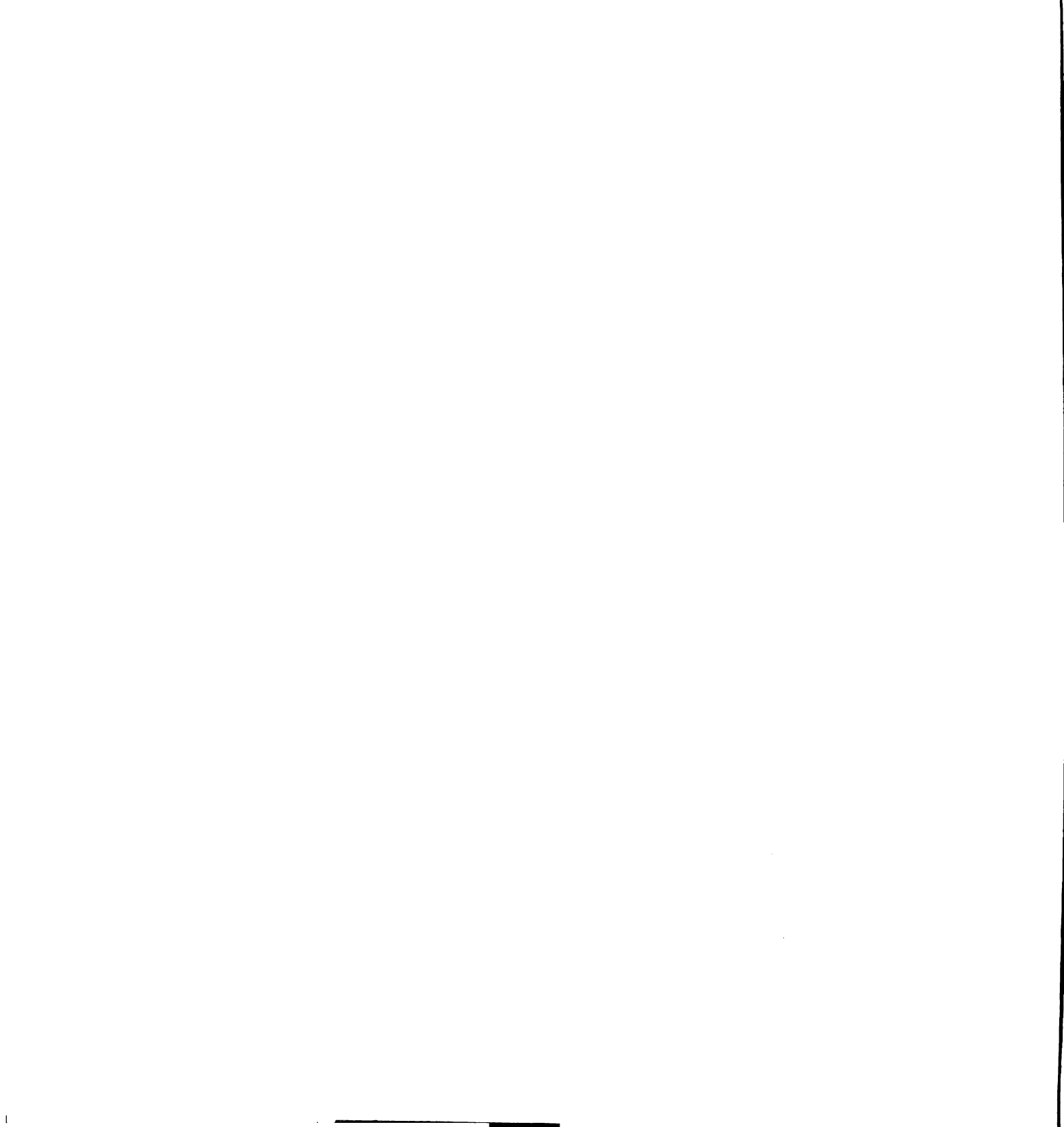
	Wage/Salary	Started	Hours/week	Weeks/Year	Raise
Job 1 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 2 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 3 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

(PROBE to fill in chart: Do you get any benefits with this job?)

Health insurance for yourself	Yes	No
Health insurance for children	Yes	No
Sick leave	Yes	No
Vacation	Yes	No
Overtime	Yes	No
Retirement plan	Yes	No

2. (Ask only if not currently employed) Are you looking for a job now? (If yes) How are you going about it? Have you ever worked for pay? What would need to happen right now in order for you to be able to work for pay?

