“IF I DON’T DO IT, THEN WHO IS GOING TO DO IT”: CENTERING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MIGRANT COLLEGE STUDENTS TO EXAMINE SENSEMAKING OF FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE COLLEGE TRANSITION PROCESS & CARVE OUT SPACE FOR THEIR COUNTERSTORIES IN EXISTING HIGHER EDUCATION LITERATURE

By

José Luis Martínez

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ABSTRACT

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The children of migrant farmworkers often take on family responsibilities to help their families. In this qualitative study, I rely on Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) to examine how current migrant college students make sense of their family responsibilities and other lived experiences during their college transition process. An analysis of eighteen individual structured pláticas with current migrant college students in South Texas, suggests that students' sense of family responsibility continues into college and is important to both their college selection and college transition processes. The data further suggests that in making sense of their family responsibilities, the participants in this study recalled their migrant experiences from an assets viewpoint creating a counterstory to narratives that have historically used their circumstances as a way of explaining their educational outcomes.

Para Mi Ama y Apa,
Gracias Por Su Apoyo Incondicional Siempre.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Academic research focused entirely on the higher educational experiences of college students from migrant farmworker backgrounds is sparse and can be easily overlooked among the more expansive higher education literature. As a result, we know very little about how this population of students transitions into or experiences college settings. Employing a critical race analysis (Delgado-Bernal & Solórzano, 2001; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2005; Huber, 2008; & Yosso & Solórzano, 2010) to utilize the critical race methodology of counter storytelling, this dissertation examines how current college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds make sense of their familial responsibilities as they transition to institutions of higher education located in deep south Texas.

Background of The Problem

Despite gains in recent decades, there continues to be little research entirely focused on the college experiences of Chicanx/Latinx and other minoritized students. This dearth in research limits not only a collective understanding of these experiences but also what institutions of higher education and other stakeholders can do to support these student populations. Although broader higher education research has engaged in greater depth with studying the experiences of the overall student college population, a common critique of this research is that many of the studies and their respective findings are generated from large national studies that have historically been set up in ways that make it difficult to disaggregate the data to drill down to specific minoritized groups within the larger data sets. Therefore, despite the advancements in the understanding of college student departure, personal & professional student development, institutional impact on student, (Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993; & Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and other areas, there continues to be a call by some of the field's exemplars (Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993; & Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) for more research that specifically examines the college

experiences of minoritized students. With this dissertation, I answer this call with a thorough descriptive and exploratory analysis of a largely ignored population of students.

Tinto's (1993) theory of student departure evolves from an inquiry into the causes and variables of student departures from institutions of higher education and is among the most cited works in higher education literature. This theory posits that student interactions with their respective institutions is critical in the departure conversation and challenges prior arguments that student departure is primarily a result of student individual shortcomings. Tinto (1993) leans on Van Gennep's (1930) *Rites of Passage* to outline a three-phase framework for contemplating student departure: separation, transition, and incorporation. He further borrows from Durkheim's (1951) Theory of Suicide argument that various forms and rates of suicide can be better understood by examining the social conditions and environments in which they occur. Tinto (1993) highlights a form of suicide, egotistical, that arises when individuals are unable to become integrated and established members in communities within societies. Through these frameworks, Tinto (1993) suggests that a strong transition and integration is very important to minimizing student departures and conversely a weak transition increases the degree to which students can integrate effectively into a college setting.

Though Tinto (1993) acknowledges, more prominently in his 2nd edition, that the experiences of minoritized students cannot be understood simply by extrapolating the experiences of white students. Some of his assertions can be taken as his attempt to somehow mitigate those differences. For instance, he suggests that, "though the competing external pressures of families and peers for disadvantaged students are no different in kind than those for other students, they may well be more intense," (p. 63). Some minoritized students might take

issue with this assertion and argue that external pressures of families are indeed different in kind. He further suggests that participation in college life might mean that students partially reject membership in communities that have been part of their upbringing and that minoritized students are sometimes pressured by their families and peers to remain true to their ethnic identities and allegiances, (Tinto 1993). Yet, research by Chicanx/Latinx scholars challenges the notions that either family separation or adopting the institution's cultural norms over one's ethnic identity are critical for the college success of Chicanx/Latinx students. My aim is to situate this dissertation within these potential incongruencies between traditional higher education models and the experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students.

Like Tinto's Theory of Student Departure, Astin's (1993) *What Matters in College* is also a highly cited work in higher education literature. In this text, Astin (1993) examines large national data sets to establish that the type of environments created by peers and faculty at institutions of higher education are very important to the academic success of students. Utilizing his I-E-O (Inputs-Environment-Outcomes) framework Astin (1993) suggests that, professors and administrators must have information about all possible environmental variables impacting students if they are going to produce strong educational policy or education reform. Astin's I-E-O framework and findings have been extremely influential in the field of higher education. At the same time, Astin (1993) himself recognizes that there is much to be done to better understand how the variables he presents impact minoritized student groups, "One major limitation of this study is that separate analysis have not been done by gender, race, ability, socioeconomic status, or other key student characteristics," (p. 29).

Another highly cited text in higher education is Pascarella & Terenzini's (1991 & 2005) analysis of decades of higher education literature in attempts to identify more concrete linkages

between college and its impact on student personal and professional development. Pascarella & Terenzini (1991 & 2005) do establish concrete connections between college and various aspects of student development while also cautioning that some student aspects of student development might need further study to decipher if changes are due to college experiences or are simply a result of a more natural maturation process. Still, despite the tremendous value of establishing these important linkages, Pascarella (2006) also cautions that, future studies should consider whether an increased diversity of student characteristics might itself shape the impacts of college on students and that the same interventions or experiences might not have the same impacts on all students.

Therefore, although higher education literature has tremendously expanded our understanding of the importance of college interactions on student success and the impacts that colleges have on student development, there continues to be an acknowledgement for a need to further explore how some of these important findings impact minoritized students. It is worth noting that all three of the mentioned works have multiple editions and that many of the critiques of how well these work's findings translate for minoritized students emerged after their respective first editions. Thus, it appears that these scholars have listened, acknowledged and even cited some of those critiques in their subsequent editions. To be clear, the critiques (Attinasi, 1987; & Hurtado & Carter; 1997) of these works in no way diminish their importance, they do however present an opportunity for scholars to contribute to an existing and acknowledge need for more specific higher education studies that focus on minoritized students.

It is important to situate this acknowledged need next to the work of Chicanx/Latinx faculty (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2005; Yosso, 2005; & Rendon, 2009) who have decided to make this line of inquiry a central

issue in their academic research. Their work has a great deal to offer a transdisciplinary approach to examining the experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students across the higher education landscape. Núnez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers, & Vasquez (2013) have put forth that the development of a strong ethnic identity among Chicanx/Latinx students contributes positively to their academic outlooks in higher education. Núnez et al (2013) also suggest that institutions of higher education, Hispanic Serving Institutions in particular, would be well served to consider the development of strong ethnic identities among these students in their attempts to enhance the educational outcomes of these students. Other scholars, like Hurtado and Carter (1997) have also highlighted the importance of the interaction between Chicanx/Latinx students with their respective institutions. More directly, Hurtado and Carter (1997) have explored the sense of belonging students feel at their respective institutions of higher education and how that same sense of belonging can possibly help explain student's academic outcomes. These are but a few examples of the possibilities for a transdisciplinary approach to studying the higher education experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students that might lead to a greater understanding in this research.

A dearth in research regarding the higher education experiences of migrant students, as a subset of Chicanx/Latinx students, also persists. Existing research regarding the children of migrant farmworkers has been primarily concerned with the education and labor performed by this population. Both lines of inquiry further reader's understanding of the education and working conditions among migrant students. Yet, they also both generally present these issues in ways that seem to offer explanations of why migrant students have less favorable educational outcomes than other students. In both sets of literature, the many challenges faced by migrant students are commonly presented as the singular point of departure. As such, these works seem

to perpetuate a narrative that establishes the educational and life outcomes migrant students as products of their life circumstances.

They also fail to highlight the unique childhoods of these children and by doing so, do little to combat the deficit models that many have used to examine the education of Chicanx/Latinx students in the United States (Romero, 2009; and Gándara & Contreras, 2009; & Valencia, 2011). Apart from a small number of works in K-12 (Garza et al, 2004; & Quezada et al, 2016) and (Araujo, 2012; & Valverde & Bejarano, 2012) in higher education, very little research examines the resiliency and educational outcomes of migrant students through an asset-based lens. In this dissertation, I rely on an assets-based approaches to studying the academic outcomes of children from migrant farm worker backgrounds.

Another area with limited studies regarding this student population is research focusing on the higher education outcomes of children from migrant farm worker backgrounds. Higher education is widely accepted as one of the means through which one can improve one's life possibilities and if we don't know much about how this group—and all the subgroups that comprise it—experience this phenomenon, then we are certainly not well positioned to make informed decisions that might impact those outcomes. A review of existing research examining the higher education of children from migrant farmworker backgrounds finds that most of the research centers on studying the post-secondary experiences in direct relationship with the College Assistance Migrant Program (Escamilla & Guerrero Treviño 2014; Willison & Jang, 2009; Araujo, 2012; & Bejarano & Valverde, 2012). Although this research is quite helpful towards understanding the utility of this support program, it does not have a unique focus on how students from migrant farm worker backgrounds transition into higher education.

Also absent in the research is a discussion that considers what familial responsibilities tell us about the notions of childhood and how these experiences might affect students from migrant farm worker backgrounds as they transition into postsecondary education. To better understand how responsibilities for children of migrant farmworker backgrounds manifest themselves, it is important to engage in a discussion regarding how the experiences of children from migrant farm worker backgrounds either align or not with traditional notion of childhood. This discussion is particularly relevant when considering the family responsibilities that many children take on within migrant farm worker families. Although Morrow (1995) pushes us to re-consider the notion of childhood as a time when children are passive, dependent, and unproductive, much of these ideas still prevail when one thinks of children in the developed world. Through a qualitative study with over seven hundred children ages 11-16 (Morrow, 1995) found that many children take on responsibilities that can be considered labor whether it is paid or not. Morrow (1995) therefore suggested that children, "should be considered social actors in their own right rather than being seen as dependent and passive," (Morrow, 1995 p 225). She further suggests that the traditional conceptualization of childhood as a time when individuals are passive, dependent, and unproductive has contributed to rendering children's work outside of the home as invisible. Although the children and young adults interviewed for her study were not from migrant farm worker backgrounds, the findings are instructive and quite useful to this study; particularly as it relates to responsibilities taken by children to support their families.

One other area which seems to be lacking when studying the academic outcomes of children from migrant farm worker students is that which employs assets-based inquiry methods. In recent years, Chicanx/Latinx scholars have contributed greatly to this area of study and have developed tools that can be very instructive to this study. Borrowing from Critical Race Theory,

Yosso (2005) provides us with a cultural wealth framework that can be applied to the study of children from migrant farm worker backgrounds. In fact, both Araujo (2012) and Valverde & Bejarano (2012) relied on Yosso's (2005) cultural wealth models for their studies of college students enrolled in the College Assistance Migrant Program. Similarly, Dolores Delgado-Bernal (2001) developed a pedagogy of the home framework and Valenzuela (1999) challenged the practice of subtractive schooling in the education system and suggested that Mexican and Mexican-American children bring many assets to schools every day. Still, the application of assets-based inquiry methods to the study of this specific student population is lacking.

However, to understand how these same students make sense of their family responsibilities during the college transition process, it is important to more fully understand those same responsibilities. Although significant research has focused on the labor carried out by the children of migrant farm worker families, there are other family responsibilities we know little about and that have yet to be studied. For example, many children serve as intermediaries (Rivera, 1971; and Jimenez, 1997, 2002, & 2009; Castañeda 1997; & Atkins, 2000) between their families and the primarily English-speaking communities in which many of them work. In their capacity as intermediaries, migrant children often find themselves in hospitals, banks, social services agencies, employment sites, schools, and in the homes of individuals selling private goods. Having a better understanding of the diverse family responsibilities the children of migrant farm worker children undertake, is critical to any discussion regarding their educational outcomes and how they transition into higher education.

Statement of The Problem

A central problem in the existing research is that higher education literature alone has not been able to adequately study or explain the experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students in higher

education. Included in this group are college students from migrant farmworker backgrounds. Yet, Chicanx/Latinx Studies has carried out important work in this area that has perhaps been under consulted and could enhance existing higher education literature. Through a transdisciplinary approach, we might be better able to address the almost non-existent research regarding the college transition of migrant students.

Research examining the college transition of this specific student population is virtually non-existent and therefore has the potential to be quite consequential in filling the existing gaps in knowledge. When one considers that a strong education is among the more important keys to ensure social and economic mobility in the United States, knowing how these families' children fare after they have spent so much of their lives gathering our food seems like it should be of importance to the national consciousness. That this topic has not garnered the attention of more researchers seems to suggest that we are either unaware of how our food gets to our tables or we are simply not concerned with what happens to these families.

Although, according to Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner (2007), less is known about the different facets of college transition than is known about theoretical models of student retention. Nevertheless, Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg's (2012) provide a model of an individual in transition that can be applied to a college transition. a guide for applying a theory of transition to practice. In their text, the authors explore Schlossberg's (1984) transition framework to consider how professionals can help counsel and support adults during transitions. Schlossberg's (1984) theory of transitions establishes a three-phase process to transition: approaching transition, taking stock, and taking charge. It further suggests that the context under which transition takes place and the individual's perceptions are of critical importance. It is in these two areas where we might gain utility in understanding the college transition process of

migrant students. Also useful for this study is that the authors not only recognize but make addressing the increasing diversity of clients across the country a principal component of their most recent edition calling for treatment plans that are culturally sensitive and conceptualizes issues according to the clients. I take this as another place where the work of Chicanx/Latinx scholars can enhance in the conceptualizing of diverse client's issues and providing culturally sensitive supports during transitions.

Because we know so little about the college transitions of migrant farm worker backgrounds, much of this study is exploratory in nature. It explores if and which family responsibilities students from migrant farm worker backgrounds continue to take on in significant ways. By developing a deeper understanding of family responsibilities taken on by these students, we can gain a better understanding of how they make sense of these same responsibilities as they transition into post-secondary education. In many respects, a data set that specifically captures how current college migrant students make sense of their family responsibilities during the college transition might be the only one of its kind.

Purpose of Study

The primary aim of this dissertation is to examine how current college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds make sense of their family roles and responsibilities as they transition to postsecondary institutions in South Texas. As many of these students enroll in college, they are usually no longer able to fulfill those responsibilities—either at all or the same degree. Thus, understanding how these college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds reconcile their family separation with their transition to unfamiliar higher education spaces is important to any discussion involving their academic outcomes.

Despite carrying out an indispensable duty, sometimes across several generations, for a nation, this community has not garnered sustained research attention from either academics or policy analysts. Although migrant children continue to experience many aspects of childhood vastly different from most children across the United States, their lived stories are also part of the Chicanx/Latinx experience. Therefore, as a subset of a larger Chicanx/Latinx student population, this dissertation adds to the research regarding this population in higher education settings.

In carrying out this study, I will rely on my experiential knowledge (Maxwell 2005) to inform both my data collection and analysis components. Experiential knowledge will be used responsibly in this study. This experiential knowledge has taught me of the various dichotomies and potential pitfalls that are present when writing about the children of migrant farm worker families. One of the first challenges associated with writing about the various obstacles that children migrant farm worker backgrounds must often overcome to be successful is the tendency for some readers to suggest that if some students can make it, then they should all be able to make it. Another real challenge when discussing possible strengths that students develop through overcoming obstacles is the risk of having their difficult agricultural labor romanticized. A balanced discussion requires that we very carefully unpack participant's sense of pride in their migrant experience from the very real experiences of young child working long days in the hot sun.

Having grown up in the migrant stream for most of my childhood, I have experienced first-hand many of the obstacles lived by children of migrant farm worker families. Whether it is watching my father carried out of the fields from a suspected heat stroke, having a sibling be gravely ill without the resources or insurance to seek medical help, witnessing my mother sprayed with pesticides by a crop duster because she could not run fast enough, not knowing where the next meal was coming from, or traveling across the country only to be told upon

arrival by the grower that there was no job or housing for the family. These examples are only a few of the experiences that I lived through during my time in the migrant farmworker stream and through much of my recent work in migrant education, I have learned of the countless other challenges that children from migrant farm worker families continue to face and overcome to have successful academic outcomes. Maxwell (2005) argues that researchers need not separate their experiential knowledge from their research endeavors. On the contrary, he suggests that if used responsibly, with an awareness towards our own biases, experiential knowledge can be a tremendous resource to all researchers.

Having researched this student population extensively and growing up in the migrant stream, I understand that writing about this group requires a balanced approach. It is important to communicate the many challenges that these children face because of the migrant stream, while at the same time not perpetuating the notion that these students are somehow a product of the circumstances and their life outcomes are foregone conclusions. By only focusing on the challenges these students face, it becomes easy to lose sight of any assets or strengths that might come from overcoming such challenging situations. Yet, it is equally important not to romanticize the often back-breaking work that migrant families carry out day in and day out.

Significance of Study

Research focused entirely on the higher education of Chicanx/Latinx students, although expanding, has not fared much better than research specific to students from migrant farm worker backgrounds. Thus, we continue to know far less about the educational experiences and outcomes of Chicanx/Latinx students than we know about the more 'traditional'—mostly white male—college student. Much of what we do know is because of scholars like (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Solórzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2005; Rendon, 2009; Delgado Bernal, 2001; &

Yosso, 2005) and others who have made this line of inquiry centerpieces of their respective research agendas. Yet, never has the need for this type of focused research been more critical than it is today. As the fastest growing population in the United States, Latinxs are leading the demographic shift that is expected to make white Americans the minority by 2044 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). This potential to alter the course of a nation largely connected and dependent on the educational outcomes of Chicanx/Latinx students over the next several generations. The entire country, and certainly the research community, would be well served to focus their attention to this student population. Failure to address the educational outcomes of this student group would only exacerbate what Contreras & Gándara (2010) refer to this is as the Latino Educational Crisis; for it would not be good for any country to have its fastest growing segment of the population not do well academically. Similarly, studies dedicated entirely to this student population must begin to play a key role in informing policy makers in all areas—including higher education.

This study is also significant because it begins to highlight how the wealth of knowledge in Chicanx/Latinx studies about this student population can enhance the existing and future work in the discipline of higher education. As a discipline that has focused almost entirely on furthering a collective understanding of the experiences of these groups in the United State, perhaps no other area of study is better suited to inform this type of research. A transdisciplinary approach such as this might lead to a fuller understanding of the higher education experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students. This type of transdisciplinary approach also has tremendous potential to inform policy and approaches to supporting these groups of students.

Understanding the educational outcomes of children from migrant farm worker backgrounds is important for several reasons. First, from a human condition perspective it stands

to reason that the condition of those that help ensure our pantries and refrigerators are full should merit even our slightest concern with their condition or life outcome possibilities. As recipients of the work of this community, any of us who consume food should in some form or another be interested in this work. Through a qualitative approach that centers to the voices of current college students from migrant farm worker families, this study aims to expand what we know about the college transitions of these students; and more specifically, how they make sense of their familial responsibilities during their transition.

Primary Research Question

As with any other research endeavor, all aspects of this study will be guided by the following research question:

- How do current college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds enrolled in Institutions of Higher Education in South Texas make sense of their college transitions given the familial responsibilities they may have had prior to enrollment.

Research Design

The research design for this study acknowledges the problematic relationship between traditional research methods and minoritized communities around the world and will embrace methods, frameworks, and approaches that borrow from diverse ways of knowing to more fully answer the primary research question. Relying on the work that scholars within and outside of Chicanx/Latinx Studies have conducted in the past half century to develop, implement, and test methodologies that challenge traditional research methods and expand diverse ways of knowing within the academy, this dissertation will situate student's voices and perceptions regarding college transition at the center of theorizing about their own experiences in higher education.

This research design also acknowledges that only focusing on the obstacles faced by migrant students runs the risk of contributing to the narrative that that somehow these children's

life outcomes are somehow a byproduct of their experiences or that these same students are destined to fail because of their circumstances. Recognizing this risk, the research design for this study incorporates both the unique childhoods of migrant students and the strengths that are developed by overcoming obstacles. In considering strengths, I lean heavily on literature from Chicanx/Latinx studies that relies on assets-based frameworks to study the academic outcomes of Chicanx/Latinx students. Although this is literature that perhaps has been under consulted or ignored by higher education scholars this study is designed in a way that values a transdisciplinary approach.

It is within these recognitions of utility in interdisciplinary approaches and an awareness of the problematic history of traditional research methods and minoritized communities that I attempt to situate the research design for this study. It is in this spirit that I draw from works from within and beyond Chicanx/Latinx Studies to inform this research design. Firstly, I rely on three important qualitative research methods works, Maxwell (1996), Creswell (2006), and Denzin & Lincoln (2011) for general foundational approaches to setting up and carrying out a qualitative study. Each of these three texts lend a unique perspective on qualitative research methods that I believe are useful in developing and carrying out this qualitative research. Secondly, I consulted with several qualitative studies Valenzuela (1999), Pizarro (2005), and Hurtado & Carter (1990), that I consider to be especially instructive in not only shaping my interpretive framework but also as examples of studies that are quite effective in making the assumptions, paradigms, and frameworks as explicit as possible throughout this study. Maxwell (1996), Creswell (2006), and Denzin & Lincoln (2011) all discuss the importance of researchers making their assumptions and frameworks explicit throughout their studies.

Creswell (2006) suggests that research design, refers to the entire process of research from conceptualizing a problem to writing research questions, and on to data collection, analysis,

interpretation, and report writing. Although the key components of the research design will be systemically identified and grouped, the research design will allow for constant reflexivity throughout the entire study. Maxwell (1996) suggests that, "Design in qualitative research is an ongoing process that involves 'tacking' back and forth between the different components of the design, assessing the implications of goals, theories, research questions, methods, and validity threats for one another. It does not begin from a predetermined starting point or proceed through a fixed sequence of steps but involves interconnection and interaction among the different design components," (p. 3). This means that one must be open to continually assessing how the design is working during the study and remain open to making the necessary adjustments to achieve the primary purpose of the study. This study will aim to keep maintain the interactive approach suggested by Maxwell (1996) where the research is constantly revisiting the research design to make any necessary adjustments.

Research Methods

A critical first step of any study is considering whether quantitative, qualitative or mixed research methods are most appropriate. As this study is primarily concerned with trying to better understand how current college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds make sense of their family responsibilities during college transition, and not interested in finding a correlation or formal relations between any set of variables, a qualitative approach seems best. This approach allows the researcher and participants to explore the full complexity of their studies to best answer the research questions that guide it.

This dissertation will rely on Creswell's (2006) circle of data collection as a road map for gathering and organizing data. He suggests that collecting valuable information to answer the study's research question is dependent on a series of activities: locating site/individual, gaining

access & making rapport, purposefully sampling, collecting data, recording information, resolving field issues, & storing data. The research sites for this study will consist of three institutions of higher education located in deep South Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border. All three of these institutions are Hispanic-Serving Institutions and all have an enrollment of Chicanx/Latinx students—mostly of Mexican descent—of more than eighty percent which is almost three times that of the required twenty five percent minimum for the HSI designation. Each of these sites operates a College Assistance Migrant Program and has at least identified a group of students from migrant farm worker backgrounds that are the active cohort of first year students enrolled in the program. Deep South Texas is among the most economically challenged regions in the country and currently counts with approximately fifty one percent of the state's total migrant farm worker student population (Texas Education Agency, 2017).

