

“USE MY NAME, THEY NEED TO KNOW WHO I AM!”:
LATINA/O MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARMWORKER YOUTH AT THE INTERSTICES
OF THE EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE

By

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ABSTRACT

“USE MY NAME, THEY NEED TO KNOW WHO I AM!”: LATINA/O MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARMWORKER YOUTH AT THE INTERSTICES OF THE EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE

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Migrant and seasonal farmworkers are the fabric and driving force of the agricultural economy in the U.S. They make it possible for us to thrive on fresh fruits and sustenance on a daily basis. However, there has been a lengthy history of K-12 schools failing to meet the needs of children of migrant farmworkers and youth migrant farmworkers. Martinez & Cranston-Gingras (1996) state: “the children of migrant farmworkers are usually the most vulnerable and profoundly affected by the migrant lifestyle and extreme working conditions” (p. 29). The children of migrant farmworkers and youth migrant farmworkers experience frequent moves, difficult life circumstances, linguistic and cultural barriers, and social isolation that often impacts their academic achievement and retention in school (Cranston-Gingras, 2003; Martinez & Cranston-Gingras, 1996). While the circumstances and situations of youth migrant farmworkers are undeniably real we must consider what it is that students *do* bring with them to our classrooms. However, despite excellent work on the challenges migrant youth face in and out of K-12 schools, scholars have failed to address the schooling experiences of youth migrant and seasonal farmworkers from an asset based perspective, the wealth of knowledge, histories, experiences, skills, languages, networks, and other assets of culturally and linguistically diverse students. My study seeks to fill this void.

In my dissertation, *“Use my name, they need to know who I am!” Latina/o Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Youth at the Interstices of the Educational Pipeline*, I examined the schooling experiences of Latina/o migrant farmworker youth in K-12 schools and a High School Equivalency Program in the Midwest. Drawing from social reproduction research, San Pedro’s (2004) *Environmental Safety Zones*, Vizenor’s (1994) concept of *Survivance*, and Yosso’s (2005) *Community Cultural Wealth*, I contend that migrant farmworker youth pursued a General Educational Development (GED) degree as an act of survivance from K-12 schools. Chapter one briefly introduces the study, while chapter two is an overview of the social, historical, and institutional context of migrant and seasonal labor. The research approach and methods undertaken in this study are discussed in chapter three, as is a detailed description of the High School Equivalency Program in which my study took place. Chapter four encompasses the schooling experiences of migrant youth in K-12 schools and the inequitable conditions that led these youth to pursue a GED. In chapter five, the educational experiences of migrant youth highlight how the High School Equivalency Program resituated learning for migrant youth. Lastly, chapter six addresses how translanguaging was used as pedagogy in the High School Equivalency Program to meet all students’ needs and make up for curricular issues. The implications of this work for K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs are provided in chapter seven. My research contributes much needed asset based research on the schooling experiences and agency of migrant and seasonal farmworker youth in navigating their educational pursuits.

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In her book, *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks (1994) described how her theorizing about Black feminism began as a young child when she questioned particular incidents in her life. I too began questioning and theorizing at a young age. I grew up in Colton, California as the daughter of immigrant parents, Elena and Gregorio Gutierrez, and sister of Luselena, Eriberto, Leticia, and Veronica. It was here that my curiosity and desire to understand issues about language, identity, and the schooling experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse communities emerged. In the 1970's, my father, Gregorio, migrated from Acatlán de Juárez, Jalisco to California, while my mother followed her brother's footsteps to the U.S. from El Agostadero, Jalisco. They met in the U.S. and were together until parted in death. This dissertation is informed by my lived realities, my family history, the heritage of agricultural work on both sides of my family, and the *confianza* migrant and seasonal farmworkers trusted in me with their life stories. What follows is my humble attempt at putting into words the appreciation and gratitude I have for each and every person who uplifted me with love, support, and guidance as I pursued my doctorate and the completion of this study.

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CHAPTER 1

“I’m Intelligent In That Stuff!”: Cultivating La Labor in Education

Lorena: Explain what *la labor* is.

Freddy: You start early and it’s always outside, never indoors. You have to wear the worst clothes ever so that if you get dirty you don’t really care about it. Uhm, you work just to put food on the table, to pay for bills, to have gas just to get there, for your family, your parents if they ever need help. It’s just difficult work.

Lorena: You’ve worked in the fields . . .

Freddy: Yup, it was mainly one job, but I had a job with other *patrones*. If we have picking blueberries . . . Uhm, I’m intelligent in that stuff. At the age of 11 my dad taught me how to drive and I was driving the tractors, the *camiones*, the semi-trucks, I drove harvester that . . . stick shift cars and machines, automatic ones, and it was fast for me. I had to get the work done easy they just told me what to do. It’s something that you already know. Fast.

[Interview, May 5, 2012]

In the quote above, Freddy, an 18 year-old migrant farmworker, explains what is formally called migrant and seasonal farm labor as *la labor*. Migrant farmworkers are “individuals who migrate from one locale to another to earn a living in agriculture” (Magaña & Hovey, 2003, p. 75). With the majority being Latino, specifically of Mexican origin, migrant farmworkers sustain the agricultural economy in the U.S. (Magaña & Hovey, 2003; Parra-Cardona et al, 2006). Freddy explained *la labor* while I interviewed him as a participant in a study about the education experiences of migrant farmworker youth in the Midwest. Freddy’s description highlights the difficulties of migrant farm labor in similar ways that scholars have researched and written about

migrant farmworker experience, especially in the field of education. Furthermore, Freddy eagerly expressed his belief in his intelligence within the field of agriculture. He reminds us of the vast knowledge and experience that migrant children and youth have in *la labor*. However, this repertoire of knowledge is often overlooked and under-theorized in education as traditional theories of social capital, such as Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), examine the wealth and value of knowledge according to social class standing

Martinez & Cranston-Gingras (1996) state “the children of migrant farmworkers are usually the most vulnerable and profoundly affected by the migrant lifestyle and extreme working conditions” (p. 29). The children of migrant farmworkers and migrant farmworker youth experience “difficult life circumstances, including poverty, frequent moves, and linguistic and cultural barriers” (Cranston-Gingras, 2003, pg. 242). This leads them to have high dropout rates and increased social isolation, plus poor academic achievement and grade retention (Cranston-Gingras, 2003, p. 242; Martinez et al., 1996). While the circumstances and situations of migrant farmworker youth are undeniably real, we must consider what it is that students *do* bring with them to our classrooms.

Migrant farmworkers of Mexican origin are the largest group of migrant farmworkers in the U.S. (Parra-Cardona et al, 2006). They tend to move within three different regional migration streams across the U.S.: Western, Midwestern, and Eastern. According to Magaña & Hovey (2003), migrant farmworkers “live in the southern half of the country during the winter and migrate north before the planting of harvesting season” (p. 75). Moreover, those in the Western stream move from Mexico to California and from California to Washington. While those in the Midwest stream move from Texas to Michigan and other nearby states, and the Eastern stream involves migration from Georgia and Florida to the Carolinas and even New

York (Magaña & Hovey, 2003). Due to the fact that migrant farmworkers must move from season to season, they have to relocate every 4-6 months throughout the year and often have to relocate their entire families with them. Although there are some farmworker families where the males in the family are the only ones who migrate, the majority of migrant farmworkers relocate as a family unit. They face economic, cultural, physical and mental health needs, legal documentation issues, language barriers, discrimination, exclusion, and issues related to the lack of permanent residential location (Parra-Cardona et al, 2006, p. 362; Magaña & Hovey, 2003; Martinez & Cranston-Gingras, 1996). Vocke (2007) affirms “migrants do not necessarily maintain this lifestyle by choice. Their oppressed status limits their ability to seek and evaluate viable work alternatives. Their lack of English proficiency and education often prevents them from getting more mainstream jobs” (p. 5).

When discussing the history of migrant labor in the U.S., Judith A. Gouwens (2001) explains that in the 1880’s “ . . . migrant workers were typically ethnic minorities (Mexican, Japanese, and Chinese) and part of a caste system that placed them at the bottom in terms of the labor pool and the scale of economics” (p. 9). Though Gouwens (2001) refers to migrant labor from over 130 years ago, migrant and seasonal farmworkers from Mexicans to Hmongs, Haitians and others, continue to be at the bottom of the labor and socioeconomic pool in contemporary U.S. society.

Although migrant and seasonal farmworkers have a long history in the U.S., it was not until the 1960’s when efforts emerged to address educational needs for children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Despite the fact that in the 1950’s an interstate migrant program was piloted by the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor and the Rural Education Association of the National Education Association, migrant education was not funded or

addressed until 1960 (Gouwens, 2001). Edward R. Murrow's (1960) documentary, *Harvest of Shame*, made public the living and working conditions of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the U.S. and was the impetus for congress to pass the Economic Opportunity Act, allocating funds for migrant education (Gouwens, 2001). Moreover, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act was modified to include migrant children in providing compensatory migrant education programs (Gouwens, 2001). In 1965, as part of the War on Poverty, part C of Title I was instituted to improve the educational opportunities of migrant children (Reynolds et al, 2007, p. 3). The Migrant Education Program (MEP) was created through the U.S. Department of Education to distribute the funds from Title I and to ensure that migrant children were prepared to achieve their high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) degree. Furthermore, in 1967 the U.S. Department of Labor began to fund the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) and the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) (Gouwens, 2001) under the umbrella of Migrant Education Programs

Currently housed within the larger Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Office of Migrant Education provides educational services and opportunities for migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families. The mission of the Office of Migrant Education is to:

. . . to provide excellent leadership, technical assistance, and financial support to improve the educational opportunities and academic success of migrant children, youth, agricultural workers, fishers, and their families. The OME administers grant programs that provide academic and supportive services to the children of families who migrate to find work in the agricultural and fishing industries. The OME also administers several contracts and special initiatives”

(<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/ome/index.html>).

Although the Office of Migrant Education does not provide an actual definition of migrant farmworkers, in their mission we understand that they serve a range of agricultural and fisheries workers and their families. The range of educational services they provide spans five different programs and initiatives. The U.S. government currently funds nationwide pre-school to college Migrant Education Programs, particularly in geographic regions where migrant and seasonal farm workers are employed. Programs and initiatives include: Title I Migrant Education Program, Migrant Education Even Start, Migrant Education Program Consortium Incentive Grants, High School Equivalency Program, and the College Assistance Migrant Program. Such Migrant Education Programs are offered nationwide, specifically in states along migrant streams like Texas, Florida, California, Washington, and Michigan. For the purposes of this study, I will focus on the High School Equivalency Program (HEP). The College Assistant Migrant Program and the Migrant Education Even Start will be referred to as they relate to the students in the study. Though programs and initiatives are in place throughout the educational pipeline (including preschool) to support the educational needs of migrant farmworker families, migrant farmworker youth continue to lag behind their peers in academic achievement (Reynolds et al., 2007).

Previous research about migrant education has largely focused on the challenges, difficulties, and deficits that children of migrant farmworkers have in comparison to not only their fellow Latino peers, but also the dominant white culture. By focusing on the deficits and struggles of farmworker communities, scholars have produced what Tuck & Yang (2014) identify as *narratives of pain*. Although migrant children and youth face difficult life circumstances, narratives of pain do not improve the social, economic, and educational challenges migrant children and youth experience. We have to question what education looks

like if educators in and across K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs were to draw upon migrant students' *community cultural wealth*, the knowledge, skills, experiences, and networks of historically marginalized groups that are often overlooked and unacknowledged in schools. Additionally, the complexity of their identities across sociocultural contexts is largely ignored when considering their educational experiences. While most scholars acknowledge that the largest ethnic population of migrant and seasonal workers are of Mexican descent, scholars have failed to address the impact of migrating, living and learning as *Mexicanos* in rural and predominantly white spaces. Due to the fact that schooling experiences of migrant farmworker youth continually repeat themselves and that narratives of pain continue to circulate about these communities, it is absolutely necessary that we address the issues facing these communities through an alternative paradigm.

In this study, I examined the educational experiences of migrant farmworker youth in a High School Equivalency, GED granting Migrant Education Program in the Midwest. The purpose of this study was twofold: 1) to demonstrate how educators can work *with* instead of *against* the cultural capital and funds of knowledge migrant students bring to our classrooms, and 2) to contribute to our understanding of the ways migrant and seasonal farmworker youth are living and learning bilingually in and out of Migrant Education Programs. The following questions shape this study:

1. How do Latina/o migrant farmworker youth experience education in K-12 schools?
And what role do K-12 schools play in migrant youth's choice to enter a High School Equivalency Program?
2. How do Latina/o migrant and seasonal farmworkers experience education in a High School Equivalency Program?

3. How does the High School Equivalency Program (HEP), extend and/or sustain students' linguistic repertoire and identities?

I explored these research questions at a High School Equivalency Program in the Midwest whose overall focus is to grant General Educational Development degrees (GED). The program will be referred to as GEM (general education migrant program) from here forward to identify it as both a GED and Migrant Education Program, as well as to protect the identity of the program and program participants. GEM was a residential Migrant Education Program (MEP) at a large land grant institution. Data was collected from Spring 2012 to December 2014 and included participant observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, and *platicas*. I have been theorizing, asking questions and looking for answers, about my dissertation research for years as both a volunteer in the program and bilingual *Mexicana*. Thus, I argue that this study has truly developed throughout my three years in the program *y con las ganas de querer aprender mas de esta comunidad*. Further details about the site and methodology used for this study can be found in chapter three.

Straight Out of Virginia Drive: Researcher Background and Perspective

The development of my study began long ago, before a PhD was ever a thought in my mind. Failing to include my experiences and position in the world would lead you to believe that this study was merely conceived in graduate school. In reality, this study is deeply rooted in my own experiences growing up in Southern California, on Virginia Drive. Dolores Delgado Bernal, Rebeca Burciaga, and Judith Flores (2012) affirm, “in listening to the story of one, we learn about the conditions of many. When we pay close attention, we learn that all stories are collective accounts of how various forces including culture, history, and society at large, have shaped our understandings of life” (p. 368).

I began theorizing about the language practices of Latinos and the power of language as a young child every time I said: *troca* for truck, *bika* for bike, and *kequi* for cake. I puzzled about why I couldn't speak as freely at school as I did at home, without getting into trouble. My research was delicately woven into my life experiences and linguistic capital at an early age. Growing up in a Spanish-speaking household in a predominantly Mexican neighborhood in Southern California, I always felt that Spanish was the norm. It was the language spoken in my home, the language that joyfully blared through my mother's kitchen radio, and the language with which I identified. However, as an emerging bilingual, the education system quickly reminded me that Spanish was far from the norm in comparison to English. In elementary, I was tracked into an English Language Learner Program while my twin sister was not. This form of tracking became a source of division between us, where others questioned my abilities to learn and messages of inferiority were implied. Furthermore, the division between the two tracks also reflected the division between groups of students.

Language became a marker of difference for me at a young age. Further, I grew up helping my mother navigate spaces and people that were not prepared to serve Spanish-speaking communities, such as schools, welfare offices, and banks by translating for her. All the while my father insisted on having us (his children) speak only Spanish at home for the sake of cultural maintenance. Thus, I am all too familiar with the belittling words, condescending tones, and educational practices that are intertwined with English-only ideologies and the demands of learning English to access opportunities as a student, daughter, and now as a teacher educator and language scholar at a predominantly white institution (PWI)¹. Therefore, as a scholar I am interested in the language practices and identities of Latinos, and the complex and conflicting

¹ The term Predominantly White Institution (PWI) describes institutions of higher education where white students are over 50% of the enrolled student population (Christopher Brown II & Elon Dancy II, 2010).

spaces between Spanish and English for Mexican American youth. I am intentional about the way I write as a multilingual throughout my scholarship, and purposely write and weave in and out of Spanish, English, and Spanglish to resist dominant language ideologies and policies. It is rare when the dominant culture is asked to make meaning *with* us. Thus, my work is an invitation to meet us, my participants and I, halfway and to engage in meaning making *with* us.

The collective experiences and *enseñanzas de la vida* that students like Freddy and myself have lived while growing up bilingual are mere glimpses of the schooling experiences of *Mexicanos* and Mexican Americans in the U.S. I share my experiences in growing up bilingual to emphasize where my interest in my dissertation research was born out of and to inform you of the lived experiences that have shaped my understandings of language and culture. Though the experience of Mexican Americans and people of Mexican descent varies according to gender, geographic location, class, sexuality, and so forth, as a Mexican American woman I am familiar with the complex cultural diversity and experiences of the participants in my study. Furthermore, my identity as a bilingual Mexican American gives me insider status within the context of my research site and with my participants. I understand the beauty and tensions of the inextricability of cultural capital and linguistic practices to Mexican and Mexican American culture and ethnicity. However, what it means to live and learn as a youth migrant farmworker is one that I began learning about over the past 3 years.

I began learning about migrant farmworkers and their schooling experiences when I first volunteered at GEM in Spring 2011. I have actively volunteered to conduct individual academic plans (IAP) for 3-4 students each semester and participate in numerous GEM activities, including GEM lunches, in-class tutoring, and professional development workshops. Though I have been volunteering with GEM for over 3 years I still consider myself an outsider to the experience of

migrant farmworkers because I never worked in the fields nor was I highly mobile or in a predominantly white space. I grew up in the same home my entire life, lived in a predominantly Mexican community in California, and am learning about migrant farmworker communities from the students in the GEM. As a graduate student who has moved in state and across the country multiple times for career and employment opportunities I can relate to the dissonance and tension that occurs when highly mobile. However, I recognize that the type of mobility that I have engaged in is privileged within the society at large, while the occupational mobility of migrant farmworkers is one that is stigmatized. Additionally, I recognize the heritage of farm work from the families of both my parents, especially my mother's father who has worked the fields in rural Mexico for over 70 years. Time and context differs between the experiences of my grandfather and the study participants. Yet in many ways my grandfather and mother's knowledge and experience in the fields provides insight into the understanding of farmworker identities and sustenance of the migrant farmworker communities.

About Writing

At times I will weave in and out of Spanish, English, and Spanglish because they are the languages that best reflect the multiple selves that my students and I embody. To write solely in English would support the deficit ideologies and the hegemonic English-only paradigms that I am seeking to challenge, and would provide a narrow understanding of my participants and GEM. Direct quotes and other data are translated to ensure that readers capture as much of the meaning from students own voices. However, I do invite readers to create meaning *with* me. For many of us whose first language is not English, we are often asked to learn English and make meaning of the dominant culture. Yet, it is rare when the dominant culture is asked to make meaning *with* us. Thus, I invite readers to make meaning with me in the same ways that my

students and I made meaning together. Therefore, be prepared to research words and to learn *con nos/otros*.

Organization of Dissertation

In chapter two, I address the social, historical, and institutional context of migrant and seasonal labor and education. I tease out identities of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their educational experiences in K-12 and Migrant Education Programs. The research methodology and how this study came to life can be found in chapter three. The next three chapters contain the study findings. In chapter four, the schooling experiences of migrant and seasonal farmworker youth in K-12 schools are examined, to provide insight as to how the youth in my study arrived in GEM. Chapter five addresses the educational experiences of migrant and seasonal farmworker youth in GEM, while chapter six focuses on language and identity in the program. In chapter seven I provide implications and suggestions for practice and future research to improve the education of migrant youth.

CHAPTER 2

Quienes Somos: Understanding the Social, Historical, and Institutional Context of Migrant and Seasonal Labor

As I sat waiting for lunch to be served, I glanced around the ballroom table and noticed that Natalia, an instructor for the General Education Migrant Program, and I were the only people of color sitting at the table. I extended my hand and introduced myself to the white women around the table. When asked what GED program I was representing I informed them that I work with migrant and seasonal farmworkers in a Migrant Education Program. The woman to my right, who I refer to as Lisa, immediately began asking questions:

Lisa: Migrant farmworkers?

Lorena: Yes

Lisa: Are they undocumented?

Lorena: By migrant and seasonal farmworkers, I am referring to farmworkers who move from one location to another for seasonal employment in agriculture and/or those who engage in seasonal work in the U.S.

Lisa: It's difficult work, especially when undocumented. Is there a path to citizenship?

Lorena: As a program we do not collect nor are we allowed to collect information pertaining their documentation status in the U.S.

Lisa: I'll have to tell one of my students about this program. She has been trying to graduate from high school, but she's unsure about what career to pursue given that she's undocumented.

The waiter interrupts our conversation as he extends his arm between us to serve lunch. *Perfect timing.*

Along with the GEM staff, I was attending an adult education conference for professional development in Michigan when I encountered this woman. Based on our dialogue Lisa seemed to lack an understanding of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Perhaps she thought she *knew* who migrant and seasonal farmworkers were. Underlying her comments is the assumption that all migrant farmworkers are undocumented individuals in the U.S. and that documentation status is the only thing that defines them and their lives. They are more than their documentation status. They are brothers, sisters, parents, *tios, tias*, students, pillars of the agriculture economy and more. Little did she know that some of the migrant farmworker students who came through the program have generations of history *in* the U.S. and in the fields. Furthermore, what characterizes many migrant farmworkers is their *familismo*, “attitudes, behaviors and family structures operating within an extended family system” (Salinas, 2013), their unwavering *ganas*, and their unquestionable work ethic. I do not mention their work ethic to romanticize the hard working Latina/o. Rather, I draw attention to their work ethic because working in the fields *is* hard. It is difficult and back wrenching work. There is no choice but to work hard in the fields to sustain employment.

Although this was not the first time I had been asked questions surrounding the citizenship of the students I work with, feelings of frustration and anger arose because as a volunteer and researcher, I can’t help but think of how misunderstood migrant and seasonal farmworkers are based on preconceived notions of who they are, the work they do, and how they do or do not choose to live a particular lifestyle. As a volunteer in a Migrant Education Program I came to know a strong network of *madres*, fathers, sons and daughters who sacrificed being the

providers, protectors, and caregivers of their families in order to pursue their GED degree. Thus, Lisa's insistence on migrant farmworkers being undocumented, and her refusal to listen with the intent to understand, begs the question: who is naming and identifying migrant and seasonal farmworkers, and for what purpose? In many ways, the naming of migrant and seasonal farmworkers as undocumented reflects one of the many ways in which they are dehumanized and made invisible in the U.S.

Struggling to understand the unsettling comments of that woman during lunch, I asked the program recruiter whether he has been asked similar questions and how, if at all, he has navigated such conversations. Unfortunately, he replied that questions and assumptions of this sort are common. As a migrant farmworker and now recruiter for the Migrant Education Program, he has learned to address questions about documentation by informing people that we are unaware of our students' documentation status and that it is not a requirement to enter the program. Furthermore, with his response it became clear that these preconceived notions are a larger reflection of the discourses of migrant farmworkers. When addressing the farm labor movement in the Midwest, Barger & Reza (1994) identified a common misperception of farmworkers as "illegal aliens" (p. 22). They identified this common misperception of farmworkers over 20 years ago and it continues today. They affirm, "Most farmworkers are American-born individuals, naturalized citizens, or legal immigrants. Anglo Americans often do not realize that almost one-third of the (contiguous) United States used to be part of Mexico" (Barger & Reza, 1994, p. 22).

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the social and historical context in which migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the U.S. live, work, and receive education. To lay out the foundation of this study, this chapter is divided into three sections: 1) The history of migrant

labor in the U.S. 2) Migrant and seasonal farmworkers and the U.S. Department of Labor, and 3) The experiences of migrant farmworkers in K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs in the U.S. The third part is a review of the literature that is relevant and foundational to this study, including research about student educational experiences in K-12 and migrant education, and the General Educational Development degree (GED).

History of Migrant Labor in the U.S.

Although migrant and seasonal farmworkers continue to be *invisible minorities* (Gouwens, 2001) their presence, history, and contributions in the United States date back to the 1920's and earlier. In the 1880's, Mexicans, Japanese, and Chinese workers formed the migrant labor that was necessary to build the railroad system in the U.S. (Takaki, 1993). During World War II, the Bracero Program was developed to recruit and replace many of the agricultural laborers who were now soldiers in the war (Glass, date unknown). Mexican men were promised shelter and food in exchange for temporarily migrating to the U.S. to work in the agricultural fields. Moreover, they held legal status as agricultural workers in the U.S. (Glass, date unknown). Although the U.S. promised these benefits, the implementation of the benefits was relegated to independent farm owners. Left to the discretion of the farm owners, benefits were not always fully dispersed. As a result, many of the Bracero farmworkers, worked and lived in inhospitable conditions with little pay.

Years later, the famous Mexican farmworker activists, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, fought against the inhumane working conditions of farm laborers across the U.S. Huerta and Chavez protested and unionized farmworkers to change many of the issues inherited from the Bracero era, such as low wages, inhospitable working and living conditions, lack of healthcare and benefits, and the spraying of pesticides on workers in the fields. While the majority of

Braceros were of Mexican origin, the unionization of farmworkers was not solely about farmworkers of Mexican nationality. It focused on unionizing farmworkers of all races and ethnicities, including Filipinos with the support of Larry Itliong. After many hunger fasts and protests, Huerta and Chavez achieved the unionization of farmworkers in 1962. The Bracero program and the farmworker movement led by Huerta and Chavez reflects the history of oppression that migrant farmworkers have experienced in the U.S.

While Mexican migrant and seasonal farmworkers have historically been instrumental in the expansion of the railroad, agriculture, food processing, and other industries in the U.S., they experienced repatriation after the Great Depression and deportation after World War II, both in times of economic decline. It is important to note that historically, migrant and seasonal farmworkers have been used and abused as needed to support the economy. Whenever there has been a need for labor in agribusiness, ethnic minorities have been recruited and offered benefits such as housing and documentation status (which often were not actually received). However, as soon as the U.S. faces economic downturns, migrant and seasonal farmworkers are suddenly disposable and criminalized, while also facing racial/ethnic discrimination, low wages and more. When discussing the history of migrant labor in the U.S., Judith A. Gouwens (2001) explains that in the 1880's "... migrant workers were typically ethnic minorities (Mexican, Japanese, and Chinese) and part of a caste system that placed them at the bottom in terms of the labor pool and the scale of economics" (p. 9). Though Gouwens (2001) refers to migrant labor from over 130 years ago, migrant and seasonal farmworkers including Mexicans, Hmong, Haitians and others, continue to be at the bottom of the labor and socioeconomic pool in contemporary US society.

To develop a complex understanding of migrant farmworker identity and schooling experiences, we must first examine how U.S. institutions such as the Department of Labor, Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Migrant Education, define migrant farmworkers. Furthermore, the social, cultural, historical, economic, and political context in which the labeling and defining of populations of migrant farmworkers occurs enhances our understanding of what it means to live, labor, and learn as migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers & the U.S. Department of Labor

The United States government has historically served migrant farmworker communities through the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Migrant Education. In 2013, the U.S. Department of Labor defined migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFW's) as “ . . . either a migrant farmworker, a seasonal farmworker, or a migrant food processing worker” (http://www.doleta.gov/programs/who_msfw.cfm). With this definition of migrant and seasonal farmworkers, the U.S. Department of Labor provides an overarching category of types of workers and details the three categories.

Seasonal Farmworker - is a person who during the preceding 12 months worked at least an aggregate of 25 or more days or parts of days in which some work was performed in farm work, earned at least half of his/her earned income from farm work, and was not employed in farm work year round by the same employer.

Migrant Farmworker - is a seasonal farmworker who had to travel to do the farm work so that he/she was unable to return to his/her permanent residence within the same date.

Migrant Food Processing Worker - means a person who during the preceding 12 months has worked at least an aggregate of 25 or more days or parts of days in which some work was performed in food processing (as classified in the North American

Industry Classification System (NAICS) 311411, 311611, 311421 for food processing establishments), earned at least half of his/her earned income from processing work, and was not employed in food processing year round by the same employer, provided that the food processing required travel such that the worker was unable to return to his/her permanent residence in the same day. Migrant food processing workers who are full-time students but who travel in organized groups rather than with their families are excluded.

The above definitions were taken from 20 CFR Part 500 Reg. 651

http://www.doleta.gov/programs/who_msfw.cfm

These descriptions provide insight into the range of people considered to be migrant and seasonal farmworkers by the U.S. Department of Labor. Although the Labor Department identifies all three types of workers as migrant and seasonal farmworkers, the type of labor, experiences, and situations of these workers are diverse and vary between individuals and groups. Most noticeable is the difference between migrant and seasonal farmworkers across migrant streams.

In the U.S., three migrant and seasonal farmworker streams exist: western, midwest, and eastern. For example in the western stream, migrant and seasonal farmworkers, largely of indigenous Mexican descent, work the fields in many regions of California such as the Imperial and Central Valleys, and then continue to follow the harvests up to Washington state.

In the Midwest, migrant and seasonal farmworkers travel from Texas to Michigan, Minnesota and Pennsylvania to work in agriculture. Lastly, in the Eastern migrant stream, people work their way from Florida up to North Carolina and New York to work in the apple orchards (National Center for Farmworker Health, n.d.).

National demographics of migrant and seasonal farmworkers have been difficult to collect due to the high mobility and lack of permanent residence for many families. However, the

National Agricultural Workers Survey has been used since the late 80's as a national survey to gather information about farmworkers in crop agriculture (U.S. Department of Labor, 2004). The 2001-2002 survey revealed that 75% of workers were born in Mexico, 23% in the U.S. and 2% in Central America (U.S. Department of Labor, 2004). 53% of all survey respondents were not authorized to work in the U.S. The National Agricultural Workers Survey also found the following:

In 2001-2002, 83% of the crop workers identified themselves as members of a Hispanic group: 72% as Mexican, 7% as Mexican-American, 1% as Chicano, and 3% as other Hispanic. Only 16% of U.S. crop workers self identified as belonging to an ethnic group that was not Hispanic or Latino.

[<http://www.doleta.gov/agworker/report9/chapter1.cfm#summary>]

In Michigan alone, official statistics record that 49,135 migrant and seasonal farmworkers are employed in field agriculture, nursery/greenhouse work, reforestation, and food processing (State of Michigan Interagency Migrant Services Committee, 2013). Additionally, there are 42,729 migrant and seasonal children and youth from ages 0-19 in Michigan (State of Michigan Interagency Migrant Services Committee, 2013). Migrant and seasonal farmworking communities ensure a \$91 billion economy in Michigan and places Michigan as the top nationwide producer of 18 food crops that require hand labor, including tart cherries and blueberries (National Agricultural Statistics Service USDA, 2012). Knowing the national context and history in which migrant and seasonal farmworkers are laboring, living and learning, we can begin to review the educational experiences of migrant and seasonal farmworker youth across K-12 and Migrant Education Programs.

Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in Education: A Literature Review

Two different institutions of education, the K-12 system and Migrant Education Programs serve migrant farmworkers and their children. What ensues is a review of three categories of literature that inform this study, 1) migrant farmworkers in K-12, 2) migrant and seasonal farmworkers in Migrant Education Programs, and 3) the General Educational Development degree (GED). A brief analysis of these bodies of literature and how I seek to build on to this research with my study will be given at the end of this chapter.

Migrant Youth in K-12 Schools

The experiences of migrant youth in K-12 school have been documented from pre-K to college. Research about migrant youth and their experiences in K-12, more often than not, highlight the ways K-12 schools fail to meet the needs of migrant youth (Zalaquett, McHatton & Cranston-Gingras, 2007). It is no surprise that K-12 schools were developed and designed with white, middle-class, permanent students in mind (Garza, Reyes & Trueba, 2001). Zalaquett et al. (2007) assert that “. . . many schools are unaware of or have difficulty meeting the special needs of students who are highly mobile, poor, and in need of support” (p. 140) The challenges migrant children face in K-12 schools are depicted in Francisco Jimenez’s (1997) autobiographic novel *The Circuit*. In his book, Jimenez recounts his life as a migrant child. As a child, Francisco “Panchito” Jimenez, immigrated with his *familia* across the U.S. - Mexico *frontera* to pursue the American Dream in California. *Para ganarse el pan del día la familia trabajo en la pisca de fresas mientras Panchito ayudaba con los quehaceres del hogar*. Panchito’s family lived in a tent at a labor camp and he was enrolled in school on and off as they migrated throughout Central California. He was often made to feel ashamed of his home when he could not invite his friends over like other kids in his school, and was reprimanded for speaking Spanish when his

teacher, Miss Scalapino, spoke only in English in class. He was held back in school because he did not speak English, but he was very astute in writing down words and their meanings in a small notebook that he carried with him throughout his years of migrating from one labor camp to another, and in making visual interpretations of what he learned at school. As exemplified in Jimenez's experiences, another reason why migrant youth experience difficulties in school is due to the fact that many speak a language other than English at home (Gouwens, 2001). Gouwens (2001) points out this issue by saying "The vast majority of migrant families speak Spanish as their home language; these children have difficulty participating successfully in schools and classrooms where there is inadequate language support" (p. 17). Though Jimenez was a migrant child over 30 years ago, his experiences continue to be relevant in regards to the decisions his family had to make for survival, the limited living conditions of his family, and the quality of education he received. Many of these things continue to be the same.

