

**UCLA**

**UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations**

**Title**

Sin Sacrificio No Hay Recompensa: Apoyo as (Im)migrant Parental Engagement in Farmworking Families of the California Central Valley

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8mh1633q>

**Author**

Nava, Pedro Enrique

**Publication Date**

2012

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

*Sin Sacrificio No Hay Recompensa: Apoyo as (Im)migrant Parental Engagement in  
Farmworking Families of the California Central Valley*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in Education

by

Pedro Enrique Nava

2012

© Copyright by  
Pedro Enrique Nava  
2012

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

*Sin Sacrificio No Hay Recompensa: Apoyo as (Im)migrant Parental Engagement in  
Farmworking Families of the California Central Valley*

by

Pedro Enrique Nava

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Robert Cooper, Chair

This dissertation seeks to document how the life histories of Mexican origin (im)migrant farmworking families in a small rural California community shape their educational engagement experiences. Farmworkers living in communities like *Trabajo* are responsible for most of the agricultural production in California, yet their children attend under resourced schools that provide limited opportunities for academic success. This investigation examines how the intersection of their immigration status, racial and social class background, shapes how and why migrant farmworkers *choose* to engage in particular ways in the schooling of their children. In this study I addressed the following question: 1) *How are the educational engagement conceptions and practices of Mexican immigrant farmworkers shaped by their life histories?*

This study is unique as it locates schooling within the larger political economy of migrant

farm labor and combined with a Freirean approach to Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) it deconstructs and analyzes the complex social, political, and economic processes that migrant farmworking families are forced to navigate to support their children's education. Data from this study was collected through community archival research, oral history and in depth semi-structured interviews and participant observations with 16 parents from 8 families.

Findings from this study revealed parents conceive of educational engagement in more nuanced ways than traditional notions of parent involvement. For example, migrant farmworking families' conception and practices of educational engagement are much broader than normative school centric understandings and are best captured by the concept of *apoyo*. Specific practices of *apoyo* went beyond the school and consisted of 1) providing economic support 2) cultivating agency in their children 3) making meaningful sacrifices, 4) and modeling academic excellence. In this respect, it can be argued that parents' specific forms of educational engagement are a direct response to the material conditions and the racism they experienced as marginalized farmworkers. This study also contributes to a subset of qualitative studies that offer a direct challenge to the myth that Mexican families do not care about or participate sufficiently in the education of their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Lopez, 2001; Perez-Carreón et. al., 2005; Solórzano, 1992; Valdes, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002). Findings from this research can be useful for practitioners and policy makers interested in understanding how to build upon the ways that (im)migrant farmworker families are already engaging in the education of their children.

The dissertation of Pedro Enrique Nava is approved.

Gilberto Q. Conchas

Ernest Morrell

Daniel Solórzano

Robert Cooper, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>VITA</b>	<b>XI</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION-PROBLEM STATEMENT</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Definition of Terms</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Purpose of the Study and Research Question</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Theoretical/Conceptual Framework</b>	<b>8</b>
Political Economy	9
Freirean Social Theory	10
Critical Race Theory	11
<b>Study Design</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Methods and Evidence</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Significance of Study</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Socio-Economic and Background Characteristics</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Setting the Context: A Qualitative Look at Immigrant Farmworkers</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Parent Engagement Literature</b>	<b>27</b>
An Overview on Parent Engagement	27
Latino Parent Involvement	30
Teacher invitations to Involvement	32
Limitations of the Present Literature	33
Conceptual limitations	33
<b>Methodological Considerations</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Political Economy of Migrant Farmwork</b>	<b>37</b>
The Border: Fortification by Convenience	42
<b>Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Critical Race Theory</b>	<b>50</b>
Critical Race & LatCrit Theory in Education	50
The Centrality of Race and <i>Racism</i>	52
The Challenge to Dominant Ideology	53
The Commitment to Social Justice	53
The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge	54
The Transdisciplinary Perspective	54
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Study Rationale</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Research Setting</b>	<b>59</b>