I will rely on my professional experiences, both in higher education and K-12 migrant education programs, and my previous professional relationships with the directors of these programs throughout the data collection process. To build rapport with the participants, I will rely on greatly on my firsthand experiences in the migrant stream and my professional experiences working with the student population. Once a relationship and rapport are established with both parties, I will collect initial demographic data from potential participants. Each of the college programs that I intend to visit with have monthly meetings with their students. My first step will be to get on the agenda for one of these meetings.

The central data collection tools in this study will be individual demographic surveys, individual structured pláticas (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013; Gonzalez & Portillos, 2011). Employing the plática framework to center student voices provides a more nuanced and personal perspective of the daily lives of students from migrant farm worker backgrounds and allow as

Pizarro (2005) suggest for the students to become part of the theorizing about education. This proposal, of allowing student voices and reflection about their schooling to drive the theorizing about education, challenges us to reconsider the traditional methodologies for 'studying' the educational achievement of Chicana/o students. Initial demographic surveys will be used to collect information regarding potential study participants. From the collected demographic surveys, purposeful sampling will be employed to identify current college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds who identified at least one familial responsibility they carried prior to enrolling in college. Once the sample group has been identified, individual participants will be targeted for the completion of the individual structured plática. These individual pláticas will be audio recorded for later transcription. Although all participants will remain anonymous in the final reporting, audio recordings will be very important to determine which participant is speaking or answering a question at any given time during the focus group. Research memos will be written and rewritten throughout the entire process.

Once all the data has been collected, a thematic analysis will be conducted on each of full transcription of the individual structured pláticas. The thematic analysis will rely on formulating themes and subthemes from the text analysis. Once the themes have been identified, a system of coding will be developed to analyze the entire transcribed transcript. In the analysis, I will continually visit and revisit all memos written during the data gathering process. The primary method for reporting the findings of this study will be in narrative form; although the use of charts, graphs, and tables may also be used when appropriate.

Interpretive Framework

The interpretive framework for this research design relies on an asset-based approach to analyzing the phenomenon of how college students from migrant farm worker families make

sense of their family responsibilities during their transition to college. One of the many effects from incompatible traditional Western research methods, among other things, and the Chicanx/Latinx community is a tendency to rely on deficit based interpretive frameworks to the analysis of Chicanx/Latinx centered research studies. In this study, I instead focus on assets based interpretive frameworks to examine the Chicanx/Latinx experience. Borrowing from cultural wealth theory (Yosso, 2005), this study will actively consider the various forms of cultural wealth that may or may not come up during the research process.

The interpretive framework will also be keen on questioning the notion of a traditional childhood as a time for children to be passive, dependent, & non-productive (Morrow, 1995). The questioning of these notions of childhood stems from the many documented experiences of children from migrant farm worker background as they take on responsibilities that are traditionally deemed reserved for adults. In taking on these responsibilities, children from migrant farm worker backgrounds uniquely contribute to not only the well-being of their families but also of the country. Yet, despite their unique experiences, this population has not garnered the interest of researchers or policy makers to better understand these same experiences or make policy recommendations that might speak to these realities.

In developing this interpretive framework, I have carefully considered the critiques from other disciplines that Chicanx Studies is a biased and activist scholarship. This framework embraces the argument by Pizarro (2005) and others that all research is indeed fundamentally biased:

"At the same time, much of this work has been attacked by those in the academic mainstream who have critiqued it as biased, activists in nature, and nonacademic or anti-intellectual. Recent work by Chicana/o scholars and critical race theorists, however, has built on

the analyses begun by Octavio Romano and others in the late 1960s, which explained that, in fact, all academic work is fundamentally biased. This bias is deemed unavoidable simply because the individuals who develop, conduct, and write about research are influenced at each stage by their own understandings and interpretations of the issues under study, which are shaped, for example, by their own cultural lenses. Interestingly, however, Chicana/o Studies is among the few areas of academic research that are critiqued for bias simply because the work makes its bias clear to readers," (Pizarro, 2005, p. 6).

I also agree with Denzin and Lincoln (2011) that, "Three interconnected, generic, activities define qualitative research process. They go by a variety of different labels, including theory, methods, and analysis; or ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Behind these terms stands the personal biography of the researcher, who speaks from a particular class, gendered, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective. The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology), which are then examined (methodology, analysis) in specific ways," (p. 11).

Theoretical Approach

In considering a theoretical framework for this study, I heed the warning by Maxwell (1996) that trying to fit one's study into one theory can potentially challenge how we conceptualize our study or think about its results. Therefore, I will not rely on or place a single theoretical framework in front of this study and will instead introduce several theories that could possibly help illuminate what we are studying and therefore included in the analysis depending on what the research studies call for. There is existing theory within and outside of Chicanx/Latinx Studies in the areas of college transition, community cultural wealth, family

separation, sense making, child labor and others that can potentially prove extremely useful in the analysis of the collected data. I will consider these and perhaps other new theoretical frameworks and let the ongoing research tell me whether their incorporation into the study is called for.

Still, if there is a theory that will provide general guidance to this study it will be a Critical Theory framework. I do believe that minoritized communities experience reality in a very particular manner and that institutions in the United States are structured in ways that oftentimes make them incompatible with the needs of these same communities. Cardenas and Cardenas (1977) speak to the many incompatibilities that exist between educational institutions and the academic needs of Mexican-American youth in what they term their Theory of Incompatibilities. The present study will rely on a critical theory framework to consider the primary research question and findings.

Chapter Summary

There continues to be very little research that focuses primarily on the higher education experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students. Included as a subset of this group are college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds. These students continue to have unique childhoods that include taking on a variety of responsibilities to not only support their families but also help feed a nation. Yet, research on the family responsibilities that migrant children take and the implications on their long-term educational outcomes is virtually nonexistent.

There is very little academic research that focuses on the various responsibilities migrant students take on throughout their lives. There is even less research that considers the impacts of taking on those responsibilities later in life; including during the transition to college for those who can make it that far. This dearth in research on this topic presents tremendous possibilities

for this study and highlights the usefulness of a study that looks at this issue much more deeply. Very little is known about how these responsibilities overlap or how they impact the educational outcomes of migrant farm worker children. Even less is known about how migrant farmworker children think of these responsibilities when they are transitioning to college. Despite these varied responsibilities, some migrant farm worker children persevere with resilience (Garza et al, 2004) and not only complete high school but move into post-secondary education.

Higher education research and literature alone have not been able to fully explain the experiences of Chicanx/Latinx or migrant students in these setting. At the same time, scholars in Chicanx/Latinx Studies and other disciplines have and continue to dedicate their careers to researching diverse aspects of the Chicanx/Latinx experience in the United States. They have developed an important body of work that contributes tremendously to a greater and targeted understanding of how these communities intersect with American institutions; including educational institutions. These works have perhaps been either under consulted or ignored by higher education literature. That makes a transdisciplinary approach to this line of inquiry particularly important and has the potential to disrupt the tendency for academic department to work in siloes.

Understanding how students from migrant farmworker backgrounds make sense of their family responsibilities during their transition to college is important for several reasons. Nora (2003) identifies family responsibility as one of three factors that plays a key role in deciding whether Latinx students persist or leave the university. Other scholars have suggested that by taking on family responsibilities student's transition to college is disrupted; namely through limiting the activities that students can participate in on campus. A positive trend is that there seems to be a growing interest in the need to better understand the college experiences of more

diverse student groups in the last several decades. Therefore, this study is well positioned to examine the utility of important and prominent theories of college transition in explaining to experiences of this student group, and perhaps other disadvantaged youth, in higher education.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I present literature that further contextualizes how migrant college students make sense of their family responsibilities as they transition to college. By situating this study's primary research question within the same literature, I query what has been written about these experiences and expose possible gaps in the literature. I focus on works that contribute to an enhanced understanding of the educational trajectories of migrant students towards higher education and that are useful to an analysis of their transitions into post-secondary institutions. Because so little scholarship has focused exclusively on the higher education experiences of migrant students, this review necessarily casts a wide net and examines scholarship from diverse academic disciplines. In my analysis, I consider possible connections between works that are at often viewed as unrelated and therefore frequently read in isolation from one another. I do this to tease out the question of whether the complexity of the migrant farm worker experience in the United States might affect the educational pathways of migrant students. I also do this to consider whether the existing literature provides either a substantive explanation or the adequate analytical tools to examine the higher education experiences of migrant students.

I begin with an overview of what existing literature says about the migrant farmworker experience in the United States. I follow with an examination of works that detail the K-12 education of migrant students. Thirdly, I examine works that specifically look at the higher education experiences of migrant students. Fourthly, I examine the research findings of some of the most cited exemplars in the field of higher education. This examination includes some of the critiques that have followed these works and their assertions. Finally, I present theories and frameworks in the field of education that are useful in an analyzing how migrant students make sense of their lived experiences as they transition to post-secondary education.

The Migrant Farmworker Experience in The United States

Literature documenting the migrant farm worker experience in the United States since the turn of the 20th century has been intermittent and at times sparse. Nevertheless, the work that has been produced presents immensely important documentation of various aspects of this experience. Many of these works detail the compelling but often unknown story of a very inequitable relationship between migrant farmworkers and the U.S. agricultural system (McWilliams, 1939; Galarza, 1970; Thompson & Wiggins, 2002; Street, 2004; Jourdane, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2010; Ganz, 2010; & Holmes, 2013). Others examine the emergence and evolution of a migrant farm worker labor system across the various migration patterns within the United States known as migrant streams (Valdez, 1991; Mapes, 2009; Weber, 1996; Rothenberg, 1998; & Owens, 2008). Furthermore, a series of documentaries, investigative reports and exposés have also been produced sporadically over the past half-century (Morrow, 1960; PBS, 1990; NBC News, 1998; ABC, 2009; AFOP, 2010; Human Rights Watch, 2010; Romano, 2010; CBS, 2011; NBC News, 2014; & Chicago Tribune, 2016) that further detail the consequences of frequent migration. Finally, a smaller number of works have been extremely effective in capturing the more nuanced experiences of migrant farm workers through either student testimonios, novels or semi-autobiographical accounts (Rivera, 1971; Atkins, 1993; Viramontes, 1995; Jimenez, 1997, 2001, 2009, & 2015; Hart, 2014; & Gonzalez, 2003). Collectively, these works advance a deeper and collective understanding of the migrant farmworker experience.

The economic, political and social tensions of a historically lopsided relationship between migrant farmworkers and the United States Agricultural industry have been documented very well by the few scholars that have taken on the task (McWilliams, 1939; Valdez, 1991; Webber, 1996; Rothenberg, 1998; Thompson & Wiggins, 2002; Street; 2004; & Jourdane, 2004). Many of

these works take regional approaches to their work. For many years, the migration patterns in the United States of migrant farmworkers have been known as three different migrant streams: Eastern, Central and Western. The Eastern Migrant Stream typically originates in the state of Florida and families generally move up along the East Coast. The Central Migrant Stream usually begins in the state of Texas and families move primarily in the mid-west; although Texas families migrate to almost every state in the country. The Western stream begins in California and families migrate primarily up the West Coast.

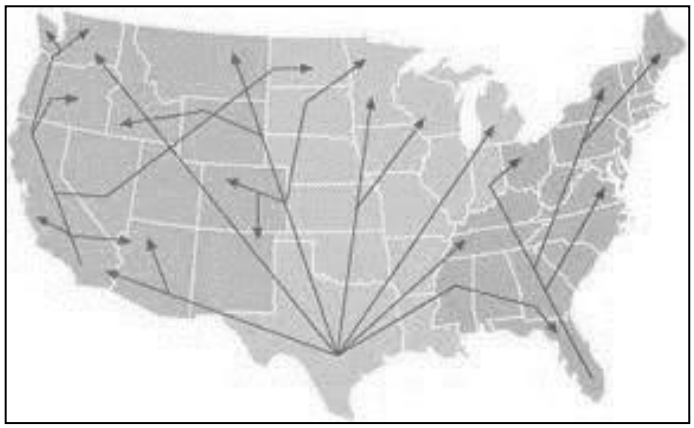


Figure 1: Migrant Streams in The U.S. - palmbeachpost.com

In keeping with these regional focuses, these works go on to detail the evolution of the migrant farm worker labor system in that respective region and discuss the various farmworker labor movements that have resulted from this uneven relationship. When McWilliams (1939) attempted to expose what he saw as the uglier side of the California agricultural system, he was simultaneously attempting to expose the invisibility of migrant farm workers and the vast power disparity between organized agriculture and the workers that harvest the crops. Following McWilliam's (1939) work, other scholars (Mapes, 2009; Valdez, 1991; Weber, 1996; & Street, 2004) documented the evolution of an agricultural labor system from individual families on farms, to European immigrants in the Midwest and Asian immigrants in California to a system

that depends primarily on Mexican and Mexican American workers. Mapes (2009), in particular, considers the reasoning for which farmers preferred family units working their fields, "This family-based migratory labor system was supposed to ensure farmers a vulnerable, seasonal, and non-threatening yet stable workforce; migrant family labor was not merely a labor form but also a means for keeping workers in the fields and away from the local community in which they were only temporary residents," (Mapes, 2009, p. 6). This work begins to foretell the intentionality on the part of farmers that shaped the evolution of the migrant farm worker labor system in the United States.

The theme of intentionality also resonates throughout works that document the legislative fights that have shaped the plight of migrant farm workers in The United States. During the 1960s and 1970s, migrant farmworker organizations fought to outlaw the short-handled hoe, that many believe was used by the agricultural industry to demonstrate its dominance over migrant farmworkers by forcing them to stoop all day in the hot sun. Jourdane's (2004) documents the long legal fight to outlaw the short hoe in agriculture and the many steps that growers and legislators took to fight this. Galarza's (1970) also details even earlier efforts and legislative maneuvers that were employed by California lawmakers to make it much more difficult for farmworkers to organize. Similarly, other works (Holmes, 2013; Thompson & Wiggins, 2002; Rothenberg, 1998; Mapes, 2009; Jourdane, 2004; & Thompson, 2013) present what I argue is intentional disregard on the part of an entire agricultural system to address the physical toll that field labor takes on migrant farmworkers.

Though fewer in quantity, in most instances where the more nuanced experiences of migrant farm workers have been best documented, it has been through the personal narratives of students themselves or of authors writing semi-autobiographical novels (Rivera, 1971; Jimenez,

1997, 2002, 2008, 2017; Hart, 1999; Holmes, 2013; Atkins, 2000; & Blackmore, 2012) have written their own experiences into their works. Of these works, none is more widely known than Rivera's (1970) *Y No Se Lo Trago La Tierra/And The Earth Did Not Devour Him.* Through the telling of short stories, Rivera eloquently conveys the tremendous hardships and situations that migrant farmworker families often find themselves because of their circumstances.

Below is one of fourteen vignettes that Rivera (1970) presents to capture the tragedies, triumphs, resiliency and strength of the migrant farm worker communities he later said he remembered growing up in a time when farmworkers had no protections. Rivera (1970) is often referred to as the father of Chicanx literature. Yet, what stands out about his work is the way in which he can make the readers connect to the narrating of these, often harrowing, experiences that migrant farmworkers consistently face.

The Little Burnt Victims

> The three children were left to themselves in the house when they went to work because the owner didn't like children in the fields doing mischief and distracting their parents from their work. Once the took them along and kept them in the car, but the day had gotten very hot and suffocating and the children had even gotten sick. From then on they decided to leave them at home instead, although, sure enough, they worried about them all day long. Instead of packing a lunch, they went home at noon to eat and that way they could check on them to see if they were all right. That following Monday they got up before dawn as usual and left for work. They left the children fast asleep…At about ten o'clock that morning, from where they were working in the fields they noticed smoke rising from the direction of the farm. Everyone stopped working and ran to their cars. They sped toward the farm. When they arrived they found the Garcia's shack engulfed in

flames. Only the eldest child was saved. The bodies of the other children were charred in the blaze. (p. 121)

Although Rivera (1970) is writing a semi-autobiographical account, these experiences and stories happen all too often in real life. Several years ago, while working for a Migrant Education Program in South Texas, I received a call from a local school district asking me for help. One of their elementary students had passed away in a midwestern state in a potato harvester accident. The father had been working on the machine while the children were playing in the fields. He had not realized that the children had begun to play near the harvester's main engine when he went to fire it up. The family did not have enough money to transport the young child back down to south Texas or for proper funeral services. Through a network of migrant advocates around the country, I was able to get the family the help they needed. However, these gut-wrenching stories would come to me about every three to six months and because they did, many of us who have worked extensively with these communities have a unique lens through which to read Rivera's (1970) work.

Like Rivera (1970), Jimenez (1997, 2001, 2008, & 2015) also relies on his upbringing in the migrant farm worker circuit to bring the readers into the world and everyday lived experiences of a migrant farm worker family. It is in the work of Jimenez' third (2009) and fourth (2015) installments of this autobiographical series that the higher education experiences of migrant students are perhaps most vividly presented. In this work, the author recalls an exchange with a university administrator and mentor regarding his contemplation of leaving college to return to help his family: "Yes, it's true. But in this case, think of the long-term consequences. Don't you think that you would be in a better position to help your family once you finish college and become a teacher? It's a sacrifice you're making now to fashion a better future for

your family, yourself, and others like you. Don't you agree?" (pg. 119). Jimenez (2008) also describes working in college and a sense of responsibility he felt for sending any money that he had left over to his family. "At the end of the month, after paying for living expenses, I sent home any money I had left over. It was not much, but my family appreciated it." (p. 82). Similarly, he describes in painstaking detail the sense of guilt that he felt for leaving his family behind to attend college, "I had a hard time falling asleep, thinking about my family. Was it right for me to be here in college while they struggled to make ends meet at home? The more I thought about it, the more confused I became. Then I remembered the English test. Suddenly I felt hot and sweaty and my heart started racing. I threw off the covers and quietly tiptoed to the window to get fresh air. I took a deep breath and stared out into the darkness," (Jimenez, 2008, p. 26). These works give us a glimpse into some of the unique ways that a migrant student's lived experiences continue to impact students even after they transition to college.

Arguably the moments when the national awareness regarding the plight of the migrant farmworker has peaked has come following the national release or showing of either a full-length film, documentary or exposé. One such moment in American History when a national awareness about the plight of the migrant farmworker was perhaps at its highest can be pinpointed to Thanksgiving evening with the national airing on public television of Edward R. Murrow's Harvest of Shame (1960). Viewed by millions of Americans, this documentary helped to build a momentum that would be carried by farm worker advocates to implement a series of federal programs aimed at supporting these families. This documentary also contextualized and made real the lived experiences of migrant farmworkers ahead of the farm worker movement that would take form later that decade.

To date, the existing literature regarding the experiences of migrant farm worker families in the United States gives anyone interested in undertaking a serious study of the issue a strong broad overview. One can understand how the migrant farmworker labor system has evolved over the years, how uneven the relationship between farm workers and growers has influenced—and continues to influence—conditions in the fields and how the children of migrant families have fared in their academic pursuits. Yet, what is often missing in the analysis of the migrant experience in this country are the individual voices and first-hand accounts of the workers themselves. No one is better able to convey the nuances of their everyday realities and we begin to get glimpses of these nuanced experiences in testimonios, semi-autobiographical works and to perhaps a lesser extent through filmed documentaries, exposés or full feature films. The limited presence or outright absence of these migrant farm worker voices robs them of the ability to describe their own experiences or to even factor into the discussion.

The Education of Migrant Students

The reviewed literature suggests that for many years, scholars have attempted to explain the educational outcomes of migrant students by relying primarily on the circumstances in which the students grow up rather than undertaking an examination of the structural forces that contribute to these student's educational attainment (Pérez & Zarate, 2016; Quezada, Rodríguez-Valls, & Lindsay, 2016). In many ways, this approach re-affirms a deficit-based analysis that often focuses on what students are perceived to lack rather than focusing on any assets that students possess which could support their educational endeavors. However, in the last two decades, there is an emerging literature that takes an assets-based approach to examining student resiliency and new approaches to working with migrant farmworker children and families.

Still, prior to initiating a discussion regarding this literature, it is important to note that the education of migrant students in the United States is replete of instances of purposeful exclusion. This is something that is not often found in the reviewed literature. For many years, the children of farm workers were openly excluded from educational settings and considered to be a segment of the population that did not need any academic training and one that was destined to stay in that line of work indefinitely. Gonzalez (2003) meticulously captures the degree to which Mexican agricultural workers were excluded from education at the urging of powerful agricultural industry: "In districts that depended heavily on the labor of the family, as in the cotton-growing region of Texas, the sugar beet fields of Colorado, and the farming areas of some California counties, school boards in effect hung signs on the schoolhouse doors to warn 'No Migrant Children Allowed," (Gonzalez, p. 67). Gonzalez (2003) further references a report from the region in which this study is carried out that reported a widespread "attitude that school attendance should not be allowed to interfere with the supply of cheap farm labor,". A Texas school superintendent candidly justified the practice: "Most of our Mexicans are of the lower class. They transplant onions, harvest them, etc. The less they know about everything else the better contented they are. You have undoubtedly heard that ignorance is bliss; it seems that it so when one has to transplant onions," (p. 67).

It is also important to note that the vast majority of existing literature regarding the education of migrant students is focused on the K-12 educational experiences and outcomes of these children (Pérez & Zarate, 2017; Quezada, Rodríguez-Valls, & Lindsey, 2016; Salinas & Fránquiz, 2004; Gouwens, 2001; Vocke, 2007; Garza, Trueba & Reyes, 2004; Rivera, 1987; Martinez, 1997). Within this literature, there has been a strong emphasis on documenting the history of migrant education (Salinas & Franquiz, 2004; & Gouwens, 2001). However, in recent

decades, an emerging literature has been pushing beyond the traditional analysis of the migrant education and centering student experiences to explore both student assets and factors that contribute to their success (Pérez & Zarate, 2017; Martinez, 2007; Vocke, 2007; Garza, Trueba, & Reyes, 2004; Rivera, 1987; Nuñez, 2009; & Stevenson & Beck, 2017). Even though this newer research paints a more hopeful and optimistic narratives regarding migrant students, many continue to emphasize and focus on the challenges faced by this student population as a way of explaining their educational outcomes; suggesting that there is much more to be done in this area. Pérez & Zarate (2017) state that, "Despite the growing educational research on migrant farmworker students in the U.S., a comprehensive body of research providing pragmatic strategies for academic success among migrant farmworkers has yet to emerge," (p. 2).