Hayes, Bahruth, and Kessler (1991) chronicled the difficulties and triumphs of working with children in South Texas who are both migrant and Limited English Proficient (LEP)². When Robert Bahruth was assigned to teach LEP fifth graders, he returned to the university to secure the necessary certificate. When he asked for assistance in organizing his room, and feedback on his teaching during his first year, what emerged was a collaboration between Bahruth and two university professors (Hayes & Kessler). Bahruths' students ranged in age from 11 to 16. They were all below-grade level, and many did not know how to read or write. There were many

² As a bilingual individual and educator who is interested in issues of language, power, and identity, I find the term Limited English Proficient (LEP) to be complex and problematic for it focuses on the limitations and deficits of students, rather than the potential and possibility of becoming bilingual. However, Hayes, Bahruth & Kessler (1991) use this term in their study and terms themselves are often a reflection of the social, cultural, and historical context in which the term is being used. Thus, Limited English Proficient, as a term, is included here to stay true to the study being reviewed and to highlight the sociocultural and historical context in which language was being analyzed. Garcia & Kleifgen (2010) offer the term Emergent Bilinguals as an alternative to LEP or English Language Learners as an asset based approach to language learning. See Garcia & Kleifgen (2010) to learn more about the history, policies, programs, and practices of Emergent Bilinguals.

factors contributing to students' difficulties in school; family mobility; the lack of curricular consistency in the district's bilingual education program; staff reluctance to teach these students due to fear that failure would reflect on them; and pervasive feelings of failure amongst students. Of great importance was how these students learned to read and write as summarized in the following:

What these children needed, he believed, was not a teacher who would pity them for their lifestyles or for their poverty, but one who was sensitive and caring and confident enough to nudge them towards literacy. His classroom was a community. Teacher and students learned from each other. Failure at first remained uppermost in the students' minds, and while the fear of it decreased it never disappeared completely. (p. 23)

In addition to facing language and literacy issues in school, migrant youth also experience social isolation in the communities to which they migrate (Gouwens, 2001). Due to their high mobility, it is often difficult for migrant children and youth to form the social relationships with their classmates that impact their feelings of belonging in school (Gouwens, 2001). Differences in customs, norms, expectations, and ways of living also impact the social and cultural isolation of migrant students from schools. Social and cultural isolation is said “. . .to create discontinuity between the schools and home experiences of migrant children and youth; varying expectations between home and school for such basics as social behavior and interaction may be difficult for parents to understand and for children to navigate” (Gouwens, 2001, p. 18). Exum Lopez's (1999) ethnography of three fifth grade boys and their migrant families in rural Pennsylvania, highlights social and cultural discontinuities among migrant families and the schools these students attend, as *collision of the discourses*. She examined how

the discourses of migrant families collided with mainstream school discourses. Exum Lopez (1999) found the following:

Farmworker families must make complex decisions in life. Economic security competes against other values. It is not that farmworkers do not value education; farmworkers clearly realize the benefits of education. All three families expressed such sentiments to me. The problem is that farmworkers are forced to make decisions for economic and social reasons that do not always benefit their child's education from the perspective of the mainstream. (p. 161-162)

Collision of the discourses are "a break down, generally because one discourse maintains its dominant status over another" (Exum Lopez, 1999, p. 159). Other situations that reflected a collision of discourses between migrant families and mainstream schools, were that mainstream teachers did not understand the discourse systems of the migrant families they were working with, including the fact that moving during the school year was a part of migrant children's lives (Exum Lopez, 1999).

In response to the schooling experiences of students like Jimenez and the families with whom Exum Lopez (1999) worked, scholars have addressed the issues migrant children face across the educational pipeline. Vocke (2007) suggests that K-8 teachers develop culturally responsive materials when working with migrant children based on culturally responsive pedagogical practices and literature about migrant families. She cautions teachers from using literature that stereotypes migrant students and recommends that teachers use Spanish and English in the class (oral and written) for learning.

At the secondary level, very little research exists about the experiences of middle and high school students. What we know about the experiences of this population is drawn from

research about migrant youth who have graduated from or left the K-12 education pipeline. According to Gouwens (2001), migrant youth are at risk of dropping out of high school due to the migrant lifestyle that prevents them from completing credits for graduation. Martinez & Cranston-Gingras (1996) affirm that the dropout rate of children of migrant farmworkers is twice as much as children from non-migrant families. In a study they conducted with 345 High School Equivalency Program (HEP) students about the reasons why migrant youth dropout of high school, Martinez & Cranston-Gingras (1996) found that 36% of students dropped out of school to work, in order for their family to survive economically. The rest of the students exited high school because of lack of interest, grade retention, and age-grade discrepancies in school created by frequent moves (Martinez & Cranston-Gingras, 1996).

Garza, Reyes and Trueba (2004) challenge previous research that focused on deficits, dropouts, and challenges of migrant farmworker youth. As former migrant farmworkers and now scholar researchers, Garza et al. (2004) researched the resiliency and success of migrant youth in the U.S. While examining the experiences of three high achieving former migrant farmworkers, they found that their success was grounded in the following:

The migrant families' legacy to their children's success was manifold- but that legacy appeared to be grounded in the families' power to influence the personal development of the students as independent, proud, persistent, and courageous human beings. The students were armed with the dreams of their parents, the empowerment occasioned by their parents' sacrifices, and the abundance of love and support of a strong extended family. Thus armed, they were equipped with self-esteem, confidence, and inner power of success. (p. 68)

The families of the migrant farmworkers were key to the students' success, as were their mentors. Mentors complemented the support these students received from their families. Furthermore, Garza et al. (2004) argue "without either component, the successful outcomes for the students would not have been realized- at least in the ways they were realized with the inputs from both support groups" (p. 98).

Migrant Education Programs

Currently housed within the larger Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Office of Migrant Education provides educational services and opportunities for migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families. The mission of the Office of Migrant Education is to:

" . . . to provide excellent leadership, technical assistance, and financial support to improve the educational opportunities and academic success of migrant children, youth, agricultural workers, fishers, and their families. The OME administers grant programs that provide academic and supportive services to the children of families who migrate to find work in the agricultural and fishing industries. The OME also administers several contracts and special initiatives"

(<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/ome/index.html>).

Although the Office of Migrant Education does not provide an actual definition of migrant farmworkers, in their mission we understand that they serve a range of agricultural and fisheries workers and their families. The range of educational services they provide includes five different programs and initiatives. The U.S. government currently funds nationwide pre-school to college migrant education programs across the nation, particularly in geographic regions where migrant and seasonal farm workers are employed. Programs and initiatives include the following: Title I Migrant Education Program, Migrant Education Even Start, Migrant Education

Program Consortium Incentive Grants, High School Equivalency Program, and the College Assistance Migrant Program. Such migrant education programs are offered nationwide, specifically in states along migrant streams including Texas, Florida, California, Washington, and Michigan. For the purposes of this study, I will solely focus on the High School Equivalency Program (HEP). The College Assistant Migrant Program and the Migrant Education Even Start will be referred to as they relate to the students in the study. Though programs and initiatives are in place throughout the educational pipeline (including preschool) to support the educational needs of migrant farmworker families, migrant farmworker youth continue to lag behind their peers in academic achievement (Reynolds et al., 2007).

Research in the study of Migrant Education Programs demonstrates varying results in addressing the needs of migrant and seasonal farmworker communities across the educational pipeline. At the preschool level, Purcell-Gates (2013) examined the language and literacy funds of knowledge, the bodies of knowledge in household activities (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992) of pre-school children in a migrant head start program. Purcell-Gates (2013) found that “reading and writing mediated 16 different social activity domains in the [migrant] camps” (p. 81). Reading and writing was used to mediate domains that include, spirituality, family life, participation in community life at the migrant camp, working and so forth. However, the migrant head start program had differing culturally specific values and ways of engaging in literacy than those found among migrant camps. The language and literacy practices of migrant children and their families were largely mediated as a community in the migrant camps, yet the language and literacy practices that were taught were very individualistic and English-dominant. Therefore, there were missed opportunities for the program to engage students’ funds.

In her study of a summer Migrant Education Program in the rural Midwest, Torrez (2014) found similar findings as Purcell-Gates (2013). Although the program was made for migrant students from kindergarten to fifth grade, and had teachers who expressed interest in including the funds of knowledge of migrant children, Torrez (2014) found that teachers were being given “culturally and linguistically desensitized curriculum and materials to implement in their classrooms” (p. 39). As a result, she argues that the curriculum and materials aided in the marginalization of the students and their families. Analysis of curricular program materials, including books, worksheets and so forth, along with interviews of program staff and teachers, reflected that bilingual materials were only appropriate for pre-kindergarten students. Teachers who had access to bilingual materials were insufficiently prepared to provide heritage language support for students. Students were often the language brokers between staff and parents due to staff’s lack of proficiency in Spanish. In addition, the curriculum often perpetuated stereotypes and was not up to par in supporting student’s academic needs. Torrez (2014) proposes that Migrant Education Programs hire bilingual staff, capable of engaging culturally relevant curriculum and drawing upon migrant and seasonal farmworkers familial strengths.

Research about students who attend High School Equivalency Programs highlights the impact of K-12 institutions on migrant youth in Migrant Education Programs. Cranston-Gingras (2003) addresses how HEP reconnects migrant students to education after dropping out from school. She argues that HEP reconnects students to education and helps them shed the dropout label as a “program [that] is specifically designed to address the history of negative school experiences many students have had by providing opportunities for academic success and maximizing untapped potential” (p. 243). Academic support, transitional employment assistance, and community living spaces are key to students’ success in HEP.

Research within the same migrant program in which I am working was done in 2010. In his dissertation, Hernandez (2010) sought to identify factors that produce “at-risk” students, and the impact of the factors on migrant students educational experiences, both prior to and during their time at a High School Equivalency Program in the Midwest. Hernandez (2010) assigned the “at-risk” classification to students who were academically low achieving, had dropped out of school, and who were forced to leave the educational system due to life circumstances. As a researcher and instructor for the program for two and half years, he created a pedagogy of Real Talk to address the lack of preparation needed to help students graduate (p. 5). The focus of the pedagogy of Real Talk is to “connect with students, build rapport, and gain insight into their terministic screens through dialogues in order to teach them effectively” (Hernandez, 2010, p. 38). Though Hernandez’s participants were migrant students, his pedagogical implications are relevant for at-risk students at large.

Araujo (2012) researched the experiences and resilience of migrant farmworker youth in college. Araujo examines how Santiago, a migrant farmworker, successfully transitioned from high school to college by using his community cultural wealth. In conducting this study at a CAMP program in the Southwest along the U.S. Mexico border, Araujo found that Santiago’s use of his community cultural wealth at numerous times throughout his educational experience and the fostering of this wealth by the CAMP program, allowed him to successfully transition from high school to college, and to persist throughout his college career. She further argues "Migrant farmworker students' experiences of working in the fields are positive assets that can lead to higher expectations from teachers, both in public schools and universities. Allowing students to use their community cultural wealth in classrooms and in universities has the

potential to increase the number of migrant farmworker students enrolling in and completing college" (Araujo, 2012, p. 96).

The General Educational Development Degree (GED)

A key component of GEM is the General Educational Development degree (GED) exam. As a joint venture between the American Council of Education and Pearson, the GED is perceived and promoted as a high school equivalency diploma although recent research about its actual value says otherwise (see GED overview and history for further details). The first GED exam was created as a credential for veterans in 1943. The exam is largely rooted in 1) The creation of the American Council of Education (ACE) after World War I to assist in preventing college-educated men from entering the battlefield, and 2) ACE 's collaboration with a small group of progressive educators that sought to develop a general education curriculum in high schools (Quinn, 2002). Historically, the GED has been designed as an achievement test that enables adult access into higher education and the workforce (Heckman, Humphries & Kautz, 2014; Bowen & Nantz, 2014).

Research about the GED exam highlights a range of perspectives. Although the GED was created with adults in mind who experienced interrupted education, Rachal & Bingham (2004) argue that the GED has been adolescentized. In other words, they contend that the GED has evolved into education for adolescents, particularly for those 16 and 17 years of age (Rachal & Bingham, 2004) rather than for adults. Moreover, they affirm that due to the adolescentization of the GED, adult education is no longer what it was intended to be. Adding on to the criticisms of the GED, Heckman & Kautz (2014) argue that “. . . this faith in tests [such as the GED] deceives students and policy makers and conceals major social problems. The GED misleads students when they are making educational decisions. High school students as young as sixteen,

can take the GED. Adolescents are impressionable, and for many the GED seems like an attractive alternative to finishing school. We show that having a GED option available induces students to drop out of high school” (p. 8).

Recent research has also challenged the value of the GED as an equivalency to the high school diploma along with its economic, social, and personal value to GED seekers. Heckman, Humphries & Kautz (2014) studied the GED and the role of character in American life and found that GED recipients are not equivalent to high school graduates as has been commonly promoted. Tuck (2012b) describes the differences in the following quote:

The GED has long been viewed as an alternative to a high school diploma, but it is not an equal alternative because GED earners experience diminished returns when compared to high school diploma earners in post-secondary school access and completion, job placement, life-long earnings, health, and incarceration rates. (p. 5)

Bowen & Nantz (2014) also question the value of the GED from a literacy perspective by questioning the implicit definition of literacy in the GED, and its relationship to the economic and other values that it holds for GED seekers. Drawing from a case study at a community-based literacy center that serves low-income women, many of whom are immigrants, Bowen & Nantz (2014) found that GED seekers in their study had high hopes of improved job prospects and also “saw the GED as a stepping stone to more education” (p. 46). While these findings have economic value the women in their study also anticipated non-economic value from the GED as they also believed that attaining a GED would improve their self-esteem and provide better lives for their children (Bowen & Nantz, 2014). According to Bowen & Nantz (2014), the greatest benefit achieved by GED seekers in pursuit of the GED was family literacy. Furthermore,

. . . almost all of the students mentioned through their studies for the GED, they had demonstrated to their children the importance of education and had modeled intellectual activity . . . more poignantly, at the same time that these GED seekers described themselves as encouraging their children, some reported that their children took on the role of encouraging and supporting them. (p. 49-50).

Through a youth participatory action research, Tuck (2012) examined the relationship between multi-level accountability policies, the over use of the GED, and school pushouts in New York. (p. 1). Tuck uses the term *pushout* to describe

. . . the experiences of those youth who have been compelled to leave school by people or factors inside school, such as disrespectful treatment from teachers and other school personnel, violence among students, arbitrary school rules, and the insurmountable presence of high stakes testing. (p. 1)

Not only did she find that accountability policies such as No Child Left Behind and mandatory exit exams produced conditions in urban high schools in New York that encouraged students to opt for GED programs, but she also found that urban youth were repatriating the GED for their own value (Tuck, 2012).

Beyond analyses of youth GED seekers as duped or self-destructive, a third possibility emerged: the GED is valued by many youth not only as gateway to higher employment or higher education, but also, more importantly, as get-away from truculent high schools. (p. 2)

Tuck's findings remind us of the agency that youth have when they realize what K-12 schools can and cannot do for them. Rather than remain in K-12 schools where they experienced

humiliating ironies, they choose to pursue a General Educational Development degree (GED) as a get-away.

In review, the schooling experiences of migrant children and youth throughout K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs reflect a lack of teacher preparation to address the needs of this population and missed opportunities for learning. As Purcell-Gates (2013) found, even within Migrant Education Programs there are many cultural and value mismatches with the migrant communities they seek to serve. The existence of Migrant Education Programs does not necessarily guarantee that the educational needs of migrant farmworker communities are being met. Furthermore, the literature of the schooling experiences of migrant children across the P-20 pipeline reflects a need for research that bridges the conversation from K-12 schools to Migrant Education Programs from an *asset* based perspective, one that honors and extends the wealth of resources, assets, and contributions of students of color. Much of the research that has been conducted focuses on the challenges of K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs in meeting the educational needs of migrant youth. Scholars (Araujo, 2012; Cranston-Gingras, 2003; Garza et al., 2001; Hayes, et al., 1991) have found what works with migrant youth, from drawing upon their assets and experiences in the fields to providing education grounded in care and culturally responsive practices. However, we have yet to bridge the conversation between K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs to learn from each other and improve the quality of education we offer migrant farmworker youth. The literature also reflects a need to complicate the language we use to identify migrant youth who exit K-12 schools and address their agency within and across K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs. While migrants youth's exit out of the K-12 pipeline was referred to as "dropping out" (Martinez & Cranston-Gingras, 1996) and students were identified as "at-risk" (Hernandez, 2010), Cranston-Gingras (2003) recognized

the problems related to the term “drop-out”. In the aftermath of the K-12 systems failure to address the needs of migrant farmworker communities, identifying the problem as the outcome of high drop-out rates for at-risk students, relieves the social institutions, especially schools, of responsibility. Branding students as dropouts, also frames them as solely responsible for the education they failed to receive.

Based on my identification of these missed opportunities for learning, I engaged in a three-year longitudinal ethnographic case study of migrant farmworker youth in a High School Equivalency Program. My focus is on the overwhelmingly negative schooling experiences of migrant students and their labeling as drop-outs, the lack of recent literature on the school experiences of migrant farmworker youth, and the need for Migrant Education Programs and the K-12 system to work together on improving educational opportunities for this student population. I draw from a rich history of scholarship that has focused on *asset pedagogies* (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll et al., 1992; Yosso, 2005), *pedagogies* that “repositioned the linguistic, literate, and cultural practices of working-class communities- specifically poor communities of color –as resources and assets to honor, explore, and extend” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 87), to highlight the wealth of migrant and seasonal farmworker communities in education. In the following chapter I detail my approach to this research.

CHAPTER 3

Learning with Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Youth: A Research Approach

This study documents the educational experiences of Latina/o migrant farmworker youth in a GED granting Migrant Education Program in the Midwest. I examined the educational experiences of Latina/o migrant farmworker youth to gain insight into the ways youth are living and learning at the interstices of K-12 and adult education. This effort began as a study into the linguistic and literate lives of migrant farmworker youth. As data was collected and I came to learn that migrant youth's language and literacy practices were deeply connected to their previous schooling experiences, my study shifted focus. Those of us who are involved with in-depth meaningful, transformative, ethnographic research know that research is anything but linear. Additionally, the shifting focus of my study reflects the nature of the program and staying true to the context where curriculum, instruction, and services are tailored to meet the needs of migrant farmworker youth. This chapter maps the research approach of this study. First, I provide an overview of GEM, a High School Equivalency Program, where my study took place. Then I draw attention to the methodology and methods that were used to collect and analyze data.

Case Study Research

I designed this research effort as a three year longitudinal, multiple case study, embedded in the same context. According to Creswell (2007), case study research can be described as follows:

A qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, audio-visual material and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-bounded

themes (p. 73).

Individual cases were collected during two semesters of the program across a three-year span; Fall 2012 to Spring 2014. The migrant farmworker youth in this study shared the context of the program and in many ways were connected by the Latina/o experience in the greater Michigan context. Although individual case studies were collected, they are bounded by the context of GEM and are deeply intertwined with what it means to be Latina/o in Michigan. Case study methods allowed me to develop a deep understanding of each student as a bounded case while allowing for comparison across cases using multiple sources of information.

The six case studies were developed using ethnographic methods to collect data. The use of participant observations and field notes enabled me to culturally situate educational experiences of migrant youth. Conducting ethnographic case studies of my participants allowed me to foreground the importance of culturally situated experiences in the identities and linguistic practices of my participants, and concentrate on the experiential knowledge of each participant, shaped by social, cultural, and political contexts. Overall, my in-depth case studies provide much needed knowledge about the community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge of migrant farmworker communities. It is only through sustained ethnographic case studies that I was able to offer a portrait of the educational and linguistic experiences of a population we know little about, and whose contributions in the agricultural economy of this country is often overlooked.

En Familia: The High School Equivalency Program

This study took place in a High School Equivalency Program (HEP) at a large Midwestern University that I refer to as the general education migrant program (GEM). The program is described as follows:

The High School Equivalency Program (HEP) helps migratory and seasonal farmworkers (or children of such workers) who are 16 years of age or older and not currently enrolled in school to obtain the equivalent of a high school diploma and, subsequently, to gain employment or begin postsecondary education or training. The program serves more than 7,000 students annually. Competitive awards are made for up to five years of funding.

The goals of the program are to help students do the following: 1) Complete the requirements for high school graduation or for General Educational Development (GED) certificates; 2) Pass standardized tests of high school equivalency; and 3) Assist students to participate/transition into subsequent postsecondary education and career activities (High School Equivalency Program, 2012). Students in the program ranged in ethnicity, gender, age, language, place of origin, generation, and citizenship status. However, the majority of students were of Mexican descent. As migrant workers many of them were from low-income working class families and have experienced interrupted schooling in either their home country, in the U.S or both. (Martinez et al., 1996; Romanowski, 2003).

Recruitment & Eligibility

In GEM, the program recruiter visited farmworker communities and migrant camps along the Midwest migrant stream in Michigan, Ohio, and Texas to inform families about the possibility of pursuing their GED. Partnerships with community centers and other organizations who served migrant and seasonal farmworkers also assisted in the recruitment of students. If interested in the program, prospective students had to meet eligibility requirements, including migrant and seasonal farmworker status. Eligibility requirements were determined based on the

Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) and federal regulation 34 CR 206.3. To be eligible for the High School Equivalency Program students must meet the following criteria:

1. Has, or has at least one immediate family member who has, spent a minimum of 75 days during the past 24 months as a migrant or seasonal farmworker (34 CFR 206.3(a)(1)); or
2. Is eligible to participate, or has participated within the past 24 months, in the MEP or the NFJP (see questions G1-G12 regarding participant eligibility under 34 CFR 206.3(a)(2)); and
3. Has not have earned a secondary school diploma or its equivalent (34 CFR 206.3(b)(1)); and
4. Is not be currently enrolled in an elementary or secondary school (34 CFR 206.3(b)(2)); and
5. Is 16 years of age or over, or beyond the age of compulsory school attendance in the State in which he or she resides (34 CFR 206.3(b)(3)); and
6. Is determined by the grantee to need the academic and supporting services and financial assistance provided by the project in order to attain the equivalent of a secondary school diploma and to gain employment or be placed in an institution of higher education (IHE) or other postsecondary education or training (34 CFR 206.3(b)(4)).

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/camp/hep-camp-eligibility-non-regulatory-guidance-2012.pdf>

The eligibility requirements are important to consider as we seek to understand the identities of migrant and seasonal farmworkers, along with the institutional and policy impact on their

educational, economic, and life opportunities. Furthermore, by defining and determining the eligibility parameters, the Department of Labor and the Office of Migrant Education have institutional power and influence over migrant farmworkers' access to health, education, labor rights, and more. Other factors, such as race/ethnicity, generational status, gender and others, also contribute to the access, opportunity, and discourse of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. However, when considering the ways (children of) migrant and seasonal farmworkers identify themselves in relation to the world they live in, we must consider the powers that be across social, institutional and individual realms.

Migrant and seasonal farmworkers are differentiated. *Migrant workers* are defined as seasonal farm workers whose employment requires travel that keeps the farm worker from returning to a permanent home within the same day. Those who are employed in farm work on a temporary or seasonal (not year round) basis are considered *seasonal workers*. Verification of migrant or seasonal worker status is required and may include pay stubs or other written proof of employment. Additional eligibility requirements include 1) Being 17 years of age or beyond compulsory age; 2) Not enrolled in school; 3) Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent; 4) Taking and passing an admissions exam. Potential students also submitted a program application, and were interviewed with his/her family by the recruiter.

Cohorts of 20-25 students entered the program every Fall (September) and Winter (January). GEM commenced about two weeks after the semester had begun at the Midwestern University where the program is located. Summer sessions were not offered although the recruitment period is year round.

Program Components

As a residential Migrant Education Program, GEM provided on-campus university housing. Students moved into residential dormitories at the university and lived with peers at Haven Court where program offices also reside. Since the program was on a university campus it was quite common for students to talk about having the college experience while in GEM. Students had access to most university resources and events, including the library, dining halls, recreation/gym access, and more.

Prior to commencing coursework all students attended a four-day orientation where they learned about university and program rules, study skills, and support services. Students would also participate in campus tours, community-building activities (i.e. If You Really Knew Me, Laser Tag, etc.), and a writing assessment. Considering changes to the GED exam, including a change from pencil and paper to electronic format, a computer basics course was added to the orientation in 2014. During orientation it was common to see family members, friends and even school personnel transport and move students into GEM. Program personnel often encourage and financially support family, friends and others to stay and eat lunch with students on this first day. Community building activities prevail during orientation to support students' transition to GEM and to create a community of learners.

Students were divided into classrooms based on their language proficiency in English and Spanish, and assigned a temporary schedule to take subject matter courses. Course offerings were based on the required subject exams of the GED. Each subject was taught in week long increments to prepare students to take a subject matter exam per week. Prior to 2014, subjects included reading, writing, social studies, science, and mathematics. In 2014 the GED exam included reasoning through language arts, mathematical reasoning, science, and social studies.

Instructors noticed that in the 2014 version of the GED there was increased attention to writing across all subjects, in comparison to the previous exam where writing primarily took place in the writing exam. However, students were sent to take GED subject exams at the discretion and approval of the instructors and program staff.

GEM offered study lab Monday through Friday to provide students with a space to do homework and receive tutoring. All students were required to attend study lab. After students completed class for the day, students were required to attend study lab from 6pm to 8pm. Bi-weekly cohort lunches were held where all students and staff shared lunch together in the residential dining hall. These gatherings were known as GEM lunches. During each lunch a motivational or community building activity would take place. Additionally, social activities were organized on an as needed basis. Activities included university football games, bowling, visits to museums, off campus lunch or dinner, etc. These social activities provided students opportunities to distract themselves from the intensive pace of the program. Professional development workshops were also offered to students including resume building, interview preparation, professional etiquette, dressing and more. All components were planned and led in pursuit of fulfilling the goals of the program, specifically that of achieving the GED and improvement of future employment.

Support Services

During the entirety of the program students were offered the following support services; individual academic plans, personal counseling (with a professional counselor), job placement, health care, financial aid stipends, housing, and residential aides. About 4-5 staff members are assigned 4-5 students each to conduct individual academic plans (IAP's) with each student. IAP's were conducted three times during the semester to help teachers and program staff to

identify areas of personal and academic improvement, future goals, and education and employment placement opportunities. Counseling sessions with a professional university counselor, as well as health care (i.e. vision and dental exams) were offered free of charge. Although students have access to counseling and other supports, it is the students' choice whether or not to pursue such services. Like all college dormitories, students had residential aides that specifically worked with GEM. Many of the residential aides were college students in the College Assistance Migrant Program.

Program Environment and Program Personnel

GEM sponsors an environment of learning that supports the cultural and linguistic identities of students. Students and staff are encouraged to use their vast linguistic repertoire to learn, communicate, and express themselves within the program. It is quite common, if not the norm to hear Spanish, English, and Spanglish in the classrooms and program offices. This is central to the culture of GEM and unique when contrasted to students' previous K-12 educational experiences that took place in English-only environments.

Program personnel in GEM ranged from 15-20 staff members including administrators, recruiter(s), instructors, tutoring staff, residential aides, and interns. Most personnel were bilingual in Spanish and English and had experience with migrant farmworker communities, or were migrant farmworkers themselves. Many had completed their education within the College Assistance Migrant Program at the same university. Three instructors shared the teaching course load. While all instructors were key players in the educational experiences of migrant farmworker youth in GEM, I will specifically highlight Mrs. Lucy. She is a Guatemalan teacher who holds a PhD in Biology, along with two masters degrees in the sciences, and has worked with the program for over seven years. She began working with the program because she wanted

to work with Latina/o students whom she had very little access to in her previous job at the university. I chose to include Mrs. Lucy in the study because she was the only instructor who consistently taught during the time of data collection. Additionally, students identified the impact that she had on them throughout their time in GEM. Thus, as data was collected it became clear that Mrs. Lucy's role in the educational experiences of migrant youth in GEM deserved greater attention.

Funding

Based on competitive five-year federal grants to institutions of higher education or non-profit organizations, GEM is supposed to serve up to 70 students in a year. However, some students have last minute financial difficulties or family issues that do not allow them to enter the program as planned. The number of students who are not served for that given funding year, rolls over to the following semester. For 2012-2013, GEM did not meet their required numbers therefore for the 2013-2014 school year GEM must serve at least 75 students. During 2012 the U.S. Department of Education allocated \$19, 871, 090 to fund High School Equivalency Programs across the nation while in 2014, funding went down to \$18, 837, 844. (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/hep/funding.html>)

The General Educational Development Degree

During the length of my study, I witnessed two versions of the GED: the 2002 and 2014 exams. The 2002 GED had 4 exams; reading, writing, math, social studies. However, in January of 2014 the GED Testing Service introduced a new version aligned with Common Core State Standards. The most recent version of the GED is solely computer-based and consists of four subject exams: mathematics, social studies, science and language arts. Changes made to the GED impacted curriculum, instruction and the number of students who achieve a GED. Increased

attention to writing and comprehension was reflected in the 2014 exam to which the program had to adjust their curriculum and instruction accordingly. Further details about the impact of the new exam will be discussed in the findings and implications chapter. Though the GED exam changed during the time my study took place, teachers in GEM still determined whether or not a student was ready or prepared enough to take a subject matter exam. If teachers observed that a student needed further preparation in a subject they continued working with that student until s/he was well prepared to pass the exam. Thus, the pace at which a student progressed through the program varied.

The Communities: Community Profile

GEM is embedded within multiple communities that must be detailed to have a rich understanding of the context in which migrant farmworker youth are learning. First of all, GEM was housed in a large Midwest, Research I land-grant institution. As a pioneer land-grant institution, this university's history is rooted in advancing agriculture. During Fall 2014, the university served 50,085 undergraduate, graduate and professional students. During the 2011-2012 school year there were 48,906 total students enrolled at the university of which 1,678 were Hispanic/Latino, 3,037 were Black/African American and 33,584 were white. In Spring 2014 there was an increase in total enrollment to 50,085 students. Of those students only 1,878 were Hispanic/Latino, 3,196 were Black/African American, with 33,116 being white.

The university itself is located in Middle City, MI. In 2010, the U.S. Census found 114,620 people living in Middle City. Of that population 12.5% identified as Hispanic/Latino. Michigan itself has a population of 9,909,877 of which 4.4% are Hispanic/Latino. The population of Hispanic/Latinos in Michigan is comprised of diverse subgroups including people from the Caribbean and Central America. The majority are Mexican-American and Mexican-

origin families who migrated to Michigan from South Texas to work in the fields (Martinez & Escobar, 2010). Michigan's first Latinos were *tejanos*, Mexicans who were born or raised in Texas or who had arrived there after crossing the border (Badillo, 2003). Many arrived in 1915 to work in the sugar beets after Russian and Hungarian laborers moved to the cities (Badillo, 2003). Badillos' research on the history of Latinos in Michigan provides a glimpse of what happened after the first wave of migration to the state:

Thereafter, the Saginaw-based Michigan Sugar Beet Company brought up thousands of migrants from Texas to replace European-origin immigrants who had "settled out" from the beet fields, often having accumulated small properties. By the 1920 growing season, almost five thousand Mexicans had arrived in the different parts of southern Michigan, and they soon came to dominate the agriculture sector. These workers, who called themselves *betabeleros*, most of whom had been farmers, sharecroppers, or ranch hands prior to heading north, spearheaded the permanent settlement of Mexican Americans in Michigan. At first they came alone (often having been smuggle into the state aboard covered trucks), but later they arrived with their families, as children and all able-bodied adults effectively served as additional hands tend to acreage. (pp. 4-5)

After experiencing interethnic hostility and having few opportunities for land acquisition, farmworkers began pursuing employment in year-round work and moved south to the booming industries in urban cities. With the expansion of the "fruit belt" in Michigan, migrant farmworkers came to work the fields of asparagus, cherries, blueberries, and other crops in western Michigan (Badillo, 2003). According to Martinez & Escobar (2010), "in the 1950's more than 300,000 migrant workers worked Michigan's agricultural fields. Today, less than

50,000 come through the state, mainly due to the decline of the sugar beet industry and the mechanization of the industry” (p. 17).