<b>Sample Selection and Participants</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Design and Methods</b>	<b>62</b>
Qualitative Case Study Design	62
Holistic Case Study Design	63
Bounding the Case	64
<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>65</b>
Oral History Interviews	66
In Depth Semi-Structured Interviews	69
Secondary Methods of Data Collection	69
<b>Data Analysis</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: SETTING THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT</b>	<b>73</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Overview of Families</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>The Families</b>	<b>76</b>
The Mendoza Family	76
The Zamudia Family	79
The Gonzalez Family	81
The Martinez Family	85
The Sanchez Family	86
The Alvarez Family	88
The Perez Family	89
<b>Setting the Context for the San Joaquin Valley and the Community of <i>Trabajo</i></b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Schooling in The Community: A Historical Look</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Concerns about Big Mountain-Trabajo Joint Unified School District</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6: PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CONTEXT OF LIFE HISTORIES</b>	<b>102</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Conceptions and Practices of Educational Engagement</b>	<b>103</b>
School Based <i>Apoyo</i>	104
Economic <i>Apoyo</i>	109
<i>Apoyo</i> as Sacrifice	111
<i>Apoyo</i> as Cultivating of Agency	116
<i>Apoyo</i> as Modeling and Mentoring	119
<b>Key “Life Moments” in Parent Narratives</b>	<b>122</b>
Poverty as a limiting situation: Aspirations without opportunity	123
Early labor force participation of children in Mexico	128
Border Crossing	135
Laboring in the fields	140
Salience of Undocumented Status in the U.S.	145
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>CHAPTER 7: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF <i>APOYO</i> AS PARENT ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>155</b>
<hr/>	
<b>From Parent Engagement Toward a Model of <i>Apoyo</i></b>	<b>157</b>
<i>Apoyo</i> as School Based Parent Engagement	158
Social Distance--Cultural and Linguistic Barriers	161
Spatial Distance	164
<i>Apoyo</i> as Economic Sustenance	167
<i>Apoyo</i> as Sacrifice	173
<i>Apoyo</i> as Cultivation of Agency	177



<i>Apoyo</i> as Modeling of Persistence	178
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Critical Migrations of Educational Engagement</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>Summary of Key Findings and Policy Recommendations</b>	<b>189</b>
<b>Implications for Further Research</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>Policy and Practice Limitations</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>Final Thoughts</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>APPENDIX B</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>208</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Familial Demographic Information	73
Figure 2: Model of Apoyo	158
Figure 3: Percentage of Population Below Poverty	169
Figure 4: Educational Attainment in San Joaquin Valley, 2009	170
Figure 5: Critical Life Moments Chronologically	181

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank God for allowing me to get this far.

That being said, I want to thank my Chair, Robert Cooper, for providing me with the time, patience, prayers, and love to help me get through this process. Having you by my side has prepared me to be ready for the academy.

I would like to thank the rest of the members of my committee for always encouraging when I most needed it and for guiding me along the way. Ernest Morrell, Daniel Solórzano, Gilberto Conchas I could not have made it this far without your guidance and support. Ernest, I can't thank you enough for encouraging me to pursue my passion and for understanding me when I couldn't understand myself. Gil, what can I say--every time I need something you are always there for me. Thanks for looking out for me and for my family--you have been there when we most have needed help. Danny, thanks for believing in us and for being that light illuminating the pathway. You do so much and for so many. You are an amazing example of a scholar and a human being. Now it's my turn to go out there and represent the legacy from which I come from to the best of my abilities.

I begin this section by first and foremost thanking my family for helping me get to the finish line. *Le quiero dar un gracias muy especial a toda my familia por brindarme su apoyo y por ayudarme a llegar a completar esta etapa. En particular, le quiero agradecer a mis padres (Jose Y Yuba Nava) por todos sus sacrificios y el apoyo que me han brindado. Gracias a ustedes he tenido todas las oportunidades del mundo para estudiar y haré lo mejor posible para representarlos lo mejor que pueda. Quiero darle las gracias mis suegros Loreto Y Carmen por siempre apoyarnos tambien. Mis hermanos José y Leti, y Ramón y Dominique, Adalberto y Francine, Loreto y Mary, Carmen y Steve, y Rolando. Thanks for all your help you were super*

*supportive. A mi familia extendida---que incluye todos mis tíos y tías, primos y primas, y abuelos de los dos lados--GRACIAS!!! Si Se Pudo!! Cuantos veces me dieron un buen consejo, o un chequecito, o ánimo para seguirle?...Gracias.*

I would also like to thank the members of my cohort for your help and guidance--11 for 11, we did it! I am also specially grateful to the Ford Foundation, UC Office of the President, and the Institute of American Cultures. Your generous financial support has made it possible for me to complete this process. Thank you also for the amazing networks that you have connected me to.

I would also like to thank formal and informal mentors who helped me along this journey. Those that come to mind: Matthew Jendian, La'Tonya Rease-Miles, Alfredo Cuellar, Manuel Bersamin, Victor Torres, Paul Shaker, Albert Valencia, among many others. I want to thank Eddie Mosqueda and Louie Rodriguez for always looking out for me--you guys encouraged me and mentored me through the process. My brother Daniel Liou--Thanks for being there for me and with me through this journey--we kicked it off together and now we are bringing this phase to a close. To Mariana Zamboni and Jesus Mendoza, thanks for the transcriptions--you all were a big help. Alfredo Gonzalez, thanks for having my back there at the end. Mark Bautista, we did it bro! Amy Gershon and Harmeet Singh, you two are life savers.