Although I agree with Pérez & Zarate (2017) that research providing pragmatic strategies for the academic success of migrant farmworkers has yet to emerge, there are some works moving the conversation in that direction. Two such works that are contributing greatly to this discussion are the works of Garza, Trueba & Reyes (2004) on academic resiliency and that of Alva & Padilla (2005) on academic invulnerability. Rather than focus on the challenges migrant students continually face, Garza et al (2004) examine the resiliency displayed by successful migrant students to consider how teachers can learn from these students to develop pedagogies that are more responsive and considerate of the strengths that these students bring into the classroom. Similarly, Alva & Padilla (2005) present an academic invulnerability framework that they suggest demonstrates "how personal resources and external factors both act as protective influences and serves to neutralize the effects of at-risk conditions," (p. 486). Other scholars (Gibson, 2003 & Duron, 1995) have focused on identifying factors that contribute to the success of migrant students. They found that high-quality academic advising, afterschool tutoring,

summer school, ongoing advocacy, mentoring, connections to school and community resources are all factors that can contribute to the success of migrant students. By focusing on strength, resiliency and factors that contribute to academic success these works advocate for a move towards a praxis—both in pedagogy and in support services—that is much more supportive of migrant students.

In their work Quezada, Rodríguez-Valls, & Lindsey (2016) propose a two-pronged approach for supporting migrant children in our schools. First, they argue that supporting migrant children requires that academic institutions build a cultural proficiency approach into all their work. This, they suggest, entails that all the school personnel look inward and if necessary, dispel many of the stereotypes that they might harbor about migrant students and instead be willing to accept the strengths that these children and families bring into the school system every day. Second, they argue that academic institutions must work to build *confianza* or trust with the migrant families.

The work of Pérez & Zarate challenges us to reconcile the incongruencies of broad educational policy developed for the masses and the individual attention that the unique condition circumstances of these students calls for. To be sure, Pérez & Zarate (2016) employ an assets-based approach to their research, "We consider how a focus on educational metrics of measuring academic success can blatantly ignore the lived experiences of migrant students and their families and specifically their emotional and overall well-being that must be addressed before any discussion of academics should occur," (Pérez & Zarate, 2016 p. 108). "As the student voices illustrate, and we argue, it is incumbent upon educators to embrace a cultural wealth model that shifts the research lens away from a deficit view of migrant communities as places full of cultural poverty, disadvantages, and low academic achievement, and instead

focuses on and learns from the array of existent cultural knowledges, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed by migrant communities that often go unrecognized," (Pérez & Zarate, p. 107). Pérez and Zarate (2016) further suggest that, "Groundbreaking research that challenges worn out deficit views of working class migrant youth and embraces a "cultural wealth" view of these students offers us fresh hope that the aspirational, resistance, cultural, and linguistic capital our migrant youth bring to school will be acknowledged along with other forms of nonmonetary capital," (p. 103).

As student's performance in K-12 education is directly linked to a college path, it is critical to understand this segment of migrant student's academic journey. This emerging research is instructive for all current and future scholars in its call to push beyond traditional analysis of migrant education. I share in the optimism and hope that Pérez & Zarate (2016) argue is accompanied by newer research that embraces a cultural wealth view of these students. At the same time, the literature tells us that these sorts of recommendations have been made for almost half a century (Cardenas & Cardenas, 1977) with limited success. Having also worked in the field of migrant education, for many years, I am keenly aware of the sorts of works that are typically touted as the most "high impact" strategies when it comes to developing teaching pedagogies, and that strategies like the ones mentioned Pérez & Zarate (2016) are rarely among them. In that respect, I recognize that impacting the education of migrant students will require that those who develop the models must also do some work in supporting the implementation of some of these strategies.

Migrant Children & Family Responsibilities

A primary concern of this dissertation is to examine the perceptions of migrant students regarding the unique roles and responsibilities that they actively take on to help support the well-

being of their families, often from a very young age. Unlike many of their first-year college students peers, children from migrant farmworker families often begin taking on family responsibilities much earlier in life. Though some of these responsibilities have been written about in the literature, rarely are they examined through the lens of the farmworker children themselves. Therefore, unpacking these students' perceptions gives us not only a deeper understanding of how students make sense of these responsibilities but also of the context in which many of these students transition to college.

Of these unique responsibilities, the labor that many migrant children and youth carry out in agriculture is what has received the greatest attention (Human Rights Watch, 2010; AFOP, 2007). Literature focused on child labor on America's farms goes back many decades documenting the progression from children working on the family farms to the present-day circumstance of migrant farm worker children and families (Mapes, 2009; Valdez, 1993; Street, 2004; Rothenberg, 1998; Thompson, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2010). Child labor literature regarding migrant children has been traditionally in a way that spotlights what many consider to be unfair labor protections in the agricultural industry. The literature also often highlights the real dangers of children working in the fields. According to Human Rights Watch (2014), in 2012 two-thirds of the children under the age of 18 who died from occupational injuries were agricultural workers on all types of U.S. farms. But almost always, these works are presented from the perspective of the author or scholar producing the text, oftentimes after having been filtered through their lens. Rarely is the text a reflection of the student's perspective themselves or written by the students. When this has occurred, we get a much deeper description of the complexity of migrant child labor and its impacts.

Beyond their active roles as wage earners, many migrant children also frequently serve as intermediaries between their families and the general predominately English-speaking population. The work of Antonia Castañeda (1997) captures some of the complexities that emerge from these social interactions. She identifies the social and cultural cues that young children are often responsible for bridging and navigating. Through oral histories of individuals who recounted experiences of when they served as child intermediaries, Castañeda (1997) vividly captures how challenging it is for young children to negotiate these duties. Specifically, Castañeda (1997) highlights that these acts of translation take place under unequal positions of power and that these experiences can be traumatic for the children who serve as intermediaries. Other works (Atkins, 2000; Rivera, 1971; and Jimenez, 1997, 2002, & 2009) also capture the nuances of the distinct roles and consequences of migrant children as intermediaries for their families. In one example, Atkins (2000) documents how a young migrant farm worker was asked to serve as an intermediary for her parents and the school system when her family did not speak Spanish or English. As a member of the Zapotec indigenous community in Oaxaca, Mexico, the experiences of this young child expose yet another layer in the complexities of child intermediaries.

For many migrant families, having the older children watch the younger children is the only way that parents can go to work in order to provide for the entire family. Dodson and Dickert (2004) conducted a decade long qualitative study on child family labor as a survival strategy for low income families. The study focused primarily on low-income single parent households where mostly young women were tasked with family labor responsibilities so that the parent could go to work. Dodson and Dickert (2004) argue that family responsibilities caused

students to lose significant developmental opportunities which they further argue contributes to an intergeneration transfer of poverty.

The physical labor carried out by the children from migrant farm worker backgrounds has also received a considerable amount of attention from researchers (Human Rights Watch, 2000; Rothenberg, 2000; Thompson & Wiggins, 2002; & Holmes, 2013). This research has been primarily concerned with detailing the working conditions and the fact that children continue to labor in the fields along with their families (Atkins, 2000; Jimenez, 1997, 2001). It has also been concerned with examining the larger issue of how children fit into the national agricultural industry (Rothenberg, 2000; Thompson & Wiggins, 2002; Jourdane, 2005 & Mapes, 2009) and its regulations that have allowed and continue to allow children as young as 12 years old to legally work in the fields. There are those who suggest that many of the migrant students who succeed despite having to work at a very young age do so because of their resiliency (Garza, Trueba, & Reyes, 2004) and because of a tremendous amount of community cultural wealth (Araujo, 2012; & Valverde & Bejarano, 2012) that they accumulate from their families. Others suggest that working from an early age develops a child's sense of responsibility, hardworking ethics but simultaneously creates a disdain for fieldwork and a desire to get out of the migrant stream (Lopez et al, 2001). For most of these students, education is the only viable way to remove themselves from the migrant lifestyle. Yet, very little research attempts to connect the work that children carry out with the life outcomes of these students beyond a cursory relationship between these two. Even less research is concerned with the impacts that the work and other family responsibilities children migrant farmworker backgrounds might have on their postsecondary prospects and outcomes.

Migrant Students and Higher Education

Despite the many challenges migrant children face, many of them hold aspirations to attend college. Many of them might not have all the information they need but they are fully aware that a college education is probably the only sure way to get out of the migrant stream (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; & Martinez & Cranston-Gingras, 1996). A review of the literature reveals that the higher education experiences of migrant farmworker students has received very limited attention from scholars. Research specifically focused on the college transition of these students has received even less consideration. This uniquely positions the contributions of this dissertation to expand the knowledge in this line of inquiry. The research that has been presented tends to focus on the effectiveness of the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), characteristics of migrant college students and the cultural wealth that students bring to their respective universities. Although sparse, the emerging literature that relies on assets-based frameworks of analysis and interdisciplinary approaches provides a hopeful outlook for continued research in this area.

Because CAMP is a federally funded program that is continuously evaluated based on the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) measures to ensure that federal dollars are being used effectively, an inclination for research measuring its effectiveness is understandable. Willison & Jang (2009) found that of all the migrant students that participated in the CAMP Program nationally, eighty one percent of them persisted into year two of college. This positions this student group almost ten percentage points above the national average. Similarly, Ramirez (2012) conducted a seven-year longitudinal study in the California State University System and found that compared with other groups, CAMP participants had higher persistence rates from their first to second year in college. Although both studies support the program's effectiveness of

getting students to persist into year two of college, one of the program's key GPRA measures, the ultimate completion rates of CAMP students need further examination.

Other studies have examined the characteristics of migrant college students and the various factors that contribute to their academic success as they move into and throughout college. In a study with migrant college students in a large metropolitan university, McHatton, Zalaquette, & Cranston-Gingras, (2006) identified student perceptions along three dimensions: self, family and school. They found that migrant students often saw themselves as resilient, proactive and self-reliant. At the same time, "When asked about barriers to success in high school, responses of all participants were self-directed. In other words, none of the participants identified systemic or institutional barriers. This further supports the possibility of socialization of a 'blame the victim' mentality, blurring the lines between personal and social responsibility," (McHatton, Zalaquette, & Cranston-Gingras, 2006). This seeming contradiction within the students is interesting considering a trend in higher education literature of moving toward an interactional model where the success of students is increasingly seen as a product of all the experiences students with the various components that make up the institution.

When offering their perceptions about family, students reported that although their parents played perhaps the most critical roles in motivating them to go to college, their counselors were the primary informants of college opportunities and admissions process (McHatton, Zalaquette, & Cranston-Gingras, 2006). This finding challenges any notion that the families of migrant farm worker parents are not interested in the academic achievement of their children. At the same time, it is consistent with other research that notes the disconnect between migrant parents wanting their children to attend college but not having the necessary information to help them get there. Another observation made by the students was that, "many participants

believed schools did not make a clear effort to understand cultural assets and/or contributions of diverse students, nor teach cultural understanding and acceptance, but they still considered themselves worthwhile members of their classes and believed they received equal opportunities equal to those from the majority culture," (McHatton, Zalaquette, & Cranston-Gingras, 2006). This finding is important because it reinforces the argument by Quesada et al (2016) regarding the importance and need of schools to taking a more culturally proficient approach to the education of migrant farm worker students.

In their qualitative study of factors that contribute to the success of students from migrant farm worker backgrounds, Escamilla and Guerrero Treviño (2014) interviewed 10 graduates from one university in which they had participated in the College Assistance Migrant Program. Through their interviews, they identified fictive kinship, family support, and concerted cultivation as key factors for student success. In their responses, participants indicated that by creating a home away from home, they established a fictive kinship where fellow students from migrant farm worker backgrounds were relied upon for support on issues that would typically be supported by family back home. The respondents also indicated that their family's willingness to be supportive of their education—albeit mostly emotional support—they often shielded their parents back home from any types of trouble they were having at school and instead would speak with CAMP staff about issues they were having. Finally, Escamilla and Guerrero Treviño (2014) suggest that the participants in this study demonstrated a concerted cultivation of a strong work ethic by their parents and migrant lifestyle. Several respondents noted that their prior migrant farm worker experiences taught them that one does not leave a work site until the job was done and that they took some of this with them to college. This, the authors suggest, is a different take on a traditional notion of concerted cultivation where families in the middle class cultivate a

sense of built-in family support for student's after school activities, team sports, and other extracurricular activities.

Several of the identified studies presented an emerging literature focused on community cultural wealth models as a way of analyzing the experiences of college migrant students (Bejarano & Valverde, 2012; & Araujo, 2012). Both studies deploy Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework to analyze the experiences of migrant farmworker students in college. Relying on a mixed methods approach, Bejarano & Valverde (2012) argue that familial and navigational wealth are critical to migrant student's access and persistence in college. Similarly, Araujo's (2012) qualitive study with migrant college students found that some migrant college students deploy all areas of Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model. Both works push the analysis of the migrant farmworker college experience away from a deficit driven approach and towards using more assets-based frameworks when analyzing the experiences of migrant college students.

Beyond the research that has been produced specifically with migrant students, there are other works that focus on the higher education experiences of other minoritized students that might also be instructive for this study. I am particularly interested in related works that examine how minoritized college students either continue to interact with their families or make sense of their moves to college during the transition process. Carter and Robinson (2002) write about a study with rural low-income Appalachian students, which demonstrated a perceived need to remain connected to family back home and a sense of responsibility to continue helping the family financially. Through a qualitative study with rural Appalachian students, Carter and Robinson (2002) found that these students remained very connected to family during their college transition. Because of their continued connection and contact with family members,

many of these students also felt a keen sense of responsibility to their communities upon graduation. Other scholars have written about the idea of survivor guilt (Piorkowski, 1983 & Tate, Williams, & Harden, 2010) that some students experience when leaving their families behind when they go to college. Piorkowski (1983) suggests that: "With low-income, urban, first generation college students, the issue is not always death in the physical sense but rather death or stagnation at the emotional level. The question 'Why did I survive when they died?' can be translated into 'Why should I succeed when they failed?' or "Why should I succeed when I didn't help them enough so that they could succeed?" (p. 620). Particularly important here is the difficulty that dealing with any type of guilt adds to students focusing on their education as they grapple with these feelings. Although this study was directed at urban students, for students from migrant farm worker families, the issue of guilt might stem from them no longer having to work or contribute while their younger siblings and parents continue to do so. Waterman (2012) writes about the need of some Native American students, many of whom also come from low-income communities, to remain connected to family and how they use going home frequently as a strategy to succeed in higher education. By returning home frequently, Waterman (2012) suggests, students can maintain a strong identity and continually reaffirm diverse cultural traditions that are difficult to keep up in university settings. Because of the lack of higher education research focusing specifically on this student population, it is important to consult this research to consider if it might be instructive to the intent of this study.

Although the research regarding the college experiences of migrant farmworker students is not extensive, there is enough research upon which to foreground this study. There is also some important works to borrow from other minoritized groups and employ an interdisciplinary approach in this analysis. It seems clear that the college transition of migrant students has

received the least attention in the research pertaining to these population. Therefore, this dissertation could significantly expand a collective understanding of this phenomenon.

Higher Education & College Transition

To better situate the experiences of migrant students in higher education settings, it is important to examine what existing literature tells us about transitions to college. According to Goldbrick-Rab, Carter and Wagner (2007), the field of higher education has been more concerned with theoretical models of student retention and less so about the various phases of college transition. They argue that research regarding this area of higher education is dominated by two primary issues: college entry and college completion (Goldbrick-Rab et al, 2007). They further suggest that the study of higher education transition has not taken advantage of a more interdisciplinary approach, "While there has been some movement, especially during the last two decades, towards a more critical approach that raises questions about race, gender, and class inequalities, such an approach has not become normative. Moreover, other relevant disciplines (e.g. economics, political science, anthropology) that might contribute both new ways of thinking about transition to college, as well as rigorous methodologies for examining it, are underutilized," (Goldbrick-Rab et al, 2007, p. 2446). This assessment invites more interdisciplinary research, and this is where I believe there are tremendous opportunities for interdisciplinary research between Higher Education and Chicanx/Latinx Studies.

In the reviewed higher education literature, it is difficult to find anyone who has been cited more than Tinto's (1993) theory of college departure. Tinto (1993) borrows from Van Gennep's (1960) study on Rites of Passage and Durkeim's (1951) suicide theory to make two analogies that help shape his theory of student departure. First, Tinto (1993) leans on a Rites of Passage framework that suggests that there are three important parts to an individual's transition

process in tribal societies: separation, transition and incorporation. Separation, Tinto (1993) suggests, “involves the separation of the individual from past associations. It is characterized by a marked decline in interaction with members of the group which the person has come and by the use of ceremonies whose purpose is to mark as outmoded the views and norms which characterized the group,” (p. 93). Once an individual has separated, Tinto (1993) suggest that they must then transition, which he describes as “a period during which the person begins to interact in new ways with members of the new group into which membership is sought.” Finally, incorporation, “involves the taking on of new patterns of interaction with members of the new group and establishing of competent membership in that group as a participant member,” (p. 93). According to Tinto (1993), these steps are critical to an effective college transition process which in turn helps a student persist in college.

Tinto (1993) pairs his first analogy with Durkheim’s (1951) suicide theory to further develop his theory of student departure. He is clear in asserting that his analogy is only intended to guide the thinking and argues that both behaviors can be understood, “in most circumstances, to represent a form of voluntary withdrawal from local communities that is as much a reflection of the community as it is of the individual who withdraws. Moreover, each can be seen to signal somewhat similar forms of rejection of conventional norms regarding the value of persisting in those communities,” (p. 99). In particular, he points to egotistical suicide as a, “form of suicide that arises when individuals are unable to become integrated and establish membership within the communities of society,” (p. 101). He suggests that egotistical suicide is useful in highlighting, “the ways in which to social and intellectual communities that make up a college come to influence the willingness of students to stay at the college,” (Tinto, 1993, p. 104). As

will be seen later in this chapter, both analogies that guide the thinking for the framing of this theory have received extensive critiques.

Another frequently cited work in Higher Education Literature is Astin's (1993) research on how student involvement impacts a student's success and development in college. He argues that, "from the perspective of educational policy and educational reform, it is useful for professors and administrators to have information about all the possible environmental variables that might be considered in any effort to enhance student outcomes," (Astin, 1993, p. 315). Central to Astin's (1993) analysis of what is most important for students during their college years is his Inputs, Environment & Outcomes (I-E-O) framework for studying student development. According to Astin (1993), "Inputs refer to the characteristics of the student at the time of initial entry to the institution; environment refers to the various programs, policies, faculty, peers, and educational experiences to which the student is exposed; and outcomes refer to the student's characteristics after exposure to the environment," (p. 7). Through his analysis, Astin (1993) found that student's academic and personal development can be enhanced by heavy involvement—both peer-peer and faculty-student.

It is important to note that from Astin's model (1993) input characteristics are limited to those measures that can produce or can relate to a verifiable outcome. For example, a student's pre-college entrance exam can be used as a pre-test where a GRE can be used as a post-test. Although he analyzes eighty-two outcome measures in his study, Astin (1993) acknowledges that there are some characteristics and outcomes that do not lend themselves to pretests. I propose that the lived experiences and the everyday realities of minoritized students leading up to and throughout college are probably among characteristics that do not lend themselves to pretests. Astin (1993) recognizes that, "One of the major limitations of this study is that separate

analyses have not been done by gender, race, ability, socioeconomic status, or other key student characteristics. While the characteristics have been included among the input variables and their effects on student outcomes summarized in the final chapter, space limitations have made it impossible to do a separate subgroup analysis (for example, for men and for women)," (p. 29). Despite these limitations, Astin's (1993) study for understanding how college impacts student development and academic success remains one of the most comprehensive and robust analysis in developing a higher education framework.

Originating in the field of developmental phycology, Schlossberg's (1984) theory of individuals in transition has been used extensively in counseling when supporting adults experiencing important transitions in their lives. She asserts that as individuals approach a transition, they prepare for it and consider how the transition might impact them. According to Schlossberg (1984), there are three basic components of approaching transition; type, context and impact of transition. Of these three elements, and for the purposes of this dissertation, it seems that context is especially important for considering the unique life course of many migrant farm worker students. It is critical to recognize that their lived experiences and perhaps their familial circumstances might not be like many other college students. Fouad & Bynner (2008) assert that, "Unfortunately, when considering context regarding the transitions people are navigating, we must be sensitive to the fact that everyone does not start on a level playing field. There is a differentiation in the opportunities and obstacles that shape people's potential, across backgrounds, locations, birth eras, and countries," (p. 245).

Schlossberg (1984) also asserts that contextual factors include things such as gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity and geographical location. She suggests that while contextual factors may have both direct and indirect influences on a transition, these factors can also influence an individual's perception of the choices available to himself or herself. This element

of context during adult transitions is extremely important for at least two reasons. Firstly, it creates a structured approach to examining factors beyond the traditional 'college preparation' or outcome measures that lend themselves for pretesting (Astin, 1993). Secondly, it affirms that contextual factors influence how individuals see and weigh the choices available to them. Therefore, if as the initial data suggest, migrant farm worker students often consider their families in their college choice process, then one must wonder if there they also consider the impact of any transition on not only them but their family as well. This question is something that I hope will be addressed during the data analysis portion of this dissertation.

These three works provide important insights that clarify both how students transition into post-secondary education and how their involvement or interactions with the college environment impacts their academic outcomes. What remains unclear in the literature is an analysis of how these works can further an analysis of how migrant or other minoritized students transition into and maneuver themselves through college. If, as the preliminary data suggests, migrant farm worker children do indeed contribute to their family's well-being to greater extents then their counterparts (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Cranston-Gingras, 1999; & Human Rights Watch, 2010), it is reasonable to wonder if that they might have a unique perspective of approaching a transition like going to college. These students might not only wonder how this transition will affect their lives but the lives of their family as well when approaching their transition. With this dissertation, I contribute to this very question.

College Transition & Chicanx/Latinx Students

The reviewed literature points to an on-going exchange between some of higher education exemplars and scholars who have not only critiqued these works but have also put forth their own alternative frameworks for better understanding the post-secondary experiences of Chicanx/Latinx and other minoritized students. This intertextual dialogue has led to some

convergence between existing college transition theory & Chicanx/Latinx college students in the United States. There is an apparent agreement that existing higher education models have not been able to fully study or isolate the higher education experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students or other minoritized students in their larger studies. Therefore, it is important to consider the critiques of these higher education models and how they have influenced the overall discussion about the higher education experiences of all college students.

As one of the most cited works in higher education literature, Tinto's (1997) work is also among the most critiqued. Critics have argued that this Tinto's (1997) work is theoretically flawed and fails to fully consider a potentially very different college experience for minoritized students. Tierney (1999) states, "This article maintains that Tinto's theory of college student retention misses the mark for minority students. With its implicit suggestions that such students must assimilate into the cultural mainstream and abandon their ethnic identities to succeed on predominately White campuses, Tinto's framework is faulted not only for overlooking the history of ethnic oppression and discrimination in the U.S. but also for being theoretically flawed," (Tierney, 1999). Tierney (1992) further argues that "rituals of transition have never been conceptualized as movements from one culture to another," (p. 611). He claims that the model makes assumptions regarding individuals undergoing a rite of passage in a culture that might or might not be their own (e.g., minority students within White institutions). He notes that "models of integration have the effect of merely inserting minorities into a dominant cultural frame of reference that is transmitted within dominant cultural forms, leaving invisible cultural hierarchies intact," (p. 611). Indeed, there is evidence that minoritized students, particularly in predominately White institutions, are confronted with embedded hierarchies that complicate their experiences.

