MOVING AROUND OR SETTLING DOWN?
OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES BY THE CHILDREN OF MEXICAN FARM MIGRANTS IN MICHIGAN

By

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ABSTRACT

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Ottawa County, Michigan, hosts the largest population of temporary agricultural workers in the state. The migrant stream between West Michigan and the Rio Grande Valley was established during the 1950s and continues to provide a steady flow of workers for Ottawa County agriculture. Upon reaching adulthood, youths who grow up migrating between Michigan and the Rio Grande Valley face the decision of whether to continue in the migration circuit or to pursue other options for their futures, such as higher education.

This dissertation focuses on the factors that influence migrant youths' choices for their futures, and specifically, the choice of whether to pursue a college education. The study's over-arching question is, "Which organizational sources of social capital influence migrant youths to continue migrating or to settle out of the migrant stream?" I break down this "umbrella question" into three primary research questions for this dissertation:

1. Who (parents, siblings, friends, teachers, schools, others) exerts the most influence on migrant youths and young adults in their decisions about education and work?
2. Does bridging social capital affect a migrant youth's likelihood of college enrollment?
3. How does one's concept of "home" influence the decision to continue to migrate or to leave the migrant stream?

Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) theory of immigrant assimilation, Bourdieu's (1986) theory of social capital, and Flora and Flora's (2003) concepts of bonding (in-group) and bridging (inter-group) social capital are used in this analysis.

I conducted nineteen in-depth personal interviews with young adults who grew up migrating between Ottawa County (specifically, Holland and Grand Haven) and Texas or Mexico. I also moderated four focus groups (two for men and two for women) with students in the College Assistance for Migrant Scholars Program (CAMP) at Michigan State University. Interviewees were located through the use of a snowball sample. Focus group members were recruited through the assistance of the CAMP office, as well as through a snowball sample.

The results of this study show that young adults from migrant families are likely to follow the career and educational path encouraged by their parents. Those with greater amounts of bonding and bridging social capital appear more likely to pursue a college education than those with a concentration of bonding social capital and little bridging social capital. In addition, lower-birth-order children may be less likely to attend college than higher-birth-order children. There does not seem to be a connection between participants' concept of 'home' and their decision of whether to attend college. The impacts of gender and race, as well as obstacles to settling out of the migrant stream and to achieving higher education are also explored. The desire of many of the college student participants to help the migrant community in the future is also discussed.

Dedicated to my family: Noah, Marin Marie, and the new baby

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation explores the educational and vocational decision processes of Mexican-origin young adults who grew up in migrant families in the Texas-to-Michigan migrant stream. I investigate whether and how they decide to go on to college after high school. The low socioeconomic status of many Latino immigrants in the United States is well known. Children of migrant farm laborers, whose families typically have low socioeconomic status, education, financial resources, and English proficiency, often struggle in school and many ultimately drop out of high school. Few go on to pursue a college education. The following description shows the perspective of one current college student, who grew up in a migrant family, on how he decided to attend college while his friends dropped out of high school:

> The three [friends] that I had were Mexicans and one of them was…born in Mexico but raised in Texas and his family had the same thing [as my family]—they couldn't find any job over there so they moved over here…And the other ones, they do the same thing…[They] lived around the corner, one of them was my neighbor… We lived right in a row…they ended up dropping out of high school. I was probably the only one that actually made it through this whole thing… And the mentality that they had it was more about, you know, 'I see this other person having this and that'—it was more material[istic]. And also their families try to push them to actually get a better education but they felt like, 'I'm never gonna be nobody;' they just doubt themselves. And I felt that was one of those big issues that they had. They even doubted me; they're like, 'Just drop out, you're not going to make it anywhere else,' and eventually I was accepted to Michigan State [University] and I'm really proud, and I'm actually taking advantage of this opportunity. So, I think that was the big difference that happened with them. I tried to encourage them as well, but I mean, when someone you know—other people have their own thoughts and ideas and it wasn't in their minds to go pursue an education. (Ricardo, college student, interviewee)

Ricardo's story introduces the central question of this study: why do some young people from migrant families "have it in their minds" to continue their educations at the college level, while others drop out of high school? More specifically, the research presented in this

dissertation is aimed at answering the following research questions: How much do parents influence their adult children's choices about school and work? What is the impact of social ties, and social capital developed therein, both inside and outside of the migrant community in the decision to pursue education beyond high school? What is the effect of birth order on adult career and academic choices for children of migrant parents? Does gender matter in one's educational pursuits? How does the place that young migrants view as their 'home' influence their educational and occupational outcomes?

These questions may seem interesting, but why are they important enough to warrant researching for a dissertation? First, Mexican immigrants, who typically settled in the Southwest and large U.S. cities, have become more visible in the rural Midwest. Their presence in the rural Midwest is not new, as the chapter on the history of migrant farmworkers in Michigan shows; but the influx of Mexican immigrant settlers (some of whom are former migrants) in recent years has drawn attention to Mexican immigration throughout the U.S., including in areas where it was previously unknown. Even though migrant farmworkers differ from new immigrants in various ways, it is not uncommon for these differences to be overlooked in categorizing Mexican immigrants, and the research questions presented here are intended to explore whether Mexican migrant farmworkers follow larger Mexican immigrant trends.

Second, even though children from migrant farmworker families comprise a subset within the population of Mexican immigrant children in the U.S., we know that their low educational achievement is typical of Mexican immigrants' children (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Bean and Stevens 2003; Telles and Ortiz 2008). Therefore, young people who grow up in migrant farmworker families are at risk, like the great majority of the children of Mexican immigrants, of joining the ranks of the working poor and struggling to provide for their families.

One of the aims of this study is to uncover the reasons behind the success of some—and how these young adults differ from their friends who drop out of high school and continue to work in the fields. Such information can be useful to teachers, administrators, social workers, policy makers, and others who seek to assist migrant children in achieving academic and socioeconomic upward mobility as adults.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) have formulated the theory of segmented assimilation as an answer to the question of why some immigrant children succeed and others do not. Essentially, segmented assimilation theory is summed up in that immigrant children adapt to U.S. culture and norms along five possible paths. These divergent forms of assimilation are consonant acculturation, consonant resistance to acculturation, dissonant acculturation I, dissonant acculturation II, and selective acculturation. In consonant acculturation, immigrant parents and children learn English and U.S. customs concurrently, but are not involved in an ethnic community. This results in the entire family being rapidly "absorbed" into American culture, and children quickly forget their native language. In the case of consonant resistance to acculturation, the reverse is true—parents and children are immersed in a co-ethnic community but have no learning of English or U.S. customs. In this case, families are isolated from the larger U.S. society and are likely to decide to return to their native country. In the event of dissonant acculturation, parents and children have opposite experiences in learning language and cultural norms. In the first type of dissonant acculturation, children learn English and U.S. customs but parents do not; at the same time, parents are involved in an ethnic community but children are not. This commonly creates a situation in which children seek to be "American" at the expense of the relationships with their parents and the co-ethnic community. In the second type of dissonant acculturation, family members follow the same pattern of English acquisition

and cultural learning as in the first type; however, none of the family members are involved in an ethnic community. Families in this scenario often experience role reversal, as well as conflict, between parents and children. Finally, selective acculturation occurs when all family members experience both English and cultural learning as well as insertion in an ethnic community. This last type of acculturation is most beneficial to familial cohesion and bilingualism among children.

The theory of segmented assimilation (discussed further in chapter two) examines several attributes of individual immigrants and immigrant groups in predicting outcomes for immigrant children. The factors that affect the outcomes include:

> …1) the history of the immigrant first generation; 2) the pace of acculturation among parents and children and its bearing on normative integration; 3) the barriers, cultural and economic, confronted by second-generation youth in their quest for successful adaptation; and 4) the family and community resources for confronting these barriers. (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 45-46)

In their analysis, Portes and Rumbaut also include the effects of racial discrimination, the increasing inequality of the labor market in the United States, the human capital and socioeconomic status of immigrant parents, the social capital within co-ethnic networks, bilingualism, and family composition as important factors in determining life outcomes for immigrant children.

In addition to segmented assimilation, this dissertation applies the theory of social capital to the topic of young adult migrants' decisions for education and work. Social capital is the resources, and the potential resources, that are contained in social connections and networks (Bourdieu 1986). These resources provide an advantage to those who possess them over those who do not. Flora and Flora (2003) further define social capital as either bonding (in-group) or bridging (across groups), and these distinctions are useful in addressing the role of social capital

in the lives of children from migrant families. In this study, I examine the connections between individuals with the goal of uncovering the relationships that may provide social capital to assist young people in choosing to further their educations beyond high school. Conversely, some social capital may assist young people in deciding to continue to work in the fields as adults.

Although there are few studies that focus specifically on the educational choices of young people from Mexican farm-migrant families, there is much literature that describes the academic achievement of Hispanic, and more specifically, Mexican immigrants in the United States. Generally we know that the children of Mexican immigrants have lower academic achievement than native-born whites (Bean and Stevens 2003; Telles and Ortiz 2008) as well as immigrant children from many other parts of the world (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut 2002), and that college graduation rates for Latinos are low as well (Telles and Ortiz 2008; Bean and Stevens 2003).

We also know from the literature that traditional Mexican norms provide strong family ties (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 1995), along with the gendered expectation for women to be wives and mothers (Matute-Bianchi 1991; Smith 2006), and for men to be providers (Smith 2006). In addition, ethnic communities, not limited to Mexican communities, can provide resources to their members in the form of employment and support for families raising children, specifically by reinforcing the group's traditional cultural values and norms (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Young immigrant women are often more successful in school than their male counterparts (Matute-Bianchi 1991), despite often living with more demands and restrictions on their time from parents (Wolf 2002). In her study of children of Filipino immigrants in California, Wolf (2002) found that young Filipinos commonly refer to the "old country" as "home." On the other hand, Rumbaut (2002) reveals that the great majority of immigrant youth

respondents in the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) said that the United States "feels most like home" (75) when comparing the U.S. and their countries of origin. The relationship between birth order and educational achievement is explored by Travis and Kohli (1995). The authors found that lower-birth-order (older) children from middle class families achieved higher levels of education than their higher-birth-order (younger) siblings; however, this relationship was not observed in wealthy or poor families.

Many studies focus on Mexican immigrants and children living in metropolitan areas in the U.S. (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Smith 2006; Telles and Ortiz 2008), and many studies reveal the general trend of academic struggle and failure among Mexican children of immigrants, relative to other immigrant groups (Portes and Rumbaut 2001), despite the fact that children of Latino immigrants perform better in school than native-born Latinos (Matute-Bianchi 1991; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 1995; Bean and Stevens 2003; Telles and Ortiz 2008). The current study focuses on a rural population of Mexican immigrants, and on high-achieving young adults within this group. There are studies that focus on Latino immigrants in the rural Midwest (Millard and Chapa 2004; Crane 2003), which help to provide an understanding of the context in which Mexicans in Michigan find themselves. However, the current study is unique in that it is an ethnographic study of young people from Mexican migrant families and it focuses on Mexican immigrants who often migrate within the United States—between Texas and Michigan—rather than internationally (although many still visit Mexico). Duron (1995) conducted a mail survey study of young adults who had grown up in migrant farmworker families, which addresses a subject matter quite similar to that of the current study. However, the approach of the current study sets it apart from Duron's research, in that I, the researcher, had direct and personal connections within the migrant community that I studied, and I personally

conducted in-depth interviews within this community. This approach yields a much more nuanced and defined "picture" of the study participant—her or his contexts, experiences, and responses are known by the researcher in a more thorough and intimate manner.

Before I came to be involved with the migrant community in west Michigan, I studied Spanish from the time I was in elementary school, continuing through my undergraduate years of college, where I earned a BA in Spanish. During my final year of high school I studied at a language institute in Guatemala, and later when I was finishing my Spanish degree, I studied again in Guatemala, as well as in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Cuba. After returning to the U.S., I was employed as a bilingual social worker in south Florida, and later, when I moved to west Michigan, I looked for an opportunity to be involved with the Spanish-speaking community of migrant laborers in the area. I volunteered with the Migrant Mentoring Program, which is operated by the Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance, a local nonprofit organization in Holland, Michigan. I became the coordinator of the mentoring program and subsequently interacted regularly with many migrant families throughout the next three years.

In order to answer the research questions presented earlier, I conducted interviews and focus groups with young adults who grew up in migrant families. They all spent at least part of their childhoods (prior to turning eighteen) in Michigan, and they all returned to Texas or Mexico with their families for some period of time during the winter. I conducted nineteen interviews with young adults between the ages of eighteen and thirty-three, all of whom had migrated between Ottawa County, in western Michigan, and Texas and/or Mexico. The interviewees came from a population in which I had spent three years as the coordinator of a mentoring program for children from migrant families, and some of them were personal friends of mine, while others were referred to me by their friends or family members. The focus group

participants came from a broader group of young people who grew up in migrant families. They had traveled during their childhood years to various parts of Michigan, including but not limited to Ottawa County. The focus group participants were all students enrolled at Michigan State University (MSU), and all were current or former College Assistance for Migrants Program (CAMP) students. I conducted two focus groups for men and two for women, in which participants discussed various aspects of their experiences while growing up and the process of deciding to attend college.

The CAMP initiative is a federally funded program that works to support high school graduates from migrant families in their quest for a college education. The program is conducted in various ways at different universities, and I am only familiar with its form at Michigan State University. CAMP recruiters work to locate and encourage young people from migrant families to consider attending MSU for their college career. The Program offers financial and academic assistance as well as social support for college freshmen from migrant backgrounds. At MSU, CAMP is a one-year program; however, as I learned from several "former" CAMP students, "once a CAMP student, always a CAMP student," and these upperclassmen often remain involved with CAMP activities and events.

The participants in this study are more successful academically than the majority of children from migrant families, or children of Mexican immigrants in general. Though not by design, I conducted the great majority of the interviews with current college students. It proved to be much more difficult to secure interviews with current migrant workers than with college students, or those who were about to enter college in the fall. Considering that the focus group members were all college students as well, the great majority of participants in this study are highly motivated and successful individuals, rising above their humble beginnings to move

dramatically up the socioeconomic ladder in comparison with their parents. It is possible that my connections within this migrant population led me to the more successful young adults—since I knew families whose children were enrolled in a mentoring program, this could have led to a snowball sample of individuals who are more concerned about education than some others in the population. At the same time, I was well acquainted with several young adults who continued to work in the fields, but was unable to secure interviews with most of them.

The remaining chapters of this dissertation are organized as follows:

In Chapter Two, I discuss the sociological literature that has addressed topics pertaining to those in the current study. Chapter Three provides a history of migrant workers in Michigan, focusing on the western side of the state, as well as the context of the study. Chapter Four describes the research methods and the analysis used in this dissertation. In Chapter Five, I discuss the findings of the study; and in the sixth and final chapter, the study is summarized in relation to the literature, and suggestions are made for further research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Segmented Assimilation

In their book on the children of immigrants in the United States, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) theorized that they can adapt to the U.S. along one of five avenues, each of which results in a different acculturation outcome. The five avenues are: consonant acculturation (in which parents and children are rapidly integrated into U.S. culture and society without involvement in a co-ethnic community); consonant resistance to acculturation (where parents and children are isolated within a co-ethnic community); dissonant acculturation I (children acculturate to U.S. language and culture while parents are rooted in co-ethnic community); dissonant acculturation II (children acculturate to U.S. language and culture while parents lack both acculturation and a co-ethnic community); and selective acculturation (in which parents and children share bilingualism and a basis in a community of co-ethnics). Each of these possible outcomes represents one "segment," or type, of assimilation.

Segmented assimilation is the result of the environment that immigrants encounter in the U.S. and their response to such social conditions. Immigrants are often under pressure to assimilate completely to American culture, in a manner that assimilation proponents believe will result in immigrants' integration into society. Those that champion "forceful assimilation" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001) believe that this is the best route to immigrant integration; furthermore, they argue that this form of "complete" assimilation changed diverse groups of European immigrants into Americans in the past. Assimilationist thought has encouraged the not-uncommon notion that current immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and other parts of the world can assimilate in the way that European immigrants did—or at least in the way they are

popularly believed to have done—by abandoning all traces of past cultures and languages, and becoming completely American. Public policy that takes the assimilationist view to heart is exemplified in the U.S. public school system (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Since schools often work against the retention of immigrant children's native culture and language, the result is fractures within familial relationships, particularly between parents and children; and the outcome is dissonant acculturation.

Racism and discrimination provide the undercurrent for a second popular approach to the "immigration problem," an ideology that Portes and Rumbaut label "intransigent nativism." The proponents of this view see immigration as a threat to the American way of life and would ultimately seek to stop immigration and deport immigrants already in the U.S. The nativist approach is to "keep immigrants in their place" through racism and discrimination. Segregated communities and discrimination in education, employment, and day-to-day social interactions impede the acceptance of immigrant groups into U.S. society. Nativist ideology utilizes the fear of becoming a "white minority" population to promote its causes, such as working to exclude undocumented immigrants and their families from public education and healthcare. The result of such hostility is often a resurgence of pride in the home country, culture, and language among immigrants—and at times, organized political backlash against nativist movements. The result is ultimately the exacerbation of the "problem" that nativists see in immigrants who "refuse" to assimilate. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) identify this immigrant response to discrimination as "reactive ethnicity." As in the case of forceful assimilation, the effects of nativist discrimination and subsequent reactive ethnicity among immigrant youths can also lead to dissonant acculturation.

Immigrants and their children who are able to withstand forceful assimilation and intransigent nativist hostilities (racism and discrimination) achieve selective acculturation. This occurs when immigrants are able to resist the pressures of assimilationist and nativist agendas while maintaining their ethnic identities. Whatever resources immigrants have at their disposal can work to bring about this positive adaptation outcome. Portes and Rumbaut identify several variables that influence the direction that adaptation will take, including: 1) immigrants' "individual features, including their age, education, occupational skills, wealth, and knowledge of English; 2) the social environment that receives them, including the policies of the host government, the attitudes of the native population, and the presence and size of a co-ethnic community; and 3) their family structure" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:46).

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) find that immigrant parents' resources have a great influence on children's achievement and positive acculturation in the U.S. According to their research, parents' socioeconomic status and children's academic achievement, as well as children's expectations for achieving a graduate degree, have a strong positive relationship. Children of Cuban immigrants who were enrolled in private schools rather than public (an indicator of their greater resources to pay for school) were sixteen percent more likely to expect to earn an advanced degree than other children of immigrants (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 227). Children of Mexican immigrants, on the other hand, were nearly ten percent less likely to aspire to attend college than other immigrant children. The authors cite the "self-reinforcing web of objective disadvantages that they face" (230) as defeating the aspirations of Mexican immigrant children and their parents.

The location in which immigrant children grow up also impacts their adaptation in the U.S. The sites of Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) study, Florida and California, are home to

distinct sets of immigrant groups with varying social contexts. The largest group in Florida, Cuban exiles, are refugees and enjoy the support of a large co-ethnic community as well as the approval of the U.S. government. Mexicans, the largest immigrant group in California, lack the official support that refugees receive, and are often the targets of nativist hostility. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) find that children of immigrants in southern California were likely to identify solely with their parents' nationality, reflecting the effects of reactive ethnicity as well as other factors. The survey respondents in south Florida, on the other hand, were much more likely to identify as simply "American." The authors discuss the environment in southern California at the time of the survey as being saturated with immigrant-exclusion politics, which resulted in a trend of reactive ethnicity for many immigrant youths.

Influence of Family

Mexican migrant parents, for the most part, have few economic resources and little formal education. In Roeder and Millard's (2000) study of laborers at migrant camps in Michigan, the average education of respondents was 7.5 years. Ward and Atav (2004:172) cite a median of sixth-grade completion according to the National Agricultural Workers Survey of 1998 (in Mehta et al. 2000). For migrant farmworkers who grew up doing fieldwork, it is not surprising that low educational achievement would be the norm. Children who have to change schools twice per year (or more) due to their parents' pattern of following the harvest face great difficulties in achieving and maintaining academic success (see Roeder and Millard 2000).

Despite (or perhaps because of) their low levels of education, many Mexican immigrant parents, including migrant farm laborers, have high aspirations for their children and can influence them to achieve higher intergenerational social and economic statuses. Portes and Rumbaut (2001:280) assert that for Mexican immigrants in general, the only way they can invest

their human capital towards their children's upward socioeconomic mobility is to give them moral support and encouragement. López and Stanton-Salazar (2001:79) concur that Mexican parents value education, although circumstances do not always facilitate it. The pressures of staying in school while working on farms, performing domestic chores, and caring for younger siblings may defeat a migrant youth's academic achievement. Mexican immigrant parents' unfamiliarity with the education system in the United States hampers them in guiding their children through that system up to, and especially through, college. Because children are often more familiar with the social organization of the school system, their Mexican-origin parents very frequently rely on them to manage this whole balancing act (Stanton-Salazar 2001). However, despite the lack of parental mentorship on academic achievement, most Mexican adolescents strongly sense that their parents value education (Stanton-Salazar 2001).

In their discussion of the effects of family composition on immigrant children, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) indicate that two-parent families are the most conducive to children's positive outcomes in the host society. Having two parents in the household provides children with double the resources that one adult can provide, and immigrant children from intact families have a very low probability of dropping out of school or being 'inactive' in school (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 255). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) report that 73% of Mexican immigrant families in the U.S. have both parents present in the household. Although this number is relatively high when compared to Haitians and West Indians, Cubans and Asian immigrants show an advantage over their Mexican counterparts.

Among migrant laborers in the Texas-to-Michigan stream, the two-parent nuclear, and at times, the extended family, has been the norm. Chavira-Prado (1992) says that "farmers prefer to hire men as workers," (cited in Roeder and Millard 2000:3) and therefore single women are

unlikely to perform migrant labor. While the preference of employers certainly has influence, I would add that there are some single women (and single mothers) who perform migrant farmwork with extended family members. The traditional Mexican (and Catholic) cultural norm against divorce also works to preserve two-parent households among Mexican immigrant families.

A child's position in the sibling group may affect the likelihood of continuing education beyond high school. There is some evidence that lower-birth-order (older) children achieve higher educations than higher-birth-order (younger) children (Travis and Kohli 1995). Travis and Kohli (1995) indicate that parents' resource distribution decisions within middle-class families work to favor oldest, then youngest, and finally, middle children. However, this pattern was only present in middle-class U.S. families, and was not observed in wealthy or poor families in Travis and Kohli's study.

Research about the children of migrant farmworkers in the United States often focuses on primary and secondary education and/or the health status of migrant children, and ignores the topic of college education. The few that do address the topic usually omit the decision-making process to pursue post-secondary education. Duron's (1995) article is an exception. It summarizes the influences that spurred migrant youths' interest in, and ultimately, choice to attend college. Duron finds that parental influence is the most frequently cited influence on the decision to attend college. These findings are consistent with those of Suárez-Orozco (1995). Other common answers to the question "Who/what was key to your decision to attend college/post-secondary education?" were "myself; desire to get out of migrant work; other family members; high school counselor; and teachers" (Duron 1995:19-20). By contrast, friends and peers had very little influence on individuals' decision to pursue a college education.