A los padres migrantes que compartieron sus historias conmigo les agradezco de todo corazón. Este proyecto es por ustedes. Ojala las historias que cuento aquí sean de su agrado. Lastly, I want to thank my life partner Argelia Lara for helping me reach this goal of ours. The next phase is going to be great. I also want to thank you for giving me the greatest gift in the world that you could ever give me: Analiza Argelia Nava Lara. Analiza papa te quiere mucho! Finally, I want to send a big shout out to everyone else who has helped me out. Thanks!

## VITA

- 2001 B.A. Liberal Studies, Dual Major: Chicano Latino Studies  
California State University, Fresno
- 2001 Kremen School of Education Dean's Medalist  
California State University, Fresno
- 2003 M.A. Education (*Administration, Planning, and Social Policy*)  
Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
- 2002- 2003 Research Assistant, Pathways for Student Success  
Harvard Graduate School of Education
- 2003 Fellow, Latino Issues Forum  
Fresno, California
- 2004- 2006 Research Assistant, *UCLA Equity and Access Studies in Education Project*  
University of California, Los Angeles
- 2006, 2007 Teaching Assistant, *Education 130: Race, Class, Gender & School Inequality*  
University of California, Los Angeles
- 2006 Teaching Assistant, *Migrant Summer Leadership Institute*  
University of California, Los Angeles
- 2007-2009 Instructor, *Ed. Foundations 440: Schooling in a Diverse Urban Society*  
California State University, Los Angeles
- 2007-2008 Graduate Yearlong Research Mentor Fellowship  
University of California Los Angeles
- 2007-2010 Graduate Mentor/Instructor, *McNair Scholars Program*  
University of California, Los Angeles
- 2009 Project Advance Fellowship  
University of California, Los Angeles
- 2010-2011 Ford Foundation Dissertation Year Fellowship
- 2010-2011 University of California Office of the President (UCOP)  
Dissertation Year Fellowship
- 2012 Instructor, M102: Mexican Americans and the Schools  
University of California, Los Angeles

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- Rodriguez, L.F., Mosqueda, E., Nava, P.E., Conchas, G.Q. (accepted, 2013, in press).  
Reflecting on the Institutional Process of College Success: The Experiences of Four  
Chicanos in the Context of Crisis. Submitted February 2011 to *Latino Studies Journal*
- Goodman, G.S., Ullrich, W., Nava, P. (2012). Action research for critical classroom and  
community change. In S. Steinberg & G. Cannella (Eds.), *Critical Qualitative Research*  
*Reader*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Cooper, R., Nava, P.E., Huh, C.R. (2010) Utilizing a Community Cultural Wealth Model to  
Explore Parental Engagement during the Transition into U.S. Urban High Schools. In  
(Eds.) Hoosain & Salili *Democracy and Multicultural Education*. Information Age  
Publishing
- Pedro E. Nava & Gilberto Conchas. (2010). Review: *Working from Within: Chicana and*  
*Chicano Activist Educators in Whitestream Schools* by Luis Urrieta Jr. Tucson: The  
University of Arizona Press.
- Pedro E. Nava. (2007). Review: Learning Power by Jeannie Oakes, John Rogers & Martin  
Lipton. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*. Vol. 3, Issue  
1, Article 12. <http://repositories.cdlib.org/gseis/interactions/vol3/iss1/art12>
- Nava, P.E. (2010). Sin Sacrificio No Hay Recompensa: Parent Educational Engagement in  
Immigrant Families in the California Central Valley. Presented at the Conference for  
Ford Fellows. Newport Beach, California.
- Rease-Miles, L., Nava, P.E., Johnson, A., Flores, A. (2010) Research is me-search: Using  
Critical Race Theory to prepare undergraduate scholar-activists in humanities and social  
sciences. Presented at *Abriendo Brecha VII: Seventh Annual Activist Scholar Conference*  
at The University of Texas at Austin.
- Lara, A., Nava, P.E. (2008). Looking Toward the Future: The Aspirations of Undocumented  
Migrant Students. Presented at the *American Educational Research Association*  
*Conference*, New York, New York.
- Huidor, O., Nava, P.E., Velez, V. (April 2007). Mexican-Origin Students' Perceptions of Their  
Parents' Contributions to Their Education. Presented at the *American Educational*  
*Research Association Conference*, Chicago, Illinois.
- Cooper, R., Nava, P.E., (April 2006) "Es Lo Mas Importante": Examining Perceptions of "Parent  
Involvement" of Mexican-American Parents and Students at Valley. Presented at the  
*American Educational Research Association Conference*, San Francisco, California.
- Nava, P.E., Desai, S.R. (February 2006) Was Bill Cosby Just Speaking on It? A Counter-  
Narrative From Low- Income Latino Parents and Students From Valley High School.  
Presented at the *Sociology of Education Association*, Asilomar, California.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION-PROBLEM STATEMENT

The recent and rapidly changing demographic makeup in the United States is “no longer largely white and of European origin” (Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2002). Since the colonial period, this country has shown an incredible capacity to incorporate different waves of immigrants into the mainstream despite the violent nativist hostility that the new immigrants experienced (Alba & Nee, 2003; Fass, 1989; Selden, 1999; Spring, 2001; Waters, 1990). Unlike earlier waves of “White” migration arriving largely from eastern and southern Europe, this “new era” over the last 45 years of mass migration is of a “darker hue” and primarily descending from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia (Alba & Nee, 2003; Suarez-Orozco & Paez, 2002).