Learning With and From Migrant Youth: Participant Introductions

In the spirit of *humanizing research* (Paris, 2010; Paris & Winn, 2014), six participants across two cohorts were selected, all along a continuum of bilingualism in Spanish and English. While some participants have been living and learning bilingually in Spanish and English, others were adding English to their linguistic repertoire as emerging bilinguals. Language across migrant farmworker youth is discussed in greater detail in chapter six. The selection of participants occurred through a process where my interactions as a participant observer in GEM, and the students’ interactions with me resulted in the mutual choosing of one another (Paris, 2010). As a participant observer in GEM, I worked with and developed relationships with my participants, first as students and then as participants in a study. Before taking part in my study, all six participants were aware that I was a graduate student, volunteering in the program, and knew that I was interested in their language practices. It came as no surprise to the students that I chose them to participate in my study, based on my interactions and participant observations in the program. Based on the mutual choosing of each other I was able to develop relationships with my participants based on trust and respect. Participants included four males: Freddy, Andres, Antonio, and Guadalupe. Melissa and Gris were both females. At the time of the study, each participant worked in migrant or seasonal farm work, except for Melissa. She was the child of a migrant farmworker and eventually worked at a peach packing farm post-GED. What follows are brief introductions of the migrant and seasonal farmworker youth in this study.

Freddy del Valle

Freddy was an 18-year-old *Mexicano* who had been working in the fields since he was 8. Prior to entering GEM, Freddy attended a rural high school in southwest Michigan. He learned about GEM through one of his teachers who was familiar with the program. She suggested he contact the program to complete his high school equivalency after reviewing his grades and graduation requirements. Most recently, Freddy was working at a recycling plant with his older brother. His parents were immigrants to this country from Mexico and Guatemala, thus making him second generation in the U.S.

When asked whether he had any positive schooling experiences prior to GEM, Freddy responded with sarcasm “What positive school experiences, Miss?” Furthermore, Freddy’s goal in GEM was to attain his GED and prove himself to the high school principal who had labeled him and his brothers as “troublemakers.” In GEM, Freddy took courses in English and successfully accomplished his goal in the Spring of 2012.

Andres Ocampo

During a community service event at a homeless shelter I had the fortune of meeting Andres. Though we had previously met in the program, we never had the opportunity to talk in depth until we both happened to be serving salad and biscuits at a soup kitchen (part of a social event sponsored by GEM). In between serving warm meals to the hungry on a chilly spring afternoon, Andres re-introduced himself and explained his journey into GEM. Andres is 18 years old and is originally from San Diego, CA. Due to the violence in the neighborhood that Andres’ family lived in, his mother decided to move their family to Michigan. Prior to GEM, Andres was kicked out of school multiple times. He ultimately left during his senior year of high school, after learning about GEM through one of his teachers in a rural Michigan farming town. When asked

about his previous schooling experiences, Andres expressed dissatisfaction with the way teachers and school administrators policed Latino students' language practices inside and outside of the classroom at his high school. He was disciplined on multiple occasions for speaking Spanish at school and for "talking back" about the schools' implicit English-only policy. When asked why he attended GEM he answered: "For a better life for my baby and I." Andres was awaiting the arrival of his first son at the time of this study. In GEM, Andres was placed in the English group to pursue a GED and succeeded in attaining it in Spring 2012.

Antonio Lopez

Antonio, a transnational *Mexicano* from Guerrero, experienced K-12 education in both Mexico and the U.S. He was born and raised in Guerrero by his grandmother until he was seven and eventually migrated to Chicago, Illinois with his parents. In Chicago, he was identified as an English Language Learner and placed in an elementary school where some of his cousins attended. In elementary school he recalls having been teased about his English or lack thereof, by some of his cousins and their friends of Mexican descent who were born in the States. For the middle and high school years he returned to Mexico where he studied at *la preparatoria*, secondary education in Mexico. There he was identified by his teacher as being "too advanced" in comparison to the other students in the course. He found himself bored in classes in Mexico and eventually left school altogether. Ultimately, he never completed education in either the U.S. or Mexico and felt like he needed to get his GED in order to be an example to his two young daughters. In GEM he placed in the Spanish group because of his written scores on the language exam, however his oral language skills were higher in English.

Melissa Acosta

Melissa was an 18-year-old *Mexicana* from Uruapan, Michoacan. She was born in Mexico, but her parents migrated to the U.S. when she was 3 years of age. Thus, she is what is termed as generation 1.5. Although she was born in Mexico she considered Michigan to be home. Prior to her arrival in the U.S. her father had been a high school student and migrant farmworker, in the U.S. Melissa's father would migrate between the Mexico and U.S. as a migrant farmworker and would regularly send money and clothes for his family in Michoacan. Eventually, the entire family moved to New Jersey followed by multiple moves to Minnesota, Chicago, and Michigan for seasonal farm work. When Melissa's uncle moved to southwest Michigan, Melissa's family would visit him often and grew to like the area. When employment opportunities emerged in other states the family would move to places like Minnesota while renting or boarding up their home in Michigan.

During the multiple moves Melissa attended over 11 schools. Though this affected her ability to develop relationships of trust with her teachers and peers, she believes that she benefitted from learning about a variety of teaching styles across different contexts. She decided to attend GEM after learning about the program from a teacher at her high school while attempting to make up missing credits from her freshman and sophomore year. Melissa's goal while in GEM was to attain her GED within a month of arrival. She wanted to be present for her father's doctor appointments to learn about the diagnosis of an on-going illness that had prevented him from working for months at a time. She was a student in the Spring 2012 cohort.

Guadalupe Zamora

At 18 years of age Guadalupe has lived beyond his years. He was born and lived in Hidalgo, Mexico until the age of four when his father sent for his family to come to the U.S. At

the time his father had been working as a migrant farmworker in Michigan. In the U.S.

Guadalupe was raised by his mother. Guadalupe's father has been in and out of his life. He is the oldest of three and brother to two younger sisters whom he helped raised while his mother worked in the fields.

Guadalupe attended the same high school as Freddy. He learned about GEM through the same teacher that introduced Freddy to GEM, but did not pursue admission. When his mother learned about the program through Freddy's mother, she insisted he attend. Guadalupe had been in and out of school throughout his K-12 trajectory. At one point he was placed in an adult education program to achieve his GED. However, he eventually made his way back to high school after realizing that adult education was not the right environment for him.

Gris Hernandez

Gris is a twenty-seven year old *Michoacana*, a wife and a mother of a four-year-old daughter. She came to the U.S. when her younger sister decided to migrate in 2008 and Gris joined her. They both started working at a dairy farm in Michigan where another sister lived and worked. Gris used to clean the large egg vats during the night shift at the dairy farm before moving to St. Christopher, MI. Most recently, she was working with her husband on the farm where they live in St. Christopher. Her husband works on the farm year-round, while she works seasonally.

In Mexico, Gris had graduated from *la secundaria* and took vocational classes on Sundays. The vocational course taught computer skills, Microsoft Word, Excel, and so on. Prior to migrating to the U.S. Gris assumed that Michigan would be like cities she had seen on television, such as Los Angeles and Miami. However, she affirms that Michigan isn't anything like she presumed it would be.

In these brief introductions to my participants, the diversity and similarities in backgrounds and experiences as migrant and seasonal farmworkers begins to emerge. Table I: Participant Overview provides further details including the semester they participated in GEM, generational status, and more. Four participants participated in Spring 2012 while two participated in Spring 2014. Students (Antonio, Melissa, Freddy, and Andres) who participated in Spring 2012 took the 2002 version of the GED, while students (Guadalupe and Gris) in Spring 2014 were the first cohort to prepare for the new version of the GED. As demonstrated in Table I, most students were seasonal farmworkers at the time of the study. Some of the participants were migrant farmworkers prior to the study, but were currently working seasonally and/or in a stable full-time job. These details are important to keep in mind to understand participant backgrounds as they experience education across K-12 and GEM. In the following chapters, you will get to know the participants more in depth through their educational trajectories in and out of GEM.

Table 1: Participant Overview

| Participant | Semester in GEM | Migrant/Seasonal Status | Generation in the U.S. | Age in GEM | Age of Interrupted Education |
|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Antonio | Spring 2012 | Seasonal | 1.5 | ~32 | ~15 |
| Andres | Spring 2012 | Seasonal | 2 | 18 | 16 |
| Freddy | Spring 2012 | Seasonal | 2 | 18 | 18 |
| Melissa | Spring 2012 | Child of migrant farmworker | 2 | 18 | 18 |
| Guadalupe | Spring 2014 | Seasonal | 1.5 | 18 | 18 |
| Gris | Spring 2014 | Seasonal | 1 | 27 | 21 |

Data Collection Methods

My data collection and analysis were informed by grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Data collection consisted of ethnographic field notes, participant observations, *platicas*, and semi-structured interviews with each case study participant. Emerson, et al (1995) state that ethnographic field research consists primarily of two characteristics: participant-observation and writing ethnographic field notes that capture what one observes. As a participant-observer in GEM, I worked to provide “thick description” of observations in classrooms, program offices, GEM communal lunches, and other program activities to “draw large conclusions from the small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics” (Geertz, 1973, p. 28). Those thick descriptions were written as field notes in my research journal, amended upon review, and became “thick” as I layered and analyzed them over time.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, this study had initially begun with a focus on the language and literacy of migrant farmworker youth. Thus, I had anticipated collecting recordings of migrant youth’s language in use. However, as the study progressed and my focus shifted beyond language and into the schooling experiences of migrant youth, I mainly focused on collecting self-reported usage and attitudes about language in prior education and in GEM rather than in-depth analysis of language in use. Self-reported language usage and attitudes were collected to understand how students were making sense of language and identity during their educational experiences. I did attend to language interactions in my field notes, which provided important examples of language in use to set against the interview data about experiences and attitudes. Additionally, two classroom recordings and two *platica* style focus groups reflect self-reported usage of language, language attitudes, and language in use.

Platicas

As a volunteer and participant observer in GEM I often found myself engaging in *platicas*, informal conversations and dialogue (Delgado Bernal & Elenes, 2011) with students in the program. These informal conversations and dialogues can occur either among researchers or among researchers and their participants. According to Delgado Bernal & Elenes (2011)

The *platicas* help bring together experiences between different worlds of students, women, Latinas, and multiple communities associating mind, body and spirit- or “mindbodyspirit”, which usually is invisible in institutions of higher education, where rationality is considered more legitimate than the body and the spirit. (p. 112)

While my training in qualitative research methods had exposed me to focus groups, it was intersections of my background in Chicano and Chicana Studies and students in GEM that lead me to use *platicas* as a method in this study. In my pilot study, what I called a focus group brought together a multiplicity of experiences in the same way that *platicas* do. The focus group was not a part of the research design to begin with, but it emerged from a conversation I had with Mrs. Lucy and two students at a GEM lunch. I asked them if they would like to continue the conversation after lunch was over and they were greatly interested. When I scheduled the focus group, I invited them to lunch and they each proceeded to invite someone that they felt could contribute to the conversation. Ultimately, the focus group ended up with 5 students, Mrs. Lucy, and me. Though I was initially concerned with how the focus group design had unraveled, it blossomed into something much larger than expected and became one of my richest and most enlightening sources of data. Considering how the so-called focus group evolved, and the interactions amongst those present, I now refer to it as a *platica*.

This *platica* was crucial in the data collection process, as it became a humanizing

moment for me as a researcher. According to Paris & Winn (2014), humanizing approaches are “. . . those that involved the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for both researchers and participants” (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. xvi). As a researcher I had to reflect deeply if the methods I was using in the study were culturally grounded in the lives of the students. After much thought I realized that I was attempting to collect data on my terms and not on the students. Thus, allowing students to take charge of what this *platica* looked like, allowed the students to exercise their agency in forming the research they were a part of. Thus, I would argue that through the use of *platicas* students researched with me.

Semi-structured Interviews

In addition to participant observations, field notes, and *platicas*, I engaged in semi-structured interview(s) with each participant. All participants consented to be interviewed and audio-recorded. The interview protocol focused on their family, educational, and linguistic backgrounds and experiences. Interviews were from 30 to 60 minutes in length. While most interviews took place at GEM, three interviews (Melissa, Gris, and Freddy’s) took place in the location of their choosing. Melissa and Gris chose to be interviewed at home while Freddy chose to be interviewed at a local sandwich shop in his hometown. Although I planned to hold follow-up interviews with each participant, I was only able to continue interviewing Gris, Melissa, and Guadalupe. Contact information for the other participants changed, making it impossible to further include them. During the interviews I was able to complete, I asked students about their life post GEM and followed up on previous observations, interview responses and so on.

Analysis and Synthesis of Data

Given participant consent, all interviews were audio recorded and manually transcribed to engage in first-hand analysis. Member checks were conducted with participants whom I was able to successfully contact. I recorded field notes in a personal research journal, typed, amended, and saved in a password-protected computer. In the tradition of grounded theory, data was reviewed throughout the data collection period and used to inform the interview protocol(s), and the direction of my study. I analyzed each case following coding methods exemplified in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Charmaz (1983) states “codes serve to summarize, synthesize, and sort many observations made of the data. By providing the pivotal link between the data collection and its conceptual rendering, coding becomes the fundamental means of developing the analysis” (p. 112). In the spirit of grounded theory, I collected and analyzed emerging data simultaneously, and engaged in initial and focused coding (Charmaz, 2014), followed by cross-case analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Negotiating Potential Ethical Issues

De Costa (2014) argues that engaging in ethical research practices is a “complex ethical decision-making process” (p. 420). While collecting research for my pilot study, staff in the program introduced me to students in both Spanish and in English. When I was introduced in English, students were told I was just doing a research project, while in Spanish I was introduced as a graduate student doing an *investigacion*. The tone and words that were used to introduce me in Spanish positioned me in a way that assumed I was an all-knowing scientist, a positive, authoritative researcher role. Though program staff were aware that I was conducting research and seemed comfortable with my presence as a participant observer, when they translated my role from English to Spanish it seemed to create some distance between the students and me.

Underlying assumptions within that comment positioned me as an all-knowing authority figure that in my eyes as a Mexican American woman, I do not find culturally respectful or grounded in the lives of the communities with whom I was learning. Thus, I had to navigate the different meanings of research within a bilingual space and had to readjust my methods to ensure that I was engaging in research that was both *culturally sustaining* (Paris, 2012) and humanizing within my research site.

Theoretical Influences

To make sense of the schooling experiences, language and identity of migrant youth in GEM, I drew upon Social Reproduction theory, Safety Zone(s) theory, and Community Cultural Wealth, and Vizenor's (1994) Survivance. In what follows, I provide an overview of each of the theories and how they helped me understand the lived experiences of migrant youth.

Social Reproduction Theory

It is well documented that the education system in the U.S. is an institution that reproduces class and labor relations (Anyon, 1981; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). In 1976, Bowles & Gintis argued that schools are sites of social reproduction that socialize students to occupy the same class position as their parents. Bowles & Gintis (1976) believe that "schools are constrained to justify and reproduce inequality rather than correct it" (p.102). For example, working class students learn to be submissive, passive learners where rule following is highly enforced and behavior control is a priority. Higher social classes are taught to work with others in a less supervised fashion and have access to more electives in their schools (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 132). The different levels of schooling reflect the hierarchical division of labor (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 132). The social reproductive role of schools is also visible in the work tasks, curriculum, funding inequities, and the rise of accountability to increase the global

competitiveness of the U.S. Scholars such as Jay MacLeod (2009), Paul Willis (1977) and others have chronicled the constraints and possibilities of schools as institutions of social reproduction, while also noting the agency students exert inside and outside of schools.

Understanding the experiences of migrant and seasonal farmworker youth requires insight to the intricate relationship between education, labor, and the economy. As social reproduction theory sheds light on schools as institutions of social reproduction, I was able to understand how schools create and perpetuate the conditions for some students to succeed and others to fail, in this case migrant farmworker youth, and the role of schools in maintaining divisions of social classes. In using social reproduction theory, my intention is to address the role of schools in socially reproducing and complicating how migrant farmworker youth end up in GED programs. Although research and literature about migrant youth have often detailed how schools are unprepared to meet the needs of migrant youth and how migrant youth often drop out, there has not been enough attention drawn to how these issues are connected to and often occur because of the social reproductive role of schools.

Safety Zone(s) Theory

To examine the environment of the GED program and the K-12 schools in which migrant youth sought an education, I drew upon what San Pedro (2014) calls the *Environmental Safety Zone (ESZ)*. The environmental safety zone is described as: “a zone *around* each of us that prevents or allows our ideas, knowledge, and experiences to grow and become realized. This includes the contexts and situations in which we are located within schools, at home, in the community, and so on” (p. 51). As individuals in the environment, which in this case is GEM, migrant youth also navigated their *Internal Safety Zone* within the environmental safety zone. The internal safety zone is described as: “a zone within each of use where can contemplate,

understand, and make sense of our ideas, knowledge, and experiences. It is what we are thinking and feeling and becoming in our mind; it is our cumulative identity up to the present point, which has been formed by our gendered, race, classes, and language” (San Pedro, 2014, p. 51). San Pedro (2014) developed the environmental and internal safety zones in his research with indigenous youth in the U.S. Southwest. He builds upon Lomawaima & McCarty’s (2006) *Safety Zone Theory* (SZT) that traced “how Indigenous knowledge and languages have been viewed as safe in our nation’s shared sense of American identity, while, during times, they have been viewed dangerous and excluded” (San Pedro, 2014, p. 43-44). San Pedro (2014) affirms that both the environmental and internal safety zones are in constant interplay, yet are not exclusive of each other. Historically, there have been moments when migrant and seasonal farmworkers have been deemed safe and have been welcomed for labor and the economy’s sake. However, as soon as economy drops then these farmworkers are deemed dangerous. With this history in mind, I used the environmental and internal safety zones in this chapter to address the interplay between the environment of the program and the students in GEM. Additionally, the concept of environmental and internal safety zones allows me to address what is deemed “dangerous” regarding migrant and farmworker youth in education, including their high mobility, occupations, bodies, languages, and more.

Community Cultural Wealth

Grounded in Critical Race Theory, Yosso (2005) theorizes a *Community Cultural Wealth* (CCW) model that consists of six forms of capital: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familiar, and resistant capital. Communities of color often develop resiliency, hopes and dreams as aspirational capital, in spite of their struggles. Communities of color also hold linguistic capital that includes more than one language or style of communication, plus a repertoire of

storytelling skills and oral histories. Familial capital refers to “those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition” (Yosso, 2005, p.79). The networks and communities of people and resources are social capital, while navigational capital refers to “skills of maneuvering through social institutions”, specifically those that were not created with people of color in mind (including schools). Lastly, Yosso (2005) defined resistant capital as knowledge and skills that challenge inequality. Some knowledge, skills, and experiences may overlap with various capitals. For example, speaking Spanish could count as linguistic capital while also be used as resistant capital. Yosso (2005) developed a community cultural wealth model to address “the under-utilized assets students of color bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom” (p. 70). Engaging the community cultural capital of students of color in our classrooms holds the potential of affirming and positioning these students as holders and creators of knowledge, as challengers to deficit approaches, and sources of knowledge that educators draw upon to better serve communities of color, particularly Chicano/Latino students (Yosso, 2005; Valdez & Lugg, 2010).

Scholars such as Araujo (2012) and Jimenez (2010) have drawn upon Yosso’s CCW in their research endeavors. Araujo (2012) researched how a migrant farmworker, Santiago, used his community cultural wealth to successfully transition from high school to college as a part of the College Assistance Migrant Program. In another study, Jimenez (2010) engaged in participatory action research with an elementary teacher of Mexican immigrant children, to develop and implement a family and cultural wealth project informed by Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth model.

In this study, I drew upon Yosso’s CCW model to help me understand the lived experiences of migrant youth from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. With this

model, Yosso challenges Bourdieu's cultural capital theory and deficit ideologies that position the wealth and value of knowledge, according to social class standing. Furthermore, it helped me understand the meaning of the GED in students' lives beyond material or economic outcomes. The migrant farmworker youth I learned with became role models to their children, inspired family members to attend college, and drew upon their CCW in ways that are not accounted for using dominant cultural capital theories. Secondly, CCW illuminates what GEM was seeking to sustain (or not) in the program. Yosso's model allowed me to name and account for the assets of migrant youth in GEM, consider the meaning of the GED in their lives beyond dominant measurements of success or capital, and name what GEM was sustaining as a program.

Survivance

In 1994, Gerald Vizenor proposed *Survivance* as resistance in his book *Manifest Manners: Narratives of Postindian Survivance*, to challenge the absence and victimry that were frequently associated with Native American Indian communities. Vizenor (1994) differentiates between natives and indians when affirming that "natives are the stories of an imagic presence, and indians are the actual absence- the simulations of the tragic primitive" (p. vii). In the course of domination, the indian emerged as "an occidental misnomer, an overseas enactment that has no referent to real native cultures or communities" (Vizenor, 1994, p. vii). Thus, the indian is a reflection of the absence of real native stories, culture, history, community, and survivance. Along with the absence of real natives, Native American Indian communities have historically been positioned as victims. While the violent colonization of Native American communities is real and tragic, the agency and resistance these communities engaged in to challenge domination and claim their right of succession to the estate of native survivancy are largely ignored. Given such absence and victimry of Native American Indian communities, Vizenor (1994) conceived

of survivance as “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry” (p. vii). When considering the ways youth engage in survivance, Vizenor, Tuck & Yang (2014) describe it in the following way:

It is a spirited resistance, a life force, not just anger, negative or destructive. Survivance is a force of nature, a new totem, and it has to be expressed and imagined to create a sense of presence. (p. 113).

Survivance can take many forms, varies by individual, community and group. Further, survivance “should remain open and adaptable in any context” (Vizenor, Tuck & Yang, 2014, pg. 114). Because of its many forms and adaptability, survivance will look very differently across individuals and communities and the outcome is never the same (Vizenor, Tuck & Yang, 2014). As survivance is enacted it must have individual significance to assert an active sense of presence. In other words, Vizenor, et al. (2014) argue that the “the consciousness of resistance must be individual to have any meaning or significance. It must have individual meaning to appreciate a sense of presence” (pg. 116).

In this study, I draw upon Vizenor’s theory of survivance to consider the agency and resistance that the migrant farmworkers in my study exercised in K-12 schools and GEM. Although theories of resistance abound, including Solorzano & Delgado Bernal (2001) theory of transformational resistance, I found the theory of survivance to be a fruitful concept in understanding the form of agency and resistance that migrant youth were exercising in their educational pursuits. Survivance allowed me to understand the responses of migrant youth to their educational experiences, and to their decision-making process. Moreover, survivance enabled me to consider how migrant youth resisted the conditions of K-12 schools and drew

upon their agency to pursue an education in GEM.

Summary

In summary, this chapter details the research approach for this three-year longitudinal ethnographic case study with migrant farmworker youth. Multiple theoretical influences helped me make sense of the educational experiences, cultural wealth, and agency of migrant youth in and across K-12 schools and GEM, including social reproduction theory, safety zones, community cultural wealth, and survivance. In the following chapters I share the findings from this study starting with migrant youth's educational experiences in K-12 schools.

CHAPTER 4

Producing Inequitable Education: The Schooling Experiences of Migrant Students in K-12 Schools

Lorena: Where would you say, in thinking about the different schools you went to, where would you say you felt the most comfortable learning at?

Guadalupe: Yeah, I don't know about learning. Uhm (5s. pause). See I really don't know cuz in Hartford at 6th grade I just stopped caring about school. So I would just go just for fun. I would go and come back same thing. I started doing that throughout the whole years. So from 6th grade to 8th grade I was in Hartford during the whole time of middle school it was just whatever.

[Interview, April 4, 2014, p. 11]

As a student who has known how to “do school” and been successful at it, I was somewhat surprised by Guadalupe’s comment regarding his learning experiences prior to GEM. Guadalupe stopped caring about school in sixth grade at merely 11 years of age. He had been to at least two different schools prior to sixth grade and when asked about where he felt most comfortable learning, he could not identify a specific school. Guadalupe describes how going to school became something to do for “fun” and in many ways a mindless routine that did not add value to his life, perhaps social value at best. Ironically, he stopped caring about school in an education system that prides itself, at least in rhetoric, with providing education for social mobility, social efficiency, democratic citizenship (Labaree, 1989) and the pursuit of the American Dream (Hochschild & Scovronick, 2003). Hochschild & Scovronick (2003) affirm that although “Americans want the educational system to help translate the so-called American

Dream from vision to practice” (p.11) there is a nested structure of inequality that prevents the achievement of the American Dream for some. Furthermore, it is within this nested structure of education where Guadalupe came to know and navigate the possibilities and realities of the education system at such a young age. I do not share this example and others in this chapter to victimize migrant youth or contribute to already existing narratives of pain (Tuck & Yang, 2014), rather I seek to implicate the role of schools in the production of inequitable schooling for migrant and seasonal farmworker communities.

When interviewing migrant youth I considered the importance of understanding their past in order to understand their present. Collecting data about their previous educational experiences was just as important as collecting data in GEM. In this chapter, I examine the educational trajectories of migrant farmworker youth prior to entering GEM. Interview data of students schooling experiences prior to GEM highlight the complexity of navigating and persisting in an inequitable education system as migrant and seasonal farmworkers. The findings from this chapter are further proof of how K-12 institutions produce conditions for migrant and seasonal farmworkers to pursue the GED as proxy for inadequate schooling (Tuck, 2012).

Inequitable Education

Education in the U.S. has always been and remains inequitable. A glimpse into the history of people of color supports this supposition. The history of Black education in the South reveals that African American slaves were prohibited from any and all education and were purposefully kept illiterate (Anderson, 1988). Yet, some managed to teach themselves to read and write and actively sought to educate themselves during and after slavery. For American Indians, formal education was used to colonize and “civilize” communities into dominant American ideals (Klug & Whitfield, 2003). Latinos have historically experienced issues in

education such as school segregation, language suppression, cultural exclusion, and citizenship (Valencia, 2011) even though many Latinos were geographic residents prior to the formation of the United States. While the history of education of people of color is much more extensive and deserving of more space, I only share these facts to stress the existence and impact of an inequitable education system. Furthermore, not only have these communities of color been historically marginalized and denied access to education, but they also share a common history of having sowed and tilled the land that we now call the United States of America.

It is well documented that the education system produces class divisions and reflects labor relations in the U.S. (Anyon, 1981; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). In 1976, Bowles & Gintis argued that schools are sites of social reproduction that socialize students to occupy the same class position as their parents. Bowles & Gintis (1976) affirm the premise that “schools are constrained to justify and reproduce inequality rather than correct it” (p.102). For example, working class students learn to be submissive, passive learners where rule following is highly enforced and behavior control is a priority. Higher classes are taught to work with others in a less supervised fashion and have access to more electives in their schools (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The different levels of schooling across social classes reflect the hierarchical division of labor (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Scholars such as Jay MacLeod (2009), Paul Willis (1976) and others have chronicled the constraints and possibilities of schools as institutions of social reproduction, while also noting the agency students exert inside and outside of schools.

Overview of Migrant Student Schooling Experiences

Navigating an education system that is inequitable is difficult. Add on being highly mobile, working in difficult conditions, being a member of one of the lowest ranked workers and you have another layer of challenges to deal with in the process of pursuing an education.

Martinez, et al., (1996) state “the children of migrant farmworkers are usually the most vulnerable and profoundly affected by the migrant lifestyle and extreme working conditions” (p. 29). The major factor attributed to the educational challenges of migrant farmworker youth is high mobility (Romanowski, 2003). Frequent moving, school absences (i.e. when they have to move or work to support their families or themselves) and grade retention issues are associated with high mobility. However, it is important to note that high mobility is compounded by ethnicity, gender, phenotype, language, and socioeconomic status. The intersections of some or all of these identities impacts how high mobility is experienced. The lack of consistency in curriculum and credit transfer in schools prevents migrant farmworker youth from transitioning successfully from school to school as they move throughout the school year (Romanowski, 2003). Due to the lack of consistency in curriculum, negative teacher perceptions of migrant farmworker youth, and high mobility, migrant farmworker youth are often held back a year and overage in their grade. In addition, they “are often overlooked for special education services and fall behind their peers academically and socially” (Cranston-Gingras, 2003; Romanowski, 2003, p. 242-246). The constant moving provides youth very little time to build peer relationships, and contributes to feelings of inferiority and like they do not belong (Romanowski, 2003). They also face social isolation inside and outside of school due to the low-status that the overlapping layers of their identity embodies with their work, racial and ethnic background, language differences, high mobility and low academic achievement (Vocke, 2007). While not all migrant children are English Language Learners, migrant children whose first language is not English are often faced with the challenge of having to learn English and assimilate culturally while being highly transient (Vocke, 2007).

As previously mentioned in chapter two, the challenges migrant children face are depicted in Francisco Jimenez's (1997) autobiographic novel *The Circuit*. In his book, Jimenez recounts his life as a migrant child. He was often made to feel ashamed of his home when he could not invite his friends over like other kids in his school did and was reprimanded for speaking Spanish when his teacher, Miss. Scalapino, spoke only in English in class. He was held back in school because he did not speak English. Though Jimenez was a migrant child over 30 years ago, Jimenez's experiences continue to be relevant today.

As we consider Francisco Jimenez's and Guadalupe's educational experiences, we must ask ourselves why migrant and seasonal farmworker youth continue to face the same issues in education several decades apart. When studying the resiliency and success of migrant children in the U.S., Garza, Reyes & Trueba (2004) affirm that as previous migrant and seasonal farmworker youth they ". . . managed to survive in a system that was not designed to meet our basic needs as human beings" (p. 18). I would argue, that K-12 has damaged students rather than aided them in their pursuits of education and opportunity. This was certainly the case in what students reported to me and visible in the ways program staff had to rebuild students' sense of confidence and belief that they could achieve their educational pursuits. In some cases, fear, doubt and insecurity were woven in tightly with a strong desire to achieve the GED. In a study about the perceptions of school personnel of migrant students, Martinez, Cranston-Gingras & Velazquez (2001) found that the educational system was "very inflexible, rigid, and in many instances not designed to deal with the special needs of migrant students in areas such as attendance and record transfer" (p. 8). Not only did principals, teachers and migrant advocates identify the educational system as a challenge, but a migrant advocate described the need for flexibility and creativity in dealing with issues of attendance. Furthermore, a principal questioned

what an education system would look like if we considered how schools could fit student needs rather than fitting the student into the educational system (Martinez et al., 2001).

There is no doubt that migrant and seasonal farmworker youth experience “difficult life circumstances, including poverty, frequent moves, and linguistic and cultural barriers” that lead them to have high drop-out rates, poor academic achievement, grade retention, and social isolation (Cranston-Gingras, 2003, p. 242; Martinez, et al., 1996). However, many of the explanations and factors that affect the education of MSFW’s place responsibility on the students, their families, and their lifestyle (a deficit-framed perspective). Martinez, Cranston-Gingras & Velazquez (2001) affirm that there are challenges migrant students pose to the educational system and challenges the educational system imposes on migrant students. However, when researching the perceptions of school personnel of migrant and seasonal farmworkers teachers and principals identified communication barrier and home environment as influential factors in the school performance of migrant students. Nonetheless, Martinez et al. (2001) state, “This attitude, however, places the burden on the immigrant, in this case the migrant child. In a sense, it is a way of justifying the problem by placing the blame on the child rather than on the system and those who work in that system . . .” (p. 6). Therefore, greater analysis of the schooling experiences of MSFW’s in schools that are sites of social reproduction and inherently unequal is needed. Ultimately, MSFW’s are facing the previously mentioned challenges in a system that was intentionally structured to be inequitable. Using interview data that reflects the schooling experiences of students prior to attending GEM, this chapter examines how schools are producing inadequate education for MSFW students. It also provides evidence of the reasons they sought out GEM as an alternative to previous educational experiences

Overview of Findings

While examining the previous and current education experiences it became clear that students were conscious of the possibilities and constraints of education in K-12 schools. They were aware of the fact that the environment in K-12 failed to support their learning as MSFW's. Students identified an overwhelming amount of institutional factors in schools that pushed them out of the K-12 education system. In seeking to understand why Chicano students dropout from school, Rumberger & Rodriguez (2011) identify individual and institutional factors that influence such a decision. Student mobility (residential and across schools), academic engagement, academic achievement, student background (i.e. gender, race, immigration status) are considered individual factors. Moreover, institutional factors include the role of families, schools, school structures, school policies and practices, student composition, and school resources (Rumberger & Rodriguez, 2011). The distinction across both types of factors are explained as follows:

School factors contribute to students' withdrawal in two ways. One way is indirectly, by creating conditions that influence student engagement and their *voluntary* withdrawal from school. Another way is directly, through explicit policies and conscious decisions by school personnel that cause students to involuntarily withdraw from school. These rules and actions may concern low grades, poor attendance, misbehavior, or being over-age, and may lead to students being forced to transfer to another regular or 'alternative' high school design for students that do not fit into the regular school. This form of withdrawal is school-initiated and contrasts with the students-initiated type mentioned earlier. Some schools, for example, contribute to students' *involuntary* departure from school by

systematically excluding and discharging “troublemakers” and other problem students (Fine, 1991; Riehl, 1999) (p. 86).