Joining in the critique of Tinto's (1997) theory, specifically as it relates to

Chicanx/Latinx students, are the work of Hurtado & Faye Carter (1997) and Attinasi (1989) which also suggest his theory is flawed and fails to explain the experiences of minoritized students in college. Hurtado & Faye Carter (1997) propose that, "understanding students sense of belonging may be key to understanding how particular forms of social and academic experiences affect these students," (p. 324). This sense of belonging framework for understanding the college experiences of Chicanx/Latinx and other minoritized groups has been widely cited and accepted in higher education literature (Hurtado & Alvarado, 2015; & Nuñez, 2009). Hurtado & Faye Carter (1997) also question the assumption that minoritized students must adopt the values of the dominant college environment and diminish their own cultural difference. They suggest that this assumption underlies the concept of acculturation and this can potentially be harmful to minoritized students. Furthermore, they suggest that Latinx students might have a more subjective sense of integration that is rarely considered in existing higher education models. Similarly, Hurtado & Faye Carter (1997) argue, as others have that for high performing Latinx students staying connected to family and continuing to receive their support is in fact among the most important factors of a strong transition process. A similar argument is made by in a study with first generation college students by Rogers, Updefgraff, Iida, Dishion, Doane, Corbin, Letnten, & Ha (2018) which found that the support from parents and friends during the initial adaptation to college is very important. This study challenges the notion that separation from family is as necessary for minoritized students as it might be for other students. In doing so, it really questions the notion of a uniform college transition process that discounts the experiences of minoritized students.

Another critique of Tinto's (1987) work comes from Attinasi's (1989) who not only pushes back on a theory that he suggests fails to consider Mexican-American students but also provides a broader critique of the ways in which research is carried out by higher education

scholars. Attinasi (1989) also points out that there is a reason for which the experiences of minorized are often overlooked by higher education literature, “Ironically, the present condition of these subpopulations exists because, in the past, higher education’s service as an instrument for social mobility was seldom indiscriminate,” (p. 247). In addition, Attinasi (1989), effectively critiques the existing data in higher education by arguing that much of the context in which Mexican American students transition to college is erased by large national data sets, oftentimes of close ended questionnaires, that make it nearly impossible to disaggregate the experiences of minoritized students. This questioning of data collection is something that has persisted and has pushed those interested in the higher education of Chicanx/Latinx students to make this a substantial line of investigation in their careers; oftentimes leading to the development of entirely new data sets (Attinasi, 1989; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; & Willison & Jang, 2009) that begin to more fully explain the college transition of various minoritized groups. Attinasi (1989) ends his critique by inviting further research in this area, “What are needed then are naturalistic, descriptive studies guided by research perspectives that emphasize the insider’s point of view,” (p. 250).

Beyond critiquing Tinto (1987), some scholars have also identified ways in which his work has influenced the study of the Chicanx/Latinx college experience. Crisp, Taggert and Nora (2015) conducted a systemic review of literature that directly addressed this issue of Latinx student success in higher education. Their guiding research question was factors that impact the academic success of Latinx students. In their analysis, the literature suggests that a combination of sociocultural characteristics, academic self-confidence, beliefs, ethnic/racial identity, and coping styles, precollege academic experiences, college experience, internal motivation and commitment, interaction with supportive individuals, perceptions of the campus climate/environment, and institutional type/characteristics are related with one or more academic

success outcome for Latina/o students. However, one of the major findings from this study was an overreliance on Tinto's (1987) work in analyzing the education of Latinx students.

It has been widely documented that Chicanx/Latinx and other minoritized students experience college vastly differently from their white counterparts, particularly in predominately white institutions. In their study, Hurtado & Faye Carter (1994) found that of all Latinx groups on a predominately white college campus, Chicanx students were least likely among all Latinx groups to score high on social adjustment during their second year of college. Furthermore, Huber & Solórzano (2015) found that Latinx students frequently experience racial microaggressions on college campuses around the country. They define microaggressions as, "the systemic, cumulative, everyday forms of racism experienced by People of Color," and argue that, "These microaggressions reinforce institutional racism and perpetuate ideologies of white supremacy," (Huber and Solórzano, 2015). Yet many of these unique experiences of Chicanx/Latinx and other minoritized students are rarely considered in the traditional higher education literature. That these issues should be studied further and considered is agreed almost unanimously by all that conduct work in higher education. Still, those conducting very important work on the college transition and experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students (Hurtado & Faye-Carter, 1997; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Nunez, 2009; & Oseguera, Villalpando & Solórzano, 2003) seem to be crafting a counter narrative through rigorous academic research of what has been presented by traditional higher education research. It is this in between space that I see a great deal of opportunity for more interdisciplinary research that is better able to tell a fuller story of the higher education experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students.

Analytical Tools & Frameworks in The Study of Minoritized Youth

The schooling of minoritized children in the United States can and has been analyzed using a variety of theories and frameworks over the years. For a long time, cultural deficit or

culture of poverty theories dominated the approaches for 'examining' the academic experiences of minoritized children in this country. Some might suggest that although these theories are not as widely espoused, the thinking behind them may persist. Nevertheless, despite these traditional deficit approaches to understanding the experiences of minoritized students in the United States, some scholars have pushed back on this analysis with their own academic research developing frameworks of their own to study the experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students through an assets-based lens. Of these scholars, the works of Solórzano (1997, 1998) stand out for not only providing a new way to examine the education of Chicanx/Latinx students, but also for the various other frameworks that have been developed borrowing from his work.

In theorizing about CRT in education, Solórzano (1998) identified five important tenets that he suggests can and should inform theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum and policy ground his CRT approach in education. According to Solórzano (1998) those tenets are as follows: 1. The centrality of race and racism intersectionality with other forms of subordination, 2. The challenge to dominant ideology, 3. The commitment to social justice, 4. The centrality of experiential knowledge, 5. A transdisciplinary perspective. Solórzano (1998) suggests that by allowing these tenets to guide this approach allows for the questioning of deficit frameworks and highlight the omission of voices and experiences of people of color.

Borrowing from Critical Race Theory, and Solórzano's take on CRT in education, Yosso (2005) develops a community cultural wealth model that challenges the widely accepted notion that cultural wealth is something reserved for communities of privilege. Yosso (2005) accomplishes this by directly challenging Bourdieu's assertion that cultural wealth is something associated with the upper and middle classes. Because Bourdieu's theoretical work has often been interpreted as a way of explaining the academic and social outcomes of People of Color, Yosso's (2005) argument is particularly important. She also highlights the transformative possibilities of

embracing a community cultural wealth framework, "In examining some of the under-utilized assets Students of Color bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom, this article notes the potential of community cultural wealth to transform the process of school," (2005, p. 70). Yosso (2005) outlines six forms of cultural wealth—aspirational, familial, social, linguistic, resistance and navigational—to argue that students of color possess a tremendous amount of community cultural wealth that they also bring into the classrooms. A similar critique of Bourdieu's ideas of cultural capital and the underlying assumption that children from migrant farmworker backgrounds have their cultural backgrounds and strengths invalidated by this framework is provided by Martinez (1997).

Figure 2: Community Cultural Wealth Model

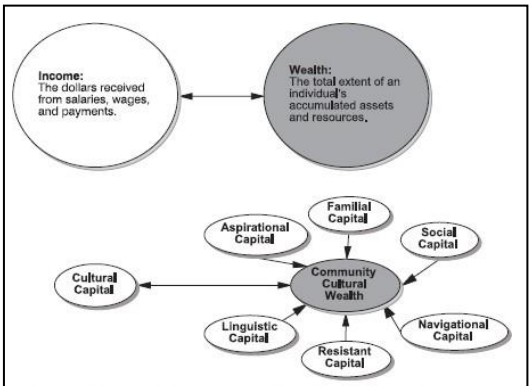


Figure 2. A model of community cultural wealth. Adapted from: Oliver & Shapiro, 1995

Like Yosso (2005) and also borrowing from Solórzano's (1998) framework of CRT in Education, Delgado Bernal (2001) conducted a study with thirty Chicana undergraduate students. In this study, Delgado Bernal (2001) also borrowed from Anzaldua's (1987) new mestiza consciousness. Through her analysis, Delgado Bernal (2001) established a pedagogy of the home framework where she theorizes how students deploy what Anzaldua (1987) refers to the new mestiza consciousness to navigate their high education years. Delgado-Bernal (2001) argues that Chicana college students deploy a new mestiza consciousness, "as the way a student balances, negotiates, and draws from her biculturalism, bilingualism, commitment to communities and

spiritualities in relationship to her education," (p. 623).

Collectively, these works lay out clear assets-based analysis of the education experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students. Because many of these scholars are either part of or affiliated in some way with Chicanx/Latinx Studies, I suggest they are in many ways some of the best equipped to study the higher education experiences of; especially in understanding the preparation for college, student lived experiences/backstories, and how students make sense of their transitions. Oftentimes, it seems that what dominates the higher education conversation is information based on large close ended questionnaires. Rarely do surveys look at the specific experiences of minoritized students as the central units of analysis. This is not to suggest that Chicanx/Latinx Studies has all the answers or even that this work has been done extensively in this field. It is, however, to suggest that these scholars provide us with analytical frameworks to not only analyze the experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students but to also inform theory, research, pedagogy, curriculum and policy. These frameworks not only challenge deficit-based thinking but offer new assets-based frameworks to use in their place (Yosso, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999; & Solórzano, 1987); making many of these scholars particularly qualified to study the college experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students.

Chapter Summary

A review of literature examining the higher education experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students reveals that these same experiences have been analyzed in ways that align more closely with the traditional lines of inquiry in higher education literature seeking to understand patterns of student enrollment and persistence. This type of analysis has yielded three commonly cited concerns with this student population: that Chicanx/Latinx students are underrepresented in higher education institutions in the United States (Gandara & Contreras, 2010; Nunez, 2011; Solórzano, 1997, 1998; Oseguera, Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005), that most Chicanx/Latinx

students enroll in community colleges (Gandara & Contreras, 2010; & Oseguera, Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005), and that only a small number of the Chicanx/Latinx students that enroll in community colleges eventually transfer to four-year universities to complete baccalaureate degrees. And although these are all important observations, my primary interest with this dissertation is to better understand the transition and overall college experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students with a specific interest in students from migrant farmworker backgrounds.

The reviewed literature regarding the overall migrant experience in the United States and provides us with an overview of the backstories and life courses of many of the migrant students prior to their transition to college. Existing literature has been effective in documenting the historically uneven relationship between the farm workers and the agricultural industry (McWilliams, 1939; Valdes, 1991; Weber, 1994; Street, 2004; Jourdane, 2004; Rothenberg, 1995). This literature also provides us with a detailed account of the education of migrant children (Pérez & Zarate, 2017; Martinez, 2007; Vocke, 2007; Garza, Trueba, & Reyes, 2004; Rivera, 1987; Nunez, 2009; & Stevenson & Beck, 2017). Finally, a smaller number of works has been able to capture the more nuanced experiences of migrant students (Rivera, 1971; Atkins, 1993; Viramontes, 1995; Jimenez, 1997, 2001, 2009, & 2015; Hart, 2014; & Gonzalez, 2003). Still, what seems to be missing from much of the reviewed literature are first-hand accounts from the farmworkers themselves. The centering of student voices in this dissertation is but a small attempt to help fill this gap.

That college students are becoming more diverse across the country is widely accepted fact by many higher education scholars (Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; & Renn & Reason, 2012). Yet, as this diversification process is on the rise, it is important to consider whether some of the most prominent theories and frameworks in the study of higher

education can substantively explain the experiences of minoritized students in college. The works of Tinto (1993), Astin (1993) and Schlossberg (1984) detail what some of the literature tells us about college transitions and impacts of college on students. At the same time, the works of Hurtado, Attinasi, Tierney, Delgado Bernal, Yosso, Valenzuela, serve to question the extent to which existing models can explain the post-secondary education of minoritized children—including migrant farm workers. Collectively all these works point to an on-going academic intertextual dialogue regarding the question of whether existing higher education literature has been able to substantially explain the higher education experienced of many minoritized groups, including migrant farm worker students. Still, emerging research is exciting and invites more studies that both focus on these student populations and center the student voices.

My intent with this dissertation is not to question the research findings and contributions of the field's exemplars (Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993; & Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Their findings have been corroborated many times over and have contributed greatly to enhancing a collective understanding not only how students transition into university settings but also how the interactions they have in those environments impact their social and academic development. Rather, my aim is to suggest that it is important to drill down and closely examine factors that impact the college transition of minoritized students and consider if and how their experiences might align with the theories and frameworks provided to us by these same exemplars. The most prominent works in Higher Education Literature are increasingly recognizing that the experiences of minoritized students may not necessarily be captured in the larger research endeavors. They further recognize and openly call for more research that looks specifically at this student population. Yet, even as these studies are being called for, the greater question is who will conduct them? As this dissertation focuses entirely on the higher education experiences of a sub-population of Chicanx/Latinx students, it is uniquely positioned to contribute to efforts

to expand the studies specific to minoritize student populations. This dissertation is equally positioned to answer the invitation by some in the field of higher education for more interdisciplinary research and inquiry into the college experiences of minoritized students in the United States.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

In this chapter, I introduce the research methods used in this qualitative study examining how current college students in South Texas from migrant farmworker backgrounds make sense of their family responsibilities during their transition to college. I also detail how the various research components depend on each other and work together to answer the primary research question for this study. Despite research gains in recent decades, higher education literature alone has been unable to sufficiently explain the higher education experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students, including students from migrant farm worker backgrounds, and other minoritized students. At the same time, several prominent Chicanx/Latinx scholars have carried out important research with this student population relying largely on qualitative methods that center the experiences and voices of students to not only develop entirely new data sets but to also establish new frameworks, theories and methodologies through which to analyze these students' experiences (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Nunez, 2009; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Yosso, 2005; & Atinassi, 1989). Thus, this chapter aims to establish how the qualitative research design for this study can contribute to a deeper collective understanding of the college experiences of migrant college students.

I begin by establishing why a qualitative research methods approach is the best fit for examining the primary research question for this study. After explaining the appropriateness of the methods, I introduce the research design and the frameworks that inform its development. I subsequently provide a brief introduction about the participants, sites and location of the study. This is followed with a detailed description of the instrumentation and data collection methods. Although many consider the research design only what happens prior to the gathering of the data,

I also include an approach to data analysis as part of my design. Finally, I discuss some of the ethical considerations of this study.

Appropriateness of Methods

My primary aim in this dissertation is to gain a deeper understanding of how current migrant college students make sense of their family responsibilities during their transitions to post-secondary institutions. In his critiques of higher education research, Attinasi (1989) argues that, "Investigators not using conceptual frameworks have been content with establishing the correlates of persistence, rather than understanding the phenomenon as a dynamic process," (p. 249) and further argues that, "What are needed then are naturalistic, descriptive studies guided by research perspectives that emphasize the insider's point of view," (p. 250). A qualitative research approach allows for a deeper exploration of this phenomenon that recognizes this as a very dynamic process. Attinasi (1989) argues that higher education research often relies on fixed-choice questionnaires and that, "These methods of data collection that effectively strip away the context surrounding the student's decision to persist or not to persist in college and exclude from consideration the student's own perceptions of the process," (p. 250). Including open-ended research questions in instruments allows both the students and researcher the ability to engage in a deeper analysis and discussion of phenomenon being studied.

According to Creswell (2006), qualitative methods are used when we want to empower individuals to share their stories and when existing theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem being examined. As higher education research has traditionally relied on closed ended surveys or questionnaires, it has not been able to sufficiently explain the higher education experiences of migrant farmworker or other minoritized college students. However, several Chicanx/Latinx scholars (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Nuñez, 2009; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Yosso, 2005; & Atinassi, 1989) have taken up this line of

inquiry and have often done so through qualitative approaches that center the voices and experiences of minoritized students. These studies highlight the diverse ways in which this scholarship continues to expand our collective understanding of the Chicanx/Latinx experience in higher education. Hurtado & Carter's (1997) sense of belonging framework has impacted how minoritized groups are studied on college campuses. Delgado Bernal's (2001) pedagogies of the home has provided a new way to specifically analyze the experiences of Chicana students in higher education. Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model provides a framework to understanding the education experiences of Latinx students through the cultural wealth they bring with them into the classrooms. All these approaches challenge deficit-based approaches by highlighting the strengths that Chicanx/Latinx students bring to college campuses and the ways in which the postsecondary experiences are different from White students.

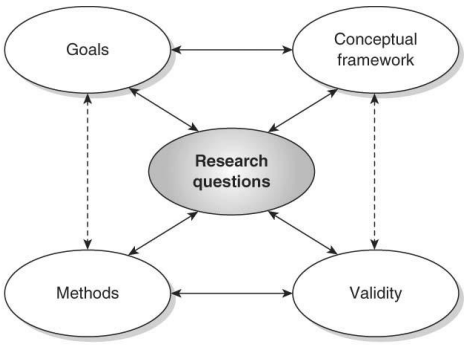
I do not seek to establish a direct relationship between two or more variables in this dissertation, therefore a quantitative approach is not appropriate for this study. Maxwell (2005) suggests that, "the strengths of qualitative research derive primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than number," (p. 22). He further suggests that, "In a qualitative study, you are interested not only in the physical events and behavior that are taking place, but also in how the participants in your study make sense of these, and how their understanding influences their behavior," (p. 22). Because migrant college students have a unique set of lived experiences and because very little research has been conducted with this student population, employing qualitative methods to study this phenomenon makes the most sense.

Research Design

The research design for this study follows Maxwell's (2005) interactive qualitative research approach model where each of the components inform and are connected to the others.

It is the logic and coherence of the various components of my study. Although this model is very structured, its design allows for a reflexive process to play out throughout all stages of the process (Maxwell, 2005). According to Maxwell (2005), sequential models with a clear starting point and a specified order for performing the intermediate tasks are not a good fit for qualitative research, in which any component of the design may need to be reconsidered or modified during the study in response to new development or to changes in some other component.

Figure 3: Maxwell Interactive Approach to Qualitative Studies



SOURCE: From *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach,* by J. A. Maxwell, 2005. Copyright by SAGE.

In his text, Maxwell (2005) introduces a series of probing questions aimed at getting the reader to consider how each of the design components are framed by the researcher. In the next several pages, I will utilize the design components from Maxwell's (2005) interactive approach as entry points to explain how I frame each of these components in this study. I do this in order to not only explain the various components of my study but to also to introduce how the different components are connected to each other.

Goals

Goals: Why is your study worth doing? What issues do you want it to clarify, and what practices and policies do you want it to influence? Why do you want to conduct this study, and why should we care about the results?

The primary goals for this study are to better understand how current college students from migrant farmworker backgrounds make sense of their family responsibilities during their transitions to college. Many migrant students take on diverse family responsibilities often at a very young age. Combined with the many obstacles that these students face along the educational pipeline, specifically because of their migratory lifestyle and an educational system that continues to struggle with how to best serve them, this makes for a unique set of life experiences leading up to college. Although every minoritized group has their own unique set of lived experiences, an examination of current migrant farm worker college students can potentially enhance how we understand and examine the experiences of other minoritized students. Centering the lived experiences of minoritized students both prior to and during the college transition process pushes us to validate these experiences as we explore the possible impacts they have on students as they navigate the higher education landscape.

Even with recent lower population projection numbers (Krogstad, 2014), Chicanx/Latinx are still one of the fastest growing demographics in this country. Therefore, engaging in research that looks beyond large national data sets and drills down at these student's experiences becomes very important. It is critical for us to not only better understand how they experience higher education environments, but also how educators and policy makers can better support their transitions to college. Chicanx/Latinx communities are now the largest minoritized group in the country. Yet, as these communities continue to grow, so does the concern that if the education system is left unchanged, it might also become one of the least educated (Gandara & Contreras, 2009).

Finally, this research is important because the literature suggests that there is an agreement among most higher education scholars regarding the need for more studies that specifically examine the higher education experiences of minoritized communities. The reviewed

literature for this study further suggests that there is a general agreement among most scholars that existing higher education literature, frameworks and theories are not currently able to fully explain the college experiences of minoritized students. Yet, despite this converging interest in more studies that specifically examine the higher education experiences of minoritized student groups, there appears to be a lingering question of who will carry out this research once those who have continued this line of inquiry have retired from the academy. It is worth mentioning that the vast majority of faculty who have specifically examined the higher education experiences of Chicanx/Latinx students are Chicanx/Latinx themselves. If only seven percent of all Doctoral Degrees conferred nationally are Chicanx/Latinx (NCES, 2017), what can we expect of for the prospects of this research being vigorously pursued. I am reminded of a quote from one of this study's participants, "If I don't do it, Who is going to do it." This statement also rings true in the consideration of who will take up scholarship that specifically looks at minoritized groups in higher education.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework: What do you think is going on with the issues, settings, or people you plan to study? What theories, beliefs, and prior research findings will guide or inform your research, and what literature, preliminary studies, and personal experiences will you draw on for understanding the people or issues you are studying?

This study is informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) framework that recognizes that for well over a century, the migrant farmworkers that pick this nation's crops (McWilliams, 1939; Galarza, 1970; Thompson & Wiggins, 2002; Street, 2004; Jourdane, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2010; Ganz, 2010; & Holmes, 2013) have been and continue to be among the most oppressed community in this country. This population has had to fight (Valdez, 1991; Barger & Reza, 1994; Street, 2004; & Jourdane, 2004) for every ounce of

dignity that they have ever taken from the agricultural industry. Migrant farmworkers continue to work in one of the most hazardous conditions in the country without access to health insurance and under minimal protections. Although agriculture work accounts for less than one percent of annual employment, thirteen percent of all occupational fatalities occur in this industry (BLS, 2009). Having personally experienced numerous encounters with racism and discrimination during my own lived experiences as a migrant farmworker allows me to understand the appropriateness of having CRT and LatCrit foreground this study. According to Huber (2008), "A critical race analysis allows for and enables researchers to work towards the elimination of racism through understanding the multiple ways People of Color experience subordination, as defined by race, class, gender and other forms of oppression," (p. 165).

It is necessary to clarify that CRT and LatCrit are compatible with each other and not in competition. They can work together towards a fuller understanding of Chicanx/Latinx experiences. Latino Critical Race Theory expands the analysis of Critical Race Theory to also consider issues such as immigration status, language, ethnicity, culture and phenotype. Although I initially considered a Critical Race Theory approach for this study, data gathered from the initial individual interviews quickly revealed that issues of language and immigration status were to be a large part of the student experiences.

The research design for this dissertation relies on Solórzano's (1987) CRT in Education framework which posits that there are five tenets of CRT: 1. The centrality of race and racism intersectionality with other forms of subordination, 2. The challenge to dominant ideology, 3. The commitment to social justice, 4. The centrality of experiential knowledge, 5. A transdisciplinary perspective. These five tenets provide a lens through which to analyze the experiences of Chicanx/Latinx and other minoritized students in education. They also provide some guidance about structuring one's academic research in ways that responds to some of these

tenants through the work. Therefore, Solórzano's (1987) CRT in Education framework not only serves as a lens through which to analyze these students' experiences, but also as a framework in the development of this research design.

Huber (2008) credits Delgado-Bernal and Villalpando (2002) with arguing that, "the academy has historically functioned from a Eurocentric epistemological perspective that perpetuates dominant ideologies rooted in white superiority, creating what they call an apartheid of knowledge in American higher education," (p. 161). She further asserts that, "Critical race scholarship acknowledges the century-long struggle Scholars of Color have endured to understand the experience of People of Color from the Eurocentric perspective. A CRT framework functions to deconstruct the 'apartheid of knowledge' that exists within the academy, through validating and honoring our own experiences and forms of knowledge," (p. 162). To that end, this study attempts to insert the voices and stories of a minoritized and historically oppressed group of college students as they enter often unfamiliar spaces of higher education.