Influence of Schools

One of the ways in which Portes and Rumbaut (2001) indicate that children of Mexican immigrants differ from Mexican-American young people of native-born parents (as well as other native-born whites and minorities) is in their educational achievement and attitudes toward school. The children of immigrants have a greater educational achievement drive than other children of the native-born (see also Telles and Ortiz 2008; Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco1995; Stanton-Salazar 2001; Vernez and Abrahamse 1996). Suárez-Orozco (1997) found that recent Mexican immigrants to the U.S. were more likely to aspire to graduate from college than U.S.-born Mexican-Americans (cited in Cuellar 2002). Both Portes and Rumbaut (2001) and Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995) found that the more assimilated immigrant children become to U.S. culture (and the less they retain the culture of their home country), the lower educational achievement drive they possess. Vernez and Abrahamse (1996; cited in López and Stanton-Salazar 2001:81-82) found that despite the academic achievement gap between Latino immigrant and native-born Latino children, the higher poverty rate and educational disadvantages of Latino immigrant parents, relative to the greater parental resources of other immigrant children, defeated children's higher-academic ambitions.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) find that Mexican-origin students perform poorly in school, with lower-than-average academic outcomes. Are the low educational achievements of many Mexican immigrant children largely the result of living in urban areas? Those that live in the inner city often face the same challenges that native-born children face in the urban context. Some inner-city minority youths come to view school as a tool of oppression that will not improve their lives in the end, and reject it and their peers who continue in school. Matute-Bianchi finds that students are labeled "wannabes" by peers who view them as wanting to be

white—as evidenced by working to achieve in school (1991: 219). Although Portes and Rumbaut (2001) find that immigrant children are less likely than their native-born minority counterparts to drop out of school, there is a significant risk that the children of immigrants will follow the example of some of their native-born peers and quit school, join gangs, or become juvenile delinquents. Despite their "immigrant achievement drive," those in urban and low-status schools are more likely to suffer academically than those in suburban or private schools (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

Juvenile delinquency and school attrition are not social problems unique to urban areas; however, it can be argued that the urban context promotes these outcomes more strongly as compared to rural areas and smaller cities. Sherraden and Barrera (1997) relay the stories of Mexican immigrant youths who, growing up in Chicago, dropped out of school partially for fear of gang violence and drug use in the schools. In addition, children that live in inner cities may be more likely to attend a poor or failing school where they are less likely to succeed. Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) study shows that immigrant children who attend inner city schools have consistently lower reading and math scores than students who attend suburban schools.

Duron's (1995) analysis also points out the importance of secondary education experiences for migrant young people in influencing their choices about college. Three out of the five most important influences that Duron identifies—"access to quality high school and college counseling that offers an array of options;…financial factors including access to scholarships, loans, and work or work-study programs; and ongoing support from family and educational personnel" (Duron 1995:34-35)—involve the impact of a student's high school experience on their college choices. High school counselors, teachers, and the Migrant

Education Program are all mentioned as influences toward post-secondary education by Duron's respondents as well (Duron 1995).

In addition to investigating the key influences on the children of migrant farmworkers in their academic pursuits, Duron (1995) also questions her participants regarding the obstacles to their participation in post-secondary education. Responses to this item included lack of finances, financial responsibilities to family, adjustment to college life, lack of family support (of college goals), and a lack of preparation for college provided in high school.

Despite all of the challenges they face, some Mexican immigrant children harness the potential of their strong family support system and reach high levels of educational attainment, specifically in the form of college degrees. For Mexican immigrants, the chances of "making it" in U.S. society are higher for their children than for subsequent generations. Although immigrant children face a host of complex obstacles, research has shown that they outperform native born Mexican-Americans academically. Mexican immigrant children make big advances in education compared to their parents; the following generations again revert to lower levels (Telles and Ortiz 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Telles and Ortiz (2008) explain that the reasons the subsequent generations decline in educational standing are based in the lack of an immigrant perspective—they don't remember how things were in "the old country." In addition, they have always known the racial hierarchy of the U.S., which helps to diminish their belief in their chances of achieving the American dream.

Influence of Social Capital

Bourdieu defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition…" (1986: 248). Social capital is the

advantage, contained in connections between individuals, over those that do not possess the same social connections. It is "capital" because it has value on the social "market." Relationships can help people advance socially, and those who do not have relationships that connect them to other people who can help them get into college, get a job, gain respect, etc., are at a disadvantage compared to those who do have such connections. Bourdieu (1986) states that social capital and the connections that support it are not naturally occurring; rather, it must be actively developed and maintained through work at relationships that can yield benefits to the individual. Social capital is built up and accumulated through reciprocal social relationships based on mutual trust (Putnam 2000).

Flora and Flora (2003) define the difference between bonding and bridging social capital: bonding social capital is built through in-group ties, while bridging social capital is based on social ties to people outside of one's in-group. In this dissertation, social capital outside of the migrant community (bridging social capital) is possessed by participants who have, or have had, positive relationships with school teachers, counselors, and other school staff; friends outside of the migrant community; and employment outside of migrant farmwork. Social capital within the migrant community (bonding social capital) is built through employment in migrant fieldwork, friends within migrant circles, and close familial relationships.

Telles and Ortiz (2008) found that several variables related to social capital were correlated with years of education achieved. They asked adult Mexican-Americans whether they knew professionals (doctors, lawyers, or teachers) while they were growing up; whether they attended church regularly as a child; and whether their parent(s) communicated with their teachers/school during their growing up years. The results are revealing: those children who knew professionals, attended church regularly, and whose parents communicated with their

schools all achieved higher levels of education than those who had the opposite experiences in childhood. Telles and Ortiz (2008) connect social capital accumulated over these bridges leading outside the migrant community—with adult professionals, religious communities, and school administrators and teachers—as having a statistically significant influence on children's long-term academic achievement.

As Telles and Ortiz's research shows, social connections with positive role models can have a lasting impact on young immigrants. Conversely, the life outcomes of immigrant children who have ties with individuals who influence them against pursuing education and upward mobility experience the "downside" of social capital (Portes and Landolt 1996). Portes and Landolt (1996) explain that social capital accumulation within particular circles can exclude individuals from the benefits of social interaction within other circles. This is evidenced in the case of a young person who "falls in with the wrong crowd," and thereby earns a reputation with teachers for being a troublemaker. His or her social capital within a group of friends excludes the student from developing, and receiving the potential benefits of, social capital from relationships with teachers. Immigrant children are often subject to peer pressure from native-born ethnic minority youths to reject academic pursuits and goals of upward mobility. Young people who continue to do so are often ridiculed by peers for being "wannabes," while being pressured to assimilate to the norms of the peer group (Portes and Landolt 1996; Matute-Bianchi 1991).

Flora and Flora (2003) discuss another downside of social capital. Bonding social capital within a dominant group can work to exclude those in dominated groups from external resources, which reinforces the status quo. Therefore, bridging social capital, often through networks

comprised of "weak ties" (Granovetter 1973) becomes very important in providing the resources, information, and opportunities to which young people in migrant camps have access.

Influence of Ethnic Communities

Ethnic communities are defined as geographical locations where a concentration of co-ethnics reside. Portes and Jensen (1989) distinguish the ethnic community from the ethnic enclave by defining the latter as a region where a high concentration of businesses are owned, and often staffed by, minority co-ethnics. In Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) analysis, immigrant groups that enjoy a neutral-to-positive reception from U.S. federal and local authorities are also more likely to enjoy the benefits of co-ethnic communities and enclaves. Southeast Asian and Cuban refugees fall in this category, and they have been successful in building co-ethnic communities and enclaves that provide many benefits to their members. Co-ethnic credit societies help entrepreneurs start businesses without taking out loans from a bank. Social capital accumulated within the community gives occupational advantages to co-ethnics and their children. In addition, co-ethnic communities provide ready customers for ethnic businesses that provide goods and services that are specific to the population and unavailable outside the group. Ethnic niches such as Chinese laundries, Cuban building contractors, and Vietnamese nail salons provide services both within and outside of the ethnic community, finding economic and social success in the larger U.S. society as well.

Co-ethnic communities also provide immigrant parents with social support from neighbors in rearing children by reinforcing cultural norms and providing an environment where the group's native language is spoken. Hein (2006) finds that the Hmong and Cambodians in Chicago and Milwaukee were able to develop active ethnic enclaves, despite their low position on the urban ethnic continuum. By contrast, members of the same ethnic groups living in the

smaller cities of Eau Claire and Rochester reported greater frustration with English skills than those in large cities, who did not need English as much as their small-city counterparts due to residence in an ethnic community. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) find that children who learn to adapt to American culture while retaining their native culture, and who become fluent bilinguals, are most likely to achieve selective acculturation.

Although some examples of Mexican ethnic communities exist in very large U.S. cities, Mexicans generally experience a hostile reception in the U.S. and do not have the benefit of strong co-ethnic communities or enclaves. Mexican immigrant parents report a lack of support from co-ethnics, reflecting their limited access to co-ethnic communities (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 278). Using data from the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), López and Stanton-Salazar (2001) contrast the socioeconomic context and outcomes of Mexican immigrant young people to those of other immigrants, particularly Asian groups as well as earlier waves of Mexican immigrants and Cubans. They point out that although "two-parent households and high levels of labor force participation are the norm," (2001:57), the Mexican immigrant community "…lack(s) the web of organizations and social practices that have allowed specific groups to utilize traditional culture to help children achieve" (2001:57). The lack of school achievement of Mexican immigrant children, in comparison to other newly-arrived immigrants, is further evidence of the cancellation effect that a hostile governmental and social reception can have on the possible benefits of co-ethnic communities (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

The Gendering of Opportunity

This study will explore the role of gender in structuring which migrant farmworkers' children drop out of their parents' occupation and pursue higher education. Gender is a key social component of all peoples' lives, and the role that gender plays in the lives of Mexican

immigrants has been well documented. Gender influences the types of employment Mexican migrants are able to obtain (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; 2001; Roeder and Millard 2000; Bean and Stevens 2003). Traditional Mexican gender roles and norms can also be disrupted by migration (Hirsch 2003; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Smith 2006). Gender norms likewise play an important role in young Mexican migrants' lives and are important in understanding outcomes. In his ethnographic study of transnational Mexicans in New York, Smith (2006) describes how young Mexican-origin males must negotiate their identities as macho *rancheros* versus striving middle-class men. Similarly, young Mexican immigrant females must reconcile multiple conflicting identities as deferential *rancheras* versus autonomous American career-women. Both genders are under pressure to redeem their parents' sacrifices by succeeding in school and work. However, the young women have additional challenges: to marry "good" men; to have children; and to provide domestic services to both.

Smith (2006) recounts the divergent paths of man- and woman-hood that his participants encounter, and the various ways in which they maneuver the intricate details of choosing the right gendered responses in given contexts. He describes a setting in which young immigrant males are presented with competing versions of masculinity, and their attempts to hold onto traditional male power in an environment where women are granted more autonomy than traditional Mexican culture allows. Smith acknowledges that while cultures contain prevalent gender norms, they are by no means concrete: "…the cultures of the countries of origin and destination are themselves both evolving and internally inconsistent" (2006:126). Variations on gender roles, depending on the physical location of the study participants at varying times, are apparent in his analysis.

Smith (2006) also develops the concept of the "immigrant bargain" in relation to gender. The "bargain" is the trade-off of parental sacrifice through work and living in a foreign context in order to give their children a better life, in exchange for the children's academic and occupational success. Smith refers to the work of the Suárez-Orozcos in his summation of the three responses of young people to this "bargain": "…some try harder, some withdraw, and some reject this narrative and come to feel that their parents' expectations fail to take account of their children's difficulties and greatly exceed their ability to help the children live up to them" (2006:126). The importance of gender within the "bargain" involves the pressure to fulfill traditional gender roles, as well as the educational and occupational expectations the "bargain" entails. Individuals will rely on gender roles and interpretations depending on the culture in which they find themselves at any given time, and may switch between interpretations depending on whether they are in Mexico or the United States. It is likewise expected that the participants in the current study will seek to balance the expectations placed on them by traditional Mexican culture and the "immigrant bargain," as well as the gender norms they have learned while living in the United States.

For migrant workers in Michigan, and their children, some specific gender outcomes are evident. Roeder and Millard's (2000:8) survey of migrant camp residents indicates that women respondents generally had more education than men—women had typically attended school until the eighth grade while men had attended up to seventh grade, on average. This is likely because young men had stronger pressures than young women to quit school in favor of working for pay to help support their families of origin. Children growing up in migrant families often have truncated educations due to this fact; fieldwork is viewed as labor that children can do. In Mexican culture, eldest sons are especially expected to contribute to the family's economic

wellbeing, although this expectation may fall to eldest daughters as well, particularly if there are no sons in the family or if sons are significantly younger than daughters.

Roeder and Millard (2000) also found that women were much less likely than men to be living without family members (approximately 2% versus 34%; 2000:7). This reflects traditional Mexican gender norms of women being in the company of other family members, particularly fathers or brothers, when in public places, traveling, or simply not at home. Girls who grow up in immigrant families often experience more parental control and influence than boys (Wolf 2002), who are conversely encouraged to engage in activities outside of the family (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). Girls, on the other hand, are commonly expected to take care of the home and to prepare for adult lives of caring for a husband and children (Hirsch 2003). Even in families that are less traditional, girls more often consent to their parents' wishes than do boys.

Girls from immigrant families typically outperform their male counterparts academically (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Matute-Bianchi 1991). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) note that even though girls have higher rates of depression and poorer self-esteem than boys, they still have higher educational aspirations and outcomes. Girls also have higher rates of bilingualism, a factor which Portes and Rumbaut (2001) find to be related to selective acculturation.

Notions of Home

Transnational migrants have been defined as those that engage in activities that cross national borders, including economic, political, cultural, and religious pursuits (Portes 1999). Some scholars define the transnational experience as more broadly including a "plurality of codes and symbols that go beyond the nation-state" and see migration encompassing many complicated and at times divergent contexts and situations in an individual's life (Wolf 2002: 257). In her study of Filipino immigrant youths in California, Diane L. Wolf (2002) frames

"home" as "multiple locations…that may exist not only geographically but ideologically and emotionally as well" (2002: 257). She found that young people commonly referred to the Philippines as "home," a place which exists within their lives in California even though it is located across the Pacific Ocean. Employing a transnational perspective, Wolf describes the common use of the term "home" to mean the Philippines among Filipino children of immigrants, whether or not they were born there or had ever visited their parents' homeland (263).

Rubén Rumbaut (2002) likewise explores the meaning of "home" among children of immigrants in his analysis of the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) data. In the process of measuring the level of transnationality among children of immigrants, respondents were asked whether the U.S. or their home country feels "most like 'home'" (Rumbaut 2002: 75). Rumbaut reports that the great majority—88% of respondents—reported that the U.S. is home: less than 2% said their parents' native country is home, or that neither place felt like home; and 9.5% said that both countries are home. Fifteen percent of Mexican immigrant youths said that both countries are home, displaying a higher level of transnational attachment than was found in the sample as a whole. A possible reason is that due to Mexico's proximity to the United States, Mexican youths had more opportunity to visit their home country and to develop greater attachments to it than many of the other respondents in the sample, including Southeast Asian refugees (Rumbaut 2002).

These divergent findings regarding the children of immigrants' claim to a place called "home" are further highlighted by Rouse's (1991) description of the postmodern migrant experience. Rouse (1991) explains that migrant communities take on new and broader meanings in the postmodern era, and that current technological advances in communications are significant in this transformation. In this respect, "home" may be one more example of a place that has

taken on multiple new definitions in the postmodern era. It is possible that children of migrant farmworkers would be more likely to remain in the migrant cycle as adults if they view multiple locations as home.

The Context of Migrant Farmworkers

If the children of migrant farmworkers have much in common with other children of Mexican immigrants, what social factors are not shared between them? Some of the challenges faced by the children of Mexican immigrants, as identified by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) are not common to the migrant youths who are the focus of this study. These are likely to include: "…insecure legal status, persecution by immigration authorities, poor and dangerous neighborhoods…" (2001:230). The majority of migrant families with whom I am familiar are in the United States legally. Most have work visas or permanent residency, and their children born in the U.S. are U.S. citizens. Although participants in this study were not asked about their legal status in the country, it is apparent through their narratives of constant travel back and forth between Michigan and Mexico that they have the protection of the proper legal channels to be in, and regularly leave and re-enter the United States.

Second, the Mexican immigrants in Portes and Rumbaut's study are located in the San Diego, California, area. Migrant farmworkers, by definition, live in rural areas, where they may have less contact with the social ills of a heavily populated urban setting. This is only to say that the challenges they face in rural America are different from those faced by immigrants in metropolitan areas. Hein (2006) found that Hmong and Cambodian immigrants in Eau Claire, Wisconsin and Rochester, Minnesota identified racial discrimination and assimilation as the most significant problems they faced in the U.S. On the other hand, members of the same ethnic groups living in the major cities of Chicago and Milwaukee identified crime as their primary

concern (Hein 2006). While Holland, Michigan, is a city, (not a small town or village), it is not a sprawling metropolis. Although migrant workers' neighborhoods can be described as "poor," simply due to the economic status of the inhabitants, it would be incorrect to say that they are "dangerous" in the way that inner-city neighborhoods may have relatively high levels of violent crime or gang activity. Hein (2006) describes the Hmong and Cambodians in large cities as being placed into a "pecking order of racial and ethnic groups" (227), while those in small cities experience "small-town hospitality and hate" (228). However, as influential as place of residence is in this regard, overall Hein concludes that immigrants' ethnic origins—the culture and politics of their home country, as well as the relationship of the United States to that history—has a greater impact on their adaptation in the U.S. than their place of residence.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) find that selective acculturation takes place when immigrant children are immersed in U.S. culture while maintaining strong roots in their culture of origin. Reactive ethnicity, an indicator of dissonant acculturation, can occur among young people from those immigrant groups that experience a hostile reception and feel forced to abandon their culture, language, and identity in order to become American. This is often the case with the children of Mexican immigrants (and even more so with third- and higher-generation Mexican-Americans), who "react" to their social position by actively embracing their Mexican identity while rejecting approved channels to upward mobility (such as education and work). Mexican immigrant parents may have high educational aspirations for their children, and children often have the same lofty goals for themselves, but the parents' lack of human capital and "…the scarcity of educational resources that parents bring to the table means that in many cases they are not able to translate those values into effective institutional support for their children, especially as they confront the difficult years of adolescence" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001:80). However, an

ethnic community can compensate for the resources that parents lack, if the parents are integrated in an ethnic community. It is in this context that selective acculturation occurs and provides young people a path out of migrant farmwork.

Conclusion

Children of Mexican-origin migrant farmworkers inhabit a unique space. Although the participants in the current study are immigrants or children of immigrants, they are different in several ways from other Mexican immigrant children studied by social scientists. First, they experience constant moving within the U.S. throughout their childhood years, combined with changing schools at least twice per school year. Second, most studies of Mexican immigrant children focus on metropolitan populations. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) consider San Diego and Miami; Smith (2006) studies transnational families in New York City; Sherraden and Barrera (1997) interviewed the children of immigrants in Chicago; and Telles and Ortiz's (2008) longitudinal study covers up to four generations of immigrant families that started out in Los Angeles and San Antonio. The context of the young adults in the current study, while not entirely rural, is that of a small-city setting in Holland, Michigan. The experiences in school alone are expected to be quite different in Holland versus any of the large cities mentioned above.

While there are certainly studies of rural Latinos in general (Millard and Chapa 2004) and of Hispanic migrant workers in particular (Rothenberg 1998), none focus on the factors that influence migrants' children in choosing to obtain a college education or to continue to do fieldwork. This dissertation will begin to fill this gap through personal interviews with young adults in migrant camps in Holland, Michigan, complemented by focus groups with students at Michigan State University who grew up in migrant families.

Of all the studies reviewed here, Duron's (1995) study is the most similar in subject matter to the current study. However, this study is distinct in comparison to Duron's approach in two ways. First, it is ethnographic, having developed through my personal interactions within a specific migrant community. Second, it focuses on young adults who had spent some part of their childhood years in a specific area—Ottawa County, Michigan—and expands to include Mexican-origin college students (in the focus groups) who migrated to Michigan at some point during their childhood years. Duron's survey sample is comprised of students living throughout the U.S., selected from the recipients of a scholarship for students from migrant families.

This study combines elements of several of the works cited thus far: the small, Midwestern-town focus of Millard and Chapa (2004), Smith's (2006) ethnographic perspective on Mexican immigrants, and Duron's (1995) subject of college students from migrant families. The current study is unique in providing a synthesis of these elements that is lacking in these other studies. In addition, since the participants in the current study all come from the Texas/Mexico–to-Michigan migrant stream, the results of this study are expected to be most pertinent to educators, social workers, and policy makers in the state of Michigan, and perhaps in Midwestern states along the route between Mexico and Michigan, as they seek to understand this particular migrant stream and how to best serve its members.

Like other children of immigrants, migrant farmworker youths understand through their everyday experiences the difficult lives that their parents endure, and what lies in their own futures if they follow in their parents' occupational footsteps. For the most part, they also have regular experience with Mexico, and they know what opportunities they lack in that country. Many of them have motivation to succeed academically; and on the whole, the children of

migrant farmworkers should be expected to follow much the same pattern as Portes and Rumbaut (2001) identify among Mexican immigrant youths.

Chapter 3

Context of Migrant Farm Labor in West Michigan

Introduction

Migrant farm laborers in the United States often spend their lives moving from one place to another—working in fields, traveling to the next job, and at times returning to visit family or home. Some constantly move to new places, while others follow a pattern of travel to a place of work and return at the end of each season to a place of rest. While their individual stories vary, migrant workers often experience similar challenges, choices, and obstacles in life. This chapter is intended to give a historical overview of migrant farmworkers in west Michigan.

Latino migrant farm labor has been an important force in Michigan agriculture for at least the past seventy years. In the early part of the twentieth century, Southern and Eastern Europeans made up much of the migrant farmworker labor force in the United States. In the 1920s, legislation restricting immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe caused a shortage of farmworkers. Mexican-origin migrant farm laborers began to fill the need for temporary agricultural labor in the U.S. during this time. With the advent of the Great Depression, much resentment arose against Latino farmworkers, but World War II soon created a new need for their labor. The resulting Bracero Program, which lasted until 1964, channeled great numbers of Mexican workers to the farms and factories of the Midwestern United States (Millard and Chapa 2004). Migrant farm laborers traveled to western Michigan in large numbers by 1950, as berries and tree fruits increased and sugar beet production declined in the east part of the state (Valdés 1991). This steady flow of migrant farmworkers from the Rio Grande Valley and Mexico to Michigan, identified as the Midcontinental route by Rochín, Santiago, and Dickey (1989), began in the 1950's, gained much strength in the 1960's, and continues to this day (Valdés 1991;

Rochín et al. 1989). Roeder and Millard (2000) conducted a survey of migrant farmworkers in southern Michigan, including Ottawa and neighboring counties, in 1997. They point out that "…Michigan workers mostly do not come directly from Mexico, but are citizens or legal residents, many of whom grew up and were educated in the U.S." (2000: 1). This statement is true of the participants in this study: while some came from Mexico originally and return there regularly, others were born in the United States and have spent their lives migrating between Texas and Michigan (many of this latter group visit Mexico often as well).