In the case of the migrant youth in my study, both individual and institutional factors influenced their educational experiences and exits from K-12 schools. In the following example, Guadalupe shares how individual factors have impacted his education as I asked him to expand on why he stopped caring about school in the sixth grade:

Lorena: Take me a step back when you mentioned you stopped caring when you were in 6th grade. Tell me more about that. What happened in 6th grade?

Guadalupe: I mean it was just (2s. pause) basically the people that I would hang out with and family problems. You just go I mean and especially if you had to work. I mean it's hard for Latinos, especially Mexicanos. There's not one Mexican student, like nowadays there is, but back then there was no Mexican student that instead of going on spring break you would be out working [L: Mmm] or instead of winter break you would be out trimming apple trees. Instead of summer you would actually be picking blueberries. You know. So in that case or at least in my opinion it got to the point "why should I work hard for this if like my only place here being illegal you don't have no social security, you don't have no documents that say you can actually work in a good job. Why should I work my ass off if now I know the only thing I'm going to do is work the fields? I don't need science, I don't need biology, I don't need none of these requirements to fill up a blueberry bucket. You know what I mean. So that's what basically set me back. Not just that but other problems that you had and you now just- I got held back in 6th grade and I was just like you know forget about it.

[Interview, April 3, 2014]

Through this example we learn that some of the individual factors affecting Guadalupe's life and educational trajectory included documentation status, engaging in farm work, and family problems that he barely mentions. Unlike other children in school, Guadalupe did not bask in the joy of spring or winter break as vacation time. Instead, he worked in the fields picking blueberries and trimming apple trees. At a very early age, Guadalupe became aware of what education could and could not provide for him. He knew that education would not guarantee him the legal documentation status that would open access to better employment and life opportunities. Guadalupe also knew that no biology course would translate into the material outcomes for survival that he and his family needed. Plus, he was held back in the sixth grade. It is no wonder why he stopped caring about school so early on.

While I would argue that both individual and institutional factors are intertwined, students specifically highlighted the ways in which schools, as institutions, created conditions for migrant students to involuntarily depart K-12 education and enroll in GEM. The migrant and seasonal farmworkers in my study reported always trying to catch up on credits and graduation requirements, navigate low expectations from school personnel, and "watching their backs" (as they called it) from racism in school. These experiences were school initiated. Building on Rumberger & Rodriguez (2011) and drawing upon San Pedro (2014) Environmental (ESZ) and Internal Safety Zone (ISZ) theories, I suggest that once school-initiated conditions for withdrawal were produced migrant youth chose to leave K-12 schools. Ultimately, the K-12 education system did not leverage, understand or meet the needs of MSFW's. As such, some students opted out of K-12 and into GEM.

“School Wasn’t the Environment for Me”: Migrant Youth in K-12 School Environments

Overall, the students in the study who attended K-12 institutions (all except for Gris) tacitly and explicitly identified dissatisfaction with the environment of schools in supporting their learning as migrant and seasonal farmworkers. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, I examined the environment as defined by San Pedro (2014). The context of GEM served as the environmental safety zone (ESZ) while migrant youth identities, experiences and knowledges composed the internal safety zone (ISZ). The overwhelming theme across their K-12 schooling experiences was that schools did not foster the environment for students to succeed. Students reported having struggled with catching up with credits and having them transfer from school to school, low expectations on behalf of school personnel, racism in schools, and pervasive language issues. Such findings are all related to school environments and include the structure, policies, physical space, ideologies, discourses, individuals, and power dynamics.

When asked to reflect about his educational experience in GEM, Guadalupe drew from his previous schooling experiences to highlight the differences in both settings.

Guadalupe: . . . I mean in school they really don't treat you like family, you know. They don't treat you like with like any respect. They don't treat you like you're capable, you know, to make the right decisions. So, in school they're just trying to make a statement. Trying to like you know always tell you what to do, not letting you experience for yourself and I mean like that's a really big you know thing that holds people down. They can't always be in control but they can't experience nothing by yourself- that's something that really sets you back. And here it's like way different here. They just tell if you can't get up in the morning and you miss your class that's on you. So like they are giving you

the responsibility and at school they don't do that. They just say if you don't do the assignment then you just get an F. You know. It's really like there's no responsibility in that. . . . Or the way they teach they don't teach like the way they do in school. They don't just get up in front of you and it's like okay open up your books and start writing. No, they actually go through it- step by step- and if you don't understand it they don't get mad. They come back and go over it again. And as far as classmates they're here and they help you too. They're not over there like in school like "if you can't get it then you're stupid." It's just like different good environment. They try here so hard to help you no matter what it is and back home they just try with whatever *they* want to help you.

[Interview, April, 4, 2014, p. 16]

In this example, Guadalupe draws attention to the myriad ways in which schools were not providing for him, the necessary environment in which to succeed. He deconstructs how schools went about “making a statement”, as he calls it, by providing examples of the ways schools try to “hold people down.” Embedded in his comment are issues of the type of learning that was expected in school, positionality and expectations of students, philosophy and pedagogies of learning that he considers oppressive. In his critique of schools, Guadalupe interwove what he identified as key elements of a good environment in education: family, respect, experiential and collaborative learning, responsibility and accountability. However, those elements were not a fabric of the environment in the schools Guadalupe attended. It was not until he shifted environments to GEM that he experienced the elements that he described make up a good environment for learning.

In many ways, what Guadalupe experienced in K-12 schools is reflective of what Freire (1987) describes as the *banking method of education*. The banking method of education is when the student is seen as a receptacle waiting to be filled by an authoritative figure, in many cases the teacher (Freire, 1987). Consequently, students are presumed to be passive learners and fail to acquire the critical thinking skills necessary to question and read the world around them. Though schools fostered an environment for passive learning, Guadalupe's comparison across both sites of learning demonstrates otherwise. Guadalupe demonstrated a critical awareness of how K-12 education failed him and how GEM cultivated his internal safety zone by working with students, not against them, from the ground up.

As an institution, schools were unable to understand the lives of migrant and seasonal farmworkers and account for their overall social and economic needs. Solis (2004) argues "The economic situations of many migrant students and their families rule out the option of staying in school throughout an entire school year" (p. 113). As family members, MSFW's are crucial to the sustenance of the family unit. Therefore, family comes first. As the eldest child in her family, Melissa worked after school and during weekends to help her mother maintain the household. Her father had a long struggle with a debilitating disease that impacted his ability to work. As a provider of the family, he worked in the fields as much as he could while risking his health. However, when her father's health worsened he was unable to work and like many migrant farmworker families they had limited access to healthcare. Although Melissa and her mother willingly worked to provide for their family in times of need this situation was one that largely influenced Melissa's schooling experience. Melissa speaks to this as she reflected upon her schooling experiences in high school:

Melissa: So schooling, school was more- [pause] I can do it but the environment wasn't really for me because my mind was always elsewhere. It wasn't working for me, being in school and Miss Anderson noticed that.

[Interview, May 5, 2012, p. 4]

In this example, Melissa details how the school environment in K-12 was not for her and one of her teachers, Miss Anderson took notice. This was the same teacher who suggested she attend GEM. When mentioning that her mind “was always elsewhere” Melissa reminds us that in addition to being a student, she plays a crucial role in her family as a sister, daughter, and provider. However, in K-12 schools these identities are at the margins of the environmental safety zone.

“Always Catching Up”: Challenges in Credit Transfer, Falling Behind, and Catching Up

Although schools are presumed to be gateways to opportunity and success they can also function as gatekeepers. Such was the case for migrant students as they sought their high school diploma in an educational system with a rigid structure that offers very little flexibility for credit and record transfer (Martinez et al, 2001). Melissa experienced this first hand when difficulties with credit transfer caused her to “always [be] catching up.” Prior to settling in rural Michigan, Melissa attended eleven different schools as her family migrated from Chicago to Michigan, Minnesota and New Jersey. Even when her family settled in Michigan over 6 years ago the family would pack up, board up their house, and travel wherever employment was available for her father. Given that migrants cannot anticipate when harvest seasons begin, when employment will be available or when it will end interrupted schooling or late entry/early withdrawal is common amongst MSFW's (Solis, 2004). Melissa provided an example of the challenges of fulfilling credit requirements as a migrant student:

Melissa: . . we ended up moving to Minnesota for like a month and we ended coming back because my dad lost his job there. Over there I was taking summer classes to catch up with my classes, but when I came back here and I didn't get the credits from over there because over there they require different classes than here. So the credits I was doing over there, they didn't count here. If anything they counted as electives and I was ok with my electives, it was my English that I was missing.

[Interview, May 5, 2012, p. 3]

In this example, Melissa details how she was determined to take summer classes and meet credit requirements in a new school in Minnesota. However, her time in Minnesota was short-lived as her father was suddenly dismissed from his employment and they returned to Michigan. Unfortunately, the credits she earned in Minnesota would only to be counted as electives in Michigan, not the English requirements she needed. Her attempts to meet her English requirements in Minnesota were in vain. Melissa's situation is actually quite common for secondary migrant students. Solis (2004) says, "Moving between schools, migrant students frequently encounter course dissimilarities and/or unavailable courses, disparities in course credits or grade equivalents, and different class schedules" (p. 115). Upon her return to Michigan, Melissa re-enrolled in school, took online classes, attended intervention class periods where she made up work, and completed additional work from home. However, we have to question whether giving migrant students more work is the right approach and if in reality what migrant students need is for the system of education to be flexible and creative as Martinez et al. (2001) study suggests.

While Melissa's credit transfer was from state to state for other students it was often difficult to simply transfer credits from one school district to another within a state. Guadalupe attended the same high school as Melissa, as well as another high school within a 10-mile radius. Guadalupe struggled to have his credits transferred at both schools. Much like Melissa, Guadalupe was always trying to catch up, as was Freddy. Further, even with support from teachers and staff Freddy was unable to catch up. Freddy explained what the process of catching up with credits was like with the support of one of his favorite teachers, Mr. Dice:

Freddy: When I was in 11th grade I was doing 9th grade classes and none of my teachers ever thought I would graduate. Most of them *me decían* cause of the credits He was the coolest guy, but he always had me catching up on work. He'd talk to teachers to give me a second chance, do this, do that, and if they gave me a second chance cause I had zeros and stuff, he'd grab the zeros and turn them into 80% and I almost caught up, but it was just too many credits to do and he said "let's give it another chance next year and for sure you'll graduate early next year" and I said "No it's fine, I'm gonna try to graduate at another spot" and he was like: "I wish you luck."

[Interview, May 5, 2012, p.5]

With the support of Mr. Dice, Freddy made significant strides in catching up with credits. Nevertheless, he was still behind in school. Solis (2004) affirms "migrant high school students tend to fall behind in credits while playing catch up or retaking classes entirely" (p. 115). Unfortunately, this was the case for Freddy. He attempted to catch up with credits while being behind by two grade levels (being a junior in high school while taking freshman level courses). While other students had started at the same "starting line" on the track to education, Freddy was

still trying to make his way to the starting line. While Freddy's example and others in this chapter could be interpreted as pain narratives, I contend that it shows how the structure of schooling operates on migrant farmworker youth. After his attempt to catch up on graduation credits, Freddy eventually opted to attend GEM at the suggestion of another teacher, Mrs. Valenzuela.

In many ways, migrant and seasonal farmworker youth's constant struggle to catch up with credits and meet graduation requirements reflects what Ladson-Billings (2006) calls the *Education Debt*. According to Ladson-Billings (2006), discussions about the achievement gap between students of color and white students are misplaced. Rather, we should be concerned with addressing the education debt, the outcome of accumulated historical, sociopolitical, economic, and moral policies and decisions, that is owed to communities of color who have long been marginalized and inadequately served in education (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Further, we must address the education debt that has resulted in the achievement gap in order to achieve equitable education (Ladson-Billings, 2006) for students such as Freddy, Guadalupe, Melissa, and all other MSFW's. Falling behind in credits is the outcome of larger issues over a period of time. Thus, for students like Freddy, Melissa, and Guadalupe to ever have caught up in the K-12 system would have required addressing the education debt that has accrued for them personally and for their communities over time. In other words, to address the education debt of the youth in my study, there must be an intentional effort to address the sociopolitical, economic, historical, and moral debt that compound the effects of living and learning as migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the U.S. An example towards these ends could involve rethinking in-state and out-of-state credit transfer policies to accommodate for the high mobility of migrant farmworker communities. Furthermore, it would require an acknowledgement of the expansion of safety

zones when migrant farmworkers and their families have historically been welcomed during times of economic growth, while in times of economic downturn the safety zones have contracted to deem them dangerous and deportable.

“If They’re Not Going to Care, Why Should I?”: Experiencing Low Expectations from School Personnel

Not only does the rigid and inflexible structure of school affect migrant students, so do the individual people within these institutions. On top of trying to catch up with credits and falling behind in school, students’ schooling experience reflect how school personnel had low expectations of them. By expectations in school I am referring to the beliefs of a person’s capability or lack of capability, limiting perceptions of human potential, and how students are expected to perform in schools (Weinstein, 2002). According to Milner (2009), “Teachers lower their expectations of students because they do not recognize the brilliance students possess, especially when students express themselves, evaluate a problem, or address a situation in a way unlike the teacher” (p. 125). Regardless of the intention, most students identified examples of teachers and in some cases, principals, having low expectations of them. Low expectations took place in various forms including, verbal comments and credit/no credit policies. For example, when being handed assignments Guadalupe was often asked by teachers in one of the three high schools he attended: “Should I give this [the assignment] to you or should I save a tree?” It became such a frequent comment embedded with low expectations and unworthiness that Guadalupe came to the following conclusion: *“If they’re not going to care, why should I?”* (Interview, April 4, 2014, p. 11). Guadalupe’s response is telling of the impact of low expectations on behalf of teachers. Based on the teachers comment, Guadalupe came to feel as if this teacher did not care about him or his education. Moreover, how the teacher questioned

Guadalupe about whether she should invest in his education by providing him an assignment or saving a tree is an example of the dehumanizing humiliating ironies that he endured in school. Tuck (2012) names the “unintended consequences of school policies and the disrespectful interactions between school personnel and youth” as *humiliating ironies* (p. 68). She argues that humiliating ironies “do not just serve to exclude youth from schooling, but assault their dignities in the process” (Tuck, 2012, pg. 68). Students in her study responded to an array of humiliating ironies with *dangerous dignities*, informed defiance and “strategies employed by youth to re-vision who they are because of and in spite of their schooling” (p. 85). In response to the humiliating irony he experienced, Guadalupe came to the conclusion that if teachers aren’t going to care then why should he. Knowing that teachers have low expectations of him Guadalupe’s dangerous dignity took shape in what some might call disengagement in school. Although Guadalupe’s response could be understood as *self defeating resistance*, when resistance implicates oneself “even further in their own domination” (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, pg. 316), it appears that Guadalupe retreats to his internal safety zone, to the zone within himself where he reflects and holds his cumulative intersectional identity, to protect himself from further dehumanization and humiliating ironies in school.

Low expectations were also intricately woven into the “good intentions” of school personnel attempting to help students graduate from high school. Although Melissa appreciated the ways the high school she attended provided opportunities for her catch up on school credits by grading on a credit/no credit system, I believe the credit/no credit grading can be a double edged sword. While the credit/no credit system made it possible for Melissa to pursue graduation requirements, she was only attaining the minimum that was expected of her. She would be one step closer to graduation, but we have to question how far meeting minimal requirements would

take her post-graduation. Thus, I contend that even when provided with credit/no credit opportunities Melissa was being held to low expectations. Milner (2009) affirms that teachers often think they are doing students a favor by having low expectations of students. Though the school and teachers provided Melissa with opportunities to catch up on credits I argue that they exuded low expectations by offering credit/credit classes.

Guadalupe and Melissa's examples with low expectations in K-12 schools challenge us to question what it is that schools expect of all students, but in particular migrant youth. Throughout many years of studying academic expectations of teachers, parents, and educational institutions, Weinstein (2002) argues that

Sadly, our system of education is largely built upon beliefs and practices on the negative side- about the differences in and limits to ability. Our expectations of ability are too low, too narrowly construed, too bound to time and speed, and too differentiated (too high for some, low for others) by social status factors that are irrelevant to the potential to learn.
(pp. 1)

Some social status factors include socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, gender, physical ability and more. Regardless of intention, whether high or low, expectations often have longstanding effects on student learning and sense of self. When studying the ways expectations impact academic achievement, Weinstein (2002) found that negative expectations and critical incidents where students are shamed or stigmatized have lasting effects on students' self-esteem and loss of interest in subject matter areas where students were held to low or harsh expectations. In regards to learning, Weinstein (2002) affirms that "when we respond to individual differences among students by lowering our expectations and providing inferior educational opportunities, we underestimate the capacity for all children to grow intellectually and we fail to provide

adequate tools for learning” (pg. 2). Although the impact of low expectations can be enduring, youth are often resilient in spite of such experiences as discussed in chapter five of this study. Given the low expectations that migrant youth lived through in K-12 schools we must question: What do high expectations look like for migrant and seasonal farmworker youth in K-12 schools?

When held to high expectations, migrant students met and exceeded such expectations. Some students recalled having teachers who not only had high expectations of them, but were actively involved in helping students meet those expectations. While all students in my study experienced having teachers who had low expectations of them, Freddy, Guadalupe, and Melissa described having at least one teacher who empowered them in their educational pursuits. For Freddy and Guadalupe that teacher was Mrs. Valenzuela, a Latina high school teacher and faculty advisor of the Latino Student Association at Lakeside High School. Freddy initially did not want to attend GEM, but was encouraged by Mrs. Valenzuela.

Freddy: She searched up everything on my list of credits, work, how many times I’ve been suspended, all of the information basically. She had a couple students go to the GEM program before so she told me about it. To tell you the truth, I didn’t want to go, but they forced me.

Lorena: Who forced you?

Freddy: Her! She forced me [giggling]. She was like a *tia* to me . . . she was like “You better graduate! ¡*Si no vas, vas a ver! ¡Te voy agarrar!*” She always taught me stuff, yeah. *Ella era la que me ayudo.*

[Interview, May 5, 2012; p. 5]

Freddy remembered how Mrs. Valenzuela not only referred him to GEM, but also went above and beyond the call of duty to delve into his records to determine his standing before referring him to GEM. Furthermore, she had high expectations of Freddy as she tells him that he “better graduate” and as Freddy acknowledges, there is a sense of kinship between the two as he described how she was like a “*tia*” to him. Guadalupe also learned about GEM through Mrs. Valenzuela, but did not decide to pursue GEM until his mother heard about GEM through Freddy’s mother and insisted that he pursue his education at GEM. Melissa was also held to high expectations by one of her teachers, Mrs. Anderson. According to Melissa, Mrs. Anderson would tutor her after school, kept her accountable for doing her work, and “pull her ear” (as she describes it) when need be.

Ironically, the same teachers who held high expectations of these students were the ones who referred them to GEM. Freddy and Melissa’s experiences are telling in regards to the way that holding high expectations of migrant youth involved moving beyond K-12 educational opportunities and expectations. Part of holding migrant youth to high expectations and turning those expectations into realities involved teachers going above and beyond their role as teachers. For Mrs. Valenzuela that meant taking time out of her schedule to intentionally work with migrant youth at her school, reviewing transcripts, and developing relationships based on kinship. Mrs. Anderson went beyond simply teaching Melissa as a student in her class and invested time in tutoring and keeping her accountable to completing her schoolwork. Furthermore, both teachers referred youth towards educational opportunities that worked *with* them. Ultimately, the moments when migrant students in this study succeeded in K-12 settings was when they were held to high expectations, given respect, and treated as the capable and responsible human beings that they were.

“Watching Your Back”: Racial Tensions & Racism in School

Migrant youth also experienced racial tensions and racism in school. According to Valencia (2011), "One likely major environmental stressor that contributes to debilitating stress among Chicano/Latino and other students of color is racial prejudice . . . they have reported discrimination based on poverty, immigration status, skin color, and stereotypes" (p. 3). What makes the presence of racial tensions and racism in schools complex is the context. The students in this study attended rural schools in the Midwest. Four out of the five students who attended K-12 schools explicitly reported having experienced racial tensions in school. Guadalupe talked about always having to watch his back at school in regards to racial tensions amongst peers. Guadalupe, Melissa, and Andres described racial tensions between African American and Latina/o students, while Freddy experienced racial tensions with white students at his high school and racism at the hands of school personnel.

Guadalupe and Melissa identified the racial tensions at Smallville High School between African Americans as a result of bussing in recent years. Smallville, MI was settled by white and African American settlers in the 1860's and had an integrated school during a time when education across the U.S. was highly segregated. However, Melissa and Guadalupe described fights and racial tensions between African American and Latina/o students. According to both students, Smallville was at risk of being closed due to funding so the district began to bus students from a nearby town in order to keep the school open. Unfortunately, this caused tensions between the Latina/o students at Smallville High School and new incoming students. Guadalupe described these racial tensions:

Guadalupe: Smallville is nothing but you gotta watch your back.

Lorena: Because you said there are a lot of fights?

Guadalupe: Yeah, there's fights. There were always a lot of fights between the Mexicans and the Blacks. So you were always watching your back. Stand your ground. If he does this then you have to stand your ground. You can't have people trying to mess with you. So that's what the whole year was like in Smallville.

[Interview, April 4, 2014, p. 14]

In this example, Guadalupe details what it meant to watch his back at Smallville High School during the year he went to that school. These types of racial incidents reflect larger tensions between Latina/o and African American students. In a study of African American Language in a multiethnic high school, Paris (2009) found that the speech events of Latina/o and African American youth reflected “community and national tensions between Latinas/os and African Americans, divisions that relate to the struggle for the scarce resources of the oppressed” (p. 438). Although Paris cautions us from a divide and conquer paradigm, we must consider how the racial tensions that Guadalupe faced emerged from a time of scarce resources at the school. The school literally had to bus students to the school to attain the funding to stay open. While Guadalupe experienced racial tensions in schools firsthand, Melissa experienced it secondhand through her brother. During her senior of high school, Melissa’s brother was a freshman. Much like Guadalupe, he too dealt with racial tensions at Smallville, including involvement in physical altercations. Though she did not experience it first hand, Melissa found it difficult to focus in class knowing that her brothers’ safety was at risk.

Like Guadalupe, Freddy also dealt with racial tensions amongst peers. During our interview at a local sandwich shop in his hometown, Freddy shared an example of racial tensions that he had to deal with at Bayside High School. Freddy and other Hispanic students, as he called them, had to deal with the “Lucky 7”, a group of white students at his high school. Freddy recalled

having to always be prepared to deal with the “Lucky 7” by carrying a weapon for defense. He remembered what it was like to go to school with the Lucky 7:

Freddy: There was a group of *gringos*, like *gueros* called the L7: the lucky seven. And it was always us going against them and there would be high school fights, 2 every week because everyone looked differently. They had mean mugging faces, we had mean mugging faces. They brought their stuff and we brought ours. It was nothing big, butter knives, brass knuckles, but everyone always had something on them. It wasn't like chaos, but it was like somebody wanted to rule more than the other.

[Interview, May, 5, 2012, p. 4]

Although Freddy states that “*it was nothing big*” these racial tensions are real. Having to carry a weapon for self-defense reflects the danger of the racial tensions between Latina/o and white students at Freddy's school. Such tensions were further solidified as racism when school personnel disciplined students differently. When asked about his teachers in high school, Freddy mentioned how he always had a feeling that teachers did not like him. Not only did his teachers and principal talk to him differently, but they also disciplined him differently than white students. Freddy described an incident that occurred with a white student in one of his art classes:

Freddy: . . . me and this kid got in trouble for we were in art, we had ceramics, where you build clay and make it into bowls and stuff like that. *Era un guero*. The *guero* and I had a clay fight. The walls were full and soaking wet with clay. We got in trouble and we went to the principals office, the guy I hate [laughing] . . . he didn't give him anything and he gave me two days of suspension, but before that I had to stay after school and clean up all the mess that was done. As soon as we got out of the office he told me not to do it

again. I asked the *guero*: “What’d he give you?” and he said: “Nothing.” He asked me”
“What’d he give you?” Freddy: “He gave me two days of suspension . . .”

Lorena: Why do you think he suspended you?

Freddy: *Hablando en serio* . . . [paused, looked over his shoulder and around the sandwich shop, lowered his voice] *Porque soy Mexicano*. Because of race.

[Interview, May 5, 2012, p. 4]

In this example, Freddy details how he was suspended from school for two days and held responsible for cleaning up the mess that both he and a white peer created. By failing to discipline both students equally the white student enjoyed what McIntosh (1989) calls *white privilege*. White privilege is “an invisible package of unearned assets” (McIntosh, 1989, p. 10). Moreover, this excerpt is an example of institutionalized racism as this was an act that was carried out by an individual employed by the school. Institutionalized racism through disciplinary actions is not new. Scholars have shown that Latina/o and African American youth are more likely to be harshly disciplined through expulsion or suspension from schools than their non-Hispanic white peers (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004). Freddy’s response in combination with his body language and the lowering of his voice to say that it was an issue of race made it clear to me that the racism he experienced were possible reflections of the racial tensions in the community at large. The racial tensions and racism that migrant farmworker youth experienced were additional challenges they faced in K-12 schools.

“No Speaking Spanish”: English-Only Language Policies in Schools

The last finding addresses how some migrant farmworker youth attended schools with English-only language policies. Macedo (2003) described English-only movements as a form of colonialism where

...colonialism imposes “distinction” as an ideological yardstick against which all other cultural values are measured, including language. On the one hand, this ideological yardstick serves to overcelebrate the dominant group’s language to a level of mystification [i.e. viewing English as education itself and measuring the success of bilingual education programs in terms of success in English acquisition) and, on the other hand, it devalues other languages spoken by an ever-increasing number of students . . . (p. 16).

This literature was reflected in the schooling experiences of Andres, Javier and Guadalupe. In his interview, Andres revealed how his high school experience was scarred by disciplinary action and disengagement in school based on the de facto English-only language policy. Farr & Song (2011) remind us that language policy can take form as *de jure*, written, top-down, overt, official decisions about language, and *de facto*, “grass-roots and unofficial ideas and assumptions about language” (p. 650). Andres described his experience with language when I asked whether being bilingual had impacted his education:

Andres: Well most of the time in school when I did speak Spanish I would get in trouble. They wouldn’t allow us to speak Spanish, but we still did. So there were others reasons why I would get in trouble. . . talking back to the teachers and telling them why I can’t speak Spanish and if I can’t speak Spanish than they can’t speak English. I would be smart with them and it would always get me in trouble because I would be speaking Spanish in class and just walking in the hallway and they would tell us “no speaking Spanish” or “stop speaking Spanish or you’re going to go to the office.” Just them telling me that would get me mad, so I would speak it even more to give them a reason to be mad.

[Interview, April 4, 2012, pg. 12]

Andres detailed how speaking Spanish was banned and his reactions to the English-only policy at school. Although he was constantly reminded to not speak Spanish inside and outside of the classroom, Andres described talking back to teachers and getting smart with them in response to the language policy that he clearly disagreed with. He recalled getting in trouble for speaking Spanish and challenging the teacher's demands to not speak Spanish. Teachers' English-only policies and destructive attitudes not only upset Andres, as his language and identity as a *Mexicano* were being suppressed, but teachers went on to engender *racist nativist discourses*. Racist nativist discourses are "the institutionalized ways people perceive, understand, and make sense of contemporary U.S. immigration, which assigns values to real or imagined differences that justifies the perceived superiority and dominance of the native (whites) and reinforces hegemonic power" (Perez-Huber, 2011, p. 382). Perceiving Latinos as dangerous, criminals, foreigners, or threats to the "American" identity are just a few examples of what racist nativist discourses look like (Perez-Huber, 2011). Perez-Huber (2011) argues that English-only policies reinforce racist nativist discourses, and goes on to state that "English-only language policies are used as a tool by dominant groups to achieve hegemonic control through what they term the hegemony of English" (p. 383). Ultimately, the constant policing of the language practices of Andres and other Latina/o youth at his high school, as well as the teacher's explicit demands to use English only in school reinforced racist nativist discourses. Farr & Song (2011) suggest that English-only policies impact the education of students in the following ways:

. . . a (standard) English-only policy adopted for the schooling of students whose multilingual realities challenge the notion of a monolingual standards not only deprives such students of learning opportunities, including developing (and

becoming literate in) their home languages, but it also furthers in ideology

contempt toward subordinate languages and dialects – and their speakers. (p.659)

Not only did Andres disagree with this English only policy as a bilingual *Mexicano*, but also as a peer and son. As a peer among emerging bilinguals, Andres found himself translating from English to Spanish for his peers and often came to their defense in class.

Andres: Just cuz they [teachers] don't understand it they thought it was disrespectful that they [teachers] didn't understand it because they don't speak Spanish. . . But at the same time I would tell them the same thing I was like "*Well what about the other students? You guys speak English and they don't understand what you're talking about. That's the same thing as us speaking Spanish and you not knowing. We don't know what you're saying.*" Those things got me in trouble. I'd talk back to them and make them see. I would put there viewing point on my viewing point, and it's the same point, but they only put it towards us because we don't speak English.

[Interview, April 4, 2012, pg. 13]

In this example, Andres detailed how he made sense of the language policies in school with teachers and highlights how the English-only policy prevented his ability to broker for his peers. According to Andres, the teachers in his school found it disrespectful that students would speak in Spanish because they didn't know the language. However, Andres turns the table on them by suggesting that teachers consider the perspective of the emerging bilinguals in class. Further, Andres illuminated the ironies of the language policy, ideologies, and practices that were taking place. Here he demonstrates a deep understanding of the English/Spanish asymmetry that exists in the U.S. Language is framed within an English-Spanish asymmetrical system where both

languages hold differentials of power and status (Cervantes & Lutz, 2003). This leads to a binary of languages and deficit conceptions of Latinos in the U.S. Although he challenged teachers to put themselves in the shoes of the students they are teaching, it is unlikely that they did because it's Spanish speakers who are expected to learn English, but native English speakers do not have a similar expectation (Alba, 1999).

In addition to challenging English-only policies by speaking Spanish and challenging teachers to understand his point of view, Andres appears to make it clear that, like his peers who are emerging bilinguals, he too is affected by English-only policies as a member of the Latina/o community. Although he does know how to speak English, he included himself when saying “we don't know what you're saying” and “we don't speak English.” This signals his membership to the larger community of Latinas/os who are affected by the de-facto English-only policies that were taking place in and out of the classroom. The implementation of the de-facto English-only policy in school led him to disengage in school as he consciously chose to stop asking teachers questions and rely on peers for assistance with school work. Ultimately, his response to the policy resulted in disciplinary action against him in the form of suspension, detentions, and getting kicked out of school.

Conclusion

During the four years that I worked with the program, many students identified challenging experiences in the K-12 education system; aging out of school, low expectations from teachers and staff, lack of credit transfer, and racism in schools. Findings further demonstrate that youth often pursue a GED as a proxy for inadequacies in K-12 schools (Tuck, 2012). Tuck (2012) researched the value of a GED in the lives of GED earners and seekers in New York and found that (2012) “although scholars and journalists debate the worth of the

credential, urban youth continue to pursue the GED, especially as a proxy for inadequate schooling” (p. 4). Tuck (2012) advances our understanding of the GED beyond its value in the labor market and education to consider the way youth repatriate the GED for their own purpose. Though individual factors and decisions inform their experiences in K-12 schools, the weight of the institutional factors on the lives and education of migrant youth is deeply troubling. They often retreated to their internal safety zone to make sense of their education and circumstances until they found a completely different environmental safety zone in GEM. Given that migrant youth experienced inadequate schooling in K-12 institutions we must consider why they continue to pursue education in GEM and what value the GED holds to their lives and future.