Immigrant children and the U.S. born children of immigrants are the fastest-growing segment and account for one in every five of the country’s total population of children under 18 years of age (Alba & Nee, 2003). In addition, immigrants and their children are primarily concentrated in urban areas in the following 5 states—New York, California, Illinois, Texas and Florida (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Portes and Rumbaut posit that recent shifts in labor market inequality signify that to find similar social and economic success “children of immigrants today must cross, in the span of a few years, the educational gap that took descendants of Europeans several generations to bridge” (p. 58). As this nation undergoes and attempts to adjust to these demographic changes, educators must be prepared to meet the challenge of helping to successfully incorporate this new generation of immigrants into educational institutions at a much faster pace than previous generations.

Presently, over 37% of California public school children speak a language other than English and 23.2% are identified as English Language learners (ELLs) (California Department of

Education, 2011; Rumberger & Gandara, 2003). ELLs are the lowest performers on state tests relative to all other U.S. racial ethnic groups (Rumberger & Gandara, 2003). However, such outcomes are not surprising given that immigrants and children of immigrants are among the most “overlooked and underserved” students in U.S. public schools (Ruiz de Velasco and Fix, 2002). Immigrant ELLs lack opportunities to learn grade level content (Olsen, 1997), are taught by underprepared teachers (Rumberger & Gandara, 2003), attend schools with inferior instructional facilities (Oakes, 2004; Olsen, 1997), are inappropriately assessed (Abedi & Dietel, 2004), and their families are marginalized from the schooling process (Auerbach, 2002).

Although a growing and significant amount of research has been conducted on understanding the educational plight of Latino students and their families, particularly in urban areas, (Auerbach, 2001; Ceja, 2004, 2006; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, 1992, 2001; Lawson; 2003; Lopez, 2001; Moreno & Valencia, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Valdes, 1996) research focused on the particular educational issues affecting the subpopulation of Mexican origin migrant farmworkers families is limited.. The most recent estimates indicate that in the state of California there were over 330,000 (Legislative Analyst Office, 2006) migrant students in 2006, but by 2011 reports indicated the population had dropped to 175,000<sup>1</sup>. In California over 98% of migrant students are Latino, mostly of Mexican origin (Legislative Analyst Office, 2006). Extant research has found that, migrant farmworker families are among the most marginalized members of society suffering from high rates of physical and social isolation, mental health

---

<sup>1</sup> News article from the Imperial Valley hypothesized that declining numbers could be as a result of the contracting economy. See: [http://articles.ivpressonline.com/2011-10-01/migrant-students\\_30236708](http://articles.ivpressonline.com/2011-10-01/migrant-students_30236708) . Other sources argue that the drop in Migrant enrollment is a result of tighter eligibility requirements. Today, less and less families are migrating in the traditional way, though “settled” migrant students still have many unmet needs and could benefit from any additional resources. See here: [http://www.csba.org/en/NewsAndMedia/Publications/CASchoolsMagazine/2011/Fall/InThisIssue/2011\\_FallCSM\\_SummerHarvest.aspx](http://www.csba.org/en/NewsAndMedia/Publications/CASchoolsMagazine/2011/Fall/InThisIssue/2011_FallCSM_SummerHarvest.aspx)



illness, lack of access to medical and dental care, labor market exploitation, and high mobility rates (Chavkin 1996; Guerra, 1979; Lopez, 2001; Sosa, 1996).

While the majority of Mexican origin migrant students in California are categorized as ELLs, the ability of schools to effectively meet the academic and linguistic needs of these students has become increasingly difficult with the abolishment of bilingual education in 1998 (Gandara & Rumberger, 2003). The combination of limited linguistic supports in under resourced schools places ELLs at a high risk for failure (Rumberger and Gandara, 2004). Thus, for educational outcomes of Latinos in general, but ELLs in particular, they have been described as “pervasively, disproportionately, and persistently” low over time relative to similar outcomes for whites (Valencia, 2002). It should come as no surprise given the degree of educational inequality that large number of Mexican origin students are forced to endure, that they are susceptible to high degrees of school failure (Valencia, 2002).