This study focuses on the agricultural communities near Holland and Grand Haven, Michigan, both located along the shores of Lake Michigan, in Ottawa County. The following definitions of migrant farmworkers fit the population of interest in this study:

> Migratory farmworkers are those who change residence during the year to accommodate their agricultural employment. Many patterns of migration exist among migratory workers. Some workers migrate to their place of agricultural employment at the beginning of the work season and return home (either in the United States or country of origin) at the end of the season. (Ward and Atav 2004: 169)

The in-depth interviewees in this study all originated from the stream of migrant workers that travel between Ottawa County and Texas or Mexico. Some of the focus group participants were also from this same group, while others come from the larger stream that travels to other parts of west Michigan or other parts of the state. The geographical scope of this study is limited; however, the experience of migrant farm laborers in this region of Michigan does not appear to be unique from that of their counterparts in other parts of the state, the region of the Midwest, or, in many cases, the country.

The places to which migrant farm laborers travel for work are those with much agricultural potential: the area along Lake Michigan is well suited to farming, containing rich soil and abundant moisture from the lake. The primary crops in this area are blueberries,

raspberries, strawberries, apples, cherries, grapes, celery, asparagus, and cucumbers. Nursery stock and Christmas trees also flourish in the region, and many nurseries employ seasonal migrant laborers as well. Migrant workers perform various tasks, including "the harvesting of plants, the production of vegetables, the production of poultry and milk, ranch activities, working in fisheries, and working at activities related to the cultivating of trees" (Blake 2004: 40). In Ottawa County, they are primarily employed in blueberry cultivation and in caring for nursery plants and trees. The participants in this study typically worked in blueberries, container plants, or both.

Michigan is the fourth largest employer of migrant and seasonal farm laborers in the nation, and Ottawa County employs the most temporary agricultural workers of any county in the state. Seasonal and migrant agricultural workers in Ottawa County number just over 6,000, and the migrant household population including non-employed members totals nearly 12,000 (Larson 2006). Ottawa County has become an attractive location for migrant workers, and eventual settlers, for many reasons. While the local agricultural economy is an obvious reason that migrants come to the area, their choice to return, or to settle, is likely influenced by the presence of social support for Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Spanish speakers in general within the community. According to the 2000 United States Census (which is being updated with the 2010 Census as of this writing), Holland, Michigan's population is 22.2% Hispanic, compared to the national average of 12.5%. Holland Township had fewer Hispanic residents in 2000, but still represented a higher-than-average percentage of 15.8% (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000).

Holland has various churches that provide Spanish and/or bilingual services; there are also exclusively Spanish-language congregations in the local area. Likewise, there are Spanish-

language church services in Grand Haven, Michigan, just to the north, although in smaller numbers than in Holland. Ottawa County schools provide English as a Second Language instruction as well as special summer school programs for migrant students. There are also several grocery and consumer goods shops that market directly to the Mexican and Mexican American population in Holland, providing ethnic foods and goods imported from Mexico. Mexican restaurants serving authentic Mexican fare are present in the area, and the local advocacy group Latin Americans United for Progress is a great asset in linking Spanish speaking newcomers with local resources. The local social support systems help to create an inviting atmosphere for Latino settlers, and an appropriate location for research regarding the topic of migrant settlement.

The cities of Holland and Grand Haven were founded by Dutch immigrants, and a strong Dutch heritage remains in these two communities. Although there is often the perception of homogeneity and an entirely white population (the population of Ottawa County was 91.5% white as of the 2000 census), some racial diversity is present in west Michigan (although cities such as Benton Harbor and Muskegon Heights contain largely segregated populations, as the following statistics reveal). The 2000 U.S. Census indicates that the population of Muskegon, Michigan, is 31.7% black or African American, while Muskegon Heights is 77.8% black or African American. Benton Harbor is 92.4% black. Grand Rapids is 20.4% African American and 13.1% Hispanic (slightly over the national average of 12.5%). Despite the large white population of Ottawa County, there is a growing number of Hispanic residents in the county. In 2006-2008, the population of Ottawa County was estimated to be 89.5% white (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2006-2008b), and Holland's Hispanic population was estimated at 24.7% (U.S.

Bureau of the Census 2006-2008a). Holland, in southern Ottawa County, has the largest Latino population of any city in the west Michigan region.

In their article "Latinos in Rural America," Saenz and Torres (2003) provide a statistical overview of Latinos in the Midwestern United States. They point out that the rural Midwest experienced a 112.8% increase in the number of Latino residents between 1990 and 2000, compared to a 77% increase in metropolitan areas of the region. The Midwest, along with the South, "…regions that have traditionally had relatively few Latinos" (Saenz and Torres 2003: 59), experienced the fastest growth in Latino population during the 1990-2000 decade. The authors also refer to the comparative youth of the rural Latino population, and the fact that 52.9% of rural Midwestern Latinos were foreign-born in 2000. While these numbers refer to all rural Midwestern Latinos, they include the migrant farmworker population. The large percentage of foreign-born Latinos may also indicate a greater likelihood of transnationalism among this group of Latinos, as those born outside of the United States are probably more likely to maintain ties and return to their country of origin on a routine basis.

In the early years of migration to west Michigan, southern whites and African American migrant workers competed with Latinos for temporary agricultural jobs. As the former groups secured permanent employment in industry, particularly in food processing (Valdés 1991), Latinos remained in the migrant circuit. Some Latinos also settled in west Michigan through moving to food processing, and the Heinz Corporation in particular has been noted to have brought Latino families to Holland permanently (Vande Water 2001). Those who continued migrating were often preferred by farmers over southern whites and African Americans, according to Maurice Voland, of Michigan State University. "Since farmers prefer a stable work force, we find that their designation of the Mexican-American family-centered crew as the most

desirable is not at all surprising. The familial organization tends to produce a more stable work force, one not prone to excessive drinking and absenteeism and keeping erratic hours" (Voland 1968: 24). Mexican American migrant farmworkers have historically traveled in family units (southern black migrants were less likely to do so), and tended to have more children than farmworkers of other racial or ethnic backgrounds (Valdés 1991). Mexican-origin migrant farm laborers have become the norm in agriculture, and 98 to 99 percent of the migrant farmworkers in southwest Michigan are Latino (Crane 2003), higher than the national rate of 94 percent, reported by Blake (2004). Rochín et al. (1989) indicate that fifty to one hundred percent of farmworkers in the state of Michigan are of Mexican origin, and that "the overwhelming majority of migrants in Western Michigan are Chicanos or Mexican nationals" (1989: 18).

Wages

Wages for migratory farmworkers have not kept pace with the increase in wages of many other occupations over time. Valdés reports that by the end of the 1950s, farmworkers' wages were approximately thirty-five percent of industrial workers' wages.

> A 1958 study determined that annual family incomes for Mexican American seasonal farmworkers coming to the Midwest, including parents and children, was $2256. The relative decline in agricultural incomes contrasted with productivity, which rose by 83 percent in agriculture between 1940 and 1958, compared with only 33 percent in industry. (Valdés 1991: 148)

While these figures speak generally of migrant farmworkers in the Midwest, it is safe to say that west Michigan rates were not much different. Comparing reports by the Governor's Study Commission on Migratory Labor in 1954 and the Rural Manpower Report of 1973, it is apparent that piece rates in some of the most significant crops in west Michigan had remained largely unchanged in nearly twenty years.

The 1959 Michigan Post Season Farm Labor Report (Michigan Employment Security Commission) stated that despite the increase in wages from the previous year, farmers still had trouble keeping laborers in the fields: "Picker earnings were much better than a year ago but labor supply remained a problem throughout the harvest. The availability of migrant workers was considerably below normal and constant recruiting and shifting of workers was necessary in order to prevent serious crop losses" (1959: 26). Such inconsistent commitment on the part of the workers could represent a lack of incentive due to the low wages in general, which may not have been greatly affected by an increase over the previous year. The Report also states that there was little consistency in who was paid what wage: "Hourly rates showed a slight increase over those paid in 1958…Hourly rates varied according to custom, supply and demand of labor, market conditions, composition of groups or crews, age, sex, experience, attitude and ability of workers" (1959: 30).

In 1965, the Michigan House and Senate Labor Committees reported that "Public Act 296 exempts from the minimum wage law agricultural fruit growers, pickle growers and tomato growers or other agricultural employers who traditionally contract for the harvesting on a piecework basis…"(1965: 15). The Committees also state that Michigan State University (MSU) was to begin a study of piecework rates, and how these rates might be translated into the hourly minimum wage. Valdés (1991) indicates that the attempt to reform migrant laborers' low wages lasted from 1965 to 1967. The resulting recommendations from agricultural experts at MSU were not well received by farm owners. Hearings were held at which farmers could voice their opinions on the committee's recommendations to increase the wages paid for over thirty different crops. In a review of the piece rate for blueberries,

> …the board set a rate of 13.8 cents per pound as the piece rate equivalent of $1.25 per hour. Employers criticized the rates, and a Western Michigan grower offered compelling

> testimony: "Blueberries are as American as Thanksgiving Day, and paying somebody 14 cents a pound to pick them is a radical idea." The board then determined that 9 cents per pound was the piece rate equivalent of the hourly minimum. (Valdés 1991: 177)

The Michigan Civil Rights Commission (1969) included the recommendation that migrants who were paid piece rate be included under the minimum hourly wage law. Their report indicates that at a time when the Michigan minimum hourly wage was $1.25, "…workers paid by piece rate consistently failed to earn an amount equal to the minimum hourly wage ($1.25)" (1969: 8). The Commission further describes the situation in specific crops, many of which were important in west Michigan: "In picking strawberries, the average hourly wage fell below the mhw [minimum hourly wage] on 80 percent of the days worked. In picking cherries, the average hourly wage fell below the mhw on 30 percent of the days worked. In picking blackberries, the average hourly wage fell below the mhw on 57 percent of the days worked" (1969: 8). Valdés (1991) also indicates that the Commission later found that blueberry pickers were similarly being paid below the minimum wage 57% of the time.

Currently, wages for migrant farm laborers are required to meet hourly minimum wage standards. While this is an advancement in the wage laws since the 1960s, the variance in adherence to the law is well known. For example, in a 1999 newspaper report, "Migrant advocate says fines against blueberry growers not enough," the legal violations of several west Michigan blueberry farms are listed, including minimum wage and lack of payment violations (Sanchez 1999). According to Farmworker Legal Services of Michigan, various legal cases involving the withholding of wages and payment of wages at less than minimum wage have been won against growers in recent years (Farmworker Legal Services of Michigan 2010). Therefore, despite the protection of a legal minimum wage, "agricultural workers are noted to have one of the lowest median weekly earnings of all workers in the United States (Runyan 2000), with half

of all farmworker families earning less than $10,000 per year" (Mehta et al. 2000, cited in Ward and Atav 2004: 173).

Housing Conditions

The housing of temporary farm laborers has been very rudimentary in the past. According to the Migrants in Michigan (1954) report, "The over 50,000 out-of-state seasonal workers are housed in every conceivable type of shelter, such as cabin houses, house trailers, wagon houses, leased, vacant farm houses, army pyramidal tents, barracks, tool sheds, granaries, chick houses, brooder houses, barns and garages" (1954: 17). Voland (1968) says that the median room size for migrant housing was 200 square feet, and that rooms originally intended to house single men were not adequate for housing the families that later became the norm. Voland goes on to describe the facilities available on farms, among them what he describes as "extras" to give incentives to workers to continue with that particular employer:

> Hot water is provided on six percent of the farms we visited. Outdoor trench-type lavatories are provided on all farms; and some farms also provide showers, though not necessarily indoors, and some type of laundry facility. Forty percent of the farmers provide a refrigerator for the cabins. Providing these extras is one of the devices used by farmers in securing and keeping their labor. (Voland 1968: 18-19)

In Michigan, prior to 1965, minimum housing standards were not required for migrant farmworkers who were U.S. citizens. Contracting workers from other countries, however, did require certain housing provisions. According to the 1959 Michigan Post Season Labor Farm Report, this was one reason that farmers could not secure adequate labor: "…Most growers who were experiencing labor shortages were not able to provide suitable bedding, eating and cooking utensils which are prerequisites for foreign workers" (1959: 27). The attitude that providing for temporary agricultural laborers was an undue burden to farmers helped to keep Michigan from passing the Migrant Housing Law until 1965.

In 1965, the Michigan House and Senate Labor Committee reported that they toured migrant camps and found that many had very inadequate facilities. "Most of the individual or family living quarters we saw were of the one-room type (usually 12' by 12') with a two-burner stove, pit latrine and one outdoor water faucet for all quarters. Most camps had no wash basins, refrigerators (or on a shared basis), showers, laundry facilities, hot and cold running water or flush toilets" (1965: 22).

The issue of what was a generally accepted minimum standard of housing for workers who were U.S. citizens was left up to the individual farmer. "In 1963 the same question [of a minimum standard for migrant housing] was put to a placement service director in Benton Harbor, Michigan. His criterion was 'a reasonable protection against the elements'" (Moore 1965: 44). The first year of inspections under the Migrant Housing Law showed that the majority of farms did not meet the new standards. The law called for

> …mandatory inspection, licensing, and regulation of all farm labor camps of five or more persons. It required two annual inspections, one before workers arrived, to allow growers to make corrections, and another during the season. The 1966 inspections located…an average of 5.9 violations per camp. Only 15 percent of the camps were inspected a second time, and only half the defects were corrected. (Valdés 1991: 174)

While pressure for a law to protect migrant workers against inhuman housing conditions was strong enough to pass the 1965 statute, the pressure from growers against raising their costs also resulted in loopholes in the law which allowed them to keep operating even if standards were not met (Valdés 1991). The ineffectiveness of the law, due to lack of enforcement, soon became apparent:

> In 1967 inspectors found more than 6,000 violations, but took only seven cases to court. They won five and operators paid fines ranging from ten dollars to fifty dollars. The law was amended in 1968, ostensibly because it was causing a backlog in the courts. The amended law transferred cases from the more impersonal circuit courts to local courts, thereby increasing opportunities for cronyism. (Valdés 1991: 174)

The west part of the state has certainly not been without its housing law violators. Valdés (1991) states, "The inspected Berrien County camp of Walter Schoenfield had frayed electric wiring that 'spews sparks in the dry wood' and 'an outhouse so infested with rats that children from the camp are afraid to use it'" (1991: 174-175).

The current condition of migrant housing has much improved since the time that the housing law was enacted. In 1969, the migrant camp licensing requirements in Michigan were changed to adhere to the Federal Temporary Labor Housing Rules. The new rules included sixty square feet of space per adult, water under pressure in all labor camps, and the requirement of showers with hot and cold water (Pérez 2000). Despite the improvements, overcrowding continues to be a prominent issue in west Michigan migrant camps. It is common to see families housed two per apartment, giving each family one bedroom and the use of common space, the living room and kitchen. At times this means that families of six are sleeping in the same bedroom. Families often feel uncomfortable living with a "roommate" family that they may or may not know, and feel the need to relegate themselves to the space of their bedroom for much of their time in the shared apartment, in order to achieve some level of privacy. I have met families who have a schedule of who uses the kitchen at what time, in order to have some individual familial cohesion at meal times. Pérez's Allegan County United Way Hispanic Assessment Report (2000) also recognized overcrowded conditions at migrant labor camps as a concern.

The following account describes current trends in migrant housing:

> Migrant farmworkers…are often housed in remote and difficult-to-access "migrant camps." The accommodations may be comprised of a series of mobile homes or may be dormitory-style housing provided by the grower or labor contractor. When the employer does not provide housing, farmworkers must find their own accommodations.

> …Overcrowding is common in both migrant camps and rental housing. (Ward and Atav 2004:173)

On the north end of Ottawa County, migrant housing is more likely to be in remote locations on unpaved roads, away from nearby towns. Closer to Holland, on the south side of the county, some migrant housing is located on the outskirts of the city and is readily accessible by main roads. Both the mobile home and apartment variety are common among housing provided by farmers, although some migrant workers in the area also rent their housing elsewhere.

Employer Relations

In considering the relationship between growers and temporary workers, two pictures emerge. One is of the laissez-faire farmer who hardly knows his workers and instills his power in the crew leaders to oversee the temporary help. This farm owner seems more humane toward his workers, and often abides by the policy that "'You should pay a fair wage and not meddle…'" and that "…you should be 'friendly' and 'treat the workers with the same respect as any other man,'" (Voland 1968: 19). (One variation on this more positive relationship between farmer and worker is the account given by Rothenberg (1998) of the very close relationship between a small Michigan farmer and the Latino family that has worked on his farm for years.) The other picture is of the micro-managing owner who is aware of every move his employees make. While farmers in either category could be, and certainly are, abusive of migrant workers, it is the former that seems to have a better relationship with employees. In describing the former type, Voland indicates:

> In general, farmers tend not to interfere in the running of the crews, especially if the crew is Mexican-American. There is a strong feeling that: 'If the farmer meddles where he shouldn't, the whole crew will quit.' Many farmers apparently have little contact with the people in their crews…In many cases, the only member of the crew that the farmer knows by name is the crew leader. (Voland 1968: 18)

It has often been the employer who is perceived as more caring that was able to "get away" with poorer quality housing since employees often rated the farmer's attitude toward them as being of greater importance than housing:

> The farmer whom they considered to be kind, understanding, sympathetic, concerned, helping and a conscientious businessman was adjudged the most desirable to work for…when the migrants perceived that the farmer was interested in them and concerned with them as people, they were much more willing to put up with deficiencies in the housing than they were when the farmer wasn't perceived so favorably. (Voland 1968: 32).

One of the problems that can arise when farmers are not acquainted with their temporary laborers is that it may seem to them that everything is fine, even when this is not the case. It is certain that some farmers simply make illegal, inhumane, and/or immoral decisions based on their personal economics. Others may be ignorant of abuses that take place between the crew bosses and the workers. They may also be aware of such abuses but choose to overlook them. The attitude that "there are no problems here" led to much animosity between growers and government investigations of migrant conditions. The Benton Harbor News-Palladium reported that a state government tour of migrant camps was a "'privy-sniffing, under-the-mattress tour of migrant living conditions'" (Valdés 1991: 153). At times, the growers *were* the government, and were able to assert that no reforms were needed in the area of migrant labor conditions:

> Sen. Burch Storey of Belding, a grower…called a single one-day session in which a handful of growers, state officials, and corporate representatives painted a rosy picture. Rep. Don Pears of Buchanan, representing a fruit-growing district in Southwestern Michigan, asserted that workers had no complaints and that the only problems were the result of 'guile' caused by outsiders. (Valdés 1991: 154)

<u>Community Relations</u>

The larger communities in which migrant farmworkers temporarily reside are often oblivious to their existence. A quotation from a 1991 Holland Sentinel article is a clear example:

"A lot of people don't realize that on the outskirts of Holland, there is a whole other community" (Caldwell 1991). This statement was made by a Community Education coordinator, who says that her "whole perspective and value system has changed…" through working with migrant families who used a daycare center funded by the group. This woman's experience, while perhaps not unique for a social services worker, stands out because she, as a resident of Holland, Michigan, learned about, and became involved with, the little-known group of migrant workers just outside of the city. Part of the historical reason for this ignorance of migrant workers' presence could be that, specifically in Holland and Ottawa County, the county government prided itself on having "no poor people" in the county. Ottawa County did not have an Office of Economic Opportunity in 1970, and the lack of poor people was the reason given by a county commissioner (Berry 1970). Berry (1970) also recounts the struggles of the local Council on Migrant Affairs to become established and support Holland's migrant community, working through volunteers and a total budget of fifty dollars in 1970.

Attempts have definitely been made, over time, by year-round residents to meet the needs of temporary agricultural workers in their communities. Sometimes such attempts have been ethnocentric enterprises intended to "civilize" and "sanitize" migrant workers and their children. Reul (1967) described such a seemingly charitable endeavor. Many communities have provided day care facilities for migrant workers' children (often through the church sponsored Migrant Ministry), and one of the centers that she visited had a practice of changing children out of their own clothes and laundering them while children were dressed in "play clothes." The children would also be given baths every day at the day care center. Reul explains many parents' reactions to these practices:

> How do you think you would feel if you were this parent and your child came home and told you he had a bath after you had given him a bath before he left in the morning? It is

> no wonder that many of the parents said their children preferred to stay home or work in the fields than to go to the center. What the parents were really saying is they had been slapped across the face. (Reul 1967: 35)

Sometimes powerful community members used their status to prevent broader knowledge of migrant laborer conditions, exploitation, and the general disregard of their needs by the larger community. In Berrien County, a comparative study of migrant children's education was to be undertaken during the 1950s. After the researcher had secured permission from county and school officials to carry out the study, the president of the Berrien County Farm Bureau found out about the project and immediately convinced them to revoke their approval. Mr. Ray DeWitt, the Farm Bureau president, told the National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor (NCALL) researcher that these studies "always result in unfavorable publicity for the growers" (Valdés 1991: 153). Mr. Greene of the NCALL was compelled to move his study to Illinois. Such a study would have been enlightening, particularly considering the sentiments that teachers and administrators often held toward migrant children: "an Ottawa County, Michigan, report observed, 'Teachers are not too happy about them in the classroom,'" an attitude undoubtedly known to the children (Valdés 1991: 186).

Voland (1968) found that communities in which migrant laborers spent shorter amounts of time and only worked with one crop provided better services and had more interaction with the migrant population. Such communities

> …made greater efforts to provide for medical facilities, day-care for children, special recreational activities, stocking of special food items in grocery stores and generally a more open and permissive atmosphere…In contrast, where migrants were in the community over a long period of time during the season, the community seemed to forget that these people were present. (Voland 1968: 27)

It is worth noting here that many of the in-depth interview participants in the current study grew up in families that spent a majority of their time in Ottawa County—most of them stayed in the area for nine or ten months of each year.

Although some migrants were provided better services than others, Voland (1968) did not find great differences in the types of people with whom migrant workers socialized, or who socialized with them. He found that migrant laborers "…tend to socialize with relatives or other members of their own camp. Few migrant workers have meaningful contact with the nearby community or with a wide selection of other migrants in that community…In general, the degree of contact with any member of the community, be it farmer, hired man, or people in the nearby community, is quite low" (1968: 27). Voland concludes, "These data indicate a general isolation of the migrants from any meaningful association in the community, with the possible exception of friends or relatives who might reside there" (1968: 27).

One of the barriers to integration with the larger community for migrant workers can affect any group or individual that is viewed as an "outsider." A Michigan farmer in Millard and Chapa's Apple Pie and Enchiladas (2004) explains that even Anglos who have not been in his community for generations find it hard to become seen as an insider. He gives this as the reason why Latinos have their own social circles separate from Anglos. While this may be part of the reason for social separation in very small towns, it seems unlikely that it plays a part in larger communities. Ward and Atav (2004) cite Latino farmworkers' linguistic and cultural differences with the communities in which they work as potential causes of friction with the year-round population, and state that "farmworkers often report not feeling welcome in their temporary communities (Rodriguez 1993; Rothenberg 1998)" (Ward and Atav 2004: 174).