As I explore the educational experiences of migrant farmworker youth in GEM in the following chapter with an understanding of how they experienced K-12 education, I argue that migrant farmworker youth opted out of K-12 and into GEM as an act of *Survivance*. Vizenor, Tuck & Wang (2014) propose the concept of survivance as resistance that challenges absence and victimry. Here we have come to know the dehumanization, absence and erasure that they experienced when the K-12 education system produced conditions for inequitable education. However, migrant youth did not simply stand by as victims to the unjust conditions they experienced. They often resisted and drew upon their agency to do something about it, even if it did work against them. When discussing survivance, Vizenor et al., (2014) remind us of how resistance and agency are understood in educational institutions:

They [teachers] want the resistance to be culturally determined, definable, categorical, collective, academically productive, and then conclude the resistance and meet with others to reach a consensus. The institutions would have young people create an effective presentation to authority, someone outside the very

energy of change and resistance. (p. 112)

It was the experiences that challenged this type of controlled and defined resistance to the educational injustices migrant youth faced in school that served as the springboard for students to opt into GEM. As I move forward to the next chapter I attempt to bridge the conversation across K-12 and Migrant Education Programs regarding the education of migrant farmworker youth.

CHAPTER 5

“It Got Personal”:

Resituating Learning for Migrant Youth in a High School Equivalency Program

“The solution is not one size fits all, but rather ongoing, committed effort that risks moving beyond the familiar. Exploring ways of honoring the knowledge and cultural background of the migrant farm families of children in our classes, we find that these families have much to contribute to our understanding of the world. Farmworkers are literate in ways not always valued or even recognized. Beyond their vast knowledge of agriculture and their highly developed survival skills, migrant laborers possess a rich heritage that can teach us much-about our lives, our work, and ourselves”

(Vocke, 2007, p. 62).

In their previous schooling experiences, many of the migrant youth in this study attempted to navigate an educational system that produced inadequate conditions for their learning. However, they had another opportunity for a formal education in GEM. In our interviews and conversations, migrant youth described how different their educational experiences were between GEM and the K-12 education system.

In this chapter, I seek to understand the educational experiences of migrant youth in GEM. I draw attention to the ways in which GEM resituated learning for them by providing a *culturally sustaining* education, one that sought “to perpetuate and foster—to *sustain*—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling”. (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 88). As mentioned in chapter four, I draw upon Vizenor’s (1994) concept of survivance

to understand the ways migrant youth exercised agency in their educational pursuits out of K-12 schools and into GEM. Grounded in the lives of Native American Indians and their creation stories, Vizenor, et al. (2014) conceived of survivance as an “intergenerational connection to an individual and collective sense of presence and resistance in personal experience” that challenges the absence and victimry of Native American communities (p. 107). In an effort to assert active presence and preserve their personhood, the students in my study opted for a GED in resistance to the dominance, tragedy and victimry they experienced in K-12 schools. Migrant youth and survivance are discussed in greater detail later in the chapter when I explore students’ choice to attend GEM.

Before delving into the findings, I review the program components of GEM. Understanding the program is foundational to the findings that emerged and educational experiences of migrant youth in pursuit of the GED.

GEM Program Overview

GEM is a federally funded High School Equivalency Program. As you may recall from chapter one, I chose to call this particular High School Equivalency Program GEM in order to protect the identity of the program and the participants in my study. As such, GEM’s mission is to provide opportunities for migrant and seasonal farm workers to prepare academically to complete a General Educational Development degree (GED) and develop the necessary academic, vocational, and personal skills to pursue higher education, careers or the military. GEM is a three to four month residential program located in a large Midwest university. GEM provides housing, food, health services and academic preparation for enrolled students. GED courses are offered in English and Spanish and as of 2014 included the following subject exams; reasoning through language arts, mathematical reasoning, science, and social studies. Much of

the program personnel is familiar with the experiences and needs of migrant and seasonal farmworkers as many of them are former migrant and seasonal farmworkers themselves or have extended family members who work in the fields. The majority of program personnel, including instructors, are bilingual in English and Spanish.

GED subject exam preparation courses were offered Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm with a lunch break in between, and dinner before their study lab began at 6:30pm. Subjects were studied in weeklong increments and sometimes longer, depending on individual student progress. Although all students started off with their respective cohort class, students moved through the GED at their own pace and as the instructors saw fit. In addition to preparing students for GED exams, GEM also provided professional development opportunities such as resume building and job interview skills, plus social activities that included GEM lunches, football games, bowling, trips to museums, and more. For more in-depth details of the program components see chapter three.

Overview of Findings

I obtained key findings for this chapter from eight in-depth interviews (including follow-up interviews with Gris and Melissa), participant observations, and field notes across the three years this study took place. Three major findings related to the GEM program as resituated learning emerged from the study:

1. The majority of students *chose* GEM as a second opportunity at an education.
2. The environment of GEM (including the program structure, programming, and personnel) supported student learning as grounded in the lives and needs of migrant farmworker youth and families.

3. The majority of students experienced trust, respect, and *familia* in GEM. These elements reflect what migrant students consider essential to an *educación*.

Findings highlight what education can be like if educators and an educational space work *with*, not against migrant farmworker youth. Sub-themes will also be detailed in order to provide a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) and do justice to the depth of migrant youths’ experience in GEM. In the first section, migrant youth address their choice in attending GEM.

Choosing GEM: Another Pathway of Education

When discussing their educational experience in GEM, five out of six students identified GEM as another pathway to education. All five of these students attended K-12 institutions throughout their educational trajectory. Freddy, Guadalupe, Melissa, and Andres were all still in high school when they chose to opt out of high school and into GEM while Javier had been in K-12 schools fifteen years prior to the study. Although there are examples of successful migrant farmworker youth in education (Araujo, 2012; Garza et al., 2004), much of the research about this population often address them as struggling, drop-outs, and focuses on the deficits versus the strengths of these youth. That is not to say that the challenges and realities of migrant farmworker youth are not real. However, up until now findings from this study have demonstrated how K-12 schools themselves produce conditions that force students to withdraw. In the process, migrant farmworker youth have gained an understanding of what a formal education can and cannot do for them.

The choice to pursue an education in GEM reflects how migrant farmworker youth took matters into their own hands before they were pushed out of K-12 schools. These students did not wait for a high school student’s worst fear; to be shut out of graduation. Rather, they chose, the GED as an alternative pathway, often with the support of a caring parent, teacher, or both.

This challenges us to consider the complex relationship between migrant youth, the schools they attend, and whether migrant youth drop out or are pushed out of school. Furthermore, I argue that migrant farmworker youth were pushed to *drop in* to a meaningful *educación* in GEM. Grounded in Noddings (1984) concept of authentic caring, Valenzuela (1999) defines *educación* as “a model of schooling premised on respectful, caring relations” (p. 61). Furthermore,

Educación is a conceptually broader term than its English language cognate. It refers to the family’s role of inculcating in children a sense of moral, social, and personal responsibility and serves as the foundation for all other learning . . . *educación* additionally refers to competence in the social world, wherein one respects the dignity and individuality of others (Valenzuela, 1999, p.23).

The schooling experiences of migrant and seasonal farmworker youth in K-12 were anything but respectful and caring with the exception of the teachers who exposed them to GEM. In many ways, they were rendered invisible in K-12. However, students exercised their agency to pursue an *educación* in GEM.

During our first interview, I asked Melissa to describe GEM to migrant farmworkers who are interested in the program. Her response provides great insight on her perspective of GEM as an alternative education.

Melissa: I would describe it [GEM] as not only an opportunity, but an option. Like a road. There are so many different roads you can take. You can not go to school and do whatever you can and you’re gonna struggle. You can go to school or there’s the option of GEM. GEM is there. It’s not only “I’m gonna go get a GED.” It’s like I’m gonna do something in order to become someone. You get

your GED, they help you there, they give you everything you need. The only thing that you would need to bring would be the [pause] what's it called?

Lorena: You can describe it.

Melissa: Enthusiasm. You need to bring that. You need to bring confidence.

[Interview, May 5, 2012, pg. 11]

In this quote, Melissa described the program as an option using the metaphor of a road. She envisioned three possible roads that students can take: (a) not attending school, (b) going to school and, (c) enrolling in GEM. After attempting to catch up with credits in high school, Melissa ultimately chose to attend GEM when she learned that it was an option and stayed enrolled in school until she received official confirmation that she had been accepted to GEM. She adds that in GEM it is not only about attaining a degree (the GED). It's more than that. GEM is all about providing migrant and seasonal farmworkers with avenues for limitless possibilities of personal growth. Sometimes it was necessary to break through internalized fear and doubt that some students carried with them from K-12 to GEM. Other times it meant providing students with resources and networks, and sometimes all they needed were reminders that they *can* and *will* achieve their GED. For Melissa, attending GEM meant "do[ing] something in order to become someone" to envision her future self (Interview, May 5, 2012, p. 11).

While research about High School Equivalency Programs often focus on how such programs support migrant youth who drop out (Cranston-Gingras, 2003), we must consider when students choose to leave K-12 when it is no longer a viable option as was the case for many of the students in this study. Tuck's (2012) research with urban youth in New York reflects this concern. She found that GED programs were often getaways for urban youth from K-12 institutions. Furthermore, Tuck and her co-researchers found that

Without seeking to understand the *lived value* of the GED from the perspective of the youth who continue to flock to a supposedly depleted credential, we are left to assume that the youth are being duped into making a fatalistic decision. . . . Our findings indicate that prior analyses of the GED conducted by academics and the press have completely missed the picture on the most prominent element of the GED: *hope. Desire*. Pained, yes. Self-protective, yes. But also reflective and growing, rhizomatic. Regrouping. And ultimately, pretty well informed. (p. 109)

Like the participants in Tuck's study, student's choice to attend GEM over K-12 was well-informed, planned, and reflective of their desire for an *educación*, an education grounded in respect and the moral, social and personal responsibility that was inculcated in them by their family (Valenzuela, 1999). Melissa, Freddy, Guadalupe, and Andres were all enrolled in school prior to entering GEM. None of them opted for GEM until they were either accepted to the program or reassured that GEM was a viable option to completing their high school equivalency. Melissa described how her father insisted she stay enrolled school until her acceptance to GEM was confirmed. And so she did. In Guadalupe's case, his mother insisted he look into GEM knowing that he had been struggling in K-12. When asked about what his mother expected of him in the program, Guadalupe answered the following:

Guadalupe: I mean my mom really expects for me to actually graduate. She expects me to not be the same person that goes back to work in the fields. I mean she's told me that, she's had this talk with me. She does expect me to not only help myself, but through what I'm doing be able to help my brother and sisters. It's hard for her, especially when I'm not around. It's hard for her to help my little sisters on their homework and my older brother

when he has homework he doesn't do it anyways. It's hard for her to help them when she never even went to school, so she'll feel like if there's only one person to help who basically knows what to do it would not only bring me to a higher level of success and education, but it would also help you know the people around me to not just stay in the same hole.

[Interview, April 3, 2014, pg. 17]

It was at his mother's insistence (despite the sacrifice of losing her daughters caretaker and a source of family income) that he opted for an *educación* in GEM. For students like Gris and Antonio who had children, attending GEM was a planned family effort and sacrifice. Prior to starting in GEM, Gris and her husband strategized how they could both attend, while ensuring the care of their daughter. With Gris attending first during Spring 2014, and her husband during Fall 2014, daycare was secured and money was saved with time in advance.

For students who had attended K-12 schools, their educational experiences had largely been patched by an inflexible education system, low expectations on behalf of school personnel, and racism and racial tensions. Such issues made it difficult for the enthusiasm and confidence that Melissa described earlier to shine through at first. However, through a program grounded in the lives, needs, and values of migrant youth, the enthusiasm, *ganas*, and confidence became brighter than ever. Students' conscious, well-informed, and planned choice to opt out of K-12 and drop into a meaningful *educación* in GEM reflects what Vizenor (1994) calls survivance. First proposed in 1994 and informed by his work with Native American youth, Vizenor, Tuck & Yang (2014) describe survivance in the following way:

Survivance stands in contrast to concepts of absence and victimry that are frequently applied to Native communities . . . Historical absence and victimry are invested in the

manifest manners of cultural dominance . . . survivance is that new reference of resistance and an active sense of presence. (p. 113)

I argue that migrant and seasonal farmworker youth in this study not only exercised their agency but also their resistance, their survivance in the face of invisibility and erasure in schools. As they faced difficulties in K-12 schools with credit transfers, low expectations, racism and racial tensions, and English-only policies, their identities and internal safety zones were excluded and erased from the environmental safety zone of schools. Their choice to opt for GEM gave them the active presence that challenges absence and victimry, as argued by Vizenor. Migrant and farmworker youth chose an active presence in their education before the K-12 system could make victims out of them.

The only student who did not identify GEM as an option to K-12 education was Gris. For Gris, GEM was her *only* option to formal education in the U.S. due to intersections of citizenship, age, language, and geographic location. Gris describes GEM as an opportunity, but she goes on to allude that the benefits of this opportunity are for certain people.

***Gris:** Pues creo que [GEM] es una gran oportunidad para el comienzo de una nueva etapa para aquellos que quieren seguir estudiando. Bueno no me he informado mucho pero tengo entendido que para entrar algún colegio tienes que tener el GED [L: Mhm] y creo que es eso lo importante sacar el GED para si quieren estudiar. Bueno para seguir estudiando pues es un buen comienzo. Creo que esta muy bien ir allí a obtener el GED.*

Gris: Well I believe [GEM] is a great opportunity for the start of a new stage for those who want to continue studying. I haven't informed myself much, but I understand that to enter college you need to have a GED and I believe that that is most important; get the

GED if they want to continue their education. To continue an education this is a great start. I believe that it is good to go there and obtain the GED.

[Interview, May 20, 2014, pg. 7]

In this quote, Gris describes GEM as a great opportunity and the start of a new beginning for students who want to continue their education post GED into higher education. However, the way she describes GEM positions her outside of the group of people who could benefit from attaining a GED. Thus, pushing us to consider the purpose and meaning of attending GEM across generational groups in the program. Although students chose to attend GEM, not everyone reaped the same benefits. I attribute Gris' response to two things: documentation status and disappointment in the education system. Having attended GEM with the hope that achieving a GED would open opportunities for documentation, Gris was disappointed to learn that this was not the case. Additionally, achieving a GED did not improve her material conditions as she told me after finishing GEM, "*sigo en lo mismo*" (still in the same). When studying the literacy practices of Azorean and Brazilian immigrants in the U.S., Vieira (2016) details how upward social mobility, material conditions, and social inclusion are tied to papers, documentation, and literacy. She affirms "papers mediate literacy's promise as a way for migrants to make it in the United States" (Vieira, 2016, p. 3). Although new policies such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) exist, Gris did not qualify for such benefits. Details about how migrant farmworker youth benefitted (or not) from the program will be discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter. However, further exploration of how Gris came to learn about the program is telling about why she positions herself outside of those who benefitted more directly from GEM.

When asked how she had learned about the program Gris shared the following. This narrative is an excerpt from my field notes from the follow-up interview post graduation from GEM:

She points over to the first *casita* at the entrance of the farm to indicate that one of her neighbors told her about GEM. Her neighbor had informed her about GEM and shared a story about a relative who attended the program. According to the neighbor, the student was undocumented. He received his GED in 3-4 weeks at GEM and the neighbor affirmed that the GED and GEM had been helpful in securing documentation for that student. Gris' neighbor told her that if she attended GEM it would help her get *papeles*. Through this story, Gris explained that she was motivated to attend GEM because of the possibility and hope of securing documentation.

[Field notes, December 14, 2014]

This field note demonstrates how Gris learned about the program through a fellow neighbor and how she became motivated to attend GEM in pursuit of documentation. This is central to her experience in the program and how she perceives the benefits of attaining a GED from GEM. She went on to explain that she was skeptical about her neighbors claim that achieving a GED could open opportunities to documentation, so she did some research of her own. Gris did not find anything that supported the idea that it would help her get her *papeles*. However, she said she still attended the program with the hope that the GED and/or GEM could help facilitate a pathway to documentation. Eventually program staff confirmed her fears. Although there was no assistance with documentation through the program or with a GED, she was still motivated to attain her degree. She and her family had invested and sacrificed so much for her to be able to attend GEM. Plus, she said “¿Que si en el futuro hay una oportunidad para una reforma

migratoria?” (What if in the future there is an opportunity for immigration reform?). *La esperanza nunca muere*. She never lost her motivation to attain her GED and the hope for documentation.

Melissa and Gris’ examples reveal different motivations for attending GEM, yet both have a similar purpose. They both want access to “become someone” as Melissa mentioned earlier. Both Melissa and Gris appear to have an understanding of the degree to which an institutional document validates one’s existence through documentation, and one’s intelligence through a degree.

A Safe and Sustaining Environment

A second finding highlights how migrant youth understood and experienced what they reported, was a better environment for learning within GEM. When interviewed, Andres alluded to the need of a better environment to learn in than his hometown. There was a GED program in closer proximity to Andres’ hometown. However, when asked about why he chose GEM over the program closer to home he said the following:

Andres: She [the teacher who referred him to GEM] said it was a good program and they have this program in my home town, but I didn’t want to go there because all my friends are there and I would get out of school to go hang out there *so what’s gonna stop me from leaving school?*

[Interview, April 19, 2012, pg. 3]

Andres’ response brings up a number of questions. What’s going to stop him from leaving school? What would have happened to him if he attended the program in his hometown? Many questions remain. What is clear is that Andres believed he needed accountability and another environment to successfully pursue his education.

To examine the environment of the program, I drew upon what San Pedro (2014) calls the *Environmental Safety Zone (ESZ)*. The environmental safety zone is described as: “a zone *around* each of us that prevents or allows our ideas, knowledges, and experiences to grow and become realized. This includes the contexts and situations in which we are located within schools, at home, in the community, and so on” (San Pedro, 2014, p. 51). As individuals in the environment (which in this case is GEM), migrant youth also navigated their *Internal Safety Zone* within the environmental safety zone. The internal safety zone is described as:

a zone within each of us where we can contemplate, understand, and make sense of our ideas, knowledges, and experiences. It is what we are thinking and feeling and becoming in our mind; it is our cumulative identity up to the present point, which has been formed by our gendered, race, classed, and languaged experience. (San Pedro, 2014, p. 51)

San Pedro (2014) developed the environmental and internal safety zones in his research with indigenous youth in the Southwest of the U.S. He builds upon Lomawaima & McCarty’s (2006) *Safety Zone Theory (SZT)* that traced “how Indigenous knowledges and languages have been viewed as safe in our nation’s shared sense of American identity, while, during times, they have been viewed dangerous and excluded” (San Pedro, 2014, p. 43-44). San Pedro affirms that both the environmental and internal safety zones are in constant interplay, yet are not exclusive of each other. Historically, there have been moments when migrant and seasonal farmworkers have been deemed safe and have been welcomed for labor and the economy’s sake. However, as soon as the economy drops then these farmworkers are deemed dangerous. With this history in mind, I used the concept of environmental and internal safety zones in this chapter to address the interplay between the environment of the program and the students in GEM. Additionally, environmental and internal safety zones allow me to address what is deemed dangerous about

migrant and farmworker youth in education, including their high mobility, occupations, bodies, languages, and more.

Three sub-themes that expand on what students call a better environment are introduced here in greater detail. The subthemes are:

1. Institutional, structure, programming and supports
2. It got personal: Flexibility and meeting individual student needs
3. “They know where they come from”: GEM program personnel

I intentionally organized the sub-themes from macro to micro in order to paint a detailed picture of the influence the institutional environment (the environmental safety zone) had on students’ individual experiences (internal safety zone) in the program. For the sake of understanding each sub-theme I write about each one separately. However, I seek to make sense of them together in the discussion at the end of the chapter.

Institutional structure, programming and supports. Data from interviews, field notes, and observations highlights how the structure, programming, and program personnel supported migrant farmworker youth in GEM. This finding is important to highlight as the implementation of GED granting Migrant Education Programs varies across contexts. However, in GEM, institutional supports were aligned to meet the needs of migrant farmworker youth.

In the realm of adult education programs, GEM is positioned to provide students a unique experience. Many GED granting adult education programs welcome students on a drop-in basis and offer services at the expense of students. For example, a student may attend twice a week, mornings or evenings, and work at their own pace using textbooks or computer programs based on GED curriculum that varies from state to state and program to program. Teachers in GED programs often assist students on an as needed basis. GEM differs from most GED adult

education programs because it is a three-month, residential, fully funded program. In GEM students are expected to move into the residential hall at the university, abide by program and university rules and regulations, and stay until they receive their GED or the length of the program (whichever comes first). The residential structure of the program made it possible for students to have a safe and sustaining environment in which to learn, where they were consistently supported, valued, held accountable, and most importantly where they were provided time and space to develop the interpersonal relationships necessary to support them through the program.

As a residential program GEM also provided tutoring, personal counseling, food, health care, and other support systems to aid in student retention and in attaining the GED. Maslow (1970) suggests that all human beings have five basic needs: physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization. These multiple supports made it possible to meet students' *physiological needs* (the body's need for food, oxygen, and sleep in order to survive), and *safety needs* (the need for security, protection, stability, and freedom), in order to pursue their education. In contrast, prior to attending GEM, students like Melissa struggled to not only meet her own basic needs but also those of her family while attending school full time. However, the use of these support systems varied by student and did not resolve the external challenges students faced outside of the program, such as family concerns, babysitting needs, employment security, etc.

One of the many benefits of being a residential program is that migrant farmworker youth were able to live and learn together. During their time in the program migrant farmworker youth develop strong interpersonal relationships with peers and staff. Many migrant farmworker youth often have to move before developing peer-to-peer relationships in school. As a result of the

residential structure, youth were able to live and learn with other migrant youth. In their previous schooling experiences, migrant and seasonal farmworker youth like Melissa had attended over 11 schools and had struggled to make new friends as there was little time to develop trust, the glue of friendship. Thus, living and learning with peers from migrant and seasonal farmworker backgrounds supported the development of their peer-to-peer relationships. In the following example Guadalupe addresses his experiences with relationships in the residential hall:

Guadalupe: There's a lot of people who without asking them for help they'll just come and check on you. "I'm done with my homework. Are you okay?" Or you know like me and Eddie. When Eddie was getting ready to take his exam I just went to his room and asked "hey man, you still need help studying?" So it's like, it's different but at the same time it's the same. You know cuz here they actually do take it serious helping you. I mean as far as describing them [peers] they're a good environment to be around.

[Interview, April 3, 2014, pg. 19]

In this example, Guadalupe describes how his peers were as he says “a good environment to be around.” He details how Eddie (and other peers) check on each other and offer to help one another with homework and/or studying, in preparation for exams. Furthermore, he emphasizes that peers take helping each other very seriously. Guadalupe’s example is one of many that highlights the tight knit community of peers that develops within GEM and how they support one another as a result of living and learning together. It is very common for students to help each other with homework, to study together, and form study groups. In a program where the expectation was to collectively support one another in pursuit of the GED, GEM supports the development of familial capital “those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition” (Yosso, 2005, p.79) among

classmates. Furthermore, these same peer-to-peer relationships became networks and communities that helped students develop navigational capital, the ability to maneuver through social institutions. In this way, the environmental safety zone expanded to sustain community cultural wealth as a springboard for learning among migrant youth. Throughout the time I volunteered with the program I noticed how this “good environment” among peers, as Guadalupe described it, was exemplified through program practices and activities.

My analysis of the GEM orientation, lunches, program components, and classroom observations demonstrates the programs intention to create community amongst the students. Not only did the residential structure of the program aid in the creation of community, so did the social activities and programming. As one example, students participated in an activity named “The Bridge”. Led by the program recruiter, students were divided into two groups and instructed to build the best bridge possible with the materials available (tubes of various lengths, tube connectors, fabric squares etc.) Students worked together in their groups for 15-20 minutes to build their bridge. During the activity, program personnel observed students and often participated, without sharing the purpose of the activity. Upon completion of the activity students were asked to describe its purpose. Students quickly identified the activity to be a team building exercise. As students discussed their experiences with the activity, the program recruiter emphasized the role of working together as a team. One key question that he asked is: Would you take your family over that bridge? Students pause. Some think twice about taking their family over their bridge. The recruiter reminds them that the process of attaining their GED is much like building the bridge: you don’t build it alone, you build it with a community of people. Furthermore, he adds that if someone is struggling to get their GED, peers must help one another in the same way that they helped each other build the bridge. The recruiter says “you cross the

bridge with the people who helped you build it.” I detail this particular team building activity because not only was it used every semester, but it was also used when students needed to come together as a community. Sometimes it was at the beginning of the semester when community needed to be formed. At other times it could be in the middle of the semester when GEM personnel saw students get discouraged and in need of community support. This activity reflects how GEM created community within the program and promoted a communal understanding of success. Through the building of the bridge, students simulated a realistic picture of the process of success towards the GED. Although social mobility and social efficiency purposes of schooling promote an individualistic approach to education, for migrant and seasonal farmworker youth, embracing such an approach was invalidating of their identities and roles as brothers, sisters, *hijas*, *hijos*, *padres de familia*, and more, particularly in K-12 schools. As demonstrated with students’ choice of GEM, the process of pursuing the GED was a collective effort in conjunction with teachers, parents, and students. Rather than promote an individualistic approach to education, GEM provided students an opportunity to experience education in ways that are culturally sustainable. Paris & Alim (2014) argue that, part of engaging in culturally sustaining pedagogies is to go beyond validating the voices of communities of color, and into preparing students with “the skills, knowledges, and ways of being needed for success in the present and future” (pg. 89). In building the bridge, students worked together, held each other accountable, and reflected as a *familia* as is often the case in their personal journeys through the educational pipeline and beyond. In doing so, students’ identities were being validated and prepared for present and future successes that require communal or team efforts. In GEM, migrant farmworker youth do not have to give up their values for community and family. Rather, community and family are part of the foundation of GEM and future endeavors.

During her follow-up interview, Melissa described the community of GEM in greater detail:

Melissa: The teachers are there, the tutors are there, the mentors are there, the volunteers are there-even your classmates and suitemates. There all there, they're there to help you. You're not there on your own. When I first left I felt like was on my own, but you're not really there on your own. It's like moving in with another family. You ended up getting close to everyone and like the teachers get personal. They don't teach you because they *have* to, they teach you because they *want* to and because they want you to be someone and because they want to see you succeed. GEM is, uhm how would you say it? [pause] Like the extra step. A big- BIG step that you take and you don't do it on your own. You have people for that. As soon as you come in they are helping you and walking you through it. After you're done they are still helping you.

[Interview, May 5, 2012, pg. 12]

In this quote Melissa mentions the extent to which the community of teachers, mentors, tutors, and classmates make up a strong support system in the program. She emphasizes how teachers actually want to teach in comparison to having to teach you. Having a community of support during the program made her feel like she had “moved in with another family”. Melissa’s description of the community in GEM, her emphasis on teachers wanting to teach students, and the help she received during and after the program, highlights the ways GEM creates family and fosters the cultivation of new familial capital for students within the program. Given the rise of accountability and social efficiency purposes of schooling I would be hard pressed to find an environment like the one Melissa described in K-12 schools. The previous schooling experiences

of students reveal that K-12 school environments were in a constant state of contraction to keep white, middle class values safe, while high mobility, migrant and seasonal farmworker status, language, values and cultural wealth were branded as dangerous.

It got personal: Flexibility and meeting individual student needs. The flexibility of the program and staff to accommodate student needs was also of great importance to students. Through flexibility, I am referring to the structural malleability of institutions to meet student needs (academics and overall well-being), and the ability and willingness of administrators and teachers to exercise their power in the decision-making process, in the best interest of students. In their previous schools, many migrant youth were attempting to make up credits and deal with the rigid structure of K-12 schools. In GEM, students experienced what it meant for the educational system to work *with* them, not against them. Melissa's experience is a great example of this. One of Melissa's goals in GEM was to complete her GED to return home in time to accompany her father to an important medical appointment. As you may recall, Melissa's father had been ill for a number of years and during high school, Melissa worked a part time job as a waitress to help support her mother in maintaining the household. After going to school full time during the day, Melissa worked until 10pm and still had to do homework. Although her teachers knew about her situation at home, their solution to help her catch up with graduation requirements was to give her more homework. And that, as she identified, "is not the solution" (Interview, May 5, 2012). However, in GEM Melissa was able to pursue the GED at her own pace with the flexibility of the program. Administrators and instructors in GEM were able to assess and make immediate and informed decisions about students' progress in pursuit of the GED. They were able to take into account the lives of students outside of school and have creative freedom in the curriculum, so as long as students were prepared to pass the GED subject

exams. These elements of flexibility in GEM made it possible for Melissa to accelerate through the GED exams, achieve her degree, and be back home in time for her father's doctor appointment.

It is important to note that GEM's flexibility is influenced by the fact that it is a program rather than a school. While GEM is a federally funded program that serves a minimum of 70 students per year, K-12 schools are regulated by the state, funded through local taxes, and serve thousands per year. Although GEM and K-12 schools are different entities, the potential for flexibility within the rigid structure of K-12 schools is still there. Stakeholders can still work within the system to address the needs of all students, in this case migrant farmworker youth. However, while analyzing the GED as a political and economic device, Tuck (2012) found that "accountability policies such as mandatory exit exams and mayoral control, punctuated by pressures excited by NCLB, produce the conditions in which schools tacitly and explicitly encourage under-performing student to drop-out under the auspices of the GED" (pg. 1). Thus, in many ways high-stakes policies have exacerbated the ability of K-12 schools to be flexible in meeting the needs of migrant farmworker youth.

Part of GEM's flexibility involved providing individualized and personalized attention to student needs. Andres described how GEM provided a "one-on-one" experience in the following:

Andres: It's a more one-on-one thing. They [teachers] can help you a lot more.

At other schools they will explain the same thing the whole class hour and here [GEM] they will explain it in different ways and if you don't get it they will explain it in different ways until you actually get it.

[Interview, April 4, 2012, p. 3-4]

According to Andres, in GEM learning is a “one-on-one thing.” He adds that in GEM teachers helped more, and explained content in various ways. Andres compares his education experiences in GEM to those in his K-12 classrooms, and highlights crucial micro level differences related to pedagogy. In this example, Andres describes how K-12 schools often teach “the same thing the whole class hour,” while GEM teachers present content in a variety of ways. Based on Andres’s description, we can deduce that the K-12 school Andres attended engaged in a rote learning, one-size-fits-all approach to teaching. In contrast, GEM provides multiple opportunities for learners to access content. Although there is no one way to learn or to teach, Andres’ comment provides insight to what works when teaching migrant farmworker youth.

“They know where they come from”: GEM program personnel. Of significant importance is the way GEM understood and worked to sustain the lives of migrant and seasonal farmworker communities. To some this finding may come as no surprise considering that as a MEP, GEM was created with migrant and seasonal farm working communities in mind. However, as Purcell-Gates (2014) and Torrez (2014) detailed in their respective studies, not all MEP’s live up to the needs of migrant children and youth. Specifically, not all MEP’s have personnel who know and understand the students and the families they serve, although they may have good intentions. Thus, it is important to highlight that participants identified how well program personnel knew them as students and individuals, as well as members of Latina/o migrant farmworker communities. For instance, Freddy describes the depth of which school personnel knew their students:

Freddy: They [program personnel] already know why everybody, what there goals are, what they want to do. They know from where they come from, who

they're doing it for, who they want to be role models to, who they want to be an example for.

[Interview, May 5, 2012, pg. 16]

Freddy emphasized that the personnel not only knew their students, but also knew their goals, aspirations, *whom* they are achieving their GED for, and who they want to be role models to. His description reflects the depth of knowledge possessed by GEM personnel regarding the community of students they were serving. Part of knowing students in such depth is related to the fact that the majority of personnel, tutors, and mentors had a background of Latina/o migrant and seasonal farm work either through direct experience or that of family members. Teachers and graduate interns were the exception. While the majority of program personnel and staff have a background in migrant farm work, teachers, graduate interns and service learners varied in their understanding of the migrant farm work experience. However, those who were not familiar with the migrant farm work experience learned about it through videos and resources provided by GEM leadership and through the first-hand accounts of the youth they were serving. As such, personnel and staff in GEM sought to provide programming and support for migrant youth, knowing who they are and what they need, not only as students, but as providers/members of families, and field workers. Furthermore, I contend that part of GEM's success in resituating learning for students is a flexible education system and personnel that understand and/or are willing to learn about what it means to be a migrant and seasonal farmworker.