3. What about your partner? What does your partner do? How much is your partner paid? When did your partner start working there? How many hours does your partner generally work each week? How many weeks does your partner work during the year? Has your partner ever had a raise? When? How much?



Partner's Current Employment

	Wage/Salary	Started	Hours/week	Weeks/Year	Raise
Job 1 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 2 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Job 3 _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

(PROBE to fill in chart: Does your partner get any benefits with his/her job?)

Health insurance for yourself	Yes	No
Health insurance for children	Yes	No
Sick leave	Yes	No
Vacation	Yes	No
Overtime	Yes	No
Retirement plan	Yes	No

4. Is there anyone else in the household who has a job? (If yes) Tell me about that.

5. (Ask if currently employed) What do you think of your current job?

6. Think about your current job or a previous job. Have you had any problems at work? Has there ever been a problem at work that made it difficult for you to keep working? Difficulties with co-workers, with bosses? Sexual harassment? Discrimination? Health problems from work? How do you deal with these problems? Do they affect your ability to work? Have you thought about changing jobs because of these problems? Do they affect your life at home in any way?

7. What do you think of the job opportunities in this area? Are there any jobs around here that you think would be better for you? for your partner? Have you been thinking about changing jobs? Why or why not? What would need to happen in order for you to get a better job in this area? (Pay special attention to local job market barriers as well as more personal and family related barriers, relationship between partners work and respondents work.) Do you think that job opportunities will be better or worse in [this] county in the next 3 years? Explain?

8. What would be an ideal job for you personally? For supporting your family? What would help you to get that kind of job?

EDUCATION

9. What is your current educational level? _____

(8th grade or less; some high school; high school or GED; specialized technical; business or vocational training after high school; some college, including Associate's Degree; college or university graduate; one or more years beyond college; graduate degree; don't know)

10. (If appropriate) What about your spouse/partner-how much education does he/she have? _____

11. In the last few years have you had the opportunity to get further education or develop new job skills? What kind? How were you able to do this? (Probe: How did you pay for this training? Negotiating child care, transportation, etc.? Did it provide you with new opportunities?)

WORK HISTORY

12. Systematically go through the work history of the respondent [and her partner's history since they've been together]. (Pay particular attention to moves for work, child care arrangements, networks to attain work, work history/credentials, education and training, job changes or losses and how this affects negotiations *within families*. If partner lost a job, how did that affect her work/ negotiations? Child care? etc. If extended family cares for child and she/he got a job, how does this reconfigure the negotiation of work? changes in transportation? changes in availability of work in the community context (a plant closes down...)

Tell me about your work history. How old were you when you got your first job? About how many jobs do you think you've had since then?

NOTES ON WORK HISTORY:

For each job (or at least the last three): How did you find the job? What did you do to get the job? (moves, interviews, etc.) What kind of job was it? What did you do? Full time or part time? Problems with this job? Why did you leave the job?

Job 1.

Job 2.

Job 3.

Job 4.

13. Can you think of reasons why you or your partner have left jobs or you haven't been able to work that we haven't already talked about? **[If not already addressed]** Has your partner's or another family member's job loss ever affected your ability to work and/or keep the same job? (Probe: moves, child care issues, ... Tell me more about that?)

14. Can you think of times in your life when you were not working or you were working less hours than you wanted to be working? Tell me about when in your life you haven't been working or you've been working less. Why? Was there anything that made it difficult for you to work or to participate in a welfare to work program? (your own or a family members health problem, pregnancy, child care issues, transportation, your partner...) What would have made it possible for you to work then or to work more (full-time versus part-time)? (education or training, transportation, child care)

ATTAINING WORK

[QUESTION FROM ORIGINAL SAPMA INTERVIEW FORMAT]:

15. **[PARENT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED OR W/ A SUBSTANTIAL WORK EXPERIENCE]** Finding and getting a good job is a challenge for some rural parents. What things have made it hard for you—(or challenged you)—(or have you had to overcome)?

I'm going to read you a list of things that other people say sometimes keep them from getting good jobs. Please tell me if these things have been important in keeping you from getting really good jobs.