Exercising Agency

While migrant farm laborers in west Michigan have certainly endured a number of abuses, they have also acted on their own behalf and asserted their human agency. Voland (1968) found that many farmers were concerned about the prospect of workers leaving in the midst of the harvest. He also found that some migrant laborers indicated that they had indeed left a farm during the harvest. However, "there are two predominant reasons for changing farms in mid-season. Forty percent of those who move do so because better housing is offered elsewhere. Secondly, more pay is important in any decision to leave" (1968: 28). While simple economics can inform such decisions, if migrant laborers were as content with their lot as some owners tried to portray them, such actions would seem unlikely. The attitude of the farmer toward the workers is also important in migrant laborers' decision of where to work, as mentioned earlier. Those employed on farms where the farmer was abusive or took little notice of his employees would also be more likely to move on (Voland 1968).

A particularly violent case of abuse is reported by Valdés (1991). Joe Hassle, a southwest Michigan farmer, assaulted Don Folgueras, a worker with United Migrants for Opportunity. Mr. Hassle broke the windows on Mr. Folgueras' car and physically beat him, threatened him with a gun, then called the sheriff deputies and had him arrested for trespassing at one of his migrant labor camps. One of the couples who lived at the camp, George and Alicia Gutiérrez, had a sick child in the hospital, and despite the fact that the baby had contracted dysentery at the camp and that the hospital was twenty-five miles away, Hassle refused to assist them in visiting the baby. After Folgueras' attempt to assist the Gutiérrez family and other sick children at the camp, and his subsequent beating and arrest, he filed a suit against Hassle, along with the Gutiérrezes and United Migrants for Opportunity. The suit was filed against Hassle, his wife, and the crew boss,

> …for violating their constitutional rights of free speech, association, and assembly and for injury to lease, hold, and enjoy the full benefits of property. In 1971 Michigan attorney general Frank Kelly wrote an advisory ruling that the state's criminal trespass law could not be used to prevent the entry of visitors to camps where farmworkers resided…The federal district court in Grand Rapids subsequently ruled against Hassle. (Valdés 1991: 182)

When a person feels that his or her rights have been ignored, and that he or she is personally being abused by others for unfounded or unknown reasons, many individuals will take a stand to defend themselves. Latino migrant farmworkers are no exception, as we see in the above account. A quick review of the court cases listed on the Farmworker Legal Services of Michigan website (www.farmworkerlaw.org) is further evidence that many migrant laborers know how to, and do secure legal counsel in cases of abuse.

Crane (2003) tells the stories of former migrant children who grew up to become social activists, working for the advancement and protection of Latinos' and migrant workers' rights. Latino migrant workers who are not social activists, per se, have also been known to voice their opinions to officials on matters that affect them. In July of 1990, a daycare center which served migrant workers' children in Ottawa County was to be closed due to lack of funding. Over twenty parents of children who attended the daycare center took a day off work and traveled to Lansing to voice their concern and express to the Michigan Economics for Human Development office the need for the center to remain open. According to the Holland Sentinel, their trip was a success, and "when they left, each parent had a copy of the signed contract…" to keep the center open (Caldwell 1990).

Conclusion

Latino migrant farmworkers in west Michigan, like other groups with little power, have endured many abuses and hardships. However, census figures show that the numbers of Hispanics are increasing in the region, and many cities in west Michigan have sizeable non-white

populations. Therefore, the Latino migrant laborers are not alone in their position of otherness to the white year-round residents of the region; many of the full-time occupants themselves contribute to the diversity of west Michigan.

Migrant laborers have been quite separate from the larger community in the past, as we see in Voland's (1968) report. However, this is beginning to change; and while many of the year-round residents of west Michigan are oblivious to the migrant workers' presence and needs, many others are taking notice of them, and various community activities, actions, and events have resulted. Several west Michigan counties participated in the CAMINO (Comprehensive Approach for Migrant Youth Introducing New Opportunities) Project in 2001, which paid migrant youth to learn computer and writing skills rather than work in the fields (Yonkman 2001). In the Holland and Grand Haven areas, a local nonprofit, the Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance, has worked since 1996 to help migrant farmworkers feel welcome and to assist in meeting their children's social and academic needs through its unique Migrant Mentoring Program. The religious community in west Michigan has also reached out to the migrant population, providing assistance and services in Spanish. The Catholic Church has been especially active in both, and Spanish speaking priests have been recruited to cities in the region (Valdés 1991). Harvest time fiestas have long been held in cities throughout west Michigan, supported by local chapters of the Kiwanis, Rotary, and Jaycees, and also by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These parties, which celebrate Mexican culture along with harvest plenty, have also become tourist attractions in some places, rather than focusing on the migrant population (Valdés 1991). All of the foregoing examples, however, point to an increasing awareness of migrant families and their needs in the larger communities within which they live and work.

It could seem that Latino migrant farm laborers are passive, perhaps even helpless in the face of exploitation that they have endured historically and up to the present. In reality, even those with seemingly little power carve out spaces for the use of human agency in their lives (Giddens 1984). This is evident in the case of Latino migrant farmworkers in west Michigan. They have exercised their fundamental human right to direct their own circumstances by leaving unjust employers, taking such employers to court and winning, securing lawyers on behalf of themselves and their children, becoming social activists, and voicing their needs to the state government. While they have certainly experienced the direct effects of their low position in the social structure, the idea that their human agency is absent is in error. Numerous migrant laborers continue to work the fields of west Michigan today because of the choices that they, their parents, and grandparents made—coming and then returning to west Michigan was one of these choices. One of the reasons that they continue to return, and many settle in this area (Millard and Chapa 2004; Valdés 1991; Crane 2003), is that they are able to find a social space in which to live, exercise their agency, and to have the support of other Latinos in the community, such as in Holland.

Many of the young people who contributed to this study are the first in their families to attend college (some have an older sibling who attended, or also attends, college). Nearly all of them are in the first generation to attend college in their respective families. This represents a great shift in the choices that individuals in these particular families made for themselves and their futures. Many of the families that migrate to west Michigan have been doing so for several generations; yet, the current generation of young adults is increasingly choosing to leave the migrant circuit and pursue higher education and better paying work. The reasons behind this

change in individuals' life choices are central to this dissertation, and comprise much of the material that we will examine in the coming chapters.

Chapter 4

Methods

Introduction

This study is ethnographic in that it is grounded in my experience within the migrant community in Ottawa County, Michigan. Creswell (2003) defines ethnography as a social scientific method "in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational data" (14). My knowledge of the Mexican migrant lifestyle, culture, and community is based in my personal interaction with individuals in their own home settings, over a period of three years. My entry into the migrant communities was facilitated through my involvement with the Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance, a local Ottawa County nonprofit that runs a mentoring program for migrant children. The migrant families knew me as the coordinator of the mentoring program, and my rapport initially came from my association with the former program coordinator. I held this position from the summer of 2005 until May 2008. During that time, many of the families came to know that I attend Michigan State University and do research about migrant workers and their families. Since I regularly visited and associated with several migrant families over this course of time, my understanding of the cultural and social situation of these families is ethnographic in nature—I have learned through direct contact with the population.

I chose to use qualitative and ethnographic methods in this study for various reasons. First, I had personal experience, knowledge, and contact with the population of interest. In addition to these, I also had a great deal of rapport. For a researcher who already had entry and rapport within the community, a more 'personal' approach was appropriate. Therefore, I chose

to use two techniques to gather information for this project: in-depth interviews and focus groups.

Maxwell (1996) describes five "particular research purposes for which qualitative studies are especially suited:

1) Understanding the meaning, for the participants of the study, of the events, situations, and actions they are involved with and of the accounts that they give of their lives and experiences. …
2) Understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence this context has on their actions. …
3) Identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences…
4) Understanding the process by which events and actions take place. …
5) Developing causal explanations." (17-20)

Maxwell's five points are illustrative of the reasons that a qualitative approach is ideal for the current study. The first four points inform the fifth: the utility of the first four results in the ability of the researcher to do number five—develop causal explanations. In this study, reaching an understanding of meaning, context, and process, as well as recognizing unanticipated results, can illuminate the causal nature of a participant's experiences on the effect of whether or not he or she pursues a college education.

Meaning is important because it affects the actions that an individual takes in life; it is part of the facts of each person's story. Maxwell (1996) explains that "the perspective on events and actions held by the people involved in them is not simply their account of these events and actions, to be assessed in terms of its truth or falsity; it is part of the reality that you are trying to understand" (17). Like the meaning, the context in which a person experiences everyday life affects the outcomes of choices and decisions that the individual makes. The meaning of experiences and events also takes place within a context (or multiple contexts), and this is

important for understanding how the meaning is developed; or for example, why one event means different things to different study participants. My population of interest is a small group of people who have some characteristics in common with Mexican immigrants in general; but they also have significant differences, including their rural U.S. destination and their regular, repeated migration to it. This makes their particular context unique as a group. Context also varies by individual; and since a qualitative approach promotes analyses that keep individuals' stories intact (Maxwell 1996), the researcher can closely examine the relationships between context, meaning, and outcomes in order to develop causal explanations.

Qualitative methodology is particularly suited for identifying unknown influences behind the unanticipated results that can occur in any type of study. This, again, points to the suitability of qualitative methods to uncover the processes that lead to particular outcomes. In the current study, I want to understand how the child of Mexican migrant farmworkers decides to drop out of the circular migration by going to college. Finally, developing causal explanations is accomplished through the previous four points: when the researcher understands the meaning, the context, the unanticipated influences, and the process of a participant's decision, the causes can provide a more thorough understanding of reasons behind the outcome than a quantitative approach is typically equipped to provide. Maxwell explains that qualitative methods get at "*how x* plays a role in causing *y*; what the process is that connects *x* and *y*" (1996: 20, emphasis in original), rather than only identifying the fact that *x* causes a change in *y*. My goal of understanding the influential factors that affect young migrants' decision of whether to attend college or to follow their parents and work in the fields, as well as the contexts that affect these factors and decisions, fits perfectly with a qualitative approach.

<u>In-Depth Interviews</u>

Many of the young adults that I know personally were very willing to participate in the study, and/or to refer me to others who would inform my research. Therefore, I used a snowball sample to locate my nineteen interviewees. The interview questionnaire was pre-tested in the fall of 2008, and each interviewee was given ten dollars to thank him or her for participating in the study. All of the interviewees were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-nine and had migrated to Ottawa County in western Michigan, during their childhood years. Some of them continue to migrate, while others have enrolled in college or live permanently in Michigan. The interviewees include individuals who migrated between Texas and Michigan, as well as some who migrated between Mexico and Michigan. The interviews were conducted in the summer and fall of 2009, as well as one in December 2008. A copy of the In-Depth Interview Guide can be found in Appendix A.

Through this process of referrals, my interviewees included young adults who have: a) remained in the Texas- or Mexico-to-Michigan migrant stream; b) stayed in high school or enrolled in a college or university in either Michigan or Texas; or c) settled permanently, but do not attend school, in either Michigan or Texas. At the time of the interviews, most of the interviewees were young adults enrolled in college (although many were on summer break), or newly graduated seniors planning to attend college in the fall.

At the outset, my goal was to secure interviews with equal numbers of males and females—ten of each. I chose this number because it was a practical goal for one interviewer to accomplish over the course of a summer and early fall. I also made the decision to seek twenty interviewees because I estimated that twenty was the approximate number of interviews that a snowball sample among the population I know would yield. I came very close to meeting this goal, ending the study with ten female and nine male interviewees.

I found the process of recruiting interviewees to be varied. Those participants whom I knew personally or with whom I had a close connection (such as a relationship with one of their parents) generally seemed most willing to participate in the study. Given that my previous work was with families whose children were under age eighteen, my connections more commonly went through the parents of young adults than directly to the young adults themselves. However, there were several individuals who were referred to me, as well as some whom I know personally, who did not wish to participate in the study. Only two directly told me "no." Both were young adults who were still in the migrant cycle. My perception was that they viewed the potential interview as something of an intrusion, and did not wish to divulge thoughts, feelings, and personal information to me—someone whom they knew by sight, but who knew their parents better. It is also a possibility that they believed they would feel, or be, objectified in the interview, as they understand the uniqueness of their position as migrant laborers in U.S. society. They simply did not like the thought of being objects of curiosity.

More common, however, was one of two responses that I received from several potential interviewees—either they agreed to the interview initially, but constantly delayed it; or they did not return my calls attempting to set up the interview. This was an indirect way of saying, "thanks, but no thanks." Again, this group was largely composed of current migrants. There were one young man and one young woman whom I attempted to reach from July to October, 2009, and finally determined that they simply did not wish to participate in the study. Both of these individuals knew me personally, so it was a bit surprising to me that they kept delaying the interviews. However, since both were migrants, it is true that they were busy during that time of year, but I felt that ample time was provided if they had wished to participate in the study. Although I was well aware of the Mexican cultural norm of avoiding the use of "no" in order to

be polite, I had often observed direct and concise communication among friends and families. Naively, I did not expect people that I knew to constantly delay the interview or to ignore my phone messages. For this reason, I kept attempting to contact these two potential participants to schedule an interview, always taking them at their word that they would have time in a couple of weeks, or figuring that they did not receive my last message. Finally I admitted to myself that both were trying to be polite according to their cultural pattern by telling me "no" indirectly through actions, rather than directly with words.

That being said, it proved much more difficult to secure interviews with current migrants than with young adults who were attending, or planning to attend, college at the time of the interviews. I believe this is partially reflective of the college students' better understanding of the purpose of such a study, and their interest in education in general. The difficulty of securing interviews with current migrant workers resulted in a sample of individuals who had higher levels of education and better outcomes overall when compared to the migrant population as a whole. The findings of this study were affected in that they resulted in much more information about those young people who are successful academically than about those who do not attend college.

Like the gender ratio, I also desired to have an equal representation of current migrants versus current non-migrants in my interview sample. However, for reasons noted above, I was unable to secure as many interviews with migrants as I would have liked; in the end, I interviewed three current migrants. Two other interviewees were young adults still living with their parents, one of whom was completing high school at age nineteen and the other who had graduated a year earlier and worked for the same agricultural company as his parents. Both families had ceased migrating south during the winters, as is often the case in this migrant

population, when children get older and school pressures become more pronounced. (Parents often decide to stay in Michigan through the winter so that their children can attend school without interruption, although they may take a trip to Texas or Mexico over the semester break.) These two young people stay in Michigan year-round. While they do not continue to migrate currently (and neither do their parents), they have not yet established households outside of their parents' homes. The remaining interviewees included nine current college students and four with definite plans to attend college in the fall of 2009. One planned to attend a technical school to earn a certificate in dental hygiene; I am including her in those that planned to attend college since she has plans to pursue education beyond high school. These interviewees had each already selected a college, and many had already enrolled at the time of their interview.

I chose to interview young adults of at least age eighteen in order to ease access to interviewees (no one other than the interviewee—such as a parent or legal guardian—was required to give permission for the interview), and to attempt to gain clearer insight into the young adult decision making process. In an attempt to uncover the individual and collective processes of decision making for the future, I have determined that the interview is the best method of data collection, as Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) explain:

> The interview is a powerful method of data collection. It provides one-to-one interaction between you (or your data collectors) and the individuals you are studying (or a small number of participants in a focus group…). It provides an opportunity to ask for clarification if an answer is vague or to provide clarification if a question is not clear. Open-ended interviews result in copious information about issues. Such information might lead to conceptualization of the issues in ways totally different from what you anticipated (102).

The great majority of the face-to-face interviews conducted in 2008 and 2009 took place in the Holland, Michigan area, at the interviewees' homes, usually in migrant labor housing complexes. I also met with two of the interviewees at a local coffee shop, and with two at their

homes in Holland. (One of the coffee shop interviews ended up taking place primarily in my car, due to noise in the eatery, and rain.) Three interviews took place at Michigan State University, in the fall of 2009, and one took place in Grand Haven Township in northern Ottawa County. Interviews were conducted in English, except for occasions where the respondent expressed a specific preference for using Spanish, or particular Spanish words or phrases. Nearly every individual involved in this study is completely bilingual. Only one interviewee struggled somewhat with English, and parts of her interview were translated as necessary.

Focus Groups

In addition to the interviews, I conducted four focus groups, two for men and two for women, composed of college students who grew up migrating to Michigan and who were enrolled in the College Assistance for Migrants Program (CAMP) at Michigan State University. CAMP offers migrant students financial assistance, as well as social and educational support. Recruiters from CAMP visit high schools in Michigan and elsewhere to spread the word about the program to migrant students. I held the focus groups in order to gain further insight into the experiences of those former migrants who elected to enroll in the university, as well as to diversify the research methods and to ensure the validity of the study (see Maxwell 1996).

I held separate focus groups for men and women, because individuals' experiences and choices in life are greatly influenced by gender. I wanted each participant to feel as free as possible to express his or her thoughts within the group without being affected by participants of the opposite sex. One question I posed only to women in the focus groups asked them to apply gender analysis to their own experiences (compare Appendix B and Appendix C).

I conducted the focus groups in January 2010 at the CAMP offices, which facilitated student participation. The focus group questions arose out of interview data; some of the

questions reflect similar themes as the interviews, and others were the result of questions that arose for me as the researcher during the interview process. For example, several of the interviewees discussed intentions to work within the migrant community, in varying capacities, in the future. Some interviewees also spoke of the pressures of being the first members of their families to attend college. Curious as to how widespread these two findings were among former migrants who were attending college, I incorporated corresponding questions into the focus group questionnaires.

The focus groups consisted of students at Michigan State University who migrated between Texas or Mexico and Michigan, not limited to Ottawa County. Some of them (as well as the in-depth interviewees) may have also migrated to other states for work, in addition to Michigan. I did not attempt to hold focus groups among the migrant population, due to very demanding work schedules, which often inhibit the potential to assemble several individuals with the same time availability.

The focus group participants were recruited through a slightly different method than the interviewees. The criteria for participation were: 1) being between the ages of 18 and 39; 2) having grown up in a migrant family that traveled between Texas and/or Mexico and Michigan; and 3) being a current or former MSU CAMP student. Since I know, or have knowledge of, some CAMP students (through the referrals of friends or family), I sent personal invitations to participate in the focus groups to these students via email. In addition, the CAMP staff assisted my research by sending out announcements on the CAMP listserve in order to invite students to participate in the study. In this way, I had some students with Ottawa County/West Michigan roots in the focus groups, as well as participants from other parts of the state.

The Focus Group Interview Guides (see Appendices B and C) reflect the recommendations of Krueger (1998). Namely, each guide contained a list of questions short enough to provide all participants with an opportunity to answer each question; and the questions were ordered in a careful sequence. As advised by Krueger (1998), I began with an opening (ice-breaker) question designed to establish rapport, a transition question meant to shift into the substantive reasons for the focus group, a small set of key questions, and a final question intended to allow the participants and moderator to reach closure. The Focus Group Interview Guides were developed based on the results of the in-depth interviews. Each session was recorded with both a tape recorder and a digital voice recorder, in order to decrease the chance of missing any of the conversation in the event that one of the devices did not function properly. Focus group participants received ten dollars in order to thank them for their time and participation in the study. In addition, focus group participants selected a meal from the menu of a local Mexican restaurant and the food was delivered to the room during the focus group. Beverages and chips and salsa were also served during the focus groups. The assistant, a Ph.D. candidate in the MSU Sociology Department who is fluent in both Spanish and English, helped with the focus groups by ordering food, taking notes, and distributing and collecting consent forms.

The focus groups were held in January, 2010; and one group for men and one group for women were held in the late afternoon and evening on two consecutive days. Following the suggestion of Krueger (1998), the focus groups were small in order to facilitate conversation and provide opportunity for everyone to answer each question. The focus groups were comprised of three to eight participants, and one of the men's and one of the women's groups were pilots. Each focus group lasted approximately one and one-half hours, and all groups were conducted in

English. As with the in-depth interviews, participants used Spanish words or phrases at times; and these have been translated in the transcription process.

Demographically, the in-depth interviewees and the focus group participants were rather similar. All of the project participants were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-nine; however, among both the in-depth interviewees and the focus group participants, nearly all were between the ages of eighteen to twenty-four. There was one thirty-three-year-old in-depth interviewee and one twenty-nine-year-old focus group member. Despite all of the focus group participants' status of college student, average years of education were also very similar among in-depth interviewees and focus group participants, due to the fact that nine of the in-depth interviewees were also college students. Another seven of the in-depth interviewees were high school graduates who had not attended college; thus, they each had twelve years of education. Two had dropped out of high school and one was still in high school. Among the focus group participants, four had three to five years of college, while the remaining participants had one-half to two-and-a-half years of college. The group of in-depth interviewees contained three individuals with three to five years of college.

One notable difference between the focus group participants and the in-depth interviewees is that in-depth interviewees were more likely to be married. None of the focus group participants were married, while six (31.5%) of the in-depth interviewees were married. Conversely, focus group participants were more likely to have a sibling participant in the study (either as a focus group member or an in-depth interviewee). Six (40%) of the focus group participants had a sibling in the study, while three (16%) of the in-depth interviewees had a sibling in the study. While it seems plausible that those young people who decided to attend college were deterred from marriage in their quest for education, it is interesting to note that of

the six married in-depth interviewees, three were college students and one was to begin college in the fall.

The higher concentration of focus group participants with a sibling in the study can possibly be attributed to the likelihood of younger siblings following an older sibling to Michigan State University. A family with one child in college would seem to have a greater likelihood of additional children attending college. Therefore, focus group participants, exclusively comprised of current college students, were more likely to have a sibling in college as well, and in the study.

Research Questions

This study asks the over-arching question, "Which organizational sources of social capital influence migrant youths to continue migrating or to settle out of the migrant stream?" I break down this "umbrella question" into three primary research questions for this dissertation:

4. Who (parents, siblings, friends, teachers, schools, others) exerts the most influence on migrant youths and young adults in their decisions about education and work?
5. Does bridging social capital affect a migrant youth's likelihood of college enrollment?
6. How does one's concept of "home" influence the decision to continue to migrate or to leave the migrant stream?

The first question asks about the structural influences on young migrants' decision to continue migrating or to pursue a different course in life. In order to answer this, and the above larger research question, I considered the application of the theory of social capital, as articulated by Bourdieu (1986). It seems likely that young adults from migrant families would be more likely to continue migrating if the bulk of their social capital was built up within the migrant community. Likewise, I thought that if a young person had more social capital within the larger

community where he or she resided, that individual would be more likely to elect to attend college and/or to settle in that community. In addition, there are many individual circumstances and contexts that may affect a young person's choice for his or her future. With this in mind, I set out to investigate the impact of the following:

1) whether a participant's primary friendships were within or outside of the migrant community;
2) how the participant's race and ethnicity have affected his or her experience in Michigan;
3) what obstacles exist to leaving the migrant stream;
4) how parental opinions influence youths;
5) how jobs before age eighteen influence what a person does after age eighteen;
6) how birth order and gender influence the life decisions of young migrants;
7) how the concept of home affects young migrants' decisions;
8) which individuals have the most influence on young migrants;
9) how pressure to succeed affects migrants who attend college; and
10) what aspirations, if any, college students have to affect the lives of migrants in the future.

These factors are likely to have an influence on each person's decisions about further education and work.