The parents of migrant students are viewed as key stake holders in the education of their children as a large body of research that has *linked* school involvement as a critical factor towards improving their academic achievement and engagement (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Epstein, 1983; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Fan & Chen, 1999; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996). It is generally accepted within the field of education that there is a “positive and convincing relationship” between parent involvement and the academic achievement of students, resulting in higher grades and scores on standardized tests, enrollment in more challenging courses, improved behavior, increased attendance, and better adaptation to schooling environments (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Parent participation in the education of their children, is especially important due to the high levels of parent anxiety and the studies examining popular opinion over the

possibility of their children not being able to have access to higher education (Immerwahr & Johnson, 2007).

However, research findings from the impact of parent involvement in education are mixed. While many studies have found the important benefits derived from establishing parental involvement, others have illuminated tensions that have arisen from unclear and at times contradictory definitions of what involvement is (Calabrese-Barton, Drake, Perez, St. Louis, and George, 2004; Lawson, 2003; Mattingly, Prislun, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002; White, Taylor, & Moss, 1992). Typically, the roles of parents in parental involvement (especially in urban areas) are largely understood by “what parents do”, and how that does or does not conform to the needs of the child or the goals of the school for each child (Calabrese-Barton, et al., 2004). As such, parents are often positioned as “subjects to be manipulated or without power to do as they see fit” and have no choice but to conform to school sanctioned forms for involvement or risk harming their child’s educational growth (Calabrese-Barton, et al., 2004, p. 4). Many types of parental involvement programs that fail to account for the perspectives and potential contributions of parents are often based on cultural deficit models<sup>2</sup> (Calabrese-Barton, et al., 2004; Valencia & Black 2002). An example of cultural deficit models in practice is when school officials are unwilling to acknowledge the funds of knowledge<sup>3</sup> (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002; Gonzalez et al., 1995), non-dominant cultural capital<sup>4</sup> (Carter, 2003, 2005; Diamond, Wang, & Gomez, 2004) and array of Cultural Wealth<sup>5</sup> (Yosso, 2005) that families possess and can be

---

<sup>2</sup> See Valencia (1997) for an extensive overview of cultural deficit models and their historical legacy in the field of education.

<sup>3</sup> The concept of funds of knowledge hold the simple premise that people are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge.

<sup>4</sup> According to Carter, non-dominant cultural capital describes those resources used by lower status individuals to gain “authentic” cultural status positions within their respective communities.

<sup>5</sup> Yosso defines community cultural wealth as an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression.

utilized in the service of improving their children's educational outcomes. Cultural deficit models have been popular explanatory lenses as they shift the focus away from what schools are failing to do (providing a high quality education for students by tapping into the home culture and community resources) and instead focus on placing blame on parents for not being "visibly involved" in the prescribed ways that are often dehumanizing.

Cultural deficit models in education continue to inform the discourse on parental involvement that specifically focuses on families of color (Calabrese-Barton, et al., 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, Valencia & Black, 2002). Recently, a critical group of scholars have begun to problematize conceptions of Latino parental involvement in their work by uncovering the hidden power relations often embedded within institutional spaces in supposed "family and school partnerships" that often serve to relegate low-income immigrant Latino families to a second class status (Auerbach, 2001, 2002; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, 1994, 2001; Ceja, 2004; Lareau, 1989, 2003; Lopez, 2001; Lawson, 2003; Valdes, 1996). While this work has served to create a counter discourse on Latino family involvement, additional work is needed that can further explore and problematize the involvement and engagement practices of Mexican origin families in economically depressed areas, including agricultural communities. I argue that additional research is required for us to understand the specific ways that Mexican origin migrant farmworking families in rural areas participate and engage in the education of their children due to the economic, school, and community constraints. More specifically, what is the cultural logic behind migrant parents' engagement efforts? And how is their educational engagement informed by their own histories of migration, labor, and prior education. To accomplish this task, I attempted to capture nuances in the rich and complex stories of these families as they engage in education in hopes of improving the future opportunity prospects of their children.

Considering the aforementioned claims about parental engagement, how then can stronger relationships based on mutual respect be forged between migrant families and school officials? How do parents support their children through the schooling process? What forms of support do these parents believe are the most significant? Are (im)migrant parents' forms of engagement aligned or at cross purposes with what is expected by school officials? What do migrant farmworking parents think consists of a good education? In answering these questions, I will be closer to understanding the critical role that migrant parents play in the education of their children through the schooling process. Given the social, political, and economic conditions that farmworkers face, it is highly unlikely they themselves will experience upward social mobility simply by just working harder in the fields. The hopes and dreams for farmworking families in the US then lie with their children's ability to utilize the educational system as a bridge to escape the farmworking lifestyle and obtain higher levels of education that will secure employment and provide a higher standard of living.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Parental Involvement:** This term is traditionally defined or understood largely in terms of what parents *do* (Calabrese-Barton, et al. 2004) and how that fits in or not with the needs of the child or the goals of the school. Parent involvement in this sense conforms to a norm of accepted actions and behaviors that parents must do to help their children effectively. One of the more common terms for parent involvement is the use of "family, school, and partnerships." Its use is problematic as it is framed in a way that hides the power differentials that exist between school officials and migrant families.