- h. How about family responsibilities? **[If yes]** In what ways have family responsibilities interfered with getting a good job?
- i. How about because you are a woman? **[If yes]** In what ways has being a woman interfered with getting a really good job?
- j. How about not having the right education or training? **[If yes]** Why didn't you get more education or training? (1) You didn't have the chance. (2) You didn't use the chance you had. (3) The education or training wasn't available.
- k. What about not having enough ability? **[If yes]** What skills or abilities do you feel employers are looking for?
- l. How important has not trying hard enough been in keeping you from getting good jobs?
- m. What about not having the right connections with people (who are hiring) for good jobs? **[If yes]** Are there any ways you could increase your connections with these people?
- n. What about living in this area? **[If yes]** Is it because this is a rural community? (Probe: Difficulties with transportation to jobs in other areas? commuting?)

[FOR PARENTS NOT CURRENTLY EMPLOYED] Do you expect to look for a job sometime in the future? **[If yes]** When rural parents decide to look for a job, they often find that getting a good job is a real challenge. When you decide to look for a job, what obstacles or challenges do you think you might face?

- a. Do you think family responsibilities will make it difficult for you to get a good job?
- b. Do you think that being a women will make it harder?
- c. Do you think you have the right education or training for a good job? What skills or abilities do you think employers are looking for?
- d. Do you have connections with people who could help you get a good job?
- e. Will living in this area make it hard for you to get a good job? **[If yes]** Is it because this is a rural community?

[IF NO] How did you come to that decision? Do you think you have the skills to get a good education?

16. I'm interested in all of the things that you need to do, to organize in your life, so that you can get and keep a job. Think about the last time that you were looking for a job, maybe for your previous job. Tell me about all of the things that you did to find and get the job. **(If already addressed in history, ask to elaborate on one of the job searches.** Probe: How did you find out about the job(s)? Did you need to acquire any skills, training, or education for the job? Did you work on a resume? Did you need to buy any clothes? Haircuts? Find child care? Transportation?.. Pay special attention to related shifts in a partner's job, local job markets, working conditions, etc.)

SUSTAINING WORK

17. Tell me about a typical work day for you. What time do you get up? When do you get your children up? Then, what happens? What do you do next...(The goal here is to get through a typical weekday for the family. Pay particular attention to role of partners, children, and significant others, social services, and other forms of support.)

18. What do you think are some things that you [and your partner] need to do in order to keep your job(s) to keep working?

TRANSPORTATION AND CHILDCARE

19. What about transportation? How do you usually get around? **(If not addressed:** Do you own a car or have one you can borrow? How do you and your partner get to and from work?)

- a. **(If the family has no car)** How do you get your groceries, take your children to the doctors, run errands, get to work or a training program?
- b. **(If the family has a car)** How reliable is your car? When was the last time your car broke down? What happened?

20. **[If currently employed]** How far do you live from your work? **[If you drive to work,]** How much do you usually spend on gas?

21. What do you do when you really need transportation and it's not available to you? Have you ever had to miss work because of problems with transportation? (Tell me about that?)

REPRODUCTIVE LABOR/ CHILD CARE

22. When you are working (or participating in a job training program or the state's welfare-to-work activities) who takes care of your children? Tell me how you get them there, and about how long they stay every day. Is it different if you have to work evenings or weekends?

23. How many childcare arrangements do you have each week/month? Overall, how much do you pay for childcare each month?

24. Tell me about a situation when you needed emergency childcare. What did you do? (**Probe:** Have you ever had to miss work or a training program because of a childcare problem?) How did your supervisor react? (**Probe:** Has a friend or relative helped you out? Is there a time when you need someone to take care of your children outside of work? Who does that? How does it go?)

25. What do you do for childcare if your child gets sick? What happens if your provider is sick? (**Probe:** Has a friend or relative helped you out? How did your supervisor react?)

26. **[IF LIVING WITH PARTNER/SPOUSE]** What sort of parenting tasks do you typically do? And what parenting tasks does your partner/boyfriend/spouse typically do?

WORK & FAMILY

27. Do you have any problems at home because of work? (**Probe:** health problems because of work....)

28. Does your work/job affect your family? (Examples of child care problems, inflexible workplace) Can you think of a time when you had trouble getting to work? What happened? What did you do? Have you ever had to miss work because of a child care emergency or health problem? What happened? How did your boss react?

HEALTH

29. Family members often have health problems. Sometimes these problems don't have much of an impact on day-to-day life, while at other times they can be a big problem. I'd like to know about any health problems the members of your family might have.