Data Reduction Methods

The interviews and focus groups for this study have been transcribed from the original format of sound recording. I transcribed the interviews as they were completed, and the focus groups were all transcribed in the month following their completion as well. Transcription of

audio files was done entirely by me; the focus group assistant did not work on audio transcription. Notes from the focus groups and the in-depth interviews (I often took note of interviewees' expressions and body language) were incorporated into the transcriptions as appropriate during the audio transcription process. The audio interviews are contained on cassette tapes and are kept in a locked drawer in my home, along with the digital voice recorder that contains the focus group interviews. All of the recordings will be erased at the conclusion of the study, and all project participants' names have been changed in this dissertation to protect their identities. Transcripts of the audio recordings are stored on my password- and firewall-protected computer, and the participants' real identities are not connected to them, in order to maintain the confidentiality of participants' responses. Focus group participants were also asked to confirm, by initialing a statement on the consent form, their agreement to keep confidential all conversations held within the focus group.

Maxwell (1996) points out that "the key feature of most qualitative coding is that it is grounded in the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967); that is, it is developed in interaction with, and is tailored to the understanding of, the particular data being analyzed" (79). Since this is a qualitative study utilizing in-depth interviews and focus groups, the research questions are answered through the content of conversations between participants and interviewer. The reduction of this type of data involves the use of content analysis. This analysis employs various codes to indicate similar themes, ideas, or concepts within the transcripts. My method of coding involved reading through the interview and focus group transcripts and labeling sections of text according to their topic or underlying meaning. As I read through the transcripts, I inserted codes such as "P2" for parental influence in support of college attendance, and "EO1" for economic reasons as obstacles to settlement, for example. The codes were developed according

to the topic a participant was discussing in the pertaining section. After the initial coding, the following categories were identified in order to collapse the numerous codes and the words to which they were attached into organized groups of information: relationships, education, race/ethnicity, obstacles and stressors, work and aspirations, language and culture, concept of home, and gender. Corresponding quotations were then compiled into documents that pertain to each category.

Through this form of analysis, I was able to determine the prevalence of a particular theme or response in an efficient manner, as well as reduce larger amounts of data to that which are most important in answering the research questions. In this way recurrent themes are identified in the data collected from various sources. Themes in everyday occurrences, rather than singular (albeit often very interesting) events are of the most concern in this study, as they show the day-to-day experience in the lives of individuals, and the continuity of experience and context across the population of interest. Of course, singular events can also have great influence on a person; and since they often relate to larger themes in an individual's life, they may also be included at times in this dissertation.

The power of content analysis of qualitative data over statistical analysis of survey questionnaires is that the former allows the study participants to answer the questions at hand, without my cues on what I expect those answers to be. While I have asked certain questions in order to prompt discussion on what I judge to be relevant topics, I have also allowed the research participants to answer and redirect the questions. The common themes and disparities in their answers have become important sections of this dissertation.

This dissertation does not avoid numeric representations of data. Some percentages may be used at times, and sometimes numbers may be applicable and necessary to relate the desired

information. However, as Krueger (1998) cautions, "numbers and percentages should be used with caution…numbers sometimes convey the impression that results can be projected to a population, and this is not within the capabilities of qualitative research procedures" (74-75). Much of the data reporting in this dissertation will consist of actual quotations from study participants. Krueger (1998) also stresses the importance of considering body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions, for example, in the analysis of focus groups. I would argue that such considerations are important in analyzing in-depth interview data as well. A laugh at the end of a statement may indicate sarcasm, or it may be that the respondent is relating a funny story or event. It is necessary for the researcher to take all contextual factors into consideration when interpreting the data. This is another reason why in-depth interviews and focus groups are powerful data collection strategies that can yield more information than usually is available from surveys and censuses.

Chapter 5

Findings

Introduction

In this study, I set out to investigate the factors that affect young people in migrant families in their decision about further education and occupation after they reach adulthood. The research questions I have posed, along with the impact of some of the variables listed in the previous chapter, will be explored in this chapter. First, I will discuss the findings that relate to the research questions, and then I will move on to review the findings that address birth order, gender, race, obstacles to leaving the migration cycle, and participants' desire to give back to the migrant community. These results are discussed in addition to the findings regarding the research questions because they reveal some of the process and the context within which young people from migrant families decide their future trajectories, and because they were found to be important topics to many of the study participants. All names of persons; elementary, middle, and high schools; and businesses have been changed in this dissertation in order to protect the identities of the participants. Only the names of cities, states, and of colleges or universities have remained unchanged.

Parental Influence on College Enrollment

"In many Mexican families, the *only* thing going for the children is the support and ambition of their parents," (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 280, emphasis in original).

The above quote is an apt description of this study's findings regarding parental influence on children's choices after high school. Despite (or perhaps, because of) low incomes, limited English proficiency, and low levels of education, Mexican-origin migrant-worker parents often impress upon their children the importance of obtaining an education. According to the

participants involved in this study, parents are the most important influence on young peoples' decision of whether to pursue higher education or to continue in the migrant circuit. Interviewees who were college students or planned to attend college most commonly identified parents as an important influence in the decision to pursue education after high school. Three interviewees indicated that an older sibling influenced their college attendance. Of the focus group participants, all of whom were college students, 73% indicated that at least one of their parents had a strong influence in their decision to attend college. Three participants stated that an older sibling had a strong influence on their decision to go to college (two of these included their parents as significant influences as well). One participant indicated that an aunt was most influential (in addition to her parents). Four focus group members said that the difficult experience of working in the fields, either their own experience or that of their parents, was a significant influence in the decision to pursue higher education:

> "What pushed me was the fields, actually. You know, going out there and working under the sun, and living it. 'Cause you can be told that it's hard—it's hard labor—you can be at home and even when I was small, when I was at home, my parents would get home and they would be tired. You know, it's something that you see that they come tired, but you don't know how they go out there. But it wasn't until I was able to set foot in the fields, I worked a whole twelve, thirteen hours—that I actually felt what they were feeling. And that's when I actually decided, you know, this is not for me. This is not for my parents. This is not for my sisters. I need to do something to better them. Not only better me, but better them too. So I have to go with [the influence of the] fields, and working out there [as the biggest influence to attend college]." (Luis, focus group member, college student)

> "I knew like my mom always—my parents were always [giving us] a lot of motivation to continue our education, but not necessarily to go to college. They just pushed us to get a job other than in the fields." (Cristina, college student, focus group member)

> "You start hearing it too from your parents when they're out in the fields that they don't want that lifestyle for you, so I guess at that point it becomes your choice whether to follow through or not, and clearly they don't want that lifestyle for you, what they've been going through in the fields all day. And if you have a certain level of respect and actually care about what they want for you, it's going to push you toward the other option, which is school." (Manuel, college student, focus group member)

Four in-depth interviewees talked about their parents' encouragement to finish high school as their highest level of education, never expecting that they would go to college. It was also indicated during the focus groups that many Mexican-origin parents do not expect their children to attend college, perhaps because their own level of education is quite low. They tend to focus on the goal of high school graduation and rarely consider college as an option:

> "My parents just tell me 'just finish your high school,' 'cause my dad—like, my parents—didn't even finish, they just went to like third grade back there in Mexico." (Ramón, college student, interviewee)

> "And as [I] grew older [my mother's] goal for me was to get my high school diploma. Until that moment I showed her I had a chance to go to college...But she wasn't thinking of it I guess, at the same time. She wasn't thinking that I was going to go to college or anything like that." (David, college student, interviewee)

> "For right now [my parents] are just like, 'Finish the whole high school thing and then we'll look into that [college].'" (Gustavo, high school student, interviewee)

> "[For] A lot of our parents, or a lot of the older generation, getting an education to them meant graduating high school. Cause even to this day I know a lot of people back home, they think, they say, '*Oh, mi hijo, que se gradua de high school*' ['My son, I hope he graduates from high school']. You know, as long as he graduates from high school, and they're proud. And it's that level of comfort that people get, and to them, to an older crowd, to them getting an education means graduating from high school. So going to college is way…it's out of the question." (Cristina, college student, focus group member)

Sometimes parents did not necessarily encourage educational attainment as much as they communicated their desire that their child find an occupation other than migrant fieldwork. This often helped participants choose further education as an alternative even if it was not directly encouraged. Some interviewees relayed that their parents did not wish for them to work for the same company with which they themselves were employed—even just for the summer.

> "For the summer here at Greenview, they sometimes hire the high school students, and my mom would never let me go, even though I would ask her if I could go, she would always tell me no, that it was not a good job for me, that it was too hot outside and she didn't want me to suffer like all of them would suffer. And so she would prefer for me to go for a different job." (Raquel, high school graduate, interviewee)

> "I guess [my father] didn't want me to work out in the hot sun and the conditions that they were in. He knew what it entailed so I guess that's why he didn't want that for me." (Maricela, college student, interviewee)

> "Yeah, well [my parents] actually want me to [start a business] because they don't want to see me to have to go through what they did, having to work outside in the fields and everything, so they actually want me to do something like that." (Orlando, high school graduate, farmworker, interviewee)

Only one study participant, Natalia, a current migrant, talked about her parents' discouragement of education and encouragement of migrant fieldwork as an occupation for their children. (One other interviewee spoke of a step-parent's discouragement of education and encouragement of fieldwork, but his biological parent supported his educational ambitions.) Natalia relayed that her parents did not see education as a path out of the fields; rather, they were resigned to fieldwork as the only option for their children. While she and several other siblings dropped out of school, one of Natalia's brothers graduated from high school despite his parents' lack of support. Natalia relayed the following story:

> "[My brother's mother-in-law said,] 'If he's going to marry my daughter, my daughter's going to finish high school and he's going to graduate too. I don't care how much it costs, I don't care if he comes from school, does his homework and gets a second job—I don't care. If he wants to be with my daughter, that's what he has to do.' So my dad's like, 'Oh, your mother [-in-law] is stupid. Why does she get into your life? Life is just work from now on.' And [my brother] got onto his mother-in-law's side, and he's like, 'I can do it, I can do it, I can do it!' So my sister-in-law was pregnant when she was a senior, she had her baby, she went to her graduation, and my brother graduated. …He had school and a second job. And he graduated, thanks to his mother-in-law—not to my parents." (Natalia, migrant worker, interviewee)

Natalia further pointed out that, unlike her parents, her brother's mother-in-law saw the economic value of a high school education, and it paid off:

> "His mother-in-law said, 'If you want to be with my daughter—not saying that people that don't graduate are not good—but you can find better jobs out there. So if you really want to be with my daughter, want to be the dad of my grandkids, I want you to have your high school diploma.' So that encouraged him to be going and going [to school], and he kept going. Now he works at [a local auto parts manufacturer] and has a very nice position." (Natalia, migrant worker, interviewee)

Despite the fact that Natalia's parents' opinion about education is in the great minority, I feel it is important to note particularly because it is reflective of the resignation to migrant life found among some migrant agricultural workers. It is also notable that Natalia's parents specifically discouraged their children from completing high school; and, like other parents mentioned above, they were not considering college to be an option. Had they been considering college, an argument could be made that perhaps their discouragement reflects that they viewed the cost of tuition as prohibitive. However, they seem to have had a lack of appreciation for the value of a high school diploma, a degree for which they did not have to pay tuition. It is possible that children's lost wages were a factor in their discouragement of high school completion. However, Natalia does not indicate this; it is her belief that her parents simply did not view education as valuable in life (in her words, "my parents never think that school was good"). It is possible that they arrived at this opinion due to experiences of discrimination, or through observation of fieldworkers who had completed high school but continued to be employed in migrant farmwork. In any case, they did not consider high school, much less college, to be worth the effort for their children.

The findings of this study show that parents are the primary influence on young people's decision of whether to continue their educations beyond high school or to work in the fields. Of the twenty-one current college students and one graduate (both focus group members and interviewees), four participants indicated that neither of their parents had encouraged them to go to college but were pleased with and supportive of their decision. The remaining eighteen college students indicated that they had received parental encouragement of college attendance. Of the four high school graduates planning to attend college in the fall (all of whom were interviewees), all indicated that at least one parent had encouraged their college attendance. One

of the remaining interviewees had experienced parental discouragement from further education. Three, like their parents, had not considered college to be an option. One interviewee (Gustavo) was still finishing high school at the time of the interview, and although he was thinking of the possibility of college, his parents were focused on his high school graduation and were not willing to discuss college with him at the time. Therefore, all participants, except four, were following the path for which their parents had provided specific encouragement. The four exceptions were cases in which parents were supportive of their child regardless of their choice to attend college, to do fieldwork, or to find some other job. Twenty-seven of the thirty-one study participants were actively pursuing the path encouraged by their parents.

Effect of Peers

Peer relationships within the migrant community are one source of bonding social capital. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) indicate that the support of co-ethnic communities helps to promote positive outcomes for the children of immigrants. The results of this study regarding the influence of connections within the migrant community show that these social linkages can and do support college attendance. Many participants indicated having friends from the migrant community who were continuing to do fieldwork; however, many also had friends who had left that lifestyle and had gone on to college. As we will see, friends from within the migrant community can provide direct connections (as bridges to extra-community forms of social capital) to a particular educational institution.

Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (1995) found that Mexican immigrant youth valued their parents' opinions and choices much more than those of their peers. Accordingly, Mexican immigrant youths did not value their friends' opinions and choices, or devalue those of their parents, to the extent to which white American youths did. This study bears out the Suárez-

Orozcos' findings regarding the importance of parents' opinions, specifically for migrant youths' college enrollment in this case. This study further indicates that while parental influence is clearly most important, peer relationships can and do influence Mexican immigrant young people's life choices as well.

Interviewees were asked about their childhood and high school friends, and whether these friends were primarily concentrated inside or outside of the migrant community. All of the nineteen interviewees indicated that they had close friends from the migrant community in which they grew up. Six of them said that they also had friends at school who were not from migrant families. Many interviewees remarked that peer relationships within the migrant community were much stronger and longer lasting than any outside of it:

> "It was mostly people here [at the camp]. Yeah, because I'm always here so, I was always playing with these guys around here. Then I had some friends at school but I was most connected with the guys here that lived at the camp, you know." (Ramón, college student, interviewee)

> "My closest friends were the ones in the migrant camps, because we all had similar experiences and we would help each other." (Analia, college student, interviewee)

> "People from the camp, I mean, that's who you grew up with. I mean, [they're] your friends. …I know you get to meet people from school and stuff but there's always that disconnect. …You can be friends, but it's like, it's just at school and stuff." (Dania, college student, interviewee)

> "I mostly hung out with kids from the camp because I saw them every day and went outside like the girls do now (motioning to children playing outside), like those best friends are their neighbors in the camp. So that's who I saw every day." (Elena, high school graduate, interviewee)

> "I didn't really have a whole lot of other friends outside of Mexican friends, primarily because I didn't really speak English very well and also because I just felt more accepted among people who looked like me. Not everybody spoke perfect Spanish so I did have some hard times understanding them. But we shared some language and some cultural aspects, so it was just mainly girls from Texas." (Gisela, college graduate, interviewee)

> "They were all the same—my friends, my mom's friends—you know, the ones that worked there at Greenview, in the camp, so everybody there…[they're all] my friends

> right now too, so, we still get together, we all stay in touch." (Juan, high school graduate, interviewee)
>
> "It was just a small group of us, there was about eleven or twelve that used to hang out, and it was just the people that were Mexicans that used to hang out. And maybe we would have one or two other friends that were outside of our circle but, primarily it was just—we stuck with what we knew." (Maricela, college student, interviewee)

In summary, the stronger bonding social capital cemented with age peers inside rather than outside the migrant community was due to the convenience of proximity to playmates at the camp, shared culture and ethnicity, and the comfort of speaking Spanish instead of English with them.

One interviewee talked about the difficulty of maintaining friendships outside the migrant community due to the migrant lifestyle of constantly moving:

> "Well it would be really hard because some of them would move or I would, since I would come back and forth, I couldn't really have stable friends. I would just know them for awhile, and then, 'Ok, I have to go.'" (Raquel, high school graduate, interviewee)

Likewise, this migratory lifestyle undercuts children's ability to perform well enough in primary or secondary schools to achieve and avoid dropping out, and to capture the interest and sympathy of teachers or school counselors from whom they might obtain the bridging social capital needed to gain admission to and funding for college.

Some of the interviewees talked about the friends they grew up with in the migrant camp as lifelong friends, at times, as close as family:

> "My friends were people in migrant families, and those were the only friends we had. …It was much easier to fit in when it's in the camp. 'Cause all the kids are outside and all they have to say is, 'Hey, you want to play?' And those are your friends. …That's how I became friends with them. And now, I mean, up until now I still have those friends from there. There's some of them right here at [Michigan State University], and basically since I was ten we've grown up together." (David, college student, interviewee)
>
> "They were the ones [my friends]; we were traveling together. Yeah, if we were ever to get into an argument it would be pretty funny because you couldn't really escape it. It's

like you couldn't really get out of the group because either you were with them or you were really alone." (Maricela, college student, interviewee)

For some students, connections within the migrant community directly influenced their college enrollment. Many of these had a specific connection to Michigan State University and the College Assistance for Migrants Program (CAMP) through a friend from the migrant community:

> "There's a lady that lives [at the camp] and her son got into [Michigan State University] a couple years ago…and she would always tell us about it, how he got in… A couple friends got in there the year before I started. " (Antonio, college student, interviewee)

> "One of our friends, he went to [my] high school in Texas and he worked at the blueberry place where we worked packaging blueberries in Holland, and…he came to [College Assistance for Migrants Program] and he's the one who told us about it." (Dania, college student, interviewee)

> "My friends that I grew up with in Holland, two of them were attending the university. … And where I went in Texas there wasn't—there was a migrant program in PanAm [University] that I did not know about, so I just took [classes] as a regular student. But after he told me that they were accepting applications, he encouraged me to apply here and I did. That's when I came [to Michigan State University]." (David, college student, interviewee)

> "For me [the greatest influence] was friends. Because when I was growing up, or going to school, they didn't have many [migrant] programs, they just had ESL (English as a Second Language). And I would go only like one hour to ESL. So I didn't have much help. I was a drop-out. So I just heard about the GED [High School Equivalency Program] here at Michigan State [University] through friends. Not through school or anything like that. And that's when I heard about [College Assistance for Migrants Program]." (Esteban, college student, focus group member)

One focus group member relayed the following account regarding a friend who was sitting next to him in the focus group:

> "I knew Michigan State [University] through Victor. I was going to stay back home, it was in the summer so, he told me, 'Hey, let's take a road trip'… [We came] from like two hours away from here. He asked me, 'Where are you going after graduation?' And I was like, '[I'm] going back home.' And he said, 'Nah, nah, let's go check out my university. Let's go to Michigan State.' …So we end up coming that day and I sit down with the recruiter and he was able to follow up on me. Make the phone calls, you know.

> He set a good example for me (motioning to Victor). So I'm grateful, you know; if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here." (Luis, college student, focus group member)

Another interviewee who was enrolled to attend a Grand Rapids technical institute in the fall recounted how she and a childhood friend had always dreamed of going to college:

> "Yeah, well me and a friend, when I was small I wanted to be a school teacher and so did she, and we would always talk about like how we were going to go to the same college and how like she would always tell me like, 'We have to do this and this to be a teacher and we have to have good grades and if we don't, you're not going to [be a teacher]'—we would just do silly bets like, 'Oh, if you don't have a good grade then we're not going to give you this,' and we would just play around and give each other help and when I would need help, she would be there. …But we always planned on going to college and being somebody in life." (Raquel, high school graduate, interviewee)

Teachers, Counselors, and Others

Although family members and friends within the migrant community were the most often cited influences on college attendance, several of the college students in this study also indicated that they had obtained bridging social capital with people outside of the migrant community, such as teachers, school counselors, and others who could help them continue their education into college. At times these individuals were directly involved in the participant's college choices; others were simply noted as good friends.

> "I had my brother's mentor [from the Migrant Mentoring Program] talk [to me] like, 'All right, what do you want to do?' But she's more like helping me more than actually other people, like counselors that like shove it down your throat like 'Oh you have to do this.' She's more like, 'Well if you want to, I can help you, if not then…'" (voice trails off) (Gustavo, high school student, interviewee)

> "I remember in elementary school it was an academic support lady, she was at West Dunes Elementary School, so she supported me all throughout elementary, and then [in] middle school was Miss Vela and she went on to high school. I think they were also friends of the family and of all migrants, because they would talk to our parents, and they spoke Spanish." (Analia, college student, interviewee)

> "My middle school teacher, Miss Carlson, she was really, really encourag[ing] like for us to get an education. My ESL teacher in high school, Miss Mary Jo as well, she was [too], she even brought some students [in to class] who were already in college. …I guess [teachers] actually planted the seed." (Ricardo, college student, interviewee)

> "If [the teacher] had contacted somebody about Michigan State [University] or she had trips, she would look for me during class and she would offer opportunities for me." (Flora, college student, interviewee)

> "There were teachers, or counselors that would make us do applications. And where were we going to apply? We had no idea where we were going to apply. And I just applied here, here, here. …I got into [Texas State Technical College at] Harlingen and PanAm [University]. I just decided to go to PanAm. It was mostly the idea of the counselor. When she gave me that idea, I stuck with it." (David, college student, interviewee)

> "I think Miss Miller, Lori Miller, she did a lot for us. She's the one that helped us learn English." (Carmen, college student, focus group member)

> "I graduated high school in three years so I decided I'm going to take a semester off, or a year off, and then I started feeling like a loser. Like all my friends were in school and I wasn't, so then my counselor from my high school is really close to me so she started calling me and saying, 'You should just go to school,' and I was like, 'Yeah, I should.' So I left everything to the last minute, she got me into this school. But her and my mom were just pushing me and pushing me, and my mom was like, 'If you're not going to go to school, then go flip burgers!' And I was like, 'Oh my god, no, I'm going to school!'" (laughing) (Rebeca, college student, focus group member)

> "[A high school counselor] is basically the one who pushed me and everything. He changed the way of life that I thought about. He was always there when I got in trouble. For some reason he was always there and always talked to me, like he got me out of trouble, he always took me to his office… And I mean, it was because of him that I got a scholarship…and I was like 'Wow,' you know. And I owe him like everything." (Jorge, college student, focus group member)

Of the twenty-one college students and one graduate in the sample, plus the four high school graduates who planned to attend college in the fall, seventeen talked about positive relationships or resources at school during their primary and/or secondary school careers. Teachers, migrant counselors, academic counselors, academic support staff, and athletic coaches were all referred to as friends, positive influences, referrals for opportunities, or sources of information about continuing education beyond high school. Of the nine college students and planned college students who did not discuss positive relationships or resources at school, all of them spoke of educational barriers they encountered in school, including problems transferring

credits between high schools, earning high enough grades to be accepted to college, the language barrier, and the lack of support and resource information they received from high school staff. Students who had help from teachers, counselors, and other school staff often had similar struggles, but they talked about the support they received from school employees in overcoming them.

For the students in this study, approximately two-thirds had social capital built up within the education system prior to entering college. This bridging social capital assisted them, directly or indirectly, in deciding to attend college, and in many cases directly aided their college enrollment through staff encouragement and assistance with applications and government financial aid forms. At times, counselors or teachers made sure students were aware of opportunities to visit colleges or apply for scholarships. While it is unknown whether the students who acquired bridging social capital with teachers and other school staff would have enrolled in college without the benefits available to them through these relationships, the students identified these individuals and relationships with them as helping them academically and promoting their decisions to attend college. Similarly, one could argue that teachers may be likely to encourage students who were already on course to attend college to do so. The data do not show whether teachers were pivotal influences for each student who went on to college, or whether the students still would have considered it without a teacher's support. Either way, the teachers' encouragement was identified by students as a factor in their academic success.