**Parental Engagement:** I define parent engagement (Calabrese-Barton, et al. 2004) as an expanded notion of involvement to include parents' orientations to the world and how those orientations

frame the things they do or choose not to do. This is a more dynamic process “in which parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to define their interactions with school and among school actors (p. 3). Parental engagement differentiates from involvement by centering the perspectives of the parents and places the onus on school officials to meet parents where they are at.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Question**

There are two principal objectives that are guiding this research study: 1) to provide a rich description, informed by life histories of the ways that migrant farmworking parents conceptualize and understand their engagement in the education of their children, and 2) to show how migrant farmworking families choose to engage. To arrive at these objectives I questioned the parents’ conceptions and practices around educational engagement, while providing a rich description of their understandings of how key life moments played a role in shaping them. Special consideration was undertaken to ensure that parents provided their own understanding of educational engagement as to not entrap them into a framing of a “school centric” form of involvement that places the onus of involvement solely on them. The design of this study allows for a critical examination of the engagement practices of migrant families within a specific socio-historical context centered on their experiences.

The principal question guiding this research is:

- 1. How are the educational engagement conceptions and practices of Mexican (im)migrant farmworkers shaped by their life histories?**

Having described the dissertation goals and research questions, I now provide the context for the study by situating the current issues migrant farmworking parents face and briefly describe the social context of their communities.

## **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

This study contributes to the literature by utilizing a conceptual framework that examines the parental engagement practices within the historical, socio-political, and economic context in which they occur. In order to understand the engagement practices of migrant farmworking families, I believe that it is essential to understand the socio-historical context of farmworkers in the state of California, and more specifically in the San Joaquin Valley. Mexican origin migrant farm workers in the Central Valley have a historic presence dating back to the early 1900's (Martin, 1988). Relations between Mexico and the United States have always been tense and contested dating back to the early 1830's, first with the movement for the independence of Texas, followed by the taking of all or large portion of the now U.S. Southwest (including the states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, Colorado, Oregon,) during the Mexican-American War and culminating with the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 (Acuña, 1988; Gutierrez, 1995). With the establishment of a rigid white supremacist racial hierarchy since that time period, Mexicans in the United States have largely been treated as second class citizens (Feagin, 2002).

In order to better understand the transnational journey that has led many Mexican (im)migrant farmworkers being called "aliens" on what once was their own land, I draw from several explanatory frameworks that focus on the social, political, and economic histories of this group in what is now referred to as the United States. I draw from Political Economy framework, Critical Race Theory, and Freirean Social Theory as explanatory models.

## **Political Economy**

Political Economy theory is especially relevant in the case of migrant farmworkers as it helps elucidate how “American employers and their allies in government have worked in close partnership to recruit foreign workers and to ensure that the flow of immigrant workers is regulated for the maximum benefit of American business and consumers” (Gutierrez, 1995, p. 211). The continuous exploitation of migrant farmworkers is facilitated through the failure of oversight agencies to enforce legal protections that migrant workers have won over time (Martin, 2003). The failure of oversight and regulation is largely ideological and tends to reflect the pro-agribusiness or pro-worker administration that is in power at the present time (Martin, 2003).

A political economy framework sheds light on the systemic oppression that farmworkers are entrapped in as a result of the Farm Labor Contractor (FLC) system and on the significant role that class relations play in farmworking communities especially when the growers are prominent community leaders that are often on school boards and city councils, and play an important role in lobbying state & federal politicians (Taylor, et al., 1997). Understanding how many of the communities farmworkers live in have become socially isolated and “extended farm labor camps” (Taylor, et al., 1997; Krissman, 1995; Allensworth & Rochin, 1996) reveals how localities shoulder the burden of dealing with externalities caused by seasonal peak employment and exploitative nature farm labor. That is, the chronic unemployment and underemployment, low wages, lack of affordable and safe housing, low quality education, and other issues as a result of the state and federal subsidizing of these families. Most importantly, political economy theory situates the parents’ as individuals with agency and the capacity to resist and challenge the structures with which they exist in.

## Freirean Social Theory

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's theoretical work (2000a, b) on dialogical education is central to the analysis of this study. His work examining the adult literacy process calls specifically for the recognition that relations between the teacher and learner must be based on respect, especially for the culture of the learner. Freire saw the adult literacy educational process as one in which the educator traditionally came to be seen as the expert and the learner as an empty receptacle waiting to be filled. He saw this process as a form of "banking education", in which learners in the process of learning came to be filled with the words that the teachers had chosen outside of their lived reality. Instead, Freire argued that in a "cultural action for freedom", the learner and the teacher should come together in a relationship of authentic dialogue, where equally knowing subjects met.