Migrant college students have educational trajectories and lived experiences that I argue are singular in the United States. Historically, many of the lived experiences of migrant students have been used as a way of explaining their academic achievement in education settings. Yet, there is also strength, resilience, and cultural wealth in this community that should never be discounted and in fact embraced to point to the agency in students and community to succeed academically. Beyond the challenges that they encounter as part of their migrant trajectories, they also take on family responsibilities. These family responsibilities don't disappear when the students enroll in college. However, we don't know if and how these responsibilities impact their college transition or how they make sense of their family responsibilities. Because so little has been written on this topic, much of this research is exploratory.

Here, I center the experiences and voices of those who have often been excluded or

disregarded in traditional research methods. In centering these experiences, I privilege the experiences of minoritized students and challenge who is considered a holder and producer of knowledge. Delgado-Bernal (2002) states that, "For too long, the histories, experiences, cultures, and languages of students of color have been devalued, misrepresented, or omitted within formal education settings. In this article, the author uses critical race theory (CRT) and Latina/Latino critical theory (LatCrit) to demonstrate how critical raced-gendered epistemologies recognize students of color as holders and creators of knowledge," (p. 105). By recognizing, validating and centering the experiential knowledge of minoritized students and their families, this dissertation aims to have the student's voices be part of the theorizing process (Pizarro, 2005) about their own lived experiences.

Research Questions

Research Questions: What, specifically, do you want to understand by doing this study? What do you not know about the phenomenon you are studying that you want to learn? What questions will your research attempt to answer, and how are these questions related to on another?

Through this research, I specifically want to understand how current college migrant students make sense of their family responsibilities and whether their sense making impacts their transition to college. Because migrant farm worker children have a unique set of lived experiences, it is fair to wonder whether their transition to college are also unique. Prominent existing college transition frameworks suggest that separating from family (Tinto, 1993) and that active involvement (Astin, 1993) on a college campus with peers and faculty are key components of a strong transition to college. Yet, initial reviews of the data seem to indicate that many of this study's participants show little evidence of family separation and are not particularly involved in campus activities outside of the CAMP program. In fact, there seems to

be a strong connection with family both as students continue with some of their family responsibilities and as they receive varying degrees of support from their families. This will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.

Method

Methods: What will you actually do in conducting this study? What approaches and techniques will you use to collect and analyze your data? There are four parts of this component of your design: (1) the relationship that you establish with the participants in your study; (2) your selection of settings, participants, times and places of data collection, and other data sources such as documents (what is often called "sampling"); (3) your data collection methods; and (4) your data analysis strategies and techniques?

The research methods for this study consist of pre-structured close and open-ended question pláticas that deploy the critical race methodology of counter storytelling (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Yosso & Solórzano, 2002; & Huber, 2008). Huber (2008) suggests that although critical race theory has been used for almost two decades as a tool for analyzing the education experiences of minoritized groups, more attention must be afforded to the development of critical race methodologies. She suggests that by doing this we can begin to collectively explore the question of how we do CRT research. Huber (2008) highlights three forms of critical race methodologies: testimonio, counter storytelling and spatial critical race theory. She credits Solórzano and Yosso (2002) with highlighting the need to "develop critical race methodologies which draw from the forms of knowledge which exist in Communities of Color. These methodologies explicitly utilize a CRT lens which reveals experiences with and responses to racism, classism, sexism, and other forms of oppression in education," (p. 166). Huber (2008) also leans on Delgado Bernal and Solórzano's (2001) four tenants of critical race methodologies to establish her framework. She restates that those tenants are:

(1) build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice;

(2) challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center;

(3) open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and to show that they are not alone in their position; and

(4) teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone.

To be clear, it is not my intent to suggest that the collecting of stories and lived experiences of minoritized groups on its own constitutes a critical race methodology. Instead, the deployment of a critical race methodology is in how these stories challenge existing research that often excludes or silences their voices and ability to speak about their own experiences. The deployment of a critical race methodology is also apparent when these collected experiences push back on what has been written about these communities; often without their voices or perspectives. It is about carrying out research with those at the margins (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) to privilege their lived experiences and voices.

The research methods are also guided by principles of social justice. According to Pizarro (2005), "one of the reasons that research with Chicanas/os has not led to more dramatic changes in Chicana/o educational outcomes is that the research itself is not grounded in principles of social justice, although it seeks this justice," (p. 24). He further argues that "The primary obstacle for researchers studying the world of Chicana/o youth is that even as we increasingly incorporate the participation of these youth, most of us have not expressed concern that our methods be as true to notions of social justice as we are asking schools and institutions to be," (p. 24). Therefore, Huber's (2008) assertion that, "Critical race counterstories can be used as powerful tools to challenge majoritarian stories rooted in a dominant Eurocentric perspective that

justify social inequities and normalize white superiority (and thus, white supremacy)," (p. 167) becomes a way to move us closer towards social justice. If, as Huber (2008) suggests, the telling of critical race counterstories, humanizes the struggles and injustices faced by People of Color in academic research, then perhaps this is a move towards a more social justice approach to research in education.

Validity

Validity: How might your results and conclusions be wrong? What are plausible alternatives interpretations and validity threats to these, and how will you deal with these? How can the data that you have, or that you could potentially collect, support or challenge your ideas about what's going on? Why should we believe your results?

My intent with this study is not to suggest or claim that this study's findings can be generalized beyond the participants of this study. It is however to ensure the integrity of the inferences that I am making from the data. In order to achieve that goal, it is important to name possible researcher biases in this qualitative study and outline the steps that were taken to ensure its integrity. Maxwell (2005) suggests that validity as a component of your research design, consists of the strategies that researchers use to identify and rule out potential validity threats.

Throughout the interview process, I was very intentional in allowing the participant to respond in as short or as long of an answer as they felt they needed to. At times the responses were very short and at other times the responses were extremely long. Yet, in both cases, my intent with this study was to capture the authentic voices and perceptions—in as little or as much as the participants felt comfortable sharing—about their lived experiences. Beyond the customary follow up questions that arose during the pláticas, I was constantly trying to give fidelity to that approach which is paramount to the integrity of the study.

I also considered my possible effect on the participants as a researcher. As a former

migrant farmworker and migrant educator, I am committed to supporting efforts that enhance the educational outcomes of this student group. At the same time, throughout the course of the study, I was very conscious to limit my own voice and not lead the participants. I am fully aware that a great deal has changed since my time in the migrant stream and therefore very intentionally limited my own voice and experiences during the pláticas. However, to the extent that participants' awareness about my own migrant farm worker background enhanced our mutual understanding of one another and the possibilities of a free-flowing plática, I did share a bit about myself and use my cultural competency and experiential knowledge.

Location and Participants

The research for this dissertation is carried out in two institutions of higher education located in deep South Texas along the U.S.-Mexico border. Both institutions are designated Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and each has enrollments of Latinx students of over 90 percent. The federal HSI designation is awarded to institutions of higher education with an enrollment of twenty-five percent or higher of Hispanic students. One of the universities has two campuses, each of them with their own College Assistance Migrant Program. Therefore, interviews will happen in three different CAMP projects in two different universities.

All three CAMP projects are in the South Texas border region. The Texas Education Agency divides the state of Texas into 20 different regions and this seven-county service area in deep south Texas is designated Region 1 service area. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the region has a population of approximately 1.5 million residents of which 97.5 percent are Hispanic/Latino. This area is also considered among the poorest regions in the nation where, except for one county, more than 32 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

Table 1: Poverty Rates in South Texas

Seven County Demographics & Poverty Levels			
County	2010 Population	% Latino/Hispanic	% Below Poverty Line
Hidalgo	774,769	90.6	32.8
Willacy	22,134	87.2	37.2
Starr	60,968	95.7	37.6
Cameron	406,220	88.1	33.0
Webb	250,304	95.7	32.1
Jim Hogg	5,300	92.6	20.9
Zapata	14,018	93.3	34.1
7 County Totals/Averages	1,533,713	91.8 %	32.5%

South Texas is also home to anywhere between nine and twelve hundred low-income communities called 'colonias'. These communities consist of cheap plots of land located in unincorporated areas outside of city limits that are often lacking any basic infrastructure like drainage, sewage, lighting or paved roads. In the late 1980s, the Rio Grande Valley experienced a severe freeze which all but destroyed much of the citrus industry in the region. Resigned to the fact that they would not live long enough to see a profit from replanting their orchards, many older farmers decided to break up their fields into small plots of land. "Colonias can be found in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California, but Texas has both the largest number of colonias and the largest colonia population. Approximately 400,000 Texans live in colonias. Overall, the colonia population is predominately Hispanic, essentially Mexican; 65 percent of all colonia residents and 85 percent of those residents under 18 were born in the United States. There are more than 2,294 Texas colonias, located primarily along the states 1,248 mile border with Mexico," *(https://people.uwec.edu/ivogeler/w188/border/coloniasTX.htm)*

Table 2: Colonias by State & County

State	#Counties	#Colonias	Colonias/County
California	**1**	**11**	**11.0**
Arizona	**10**	**56**	**5.6**
New Mexico	**11**	**141**	**13.3**
Texas	**30**	**2,292**	**76.4**

Colonias are largely inhabited by recent immigrants and migrant farmworkers because many of these plots of land can be purchased with very little money down and purchased directly from the seller at generally higher interest rates proposed by the seller and accepted by the purchaser out of necessity. As migrant farm worker families are among the poorest in the United States, they have historically been a large the make-up of colonia residents. According to the most recent National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS), the mean and median annual income of a migrant farm worker family were $20,000 to $24,999 (2012-2013). My own family grew up in a colonia where my parents continue to reside. This discussion is important because migrant college students continue to live in these colonias after they enroll in institutions of higher education and the lack of infrastructure continues to play an important role in their postsecondary educations.

Although this region is one with high levels of poverty, it would be irresponsible to not also mention an important history of self-advocacy and activism in the area. From the struggles of Mexican and Mexican American families fighting to retain or regain their lands after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the Edcouch Elsa High School walkouts of 1968, the melon strikes of 1966, the onion strikes of 1979, and the present-day efforts of local community based non-profit organizations fighting for low-income communities throughout South Texas. In more recent years, colonia residents have successfully advocated for increased drainage and public lighting with local and state officials. Too often, low-income communities are also discussed and analyzed from deficit perspectives that often discount the assets, knowledge and cultural wealth found in these same communities. To speak of this geographic location without highlighting community strengths would be inappropriate.

According to the national Office of Migrant Education, Texas has the second highest number of migrant children eligible to participate in Migrant Education Programs (OME 2017)

in the country. At the same time, the Texas Education Agency (2017) indicates that more than 50 percent of all migrant students in the state are in the South Texas region. Currently, the eligibility requirements to participate in the Migrant Education Program state that a child must have moved with their families, or moved to later join their parents, across school district lines in search of agricultural work. Once qualified for the program, there is a 3-year eligibility period that is renewed each time a child makes another qualifying eligible move. It is estimated that there are approximately 360,000 children around the country that are eligible to participate in the Migrant Education Program (OME 2015).

Participants

The participants for this study will be current college students (18 and older) from migrant farm worker backgrounds that are presently enrolled in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at each of the two universities and who took on family responsibilities for their families at some point in their lives. The two universities are in deep South Texas along the US/Mexico border. One of the universities has two campuses and each of those campuses currently operates a CAMP grant. To participate in the College Assistance Migrant Program, students must be either US Citizens or Permanent Residents, and must have been either able to participate in the Migrant Education Program or have worked a minimum of 72 days in agricultural in the last 24 months. Because being a Permanent Resident or US Citizen is a prerequisite to participate in the program, this study did not seek participants nor jeopardize any students who might be DREAMERS. This study will also not seek the participation of students who are considered minors and under the age of eighteen.

The College Assistance Migrant Program was created in 1972 and according to the national HEP CAMP Association and the Office of Migrant Education, “CAMP assists students

in their first year of college with academic, personal, and financial support. CAMP serves approximately 2,400 migrant participants annually. Overall, nearly three-quarters of all CAMP students graduate with baccalaureate degrees," The Office of Migrant Education states the program, "assists students who are migratory or seasonal farmworkers (or children of such workers) enrolled in their first year of undergraduate studies at an IHE. The funding supports completion of the first year of studies. Competitive five-year grants for CAMP projects are made to IHEs or to nonprofit private agencies that cooperate with such institutions," (OME 2018). "Services include outreach to persons who are eligible, counseling, tutoring, skills workshops, financial aid stipends, health services, and housing assistance to eligible students during their first year of college. Limited follow-up services are provided to participants after their first year," (OME 2018).

Instrumentation

The research instruments for this study were created by the researcher in alignment with its primary research questions and include: the participant consent form, the initial demographic survey and the individual interview protocol. The development of these instruments was also guided by the researcher's experiential knowledge regarding the migrant lifestyle and the education of migrant children at multiple levels along the educational pipeline. A primary consideration in developing the instruments for this study was ensuring the safety and protection of all participants. A secondary consideration was their ability to capture student's perceptions about how they made sense of their family responsibilities during their college transition process. A final consideration was developing instruments that were open enough to allow for free-flowing conversation and deeper inquiry.

Initial Demographic Survey

The Initial Demographic Survey was developed with two key goals in mind. The first goal was to gather as much demographic, education and contact information on each of the potential participants. The second was to ascertain which of the potential participants had carried out one or more family responsibility while they were growing up. Because this study employs purposeful sampling, it was critical to identify which of the potential participants had carried out some family responsibility. The development of this instrument was informed by the researcher's experiential knowledge of the migrant lifestyle and as a practitioner in migrant education for many years.

The initial demographic survey was designed to gather information around three general domains: high school academic preparation, parent education levels and prior family responsibilities. Potential participants were asked about their high school graduation academic plans and any college hours they had earned as a way of gauging their academic preparation for college. They were also asked about their parent's education levels and whether they were first generation college students to understand the family's experiences with higher education environments. Thirdly, potential participants were asked which, if any, family responsibilities they carried out as children and when they first remembered taking these on. Finally, they were asked if they were willing to participate in the individual interviews and focus groups.

All initial demographic surveys were completed by current college students who were or had participated in the CAMP Project at their respective universities. All potential participants are from migrant farm worker families with varying year classification in college. Although most students were in or had recently completed their first full year at their respective universities, because of dual or concurrent enrollment college credits, some students had enough college

hours to be considered sophomores or juniors. Most of the initial demographic surveys were collected in person on a hard copy of the document. Some were collected through an electronic survey method.

Participation & Consent Form

A participation consent form was created to document participants agreement to participate in the individual interview. The form also informed them of the purpose of the research project and other important protocols. Participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without fear of repercussions. They were also informed that their identities would be protected, and that no identifiable information would be used during the final reporting of the findings. Participant and researcher expectations were also reviewed with the participants using this form. Participants were also reminded that their information would be safeguarded according to Michigan State University's research protocols. Finally, every participant was provided with the contact information of the researcher and the committee chair in case they had any questions or concerns at any point during the research process.

Individual Interview Protocol

The interview questions for this study were designed around three key domains: student perceptions of their family responsibilities, student's campus involvement and student's perceptions of their overall college transition process. The development of the questions was guided by the researcher's extensive experiential knowledge from many years in the migrant stream and the literature reviewed for this study. Maxwell (2005) suggests that researchers ought to employ their experiential knowledge during the research process instead of trying to suppress it. As a former migrant farm worker who took on several family responsibilities from the age of

seven years old, I have a unique lens through which to study this phenomenon. Furthermore, many years as a practitioner in migrant education, both in K-12 and higher education settings, helped to inform the development of the questions.

The development of the questions also relied greatly on the existing literature regarding widely accepted college transition frameworks. Astin (1993) suggests that student involvement on campus with faculty and peers is critical for academic and social development. To that end, questions were developed to understand this study's participant's level of involvement in their respective universities. Similarly, Schlossberg's (1984) transition frameworks highlights the importance of context during transition and therefore some questions were aimed at gauging this in the study's participants. It was particularly important to inquire whether and how the family responsibilities that these students took on for their families shaped the context in which their college transitions occurred. In some instances where students took on more family responsibilities after they entered college, the issue of context continued to be important into their college years.

Family Background Information

- Can you tell me about your family, where your parents are from, how many children are in your family, and where you fall in the order of siblings?
- Can you tell me about your migrant farm worker experiences? Where you travelled to, what crops or types of farms your family worked in, and overall how you think about your farm worker experience?

Student Perceptions of College Transition

- Have any of your other siblings attended college? If so, have they helped you navigate college up to now?
- What has been the most challenging part about transitioning to college?

- What has been the most helpful in transitioning to college?
- Overall, how effectively do you think you have transitioned to college?

Campus Student Involvement

- How often do you go to scheduled office hours with your professors?
- How often to you communicate with your professors outside of class and office hours?
- Are you part of any school clubs or organizations? If yes, which ones?

Perceptions of Family Responsibilities

- You indicated in your initial survey that you took on family responsibilities growing up. Can you tell me more about each of them and approximately how old you were when you first remember taking each of them on?
- Do you remember how you felt about taking on these responsibilities?
- Now that you are in college, do you continue to carry out these responsibilities? If so, which ones, to what degree and when do you make the time to do this?
- If not, is this something you thought about as you transitioned to university life? How did you make sense of those family responsibilities you could no longer carry out?
- Do you think these responsibilities or not being able to continue carrying them out has impacted your transition to college in any way? If so, how?
- Have you taken on new responsibilities after enrolling in college?

Data Gathering Procedures

The data gathering process for this study is guided by Creswell's (2007) data gathering circle. Following this approach will help expand our understanding of the college experiences and outcomes of college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds. Creswell's (2007) data gathering circle involves the following steps: "locating a site or an individual, gaining access and making rapport, sampling purposefully, collecting data, recording information, exploring field

issues, and storing data," (p. 117). A primary consideration informing all the procedures associated with this study is the safety and protection of all participants. All the appropriate precautions were and will continue to be taken to protect the identity and well-being of every participant. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of the participants, all Institutional Review Board processes have been adhered to. All the necessary paperwork and reviews will be conducted in accordance to MSU research policies and procedures.

IRB Approvals

Institutional Review Board Approvals were obtained from three different institutions. An initial IRB Approval was obtained by Michigan State University. Once the IRB had been approved by MSU, I then proceeded to request approval from two additional institutions of higher education. The first institution processed the IRB approval in a matter of weeks where the second institution took several months to approve the request. This delayed my ability to approach students with the Initial Demographic Survey. The need to obtain IRB approvals from each of the potential sites extended the research period as one institution took months to approve an already pre-approved IRB from the researchers' primary institution. This should serve as a word of caution to others considering carrying out similar research.

Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical consideration in this study is safeguarding and protecting all of the participants and the data they provided. As noted previously, this study was deemed to pose a minimal risk to participants. Yet, the authentic stories and experiences provided by the students demand that they not only be safeguarded but analyzed and presented according to a qualitative research process with integrity. This requires the following of all existing protocols and procedures to honor the stories and experiences of these students.

Strategies of Inquiry

Although the open-ended interviews were pre-structured and designed to gather a very specific set of data, the process through which these interviews were carried out employed a plática (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013; & Gonzalez & Portillos, 2012) approach to inquiry and data gathering. According to Guajardo & Guajardo (2013), plática is, "an expressive cultural form shaped by listening, inquiry, storytelling, and story making that is akin to a nuanced, multi-dimensional conversation," (p. 160). Plática is used in a way that honors and confers privilege to participant's stories rather than silencing or disregarding them. Guajardo & Guajardo (2013) indicate, "In our brand of research we use plática as a tool for collecting data; some data sets come as stories, as cuentos, or other narrative forms," (p. 161). They further argue that, "in our Mexican American cultural and historical context we are much more drawn to plática. It makes more sense, feels more real, and speaks to us in ways that helps us build relationships and community more respectfully," (p.163). Similarly, Gonzalez & Portillos (2012) describes plática as, "intimate conversations, popular conversations, and intellectual dialogue," (p. 19). They further argue that plática is useful and necessary to unbury and advance Chicana/o intellectual knowledge on theory, methods, cultural knowledge, civic participation, and the effects of the schooling process. Within the migrant farm worker community, many of the conversations regarding the matters of the day are understood through pláticas.

The plática approach to inquiry served a number of different purposes. Firstly, it helped to help co-construct space with the participants and to explore the questions as we got to know each other (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2013). It was often throughout this plática approach that the participant and I learned how interconnected we were. On one occasion, I learned that one of the participants is from the same small community in Mexico as my family. On a separate occasion, a student referenced the profound impact a university residential program had on our higher

education aspirations. I had helped to create that program almost ten years prior. Another participant shared that he attended the same elementary school I had attended in the southmost point of our city and near the banks of the Rio Grande. These observations could only have happened through a plática approach to inquiry and this makes the data gathering process stronger.

Research Memos

As an integral part of the data collection process, detailed research memos were kept to carefully document each step of the data collection process. Many of these memos were drafted the same day of either my interaction with participants or any gatekeepers throughout the process. These memos were critical for a number of reasons. Firstly, they helped to document the process and communications through which I was able to gain access to the study's participants. Although my initial approach to data gathering had been developed around a certain set of procedural assumptions, I quickly learned that flexibility and reflexibility would be of tremendous importance. Flexibility was important both in my interactions with the various gatekeeper's and when working with potential participant's interview schedules. Several students indicated in their initial surveys that they were interested in participating in the interview but later became unresponsive to email communications. As a researcher, I made certain that they had every opportunity to participate but did not push the issue with them. All throughout the study, it was made clear to all potential participants that their participation was entirely voluntary. Therefore, even those students that indicated that they were interested in participating were invited and informed about any available interview times but were not pushed to participate beyond informational communications.

Data Analysis

Although many researchers see research design as only what happens prior to gathering the

data, Maxwell (2005) suggests that it is important to consider the approach to data analysis at this when designing one's research. According to Creswell (2006), "Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text, data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion," (p. 148). The data will initially be sorted into larger categories based on the targeted dimensions from the structured pláticas and other instrumentation. Once the initial data has been sorted, it will then be coded into themes and sub-themes if needed. The researcher will then conduct a count of how many times each of the themes emerge in the data. A thematic analysis process will be followed with all the data and field memos collected during the entire research process.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the research design for this study and the frameworks that inform its development. I have introduced a qualitative research design that relies on CRT and LatCrit to examine the higher education experiences of current migrant farmworker college students. More directly, I have laid out how utilizing a CRT lens and the critical race methodology of counter story, helps explore how current migrant farmworker college students make sense of their family responsibilities during the college transition process. Traditional college transition models (Tinto, 1993; & Astin, 1993) have promoted a college transition process that has been vigorously critiqued (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Nunez, 2009; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Yosso, 2005; & Atinassi, 1989) for not considering the experiences of minoritized groups, including migrant farmworker students. Those who have critiqued traditional higher education transition models have also called for more qualitative methods in this scholarship that are able to study the experiences of minoritized students as a much more dynamic process.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

My aim in this dissertation has been to examine how current college students from migrant farmworker backgrounds make sense of their family responsibilities during the college transition process. In this chapter, I provide an analysis of all the collected data along with the major findings. I begin by providing an overview of the data gathering process and a review of the completed research instruments that were collected throughout the study. I subsequently offer a brief description of the participants and outreach efforts. I conclude with a qualitative analysis of how eighteen current migrant college students reflected on their lived experiences to make sense of their family responsibilities.