30. **(If applicable)** Do any of these health problems that you have or a family member has affect everyday life in your family? If so, how? Do they make it difficult for you to work or participate in work programs?

INCOME & PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

31. I'd like to know a bit about your family's sources of income. Remember, all of this information is completely confidential. From which of the following sources do you receive income?

	Amount	Weekly	Biweekly	Monthly	Other
Wages & Salaries (self)	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wages & Salaries (partner)	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tips, Commissions, Overtime	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Security Disability	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Security Retirement/pensions	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supplementary Security Income	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TANF	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unemployment Compensation	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worker's Disability Compensation	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Veterans' Benefits	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child or Spousal Support	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
* When it doesn't come, what do you do? How do you manage?					
Children's wages	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food Stamps	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular gifts from family/friends	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others	_____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

32. Families sometimes receive assistance from a variety of government or private programs. Do you receive assistance from any of the following? **[TRY TO RECORD THE CASH VALUE IF POSSIBLE.]**

	Amount	
<input type="checkbox"/> WIC	_____	What do you get from WIC?
<input type="checkbox"/> School Lunch/Breakfast Program	_____	Do your children eat the food?
<input type="checkbox"/> Earned Income Tax Credit	_____	What did you do with the money?
<input type="checkbox"/> Childcare Assistance	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing Assistance	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy/fuel Assistance	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Assistance	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Education Grants or Loans	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Medicaid	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Diversionary Assistance <i>{IF APPLICABLE}</i>	_____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other [describe] _____	_____	

33. Housing is usually the largest expense for families. Tell me about how much you pay per month and what utilities, if any, are included. Is this a rental or do you own? What utilities do you pay each month (electric, gas, phone, garbage and sewer, etc.)? How much? What happens if you can't pay for utilities?

34. In the past year, have you had a problem paying for any of the following? **[FOR EACH YES]** What have you done when this happened?

Food	No	Yes
Clothing	No	Yes
Medical care	No	Yes
Dental care	No	Yes
Medicines	No	Yes
Credit payments	No	Yes
Personal care items	No	Yes
Diapers	No	Yes
School fees or expenses	No	Yes
Rent or house payment	No	Yes
Anything else?	No	Yes

35. In the last several years welfare regulations have changed. There is now more of an emphasis on getting a job, and there are now time limits (*talk about specific state programs, if appropriate*). What do you think about these changes? Has your family been affected by them?

Do you talk with anyone about these changes? **[If yes]** What have you heard?

36. **[If not previously addressed]** Are you or have you been involved in any of the state welfare to work programs? Tell me about that. (Pay particular attention to how this affects the process of negotiating work.)

37. Sometimes people express strong opinions about people who are receiving welfare. What kinds of opinions have you heard?

[If ever received welfare] Were any of these things said to you? To your children? What was the situation? Have you ever felt that you or your children were treated differently or unfairly because you were on welfare? (Prompt: Refused service, made to wait, treated rudely)?

38. **[If applicable]** When you've gone for help from an agency, how were you treated? (Probe for specific agencies.)

SUPPLEMENTAL WORK & SOCIAL SUPPORTS

39. When people are having a hard time making ends meet, sometimes they will work for cash by doing different kinds of odd jobs. Have you ever done anything like that? (**PROBE:** Cleaned homes? Collected bottles/cans? Mowed lawns or shoveled snow?) **[IF APPROPRIATE]** Has your partner ever worked for cash?

[IF YES] What did you do? How long? Have you done this in the last year? How much did you earn? Did you like doing that work?

[IF NO] Do you know other people who do this? What do you think about it?

40. Do you ever do any other work or jobs to help earn extra money...or to save money? (**Example:** Work such as raising your own food, sewing, etc.)

41. **[For mothers who are not employed]** Are there things you do to save money that you wouldn't have time to do if you worked? (**Example:** Sewing, cooking from scratch, baking bread, hanging out laundry) Do you exchange babysitting with other mothers, or help each other out in other ways?

42. During the last year, did you ever borrow money from a relative or friend?

[IF YES] Why did you borrow it? How much did you borrow? Have you been able to pay it back?

[IF PAID BACK] How were you able to do that?

[IF NOT PAID BACK] Has anything happened because you have not been able to pay it back?

43. Is there anything else that you think I should know about what you [or your partner] need to do to be able to work? Is there anything I've missed?

This is the end of the interview. Thank you so much!

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