For migrant children, relationships and networks outside of the migrant community are often located within the educational experience, as noted by many participants. A kind and caring teacher or school counselor can have a positive impact on a young person's life outcomes, specifically college attendance. Conversely, school staff members that contribute to a migrant

student's sense of difference within the educational system can negatively affect academic advancement. One interviewee explained the circumstances that led up to her decision to drop out of high school:

> "I had problems with one of the teachers. In that class, that particular class and hour, I was the only Hispanic person. And it seemed to be that [the teacher] would only be bothering me. So one time we were taking an exam and …when I finished I put my head down and then he comes and kicks my desk. And so I got into it with that teacher and then they didn't want to change my classes. So I stopped going to his class and then I stopped gaining credits, and I'm like, 'What's the use of going to school if I'm not going to get enough credits anyways and they don't want to change my classes?' So I just—at that point I already had my son. He was like a year [old], so I decided to stay at home." (Sara, migrant worker, interviewee)

A few other participants had negative experiences with teachers or school staff in high school as well. One of these, an interviewee who had continued in fieldwork after high school graduation but whose family no longer migrated each winter, relayed the following account of how his high school's administration overlooked racial taunting in the school:

> Orlando: "I started getting into some problems with [kids at school] cause of what they would say to me and everything, and it ended up with me doing something."
>
> Researcher: "So how did the teachers, or whoever was in charge, handle it?"
>
> Orlando: "Well basically they just, well they would suspend both of us from school but I would get a long period of time because usually I would like hit 'em or something, but then usually they would tell me like, 'If they ever do anything like that just to go and tell' them and they would deal with it, but thing is that sometimes when I would go do that I would see that they wouldn't really do anything about it. So that's why I would think it was better just if I did something about it. …Well when I was in high school probably three years ago, there was this kid telling my sister at lunch that she couldn't sit at the table 'cause she was Mexican and everything. So then I heard about it and I told him, 'What's your problem?' So he started saying things to me too, then I got mad and I ended up hitting him and I actually ended up breaking his jaw. So then I got suspended for that. And then I guess they didn't do anything to him, so…I guess they just told him that if he ever does that again he's going to get suspended, you know, but at that particular time they didn't do anything about it." (Orlando, high school graduate, farmworker, interviewee)

The two preceding accounts reflect shortcomings on the part of individual teachers as well as school systems as a whole, which can negatively affect migrant students' life outcomes. Such experiences can block a student from obtaining the bridging social capital needed to remain in high school or to get the necessary information, scholarships, and letters of recommendation to enter college.

Employment

Farmwork was the most popular form of employment for interviewees during their high school years. Seventeen of the nineteen interviewees indicated that they had worked in the fields, or in blueberry processing, at some point. (The remaining two interviewees stated that their parents had prohibited them from doing fieldwork while they were growing up.) Blueberry picking is a very popular job for children and teens within the west Michigan migrant population, and sixteen of the nineteen interviewees had worked in blueberries. Older teenagers may also work in blueberry processing, which involves working in a refrigerated building during the summer.

> "We worked on the blueberries after school in the summer. My parents took me and my brothers to pick blueberries after summer school." (Natalia, migrant worker, interviewee)
>
> "I was like seven or nine [when] I started picking blueberries and I was like 'Nah, I'm not going to do this for the rest of my life.'" (Ramón, college student, interviewee)
>
> "In middle school and the first couple years of high school I was picking blueberries... and my sophomore, junior, and senior year I worked at [blueberry] packaging…" (Antonio, college student, interviewee)
>
> "I started working when I was fifteen, that's when I got my first job at a blueberry factory, processing—I picked blueberries when I was ten. I didn't like picking very much and I still don't, and I started to say, well, maybe if I have an education, let's see what happens." (Ricardo, college student, interviewee)
>
> "In summers I work in the blueberries with the guys that I know. I've been doing that for four years already, so that's my summer." (Julio, high school graduate, interviewee)

> "I would go to pick the blueberries. But that was about it…I never [worked] outside of the blueberries. And that was because my mom took us, not really because we wanted to.…I was like eleven, so [my brother] would have been like seven—seven or six." (Sara, migrant worker, interviewee)

Just as bonding social capital is increased within the migrant community through fieldwork, employment in sectors outside of farm labor are important in establishing social capital outside of the migrant community (bridging social capital). Of the three interviewees who were still migrants, none of them worked outside of agriculture during childhood or subsequent years. Although the interviewees who were college students and those who planned to attend college had often picked blueberries and worked in the nursery plant industry while they were growing up (and some continued to do so during their summer breaks in college), ten of fifteen reported having had other jobs outside of farmwork. The one interviewee who does fieldwork but no longer migrates (Orlando) had worked in a fast food restaurant during high school. Several interviewees worked in local restaurants in the Holland area, while others did factory work for temporary employment agencies or worked in retail.

The findings show that the accumulation of bridging social capital through employment outside of migrant farmwork is concentrated among college students and those with plans to attend college. None of the current migrants in this study have been employed outside of farmwork, while two-thirds of the college students were employed in jobs other than farmwork during high school. Similarly, approximately two-thirds of college students and those who planned to attend college talked about positive relationships, and resources they received, in school. All of the interviewees had strong bonding social capital with peers inside of the migrant community. Six of the nineteen, just under one-third, reported having friends outside of migrant circles as well. This mixed group represented two current migrants, three college students, and one interviewee who was to begin college in the fall.

Although those who reported having friends outside of the migrant community represent a mixed group, several observations can be made regarding the distribution of social capital among the interviewees. College students, the college graduate, and those who were to begin college in the fall had multiple social connections—and social capital—both within and outside of the migrant community. Simply put, two-thirds of those who pursued a college education had accumulated bridging social capital through employment outside of field work and/or had supportive relationships with teachers and staff at school. All had strong bonding social capital as well through friends inside the migrant community, and all but one had farm jobs while growing up. These college and college-seeking students had ties both inside and outside of the migrant community.

The second research question asks whether bridging social capital affects migrant youths' likelihood of college enrollment. When considering the college-pursuing group, the majority (two-thirds) of them had bridging social capital with people outside of the migrant community before choosing to attend college. Within this group, bridging social capital does appear to influence college attendance, and participants have identified the importance of teachers and other school staff in their choice to attend college.

If we consider those who are not pursuing a college education to be the three current migrants along with Orlando, who no longer migrates but continues to do fieldwork, and Gustavo, who is finishing high school and putting off decisions of college, the effect of social capital concentration is less clear. As mentioned earlier, the three current migrants have worked only on farms—they were not employed anywhere else during their high school (or any other) years. This represents a lower level of bridging social capital in the migrant group in comparison to the college-seeking interviewees. One of them, who dropped out of high school, relayed

having negative experiences in school, while the other two said their school experiences were quite positive, although one of these (Natalia) dropped out as well. Orlando, who did graduate, had negative experiences with teachers and administrative officials in high school. Orlando worked at a fast food restaurant, and Gustavo worked for a friend's cleaning company during high school, and did not work in the fields. Two members of this group talked about having friends outside of migrant circles. It can be said that this group of interviewees who are not pursuing post-secondary education has a higher rate of negative school experiences and of working only in agriculture than the interviewees who seek a college education; however, these observations are based on a very small number of cases within a purposive sample. Thus, these conclusions must remain tentative.

Concept of 'Home'

The third research question is how young adult migrants' concept of home influences their decisions to continue migrating or to drop out of the migration cycle after high school. All of the interviewees migrated regularly as children, having experiences of 'home' in Mexico or Texas and Michigan, or all three. (Some lived in other locations as well.) In order to attend college, an individual would typically need to stay in one location to attend classes and complete a degree. The decision to stay in one place might be difficult for some migrant youths to make, particularly if they are close to their parents who may continue to migrate after children enroll in college. It also seems likely that a person who sees Michigan as home will be likely to want to live in Michigan in the future, and one who sees Texas or Mexico as home may be more likely to intend to live in one of those places. Of course it is also possible that young people who grew up with numerous places to call home may simply view all of them (or none of them) as such, and be satisfied living in any of them.

Only the in-depth interviewees were asked what they view 'home' to be. Due to the restrictions of keeping a short interview guide for focus groups, and allowing ample time for each focus group member to respond to each question, the question about home was not included in the focus groups. The results regarding participants' views of home are varied. The most popular answer, given by nine out of nineteen interviewees, is that home is wherever his or her family is located. These nine were quite evenly divided between those who wanted to continue to live in Michigan in the future and those who were uncertain as to where they preferred to live, or thought they would live. One interviewee who said her home was with her family planned to move south after college graduation. Of these nine, six are attending college and one is a college graduate.

It is not surprising that many of the respondents see home as a place with family, rather than a physical location. Since they are used to frequent moves and change of surroundings, the constant in their lives as children was the comfort of parents, siblings, and perhaps other family members being there no matter where 'there' happened to be. While some of these interviewees enjoy Michigan and would like to stay permanently, others are less certain about where they would prefer to live in the future, possibly reflecting that they are accustomed to adjusting to various locations.

The remaining ten interviewees responded to the question of what home means to them in this way: three said that home is in Michigan. The same number said that home was either in Texas or Mexico. The remaining four interviewees were unclear as to what home means to them and were uncertain where they wanted to live, or thought they would live, in the future. Not surprisingly, those who saw Michigan as home were likely to want to stay in Michigan, and those who saw Texas as home planned to live there. One interviewee who viewed Mexico as his

home planned to be in Michigan in the future, and one interviewee who said that his home is in Michigan was uncertain where he would live in the future. Of these ten, seven are enrolled in college.

The results regarding the effect of one's concept of home on college attendance are mixed. Many of the interviewees viewed home as being with family, or seemed uncertain about where home is or where they would like to live in the future. An equal number of the college and college bound students identified either Michigan or Texas/Mexico as home. Two of the current migrants as well as Orlando, who works in the fields but no longer migrates, said that Michigan is home. The remaining migrant said that home is with family but had no idea of where home would be in the future. Gustavo, who is completing high school, did not have an idea of where home was or where he would be in the future. The fact that the majority of interviewees said that "home is with family" is indicative that the family is a highly stable element of life for young people who grow up migrating. This is also reflective, of course, of the strength of the Hispanic family in general. In addition, the interviewees grew up primarily in the U.S. and are accustomed to the idea that adult children often live far away from their parents and other family members. While they may desire to be in close physical proximity to their families later in life, the U.S. cultural norm of family members residing at great distances from one another, and in many cases their own experience with living far from grandparents and others, may contribute to uncertainty about where to settle.

Birth Order

In Mexican migrant families, older children are often under more pressure than their younger siblings to work for pay to help support the family. Due to the cultural norm of men working for pay to meet the family's physical needs, males are under more pressure than females

to do so; however, in families that lack male children or in which sons are much younger than daughters, females may also be expected to work for pay. Because of the pervasive nature of these expectations and their importance in participants' lives, I am including a discussion of how birth order and gender can impact migrant youths' decisions about education.

In conducting this analysis, I considered where each interviewee fell in the birth order in his or her family of origin. If a participant's birth order is in the older "half" of the sibship, he or she is a lower-birth-order child. If a participant's birth order is in the younger "half" of the sibship, he or she is a higher-birth-order child. For example, a second child in a sibship of five would be a lower-birth-order child, but a second child in a sibship of two would be a higher-birth-order child. (Two interviewees are excluded from this analysis because one is an only child and one is the middle of three children.) Of twelve lower-birth-order children in the group of interviewees, seven of them were current college students or were to enter classes in the fall semester of 2009. Of the five higher-birth-order children, all are in college, graduated from college, or are college bound.

Only interviewees were included in the birth order analysis because they typically came from families with which I was familiar. Interviewees commonly discussed their birth order in the interview, so that those whose families were not known to me told me their place in the birth order. Some of the focus group members came from families that were known to me, but others did not. However, some focus group members commented on the difference of responsibilities and pressures of being younger or older in the order of children in their respective families:

> "…You're in a position where, you know you're the first one, and my grandparents, my parents—they don't know anything about college. They barely finished high school; they barely know what high school is. …But being back [home] and seeing that my little sisters, they're like, oh, 'MSU, MSU!' and I take them little gifts that they make it like a big deal, when over here it's just a little deal for us, like even a pen. Take them a pen you can get free anywhere and I take it to them and they're in school [saying], 'Hey, my

> brother's at MSU, you know.' And just seeing that in them, you put the pressure on yourself. Hey, I don't want to fail because if I fail, what are they going to say? You know, 'I'm not going to college because my big brother, he was smarter than me, and he failed.' So the pressure you put on yourself. I don't want to fail." (Luis, college student, focus group member)
>
> "I'd say yeah, it puts a little—a lot of pressure. I mean you gotta set the bar. I'm the first even just out of my generation in my family and I have like my dad and two of my aunts graduated from high school, other than that I'm the only one that has done it so far. [I am the] first to ever go to college and a big one at that, too. It's mostly, it's a lot of pressure cause I have a younger brother who wants to come here too so I gotta set the bar, hopefully he'll do a little better. Like it's been a competition in high school, I set the bar being the best wrestler in our high school and just one of the best football players and just an all-around nice, academically-set guy. He's at the top of his class right now, he's got the potential, he's only a sophomore but he's going to be like the best in the state, he's going to probably have a state title this year. So it's more like setting the bar, if I don't set it high enough, then he won't go far enough. So that's my main concern." (José, college student, focus group member)
>
> "I have set the bar for my two sisters. Now one of them actually made it and she is here in college. And the younger one, I expect her to do the same thing." (Carlos, college student, focus group member)
>
> "I don't get much pressure because I'm the second youngest. There's seven brothers and I'm the second youngest. You know my brothers, they went to college, two of them dropped out, but one, he graduated." (Esteban, college student, focus group member)

The pressure to set an example for younger siblings may be one reason that lower-birth-order children would choose to attend college; but for some, the pressure to support younger siblings by helping to provide for their immediate physical needs may outweigh the pressure to achieve academically. This suggests that older siblings can provide a link to the bridging social capital that puts younger siblings in contact with resources they need to gain college admission.

Gender

According to traditional Mexican (and U.S.) gender norms, women are expected to remain in the home and perform most if not all household chores, food preparation, and childcare. In the same way, both traditional U.S. and Mexican cultures place high value on

women's abstention from sexual contact outside of marriage, and traditional parents can be very protective of their daughters, as the following interviewee describes:

> "When we lived in Mexico I wasn't allowed to really go anywhere without a brother or an uncle or a cousin—a male cousin. Usually whenever my aunts went somewhere, they were like, 'Oh, we need a man,' or 'We need a guy.' It's like, why? So I couldn't really stay out really late. My brothers could but I couldn't you know because I'm a girl. …[In the U.S.] I didn't have a lot of freedom when I was in middle school and high school—not as much as my brothers, but I feel like you know, [my parents] got used to the culture here and so they changed a little, and now that they're older too because they're almost in their sixties, so that definitely changed their ways of thinking, but when I was younger it was a lot of restrictions because I'm a woman." (Gisela, college graduate, interviewee)

Cultural practices of courtship instead of dating, substantial restrictions on young women's social lives, and the escorting of women by a male family member in public persist in some Mexican-origin families, while these and other gendered cultural traditions are less common in the larger U.S. society. Since the participants in this study are primarily children of immigrants whose parents were raised in Mexico but live at least part of the year in the U.S., it is expected that some families will have modified gender roles and expectations to accommodate their children in U.S. society. On the other hand, parents who feel strongly about maintaining traditional gender roles and expectations continue to raise their sons and daughters with distinct differences according to sex, despite the influence of U.S. culture on the children. The following exchange provides an example of traditional gender roles in the context of one young woman's frustration with her parents' strict rules, which continued despite the fact that she was going into her sophomore year of college.

> Researcher: Do you think that your parents raised you differently at all from your brothers?
>
> Flora: 'Cause I'm a girl. Yes. Yes. A lot. A lot.
>
> Researcher: In what ways?

Flora: Well, in most everything. I'm usually the one who cleans of course, 'cause I'm the girl. I have my own room—that's good—but like I can't go out, I can't date, I can't do a lot of things as my brothers. It's different. It's a lot different.

Researcher: So now that you're in college do you think that will change?

Flora: Huh-uh. It's not. It hasn't changed. 'Cause like my brother, he dropped out of college, and he…got his girlfriend pregnant and it was just like, 'Yay!' But if it was me it would be…(her voice trails off as she looks at the floor and shakes her head side to side). Even if I'm going to college. I thought it was going to be different but it's not. I still can't go out.

Researcher: So how do you think that would ever change?

Flora: Me getting married and being able to do my own thing. But for now it's the same, I guess.
(Flora, college student, interviewee)

Flora's situation seems to be an extreme case among the female college students in this study. Although many others acknowledged their parents' differential rules for themselves versus male siblings, no other woman stated that her parents continued to control her social life beyond high school. However, several female college student participants commented that their parents kept in very close contact with them, calling at least once per day, even though they were many miles apart during the school year. Nearly all migrant workers use mobile telephones due to the ease with which they can be transported to various locations, with no need to change telephone numbers. This use of mobile phones has also made it very easy for parents to keep in touch with children, particularly daughters, who are away at college. In Flora's case, she has a very close relationship with her parents, as is common in Mexican families. While Flora disliked her parents' rules, she continued to follow them, even though she was in Texas while they were working in Michigan for the majority of her school year. Although her parents could not physically stop her from dating, she followed their rules because she talked with them constantly

and did not wish to displease them. She valued her relationship with them too much to disobey them or to lie to them about her actions.

During one of the men's focus groups, a participant commented on the difficulty that young Mexican women have, compared to men, in going against their parents' wishes:

> "If a girl tries to do that [go against parents' wishes], it might get to the extreme where they're just going to be like, 'You know what, don't ever talk to me again.' And parents don't—[they] won't talk to them. As with us [men], eventually they'll warm up to the idea…eventually, somewhere down the road. But it won't be as big of a deal. So I think in that aspect, we are luckier, sometimes we can just be like, 'All right, I have my own—' we can just walk away." (Manuel, focus group member, college student)

Young women who continue to follow their parents' wishes, despite the parents' inability to enforce rules due to distance, are likely concerned about preserving the relationship with their parents. In fact, Flora missed her parents so much, and vice versa, during her first year of college that she decided to transfer to Michigan for her sophomore year in order to be closer to them. This closeness of the parent-daughter relationship, and the greater control that parents often have over daughters, may be further reason to think that fewer Mexican migrant women would attend college than men.

Like Flora, Analia viewed marriage as her key to freedom from parental control, and believed that her parents would have continued to monitor her movements if she had not married:

> "I remember that when I was my brother's age—he's sixteen now, my younger brother—I wouldn't go out THAT much, you know, so I think there is a difference between the boys and the girls, well as far as my family. And just recently I asked [my parents], 'How come he's going out more, and why are you letting him go out?' And it's just like, 'Well, he's a boy,' you know, like, he-doesn't-have-much-to-lose type of thing. And so they were very protective. Like just because I'm married now they're not as protective anymore. I have my family, but, if it wouldn't be for that—that I got married and I have a baby now, I think they would still want to know [where I am], even if I'm 21." (Analia, college student, interviewee)

Maricela described her lack of social interaction in comparison to her brother:

> "I mean the machismo in Mexican families is just over the roof. …There were different standards. [My brother] could go out, I couldn't, that sort of thing—women/men thing. There was no cleaning around the house from him, but he did other things like help around the cars or do whatever else. But it was different for him than it was for me, I think. … I know my brother definitely went out more than I did—a whole lot more. I wish that it would have been the same thing, because maybe I just would have felt comfortable around other people like he does. Because he went out everywhere and maybe he met other people and you know, understood things a lot more differently. …I think it still happens now but I would hope that it didn't because it doesn't bring that same experience to girls as to boys." (Maricela, college student, interviewee)

Young women, who may be raised to follow the feminine role of performing household duties and childcare, would seem less likely to enroll in college than young men, who are allowed much more freedom under traditional gender norms. However, research shows that young girls from immigrant families tend to outperform their male counterparts academically (Portes and Raumbaut 2001; Matute-Bianchi 1991). The stories that participants have provided of their personal experiences point to the often complex and stressful gender roles that must be negotiated, and the greater restrictions that young women often face from parental rules.

Combined Effect of Birth Order and Gender

If we consider both gender and birth order, it is also possible that the combination of being a lower-birth-order child and a daughter decreases her likelihood of attending college. Parents may be more likely to raise higher-birth-order children in a less traditional Mexican manner, since as parents' time in the United States increases, they may adapt more to American cultural norms. Parents may adapt more to U.S. cultural practices over time, and they may be more lenient with younger children in general, as Gisela's quote indicates earlier in this section. Analia, also quoted above, explained that while her mother was still strict, she was more lenient with her, a younger daughter, than with her older sister:

> Researcher: Do you think that your parents raised you differently from your brothers because you are a girl?

> Analia: Well, yeah. Yeah, I have to say yes. I didn't see it when I was younger really, because my older brother is like ten years older. So then when I was eight, he was eighteen so he was already an adult so I saw that whatever he did was because he had to work and everything. But now that we're older, my sister points out, 'You know, I wouldn't have dropped out of school if mom was like that [less strict] with me.' Sometimes she was like, you know, 'She was harder with me, she wouldn't let me go out.' She was like, 'With you, she let you go out on the weekends, after school.' So I think my mom also, after saying, 'Ok, my two older kids dropped out; what did I do wrong?,' she started changing a little bit, because she was very strict on going out and I know my sister kind of got frustrated sometimes. But, because really our only outing was like there in the migrant camp…so, yeah. (Analia, college student, interviewee)

In addition to experiencing stricter rules at home, lower-birth-order daughters may also work to help support the family, along with their brothers, while higher-birth-order daughters seem less likely to have such responsibilities. (Although higher-birth-order daughters worked while in middle and high school, they often worked for their own spending money rather than to help support the family.) This added responsibility may also deter college enrollment. Analia (a higher-birth-order daughter) is the only female interviewee who never worked in the fields or in packaging blueberries. Other higher-birth-order women acknowledged that their work experiences were different from those of their older siblings.

> "I think I was the exception [in not working much] because I was the smallest one. [My father] didn't really have a need for me to work and it was just, it was extra money for me. …I know that my brother had to work a whole lot. It was more than probably we all did. Although I know my oldest sister worked a whole lot too." (Maricela, college student, interviewee)

Lower-birth-order daughters relayed their experiences of working to care for younger siblings, and to contribute to the family income. Elena, the first of two children, explained how she performed household and childcare duties while her parents worked. She stated that her brother was raised differently than her due to age, not sex, but her experience follows traditional Mexican gender roles as well:

> Researcher: Do you think your parents raised you differently at all than your brother?