My work in this chapter is guided by a critical race analysis approach that borrows from the critical race methodology of counter storytelling (Delgado-Bernal & Solórzano, 2001; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2005; Huber, 2008; & Yosso & Solórzano, 2010). As part of this analysis, focused attention is given to how participants' unique lived experiences and stories tell a collective counter story that challenges a deficit-based narrative in which their lived experiences have often been used as a way of explaining their historically lower academic achievement. The data review and findings for this study are presented in narrative form based on a qualitative data analysis of the entire individual structured plática transcript. Although not included as part of the initial inquiry, I also share three key unanticipated findings that hold important implications for future research with this student population.

The findings in this chapter contribute to a greater collective understanding of how migrant farm worker students make sense of their family responsibilities both prior to and during the college transition process. Higher education literature has not been able to substantially

explain the college transition process of these students or capture their experiences in higher education settings. By centering their voices and lived experiences, my aim is to not only expand their presence in higher education discourse but to also assert their lived experiences as important within the broader academic record.

Overview of Data Gathering Procedures

Before presenting my analysis, it is important to provide an overview of the data collection process and the data that was gathered throughout this study. After all the necessary Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocols were approved at each of the respective institutions, the data collection process began with individual communications to the CAMP Program Directors at each of the different research sites. These initial communications were used to arrange in-person meetings. The individual meetings with program directors served two important functions. First, they helped to establish a relationship with these directors. Secondly, these meetings were helpful to gauge and discuss the best method to communicate directly with the CAMP students. Each of the respective program directors provided suggestions for reaching out to their students and each of their strategies had varying degrees of success.

The data collection process spanned across three academic semesters. The first attempt to gather data was in the Spring semester of 2018. Because of delays with IRB approvals at one of the sites, the data collection could not be initiated until late in the Spring semester. This limited my opportunity to meet with potential participants in person during the academic semester. I was only able to email students asking them to complete the on-line electronic survey. Unfortunately, this approach yielded a total of eight responses from the three CAMP Programs of which only five agreed to participate in the individual structured plática.

During this same time period, several migrant college migrant students had learned about my research through my family. During the early part of the summer, I contacted two migrant college students that had just completed their first year of school at the local community college. Both students had been migrating their entire lives and both had taken on diverse family responsibilities while growing up. After explaining my research and reviewing what their participation would entail, both agreed to participate in my study. Both participants were over the age of eighteen, out of school, on summer break, and both reviewed and signed participation consent forms.

Early in the fall semester of 2019, I attempted several new approaches for student outreach. I began by scheduling lunch meetings with students to introduce my research and to collect individual demographic surveys. Through this approach, I was able to connect with five more students. I followed the lunch meetings by coordinating with the various site directors to arrange a time to visit with students during their regularly scheduled monthly meetings in the middle of fall 2019. These meetings were extremely helpful for both informing students of my research and collecting demographic surveys. Still, although I was able to collect many demographic surveys, many students declined to participate in the individual structured plática. I continued holding individual structured pláticas with students into the early spring semester of 2019.

The two primary instruments for this study were the initial demographic survey and the individual structured plática protocol. Both instruments along with the participation consent forms can be found in the appendices of this dissertation. It is very important to note that all the participants have been assigned pseudonyms and the places to which they migrated and worked

have been altered or removed entirely to avoid having any identifying information in the reporting of the findings. In the following pages, I will provide a summary of both instruments.

Initial Demographic Surveys

The initial demographic survey was designed to accomplish two primary objectives. The first was to gather basic demographic and contact information from potential participants. The second was to collect important student and family information to help me identify which respondents had carried out some family responsibility growing up. I relied heavily on my experiential knowledge as a former migrant farmworker and experienced migrant educator to design some of this instrument's questions. I was particularly interested in whether students had taken on any family responsibilities in their youth, at what age they took them on, and when they had last migrated in search of agricultural work. I also attempted to collect as much information about educational backgrounds and farmworker experiences of both the parents and potential participants.

The initial demographic surveys were collected in two different ways. The first method was a paper method that was handed out to students on multiple visits to different research sites. The CAMP projects at each of the institutions had monthly meetings with students as part of their on-going student support mechanisms. The second method was an electronic survey method that was initially attempted but that did not prove to be effective in generating responses from potential participants. Virtually all the initial demographic surveys were collected during the monthly meetings at each of the respective sites. Most of the individual demographic surveys came from the two CAMP projects that are part of the same higher education institution. The third institution only resulted in two completed initial demographic surveys and one completed individual structured plática.

All three sites were visited on multiple occasions for data gathering purposes. In each of the sites, I took the guidance of the respective program director in deciding which outreach approach might be most effective at their site. In one instance, the program director requested that I draft an email to all the students explaining my research and inviting them to complete an electronic version of the initial demographic survey. This strategy produced the least amount of student responses and completed individual demographic surveys. At the two other sites, I was invited to present to students during regularly scheduled monthly meetings. This strategy was the most effective and yielded the greatest number of completed initial demographic surveys.

The data gathering process produced a total of ninety-one initial demographic surveys. Of the total number of surveys, twenty-seven participants self-identified as male and sixty-four self-identified as female. Furthermore, sixty-one of the ninety-one participants, or sixty-seven percent, had worked in agriculture. Of all the respondents that indicated working in the fields, five years old was the earliest anyone remembered working in the fields. Seventy-six of the ninety-one or eighty-four percent indicated that they consider themselves to be first-generation college students. Thirty-three of ninety-one, or thirty-six percent, indicated that they had taken some form of Dual Credit or Concurrent Enrollment college hours in high school. Of all the collected initial demographic surveys, thirty-three of ninety-one, or thirty-six percent, agreed to participate in the structured pláticas.

The completed initial demographic surveys revealed that many students declined participation in the individual structured pláticas. Program directors and gatekeepers at each of the respective sites were perplexed about the low participation rates. Another revelation, which became apparent very early on in the data gathering process, was that a significant number of respondents indicated that they were willing to participate in the individual structured pláticas

but were not willing to participate in the focus group discussions. The numbers were significant enough that I decided to remove the question to avoid further risking the participation of other potential participants. Nevertheless, I did follow up and attempted to schedule individual pláticas with those students that had agreed to participate in this component of the data gathering process. At the same time, because it was evident that students were hesitant to participate in the focus groups, it did not make sense to keep that component of the study.

Individual Structured Pláticas

Of the thirty-three participants that indicated a willingness to participate in the individual structured pláticas, only thirty-one indicated that they had taken on some family responsibility during their childhood. Using purposeful sampling, this group of thirty-one students was targeted for an individual structured plática. In the end, a total of eighteen individual pláticas were conducted and collected. All thirty-one of the potential participants were contacted personally on multiple occasions.

The individual structured pláticas were confirmed and set up by the interviewer with support from the program. The support from each of the respective sites varied. In some instances, the support entailed helping secure meeting space for the individual structured pláticas. In other instances, they helped contact students whose emails had returned as undeliverable. The support was strongest at one research site and the student participation was also greater at this location. On numerous occasions, I made plans with either the program director or other key staff to be at the CAMP Offices available for drop-in visits from students. The success of this approach varied. There were days when no students would visit with me and there were times when I would have multiple students drop in for their individual structured plática.

Signed Consent Forms

Every participant in this study signed and received a copy of the consent form for their own records. They were also reminded of the study's purpose and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, even after they had completed the interview. They were provided with both a copy of the consent form and my business card in case they had any questions or concerns about the study. All but one consent form were received in person immediately preceding the individual structured plática. One of the participants indicated that she had recently had dental work and that she was not able to speak clearly, but she was very interested and participating in the study. She indicated that she would be willing to submit written responses to my questions. I agreed to this method and the participant sent a signed consent form electronically along with her responses.

Participants and Student Outreach

Prior to analyzing the data, it is important to present a description of this study's participants. Sixteen of the eighteen participants were enrolled in their first year of college or had recently completed their first year of college. Two of these students had learned about my study from my family members and were interested in participating. Yet, they were enrolled in a local community college that did not operate a CAMP Program and where there are currently no migrant-specific support systems. Because it was the summer months and both individuals were over the age of eighteen, I decided to collect their individual structured pláticas. Both were informed of the study's goals, signed a participation consent form and were provided copies of the form for their records. Two of the participants that were present when I collected the original demographic surveys during one of the monthly meetings and agreed to be interviewed were CAMP mentors who had gone through the program two years ago. Because more than one-third

of all participants had some Dual Credit or Concurrent Enrollment college hours, student's classification did not tell the full story. In fact, several of the participants had completed an associate degree while still enrolled in High School. This made it challenging to distinguish these students from the other respondents. Yet, because these students had taken on numerous family responsibilities growing up, had experienced the college transition process with the support of the CAMP Program and were currently enrolled college students, I decided to also collect their individual pláticas.

Data Analysis

This data analysis was conducted in a two-step process that reflects the open and close-ended questions from the individual structured pláticas. I first analyzed the close-ended responses from the individual structured plática that were intended to gather participant's perceptions of their college transitions process and subsequent campus involvement. Secondly, I examined the interview transcripts to analyze participant responses using a critical analysis approach to better understand how participants made sense of their family responsibilities during and prior to their college transition process.

Campus Involvement

A great deal of literature (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993; & Tinto, 1993) has found that student involvement on campus, particularly with faculty and peers, enhances both student transition and persistence in higher education. Therefore, in this dissertation, I aimed to capture student involvement of migrant students with their faculty and peers. To gauge campus involvement, participants were asked whether and how often they attended office hours with faculty, whether they collaborated with faculty outside of class on research projects and whether they were active in any student organizations.

A review of the data found that participants were considerably more involved with their peers than they were with faculty. Ten of the eighteen participants indicated that they were a part of at least one student organization on campus outside of their involvement with CAMP. In two instances, students were involved with as many as three different organizations. By contrast, only six of the eighteen participants indicated that they regularly visited with faculty during office hours and only three responded that they collaborated with faculty outside of class. Most students indicated that they preferred to communicate with faculty by email rather than visiting them during office hours.

Table 3: Migrant Student Campus Involvement

	Student Organizations	Frequent Office Hours	Faculty Collaborations
YES	10	6	3
NO	8	12	15

Participants were also asked how they were doing academically at the time of the plática and all but one provided what they thought their grade point averages were at that time. The self-reported grade point averages were all between 2.8 and 4.0. Contrasted with the relatively low involvement with faculty members either during office hours or outside of class, most students seemed to be excelling in their academic performance. However, it is important to mention the many resources that are provided to most of these students through the CAMP Program.

Perceptions of College Transition Process

To capture their overall perceptions regarding their transition to college, participants were asked to consider which factors were the most challenging and most helpful during their college transition process. They were also asked to share how well they thought they had transitioned into higher education. Ten of eighteen students indicated that adjusting to the demands of college proved to be most difficult during their transition to college. Conversely, eleven of the sixteen

students that participated in the CAMP Program considered it the most helpful during their college transition. Understanding these perceptions of college transition might be helpful for either the enhancement or development of migrant-specific support services at their institutions.

Most Challenging During College Transition

Adjusting to college demands was identified as the most challenging factor in their transition to college by ten of the eighteen participants. Within this category were things like time management and the fast pace of college work. Three students identified college-level writing as the most challenging factor during their transition to college. In all three instances where students pointed to college-level writing as their greatest challenge, they almost immediately associated their writing woes with a perceived lack of preparation from their respective high schools.

Table 4: Most Challenging During College Transition

	Adjusting College Demands	English/Writing	Financial	Leaving Home
University (16)	10	2	1	2
Comm. College (2)		1	1	
Note: One participant indicated that nothing had been challenging during their transition.				

Two students indicated that being far away from family was the most challenging in their transition to college. This was especially true for students who lived several hours from their homes and were staying in dormitory housing. Finally, two students identified financial issues as most challenging to their college transition. Regardless of what participants identified as most challenging during their college transition, they often pointed out and reminded me that they were first-generation college students and that their families had limited experience with college. Furthermore, in cases where participants were the eldest in their families, they often indicated that they felt the pressure of doing well in school to set the example for their younger siblings.

One participant voiced that not only did he feel the pressure of doing well but also felt that if he failed in college, he would be setting all his younger siblings up to fail.

Most Helpful During College Transition

Of the sixteen participants that participated in the CAMP Program, eleven indicated that it was the most helpful in supporting their transition to college. Students referenced the early CAMP Orientation, identification of resources, reminders of important dates, peer mentoring, creation of a safe space on campus, life-skills course, support with scholarships, and other services as being critical to their transition. Of the various components mentioned, the peer-mentoring was referenced most by participants.

Table 5: Most Helpful During College Transition

	CAMP	Family	Financial Aid	Peers
University (16)	11	4	0	1
Comm. College (2)			2	
*Note: Both community college students indicated financial aid as most helpful.				

Several studies have been carried out examining the success of the CAMP Program (Willison & Jang, 2009; & Escamilla & Guerrero Treviño, 2014). The findings in this dissertation further bolster the impact that the CAMP Program is having on migrant students. Some of these same studies have suggested that the success of programs like CAMP have the potential to help develop similar college retention programs for other Chicanx/Latinx students around the country. Still, even within the context of a program that provides students with so many resources and benefits, participants expressed challenges with college-level writing and with adapting to the fast pace of the university.

Interestingly, both community college students indicated that Financial Aid was the most helpful in their transition to higher education transition. It is important to re-state that there are currently no migrant-specific support systems available to these students at their community

college. They also both indicated that they did not know how they could have afforded to attend college without this financial support because their parents could not afford to send them. One student indicated that the financial aid money helped in purchasing several very expensive books that her family could not otherwise afford. The other student emphasized that without financial aid, he would not afford the very expensive mechanical tools that are required for his auto technician program.

Family support was another factor identified by several participants as being the most helpful to their college transitions. Several students indicated that their parents, who had limited formal educations, had been extremely helpful in supporting their transition to college. In one instance, a student indicated that their family decided to stop migrating entirely to support them while in college. Finally, after considering all the challenges and supports, all participants believed that they had transition well into college. Again, it is critical to point out that most of the participants counted with the support of the CAMP program.

Making Sense of Family Responsibilities

To better understand how participants in this study made sense of their family responsibilities during the college transition process, it is important to also consider sensemaking of responsibilities along the trajectory of their migrant experiences. In fact, I argue that for migrant students who have been making sense of their family responsibilities for a greater part of their lives, it is impossible to separate how they make sense of their family responsibilities during the college transition process from how they made sense of these same responsibilities at other times in their lives. To better understand their approach to sensemaking of family responsibility, I examined the data to study how participants made sense of their family responsibilities pre-college, as they applied to college and now that they are enrolled in college.

Pre-College

When making sense of their pre-college family responsibilities, most respondents indicated that they either fully accepted or at least understood why their help was so important for their families. Even when three of the students recalled experiencing some degree of frustration with not being able to do some of the things other children were able to do at that time, they almost immediately stated that they understood and that they were not upset or resentful. However, the reasons behind their acceptance or understanding varied slightly among the participants.

Several participants pointed to either witnessing how hard their parents worked in the fields or to a particularly critical moment in their parent's lives as a way of making sense of the pre-college family responsibilities they took on. Ximena, the eldest of four children who began migrating at a very young age, for example, recalls:

> When I was about 7 or 8 years old, my parents would go to work, and I would have to stay home and watch my little sisters and brother. Then later when my mom started going to school, I also had to stay at home because she needed to go to class and my father had to go work. My parents did not have enough money for daycare so I would stay home and watch them for the day. My mom would leave us enough food for the day, but I would watch them. I felt like it was a way of helping my parents and mostly my mother. I remember when she was going to school, she was also pregnant with my younger brother. She went to college but did not finish school. I knew that she was going through things with school and that her body was going through changes, so I felt like I just had to help her out. I sometimes felt like I wanted to go play, but I also realized that I had to help her out.

For Ximena, that moment, which revolved mostly around her mother, became a critical instance in which she realized the importance of her help to the family. Similarly, when her mother fell very ill and could not travel north with the family in order to receive medical treatments, Valentina remembers stepping in to fill that void during their migrant summer journey into the mid-west. She is the middle child of three siblings and has been migrating for as

long as she can remember. When asked for clarification regarding her statement that the experience of traveling without her mother was overwhelming, Valentina elaborated:

> Yes, very overwhelming, because it was like a whole bunch of things added to like my to do list. Like besides of me working, like summers, I would work like 15 hours a day, 14 hours a day, and to get home you know because my little sister would work too with my auntie, so we would all work, so to get home, there is laundry to do, there are dishes to do, or when I have classes to do too, because I was taking summer classes, so it's like you have all of these things, like when are you going to have time. So, it was like a little overwhelming. Now, I am going to say that my little sister, she did help with a lot of things when she had time, because you know, she's small, she works, she gets home tired she says, and I understand.

Although Valentina was clearly overwhelmed from assuming her mother's role during their migration, she understood it had to be done. Otherwise, her family might not be able to go work and earn the money that they rely on to survive in Mexico during the winter months. In other cases, participants adopted an 'if not me, then who' approach to making sense of their family responsibilities. Lucia, the oldest of three children who has been migrating her entire life, recalled a moment when her parents were working very long hours while she cared for her two younger siblings to help her family.

> I remember when my parents used to work in Greenville, I would take care of them, I would have to cook for them, I would have to do a bunch of stuff. So, it's like, we would rarely see our parents, so I'd just be like the mom kind of person. At times I felt like the mom but, I wouldn't feel bad about it, but I would feel like well I have to do it, because if I don't do it, then who's going to do it?

Lucia's 'if not me, then who,' approach to sense-making of her pre-college family responsibilities was a common response from participants. A similar, but slightly different approach to sense-making was taken by other participants that indicated being aware at a young age that at some point, they were going to have to work. This feeling of acceptance or resignation that they would eventually need to contribute in some way for the family was also widespread in the participant responses. Mario, the eldest of five boys who migrated for the first

time at the age of eleven with his grandfather after his mother and father divorced, recalls this awareness.

> Well, I thought I was…I did not think much of it, because I mean, because I thought I grew up poor, so all I knew is everybody worked in the family at a certain age, I kind of knew that at a certain age, I was going to go to work, I had that expectation like when you turn 10 or 11, they were going to send me to work, I already knew that it was just me waiting for that age so I could start working.

In reflecting on their pre-college family responsibilities, participants addressed what at first glance might seem like a glaring and complicated contradiction. On the one hand, participants expressed their disdain for the heavy worked that they carried out in the fields and recalled the physical toll that it took on their young bodies. They did not romanticize the very difficult labor or the unfavorable conditions in which they worked. On the other hand, some of these same participants mentioned that they were grateful for having grown up as migrant farm workers. To be clear, none of them indicated that they enjoyed the difficult labor, but their responses help to unpack this apparent contradiction. Alma, who is the youngest child in her family and began working at the age of eleven recalled her first time working in agriculture. She specifically recounted how her mother often worked double time to ensure that they would both keep up with the more experienced adult workers.

> The first days were really harsh, I cried, I cried a lot, because people don't realize but when you are hours in the fields, in the hot summer, my skin was burning, and there are people who have experience and they are way over there and you have to catch up to them, so I remember my mom would be like…I am going to…te voy a revasar/I am going to pass you…I am going to do all of this row, and then I will come back to you, because the first season, I worked with my parents, and my brother and my sister also worked there, so that's what she would do, revasarme/pass me and then she would come back to me and then go again. She was working hard for me to learn and to catch up, the first days it was really harsh, your feet hurt because your standing, que la escalare/the ladder, cortar las uvas/cut the grapes, llevar la caja a la caretilla/carry the box to the wheelbarrow, pesado es muy pesado/heavy it is very heavy, and I am a little girl, I can't do all of that stuff.

Yet, later during our plática, she also recounted several life lessons that she learned from some of these extremely difficult moments. She spoke very proudly of a time when she defied a teacher in their receiving state who had required all the children to bring one person to the school job fair but had insisted to Alma that her parents and other migrant farm workers could not participate in the job fair because they were not professionals.

> So, when we went to the job fair, and all of us, our parents got out at four because we asked them, they usually get out at six or seven, but we asked them to, they got out at four, the job fair was coming in, and I told all our friend from el campito/the migrant camp, we brought our parents, we were like, you might not see this as a professional job, but this is a job and this is what I have, because I have no one else but my dad and my mom, because we come from far away, we don't have no one else but them, and their job is something that I am not ashamed of, so we had a whole station where it was full of migrant workers, and they brought some of the grapes that they worked with, and they talked about how to manage the plantation, how to cut them, how they are processed all of that, and it was funny because even though the teacher made fun of us and was criticizing us at the beginning, that booth had the most amount of people, because the children were fond about the process and the fruits and all that, they wanted to know all of that, so I was like, you know, don't judge me, I am not afraid, I am not afraid, and I am not ashamed that my parents are migrant workers. And I remember that day, and I proved her wrong, and I was like yes Dad!

This was a defining moment for Alma that helped her make sense of not only her family responsibilities but in some ways of her overall migrant experience as well. Like Alma, Violeta also recalled her experiences working in the fields. She is the youngest of three children who has migrated her entire life and is the only sibling that has pursued higher education.

> There were times when it was so bad, that I told myself, maybe if I don't drink any water, and I just dehydrate, that would give me an excuse to go to the hospital, and not work…like it was that bad.

Although it might be challenging for those who have never experienced the pain of working in the fields to follow Violeta's thought process, she was not the only participant that recounted similar stories of aching backs, burning skin, and tearful eyes. Yet, like Alma, Violeta

also spoke of the strength that she had learned as a result of these challenging experiences and despite those who have doubted her in the past.

> In all honesty, I hope that your research will be an eye opener for a lot of people not to put Hispanics down for one, and not to doubt in migrant students, there are a lot of migrant students that are very serious in school, I even heard this girl that literally turned down her internship for her career to study more, and I am like you go girl, I really hope that society does not have doubts in Hispanics, especially migrant students, I had a lot of teachers in my past who were very criticizing of migrant students, they did not believe in us, even some Hispanics in my own neighborhood, some of them did not believe that I could do it, and I showed them, I hope that they don't doubt us because we are going, we are coming for you, I just hope that more migrant students realize that just because you are a migrant does not mean that you are any less than any other person, it's more like a privilege to have been a migrant student, at least that's the way I think about it, I think it is a privilege to be a migrant student, because if it was not for my experience traveling between states, working in the fields, I would not be the person that I am today.

Again, it is critical to recognize that Alma's and Violeta's disdain for agricultural work can co-exist with their pride in the way their lived experiences have shaped them. It is equally important to recognize that in making sense of their family responsibilities, in almost every case, the participants spoke of their experiences from an assets and not deficit-based perspectives. Recalling her experiences translating for her mother, Luna presented a unique viewpoint. While most of the participants discussed this responsibility by listing the tasks they carried out, Luna connected it to the strengthening of the relationship with her mother.