When studying parental involvement in successful MSFW serving institutions, Lopez (2001) found that personnel could identify with the migrant experience, as they have been former migrants, or have family who has worked seasonally. Lopez (2001) then highlighted the contributions of personnel who can directly identify with migrant and seasonal farm work:

. . . . As such, the background of these individuals not only provides them with a unique insight into the complex needs of migrant families, but it also allows them to 'connect' with families on a deeper, more personal level. . . . Our research suggests, that school personnel could, because of their personal experience as migrants, readily identify with the migrant experience and could connect with families on a level that is more sympathetic and understanding of their condition. Their experience as migrants provided a unique vantage point that recognized the complex needs of migrant families in a nonjudgmental way.

(p. 263-264)

Lopez (2001) reminds us of the importance of having school personnel that understand the needs of migrant students and their families. Arguing for the hiring of staff with first hand experience of migrant farm work is ideal, however the key is to have school personnel who fully understand the needs of migrant families in nonjudgmental ways. The key word here is “nonjudgmental.” I emphasize this term because migrant farmworker families are often judged for the work they do and their way of life. In her study with fifth grade boys of migrant and seasonal backgrounds, Exum-Lopez (1999) found that community sentiments of migrant farmworkers made their way to the schools and classrooms attended by migrant students. Thus, in school the young boys and their families were presumed to be irresponsible with no sense of stability, and coming and going as they pleased (Exum-Lopez, 1999).

Culturally Sustaining Education for Migrant Farmworker Youth

This chapter portrayed the educational experiences of a sample of migrant farmworker youth in a GED granting Migrant Education Program. Migrant youth lived and learned in an educational context that re-centered their internal safety zone from the margins of K-12 schools

to the heart of GEM. In doing so, migrant youth were able to pursue not just any education, but an *educación* that was grounded in *familia*, care, respect, and lived experiences. Migrant youth chose to attend GEM as a means of survivance, a resistance through active presence, from their previous schooling experiences in K-12 schools. Their experiences in GEM reflect what a culturally sustaining education looks like for migrant farmworker youth. While this study took place in a Migrant Education Program there is much that educators can learn from GEM in relation to K-12 schools. It is my hope that in chapter 7 we can begin to consider what a culturally sustaining and humanizing education can look like in and across K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs.

CHAPTER 6

Los de Español y Los de Ingles: Understanding Language and Identity in GEM

My father had a vocabulary of Spanish words that to this day are not found in popular Spanish language dictionaries. He was born into a poor, migrant farm working family in a community where people still used ancient words that some found improper or backwards . . . And though he knew the ‘standard’ Spanish of ‘educated’ people, he also worked, lived, laughed, and cried with words that were more expressive and indigenous to the border than standard Spanish. (Burciaga, 1993, p. 5)

In his book, *Drink Cultura: Chicanismo*, Jose Antonio Burciaga (1993) writes about the beauty and complexity of growing up Chicano across Mexican and American cultures. Drawing from his father’s experience, he specifically illuminates the difference between knowing “standard” Spanish, and living language in ways closer to his indigenous roots. Burciaga’s quote and the rest of his introductory chapter captured my participants’ attention when I read it aloud to preface what my study was about. Through their engagement with the text and their interest in wanting to know more about my study, one could infer that they knew and could relate to the ways of living, laughing, and identifying with the language practices described by Burciaga. Those inferences came to life as I explored the language practices of migrant farmworker youth in GEM. It became clear that Latina/o migrant farmworker youth also lived language in the ways described by Burciaga. However, findings from this study reflect that K-12 schools did not value the linguistic dexterity of Latina/o migrant farmworker youth. In K-12 schools, students such as Andres struggled to traverse English-only language ideologies and policies. Andres recalled having been surveilled and disciplined for speaking Spanish in high school. His resistance to English-only policies in school even led him to be suspended from school. On the

other hand, in GEM students were encouraged and expected to draw upon their vast linguistic repertoires to live and learn within the program. As a bilingual myself, I was intrigued by the embracing of migrant students' linguistic capital in an educational environment.

In this chapter, I address how Latina/o migrant farmworker youth who were on a continuum of bilingualism, navigate language and identity in GEM. I identify the dynamic and fluid use of language(s) as *translanguaging* (Garcia, 2014; Canagarajah, 2011a) and draw upon language ideologies to understand the role of language at the intersections of the social and cultural worlds that migrant farmworker youth experience in GEM. I aim to contribute to our understanding of how these youth live and learn across language in GEM. Findings reflect how translanguaging supports students' internal safety zone, and in many instances is necessary to leverage learning. Findings also highlight how students exhibited identities within and across groups that were institutionally known as the English and Spanish groups, positioned along a continuum of Americanness.

Translanguaging: Framing Language and Identity

Garcia (2014) describes translanguaging as “. . . the complex discourse practices of bilinguals but also to the pedagogies that use these practices to release ways of speaking, of being, and of knowing of subaltern peoples” (p. 74). Translanguaging as a concept emerged in Wales during the 1980's within the discipline of linguistics to transform the language struggles between English and Welsh from deficit and disadvantageous to additive and advantageous for bilingual schools, people and society (Lewis et al., 2012a). Born from the need to address the changing sociocultural and political times in Wales for bilinguals, translanguaging was first conceptualized by educationalist Cen Williams as the “the planned and systematic use of two

languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson” (see Lewis et al., 2012a, p. 643). In the U.S. Garcia (2009a) extended the meaning of translanguaging in the classroom.

Translanguaging conceptualizes the use and acquisition of multiple languages as an integrated system rather than compartmentalized and separate (Lewis et al., 2012b). Scholars such as Canagarajah (2011a; 2011b), Hornberger & Link (2012), Garcia & Sylvan (2011) and others have challenged deficit and monolingual language approaches with the alternative of translanguaging in education. Canagarajah (2011a) captures the major emphasis of translanguaging in the following:

. . . for multilinguals, languages are part of a repertoire that is accessed for their communicative purposes; languages are not discrete and separated, but form an *integrated* system for them; multilingual competence emerges out of local practices where multiple languages are negotiated for communication; competence doesn't consist of separate competencies for each language, but a *multicompetence* that functions symbiotically for the different languages in one's repertoire; and, for these reasons proficiency for multilinguals is focused on *repertoire building* . . . rather than total mastery of each and every language. (p. 1, emphasis added)

Canagarajah (2011a) argues that everyone is multilingual and multivocal and therefore we all engage in translanguaging as a performative social accomplishment that is largely valued as an oral practice, but not so much as a written one. However, depending on the race/ethnicity and language of the speaker, the relative cost of our translanguaging and/or its value in school and society at large is very different.

Garcia (2010) identifies translanguaging as a both a bilingual performance and pedagogy. As a performance, individuals can perform bilingually in multimodal ways through writing, signing, discussing and more. Drawing upon students' linguistic repertoires to maximize understanding and achievement in school is translanguaging as pedagogy (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). Garcia & Sylvan (2011) examined the translanguaging practices of multilingual students in multilingual classrooms at the International High Schools in New York for newcomer immigrants. They found that the high school context had multiple core principles that allow for translanguaging to occur within the multilingual classrooms, including the following: heterogeneity and singularities in plurality, collaboration among students, collaboration among teachers, learner-centered classrooms, language and content integration, plurilingualism from the students up, experiential learning, and localized autonomy and responsibility. Garcia & Sylvan (2011) proposed that translanguaging be taken up in classrooms as a dynamic plurilingual approach to address the dynamic bilingualism of the 21st century. However, they acknowledge that if translanguaging is taken up by misguided educators it is possible for bilingual education efforts to be undermined and translanguaging could become random and senseless (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011). When curriculum and instruction are planned around creating opportunities to engage in translanguaging as a pedagogy and/or language practice, the possibilities for academic learning and identity affirming are endless.

Lewis et al. (2012b) identified multiple factors that contextualize pedagogic translanguaging. The developmental use of translanguaging, input and output variations, subject-determined translanguaging, varied classroom contexts, and the difference between teacher-led and pupil-led use of translanguaging, are all factors identified by Lewis et al. (2012b). Further, they state that translanguaging was originally meant for students who have a good grasp of both

languages in order to strengthen both languages and build students' confidence with both languages. However, Garcia (2009b) suggests that translanguaging can be used to support emerging bilinguals in mainstream classrooms via scaffolding; modeling, bridging, thematic planning and so on. Lewis et al. (2012b) say that when the language level of the student appears to be insufficient to engage in learning, then support should be given to the student so s/he can participate in translanguaging in the classroom (p. 661). Lastly, Hornberger & Link (2012) explored the translanguaging practices of first grade emerging bilinguals. The fluid movements between Spanish and English and the incorporation of oral and written Sepedi and varieties of English are two examples of translanguaging from the Hornberger & Link (2012) study. They suggest that:

Translanguaging practices in the classroom have the potential to explicitly valorize all points along the continua of biliterate context, media, content, and development. They offer the possibility for teachers and learners to access academic content through communicative repertoires they bring to the classroom while simultaneously acquiring new ones (p. 245).

In this study, I used translanguaging to identify the dynamic and fluid language practices and pedagogy used by migrant farmworker communities, program staff, and me. I identify language practices and pedagogy as translanguaging for various reasons. First of all, translanguaging encompasses a range of language practices, including codeswitching, translation, and codemeshing. Moreover, incorporation of translanguaging provides the opportunity to consider the fluidity, flexibility, and creative process of not only speaking and writing, but also of the process with which my students affirmed and (re)created self through language. Secondly, translanguaging provides the opportunity to situate language from a translingual approach, where

I could focus on the process and ways the migrant farmworker students in my work, were living and learning translingually. Lastly, translanguaging made it possible to focus on the agency of individuals in creating and interpreting signs of communication (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). Ultimately, the flexibility and fluidity, the focus on process and agency of individuals, and the range of language practices that translanguaging encompasses, allowed me to develop an expansive and deeper understanding of the ways language and identity was drawn upon and negotiated in GEM.

Language Ideologies

In conjunction with translanguaging, I draw upon literature that addresses language ideologies. According to Kroskrity (2004), language ideologies “are beliefs, or feelings, about languages as used in their social worlds” (p. 498). Examining language ideologies involves understanding how people conceive of language, what they understand with particular languages, and how people interpret language in social and cultural worlds (Irvine, 2012). However, language ideologies are sometimes not easily observable or tangible. McGroarty (2010) states the following:

Whether implicit or explicit, language ideologies inevitably incorporate, often unconsciously, speakers’ sometimes-idealized evaluations and judgments of appropriate language forms and functions along with opinions about individuals and groups that follow our flout conventional expectations. (p. 3)

Examples of language ideologies in the U.S. include the belief in monolingualism and language standardization. Language standardization, the belief in a uniform and correct language, and monolingualism, the belief in a “one language-one nation”, emerged in the rise of modernization, and often function together although they are distinct language ideologies (Farr & Song, 2011).

Monolingualism and language standardization have had serious implications for language policy as described by Farr & Song (2011) in the following quote:

. . . a belief in monolingualism in a standardized language persists, explaining both the widespread criticism of vernacular usage (e.g. in the Ebonics controversy of the mid-1990's in the U.S.) and of code-mixing (either as code-switching or in mixed languages such as Creoles), as well as the fervor of the English-Only movement in the U.S. (pp. 652)

Canagarajah (2013) critiques monolingualism and language standardization under the *monolingual orientation*, the belief that “languages have their own unique systems and should be kept free of mixing with other languages for meaningful communication” (p. 1). Canagarajah (2013b) identified characteristics of the monolingual orientation starting with the assumption that language is equivalent to community therefore community is equivalent to place. Secondly, a single language equals identity and that language itself is a self-standing system. Through a monolingual orientation “the locus of language as cognition rather than social context, or mind rather than matter” (Canagarajah, 2013b, pg. 20). And finally, communication based on grammar and form, rather than practice in its ecological context is also characteristic of the monolingual orientation. Romanticism, enlightenment and modernity, nation-state formation, industrialization, structuralism, colonization and imperialism, have historically played a role in the development and popularization of the characteristics of monolingual language ideologies (Canagarajah, 2013b; Farr & Song, 2011).

Farr & Song (2011) examined the relationship between language ideologies and language policies in education and argued that language ideologies are inseparable from education for two reasons: “first, language policy often is carried out through mass education, and, second

education itself is conducted through language” (p. 650). In his study about the language ideologies of elementary school students’ everyday use of Spanglish, Martínez (2013) found that students skillfully engaged in codeswitching as a means toward cultural maintenance and preferred the aesthetic sound of Spanglish. Martínez (2013) argues that their use of codeswitching and preference for the sound of Spanglish is counterhegemonic to dominant language ideologies and deficit rationales that students voiced to explain why they codeswitch. Martínez (2013) defined deficit rationales as "explanations or rationalizations that emphasized their lack of proficiency in English and/or Spanish" (p. 280).

In 2004, Kroskrity proposed five axioms that characterize scholarship about language ideologies. For purposes of this chapter, I only highlight the fifth: Language ideologies are productively used in the creation and representation of various social and cultural identities (e.g. nationality, ethnicity). Kroskrity (2004) affirmed that “. . . when language is used in the making of national or ethnic identities, the unity achieved is underlain by patterns of linguistic stratification which subordinates those groups who do not command the standard” (p. 509). These issues of stratification were visible among migrant youth in GEM.

For this study, I drew upon language ideologies and the monolingual orientation for two purposes. First, I enlisted language ideologies to understand the beliefs of migrant youth about the dynamic bilingualism that was fostered in GEM, and the language practices that emerged from this particular educational site. Secondly, language ideologies made it possible to examine how migrant youth create and represent various social and cultural identities. McGroarty (2010) says, "because speakers can, and do, use various combinations of the languages and varieties they know, the study of language ideologies helps to refine the understanding of the boundary- and identity-marking functions within a community” (p. 9). Understanding how students made

sense of the dynamic and fluid language practices in GEM and how their beliefs shape their social and cultural identities was made possible through an examination of language ideologies and the translanguaging that took place in the program.

Findings

In GEM, a common and uniting identity is that of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. However, migrant and seasonal farmworkers came to know each other as the “Spanish” and “English” groups in GEM. Given their language proficiency, students were assigned to the Spanish or English group to take classes with and be instructed in that language. Moreover, teachers and staff often identified students as two distinct groups: the “Spanish” and “English” groups. Students in the Spanish group were predominantly Mexican immigrants to the U.S., 25 years of age and older, and Spanish dominant. These students were mostly first generation *Mexicanos* in the U.S. The Pew Research Center (2004) identifies first generation Latinas/os as those born outside of the U.S. or Puerto Rico. In contrast, in the English group there were students of Mexican descent who are English dominant or bilingual in Spanish and English, 18-21 years of age, and who have attended K-12 education in the U.S. Generational status among students in the English group varied. Some of the students were what is known as the 1.5 generation, those who were born outside of the U.S. but were raised in and identify the U.S. as home. Other students were second generation Latinas/os who were born in the United States to immigrant parents (Pew Research Center, 2004). These general distinctions and differences were observed and documented throughout the three years this study took place. How migrant and seasonal farmworkers in GEM came to understand and live out generational differences across language groups is discussed in the latter half of this chapter.

My analysis of the data revealed the following:

- 1) Translanguaging was used for teaching and learning in GEM by both migrant youth and instructors.
- 2) In spite of an environment that fosters dynamic bilingualism, monolingual language ideologies persisted among students.
- 3) Migrant youth performed identities and identified one another within and across institutionally known English and Spanish groups that position them along a continuum of Americanness.

First, I tease out how instructors and students engaged in translanguaging in GEM. Although I did not intend to research the language practices of instructors, students identified how instructors themselves translanguaged. It was common for instructors to draw upon their linguistic resources to meet student needs since most of the instructors in the program were bilingual. Second, I address how monolingual language ideologies persisted among students especially those in the Spanish group in spite of living and learning in an environment that fostered dynamic bilingualism. Finally, analysis of the data brought to light how migrant farmworker youth defined themselves and their peers in relation to the language group they were assigned to in GEM. As Latinas/os in the U.S., participants in this study language across “standards” of English and Spanish regardless of their level of proficiency in either language. Although students were initially assessed and classified into such groups for what the program deemed “learning purposes”, the labels of each group came to mean more than program assignments. Similar to Garcia Bedolla’s (2003) findings in her study of Latino politics and language findings, participants used language “as a symbolic marker to describe class, race, and generational differences they see in their communities” (p. 267). In this chapter, I highlight the ways that students enacted, affirmed, and negotiated linguistic, class, and generational identities

in the program. Most intriguing is the way students performed identities associated with their perceptions of what it means to be “American”.

Translanguaging in GEM

During interviews, migrant farmworker youth identified the language practices of their instructors and were highly aware of whom they could readily translanguage with. When asked about what their teachers in GEM thought about the way they translanguaged, they identified Mrs. Lucy as an instructor who translanguaged like them. As a speaker of English, Spanish and French, Mrs. Lucy drew upon a range of linguistic resources to teach in her classes. She taught both English and Spanish classes, but was primarily assigned to the Spanish group of students. As the semester progressed she would end up teaching students in both the Spanish and English group since she was the veteran instructor in the program.

For instructors it was a necessity to translanguage in order to meet all students’ educational needs. Educational needs included, teaching and reviewing new content, preparing students with testing skills, breaking through feelings of failure and more. As previously mentioned, at various points in the semester it was possible to be an instructor in the program and teach students in both the English and Spanish groups, even if initially assigned to a single group. During the last week of the 2014 spring semester, Mrs. Lucy was teaching the most difficult subject for students, mathematics. By this time, very few students remained in the program as many had already left or graduated. The remaining students represented both groups, Guadalupe (English), Gris (Spanish) and Chayo (Spanish). Although they were all studying for the math exam, each student had a different background in mathematics, and Guadalupe preferred instruction in English while Gris and Chayo preferred Spanish. As a result, Mrs. Lucy translanguaged across Spanish and English to teach Math to all three students. Translanguaging

as a pedagogy and practice supported student learning in GEM.

For Antonio being able to translanguage and to have instructors, who like him drew upon language as a resource, was key. When asked about their language practices during a *platica* Antonio and Mrs. Lucy shared the following:

Antonio: *Cuando me hablan en Español yo lo contesto pero si no sé qué decir en Español hay veces que me baso en el Inglés como mi segunda opción.*

When someone talks to me in Spanish I answer, but if I don't know what to say in Spanish there are times when I base myself in English as a second option.

Mrs. Lucy: *“Si porque en la clase . . . ellos están tomando Español pero el en Inglés. Pero a veces el (Antonio) no entiende el significado de la palabra en Español entonces se la digo en Inglés y rápido [lo entiende] porque habla bien el Inglés pero no lo escribe bien y no lo lee bien pero entonces facilita hablando.*

Yes, because in class . . . they are taking Spanish, but he in English. But sometimes Antonio doesn't understand the significance of a word in Spanish, so I say it to him in English and he quickly understands it because he speaks English well. But he doesn't write it or read it well, yet he manages by speaking it.

[Platica, Spring 2012, pg. 3]

This quote demonstrates how Antonio and Mrs. Lucy drew upon the translation portion of translanguaging to support his learning in GEM. With the assistance of Mrs. Lucy, Antonio drew upon his linguistic repertoire to make up for the lack of a solid education in both languages. Although migration to and from Mexico led Antonio to experience interrupted schooling in both countries, Mrs. Lucy was able to enlist his linguistic repertoire as a mobile resource to leverage learning in GEM. The interrupted schooling produced an unbalanced education in both countries,

and translanguaging was one way that educators like Mrs. Lucy drew on Antonio's linguistic resources.

Not only was translanguaging a necessity in order to meet all students' educational needs in preparation for the GED, it was also necessary to leverage curricular issues. In the following vignette, I provide an example of one of many moments that called for translanguaging. This particular vignette highlights the need for translanguaging to make up for shortcomings in curriculum:

It's time to review poetry and Mrs. Lucy is reading aloud a poem when I arrive. She finishes reading and students applaud her. Students are instructed to read through the examples of poems they were given earlier and to identify the type and structure of the poem. As students read the poems Antonio runs into a word he was unfamiliar with:

Antonio: *Maestra ¿que es cogollo?*

Teacher, what is a cogollo?

Mrs. Lucy: *Busca el significado en tu diccionario.*

Look for the definition in your dictionary.

Javier and the rest of his peers pull out their Spanish-English dictionaries and page through it to find the word cogollo. Leonardo, Antonio's peer, does not find cogollo and informs Mrs. Lucy.

Leonardo: *Cogollo no existe en el diccionario.*

Cogollo does not exist in the dictionary.

Mrs. Lucy: *¿Como que no existe?*

What do you mean it doesn't exist in the dictionary?

Mrs. Lucy is surprised that the word is not in the dictionary. She whips out her dictionary, searches for the word, and cannot find it either. Upon searching for the word and failing to find

it, students began talking amongst themselves about this issue.

Antonio: *¿Porque será que hay tantas palabras en Español que no están en el diccionario?*

Why is it that there are so many Spanish words that are not in the dictionary?

Leonardo: *¡Verdad! Te acuerdas que así nos paso la semana pasada en el examen de GED.*

True! Remember this happened last week in the GED exam.

Mrs. Lucy: *Hay muchas palabras en el GED de Español que no usamos a diario. En mi país de Guatemala un cogollo es un retoño. ¿En su país que palabra usan para significar retoño?*

There are many words in the Spanish GED that we don't use everyday. In my country, Guatemala, a cogollo is a sprout. In your country what words do you use to signify a sprout?

Leonardo: *Brote o tallo.*

Bud or stem

Antonio: *También se dice botón.*

You can also say botón.

Mrs. Lucy: *Ven que hay muchas palabras que significan los mismo. Cuando tomen su examen van a tener que buscar sinónimos o la raíz de una palabra para buscarle significado a una palabra que no conozcan.*

See there are many words that mean the same thing. When you take the exam you are going to have search for synonyms or the root of a word to find the meaning of a word you may not know.

Leonardo: *Si maestra. Pero se supone que es el examen en Español.*

Yes, teacher. But isn't the exam supposed to be in Spanish?

Mrs. Lucy: *Les recuerdo que el examen de Español a veces son direct translations de Ingles a Español.*

Let me remind you that the Spanish exam sometimes has direct translations from English to Spanish.

Antonio: *¿Entonces quien traduce el libro de GED de Ingles a Español?*

So, who translates the GED [preparation] book from English to Spanish?

Lorena: *Es que la gente que crea libros muchas veces traducen en Castellano o aprendieron Español como segundo idioma.*

Textbook developers often translate in Castillian Spanish or have learned Spanish as a second language.

Antonio: Ohh!

Lorena: *¡Por eso ocupamos que ustedes reciban su GED y escriban los libros de GED!*

That's why we need you all to receive a GED and write the textbooks for the GED!

Mrs. Lucy looks at her watch and realizes class time is over. She instructs students to finish the class assignment for homework and reminds them that the incident that happened to day could happen to them while taking the GED. She goes on to say that they need to have strategies to be able to understand words they are unfamiliar with as this is very common in the GED.

[Observation, March 23, 2012]

What at one point was a failure in the curriculum, emerged as a teachable moment and discussion about Spanish in the U.S. Mrs. Lucy explained that in her country, Guatemala, the

word means “*retoño*”. She then asked students to identify words that signify “*retoño*” in their home languages to understand *cogollo*. As students provided examples based upon where they grew up and the Spanish spoken in that region, Mrs. Lucy followed up by reminding students that there are words (and entire curricula for that matter) that are direct translations from English to Spanish. The term in the poem that Antonio did not understand brought about a rich discussion of what gets lost in translation and differences in meaning across languages and language varieties. Further, students asked who translated the GED book. Although the direct translation of the poem students were reading from the textbook resulted in an opportunity for learning, this example reflects the ways English continues to be privileged while the materials in Spanish are subpar. Unfortunately, this is just one of many times that this occurred with the “old” exam prior to the 2014 version. Yet, the new GED brought its own challenges.

In Spring 2014, students in the Spanish group were learning in English. With the new GED exam in place, the Spanish group was learning from English materials. As discussed in chapter three, during Spring 2014 the GED had undergone curricular and format changes to align with Common Core standards. Although program staff and instructors searched for GED curriculum and textbooks in Spanish in late 2013, none of the Spanish language curricula available at the time was deemed suitable by program staff to meet the needs of the students in GEM. Therefore, Mrs. Lucy used a combination of the English curriculum materials and some of the ones that she had created over the years to prepare students for subject matter exams. In addition to drawing upon her own creativity and time to create materials for students in the Spanish group, she enlisted students to use their linguistic repertoires as resources in the classroom. This was visible when she paired two students, Eiza and Francisco to work together. Mrs. Lucy talks about why she paired them up:

Mrs. Lucy: *Es que fijese que lo que sucede es que no he encontrado buen material porque hay ya del 2014 libros, pero no en Español. Entonces lo que hago es que por ejemplo estos [materiales] en Ingles con Eiza que se fue a testar. Entonces lo que hice es Eiza trabajaba con Francisco y se intercambiaban. Eiza le traducía a Francisco y lo hacían juntos y de allí Francisco le ayudo al final a Eiza porque ella iba testear y el ya había pasado. Entonces se ayudaban los dos y después yo les revisaba si sacaban alguna mala.*

Mrs. Lucy: See what has happened is that I haven't found good material. There are 2014 [GED] books, but not in Spanish. So what I do is that for example, I used these [worksheets] in English with Eiza who went to test. So what I did is that Eiza worked with Francisco and they would interchange. Eiza would translate for Francisco and Francisco would help Eiza because she was going to test [in Math] and he had already passed that exam. So they would help each other and later I would revise [their work] to see if they got any bad ones [incorrect questions].

[Platica, April 17, 2014]

In this example, Mrs. Lucy described how she partnered Eiza and Francisco to aid each other in preparation for their exams, despite not having the necessary curriculum materials. While Francisco prepared for the writing exam, Eiza would translate the prompts for him since there were no preparation books for 2014 GED in Spanish. The collaboration between the two students led to Francisco helping Eiza in preparation for her math exam. Creese & Blackledge (2015) affirm, "in the classroom, translanguaging approaches draw on all linguistic resources of the child to maximize learning and achievement" (p. 26). This approach was reflected in Mrs. Lucy's creative attempt at making up for the curricular materials that were missing. Through

collaboration and sharing of linguistic resources, both students were able to prepare and learn for their respective exams. However, this seemed to also be another example where the Spanish group still had to learn under English dominant language since the Spanish GED curriculum was not up to par for GEM staff to purchase. Ultimately, the Spanish group still had to come to the English side.

“ . . it would just be like back home”: Language in GEM. Knowing that the teachers in GEM are bilingual, during interviews I asked students whether teachers used their linguistic repertoire in class. Freddy’s response gives us a glimpse into how he felt when his teachers in GEM used more than one language in class.

Lorena: Did you ever hear the teachers using both languages [Spanish and English]?

Freddy: Mhmm. Yup.

Lorena: How did that make you feel?

Freddy: Felt like comfortable because it’s like a new place . . . When they would speak in two different languages it would just be like back home. Everything comes back to your mind . . . fast.

[Interview, May 5, 2012, pg. 8]

This excerpt demonstrates how Freddy felt comfortable when hearing instructors speak his home languages in class. For Freddy it was common to speak Spanish, English and Spanglish at home, amongst peers, and in school. Thus, hearing it at school made him feel at home. This finding is key, as affirming students language in turn affirms their identities and their internal safety zones. As students like Freddy experienced a sense of belonging, a sense of home in the program through the linguistic repertoires of the instructors, they seemed to be drawn into learning in

ways that had not occurred before in previous educational experiences. After all translanguaging as pedagogy is said to engage learners through identity investment (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

“No le hallo sentido a el Espanglish”: Monolingual ideologies in GEM. Despite the encouragement of translanguaging within the fostering of dynamic bilingualism in GEM, there were still some students who held monolingual ideologies, beliefs that languages should be free of mixing and contained as their own language systems, particularly students in the Spanish group. This was exemplified in a *platica* with students in the Spring 2012 cohort. I asked students what languages were used in GEM and they identified English, Spanish, and Spanglish. I followed up by asking:

Lorena: *¿Qué piensan de Spanglish?*

What do you think about Spanglish?

Nayeli: *Yo nunca le he hallado sentido al Espanglish.*

Spanglish has never made sense to me.

Roberto: *Hay unos que quieren hablar Ingles y Español y luego quieren mezclar las palabras y le quedan feos así como hablan.*

There are some who want to speak English and Spanish and they want to mix the words and it sounds ugly how they talk.

Nayeli: *Yo digo decídete. Si hablas Ingles hablas Ingles. Si hablas Español hablas Español y ya.*

I say decide. If you're speaking English, speak English. If you're speaking Spanish, speak Spanish and that's it.

[Platica, April 1, 2012, pg. 3]

In this interaction among students in the Spanish group, Roberto and Nayeli criticize language practices that extend beyond monolingual approaches to language. While it is unclear in this quote whether Roberto and Nayeli are opposed to simply codeswitching from Spanish to English and vice versa or to code-mixing, they later clarified that they were opposed to mixing words from different languages to create new ones. Examples include *parquear* and *troca*. Their commentary suggests a strong opposition to any language practices that deviated from a monolingual orientation. Canagarajah (2013b) argues that a monolingual perspective pits languages and cultures at war with one another and dichotomizes language acquisition, use, and learning. In this quote, Nayeli and Roberto pit English and Spanish against each other and stigmatize the fluid and dynamic language practices youth commonly engage in. Antonio countered their claim and used himself as an example of why dynamic language practices are needed and used. Although Roberto and Nayeli had seen Antonio and other students enlist their linguistic repertoires, including with instructors, they continued to criticize language practices that did not involve languages being spoken purely and separated from each other. As a participant observer, I noticed that the tone of the conversation had changed when Roberto and Nayeli voiced and insisted on their beliefs regarding language. In a sense, I observed what Canagarajah (2013b) had warned us about: monolingual language ideologies pitting languages and cultures at war with one another. However, in this *plática* it was people within similar cultures, but different generations in the U.S., that turned on each other. Mrs. Lucy added to this conversation with the following:

Mrs. Lucy: *Lo que yo he me he dado cuenta con los estudiantes es de que es como otro lenguaje. No es ni Español ni es Inglés pero es la forma de cómo se comunican y aprendiendo a estudiar es así. Por ejemplo cuando trabajan en los campos a veces hay*

personas que les hablan en Ingles y cuando no saben la palabra en Ingles agarran la de Ingles pero le ponen algo del Español. Truck, troca. Para nosotros, por ejemplo pick up. Pero usándola en Ingles y poniéndole pedazo de Español ya tiene significado para ellos. Entonces es un nuevo lenguaje (Freddy: Si) y como es algo que se conocen pero bastantes cuando vienen de Texas del campo o de las áreas que acaban de llegar. Pero no es ni Español ni es como dice ella [Nayeli], es como si fuera otro lenguaje.

Mrs. Lucy: What I have noticed with students is that its [Spanglish] like another language. It's not Spanish or English, but the way in which they communicate and learn is like that. For example, when they work in the fields sometimes there are people who speak to them in English and when they don't know the word in English they grab the word in English and add some Spanish. Truck, troca. For us, for example it's pick-up. But using it in English and adding a piece of Spanish gives meaning to them. So it's a new language (Freddy: Yes) and it's something they know many of whom come from the fields of Texas or the areas they just arrived to. But it's not Spanish like she [Nayeli] says, it's like a new language.

[Platica, April 1, 2012, pg. 4]

Here Mrs. Lucy reflected an understanding of the process by which new words emerge across Spanish and English, when a piece of Spanish is added to an English word to maximize understanding of English words with which someone may be unfamiliar. She argued that in mixing languages, a new language is created, and Freddy agreed with her. However, Nayeli countered back.

Nayeli: . . . *Yo no le hayo sentido al invento de ese otro idioma que no existe en ningún lado.*

Nayeli: . . . The inventions of this other language that doesn't exist elsewhere doesn't make sense to me.

[*Platica*, April 1, 2012, pg. 4]

Like many who encompass a monolingual ideology, Nayeli believes that translingual practices are new and that they do not exist elsewhere. However, Canagarajah (2013b) argues that they have existed in “diverse communities in the past and continue underground despite the dominant monolingual ideologies” (p. 54). By the end of the *platica* you could cut the tension in the room with a knife. Feeling worried about the unexpected tension that emerged during this *platica*, I reflected upon the conversation and even questioned whether I had done anything as a researcher to influence their responses. After much reflection, I realized that what emerged from this *platica* was reflective of the discourses surrounding monolingual language ideologies, diverse language practices among Latinas/os, and differences in experiences across generation, age, and other layers of identity. While analyzing U.S. Spanish and education, Garcia (2014) argues that the

. . . . the failure of Spanish language education policies in the United States to educate both Latinos and non-Latinos has to do with the clash between three positions- (a) the English language, characterized by U.S. educational authorities as the unique and powerful lingua franca; (b) the Spanish language, as defined by the language authorities in Spain and Latin America as a global language of influence; and (c) language as lived and practiced by bilingual Latino speakers.