> Elena: Yeah, because he was younger—not because [of being] a boy or girl; because he was younger. He's like the "*consentido*" (spoiled child)—I don't know how to say that [in English]. It's like the daddy's boy… he's like mommy's boy, because my mom is like, "Oh leave him alone because he's young," or just stuff like that—but not because of gender. …When I was in middle school or fifth grade I started staying by myself and took care of him, because we didn't qualify for—I don't know, the DHS [Department of Human Services] department or something like that—so [the babysitter] stopped taking care of us. And I think I was in fifth or sixth grade and I took care of him, and then I had to do the laundry, clean the house, the living room, I did pretty much everything cause [my parents] worked a lot. They had more hours than they do right now. My dad worked until like ten or nine, and my mom came home around eight. So, *hacía la comida, a veces hacía la comida* (I would make supper, sometimes I made supper)—not all the time. But like during the week I did the laundry and took care of him, did a lot of things.
>
> Researcher: So does he do chores like that now?
>
> Elena: No.
> (Elena, high school graduate, interviewee)

Dania, an eldest daughter with three brothers, talked about how she and her brother helped their parents financially by picking blueberries over the years:

> "The only reason we worked was because we needed to work. So being nine years old, I'm not allowed to keep my paycheck, you know what I mean?...And we got an allowance and stuff, but then when we got into high school, I guess one thing my parents did do was kind of give us some freedom, like more financial freedom, like, 'You're taking care of your stuff.' And while other parents—like I know some of my friends worked and their parents would keep their paychecks and give them an allowance. And my parents made it an option; it was just kind of like, 'Hey, this is what's going on, this is what we have to pay. It's up to you guys to help us, it's up to you guys to get out of this situation faster,' you know. So it was just kind of like they put it out there and then we chose to give my parents the money that we earned while in middle school. And then once we went to high school, we realized that we needed other things, you know like more than we ever—like I don't know, maybe school supplies or now you're—like the whole social pressure of you know, being in high school, clothes and all this stuff. My parents would say, 'Save that money during the summer,' because during school we weren't gonna work." (Dania, college student, interviewee)

Some interviewees said that they were raised in the same manner as their opposite-sex siblings. Among the women interviewees, one (Raquel) came from a family of three daughters, and is excluded from this analysis. Of the remaining nine women, the answer to whether or not parents raised them differently from their brothers is largely divided by the women's birth order

position. Of these nine, four of them answered that they were raised basically the same as their brothers. All of these women are lower-birth-order children. Of the five women who answered that they were raised differently than their brothers, three are higher-birth-order children, one is the middle of three children, and one is an eldest daughter. The eldest daughter (Elena, quoted above) confirmed that she and her brother were raised differently, although she believed this to be due to age, not gender.

The following quotations reveal the feelings of gender equality expressed by some of the female interviewees. Although they did not experience differential treatment by gender in their own families, some of the women acknowledged this trend in the Mexican culture. Dania smiled and chuckled while she described her propensity to go against such traditions:

> "Maybe if I was younger than my brother—a lot of the friends that I know that were younger, that were the only girls that were younger, they had to help out more because you know culturally girls do more and that. But not in our house though because I would always put up a fight. You know I guess I was always the rebel and basically I would not allow it." (Dania, college student, interviewee)

She went on to explain how her family shared day-to-day chores:

> "I know a lot of people, like a lot of our friends, especially our guy friends, their mom woke up and did everything, you know in the morning—make the lunch and everything. Basically what they did was woke up and got ready for work. And with us, one thing [our friends] were always surprised by was we all woke up at the same time, we all helped out, and that's something that surprised a lot of people. Like my dad would wake up, and my mom was never the one doing everything, and a lot of people were surprised by that. I don't know why my parents did it, but it's a good thing because my mom didn't get stuck doing all the work all the time. And it's hard—she still had to go to work, like we did. And a lot of our friends wore out their parents, especially their moms, and they don't—they're too selfish to realize it. I mean I guess they're just different." (Dania, college student, interviewee)

Natalia's brothers were likewise expected to help around the house:

> "Well we had to do all the chores. My brothers did too. It didn't matter if they were boys. They had to sweep, they had to clean the restroom, they had to wash dishes, they had to do laundry—they had to do everything, because my mom said, 'It doesn't matter that you're boys. Those things that you have in the middle of your legs ain't gonna fall

> off from you washing dishes.' We're all the same." (Natalia, migrant worker, interviewee)

The difference in upbringing based on birth order position shows that lower-birth-order daughters are likely to see themselves as having been raised in a similar manner to their brothers. Interestingly, the four higher-birth-order daughter interviewees acknowledged gender differences in upbringing, but two of them also relayed that their older sisters experienced more gender-related family structures than had they. The remaining two that acknowledged gender differences (Gisela and Flora) described upbringings in which they were very sheltered due to being female. Flora is the middle of three children, with two brothers. Her status as an only daughter may increase her experience, and perception, of strict parenting.

It seems that lower-birth-order daughters in migrant families experience more responsibilities, including childcare, housework, and working to provide income for the family than do their higher-birth-order sisters. Some may also experience strict upbringings due to being female. However, the importance of their responsibilities, perhaps particularly work for pay, may cause them to feel that they are raised no differently than their brothers. The three migrant women interviewees all felt that they were raised about the same as their brothers. If it is the case that lower-birth-order women from migrant families are less likely to attend college than higher-birth-order women, it may be in part because the position of greater equality with their brothers places equal pressure on them to provide for and care for the entire family, including younger siblings. To the extent that this happens, it deprives younger (higher-birth-order) siblings of the modeling and access to bridging social capital that older siblings can provide them in breaking out of the migration cycle.

Obstacles to Settling Out

In the in-depth interviews for this study, I asked participants what obstacles exist to leaving the migrant stream, since pursuing a college education would necessitate leaving the pattern of migration. In addition, the obstacles that participants identify can provide a more complete picture of the context within which migrant youths make decisions about whether to attend college. I also asked focus group members what factors keep people in the migration cycle. Thirteen of the interviewees responded that economic factors are an obstacle to leaving the migrant cycle. The lack of employment opportunities in the Rio Grande Valley for unskilled laborers with little education was given as the foremost reason for continued migration:

> "Well, the economy. Yeah, the jobs, I think that would be it, maybe they have jobs but they don't pay them enough money. I think that's the reason why." (Elena, high school graduate, interviewee)

> "I think if there was enough work down there they would rather stay over there than come over here." (Flora, college student, interviewee)

> "Yes, well in Texas, there's not so many jobs. And if you do have a job, it's just temporary, it's like less than four months, because my mom and my dad have tried to stop [migrating], and we've gone to Texas and my parents have gone looking for a job in the few months that we've been there just to see if they do get a job and they usually never find anything. And if they do, they just tell them that it's not going to last a long time, it's just for like two months and then they'll [get] laid off and they have to find another job. So here at Greenview, it's by contract so they'll be here the whole season." (Raquel, high school graduate, interviewee)

> "Typically [in Texas] there are not a whole lot of jobs where you can fit into, have that type of criteria, working in the field—that's all they know. That's all they've known. So it's just kind of hard." (Maricela, college student, interviewee)

> "No employment. It's very, very low employment. And if you work over there it's just the minimum wage. No overtime, no nothing. And here when it's shipping season, we get a lot of overtime." (Natalia, migrant worker, interviewee)

> "No jobs." (Antonio, college student, interviewee)

While many study participants spoke of familial closeness as important and influential in their lives, they also talked about family members in the south as one of the reasons for continual

migration. Family ties were not identified negatively in this sense; rather, participants viewed it simply as a fact that family members in Texas or Mexico are a factor in perpetuating the migration pattern. Family ties work in concert with the lack of economic opportunity in the south: while employment in Michigan annually draws workers away from Texas and Mexico, their parents, grandparents, siblings, and other family members who live in the south keep drawing them back during the season when employment in fieldwork is unavailable in the north.

> "[The family] keeps you coming back and forth. And then you also have family in both places. Like here I have my sister. And it's only her, but it's my only sister. And I have my three nephews here. But other than that, in Texas we have the whole rest of the family." (Sara, migrant worker, interviewee)

> "Yeah like mostly my parents want to be over there, like while my grandparents are still over there. We got a house over there and everything, you know, we gotta maintain it and everything." (Ramón, college student, interviewee)

> "My whole family is down there. Most of them don't migrate, out of all the families it's just my mom that's over here. My mom and an aunt. The house is in Texas. But we live right on the border; my grandma, aunts, in Mexico. All my father's family is in Mexico, my mother's family is in Texas. We're on the very border." (Natalia, migrant worker, interviewee)

> "I think it is because of the family. I believe it's because my parents want to go back to where they came from, since it's closer. And they want to go back, be at home…And I guess Texas is the best place cause they're closer to Mexico and here it's like they're far away and they just, come work. And it's not really family, just people they work with. And in Texas it's more, family." (Flora, college student, interviewee)

> "[They migrate] because they have to go see their families, mostly. Most of them do that… I guess because of Christmas and New Years and all of that they want to celebrate with the families, I guess." (Juan, high school graduate, interviewee)

> "Some of the reasons that my parents [migrate] is we still have family back in Mexico. So in those periods, those couple months, we go back there and visit them, and come back here and work since there's not that much work over there. But my parents tell me that it's because of my family—relatives that are still living back there." (Julio, high school graduate, interviewee)

Several of the interviewees stopped to think about why their families, friends, and in some cases, they themselves continue in the cycle of migration. One particular interviewee pondered the question of why people continue to migrate for several minutes before answering:

> "I really don't know why. I guess some people just like it…You get nine months of work over here, then you get unemployment, you can go back to Texas with your family—it's like you're on vacation for four months. And you know, people go back to Mexico, visit their families, and [get] unemployment from Greenview." (Miguel, college student, interviewee)

Focus-group participants were posed with a similar question, which elicited similar answers: "Why do you think that some kids who grow up migrating decide to continue working in the fields, rather than going to college?"

> "…They take the term 'family' to heart, and most people grow up and are taught, the teaching from our parents is that family is the number one thing, so many people choose to help the family out. That's one of the major reasons I know people decide not to go to school and keep working in the field. And also it's because, since they're migrants, they come up every year and they're used to it. I guess they don't want to leave it because they got used to it after all those years." (Jorge, college student, focus group member)

> "They feel like they have to be with the family I guess. That's a reason they would stay [in the migration cycle]." (José, college student, focus group member)

In addition to the factors of family and employment, focus group participants in particular identified a lack of awareness of available opportunities for higher education as a significant obstacle to settling out of the migrant circuit:

> "I think people are not aware that they have a better opportunity to educate themselves. That's why they get married young and go back to the fields. That's what I think." (Alejandro, college student, focus group member)

> "I had the opportunity to come [to college] and maybe that's a lot of times the reason that students, they don't know about the opportunity that is there. 'Cause I personally didn't know. Where we worked, the people in the camp that we lived in, none of them got—older people had not gone to college. I guess they never heard of the opportunity." (Jesús, college student, focus group member)

> "They don't see the opportunities they can have, what they can do." (Carmen, college student, focus group member)

Not surprisingly, the college students in this study displayed much greater analytical skills in their responses than those who had no education beyond high school, or those who had dropped out of high school. It is therefore notable that some of the responses to the question of why some continue to migrate—such as "a lack of awareness of opportunities" and "fear"—were offered exclusively by those with at least some college education.

> "I'm going to have to say it's fear. Because I think it's just being afraid of stepping out of what you know, stepping out of your comfort zone. Fear that you might not get used to just being in a permanent place, or finding a job that has that security. It can also be being afraid of letting go of visiting your family members every year, or having that, in a sense it's some sort of freedom that you're not, you work for so many months and then you sort of go back and relax or just, use up your savings or something. And if you have a permanent job, you won't be able to go visit the family and stay for however long you want, things like that. Those are the things that I see in my house." (Gisela, college graduate, interviewee)

> "When you don't see it [opportunity], you're just lacking, you don't know what it's like to be here [in college], you don't know what to expect at all. I think that's one of the big issues. You don't want to try 'cause you're just thinking like, 'Oh, well.'" (Alicia, college student, focus group member)

> "And that's another reason why I think that people just keep working in the fields, 'cause they just don't know what to do, or how to get into college and stuff like that, or they're scared." (Daniel, college student, focus group member)

Eight participants indicated that some people are just used to migrating, continue to do it because that's all they know, have a family history of migration, or they see migrating as freedom.

> "Well it wasn't like this big decision, it was just like, I guess basically we're just used to it, and now we have thought about staying here or staying in Texas, but it's not, I guess it's just something we have to get used to, staying in one place. I've been coming back and forth for twenty years. Kind of hard not to…that's what I know… a lot of people here started going to [work at a local meat processor]. But the reason why I didn't go to that is that they didn't have a layoff. We wouldn't be able to go back down every year." (Sara, migrant worker, interviewee)

> "I think that they're so used to migrating that they don't feel that they belong to one place. So they find, like, they try to travel and find a place to stay. I know my parents don't [stay in Michigan] because they don't feel that they belong to the United States. They

> want to go back to Mexico. They want to see us finish school and then move on." (Alicia, college student, focus group member)
>
> "I think that maybe you're so used to it 'cause it's like generations of people that do it, like in my family, it's like my grandma you know, they always do it so, they're not prepared for school, they don't have a job, they don't have a position, so they're like, 'What else am I going to do? I need food, I need work, I need to get money,' so that's the easiest way you know, to move back and forth. Might as well just do it and keep going." (Isela, college student, focus group member)

One interviewee talked about his desire to start an international business so that he could continue to travel regularly between the United States and Mexico:

> "Yeah I like that because you know, if you don't want to be here, just go over there, stay over there if you want to. But if you don't want to be over there you can just come over here. Yeah, I don't know, I'm used to that…yeah I just want to keep going back and forth, mostly." (Ramón, college student, interviewee)

Some respondents identified the immediate income available through fieldwork as an influence in continued migration as opposed to college enrollment. Parents also recognized this phenomenon at times and some discourage children from working in the fields at all for this reason.

> "I considered it [working for Greenview while in high school] because in the summer they had transportation, so I didn't need to get someone to take me, but my parents said no—it was an angry no, so I knew, 'Ok, drop it.' But yeah I did consider it just because of the transportation, and they would give high school students not that hard of a job, but [my parents] said no…because that would be a full time job type of thing, and then the money sometimes gets people to just not consider education anymore, because they just let—the money controls them…so they didn't allow me to work there." (Analia, college student, interviewee)
>
> "I mean it's just that they're already used to you know, what the pattern of their parents is. I mean our pattern here, when my parents were working in Holland, where they would work eight months and then they would receive unemployment but they still know that they were going to come back in March. So I mean they would have that same mentality, I know, a couple of my friends had that mentality, they kept on working, they're still working there. And they like that life 'cause that's what they saw with their parents. And one of them tried to come here to school but they were used to getting money and then they just left." (David, college student, interviewee)
>
> "Well I think younger people have, some start working, I don't know, they're able to

> work and they start working and then they think that it's really easy 'cause they're working and getting a paycheck, but still living with their parents. They just have no motivation to do something better. I know people my age that were just like 'Well, I'm working, I'm making good money, it's not as hard as my parents say it is.' But that's just 'cause you're starting and they don't realize." (Cristina, college student, focus group member)

The obstacles that prevent movement of young people out of the migration cycle are important because they reveal the unique challenges to upward mobility that these young people face. In addition, understanding the obstacles can help parents, teachers, and others who are in direct contact with children from migrant families to develop strategies for overcoming these obstacles. Some of the obstacles that are identified in this study may not necessarily be viewed as such if an influential person (i.e., a parent or teacher) helps a young person to understand that they will have regular opportunities to visit family in the south while in college, or that income potential and long-term security for the family is much greater after obtaining a college degree, for example.

The Importance of Race

Racial discrimination was identified as one of the obstacles to settling out of the migrant stream by some participants in this study. While some participants spoke of experiences of racial discrimination, two participants said that they had not experienced any sort of racism, prejudice, or discrimination. One of these was a current migrant and one was a college student. The remaining twenty-nine participants had a broad range of comments on the topic. Some participants seemed ambivalent about the issue, others acknowledged experiencing discrimination due to their migrant status, and still others relayed specific incidents in which he or she was discriminated against due to Mexican ethnicity. When asked if they were treated differently in Michigan than in Texas, one participant attributed such differences to culture, and one found any slighting he may have experienced to be easily dismissed:

> "A little bit. I'm not sure. Not really the way you're treated, but the way people act and stuff like that. I'm not sure how to say it. …Not 'strange' but just different ways. I don't know. Down in the part of Texas where we live, uh it's a little more Mexican culture and stuff like that. Up here it's not as much. It's just like different cultures." (Antonio, college student, interviewee)

> "I don't know [if I experienced any discrimination]. I mean I'm pretty sure if I had, or if I have, I didn't really realize it 'cause I'm pretty laid back and stuff. Like if someone says something, I'm just like, 'Yeah, whatever.' If someone tries to get me mad, I'm just like, 'Nah,' I just deal with it. So like when people are actually like trying to treat me different or something I just think it's a joke or just kind of like, 'I'm the bigger person.' So if I do, I don't remember." (Gustavo, high school student, interviewee)

The following exchange revealed ambivalence on the part of the interviewee regarding the question of whether he had experienced differential treatment due to his ethnicity:

> Miguel: "Not really. I don't know; not that I've noticed."
>
> Researcher: "Not that you've noticed?"
>
> Miguel: "I don't really care." (Miguel, college student, interviewee)

Although a few participants seemed somewhat reluctant to discuss the question of whether they had been treated differently because of race or ethnicity, the great majority responded that this had indeed been their experience.

> "I had a lot of hardships, in school with the kids. You know kids can be very mean. And also in the stores, when I was first learning English, it was really hard for me to speak and be confident. Particularly because I was the only one in the family that spoke English, so it was kind of, it was a very big burden to have to translate for everybody, and it's one of those things like returning a product or something like that, so it felt very, I felt a lot of pressure and at the same time I was scared because I didn't always have very pleasant experiences. I had a kid once who spat in my face and told me, 'You're a dirty Mexican,' so it was a lot of experiences that were because of my ethnicity." (Gisela, college graduate, interviewee)

> "I feel like I've been discriminated before….When I was actually in middle school, we were sitting in a theater where it was me and a couple of friends, and we were called names, that was the first time I was exposed to actually a derogatory term. They called us 'spics' or something. And I didn't even pay attention to it because I didn't know what that word meant, but it was actually, like I said, a derogatory term for Mexicans. And a couple of other places I mean, I've felt, you feel that kind of attitude that you're not

welcome there—just because of the color of your skin." (Ricardo, college student, interviewee)

"There [are] some people who are racists…but I didn't pay much attention. And I don't know why people are scared of Mexicans, but they are—some of the people." (Ramón, college student, interviewee)

"I've been to places—restaurants, stores—where, I don't know, they give you like a bad look or something." (Julio, high school graduate, interviewee)

"I think here in Lansing it's a little bit different because it's so diverse that we just kind of blend in. But when we go back, when I go back home to Grand Haven, it's so—it feels so the same, it just feels like we're just back to having to go through all of that and it's so uncomfortable. But I just, I don't really mind it anymore, it's just sometimes it does bother [me] 'cause we go to the store and it's just like everybody's staring and it feels so uncomfortable." (Maricela, college student, interviewee)

"Yeah like at school, or sometimes there would be people like at, if you'd go to the grocery store and stuff like that, would give you nasty looks…" (Sara, migrant worker, interviewee)

"No, I never had any [personal experiences of discrimination]. But some [people] do kind of look at you like, you know, they act kind of weird to you." (Juan, high school graduate, interviewee)

"[In Texas schools] they tease you a lot because of the way you dress, because of this, because of that. And we're the same, we're Mexicans, we're all Hispanics. But it's just the difference if you don't start [school] with them right in September and towards the whole year, and if you just go like an exchange student for a couple months, they give you a different treatment. …Because they say that we have the free lunch, and the free…well, free lunch. That's what we got from them." (Natalia, migrant worker, interviewee)

One focus group member, who insisted that his ethnicity had no effect on his experiences or choices, relayed the following account:

"[I was] never discriminated against 'cause I was Hispanic. Maybe one time. I went to the bathroom and some wangsters were writing the Latin Kings symbol on one of the mirrors with permanent marker, and you know I just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. They weren't even in there [in the Latin Kings gang]. Me and my best friend, he's also Mexican too, we walked out and I don't know what they're called, you know the enforcer people there, you know the person in charge, like gives referrals and stuff, went in there and called me [and] my Mexican friend, and let my white friend keep walking. And he called us up to it and said, 'Did you guys write that?' That was like the only time." (José, college student, focus group member)

Apparently this participant was able to overlook the incident since it was an isolated event in his life, but at the same time he felt compelled to share it in the focus group.

Some of the college students in the study identified their racial background as a challenge to succeed academically, specifically in a context in which many Hispanic students drop out of school:

> "[Racism] has changed a lot over the years but unfortunately it's still around; I wish it wasn't like that, but it is. But sometimes some people use it as motivation too. Some people just want to prove them wrong; some people just want to say, 'I can do this.' Those are the people who succeed in life, you know. And like I mean, people being discriminated [against], it's always going to be around. It's never completely going to go away, that's just the truth about it. So yes, it does influence a lot on some people. Like for some migrant students, they come up when they're small, and they go to school here, [or] like maybe in Wisconsin or something. And they are introduced into a whole different environment than they were before, and they see how they can't just hang out with other people because they don't accept them. And that can really influence them in a very bad way. But it can also influence them in a different way, like if they can overcome that and they can become friends, then they can know we can do anything. If we want to do something, we can accomplish it. Just like anybody else. We're equal. And I think that's a good experience that everybody has to go through, especially if you're a minority, you know some sort of Hispanic or anything. It's just part of your life, it's just something that you have to go through, and it eventually will help you out in the future." (Jorge, college student, focus group member)

> "The way I see it is [that] my color—you can get discriminated [against] and everything but you can also use it to your advantage. To apply for my master's program I can use that as being a challenge, I have to challenge myself twice to do whatever—I guess I would say a normal kid—a white person, would do. … The resources I had were limited but still, here I am….Maybe coming from a low-income background like I did might influence [some people] to rob, get into gangs. Luckily I had a family who supported me all the time, even though they didn't know what I wanted to be or anything like that but they totally supported me in the right way." (Carlos, college student, focus group member)

Discrimination as a barrier to settlement, or further education, was identified only by college students. It is likely that their higher level of education, compared to the study participants who had a high school education or less, enabled them to recognize and analyze the broad impact of discrimination on individuals' lives.

> "I think because when you're in the fields, there's a lot of discrimination, and my family has gone through it and I ask my mom, 'Why do you keep on working [in the fields]?' And my mom has a very low self esteem so she's like, 'Well if they're making fun of us right now and saying that's all we're good for, we might as well just do what we're good for.' I guess that's why [people keep migrating], you know." (Rebeca, college student, focus group member)

One focus-group participant relayed the story of her cousin who dropped out of college:

> "Somebody asked him like, 'Are you… (voice trails off)?' They couldn't tell him from different nationalities and other stuff and I think he got so upset with that—[he said,] 'There's too much racism, I can't do it.' So that's one of the things that, that's why he didn't do it. That was my first cousin that was going to graduate. …I know for that reason that he dropped out of college." (Alicia, college student, focus group member)

Racial discrimination and general xenophobia can and do contribute to negative outcomes for Mexican immigrants, as the above quotes display. Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco (1995) and Portes and Rumbaut (2001) discuss the racially charged atmosphere in which Mexican immigrants reside in the United States, and recognize the effects that such an environment can have on children's life outcomes. "Immigrant children's perceptions of discrimination in American society, their ethnic identities and self-esteem, their aspirations, and their patterns of school behavior are affected accordingly" (Portes and Rumbaut 2001: 56).