> I actually never thought of it being odd or weird, but now that I think about it, I was helping my own mother, like it is so odd that a little girl is there like helping her mom and things like that, but it is a neat experience, it is very nice…Because it connected me and my mom more, you know, because I was like I was helping her say things, I was her voice, you could say.

Regardless of the pre-college family responsibility participants took on, they made sense of them within the context of an active migrant lifestyle where the agricultural work that they or their parents carried out were important markers. Making sense of responsibilities in this context, most participants accepted, understood or resigned themselves to the fact that their help was

necessary for the family given their circumstances. At the same time, they overwhelmingly opted to highlight the strengths and pride that came from having carried out these responsibilities while not entirely discounting any of the challenges.

Family Responsibilities & College Selection

Though not included as part of the initial inquiry, the very first individual structured plática revealed that family responsibilities were a deciding factor in where the participant applied to and ultimately decided to attend college. This prompted me to ask all the subsequent participants whether their family responsibilities had either been a consideration or a deciding factor on their college selection. Of the eighteen participants, eleven indicated that being able to continue helping their families played an important role in their college selection. This finding complicates Tinto's (1993) notion of family separation. Although Tinto (1993) discusses family separation in the context of college transition, the fact that for more than half of the participants, family responsibilities were either consideration or deciding factors merits further attention when studying Chicanx/Latinx or other minoritized students who have taken on family responsibilities in their pre-college years.

The consideration participants gave to the wellbeing of their families during the college selection process also complicates Schlossberg's (2012) notion of impact and context in her individuals in transition model. In making their college selections most of the participants were not only concerned with the impact of college selection on them but on their families as well. Whether they were concerned with providing direct support to their parents or siblings, how they made sense their family responsibilities shaped the context of their transition. This was the case with Gustavo who is the youngest of twelve children and has been migrating his entire life. He decided to stay close to home to help his parents in any way that he could.

> Well, mainly because of my parents. They have done a lot for us, for all twelve of us, and well I mean the little bit that we can do to help them out, I think it will make them happy. Well, I actually don't like getting separated from my parents too, because I am the youngest one too, you know, and I just, I can't leave them alone, you know, they're my family and they've helped me throughout a lot, they've pushed me to go to college. They tell me to keep studying because they don't want me to be doing what they are doing.

Many of the participants that decided to stay close to their families had been accepted into and had the opportunity to enroll in other universities. Yet, a sense of responsibility and concern for their families heavily influenced their decisions to stay. Catalina is the middle child of three and decided to stay close to her parents although both of her other siblings left the area to attend college.

> I had other options, I could have gone too, I got accepted to several universities, but I did not go, I was thinking of, I guess further ahead, in case if anything happened, who is going to help my mom, who is going to help my dad, so I decided to stay here, and dicho y hecho/and as luck would have it, like they do need somebody and I am glad I did because I don't know who they would be asking for help.

Catalina's father recently became very ill and she indicated that she was glad she decided to stay close because she was now able to help her parents in these difficult times. Like Catalina, other students recounted stories of other family members being sick, of wanting to support their younger siblings as they completed their education and numerous other reasons why it was important for them to select a college close to family.

Nayeli is the oldest of three children and experienced several instances in her school district where she believed that her family was treated unfairly because of their migrant status. She recalls an incident where she was denied Advanced Placement courses because she arrived later in the school year and all of the slots in the course had been used up. This happened to her family despite federal statutes that migrant farm worker children should not be penalized in any way because of their circumstances. Like other students, Nayeli is very close with her family and they were a very important consideration in her college selection. She often represented the interests of her parents

during school functions and teacher-parent meetings.

> "So, I put all my acceptance letters and I was like what school do I want to go to? And my sister was with me. And then she was like, but if you go here, how are you going to make it to my wrestling, because she is a wrestler. She was like how are you going to come to my meets, and I was like oh she is so right. And that night, I sat down and I was like how am I not going to be there for my sister's wrestling meets? And she is really good. Like this past year, she made it to regionals, but they broke her arm during one of the matches. She has the potential to go really far. And I am always there for her, for everything. Like this past week, she lost her first match, she was undefeated, and she lost her first match. It was just me and my mom, right. She started crying in the restroom, and I was comforting her. And I was like, what would I have done if I was not here for her. If I had gone away for school. And then my brother has power lifting matches. And I was like, how am I going to miss all these meets, all this stuff? You know? It's like I am going to miss an entire year of their lives."

Cabrera & Nasa (2000) suggest that "Taken as a whole the, the literature on college choice depicts decisions to go to college as a by-product of a three-stage process, which begins as early as seventh grade, if not earlier, and ends when the student enrolls in a postsecondary institution. In this process, parents, middle schools, high schools and a student's characteristics are key to developing plans and aspirations towards college, securing the necessary qualifications, applying to college, and enrolling," (p. 17). Yet, the lived experiences of these migrant students complicate the idea of a linear and neat college selection process.

Family Responsibilities in College

The data suggest that family responsibilities either stayed about the same or decreased significantly for most participants. Very few participants took on new family responsibilities after enrolling in college. For most students that took on additional responsibilities while in college it was usually because they now understood more well versed in the English technical language and could help their parents with more complex documents like health insurance paperwork. In other cases, the participants were also now able to drive a vehicle and were therefore relied on more by their parents to help with errands or transport their siblings. Yet, in one occasion a participant took on a new responsibility helping her father begin a small business:

> "He's trying to start a company. With that, he does not have the money for the right help. So, as far as accounting, I have to do it. So that's just another big one that I have to do. Because I took accounting in high school. And I know it's not the same, I know a little more or less what they are talking about and I set up the spreadsheets, I take down the worker's, or like not our workers, but some people that help once in a while and I take down their hours of work, the pay that they are getting and I put it down in the payroll. The expenses within the company. This is new since I started with college."

In situations where responsibilities decreased significantly, it was at the insistence from parents that students focus entirely on school. Thus, when making sense of family responsibilities as college students, participants generally did so in the context of their new demands as college students under one of the two conditions. Nevertheless, though most participants fell under one of these conditions, there were noticeable variations in the sense-making process. Several participants indicated that they now saw their success in college as an added dimension to their family responsibilities. For example, Mario recounted how as the oldest child he has always paved the way for his siblings and that now he feels the pressure of succeeding in college so that they follow in his footsteps.

> I feel like, a different role, my mom always says you have to succeed in college so that your brothers will follow you, I always have that pressure, if I fail, I am setting everyone up to fail, you know what I mean, I have to succeed, I have to…My mom always said, if you succeed, your brothers will follow you, they might do something better or at least they will continue to college and they will graduate college.

In another instance, a participant felt a sense of guilt for not having a job to help contribute financially to her family but also realized that she needed all the time she could get to study in order to maintain her grades. Of all participants, she was the only student who exhibited a sense of what Piorkowski (1983) discusses as survivors' guilt in college students. Carolina was clearly troubled with the decision of whether to work now to help her family in the short-run or focus on her education so that she might be better able to help them in the future.

> Because, I don't know, like, because they work so hard yet I am over here not really working on getting money, when they went to like, I don' t know, they have been through a lot just to get money, and I am over here not working to get money…you know what I

mean?

Like Carolina, only one student indicated that she used going home to visit with family as a sort of survival strategy to remain in school. Like many of the Native American students in Waterman's (2012) study that used to go home as a college survival strategy, so did Julia, who is a transnational migrant farmworker student.

> "Being able to see them every other week for five months. And I get a re-assurance that I am doing the right thing. Because I sometimes wonder if I should have gone to college in our receiving state. Whenever I call them, they ask me how things are going, and reassure me that everything will be fine. And for me it's not fine because we are far away. I can't stop going to Mexico. That is what keeps me going. I need it, but then sometimes I don't want to go home because coming back is like starting all over. Paque me iba/why did I go home. I don't know if I am the only one that feels that way, but."

In some instances, participants found themselves having to explain the new demands of college life to their parents, most of whom had never attended college. Valeria recalls the challenges of trying to bridge that gap with her parents.

> They are very different, but también/also I don't think they understand, my dad yes, like oh you have homework, and he does not do much of the cleaning, but he's like oh tienes tarea es importante/you have homework it's important, and he wants me to go to college, to do greater things, but, my mom she's like still, eh, iffy about it, no this is more important, I'm like once you get married, you have to do this, you're not going to know, but I can learn, once ya that happens, but first I have to finish this paper, because if I don't finish this paper, I am going to flunk…like saying no, oh I can't go to that party, I have to do this, and they will get mad at me, they will be like why, or tambien/also, with the cleaning stuff, puedes limpiar la casa/can you clean the house, I'm like I can't, I have to do my homework, and they get mad, and I am like you go do my homework and I will clean, and they say, no, do your homework, so I am like oh my gosh, I am like please.

The pressure that Mario felt to succeed in order to set the right example for his younger siblings, the angst Carolina felt in deciding whether to work to help the family financially and the challenges Valeria faced in bridging the college gap provides a glimpse into some of the external issues that migrant college students often deal with. Yet, the views into these student's lives sit in stark contrast to broader higher education research which most often relies on very large national data sets, in which students like Mario, Carolina, and Valeria tend to get lost.

Significant Unanticipated Findings

Throughout the course of this study, several important findings were revealed that were not part of the original line of inquiry. Yet, because they speak to the experiences of some migrant college students, and potentially other students at these research sites, it is important to highlight them here. These unanticipated findings could potentially be quite consequential and present very intriguing lines of inquiry for future academic research.

Transnational Migrant Farmworking College Students

The first of these findings is that three of this study's participants indicated that they were transnational migrant farmworkers. One of the participants' family ultimately moved to south Texas but the other two are still transnational migrants today. Transnational migrants are those who have homes in more than one country and whose lives play out in two different societies and according to the different norms of those respective societies. Three of this study's participants indicated that for most of their lives, they spent approximately six months in Mexico and the other six months in the receiving states to which they migrated. Their families would migrate from their hometowns in Mexico directly to their respective receiving states in the mid-west. So unlike migrant students that travel between different locations in the United States, and receive their entire education in English, unless they participate in bilingual education programs, transnational migrants spend half of their year learning entirely in English and the other half learning entirely in Spanish.

This transnational migration adds so many more layers to the study of migrant farm worker children and could become an entirely different study in the future. These students receive half of their instruction in English and half of their instruction in Spanish, and yet still had to demonstrate mastery in both languages in two different countries. According to the participants, this really became an issue during the high school years when internationally

misaligned curriculum became problematic for the accumulation of high school credits required to graduate. Although, Valentina recalled that there were also issues during her elementary years.

> There was a time when there was an issue. I remember I was in elementary. It was like when the flu was going around, the influenza virus and stuff, they would like tell us if we had our vaccines and I remember one time, like they made me, because I did not have my vaccine, and they would not let me into school unless I went out to get a vaccine because there were these rumors because up there, you hardly see any Mexican people or Hispanic or Latinos, so and our school is very small, it is K-12, so there's like a total of 300 kids, so we were known as you know the Mexican kids, oh the Mexicans, they are bringing the virus, oh the Mexicans are bringing the flu, oh she's a Mexican, I bet you she does not have her vaccine, so I remember the principal call my parents, made sure that I went to get my vaccine, or else I was not going to be permitted to go to school without my vaccine like the flu shot.

In discussing this issue of transnational migration, the students insisted that there were a lot more students in their situation, but they all don't get in to CAMP. As a way of highlighting how many students were in her situation, Julia described the impact that their community had on an entire school district in their receiving state.

> "Y de hecho, cuando nos ivamos pa el norte/And when we would go up north, like even the teachers over there knew we were coming, they would add more seats to the rooms, porque las quitaban/because they would remove them when we left. Porque se queda vacio/Because it stays empty when we leave, ah when are you are all coming back? Then they go used to the routine that we arrived in late March and would leave late October. Averiguale porque ya no hay asientos/Figure it out because there are no seats, because it is not like a high school here in Texas. Like my class was 78 students."

Although they are all either U.S. citizens or Permanent Residents, many transnational migrant students are graduates from out of state high schools and must apply for institutional waivers to qualify for a lower tuition rate. If, as the literature review for this dissertation reveals, there is very limited research on the experiences of migrant college students, there is even much less for this segment of the migrant student population.

Colonias & Lack of Internet Access

A second revelation in the data is that several of the participants indicated that they do not have internets service available to them in their homes. As one can imagine, this is very

problematic for current college students that desperately depend on the internet for schoolwork; particularly in a time where online learning and blended courses are on the rise at institutions of higher education across the country. Nevertheless, these students demonstrated their resilience and adaptability by figuring out ways to still get their work done despite this obstacle.

Valeria is currently living with a relative while her family is still up north. Fortunately, her relative lives in the city limits and currently does have internet access. But she pointed out that when her family came back in about one month, she would move back in with them and would once again be without internet. She recalled the challenges of not having internet at home and sometimes visiting this same relative after leaving the university to try and do some work at their house. In particular, she described the challenge of trying to do work in a small house constantly filled with visitors.

> Yes, my grandpa, my aunts, my uncles, so it's like, ok, so I kind of tried to do some of my work and there, but if I did not finish it, I would come home and I would do it on my phone on the docs, because the docs is transferrable, but if I do docs on my computer, it does not save until I get Wi-Fi connection, so it's between my phone and my computer.

Experiences like Valeria's were not widespread among this study's participants. But they are however indicative of other migrant and low-income college students who might live out in the colonias with limited or no access to the internet. One can only wonder how many other current university students in South Texas find themselves in similar circumstances.

Continued Migration & Agricultural Work in College

The third unanticipated finding in the data was that approximately one-third of the participants continue to either migrate with their families or work in the agricultural industry. In fact, Lucia and Gustavo migrated to a mid-western state within days of completing their individual structured plática. Although some may consider this finding surprising, the participants were clear about why the remained in this line of work. Mario indicated that he

continues to work in agriculture almost every weekend.

> Well, I still work in the fields, but not necessarily for my family, just for me now, because I need to take care of…I need pay for my gas, for my food…that way my parents don't have to pay for it…so like here I work on weekend…like I just worked Saturday and Sunday this past weekend, so I would get money for the week, as much money as I can for all my food and everything, all of my expenses, that way they don't have to worry about it.

Mario further explained that he continues to work in agriculture because he prefers having a work schedule that he can control and not one that can potentially get in the way of his studies. Therefore, he reserves his weekends for laboring out in the South Texas fields. He half-heartedly jokes that they will always need pickers in the agricultural industry and that by doing this, he frees up his entire week to focus exclusively on his studies.

Similarly, Lucia indicated that she would be migrating up north again with her family to work in agriculture and provided an equally powerful explanation.

> This summer, I am going up north, I am leaving with my uncle probably Tuesday. I am going to work all Summer and then come back. I am going to be packing asparagus and then picking blueberries.

When asked what she would tell someone who wonders why she would continue to migrate as a college student, she quickly responded:

> First of all, it's too hot here. It's too hot, and then there is pretty much not a lot of jobs here. Well, there are a lot of jobs, but you have to like for example you have to know someone in the local restaurant to get hired and stuff like that. So pretty much it's not the same, because over there you just fill out an application and you get the job.

It may seem like Lucia is flippantly making a comment about the hot weather in South Texas during the summer months. What she did not mention in her response is that her family had left several weeks earlier and that their home is in one of the approximately 1,200 colonias spread out across south Texas. Like most homes in these low-income communities, her house is not equipped with central heating and cooling; making her home extremely hot in the summer months and extremely cold in the winter months. Therefore, for many migrant students' whose

family migrated north, staying behind for the summer usually means taking charge of all the utilities and the often-astronomical costs of keeping at least one room in an un-insulated home at a bearable temperature.

Making Sense of Family Responsibility

After careful review of the presented data, I suggest that current college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds make sense of their family responsibilities using a contextual and familial approach. I further suggest that this same contextual and familial approach was used by participants when making sense of their family responsibilities at different points along their migrant trajectories. At the same time, student's critical reflections point to different elements that were prevalent in the sense-making at each of the different points looked at in this dissertation. Contemplating how participants made sense of their family responsibilities throughout their lives is important to understanding shifts or adaptations of the sense-making process through time.

During their pre-college years, the participants lived experiences suggest that participants employed a contextual and familial approach where the agricultural work seemed prevalent in their sense-making process. Participants often recalled seeing their parents come home dirty and tired from a long day at work and referenced those moments as important markers in how they made sense of their family responsibilities. Other participants recalled experiencing agricultural work alongside their families as important moments that influenced their sense-making. Whether participants recounted experiences of seeing their parents or themselves working in agriculture, both scenarios seemed to guide them towards acceptance, understanding or resignation to the that the responsibilities they were carrying out were necessary for the well-being of the family.

As participants began their college selection process, the data suggests that most of the students made sense of their family responsibilities using a contextual and familial approach

where their ability to either continue supporting or at least be close enough if needed played a prevalent role in their sense-making process. This is especially true for the eleven students who indicated that these elements were either consideration or deciding factor on where they ultimately enrolled in college. As a result of this sense-making process, these same eleven students ultimately selected a college that would allow them to continue supporting their families whenever needed.

During their time as college students, I propose that students continue to make sense of their family responsibilities using a contextual and familial approach where their role as college students is prevalent in the sense-making. The data suggest that for most students, their family responsibilities either stayed the same or decreased at their parent's insistence. But in both situations, the students' roles as college students were prevalent in their sense-making process. As in the case of Valeria, where she had to explain to her parents that she could no longer continue to take on the same degree of family responsibilities because of the demands of a college schedule.

A Collective Migrant Counterstory

Solórzano & Yosso (2002) argue that "Although social scientists tell stories under the guise of "objective" research, these stories actually uphold deficit, racialized notions about people of color. For the authors, a critical race methodology provides a tool to "counter" deficit storytelling. Specifically, a critical race methodology offers space to conduct and present research grounded in the experiences and knowledge of people of color," (p. 34). For well over three-quarters of a century scholars and education practitioners, even the most well intentioned, have crafted a narrative that has used the unique lived experiences and circumstances of migrant farm worker students as a way of explaining their historically poor academic achievement. In constructing this narrative, rarely have the authentic voices or lived experiences of migrant

students factored or been invited to participate in the discourse.

By framing the educational experiences of migrant students in this way, we as scholars and educational practitioners alike, are re-telling what Solórzano & Yosso (2002) term a majoritarian story that "distorts and silences the experiences of people of color. Using 'standard formulae,' majoritarian methods that purport to be neutral and objective yet implicitly make assumptions according to negative stereotypes," (p. 28). In this dissertation, I center these unique voices and lived experiences to present a collective migrant counter story (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; & Huber, 2008) that challenges the notion that the academic failure of migrant students is somehow a foregone conclusion. Instead, the data find that the participants and their families have a tremendous commitment to educational success.

Solórzano & Yosso (2002) define counter-story as "a method of telling stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society). The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege," (32). Similarly, Delgado-Bernal (2002) argues that "For too long, the histories, experiences, cultures, and languages of students of color have been devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal education settings," (p. 105). In this dissertation, I have privileged the lived experiences and voices of current migrant college students as a way of challenging narratives that have framed these students in deficit terms.

In this analysis, I borrow from Solórzano & Yosso (2002) to create a migrant counterstory from "(a) the data gathered from the research process itself, (b) the existing literature on the topic(s), (c) our own professional experiences, and (d) our own personal experiences," (p. 34). I searched and sifted through the data for examples in which the study's participants challenged the notion that the historical lower academic achievement of migrant students was either a foregone conclusion or could be explained by their circumstances. While

reviewing the structured plática transcripts, that current migrant college students recalled their experiences as migrant students and made sense of their family responsibilities from an asset and not deficit standpoint. In recounting their lived experiences, participants frequently recalled, sometimes on multiple occasions within the same plática, the support and motivation that they received from their parents all along the educational pipeline. In many instances, participants shared that their parents continue to support them now that they are in college. They also spoke with a sense of pride and strength that they indicated came from knowing that they had overcome some great challenges growing up in the migrant stream. Finally, they spoke of a strong motivation to succeed in their college careers in order to escape the migrant streams. All of these reflections, along with others throughout this dissertation, contribute to the construction of a collective migrant student counterstory.

Carolina recalls how her parents have been the most helpful to her college transition, despite having a limited formal education.

> I don't know…my parents like they are not educated…well they are really educated…they are really smart…but like subject wise, they are not…but every time I ask for help, they still try and they are right…its weird, ok mom, your smart, and I guess that helped me a lot, because my mom helps me with like financial aid, and everything to be honest, and I don't know, like I would not be here if it was not for her.

Like Carolina, Mario recalled his mother's frequent warnings that not getting an education would mean a lifetime out in the fields.

> Because my mom did not like taking us out, like go out and go to work, she preferred us going to school, she was always like go to school, go to school, because I don't want you ending up like me, working in the fields and that is all you do for the rest of your lives, so she just pushed a lot of education, my mom always said focus on your university, so you get out of that work and that, that's first, then work…always says, if you don't do anything in life, there will always be the fields there, people are going to have to eat, that field is not going anywhere, if you ever want to quit the university, you can go work in the fields.

Similarly, Gustavo indicated that although he may not have understood it earlier in life,

he now really appreciates his parent's constant reminders about the perils of not getting a good education.

> I really do say and I really do appreciate my parents, Because um, if it was not for them, I would probably be working in the fields and I would not be in college because they tell me and it might sound mean that I say ok, ok, ok, but at the end of the day, I know that they are telling me for my own good. And because they don't want to see me working in the fields or struggling later on.

In an example described earlier in this work, Alma recalled with pride the time that she defied a teacher in her receiving state by bringing a group of migrant farmers to a job fair which they had been explicitly told farmworkers were not professionals and could therefore not participate. Again, Alma did not recall that story from a deficit perspective. Instead, she was presenting a concrete example in which through her agency and action, she countered the narrative of who was considered by the teacher and job fair organizers. Another example of agency and advocacy was offered by Violeta.

> "I sometimes feel like I am a second mom to my cousins. Not that my aunt is not always there, sh e is always there, but I felt that way because I had to take them to their school stuff. And sometimes I would go with my aunt to school events, because she does not understand. She never finished high school, so she is not familiar with what they are talking about. And she takes me so that I can tell them more or less what they mean because, you know. Or when someone is in trouble, or not that, actually, there was an incident where a migrant clerk was giving false information about the migrant program in our district. And we were telling her like, tia/aunt like, no, that's not right. he was supposed to take his state exam to his receiving state and they said they could not do that. And I said, Tia/Aunt, even when I was in elementary, I took it over there. And they said, he cannot leave, without taking the state exam. And I was like, NO, she is wrong. You can leave because you are a migrant. The district is very familiar with migrants, and there is even a program Tia/Aunt we're all in it, your children are in it, I'm in it. They are allowed to leave when they want. As long as, even if they don't finish the state exam, they can send it over there, and she is saying that they can't. And I told her, and even me and my mom were arguing with the lady. And finally, they called and they talked to someone higher than the migrant department and they straightened her out. They said, they are right, they are right. You can send the state exam and you are not allowed to tell him that they cannot go."

Similarly, Amalia recalled her migrant experiences with a sense of pride despite also sharing some very troubling accounts of her experiences.