I draw similar parallels to the way that schools should structure their relationships with families and communities, especially as it pertains to migrant farmworking parents. I pay special attention to cultural mismatch, issues of power, and cultural imposition through "banking" parent education programs, and the way that current parental roles and expectations by educators and parent programs create a culture of silence<sup>6</sup> (Freire, 2000). Through this framework, I explore alternative parent engagement practices that challenge normative notions of involvement and consider the socio-cultural location of migrant families and center their lived experiences as a pedagogical starting point. A Freiran pedagogy of migrant parent engagement seeks to understand how education can be used as a mechanism towards the empowerment<sup>7</sup> of these families. How can families and school officials come together to promote educational success

---

<sup>6</sup> Freire defined the culture of silence as the denying of voice to groups in a particular society. He believed that one needed to engage in a prolonged struggle to gain one's freedom.

<sup>7</sup> I define empowerment as the creation of structural opportunities that eliminates the dependence of individuals on others.



and advancement while respecting the cultural history of the students and the families? How can parental engagement practices be structured that build upon the strengths that families bring into their communities and schools? Freirean concepts such as culture of silence, act of knowing, assistencialism, and problem posing education are critical in gaining a more complex understanding of the power relations present in the schooling, community, migratory, and employment context that parents navigate through in order to engage in and with schools.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race and LatCrit Theory serve as frameworks that expose the continued historical racialization and oppression that Mexican (im)migrant origin people have faced in the U.S. In public schools throughout the country, students of color as a group tends to have lower levels of academic achievement when compared to white students (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Over the years, many explanations have been put forth to explain the “underachievement” of students of color, and many of these explanations are often embedded with meanings that assign the lower achievement to the culture of these students (Noguera, 2003). Critical Race scholars have actively worked to continuously debunk the blaming of the underachievement of students of color on cultural inferiority and have instead put forth more nuanced explanations that examine schooling conditions (Delgado-Bernal, 2002), teacher racial bias (Solozano & Yosso, 2001), inequitable opportunities to learn (Bell, 1980), racist policies and beliefs (Ladson\_Billings & Tate, 1995), as well as immigration (Johnson, 2002; Sanchez & Romero, 2010) and labor policy (Carbado & Gulati, 2003).

### **Study Design**

The goal of this study is to explore how the life histories of Mexican origin immigrant farmworking families mediate their engagement in the educational process of their children. It

traces the process of how parents come to understand the roles they play through their own life experiences and histories with the educational system. Through their life histories, this study highlights the roles parents play in supporting and educating their children. In doing so, one goal is to provide logic for the specific ways that families choose to engage in with the school system on their own terms.

In developing this study, I recognize some of the limitations in the current literature pertaining to the conceptualization of parental involvement largely as a school centric (Lawson, 2003) phenomenon based on the priorities of the “expert” educators. While traditional notions of involvement are indeed important, in this study I set out to capture and understand how Mexican origin farmworking families choose to engage with the U.S. educational system on their own terms. I argue new understandings of parental engagement to be most effective must go beyond simply making contact and assisting children with homework and “banking” information to include the *parents’ orientations to the world and how those orientations frame the things they do or choose not to do* (Calabrese-Barton, et al., 2004). More simply put, in what ways do parents support their children through the educational process, and why do they support them in those ways? When do they choose to participate in traditional forms and when do they not? In what ways might they resist the traditional involvement process, and why?

For this study, I selected a group of parents from the city of Trabajo<sup>8</sup>, a community located in the San Joaquin Valley and in a congressional district with a large Mexican origin migrant farmworking population. In a recent study profiling the well being of residents across the country, the district in which this community is located in was ranked toward the bottom out of

---

<sup>8</sup> I use *Trabajo* as a pseudonym for the community under study to protect the identity of study participants.

436.<sup>9</sup> The study examined quality of life indicators for health, education, and income, and the district ranked even worse off than the Appalachian region. Understanding the political and economic trajectories that have brought these families to the San Joaquin Valley is an important point of departure for understanding their ideologies about education and the ways in which they engage in education.

I began this study by selecting a diverse group of migrant families that I recruited through the Migrant Education Program (MEP) in the local school district. I selected my sample with the help of the MEP director who helped me identify and recruit a population. The collecting of family histories of migration, labor, and education, has provided me an understanding of how their lived realities color their outlook and the educational prospects of their children. By inquiring about their autobiographies, my goal was to capture how these families make sense of the role that they play or can potentially play. Gaining insight into the lived realities of farmworking families will help us understand their outlook and orientation towards their engagement in education.