<u>Desire to Give Back to the Migrant Community</u>

The interdependent nature of the Mexican immigrant family is evident in the results of this study. Many participants' college enrollment was influenced by parents, siblings, and peers. But bonding social capital is based on reciprocity. Thus, participants in the current study also talked about the pressure that some migrant youths feel to contribute financially to their family's wellbeing.

> "…[My brother] was telling me, 'You need to come to college. I know you can do it, and I know our parents have a job but we can get a better job and we can help them after.'" (Alicia, focus group member, college student)

My findings are consistent with Carola and Marcelo Suárez-Orozcos' (1995) work on Mexican immigrant students, for whom "…achieving success or 'becoming somebody' means returning to give back to the family" (181).

Several college and college-bound students in the present study are conscious of the bridging social capital they have received and of the merits of repaying it by choosing a career path that will let them serve the migrant or larger community in the future:

> "I'm trying to come back to Holland because I know this, this camp, this little camp that I'm actually living in right now has a lot of issues and I'm planning to come back over here and hopefully I can save one or two kids that actually can go, doesn't matter what college, what community college they go, but hopefully they can get [rid of] this mentality of just material[ism], just trying to buy a truck, trying to buy something else, and try to think of a future different than that. I mean I don't see nothing wrong with after you graduate if you want to have a nice car but not when you're like in high school. To drop out because of that is a bad reason. I mean I guess there's other issues for other people but this would be my main focus here, Holland." (Ricardo, interviewee, college student)

> "Hopefully if and when I do graduate from college, and I get into my career as a manager, I would like to give a scholarship. I would like to go personally out to the fields, 'cause showing that you're being a successful man, you know, and still going back and giving back to your community shows a lot about you. It shows a lot about setting an example for everybody, you know, 'Hey, he was in my same shoes and now look at him. I want to be like him.'" (Luis, focus group member, college student)

> "I am already involved in the migrant community. In the summer this past year I did this program…like basically what they do is provide summer school for migrant children. You know they come up to Michigan, you know they take school buses to camps and pick up hundreds of kids, and you know, just basically summer school. I got into that and basically I was a teacher's aide and I got to be a role model for them and tell them about myself and it was one of the better experiences I've ever had. And that's my involvement in the community now. …I love it, it was so much fun." (José, focus group member, college student)

These findings are consistent with those of Crane (2003) who reports of migrant children who grew up to settle permanently in Michigan and to work as education, healthcare, and social justice professionals among the migrant population.

The goal of these college students to help children who grow up in the same communities and circumstances in which they did, to achieve upward mobility through education, is a very promising finding of this study. The impact that such change-makers can have is yet to be seen, but their energy, enthusiasm, and not least of all, bonding social capital within the migrant community will go far in influencing future generations of migrant children. Further research, in particular a longitudinal study, would be insightful for understanding the effect that college graduates from migrant families can have on their home communities.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

"At first, when I was almost to graduate, I thought to myself if I really wanted to go to college or not. And sometimes I thought to myself, 'I could work like my parents, work like the whole weekend and then go to Mexico every year like that,' but I thought about it, but I don't know, I just didn't really want to have that life." (Julio, interviewee, high school graduate)

In this dissertation, I set out to discover the factors that influence migrant youths' decisions for education and career in their adult lives. Like Julio in the quotation above, many recognize the difficulty of their parents' lives and desire to do something different. The decision to pursue a different lifestyle through a college degree is affected by many variables within each individual's context. The research questions and contributing factors reviewed in this dissertation uncover some of the circumstances that influenced the decisions of these young adults from migrant families.

Review of Findings

This study is designed to investigate three primary research questions:

1. Who (parents, siblings, friends, teachers, schools, others) exerts the most influence on migrant youths and young adults in their decisions about education and work?
2. Does bridging social capital affect a migrant youth's likelihood of college enrollment?
3. How does one's concept of "home" influence the decision to continue to migrate or to leave the migrant stream?

Beyond these queries, there exist many variables that influence young peoples' choices concerning work and education. Those that were found to be the most influential or most important for the participants in this study are also reviewed in the findings. These include birth order position, gender, obstacles to settling out of the migrant stream, the importance of race, and the desire of many college students to give back to the migrant community.

The most consistent finding among the study participants is that parents have great influence on their children's choices for adult life. Eighty-seven percent of study participants were actively following the educational and/or career path encouraged by their parents. The remaining 13% indicated that their parents did not steer them toward one specific career or educational goal; rather, they expressed support for any path their children would choose. This finding is in accordance with the importance of the family, and family loyalties, in Mexican culture. Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (1995) found that parents had greater influence over children than did peers in Mexican-origin families. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) also indicate that Mexican immigrant parents' ambitions and goals for their children, in the context of few resources otherwise, are the most significant support the children receive. Mexican-origin parents who appreciate the value of education for their children, as many do, are likely the greatest influence that children have to encourage college studies. On the other hand, parents may also influence children to remain in migrant farmwork, as in Natalia's case. These findings indicate the importance of parental understanding and appreciation of the better life that education can bring for their children.

Beyond parental influence, social capital built up both inside and outside of the migrant community can work to promote positive outcomes, and specifically college enrollment, for young adults. The college students in this study had more relationships, and associated bridging social capital, with employers, teachers, school counselors, and coaches, than those who were current migrants. None of the current migrants had worked outside of agriculture, while two-thirds of the college students had done so. These findings suggest that young people who work outside of farmwork at some point during high school may be more likely to attend college than those who work only in the fields.

Although some participants spoke of friends' influence, the effect of peers on young adults' choices seems less profound than that of school employees or employment outside of farmwork. This is in accordance with the Suárez-Orozcos' (1995) finding that peers had much less influence on Mexican immigrant children than did parents; Mexican immigrant children were much less influenced by their peers than were white, native-born American children. While the importance of multiple ties both within and outside of the ethnic community is found in Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) theoretical framework, in this study the effect of relationships with same-age peers outside of migrant circles cannot be established. Further research, particularly with a larger group of migrant participants, may be able to flesh out the effect of peer relationships on young adult migrants.

The final research question concerns the effect of a young person's concept of "home" on his or her decisions for education and work. Not surprisingly, many of the study participants stated that they view their homes to be with their families, and not in any one particular geographic location. This finding is indicative, as are previous findings, of the importance and influence of one's family in the lives of Mexican immigrant children. However, no connection could be drawn between the location that some viewed as their home (since some participants did name a location), or the "family as home" and college enrollment.

Due to Mexican cultural norms, as well as to the low paying jobs performed by migrant workers, birth order can be a factor in a young person's chances of going to college. Of the interview participants in this study, all of the higher-birth-order children attended or planned to attend college, while just over half of the lower-birth-order children did the same. Parents may not need higher-birth-order children to work to help support the family, as lower-birth-order children are often expected to do. Higher-birth-order children may also be less likely than their

older siblings to be raised in a traditional Mexican manner, since parents may raise children less traditionally as their time in the U.S. increases. The possible effect of birth order on college attendance was only examined among interviewees (not focus group members) because I had personal knowledge of the families of interviewees, but did not necessarily know all of the families from which focus group members came. I recognized the possibility that birth order was influential in college attendance after the data were collected, precluding the ability to ask focus group members about their birth order position. However, I believe that future research in this area would do well to include an analysis of the effects of birth order on educational achievement among children from migrant farmworker families.

There was no pattern of difference observed between the numbers of men and women participants who chose to enroll in college. However, the women in this study often relayed their experiences of greater parental control over their time and activities than did their brothers. Parents may continue to exert special influence over daughters into their college years.

When we combine the variables of birth order and gender, we find that the lower-birth-order women in this study often saw themselves as having been reared in the same manner as their brothers. This may reflect the greater responsibilities that lower-birth-order women had as children, compared to higher-birth-order women. Such responsibilities may lead a girl to feel that her role in the family is just as important as that of her brother. Birth order may be more significant than gender in its effect on college enrollment for migrant youths. Further research is needed in order to determine whether birth order alone has a greater effect on college enrollment than gender and birth order combined. This knowledge would reveal the importance of encouragement and support for lower-birth-order children to attend college, or conversely, would

help to direct the focus of teachers, school counselors, and others working with migrant students on lower-birth-order women, due to the double challenges of gender and birth order.

Participants identified the lack of available non-farm employment in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas as the primary obstacle to leaving the migrant circuit. Family ties, lack of awareness about other opportunities (specifically education), racial discrimination, fear, the attraction of income through fieldwork, and the familiarity of routine were also named as obstacles to settling out of the migrant stream and to further education. The college students who participated in the focus groups spoke about their desires to return and "give back" to the migrant communities from which they came, either through careers as social workers and school staff, or by being an example and sharing their knowledge, resources, and even wealth with others. These findings are consistent with those of the Suárez-Orozcos (1995) and Crane (2003).

Many study participants described experiences of racial prejudice and discrimination because of their Mexican heritage. Two of the thirty-one participants denied having experienced any racially-motivated discrimination in their lives. The remaining twenty-nine had a broad range of comments on the topic, ranging from a general acknowledgement of racism as a social phenomenon to specific personal experiences of racial hatred or harassment. Some of the college students saw racism as a challenge to overcome in order to succeed in life. Others acknowledged that racism had contributed to family members' decisions to stay in fieldwork or to leave college, for example.

Segmented Assimilation Revisited

In Chapter Two, I introduced Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) theory of segmented assimilation and its five avenues of immigrant acculturation. The participants involved in this study largely represent successful adaptation—most of them are enrolled in college and will

achieve a higher socioeconomic status than that of their parents. Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) model shows that selective acculturation, the most advantageous adaptation outcome, is achieved in cases where both parents and children are involved in a co-ethnic community and learn English and U.S. cultural norms together. I suggest that the majority of young adults from migrant families in this study fall into a sixth type of assimilation, in which families are involved in a co-ethnic community but parents remain monolingual and do not learn U.S. customs. Their children, on the other hand, achieve fluent bilingualism and biculturalism; and like their parents, they are involved in a community of co-ethnics. Their parents' lack of learning English and U.S. customs places them outside of Portes and Rumbaut's model of immigrant children who achieve selective acculturation.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) indicate that immersion in a co-ethnic community can be an important component of successful adaptation to U.S. society for young immigrants. However, in the case of Mexican-origin migrant workers, the community of co-ethnics undergoes constant change in composition, size, and membership due to the migration of individuals and families over time. The parents of young adults in this study speak only Spanish and remain largely within the migrant community. Their contact with any non-migrants is often limited to interactions with a migrant counselor or English as a Second Language teacher at their child's school. They also interact briefly with store employees, healthcare providers, or government agency employees, but they remain largely within the community of co-ethnics at a migrant housing camp.

The adult children of such parents, however, have the great advantage, compared to their parents, of speaking English. As we saw in the previous chapter, the friends of migrant children are primarily other migrant children. However, school attendance and English abilities open the

door for them to meet and befriend individuals outside of migrant circles. Many of the study participants said that they had been employed outside of farmwork during high school. Many of them also went on to college after high school graduation. If the parents can be described as "isolated" within a community of co-ethnics, in accordance with Portes and Rumbaut's theory, their young adult children certainly cannot be considered in the same way. Just as parents' lack of English and cultural learning prevents children from fitting into the category of those who achieve selective acculturation, children's social ties outside of the migrant community, as well as English and cultural learning that occur as a result, keep children from following a path of consonant resistance to acculturation (which occurs when the entire family is isolated within a co-ethnic community).

A sixth path of acculturation is evident in the outcomes of this study: that in which families remain involved in a co-ethnic community while children achieve positive acculturation, despite their parents' lack of bilingualism and understanding of U.S. customs. This additional type would fit many in the west Michigan migrant population. A supportive family and ethnic community, along with English language skills and connections with teachers, friends, and employers outside of the migrant community, can all work to support positive outcomes and upward mobility for migrant youths. Policy makers, researchers, and those who work with migrant farm families would do well to recognize that promoting family support systems (including co-ethnic relationships and parental authority) can work to bring about positive acculturation results for children, even if parents do not learn English or U.S. cultural patterns.

Social Capital Revisited

Social capital can be defined as either bonding social capital or bridging social capital (Flora and Flora 2003), as discussed previously. As Flora and Flora (2003) explain, social

capital accumulation of both types is necessary for change within disadvantaged communities. Portes and Rumbaut's assertion of the importance of a co-ethnic community in the adaptation of the children of immigrants fits well with Flora and Flora's argument. Young people who have bonding social capital (built through co-ethnic community ties) as well as bridging social capital (accumulated in ties outside of the co-ethnic community) are better equipped to achieve upward mobility. Flora and Flora argue that both are necessary to create change within a community; in this case, change in the intergenerational educational achievement and socioeconomic status of Mexican-origin migrant families.

For the participants in this study, the influence of both bonding and bridging social capital is apparent in the choice to pursue a college education. Many respondents learned about college and how to apply through teachers, counselors, and other relationships with school staff in high school. Many also learned of opportunities for higher education through friends within the migrant community. Therefore, this study bears out the importance of both bonding and bridging social capital for positive adaptation outcomes, and more specifically for higher educational attainment among immigrant children.

Limitations of Study and Suggestions for Further Research

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009), Latinos comprise fewer bachelor's degree holders than whites, blacks, or Asians in the U.S., and it has been widely acknowledged that Latinos lag behind other racial and ethnic groups in educational achievement. The Pew Hispanic Center (2008) reports that in 2008, just 9.1% of Mexicans in the U.S. held a bachelor's degree, less than the 12.9% rate for all Hispanics. In addition, the Census Bureau's (2009) numbers show that young women, on average, have higher educational achievement than men—within the entire population and among Latinos as well. Michigan residents follow the same

pattern as the nation: for the population less than forty-five years of age, women outperform men academically, holding more advanced degrees (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2005-2009). In this study, no comparison was made between the Latino and other populations; however, the great majority of participants (all of whom are Latino) are pursuing education beyond high school, which goes against the national trend. This is because the type of sample that was used—a snowball sample—provided for those who are higher achievers to be involved in the study. The preponderance of successful study participants was not due to the overall academic success of young people in the target population (or a lack of individuals not pursuing a college education within the population). Rather, field workers proved more difficult to reach and to interview. This resulted in a sample of highly successful young people from migrant families, and although it would have been informative to know more about those who continue to migrate, it is also important to understand the context and experiences of those who choose to attend college.

In addition, the sample used here was limited by the fact that only those of age eighteen years or more were eligible to participate in the study. This decision was made in order to ease access to potential respondents: since all participants were of legal adult age, parents or legal guardians of minors would not be required to give permission for children to participate in the study. Therefore, individuals under age eighteen who may have dropped out of high school and remain in the migration cycle were not able to be included in this research. The age requirement also precluded current high school students under age eighteen who may have been considering dropping out or continuing to migrate after graduation from participation.

This study reveals no observable difference between males' and females' college attendance. It is logical to expect more young women from migrant families to enroll in and graduate from college, as is the trend nationally among all populations. However, it is possible

that the combined impact of gender and birth order may result in less likelihood for lower-birth-order women from migrant families to attend college. Further research to examine gender and birth order differences among college students and graduates from migrant families would be beneficial.

There is also a widely recognized educational achievement gap between rural and urban residents. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (2003), 15.5% of rural residents had earned a four-year college degree in 2000, compared to 26.6% of urban residents. In this study, the participants are rural residents who are pursuing a college education, going against the trend of lower levels of education for those in rural areas compared to their urban counterparts, but moving with the trend of increasing educational achievement for rural residents in general (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2003).

In order to address the shortcomings of the sample used in this study, I would recommend that future researchers employ broader techniques in order to recruit more current migrant farmworkers in study samples. First, it would be beneficial to include those younger than eighteen years, which would require the permission of parents and legal guardians. Second, more migrant farmworkers of age eighteen and over could possibly be recruited through the use of greater monetary compensation. This may also increase the likelihood of parents and guardians to agree to interviews with children under age eighteen. I offered a compensation of ten dollars per participant; but if a researcher were able to offer compensation of fifty dollars, for example, it would likely increase the proportion of current migrant workers in the sample.

Although the greatest challenge concerning the sample composition was in the area of securing interviews with current migrants, I also encountered some, albeit less, difficulty in recruiting sufficient numbers of focus group participants at Michigan State University. Even

though I was able to hold four focus groups, two in particular were not as well attended as I would have liked. It is certain that for some potential focus group members, class or other obligations prevented their participation at the appointed times and dates. On the other hand, like the potential migrant interviewees, offering a higher level of monetary compensation would likely increase participation in focus groups with college students.

Conclusion

In sum, this study has reaffirmed the importance of parental influence for higher education on Latino immigrant youth in migrant families. Employment outside of the migrant community, bridging social capital developed with teachers and other school staff, and higher-birth-order position in the sibship may also increase the likelihood of college enrollment. Lower-birth-order women may be less likely to attend college, a finding that may be of particular interest for further research. Lower-birth-order children may be needed to work for pay to help support their families, effectively removing the option of a college education. If lower-birth-order children are indeed less likely to attend college, then schools, parents, and others who work with migrant children and families should be aware of this challenge and work to develop resources that will assist lower-birth-order children in pursuing a college education.

The influence that birth order, and gender in combination with birth order, may have in the likelihood that a young adult migrant will attend college was most interesting to me in this study. These findings were the least anticipated; I expected to find that parents and bridging social capital were important—which they are—but I learned that the assigned statuses of birth order and gender may be influential as well.

The results of the current study are limited to a particular population of Mexican-origin young adults in Michigan. While the status of being a Mexican immigrant is common to the

young-adult participants in the study, their status of having been an immigrant child who regularly circulated between states adds another dimension to their life stories that is not generally shared by young immigrants who are not the children of migrant farmworkers. The circumstances of constant movement between states or countries, the regular change of school environments, and the fact that many of these young adults grew up working alongside their parents and siblings on U.S. farms sets them apart from many other immigrants—Mexican or otherwise. I argue that it has forged stronger bonding social capital between and within them in ways that both help and hinder them from completing educational diplomas that will become their "passports" out of the seasonal migration cycle of manual farm labor.

Although Latinos of all nationalities face multiple challenges in the U.S., the unique characteristics of each group are likely to influence life outcomes for individuals. Cuban immigrants, for example, have the benefit of being refugees in the U.S., and therefore enjoy official acceptance by the government. They also may arrive in the U.S. with much more formal education than do Mexicans, and generally settle in the Cuban enclaves of south Florida. Puerto Ricans are native-born U.S. citizens, and the traditional Puerto Rican enclave is in the Bronx, in New York City. Neither of these groups face the same legal hurdles as Mexicans in order to be in this country. Mexicans are dispersed throughout the U.S. in a way that Puerto Ricans and Cubans are not, at least partially because the latter two groups are so much smaller than the Mexican population in the U.S. There is also much more nativist anxiety and tension in relation to the Mexican immigrant population in U.S. society than in regard to any other Latino immigrant group. The relative lack of Puerto Ricans and Cubans in the U.S., compared to Mexican immigrants, decreases the sense of threat that some Americans feel from them. Although some Cubans and Puerto Ricans certainly do migrant farm labor, the sheer number of

Mexicans in the migrant population overshadows these much smaller groups. For these reasons and others, I would not expect the findings of this study necessarily to carry over into other Hispanic groups.

This dissertation adds to the body of sociological literature in several ways. It is a study of young adults who grew up in migrant families, a narrow category in which few studies have been carried out. It identifies factors that influence young adults from migrant families to pursue a college education, again, a topic to which very little sociological literature is devoted. These are perhaps the most unique contributions the study makes to the literature. It also re-affirms the importance of parental support and influence on children's choices, as well as the importance of bridging social capital for achieving greater levels of human capital and upward mobility. These latter findings have been well established within the literature.

Each of these findings can inform the actions of teachers and other school staff, and social service professionals who work in migrant communities, specifically in west Michigan and throughout the Midwestern United States, in the goal of achieving college enrollment for children from migrant families. In addition, the obstacles to settling out that participants identified are instructive for the same group of professionals who seek to help migrant children overcome the barriers to success that stand in their way. The findings of this study were influenced by the fact that my contacts helped me net those who had access to bridging social capital. Even though these results come from the use of a snowball sample, they can be used as a reference point from which to proceed in ongoing investigations of factors that influence migrant youths' life outcomes.

Further research is needed to investigate the factors that affect migrant children's responses to racism in the U.S.: whether they see racism as a challenge to succeed, as did some

participants in this study, or as a barrier that will stop them from succeeding in life. It is possible that the lack of parental support or bridging social capital accumulated through positive relationships with teachers, school staff, and others can influence a child's perception of racism and how to confront it. Research on this topic could reveal the factors affecting children's views of racism, thereby informing parents, teachers, and others of steps to be taken to support migrant children in confronting the challenge of racism and to promote positive outcomes.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

In-Depth Interview Guide

1. How many years have you been coming (did you come) to work in Michigan?

2. Have you worked (do you work) in other places in the US? If yes, where?
    2b. How do these compare with Michigan?

3. Do you feel that you have been treated differently in Michigan because you are Latino?

4. Who were your friends in Michigan while you were growing up?
    4b. How did you meet them?

5. How did you decide to keep migrating OR to settle in Michigan?

6. (for those settled, no longer migrating) What do you think are the obstacles to leaving the migration cycle for settled residents OR college students (whichever the case may be)?
    6. (for migrants) Do you think there are things stopping you from leaving the migration cycle?
    6b. How could these be overcome?

7. Did your parents support your decision to settle out, continue migrating, or attend college (whatever the case may be)?

8. Did your parents raise you differently from your brothers (or sisters) because you are a girl (or a boy)?

9. Did (do) you work while you were (are) in high school? Where?

10. What does 'home' mean to you?

Appendix B

Interview Guide for Women's Focus Groups

Opening Question: Please tell us your first name, your major, and where you grew up.

Transition Question: Why do you think that some kids who grow up migrating decide to continue working in the fields, rather than going to college?

Key Question 1: Who had the greatest influence on your decision to attend college?

Key Question 2: What effect did being a woman have on your decision of what to do after high school?

Key Question 3: Does being among the first in your family to attend college put more pressure on you to succeed? Explain your answer.

Key Question 4: How does race/ethnicity affect migrant youths' decisions in life?

Key Question 5: Do you plan to be involved with the migrant community in the future? If so, in what ways?

Closing Question: Is there anything else about the topic of migrant youths' decision making processes that you would like to add?

Appendix C

Interview Guide for Men's Focus Groups

Opening Question: Please tell us your first name, your major, and where you grew up.

Transition Question: Why do you think that some kids who grow up migrating decide to continue working in the fields, rather than going to college?

Key Question 1: Who had the greatest influence on your decision to attend college?

Key Question 2: Does being among the first in your family to attend college put more pressure on you to succeed? Explain your answer.

Key Question 3: How does race/ethnicity affect migrant youths' decisions in life?

Key Question 4: Do you plan to be involved with the migrant community in the future? If so, in what ways?

Closing Question: Is there anything else about the topic of migrant youths' decision making processes that you would like to add?

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