> "We were first working with a very large company and we didn't get a hotel or anything. Like they make us stay in an abandoned hospital. So it was kind of creepy, that was in a midwestern town hospital, it was abandoned. And well people say all these kind of crazy stories that would happen at night and these weird sounds that you hear. I remember that year, it was around three in the morning and it smelled like something was burning, so we got out of the room, we were kind of panicked, but it happened that a man was preparing his lunch for work and he said that he saw a nurse pass by telling him to get out of the way and got so scared that he just ran to his room and he left his countertop burner on. Some people believed him and others did not. It was a weird thing going on. It was an abandoned hospital, it was pretty bad. When we got there, the beds we had to stay in were the ones they used to treat patients, the ones they would use. And then my mom did not like that, and she said no, we're not going to stay there. So, like we stayed in the place, but we were not going to stay in those types of beds. She went to go get like, she grabbed some pillows and she grabbed this bunch of stuff, disinfecting wipes and all of this stuff, to make sure everything was clean."

Amalia went on to describe the second year she migrated and the horrible treatment that the workers received from the field boss.

> "My second year was the worst. We went to do blueberry in one state but the blueberry was not ready. We were there for two weeks and we had not made any hours and we had not made any money. So, we had to go back to a different state. It was harsh because I remember that the contractor had her right hand, he was like a compadre to her, he was the one that handled everything. She would get paid for finding the people and sending them to work but he handled everything, and he would give us pretty harsh treatment. He treated people worse than animals. Some people were paid in cash and some were paid with personal checks. They were not company checks or anything. And one of the other farmworkers asked the field boss, what happens if someone dehydrates and loses it and just falls without a nurse. And I remember he answered in Spanish, si se cae, nomas le damos con una rama en el espinazo y se levanta/if she falls, we just hit her on her back with a branch and she will get up. And we just look at each other and were like what?"

Even after having lived through these experiences, Amalia understood that the strength required to overcome these same experiences continues with her today.

> Once you know what it is like to get your hands dirty, and to work under the worst weather conditions, because sometimes its muddy, its' crazy and you know that once you can go through that, you can do anything, you can work in any job, you can handle any situation that comes up, because it does make you stronger and it makes you value not just life but family, and I think that is something that helps you I guess not only transition but also like grow, it helps with like your mental growth.

Participants also spoke of being very motivated to do well in school and particularly driven by not wanting to return to the long days in the fields. Lucia recounted how working in

the fields made her think of school differently.

> Well my parents always told me to go to school. That's why. Another one was that like, working in the fields made me look at different stuff differently. Made me look like…like school was the only outcome of that, of being in the fields, it whether going to school or getting married, so it was one of those, so I ended up going to school cuz I really like accounting.

Similarly, Violeta Spoke at great length about being grateful for the migrant experience because it made her grow up and value an education. She indicated being ten years old when she decided that an education was imperative to help her remove herself from the migrant stream and is extremely motivated to succeed in her education. The stories and experiences shared by the participants craft a powerful counterstory that challenges deficit models and shatters any idea that their circumstances can determine their academic potential.

Credibility

Pizarro (2005) argues that works in Chicanx Studies grounded in critical race analysis have often been attacked by those in the academic mainstream as being biased, activists in nature or nonacademic. He also points out that that the works of Octavio Romano and others in the 1960's that argued that, in fact, all academic work is fundamentally biased. Arguing that bias is "deemed unavoidable simply because the individuals who develop, conduct, and write about research are influenced at each stage by their own understanding and interpretations of the issues under study, which are shaped, for example, by their own cultural lenses, Pizarro (2005), points out how interestingly, Chicanx Studies is among the few areas of academic research that are critiqued for bias simply because the work makes its biases clear to readers.

Earlier in this work, I made my positionality as a former migrant farm worker and migrant educator quite clear. I also made clear that I am interested in supporting the academic success of migrant students. At the same time, throughout the entire research process, I continuously reflected on my positionality to ensure fidelity and integrity to the research process.

Participants could respond to all questions in as little or as much as they felt was necessary without being led in any way. Furthermore, students could respond in any language that they felt most comfortable (English or Spanish). My intent in this study was to capture the authentic voices and perceptions of the participants. Therefore, I do not find that my positionality precluded me from following the research process with integrity throughout.

In considering the reliability of this study, I am convinced that another experienced researcher repeating this study, utilizing these same instruments would gather similar data and arrive at comparable findings. However, in portions of the structured pláticas that relied greatly on my bilingualism, cultural proficiency and deep understanding of the migrant lifestyle, there might be some divergence. Experiential knowledge was very important, and I relied on mine extensively throughout this study. Participants were not restricted in their language of choice when we entered the structured pláticas. In some instances, the pláticas were entirely in English and others included significantly more Spanish. A cultural competency allowed me to enter a respectful and deep plática with students that might not be possible without this same proficiency. I was able to reference or expand thoughts and observations that were based on cultural understandings. These cultural understandings allowed me to connect with the participants in ways that might not be possible otherwise. Finally, my own lived experiences of being immersed in the migrant lifestyle, in which I also often had to make sense of my own family responsibilities proved incredibly important throughout the study. I wonder how the participants would've differed in their responses if they did not believe me to have a strong grasp of the migrant lifestyle and experience.

Chapter Summary

Attinasi (1989) makes a compelling argument that what is needed to better understand the college experiences of minoritized students is to produce more descriptive studies by research

perspectives that emphasize the insider's point of view. In this chapter, I have presented an analysis of the data collected in this dissertation whose aim is to do precisely that; collect the authentic voices of current college migrant students enrolled in institutions of higher education in South Texas. Together, the collected lived experiences of the eighteen study participants provide a window into a college experience that sits in stark contrast to what has been written in the more expansive higher education literature.

The findings in the data that suggest that the sense of family responsibility that migrant children developed earlier in life followed them as they moved into higher education settings. Sixty one percent of the students indicated that they decided to attend college locally in order to either continue supporting their families or be close enough to do so in case of an emergency. This suggests that for most of these students, the potential impacts of their transitions to college on their families were considerations in their college selection process. Once enrolled in college, the data find that for most students their family responsibilities either stayed about the same or decreased significantly. Still, regardless of which of these two situations they were in, participants made sense of their family responsibilities in ways that privileged their roles as college students.

Also presented in this chapter are participant's perceptions about their overall college transition process. After considering what they perceived to be the most challenging and most helpful during their college transition process, none of the participants indicated that they had transitioned poorly into higher education. Of the fourteen students who participated in the CAMP Program, eleven indicated that the program's support had been the most helpful in transitioning to college. Conversely, most participants found the adjustment to the demands of college level work to be the most challenging to their college transition.

Finally, in this chapter I also present the counterstory that the experiences and voices of the participants create a counterstory to the narrative that has often used their circumstances as

away of explaining their academic outcomes. Huber (2008) asserts that a critical race theory framework helps to deconstruct the 'apartheid of knowledge' that exists within the academy through honoring and validating our own experiences and forms of knowledge. By privileging the lived experiences of these migrant farm worker college students, I hope to have honored and validated their experiences and those of their families.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Migrant farmworker children continue to have a unique, I would argue singular, set of lived experiences in the context of the United States. The findings presented in this dissertation suggest that the distinctiveness of their lived experiences follows them into higher education settings. The data indicate that the sense of family responsibility migrant students develop in their childhoods plays an important role in both their college selections and college transitions. They further suggest that when recounting their migrant experiences to make sense of their family responsibilities, participants did so overwhelmingly from an assets-based perspective. Finally, the data revealed three important unanticipated findings that reveal how much there is to be done in order to more fully understand the college experiences of this student population.

With this dissertation, I set out to better understand how college students from college migrant farm worker backgrounds make sense of their family responsibilities during the college transition process. Although some scholars have attempted to capture aspects of migrant college students (Willison & Jang, 2009; Escamilla & Treviño, 2014; Bejarano & Valverde, 2002; Araujo, 2012; & McHatton, Zalaquett & Cranston-Gingras, 2006), existing research focused on the college transition of migrant students, in the context of family responsibilities is virtually non-existent. Therefore, this dissertation is uniquely positioned to make an important contribution to this area of research.

Higher Education literature, and some of its major works documenting the college student experiences in the United States (Tinto, 1993; Astin, 1993; & Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), have long been critiqued for their inability to more fully explain the higher education experiences of minoritized students (Attinasi, 1987; & Hurtado & Carter; 1997). This critique is something that leading scholars in higher education have in many instances accepted and even

included in their subsequent textbook editions where they too have called for more studies that focus specifically on the experiences of minoritized college students. These widely accepted calls for more interdisciplinary research that focuses on minoritized groups makes this an exciting time to be working along this line of inquiry. With this dissertation, I answer the call by more deeply studying the higher education of a unique group of minoritized students.

Sensemaking of Family Responsibility

I suggest that migrant students made sense of their family responsibilities using a contextual and familial approach that often relied on the context of the sense-making. During their pre-college years, I propose that migrant students made sense of their family responsibilities in the context of their active migrant lifestyles where the work carried out by their parents played an important role. I further posit that as they prepared to make their college selection, more than half of the participants made sense of their family responsibilities along using contextual and familial approach in which the impacts of their transition to college were prevalent. Finally, I argue that as college students, participants made sense of their family responsibilities using a contextual and familial approach where their role as college students was prevalent in the sense-making.

When making sense of the family responsibilities participants took on early on in life, most participants either fully accepted, understood or resigned themselves to the fact that their families needed their support. As part of their sense making process, students often recalled specific moments where either they or their parents were working in agriculture in which they realized that their contributions to the family were important and necessary. In a few cases, participants recalled several of these moments.

Once the participants entered post-secondary education, their roles as college students seemed prevalent in making sense of their family responsibilities. For most of the participant, their family responsibilities either remained the same or decreased significantly. In the cases where responsibilities decreased, it was usually at the insistence of parents that their children focus entirely on college. Yet, regardless of their situation, participants new role as college students and the new demands of college like were prevalent in their responses.

Limitations

As a largely exploratory study, some of the approaches and the instrumentation used here are new. The sampling for this study effectively identified participants that carried out family responsibilities in their childhood but produced a relatively small participation from the completed demographic surveys. Similarly, the individual structured plática protocol was created by the researcher and although it did produce a very rich data set, there are question that can be added in the future might make the data set even stronger. These two first limitations, impact the generalizability of this study. Although this study was never intended to be a generalizable one, the sample size does not allow for its findings to extend beyond this work. They do, however, provide important insights into how the children of migrant farm worker families transition into postsecondary education.

Implications

The findings from this dissertation present at least three noticeable implications. Firstly, the collection of a new set of lived experiences in the college transition process of minoritized students adds to existing literature that seeks to better understand these experiences. Secondly, the data analysis both complicate and add to what we know about the college selection process or family separation during the transition to college. Finally, the counterstory presented by the study's participants challenge scholars and education professionals not to continue using their

circumstances as a way of explaining why migrant farmworker children have historically not fared well in U.S. educational institutions.

The primary implication from this exploratory study is that it offers us a window into what the children of migrant farm worker families experience as they transition into institutions of higher education in South Texas. In providing this window, the findings in this dissertation also reveal multiple points of entry for designing and carrying out of further research with this student population. I suggest that there are possibilities for carrying out research with the potential to directly impact this student populations. Understanding what this study's participants perceived as the most challenging and most helpful during their college transitions, at minimum, point to some considerations for those that support these students to contemplate as they develop their programming. Being aware that some of the respondents do not have access to internet services in their homes may also be important for their institutions to consider.

In capturing the lived experiences of current college migrant students, we are presented with concrete examples that complicate what we know about the college choice process and external family pressures faced by migrant college students once in college. The participants offer a variation in the college transition process in which students are not only considering the impact of the college transition on themselves but on their family's as well. In recounting their continued sense of family responsibility, participants most often mentioned being concerned with their ability to continue supporting their parents or siblings. The student's sense of family responsibility often seemed heightened when contrasted with the feeling that their families had done so much for them growing up; including being extremely supportive of their education. In cases where the participants were the eldest in their families, several indicated that they now believe setting the example for their younger siblings by doing well in college as an added

dimension to family responsibility. Conversely, they also felt the pressure with their perceptions that their failure in college would be in many ways setting up all their younger siblings for failure as well.

These student's continued sense of family responsibility into college spaces also complicate what has been written and widely accepted in higher education literature regarding family separation (Tinto, 1993) being a priori to a strong college transition. Although Tinto (1993) discusses the idea of family separation in the context of transitions to college, the continued sense of family responsibility among these migrant students complicates the notion of family separation in two important ways. Firstly, the fact that for many of these migrant students strongly considered their continued sense of responsibility during their college selection process foreshadows a more difficult time with family separation. Secondly, many of the participants in this study either continued to carry out some family responsibilities or at least felt they needed to be vigilantly watching and on hand for any family need that they might be able to help with. These collected experiences add to the discussion regarding the external pressures that minoritized students might face during their college years.

Finally, through the capturing of these lived experiences, the migrant students crafted their counterstory to the narrative that their circumstances can explain their academic potential. Delgado Bernal and Solórzano's (2001) present four tenants of critical race methodologies: (1) build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice; (2) challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center; (3) open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and to show that they are not alone in their position; and (4) teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can

construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone. The migrant counterstory presented here opens a new window into the college experiences of these students in ways that has rarely been captured before.

When so much of the higher education literature examines student pre-college experiences almost exclusively utilizing lenses of academic college preparation, this group's, and perhaps other minoritized group's, lived experiences should push us to contemplate broadening our understanding of what these experiences mean not only during the college admission or selection processes but also in the student support services divisions of an institution. More importantly, I believe these student's lived experience support the calls of Rendon (2009) and others to further humanize the college-going experience.

Discussion

By explicitly naming the unique lived experiences of migrant families, and by detailing these experiences in more nuanced ways, this dissertation challenges the premise that the obstacles students face are fixed or unalterable realities and pushes beyond a narrative that often relies on circumstances to explain the educational outcomes of migrant students and considers the agency of the students themselves. Furthermore, it challenges us to continue moving towards assets-based approaches to researching and capturing the lived experiences of migrant students. In fact, the participants in this study also demand that we speak of their experiences in ways that reflect how they make sense of their own experiences.

The work of Pérez & Zarate (2016) challenges us to settle the incongruencies of broad educational policy developed for the masses and the individual attention that the unique condition circumstances of migrant students calls for. In this dissertation, I extend this thinking into higher education spaces. They consider that, "a focus on educational metrics of measuring

academic success can blatantly ignore the lived experiences of migrant students and their families and specifically their emotional and overall well-being that must be addressed before any discussion of academics should occur," (p. 108). As the student's lived experiences have demonstrated throughout this dissertation, there must be a shift in how we study their higher education experiences to ensure that their stories are not lost in the large national data sets that are commonly used in this area of research.

Suggestions for Future Research

After completing this largely exploratory study, there are two important recommendations that I suggest for future research with migrant college students. The first recommendation is that future studies expand the group of participants to also include the participant's parents and university support personnel. Throughout the course of this study, participants frequently mentioned the role that their parents continue to play in their education. Therefore, collecting the perspective of the migrant parents could prove extremely beneficial to a fuller understanding of the migrant student college transition process. Furthermore, during brief conversations with current or retired CAMP support staff at different points of the data collection process, they often mentioned their own perceptions of how their students made sense of family responsibilities as they transitioned to college. Thus, gaining these perspectives would also prove extremely useful.

The second recommendation is regarding two of the unanticipated findings in this dissertation. The lived experiences of transnational migrant students have received minimal attention in the literature that examines the education of migrant farmworkers in the United States. Yet, their experiences present so many more layers and complexities to the migrant farmworker experiences that future studies with this student population should be carried out.

Similarly, an examination into how many migrant students who are currently enrolled at the research sites in this dissertation live in colonias and therefore have limited or no access to reliable internet services is important. This examination could also impact other low-income students currently enrolled at these institutions that are also without access to the internet. It also initiates a broader discussion about access to these services in other low-income rural or metropolitan as college students continue to reside in low-income communities even when they enroll into institutions of post-secondary education.

Conclusion

> By this time, I could actually "see" the women and men working in the fields and knew where the camps were located. This perceptual skill was acquired slowly over the course of my first summer spent working in the preschool and visiting the camps. At first, I could not spot farmworkers in the fields nor their camps as I drove past farm after farm. They were literally and phenomenologically invisible to my outsider's eyes. Invisibility is a reality of marginalization, in my experience. (Purcell-Gates, 2013).

I was once asked by a close friend to describe the farmworker migrant experience. I quickly explained that I was not sure that there was a single migrant experience. Instead, I suggested that there are common elements that define a migrant farmworker experience; travel, agricultural work, family, struggle, joy, and strength. I further explained that within this broader experience there existed and endless diversity of experiences shaped by the particulars of where one travels, what crops one pick, the growers one works for and many other factors. My work in this dissertation has affirmed my belief in this endless diversity within the migrant experience.

For far too long, despite the efforts of many (McWilliams, 1939; National Commission on Migrant of Migrant Education, 1992; Velasquez, 1994; Moorhead, 1996; Bell, 1994; Rothenberg, 1999; & Purcell-Gates 2013) to document and detail the experiences of migrant farmworkers, this community remain invisible to many across the country. Despite their invisibility, there are currently hundreds of thousands active migrant farmworkers who can

provide first-hand accounts of their experiences. Researchers need only pay attention and privilege their lived experiences as a line of inquiry worth studying and full of possibilities. Otherwise, we as educators and scholars will remain complicit in the continued invisibility of this community. My most sincere hope is that with this dissertation, the migrant student population becomes a little more visible.

APPENDICES

APENDIX A:

Individual Structured Plática Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview and study. As you are aware the study is entitled: ***Making Sense of Family Responsibilities During the College Transition Process-A Qualitative Study with Current College Students from Migrant Farm Worker Backgrounds in South Texas.*** As you also know from the consent form, you are free to stop this interview and withdraw from this study at any time. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. What I want to capture is your perspective based on your lived experiences.

To accurately transcribe the interview, I will be audio and video recording. If you would rather not be video recorded, you can feel free to opt out by stating that at the beginning of the interview.

Interview Questions:

- *Can you tell me about your family, where your parents are from, how many children are in your family, and where you fall in the order of siblings?*
- *Can you tell me about your migrant farm worker experiences? Where you traveled to, what crops or types of farms your family worked in, and overall how you think about your farm worker experience?*
- *You indicated in your initial survey that you took on family responsibilities growing up. Can you tell me more about each of them and approximately how old you were when you first remember taking each of them on?*
- *Do you remember how you felt about taking on these responsibilities?*
- *Now that you are in college, do you continue to carry out these responsibilities? If so, which ones, to what degree and when do you make the time to do this?*
- *If not, is this something you thought about as you transitioned to university life? How did you make sense of those family responsibilities you could no longer carry out?*
- *Do you think these responsibilities or not being able to continue carrying them out has impacted your transition to college in any way? If so, how?*
- *Have you taken on new responsibilities after enrolling in college?*
- *What has been the most challenging about transitioning to college?*
- *What has been the most helpful in transitioning to college?*
- *Have any of your other siblings attended college? If so, have they helped you navigate college up to now?*
- *How often do you attend office hours with your professors?*
- *How often do you communicate with your professors outside of class and office hours?*
- *Are you part of any school clubs or organizations? If yes, which ones?*
- *What is your current GPA?*
- *Overall, how effectively do you think you have transitioned to college?*
- *Is there anything else you would like to add or say about either the family responsibilities you took on or your transition to college?*

Once again, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. If at any time, you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at mart1496@msu.edu.

APPENDIX B:

Initial Demographic Survey

Name:					
University Name:					
Age:		(NOTE: If under the age of 18, see additional consent form)			
Gender Identification:					
Ethnicity:					
Birthplace:		If outside US, age when arrived in US.			
High School Name:					
Phone Number	( )		Email:		
Prior Credit Hours:	Prior Dual Credit Hours:		Prior Concurrent Enrollment Hours:		
Mother Education:	Elementary	Middle-School	High School	College	Not Sure
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Father Education:	Elementary	Middle-School	High School	College	Not Sure
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Initial Sample Data

Question		Yes	No
Are you a first-generation college student? (If neither of your parents attended college, select yes. If one or both of your parents attended college select no.)		☐	☐
Are you classified as a first-year student?		☐	☐
If no, what is your classification?			
Have you ever worked in agriculture?		☐	☐
If yes, at what age did you begin to work?			
Did you ever take on the following responsibilities for your family?		☐	☐
Examples:	List all Other Responsibilities Here:		
a. Translator ☐			
b. Child Care Provider ☐			
c. Wage Earner/Worker ☐			
Do you currently live at home?		☐	☐
Do you continue to take on responsibilities for your family now?		☐	☐
When was the last time you migrated in search of agricultural work?			
I am willing to participate in the individual interview.		☐	☐
I am willing to participate in the structured focus group.		☐	☐
Signature:		Date:	

APPENDIX C:

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research study regarding the higher education experiences of students from migrant farm worker backgrounds. Your consent and participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. You must be 18 years or older to participate in this study.

Study Title: ***Making Sense of Family Responsibilities During the College Transition Process-A Qualitative Study with Current College Students from Migrant Farm Worker Backgrounds in South Texas***

Investigator
This study will be conducted by Jose L. Martinez a PhD Candidate at Michigan State University's Chicano/Latino Studies Program under the guidance of Dr. Eric Juenke (Dissertation Committee Chair).

Purpose of Research
The purpose of this study is to better understand how college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds make sense of their family responsibilities as they transition to institution of higher education. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a currently enrolled college student participating in the College Assistance Migrant Program.

What You Will Do
Participants in this research project will be asked to participate in an individual interview and a focus group each of approximately 1 hour in length. Your participation in this study will take about 2.5 hours between the two meetings. The sessions will be recorded to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide. All recordings and transcriptions will be stored and subsequently destroyed in accordance to MSU's research protocols. Individual interviews will be scheduled during times that work for each participant and focus groups will be scheduled during times that work for most participants. Participants will not have any other commitments beyond these two meetings.

Costs & Potential Benefits
A potential benefit of participating in this evaluation for you could be having an opportunity to provide your experiences and perceptions about your transition to college to this research study. Additionally, helping the researchers gain a fuller understanding of how college students from migrant farm worker backgrounds make sense of their transition to college might be helpful to future students from similar backgrounds.

Your Rights to Participate, Say No, or Withdraw at Any Time
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time during the process. If you choose to withdraw, any information derived from your participation will be deleted from the evaluations findings. Your refusal to participate will have no penalties to you in any way.

Confidentiality
If you choose to participate, your real names will never be used when reporting the results of the study. All the participants names will be either deleted or changed to pseudonyms to safeguard the identity of all participants. If a transcriber is used to assist during the data analysis, they will all sign a confidentially agreement and be instructed to delete all names from the transcription and substitute pseudonyms in their place.

Costs and Compensation for Being in The Study
Beyond your time commitment, there are no foreseeable costs associated with participating in this study. There will be no compensation for your participation.

Contact Information
Michigan State University appreciates the participation of people who help it carry out its function of developing knowledge through research. If you have any questions about the study that you are participating in you are encouraged to call the investigators: **Jose L. Martinez,** at **956-456-5758 or email at** mart1496@msu.edu or **Dr. Eric Gonzalez Juenke at 517-353-8605 or** juenke@msu.edu**.**

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 4000 Collins Rd, Suite 136, Lansing, MI 48910.

Documentation & Informed Consent:

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Printed Name of the Participant _____
Signature of the Participant _____
Date_____
Printed Name of the Investigator _____

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