U.S. educational policies treat the "Spanish" of its Latino students as a problem to be eradicated because of negative attitudes toward bilingualism. At the same time, U.S. educational policies also view the "English" of "nonnative" Latinos as a

problem, guaranteeing that monolingual English speakers conserve advantages. (p. 59).

Garcia reminds us that Latinas/os in the U.S. are not only navigating the ideologies and pressures of standardization and the nation-state to learn English, but they also have to negotiate Spanish as defined by the language authorities in Spain, as they live and learn bilingually. With the pressures of English and Spanish it comes as no surprise that conflicting perspectives between Nayeli, Roberto, and Antonio arose. Nayeli and Roberto in a sense have internalized the monolingual ideologies that support these positions, however that did not stop Antonio, Mrs. Lucy and others from drawing upon their linguistic repertoire in dynamic and translingual ways. Ultimately, the monolingual approach limits both in-groups and out-groups in understanding the dynamic ways in which migrant farmworker youth and Latinas/os are living and learning bilingually. Furthermore, through a monolingual lens the agency and creativity that individuals enact through language(s) as described by Canagarajah (2013b) is often overlooked:

Rather than moving top down to apply predefined knowledge from their language or cognitive system, people are working ground up to collaboratively construct meaning for semiotic resources which they are borrowing from diverse languages and symbol systems. They are co-constructing meaning by adopting reciprocal and adaptive negotiation strategies in their interactions. They also are not relying on words alone for meaning. They are aligning features in the environment, such as objects, bodies, setting, and participants to give meaning to words. (pg. 26-27)

Examples of this overlap in important ways with the finding I take up next. As we move forward it is important to note that fostering a dynamic bilingualism in educational sites does not necessarily eliminate monolingual language ideologies that students bring to our classrooms.

Moreover, the following finding provides greater insight to the role of generation, age, class, and other factors of identity that impacted the ways migrant and seasonal farmworkers experienced language and identity in GEM.

The “Blind”: Identity and Divisions Among Students in GEM

It is well documented that identity formation often occurs in relation to others (Tatum, 2000). As Tatum (2000) notes, “the parts of our identity that *do* capture our attention are those that other people notice, and reflect back to us” (p. 11). At GEM, students often defined themselves and the language group they belonged to, in relation to the opposite group. Rarely was there cross-group communication unless students themselves reached out to the other group, or program staff facilitated activities with both Spanish and English groups. Kroskrity (2004) affirmed: “Language, especially shared language, has long served as the key to naturalizing the boundaries of social groups” (see page 509). During a home visit at Melissa’s house, I asked her about the group dynamics amongst the Spanish and English group. Melissa responded with the following:

Melissa: What I noticed was that the English group stayed with the English group and the Spanish group stayed with the Spanish group. They always kept separate. . . . It was like they stayed there [pointing far away] and we stay here [pointing near]. When I was in the hallway I would always say hi. I would be, you could say kind. I would always say hi to everyone. . . . Even though we were separated that way, it didn’t mean that we had to *stay* that way. I felt like they [Spanish group] thought that. Like they’re the Spanish group and that’s not our problem. It’s like you could still help each other and it was like. . I didn’t see like [pause]. I expected everyone to just mix, but when we got into the Spanish and

English group it kinda stayed that way. You could say it kinda bugged me a little.

I'm kinda used to everyone talking to everyone maybe not in the nicest ways, but still talking you know. That was kinda interesting for me.

[Interview, May 5, 2012, pg. 15]

Moreover, she went on to explain why it bothered her that the groups of students were separate from one another. To do so, Melissa compared it to her experience in high school.

Melissa: Here [Rural HS] at school even if you don't like someone, you notice that they're there. You notice that person is there. You might mean mug 'em, but you know they're there. You notice them. When we were separate [at GEM] that way it kinda like, *it was kinda like there was a blind there*. Like they didn't really try to focus on each other.

[Interview, May 5, 2012, pg. 15]

Melissa described how separated students were in the program, both physically and symbolically. Not only were the English and Spanish groups physically divided into different classrooms, but also the separation continued outside of the classrooms and into spaces they shared. Some of the shared spaces included dormitories, study lab, cafeteria spaces, and GEM lunches. Their physical presence amongst each other was not always dichotomous as separate or together because students like Melissa and Freddy made an effort to talk to and build friendships with students across both Spanish and English groups. However, in this interview Melissa identified what she calls a sort of "blind" that prevented students from acknowledging others' presence.

Both physical and symbolic division across groups reflects the existence and reproduction of what Gloria Anzaldua (1987) calls, the *Borderlands*. While drawing from her

own experiences learning to navigate the multiple worlds she grew up in as a Chicana feminist, Gloria Anzaldua classifies the often competing and clashing worlds, cultures, identities, and physical spaces that she and other Chicanas/os traverse as the borderlands. Anzaldua affirms that: “Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, la *mestiza* (racial, ideological, cultural and biological hybrid) undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war”(p. 100). The blind that Melissa identifies between the Spanish and English groups is termed by Anzaldua, *Nepantla*, the land in the middle. *Nepantla*, the Nahuatl word for the land in the middle, is considered a space of transformation and the second stage of what Anzaldua (2002) calls the path of *conocimiento*- “a personal epistemological path based on seven stages of awareness or reflective consciousness” (Delgado Bernal & Elenes, 2011, p. 102). Within *Nepantla* it is possible to gain perspective of two different angles as one critically reflects on the conflicting cultures, beliefs, values, and identities that an individual straddles. The physical and symbolic distance from each other, the failure to acknowledge one’s physical presence, and lack of focus on one another, reflects the ways both groups traverse multiple cultures, values, beliefs, and ideologies, and ways of living that conflict and/or overlap.

Furthermore, I suggest that the “blind” that Melissa described is reflective of the diverse differences amongst migrant and seasonal farmworkers in GEM. Although the blind, the division, amongst students in the program is most explicit and visible around language, generational differences, age, and other layers of identity widen the physical and symbolic distance between migrant and seasonal farmworkers in GEM. In what follows, I use language as a window into the lives of migrant and seasonal farmworkers to understand how they experienced generational, classed, linguistic, and age differences in GEM.

Generational differences. In her study of the symbolic role of language in the ethnic identity maintenance amongst Latinos in Los Angeles, Garcia Bedolla (2003) found that participants used language "as a symbolic marker to describe class, race, and generational differences they see in their communities" (p. 267). She found that the language practices of Mexican Americans in California are a symbolic marker of one's ethnic identity, a marker of social class, race, and a reflection of generational differences within the Latino community (Garcia Bedolla, 2003). Years of in-depth ethnographic research have found that Latina/o youth experience education differently across language and generation (Mendoza-Denton, 2008; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Spanish marks students as foreign to the U.S. and emerging bilinguals, while English marks students as mainstream and "American." These types of associations impact the ways Latino youth experience education because as Urciuoli (1996) reminds us, "When people use languages other than English in public and in ways that are not tightly scripted or framed by an unequivocally middle-class presentation, they are seen as dangerously out of order" (p. 38). The experiences of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in GEM echoes this research.

In GEM, the majority of students in the Spanish group tended to be Latino immigrants to the U.S., mostly from Mexico. The assignment of students into Spanish and English group signals generational differences between the groups. The students assigned to the English group were largely composed of youth who were born in the U.S. or brought to U.S. at a young age; a combination of second generation and generation 1.5. Most of the students in the Spanish group were first generation to the U.S. and typically older than the second and 1.5 generations in the English group. Students in the Spanish group ranged from 25 to 40 years of age and older. In the

English group, students were primarily 18 to 22 years of age. Generational differences in language, age, and other factors were noticeable in the students' dress and schooling purpose.

Dressing & looking the part to feel the part. When discussing Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), Solorzano & Delgado Bernal (2001) identify immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture as central aspects of Latina/o identity and experience. In regards to language, ability to speak or not speak Spanish may be seen as the denial of one's ethnicity, while speaking only Spanish is seen as lower class and a detriment to success and social mobility (Garcia Bedolla, 2003). This research was mirrored by the comments of Antonio and Nayeli. During a *platica* Antonio and Nayeli criticized Latinas/os who say that they do not speak Spanish. Antonio referred to them as having a “*nopal en la frente*” while Nayeli said they have a “*cara de hacha pintada en la cara*”. These sayings allude to the ways a person looks ethnically Latina/o to call out the irony of looking Latina/o yet not speaking Spanish. Although Latinas/os come in all different shapes, phenotypes, and sizes, when addressing people with a “*nopal en la frente*” and a “*cara de hacha pintada en la cara*”, Antonio and Nayeli refer to perceptions of Latinos as indigenous brown folk. Although speaking Spanish is expected from all Latinos for cultural citizenship, those who look more Latina/o are held to higher expectations of speaking Spanish. If you look the part, you speak the part, then you are the part. At least, that is the assumption. However, when you do not speak the part you are considered to be a cultural traitor. In addition to Nayeli and Roberto, students in the Spanish group shared having had experiences with people who they considered to be Latino based on physical and phenotypical features and that they assumed refused to speak Spanish to them.

Migrant youth in GEM were also aware of the semiotic and symbolic meaning of dress to their identities across Spanish and English groups. During our interview, Andres highlighted

some aspects of dress as a marker of difference across the Spanish and English groups:

Lorena: You mentioned how there are the non-English speakers and those who speak both. So how do they talk, dress and do school?

Andres: Well the way I've seen them that they dress is that they don't [short pause] really [short, but hesitant pause] *care* much like the non-English speakers [pause] . . . Like they'll still wear the same clothes that we wear like Aeropostale, Hollister [pause] . . . at least one of them does, but the other ones don't really care what we think or what others think of them if they look right or if they dress wrong [pause] . . . and *us* English speakers I guess we have more of . . . like we have to dress up to *look good* and *professional*. Me personally, I feel like weird when I am all dressed up just in regular shorts, I have to have something matching dressy to make me feel more comfortable.

[Interview, April 19, 2012, pg. 6]

In seeking to understand the ways that Andres understood the groups in the program, I asked him to describe the way both groups dress, act, and do school. In the first half of the quote, Andres assumed that students in the Spanish group “don't care” about what they wear. He went on to identify that one of the students in the Spanish groups wears brands like Aeropostale and Hollister that students like Andres wear in the English group. While to some Aeropostale and Hollister are simply clothing brands, clothing itself is another marker of identity. Not only did Andres identify dress as a marker of difference amongst the Spanish and English group, but in doing so he signified generational and class differences. When studying the Latina gang girls and language ideologies, Mendoza-Denton (2008) found that gang girls subtly distinguished themselves from each other through dress, hair, and makeup. For example:

Lupe had “read” Patricia’s bandanna, looking-in posture, and eyeliner from afar as signifying a change in status, and asserting a claim of distinction. Such dynamic and malleable indices of distinction are found not only in dress, makeup, and hair, but in the deployment of linguistic variables like those involved in the production of the pronominal item *nothing*. (pp. 209)

Thus, dress and other physical markers are just as important as language in indexing identity. Further, Andres goes on to say that “we”, the English group, dress up “to look good and professional” and he alluded to the idea that some students in the Spanish group may dress “wrong.” Interestingly, in my observations of him and other students, he did not dress professionally in the program except when career clothes were purchased for students as part of their professional development training. Further, it can be said that he dressed in ways that made him *feel* a particular way as a member of the English group. However, according to whose standards did the Spanish group dress incorrectly? And why does he believe the English group must dress “good” and professionally?

Insight to Andres’ comments required an understanding of the role of dress in connection to perceptions of what it means to be American. In search of understanding how immigrant students learn what it means to be American in public schools, Laurie Olsen (1997) found that newcomer immigrants were highly aware of the importance of dress in their perceptions of becoming American. Not only were the immigrant women in her study aware that dress was a marker of difference, but that ultimately: “If you dress American, it leads to acting American; it sends American signals” (Olsen, 1997, p. 47). Although Andres is not an immigrant to this country, he too uses clothing to construct an identity of Americanness and social class for the Spanish and English groups. By identifying himself with particular clothing brands and ways of

dress, Andres marked his identity in close proximity to the behavior and ideals of what he believes to be American. Although there is not one way of being American, Olsen (1997) identified three ways that schools pursue efforts of Americanization:

(1) the marginalizing and separating of immigrant students academically; (2) requiring immigrants to become English-speaking . . . and to drop one's native language in order to participate in the academic and social life of the high school; and (3) pressuring one to find and take his or her place in the racial hierarchy of the United States. (p. 9)

While I would argue that there is no arrival point to an "American" identity, students like Andres are conscious of the ways dress, language, class, and other factors place them in proximity to dominant ideas of American identity. Moreover, as Andres identified how students in the Spanish group did not care about the way they dress, he is affirming how distant the Spanish group is from, and how close he is to, an American identity. Furthermore, Andres appears to participate in what Garcia Bedolla (2003) identifies as selective disassociation. According to Garcia Bedolla (2003) *selective disassociation* is a process by which Latina/o " . . . are maintaining their identification with their ethnic group, but instead of dissociating with the entire group they are excluding from their definitions of their identity those groups they see as perpetuating the negative images of their group, namely immigrants"(p. 276).

Purposes of schooling. Migrant and seasonal farmworker youth also noticed differences in the purposes of schooling across Spanish and English groups. When attempting to follow up with Andres regarding the dress of the Spanish and English groups, he interjected by saying the following:

Andres: They're [the Spanish group] actually here to get their GED. Like they don't really care about other people, they don't really talk to other people much,

just their teachers and if they have questions they'll ask. They don't really get into much and they don't like to go out, they just actually . . . I guess they have more motivation to get it [the GED] than we do because we've gone to school and everything and we can go back to school and we can get into other GED programs, but they see it as one shot only and if they don't get it this time they don't want to try it again. But I feel like they are more motivated than we are.

[Interview, April 19, 2012, pg. 6]

Here, Andres compared the ways the Spanish group engaged in the program and their motivation for attending in comparison to the English group. Andres mentioned how he believes the Spanish group is more motivated than the English group given that they ask teachers questions, don't go out (or socialize) much, and so on. Although he doesn't explicitly mention the English group, the factors that he mentions about the Spanish group are in relation to the way the English group is known to socialize across the university and attend social activities (i.e. house parties, sports games, etc.), and resist and struggle with learning in the classroom. In comparison to the Spanish group, during my observations, the English group was slightly more difficult to keep engaged in the classroom. By engaged I refer to complete attention towards the classroom learning task and the subject at hand. Engagement in class can be described as staying on task, participating in classroom discussions or assignments, showing interest and asking questions on the current topic and more. Moreover, Andres affirms that the Spanish group is actually in the program to get their GED. If that is the case, then what were the students in the English group there to do?

Andres's comment goes beyond motivation and highlights the ways he is aware of the immigration generational differences across the groups of students. Andres' knowledge of these differences are woven throughout his comments about the educational opportunities that have

been afforded to him and other students in the English language group, and that that students in the Spanish group have limited opportunities to get their GED or a formal education. In contrast, Andres assumes that most students in the English group have had and will have other opportunities available to them to attain their GED, if need be. However, Andres fails to realize that it is not just students in the Spanish group who have limited access to opportunities based on documentation status, age, language, and so on. There are students in the English group who face similar struggles as the Spanish group due to their intersecting identities and vice versa. Migrant and seasonal farmworkers are not monolithic and neither are the languages they were assigned to in GEM.

During an interview, Guadalupe also expressed similar thoughts as Andres about the experiences of language groups in GEM. When asked if one group did better academically in GEM, Guadalupe answered with the following:

Guadalupe: Of those who got here first (referring to the students who arrived in January), the Spanish did a lot better cuz they're like- the English group would just clown around and the Spanish group would take things serious. So, I mean the Spanish group did have quite a bit advantage of the whole education.

Lorena: Why do you think they took it more seriously?

Guadalupe: I really don't know. I would have to say that maybe they had their whole goal was better planned out than us. You know mainly because people in the Spanish group were older, so they were people with experience and us, we're still young.

[Interview, April 3, 2012]

In this quote, Guadalupe expresses how he believes the Spanish group did better in GEM because they took “things” (the program) seriously. Guadalupe goes on to compare the Spanish

and English groups and affirms that the English group would “just clown around.” He also highlights age as a key difference. For some students, differences in age were very difficult to overcome, particularly for students 40 and older, so much so that they would leave the program. Issues of age and language caused one student to leave the program after three weeks of intense work in GEM. Although she had long dreamed of pursuing a GED she was disappointed by some of the assumptions and comments younger students made about her physical and mental capacity at her age of 40+.

Guadalupe also recognized that the Spanish group planned their attendance to GEM better than the English group of which he is a part. For many of these students, the cost of education comes at the price of sacrificing employment and economic security, time with family and loved ones. The reality is that the cost of education is high for all of the students in GEM, but even more so for the Spanish group. However, the sacrifice is particularly difficult for students in the Spanish group, many of whom are 25-40 years of age, immigrants, and heads of household. Many of them have children, partners, and limited access to employment opportunities because of the compounding effects of language, class, immigration and documentation status. In order to attend, many of the students in the Spanish group planned their attendance in advance. They often have to secure a caretaker or babysitter for their children, save money in advance to make up for the lack of income they will experience while in GEM, and decide with their families when would be the best time for them to attend the program. Furthermore, many have to have the necessary but difficult conversation with their employers about taking time off from work to attend GEM. Some employers were more supportive than others. There were stories of employers ranging from supportive and securing jobs for employees to others who threatened to give the position to a new employee if the student did not return by a

particular date. Moreover, the sacrifices for attending GEM were too high for them to not take their education in GEM seriously.

Much like Guadalupe and Andres noticed that the Spanish group were serious and purposeful in attending GEM, students in the Spanish group often commented about the ways the English group appeared to not take advantage of the opportunities that were afforded to them in GEM. The English group was perceived to be “clowning around” like Guadalupe mentioned, to enjoy partying around campus, and to not be as invested in their education as the Spanish group. Although this was true for some students in the English group at times, I would counter that the younger students in GEM played off the importance of attaining the GED. Their persistence in the program and disappointment in not passing subject exams, counters the presumed lack of seriousness in attaining the GED.

Strengthening Ties: Learning English & Ethnic Solidarity

Many of the students in the Spanish group had immigrated to the U.S. at various points in their lives with the help of family members who were already present in the states. Like other immigrants in the U.S., the struggle to learn English is real. Some of the students have attempted to learn English, but *la verguenza* or *la burla* has deterred or stumped their efforts. Moreover, students in the Spanish group expressed a desire to learn English in the U.S. During a *platica* with Freddy, four students from the Spanish group and Mrs. Lucy, I asked them about the languages that are used and heard in GEM. Agustin, an indigenous Mexican immigrant, detailed his desire to speak English in the following:

Agustin: Pues yo que quisiera hablar Ingles pues no lo sé. Yo nomas lo escucho hablar pero yo no domino el Ingles pero si me gustaría. Si se ve bien [que hablen Ingles] porque

estamos aquí, no estamos en México. Entonces si estamos aquí pues igual la mayoría habla Ingles. A mí me gusta el Ingles pero igual no lo domino.

Agustin: Well I would like to speak English but I don't know it. I only listen to it being spoken, but I do not speak English but I would like to. It looks good [to speak English] because we're here, we're not in Mexico. So if we're here well the majority speaks English. I like English, but I just don't master it.

[Platica, April 1, 2012]

In this quote, Agustin not only demonstrates a desire to learn English but also an understanding of his position outside of his home country of Mexico. Agustin appears to believe that speaking English in the U.S. as an immigrant would “look good” considering that the majority of people here speak English. While Andres previously highlighted the influence of dressing in particular ways to look American, Agustin reminds us of the role of speaking as an American, of speaking English. Agustin's belief that it looks good to speak English in the U.S. because the majority speaks it highlights how he has positioned himself as a minority due to his emerging bilingualism in English. Furthermore, he seems to understand the power of English in the U.S. in comparison to Spanish. Later in the *platica* he continues to remind his colleagues and me about his desire to “*aprender Ingles*.” His repetitive mentioning of the fact that he does not speak English seems to signal what Darder (2004) described as she discussed the politics of language:

Underpinning nativist views are unexamined assumptions of the “other” as inferior and dangerous to the conservation of democratic life and the capitalist enterprise. As such, the “othering” of cultures and languages outside of the mainstream has consistently burdened minority language populations to prove themselves “decent human beings” worthy and

deserving of entrance into the inner sanctum of nation-state citizenship and the opportunities it affords. (p. 233)

Agustin's desire to learn English in a sense is a desire to prove himself as a worthy human being in the United States. Although Agustin, like every person, is a worthy human being in the U.S., one's worth is often measured through documentation, language, socioeconomic status and more. In this case, Agustin knows that learning English would ideally make him feel deserving of being in United States and the opportunities that open when you can speak English. Macias (2014) would argue that Spanish has an exceptional status in the U.S. along with English. After carefully reviewing eight different arguments for the exceptional status of Spanish, including that 1) "Spanish was spoken in North "America" as a colonial language over 100 years before the establishment of the first permanent English-speaking colonies at Jamestown and Plymouth", and 2) "Two thirds of what is now the United States was at one time under an official Spanish language policy", (Macias, 2014, pg. 33-34), Macias (2014) determined that

In exploring only some of the arguments, we find logic, fact, if not merit, in them. We have seen that Spanish in the United States does not have a strictly immigrant status, nor can it simply be accepted as a colonial language, implying those who speak it to be descendants of colonial-settlers, ignoring the base of an indigenous gene pool among the majority of Spanish speakers in the country; if not the world. Spanish was planted more than 500 years ago in, and spread among the peoples of, the Western continent, and survives. . . . Factually, Spanish has had and has official status. (p. 51-52)

My findings also demonstrate that participants used language to assert and form communities of ethnic solidarity in GEM. Within the program, the degree to which participants'

translanguage depended on their location inside and outside of formal class times, and whether they were speaking to someone within their classroom and group, which as you may recall is organized around language. When asked about the way he speaks in GEM Freddy stated the following:

Freddy: I talk a lot in Spanish *porque somos todos Mexicanos* [because we are all Mexican] there so I talk in Spanish most of the time. . . I was with the English class so I just talked in English *pero saliendo de alli* [but coming out of that there] I talked mostly Spanish all the time.

[Interview, May 5, 2012]

By speaking English in class, Freddy partook in the “culture of power” (Delpit, 1988) and in speaking outside of class Freddy assumes ethnic solidarity with fellow *Mexicano* peers. In class Freddy spoke English, but outside of class he spoke Spanish for ethnic solidarity across both Spanish and English peer groups who are *Mexicanos* as he stated. Throughout observations I noted that Freddy did speak mostly English during class and Spanglished it up during social activities such as lunches. In this example, Freddy demonstrates his belief that speaking Spanish is part of being *Mexicano* and that he has become highly skilled at accommodating to the language of schooling. Wiley, Garcia, Danzig & Stigler (2014) remind us that

Presently and historically, a growing minority of children in the United States and a majority in many countries around the world attend schools where there is a difference between the language of variety of language spoken at home and the language of instruction in school. As a result, to learn in school, language minorities must learn the language of schooling which requires some type of accommodation (Wiley, 2013).

(pp.vii)

Freddy has figured out how to accommodate his language practices at GEM although he doesn't necessarily have to. However, he has learned to do so as an outcome of his experiences in K-12 schools. During a *platica*, Freddy shared having spoken mostly English when he was younger in school. He argues that his language practices in speaking Spanish and English at school evolved, as he got older and came in contact and formed friendships with other *Mexicano* boys at school.

Overview of Language in GEM

I propose that “the blind” (differences and divisions amongst youth) was further cemented through the institutionalized naming and separation of migrant farmworker youth, into the Spanish and English language groups. Although the physical separation occurred for learning purposes, staff, students and myself included, are implicated in continuing to identify students by the group to which they were assigned. The separation of students into language groups is very much embedded in monolingual language ideologies and differences across generation, age, class, and language. Thus, not only was the “the blind” as Melissa calls, it institutionalized in the program through the separation of students, but so were monolingual language ideologies. Furthermore, I argue that monolingual language ideologies were bolstered through the institutionalized separation of language groups.

Garcia's (2014) criticism of dual language programs applies to GEM as well. She argues that the compartmentalization of two languages enforces “a diglossic relationship that keeps the hierarchy of English over Spanish and that keeps Spanish away from the bilingual practices that characterize Spanish speakers in the United States” (p. 38). As members of the larger Latina/o diaspora in the U.S. migrant farmworker youth in GEM also faced the politics, associations, triumphs and challenges of being Latina/o in the U.S.

Grounding my analysis in the language ideologies and the translanguaging that took place in GEM, I conclude that the dynamic bilingualism in GEM provided avenues for learning while also bolstering monolingual language ideologies. Although translanguaging as pedagogy was used to meet all students' needs (and was a mobile resource for students and instructors) English was still privileged over Spanish. This was reflected in the separation of students into language groups, the lack of curriculum materials available in Spanish, and desires to look and sound American. Understanding their position in the world, students then performed roles that mirror their aspirations to be recognized as American.

I wonder what it would have looked like if the Spanish and English groups were integrated. What would education in GEM look like if students were integrated in a single classroom? Would the physical and symbolic division amongst the Spanish and English groups still exist? While there are no conclusive answers for these questions, what is clear is that it's not enough to foster dynamic bilingualism and allow translanguaging in an educational site without addressing institutionalized monolingualism and the privileging of English. Moreover, in seeking to engage in language and culture in inclusive and critical ways in schools, educators must pay attention to the ways youth are using and living language and difference in creative and evolving ways. As Moll (2000) once suggested, we must move away from normative, traditional, bounded notions of language and culture and seek to understand "*la cultura vivida*, how people live culturally" (p. 256). How language was used in GEM for educational purposes and how students lived and learned across differences in generation, age, language, and other complexities of identity, informs our understanding of the ways migrant and seasonal farmworkers are living *la cultura vivida*. In the following chapter, I detail the implications these findings and others have for the lives of migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

CHAPTER 7

“Use My Name, They Need To Know Who I Am!”:

Latina/o Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Youth at the Interstices of the Educational Pipeline

When discussing the details of my study with students in the Spring 2014 cohort, I asked students to inform me of their pseudonym of choice. Otherwise, I would choose a pseudonym for them. Jose, a second generation *Mexicano*, made it very clear when he yelled halfway across the room to say: “*Use my name! They need to know who I am!*” At the time he said this, I thought of how his suggestion was in conflict with the rules and regulations of the Institutional Review Board. But after spending years learning with migrant and seasonal farmworker youth and engaging in analysis of their educational experiences in GEM I concluded that his comment had greater significance than regulation anonymity.

Over four years ago I entered GEM with a desire to stay connected to a Latina/o community while in graduate school at a predominantly white university. This desire resulted in learning with and about migrant farmworker youth in the Midwest. It all began in Fall 2011 with Chuck, a third generation migrant farmworker of Mexican descent. After interviewing him regarding issues of language and identity for a course project, I informed him that I would be transcribing the interview. He responded with the following information:

Chuck: You know I love to write. I always carry a journal with me to write in!

Lorena: Oh really? What do you like to write about?

Chuck: Life stuff, you know.

Lorena: Cool! I used to love journal writing too.

Chuck: You want to read some? I can write something for you, like my autobiography.

Lorena: Don't you leave tomorrow though?

Chuck: Yes, but I can write it tonight. Can you pick it up tomorrow before I leave?

Lorena: Are you sure? I hope you don't feel obligated to write something for me.

Chuck: No, Miss. I *want* to write. You know, I've never really had opportunities to share my writing with other people.

[Fall 2011]

There I was worried about the influence I had as a researcher, assuming that he felt obligated to write his autobiography for me after the interview. However, my concern as a researcher was of minimal importance when compared to what I believe was Chuck's yearning to be heard through his writing. I reflect upon these two distinct moments with Jose and Chuck to demonstrate how migrant and seasonal farmworker youth called out the invisibility, silence, and exclusion they felt in K-12 schools by striving to make their voices heard. Furthermore, I contend that both examples represent the agency of migrant farmworker youth in pursuit of an active presence, of survivance. These examples draw attention to the need for humanizing approaches to working with this student population. As mentioned in chapter three, humanizing approaches are defined " . . . as those that involved the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for both researchers and participants (Paris & Winn, 2014, p. xvi). In hopes of bringing to fruition the much deserved humanizing and transformative education that these students and many others deserve, this chapter addresses the implications of this study. I premise this chapter by questioning the ways we can support the survivance of migrant youth, and create educational spaces and opportunities to honor students dignity and respect in education.

The purpose of this final chapter is to present the implications of this study and suggest recommendations for practice and future research. I specifically address this chapter to educators throughout K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs. First, I provide an overview of the study and findings. Then, I review the contributions of my study, embedded with recommendations and directions for future research. Ultimately, I hope to contribute to the improvement of policies, decision-making, and practices that educators across the educational pipeline can use to provide migrant and seasonal farmworker communities with an equitable and culturally sustaining education.

Study Overview

When new cohorts of students arrived at GEM I typically asked them numerous questions in my efforts to get to know them. Two of those questions included: 1) What brings you to GEM? 2) How did you find out about the program? Their responses and experiences varied, but time and time again their responses reflected a theme: dropping out. As they shared their experiences it became clear that aging out of K-12, being disciplined for resisting English-only policies, and pursuing graduation in an inflexible education system did not constitute dropping out. Thus, the term “drop-out” did not capture the extent of the schooling experiences of migrant farmworker youth. However, many students used that term in their responses to my questions. As the semester progressed I observed how students were held to high expectations, how they used their language(s), *ganas*, and hunger for knowledge to achieve their GED. They forged learning communities grounded in *familia*, trust, respect, love, and more. These observations and experiences with migrant farmworker youth are what led to the inception of this study. Thus, I pursued this study to: 1) to contribute to our understanding of the schooling experiences of youth

migrant farmworkers in GED granting Migrant Education Programs and 2) to provide a counter story to the current deficit dominated narratives of farmworker communities.

This study was designed as a three year ethnographic multiple case study at a GED granting Migrant Education Program in the Midwest. Data included participant observations, field notes, *platicas*, and semi-structured interviews that were collected and analyzed using grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). In a grounded theory tradition, I collected and analyzed emerging data simultaneously and engaged in initial and focused coding (Charmaz, 2014), followed by cross-case analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Review of Findings

What follows is a review of the findings of this study. I present them in the order they appear in the dissertation and provide a brief overview of the main points.

Table 2: Overview of Findings

| <i>Chapter Location</i> | <i>Chapter Findings</i> |
|--|---|
| <i>Chapter 4</i> Producing Inequitable Education: The Schooling Experiences of Migrant Students in K-12 Schools | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. K-12 schools produced conditions for inequitable schooling for migrant farmworker youth. 2. Students often faced difficulties in K-12 schools: transferring credits from school to school; low expectations from school personnel; racial tensions; English-only language policies. 3. The inequitable conditions in K-12 schools led migrant farmworker youth to pursue a GED as an act of <i>survivance</i>. |
| <i>Chapter 5</i> “It Got Personal”: Resituating Learning for Migrant Youth in a High School Equivalency Program | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The General Education Migrant Program (GEM) resituated learning for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. 2. All students who attended K-12 schools chose GEM as an alternative pathway of education. I suggest migrant students chose to <i>drop-in</i> to a meaningful <i>educación</i>. 3. The environment of GEM (program structure, content, and personnel) supported learning because it was grounded in the lives and needs of migrant farmworker youth and families. |

Table 2: (cont'd)

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Chapter 6</i> Los De Español y Los de Ingles: Understanding Language and Identity in GEM | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Translanguaging was used as a pedagogy by instructors to meet all students' needs and to make up for curricular issues.2. Some students in GEM still had monolingual language ideologies despite living and learning in an environment that fostered dynamic bilingualism.3. Monolingual language ideologies were bolstered through the separation of students into groups labeled English and Spanish. |
|--|--|

K-12 Schools Produced Conditions for Migrant Farmworker Youth to Enter a GED

Program

While I investigated and sought to understand the experiences of migrant farmworker youth in GEM, students often referred to their previous schooling. In-depth analysis of these accounts (in chapter four) revealed that K-12 schools produced conditions for migrant and seasonal farmworker youth to enter GEM, a GED granting High School Equivalency Program. Students often faced difficulties in transferring credits from school to school, low expectations from school personnel, racism and racial tensions, and English-only policies. These factors further marginalized migrant and seasonal farmworker youth from an external safety zone within the schools they attended. As a matter of fact, these *humiliating ironies* as Tuck (2012) calls them, kept migrant youth at the margins of the external safety zone, context and environment. In response, some migrant youth resisted the previously mentioned conditions. Moreover, the prior schooling experiences of migrant farmworker youth demonstrates that K-12 schools are in service to the social efficiency purposes of schooling. Previous research (Tuck, 2012) demonstrated this role in developing GED seekers and in pushing out urban youth from K-12 schools in New York. This study shows that it is also occurring in rural schools in the Midwest that serve migrant and seasonal farmworker youth. Furthermore, I argue that the K-12 school

system in this country produces the inequitable conditions for migrant farmworker youth to pursue GED as an act of survivance, of agency and active presence. By pursuing a GED, migrant and seasonal farmworker students challenged the absence and dehumanization they experienced in K-12 schools. In short, the findings from this chapter challenge us to consider migrant and seasonal farmworkers exit from K-12 schools as agentic, driven by agency.

The GEM Program: Resituated Learning for Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers

The exit of migrant farmworker youth from K-12 schools and into GEM resulted in resituated learning. Program personnel from GEM often found themselves challenged to ameliorate the baggage (i.e., feelings of failure, disappointment, frustration, etc.) students arrived with from their previous schooling experiences in and out of K-12 schools. However, analysis of their experiences in GEM uncovered three findings that undergird what I argue was resituated learning for migrant farmworker and seasonal youth. First, the majority of students chose GEM as an alternative pathway of education. Moreover, I argue that the participants in my study were pushed to *drop in* to a meaningful *educación* in GEM. Valenzuela (1999) describes *educación* as education that is grounded in care, moral, social, and personal responsibility. All five of the students who attended K-12 institutions throughout their educational trajectory reported opting out of high school and into GEM to continue their educational endeavors. Choosing to leave K-12 for GEM reveals how migrant and seasonal farmworker youth exercised their agency in response to the inequitable schooling they experienced. Students' choice to attend GEM was also found to be a collective, well-informed, and planned effort among the students, their family members, and teachers. The second finding reveals that the environment of GEM, including the program structure, programming, and personnel, supported student learning as it was grounded in the lives and needs of migrant farmworker youth and families. As I will discuss in greater

detail later in this chapter, this finding is of particular importance given that migrant farmworker youth in this study have found formal K-12 environments danger zones to learn in, rather than safety zones. Last but not least, the majority of students experienced trust, respect, and *familia* in GEM. I argue that these elements reflect what migrant students consider essential to an *educación*. Greater details about what *educación* looks like can be found in chapter five.

Migrant Farmworker Youth Translanguaged in Pursuit of their Academic Endeavors

Central to the educational experiences of migrant youth in the K-12 school system and in GEM, is language. Findings in chapter four highlighted that the language practices of migrant and seasonal farmworker youth were not valued and in turn their identities were not affirmed in K-12 schools. In contrast, GEM students were not only encouraged but expected to draw upon their linguistic repertoire and dynamic language practices identified as translanguaging in this study. Translanguaging as pedagogy was used by instructors to meet all students' needs and to make up for curricular issues. However, some students in GEM still had monolingual language ideologies despite learning and living in an environment that fostered dynamic bilingualism. Furthermore, I found that monolingual language ideologies were bolstered through the group assignments and separation of students into groups labeled English and Spanish. These labels were embedded with class and generational meanings along a continuum of Americanness. Hence, the latter half of chapter six highlighted the diverse experiences of students based on generational, linguistic, class, and age markers in the Spanish and English groups. Using language as a window into the lives of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in GEM, I suggest that GEM reinforced "the blind" (chapter 6), differences and divisions between students through the separation and institutionalization of students into Spanish and English groups. Ultimately, findings from this chapter challenge educators who serve migrant and seasonal farmworkers to

consider the ways they are living and learning across language, culture, and difference.

Contributions

Findings from this study contribute to various aspects of education. First, migrant and seasonal farmworker youth in this study challenge us to re-conceptualize their exit through, and ultimately from, the educational pipeline. Research about migrant farmworker youth has often identified them as “at-risk” and “drop-outs”. The terms themselves are problematic. What I find troubling is the assumption that the schools these students are leaving are actually prime, safe, and desirable learning environments for migrant youth (and other student populations). Working from an asset-based perspective, this study suggests that migrant youth are *dropping-in* when leaving unsuitable schools and seeking a GED. The term “drop-out” assumes that students leave school and are solely responsible for that action. Underlying that term is also the assumption that the schools students depart from are actually safe, desirable, and sustaining spaces. However, migrant youth in this study experienced quite the opposite. K-12 schools were anything but safe for migrant farmworker youth. Students often resisted and retreated to their internal safety zone as a means of self-preservation from the humiliating ironies they faced in school. Further, I argue that you cannot drop out of school if you were never a part of it to begin with. While migrant farmworker youth were physically present and persisted in their educational efforts, they remained at the margins of the school and the environmental safety zone. Thus, if migrant youth were already at the margins of K-12 schools what is there to *drop out* of? For migrant youth in this study, movement from the margins of schools involved moving towards the center of their internal safety zone, and drawing upon their agency to find an educational site where they could *drop-in* to education. Hence, this research complicates the framing of migrant farmworker youth as drop-outs from a top-down approach to dropping-in from a bottom-up approach. Analyzing

from the bottom up allowed me to understand from those most strongly affected by the school environment, the students. Migrant youth in this study remind us that students are ready to drop-in. They are ready and willing to drop-in to meaningful and transformative educational experiences. Grounded in the experiences of the students, dropping-in centers on the agency and strengths of youth. As educators it is our responsibility to create and provide valuable, affirming, and culturally sustaining spaces in which students can drop-in to learn, within and outside of K-12 schools. Further, we must question what happens to students who stay in schools like the ones migrant youth in this study first attended.

In her study of school dropouts and biopolitical youth resistance, Ruglis (2011) argued that the conditions of educational systems, schools, and educational policies, influence the health and development of youth. She found that “educational policies and conditions are not understood, interpreted or *experienced* separate from how students feel about themselves and others, their bodies, futures, and place in society” (Ruglis, 2011, p. 632). One could speculate that if this population of migrant youth had stayed in K-12 schools, they may have exhibited effects similar to the students in Ruglis’s study who experienced pain and discomfort in various parts of their bodies. Furthermore, pursuing a GED in GEM was not just an act of survivance, but also a matter of preserving their humanity and overall well-being. Thus, we must consider what we can do in K-12 schools to create educational spaces that value, affirm, and provide migrant and seasonal farmworker youth a dignified and humanizing education.

I would also like to propose the idea that dropping-in to education in GEM is an act of collective survivance, as multiple stakeholders - migrant youth, family, teachers, and others - made it possible for these students to seek a culturally sustaining education. While examining how they came to know about GEM, students identified their teachers and family, particularly

parents, as key players in their decision making process. According to Treviño (2004), family is a constant in spite of the high mobility of migrant farmworkers. He studied the parental involvement of high achieving migrant students and found that parents considered themselves partners with teachers in their child's education, expected their children to graduate and go to college, and had a vision for their children's future. Furthermore, they were also advocates for their children. The parents, family members, and teachers who referred them to GEM reflected the parents in Treviño's study. Melissa's father expected that she graduate and advocated for her throughout K-12 and GEM. Guadalupe's mother insisted that he seek a GED in GEM and found the contact information for the program recruiter through a friend, Freddy's mother. For Freddy, it was two of his teachers, Mrs. Valenzuela and Mr. Dice, who held high expectations of him and kept him accountable for attending the program. Upon graduating from GEM, he returned to his high school and shared his accomplishment with them. Attending GEM and pursuing a GED was also a collective sacrifice. The students in this study played key roles in their family from providers to caretakers to parents. As parents, Gris and Antonio had to sacrifice family time, caregiving, and providing for their children. It also meant coordinating childcare, balancing family time and study time during weekends, and ensuring the financial stability of there loved ones. These collective efforts and sacrifices made attending GEM a possibility. Thus, I suggest that attending GEM and pursuing a GED was not simply an individual enactment of survivance, but a collective one.

It is my hope in knowing the power of collective agency that we can start a path towards bridging the conversation between K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs from supplemental to collaborative. While Migrant Education Programs have historically played more of an advocacy role and supplemented students' education across the P-20 pipeline, we need to

reconsider the relationship between these two institutions to serve contemporary migrant and seasonal farmworkers. I put forth the need to move from a supplemental relationship to a collaborative one throughout the K-12 system and Migrant Education Programs.

Learning from GEM

There is plenty that can be learned from GEM as a provider of migrant education. In chapter five I argued that GEM resituated learning for migrant youth based on numerous factors that supported a safe and sustaining environment. The residential component of the program, flexibility to meet student needs, and the school personnels' experience and knowledge of migrant and seasonal farmworkers contributed to resituated learning in GEM. These factors and more made it possible for migrant youth to experience a culturally sustaining education. As a volunteer and participant observer in the program, I witnessed the impact of the program on the lives of migrant youth from start to finish. I observed the ways GEM personnel would actively work on breaking down the barriers that students often arrived with. Some students were disappointed with K-12 experiences and had internalized feelings of failure. Others were not used to speaking in front of people and were extremely shy. Moreover, there were students who did not trust other people. Period. In spite of how they felt, students were ready for action, and ready to get their GED. With the persistent efforts of program personnel and the help of their peers, their confidence and sense of possibility grew to new heights. However, where did migrant youth end up post-GEM? Did attending GEM change their lives or not?

As a researcher who ended up developing relationships with my participants grounded in trust and respect, I was hesitant to include student's post-GEM journeys. I am very cognizant of the fact that there is knowledge and research that academia, the scholarly and academic world does not deserve (Tuck & Yang, 2014). Tuck & Yang (2014) address this issue within social

science research that highlights stories of pain and humiliation in the lives of the communities being researched for commodification through a colonial gaze. They challenge this type of research by offering a refusal to do research or refusal within research. Tuck & Yang (2014) suggest “refusal, and stances of refusal in research, are attempts to place limits on conquest and the colonization of knowledge by marking what is off limits, what is not up for grabs or discussion, what is sacred, and what can’t be known” (p. 225). Their refusal to research consists of three key ideas that challenge the use of pain narratives, question what knowledge academia does not deserve, and encourage us to consider whether or not research is actually the intervention that is needed within the communities we (researchers, scholars, educators) work with. Like Tuck & Yang (2014), I too placed limits on what would be included in the writing of this study. I was specifically hesitant and cautious about writing what students’ lives were like post-GEM because like anything that is written or produced, it is up for interpretation. In this case, I was afraid that students would be misunderstood as victims or failures. Neither is the case. However, I questioned what would happen if I did not share a postscript. Readers might just regard this as a meritocratic “they pulled themselves up by their bootstraps” narrative. Migrant youth did work hard, as did their families and program staff in GEM, and their accomplishments were well deserved. However, I have decided to share what I know about the students who were in my study after completing GEM because there are larger issues affecting migrant and seasonal farmworkers, their families, and students who pursue GED’s that require immediate attention.

Of the students in the Spring 2012 cohort I was only able to stay in contact with Melissa. Upon graduating with her GED Melissa returned home as she had hoped. She arrived home in time to support her father at an important medical appointment with her GED in hand. Her return home involved finding immediate employment, as her father was unemployed because of his

medical condition. Although she had attained her GED, her documentation status prevented her from accessing improved employment opportunities. GEM staff followed up with her regarding a job opportunity and Melissa was very grateful for this, but she accepted a position packaging *duraznos* at her mother's insistence. Even though her father insisted she attend college she felt the need to work and save money for tuition, before pursuing higher education. Melissa's desire to go to college persists.

I stayed in contact with Gris and visited her multiple times after data collection was finalized. Upon achieving her GED she returned home to her four year old daughter and husband. She had a strong desire to learn English and searched for English language programs nearby, but the closest one was half an hour away. Although Gris knew how to drive, she only drove if needed. Driving without documentation is a high-risk activity. As a mother she could not fathom driving to and from the nearest English language program, with the risk of getting pulled over or possibly even deported. It was my conversations with Gris that challenged me to consider what is possible with the GED and to question its value in the lives of migrant farmworkers and their families. One of the last times I visited her I asked her how she had benefitted from achieving a GED and she reminded me that things were the same as before she pursued the degree. As a person who has successfully traversed the educational pipeline and been optimistic about the possibility of a better life through education, I was naively dumbfounded that things remained the same for her. Upon asking her if it had benefitted her family she related that her sister and husband had been motivated to attend the program. She had even become a role model (not that she wasn't before) for her young daughter who informed her peers and teachers at her pre-school that "*mi mama va a el colegio*" (my mom goes to college). It was then that I knew that the value of the GED reached beyond immediate material or economic outcomes.

Although Gris and Melissa achieved their GED (as did Freddy, Andres, and Guadalupe) the circumstances in which they lived on a day-to-day basis did not change. For Melissa that meant still having to work hard, if not harder, to put food on the table and to pay for her father's expensive health costs. She never complained about this and was ready and willing to do whatever it took to be there for her family. Although the program does not collect or require proof of legal documentation in the U.S., Gris, Melissa, and Guadalupe shared their experiences as undocumented migrant and seasonal farmworkers. In chapter two, I argued that migrant and seasonal farmworkers are more than their documentation status or lack thereof. I stand by this claim, but I am also acutely aware of the implications the lack of documentation has on their access to opportunities and privileges that many of us take for granted in the U.S. Cuevas & Cheung (2015) describe the paradox that many young undocumented students find themselves in.

Their right to an education at the K-12 level is constitutionally guaranteed through the 1982 *Plyer v. Doe* decision, and yet restrictions on their ability to legally work and receive financial aid, stall, detour, and often derail their educational and socioeconomic trajectories. (p. 310)

Their experiences in and out of GEM highlight some of the challenges that migrant farmworkers and their families face across the nation. In the foreword to *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies* (Holmes, 2013), Bourgois (2013) states that

The fresh fruit market niche that biopower, symbolic violence, old fashioned racism, and xenophobic nationalism have rendered profitable and vibrant in the United States is actively enforced through the structural violence of U.S immigration laws and the details of the Department of Homeland Security's border and workplace inspection enforcement policies (p. xxiii)

In this quote, Bourgois (2013) identifies the forces that impact migrant and seasonal farmworker communities, particularly those linked to documentation and immigration status. As we consider what needs to change in order to address the educational needs of migrant and seasonal farmworker youth, I argue for intentional efforts towards addressing the education debt owed to these communities that is linked to global, economic, and labor policies in the U.S. In chapter four, I argued that the inequitable education the students in this study experienced were reflective of what Ladson-Billings (2006) propose as the education debt. As you may recall, the education debt is the accumulation of historical, sociopolitical, economic, and moral policies and decisions, that is owed to communities of color who have long been marginalized and inadequately served in education (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Achieving equitable education would require that these accumulations be addressed (Ladson-Billings, 2006). To better serve students like Freddy, Guadalupe, Melissa, Antonio, Gris, Andres and the many other students in GEM, I argue that we must direct our efforts towards intentionally addressing the education debt of migrant and seasonal farmworker communities. In other words, addressing the education debt requires that all parties who impact the lives and education of migrant and seasonal farmworkers be involved.

In the 1960's, the Civil Rights movement was at its height. Edward R. Murrow produced a television documentary called *Harvest of Shame (1960)*, about the plight of migrant agricultural laborers. The U.S. sought to resolve the education debt of migrant and seasonal farmworker communities by establishing migrant health centers and amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1966. The act created the Migrant Education Program (MEP) as a component of ESEA Title I (Branz-Spall & Wright, 2004). According to Branz-Spall & Wright (2004)

Migrant education was ideally structured for migrant children advocates, especially those

at the state level. Congress established the Title I Migrant Education Program as a series of state education agency programs (because the original focus was on students moving from state to state). The law granted states unusual flexibility in designing and administering programs for migrant students, which ultimately promoted tremendous innovation and creativity among migrant education programs (pp. 5-6).

The Migrant Education Program eventually developed programs that stretched throughout the educational pipeline from the Migrant Education Even Start to the High School Equivalency Program and the College Assistance Migrant Program. For over 40 years, these programs have succeeded in providing *supplemental* education to migrant and seasonal communities. However, migrant and seasonal farmworkers continue to lag behind their peers in education. What's happening? Or better yet, what is *not* happening in the K-12 system and Migrant Education Programs? What are K-12 and Migrant Education Programs missing? If we are to address the education debt for MSFW's, educators and other stakeholders must acknowledge that the education debt *persists* in spite of ongoing efforts in migrant education. What follows are suggestions and implications for K-12 schools and programs who serve migrant and seasonal farmworker communities.

Implications for K-12 Schools

Earlier in this chapter, I emphasized that migrant farmworker youth are ready to drop-in to meaningful education. However, teachers, policy makers, and administrators in K-12 schools must consider whether schools are ready to provide the education migrant children and youth desire and deserve. Based on the schooling experiences of the students in this study, I suggest that K-12 schools need to be equipped with:

- 1) Environmental safety zones that bridge student's internal safety zones

- 2) A willingness to learn and work *with* migrant families
- 3) Survivance as an active model of expectations in school

I detail each of these suggestions in the following sections.

Environmental safety zones that bridge student's internal safety zones. Based on the educational experiences of migrant and seasonal farmworker youth in K-12 schools and GEM, there is no doubt that context or environment matters in which we expect students to learn. Using San Pedro's (2014) environmental safety zone and internal safety zone theory, it was determined that migrant farmworker youth were at the margins of the environment in K-12 schools. However in GEM, they were at the center of the environmental safety zone and this facilitated possibilities for learning. To create environments for learning that bridge the environmental safety zones of schools with students from migrant communities, it is necessary to understand who they are. In chapter two, Lisa, a woman I met at an adult education conference, insisted on seeing migrant and seasonal farmworkers only as undocumented. Even though documentation status may be salient for some, this generalization barely skims the surface of the diversity within migrant and seasonal farmworker communities. In chapter six, student dress, purposes for schooling, and language ideologies were indicative of the generational, linguistic, and age differences across migrant and seasonal farmworkers. These differences are ones that educators need to consider to create and foster environments for learning that are grounded in the lives and needs of these communities.

Secondly, creating an environment conducive to the internal safety zones and learning of migrant farmworker youth also requires that K-12 schools provide professional development to administrators, staff, and teachers regarding these student communities. In this study, teachers and staff members who reached migrant and seasonal farmworker youth in successful ways had

a few things in common: 1) They went above and beyond what was expected of them as teachers, 2) They held high expectations of students, 3) They developed strong interpersonal relationships with students, and 4) They took the time to get to know the background of students as migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Through professional development, teachers, administrators and staff can learn about issues affecting migrant and seasonal farmworker communities that influence students' academic achievement and performance in school. Lopez (2004) argues that schools often fail to address the issues affecting migrant families on an everyday basis. Moreover, I contend professional development is needed to help K-12 educators understand the issues facing migrant families, and learn strategies to address their educational needs in and out of school.

Be willing to learn and work *with* migrant families. As a program, GEM ensured that students' basic needs were met including housing, food, physical and mental health care, and more. With these basic needs in place, migrant and seasonal farmworkers were able to focus on their educational endeavors. However, there were students who left the program because they had to provide these basic needs to their own families. For those students who left the program or who completed the program but did not achieve their degree, it became very difficult to continue their efforts towards the GED. Not because of a lack of motivation or effort. Rather, financial, employment, and housing issues were immediate concerns. Access to resources similar to those offered in GEM, were not available. Further, regardless of whether or not a student achieved their GED, migrant youth returned to their respective communities where the conditions that impact migrant and seasonal farmworkers remained in tact. I am not suggesting that the K-12 system and Migrant Education Programs should model GEM because financially that would be unrealistic. Rather, I challenge us to consider the socioeconomic, labor and global issues that create the conditions that migrant and seasonal farmworker youth must overcome to pursue

formal education. More importantly, I suggest that educators in K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs invest in meeting the multiple needs of migrant farmworker communities in and out of educational sites. In their study of parental involvement within successful migrant-impacted schools, Lopez, et al., (2001) found that

. . . schools were successful primarily because they focused their energies on meeting the multiple needs of migrant families above all other involvement considerations. In other words, these schools were successful because they made immense investments to provide families with psychological support and physical resources necessary for success. (p. 279)

As Lopez, et al., (2001) demonstrate we know that meeting the physical and psychological needs of migrant farmworker families positively impacts academic achievement. Moreover, part of creating environmental safety zones in K-12 schools in which migrant youth can learn requires an investment not just in the student, but also in the migrant family. In chapter five, findings from this study reflect the collective effort of families and teachers in helping students choose an alternative path to education from K-12 schools. GEM was intentional about meeting a student's family before the program to ensure that they knew the collective effort it would take to make the decision to attend. They were also purposeful in learning about a student's family background through individual conversations and individual academic plans, knowing that the issues their families faced could impact student learning in the program. Research regarding effective parent involvement in migrant-impacted schools has demonstrated that

. . . effective migrant parent involvement initiatives are not defined as a set of practices or activities for parents to do (e.g., PTA/PTO, bake sales, parent-teacher conferences). Instead the focus is on ways schools can help migrant parents cope with the problems

they face on a daily basis. . . (p. 142)

Moreover, migrant-impacted schools “perceived themselves as active and proactive agents in reaching out to migrant parents” and demonstrated a high level of “home involvement” with migrant families on a daily basis (Lopez, 2004, p. 142). Most schools expect parents and families to participate in on-site school events. However, for migrant families on-site events are often difficult to attend due to their long work hours, language, and the often hostile environment of traditional schools. Thus, working *with* migrant families involves active outreach to families beyond the school into the homes and communities within which migrant youth thrive. I recognize that teachers in K-12 schools are already overburdened and underpaid. However, incorporating and ensuring the needs of migrant families are met yields a return of higher grades, improved test scores, positive student attitudes, and more (Lopez, 2004). Thus, preparing teachers and other education stakeholders to work with migrant children and youth requires investing in migrant families as a whole.

Establish survivance as an active model of expectations in school. What would education look like if we expected all students, specifically migrant youth, to practice an active presence in K-12 schools? What would K-12 schools be like if educators expected migrant youth to be self-determined subjects in their educational pursuits? I ask these questions to challenge us to consider survivance as an active model of expectations in K-12 schools. In chapter four, I argued that migrant farmworker youth fled out of K-12 schools and into a GED granting Migrant Education Program as a means of survivance. Vizenor (1994) characterizes survivance as an active presence, resistance, and self-determination that counters dominance, tragedy, objectification, and victimry.

Scholars have taken up the concept of survivance in education to raise questions about

the role of teaching and learning in the maintenance or subtraction of students' identities (Wyman, 2012; Powell, 2003). The migrant farmworker youth in this study were at times expected to perform at a minimum or low level in K-12 schools. Students, like Guadalupe, took notice of this and at times both internalized low expectations and also resisted them. To challenge low expectations and other factors that make K-12 schools dangerous and hostile environments for migrant farmworker youth, I suggest the concept of survivance as an active model of expectations. I argue that an active model of expectations grounded in this concept, positions students as drivers in their own educational pursuits, rather than passive objects in the social reproductive institution of traditional schools, as exhibited by the GEM students. Furthermore, if we expect students to assert an active presence in schools, then we engender a culture of expanded possibilities in K-12 schools as youth reimagine education for themselves.

What does survivance as an active model of expectations look like? Vizenor (1994) has intentionally avoided defining survivance so as not to bound the possibilities of what survivance can look like per individual or community. As I continue to develop this model I am certain that this concept of survivance as expectation will vary across contexts. Survivance, as Vizenor conceived it, varies by person and community. There is no single or defined way to engage in survivance. What remains constant are the elements of active presence, resistance, and self-determination that counter domination, absence, and victimry. I hope to develop this model in greater detail in future research.

Implications for Migrant Education Programs

Migrant Education Programs are designed and intended to serve the educational needs of migrant and seasonal farmworker communities. However, previous research has found that in practice there is room for growth and improvement (Purcell-Gates, 2013; Torrez, 2014). Based

on the findings of this study, I offer the following suggestions for Migrant Education Programs:

- 1) Reconsider policies and practices to align with the ways migrant and seasonal farmworkers are living and learning in contemporary times.
- 2) Engage in culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Reconsider policies and practices to align with the ways migrant and seasonal farmworkers are living and learning in contemporary times. Migrant Education Programs first came to fruition in the 1960's. Fifty-five years later they are still serving migrant families across the nation. I suggest that Migrant Education Programs reconsider their policies and practices with the migrant and seasonal farmworkers of today. As was detailed in Chapter six, there is a wide diversity within the migrant and seasonal farmworker community at the intersections of generation and immigration status, age, language practices and ideologies. All of which should be taken into consideration when seeking to serve these communities. Although the differences previously mentioned contribute to the diversity and dynamics of the classroom, they can also be sources of division among students as detailed in Chapter six. Two ways in which Migrant Education Programs can mitigate these divisions are by 1) aligning their language ideologies with their practices and 2) raising critical consciousness about issues related to diversity, power, and privilege.

In GEM, translanguaging was being used as pedagogy to meet all students' needs for learning. However, some students had monolingual language ideologies that were bolstered through institutionalized separation and labeling of the English and Spanish groups. Although I believe the monolingual language ideologies did not diminish the impact of translanguaging on learning in GEM, findings reveal that the separation of students based on language proficiency impacted their interpersonal relationships and how they perceived one another. During her time

in the program, Melissa described a “blind” that separated the Spanish and English groups and prevented them from recognizing each other’s humanity. As I sought to tease out the nature of the blind between the students, I found that students came to know and identify themselves and their peers as members of the Spanish or English group in ways that reflected their proximity to what they perceived to be American.

Given these findings I suggest that institutional practices of K-12 schools and Migrant Education Programs need to be aligned with the language ideologies they promote. In the case of GEM, that would mean doing away with the labeling and separation of Spanish and English groups. Canagarajah (2013) reminds us of the power of labeling and separating groups:

Languages are always in contact with and mutually influence each other. From this perspective, the separation of languages with different labels needs to be problematized.

Labeling is an ideological act of demarcating certain codes in relation to certain identities and interests. (p.6)

As such, labeling and separating students into language groups supports what Cummins (2008) calls the “two solitudes.” Programs like GEM often have more flexibility to implement suggested changes at the institutional and classroom level. Meanwhile teachers in K-12 schools can challenge monolingual ideologies and practices more freely at the classroom level. Moving beyond group separation of students by language, to uniting them in a single classroom or educational site holds the possibility of fruitful collaborative learning, expansion of the students’ linguistic repertoire, and affirmation of the ways students are living and learning in a diverse world. Garcia & Sylvan (2011) argue “organizing classrooms for homogenous groups of students is often not enough in our complex world” because as they observed in a classroom, “the individual experiences of the children were far more complex than simply those of two ethnic or

linguistic groups” (p. 390).

Engage in culturally sustaining pedagogy. In chapter five, I discussed the ways GEM resituated learning for migrant and seasonal farmworkers. Students were found to be at the center of an environmental safety zone because GEM grounded learning (and the program at large) in the lives and needs of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. In doing so, I argued that they engaged in *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (CSP)* (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014). Central to CSP is sustaining, perpetuating and fostering heritage and community practices as well as fostering cultural and linguistic pluralism as an educational imperative, in our growing multilingual and multicultural world. I suggest Migrant Education Programs move towards culturally sustaining pedagogies to address the needs of migrant and seasonal farmworkers who are living and learning in evolving ways. Although scholars have found schools and Migrant Education Programs who have drawn upon funds of knowledge from migrant youth (some being more successful than others) (Araujo, 2012; Purcell-Gates, 2013), drawing upon student assets does not necessarily guarantee that we are actually sustaining them. Thus, I emphasize the importance of sustaining the linguistic and cultural assets of migrant and seasonal farmworkers by engaging in CSP.

Key to CSP is also critical reflexivity. Paris & Alim (2014) detail what critical reflexivity entails:

. . . we are primarily interested in creating generative spaces for asset pedagogies to support the practices of youth and communities of color while maintain a critical lens visa-a-vis these practices. . . we argue that rather than avoiding problematic practices or keeping them hidden beyond the White gaze, CSP must work with students to critique regressive practices (e.g. homophobia, misogyny, racism) and raise critical consciousness.

(p. 92)

I highlight critical reflexivity as an element of CSP that must also be attended to in Migrant Education Programs and beyond. Here I reflect on the experiences of students who felt marginalized in GEM due to their age, language, generational status and more, especially on a predominantly white institution (PWI). For example, in chapter six I briefly discussed an incident where a student left the program after comments were made about her age by fellow students. Although her classmates did not appear to have bad intentions, their comments resulted in making her feel out of place and unwelcome in the program. Situations like this require difficult, yet much needed conversations around issues of diversity. Thus, I suggest that educators working with migrant and seasonal farmworker communities find ways to practice critical reflexivity to attend to issues of power, privilege and diversity. As we learned in chapter six, failing to do so impacts student retention and success in Migrant Education Programs.

Future Research

While there are various avenues for research I am greatly interested in seeking to understand the role of teachers in the transition of the migrant farmworker youth to Migrant Education Programs. For the students in this study, the teachers and school personnel they encountered throughout their educational trajectories opened and closed the door to future opportunities. If you recall, in chapter four we learned that students who attended K-12 schools learned about GEM through their teachers. However, I was left wondering why teachers recommended students to GEM. When examining what they call adolescentization, how the GED transformed from an exam for adults to one for adolescents, Rachal & Bingham (2004) address the role of K-12 schools in the growing number of GED seekers:

When school officials also hear the siren song and suggest the GED as an alternative for

"problem" students, or for students who are having problems, or for students who "just don't like school anymore," they are in effect participating in what amounts to administrative collusion in the dropout culture. (p. 39)

Rachal & Bingham (2014) suggest that that the teachers who introduced students to GEM are participating in administrative collusion. Given the findings of this study, I believe the decisions teachers make in recommending students to GEM are more complex than that and grounded in genuine concern for students. Thus, in the future I would like to delve further into this research with teachers.

Another future project will also explore the role of the GED in the marginalization of migrant and seasonal farmworkers. A central component of the High School Equivalency Program is the General Educational Development degree (GED). The GED was created in 1943 as a gatekeeping mechanism to prevent college-educated men from entering the battlefield and as a precursor to a general education curricula for high schools (Quinn, 2002). Even though the High School Equivalency Program is providing migrant and seasonal farmworker communities access to education in ways that would not be accessible otherwise, we must also consider the role of the GED in perpetuating the marginalization of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the labor market. While tracking the history of the GED, Tuck (2012a) found that businesses and corporations have been contributing to revisions in the GED.

The 2002 revision of the GED can be read as an attempt to better align GED earners to low-wage jobs rather than higher education. The revision was largely informed by corporate representatives in order to reconnect the qualifications of GED earners with the needs of corporate employers . . . the new GED exam was developed with the help of a committee featuring representatives from businesses and organizations such as Taco Bell,

Safeway, Motalal, and the National Alliance of Businesses, at least in part because of a history of employer complaints about the quality of GED holders. (p. 96)

In this quote (Tuck, 2012a) describes how large corporations, such as Safeway and Taco Bell, were involved in the revisions made to the 2002 GED, the exam taken by four of the six principal students in this study. I draw attention to this as an issue of *interest convergence*.

Delgado & Stefancic (2001) describe interest convergence when “circumstances change so that one group finds it possible to seize advantage, or to exploit one another. They do so and then form appropriate collective attitudes to rationalize what was done” (p. 18). In other words, interest convergence occurs when white interests coincide with the gains or improvements of communities of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). I highlight the role of corporations in the development of the GED as interest convergence to challenge Migrant Education Programs to consider the ways the GED may fuel migrant and seasonal farmworkers into low-wage, physical, labor jobs.

I conclude this study by recalling the desire with which Jose and Chuck eagerly sought to be heard at the beginning of this chapter. Both young men made it a point to let me know that they *wanted* and *needed* to be heard; Jose by name and Chuck through writing. “They need to know who I am!” exclaimed Jose. In this study, I sought to live up to Jose’s request and to share the educational experiences, stories, challenges, and triumphs of Melissa, Andres, Gris, Guadalupe, Antonio, and Freddie, with dignity and integrity, knowing that it is they who are the experts in migrant and seasonal farm work. Through their experiences, we educators are called to create educational spaces that affirm their identities in humanizing ways, that embrace their community cultural wealth as sources of knowledge and expertise, and that prepare them to live and learn in a multilingual and multicultural world. While this study may not improve the life

circumstances of migrant and seasonal farmworkers, my hope is that I have cultivated a seed of possibility towards improving the education of migrant families using asset based perspectives.

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