### **Methods and Evidence**

I utilized a holistic case method to carry out this study on how migrant families understand their engagement in education. This design allowed me to examine the life histories of these families and how they think about their role in the education of their children. I began by conducting life histories with individual heads of households with a specific focus on their educational, labor, and migration histories. It was of critical importance to have a historical trajectory to grasp the families' orientation towards education. The purpose of this initial round

---

<sup>9</sup> The Measure of America, a publication by the American Human Development Project modeled on the United Nations Development Programme's global Human Development Report. It examined quality of life indicators for the first time in the United States and found congressional district 20 in California to be the worst in the nation.

of oral history interviews was to gain an understanding of the socio-political factors that have led these families migrating to the community of Trabajo in the California San Joaquin Valley. In other words, how have the families' perspectives on education been shaped by what they have experienced in their own educational process, their work experiences, and in moving from place to place, and now in the Valley?

I then explored through one-on-one in depth interviews how these families choose to engage in the education of their children. What is the cultural logic behind what they choose to do and not do in relation to the education of their children? How is that informed by their prior experiences? What are the places that these families obtain messages about engagement from? The responses to these questions played a critical role in helping me make sense of the unique role that life events play in shaping one's world view and perspective.

### **Significance of Study**

This study is of importance to educational researchers, practitioners, and policy makers for the reasons discussed below.

**Researchers.** The knowledge gained from this study will contribute to the literature of parental involvement and engagement. More specifically, the conceptualization of engagement in this study frames participation more broadly and accounts for less visible ways that these parents may be supporting the education of their children. By considering the different conceptual frameworks utilized in this study to understanding parental engagement, prevailing assumptions about the participation of economically oppressed parents of color will be challenged.

**Practitioners.** Educators in schools around the country are mandated under the No Child Left Behind Act to develop relationships with the parents of their students. This study can provide an alternative way for practitioners to think about how parents engage in the education of their

children. Specifically, it will force them to think about the context in which these families raise their children on a daily basis and why these families may or may not participate in the school sanctioned nations of involvement. In listening to the life histories of these families, practitioners can gain a deeper understanding of the complex lives these families live.

**Policymakers.** This study challenges the ways that parental engagement is typically operationalized by administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and policy makers, especially under the No Child Left Behind Act. In the current educational climate in which school districts are to develop comprehensive parent engagement policies aimed at diverse school populations, this study adds to the knowledgebase complicating prevailing assumptions of why and how farmworking families engage in the education of their children.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This dissertation contributes to the growing literature that examines the family involvement and engagement practices of Latino families, specifically those from migrant farmworking backgrounds. The literature overwhelmingly points towards the increased educational benefits of parental involvement—especially in regards towards several academic indicators—it also suffers from issues of conceptualization, ascription towards deficit thinking, and validity issues. With the NCLB act of 2001, the federal government made parental involvement a key school reform component in ensuring that schools be accountable to the local communities (Rogers, 2006)

In this chapter, I begin by providing “quantitative” and “qualitative” descriptions of who migrant farmworkers are in the state of California. I review studies on parental involvement, concentrating on those that focus on “what involvement is” and how it is understood by parents. I identify the strengths and limitations of the present knowledgebase, as well as the directions for future research that can fill some gaps in the literature. I then identify key theoretical concepts from the literature that focus on framing parental involvement from a familial assets based perspective by challenging deficit ideologies that blame families of color for the lower academic attainment of their children. Finally, I explore some of the methodological limitations in the field and explore avenues for new directions.

### **Socio-Economic and Background Characteristics**

There are an estimated 1.7 million farmworkers working in the agricultural landscapes of this country (Triplett, 2004). Migrant farmworkers in the United States are a segment of the labor force that continuously encounters some of the harshest working and living conditions. In states

like California, 800,000 to 900,000 farmworkers each year help sustain the agricultural industry to the tune of about \$37.5 billion per year (California Agricultural Statistics, 2010)<sup>10</sup>. Unfortunately for farmworkers, their average hourly earnings was only \$9.78<sup>11</sup> in 2008 (Martin, 2010). Compounding the problems of low wages is a “farm labor market [that] is dominated by specialized enterprises with highly seasonal labor demands” resulting in an average 1,000 hours of work per year, about half as manufacturing workers (Martin, 2000, p. 20). A recent national survey of farmworkers found that the individual median income for a farmworker was \$7,500 per year and \$10,000 for a farmworker family per year (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998; Lacar, 2001; Martin, 2000). Farmworker earnings are amongst the lowest of any segment of the US workforce, as relatively few receive any fringe benefits such as health insurance or public assistance (Martin, 2003).

Further complicating the situation for farmworkers in this country is that since the late 1990’s, the percentage of those undocumented has risen from 52% to around 85% according to an estimate by National Agricultural Workers survey (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998). This increase in the number of undocumented farmworkers nationally has weakened the ability of labor unions to demand better wages & improved conditions for their workers. Some migration scholars have argued that the federal government has been complicit in creating the conditions necessary for an oversupply of migrant workers as means towards depressing farmworker wages and ensuring the agricultural industry’s increased profitability (Krissman 1999; Martin, 2003). The increased undocumented migration of farmworkers principally from Mexico and Central

---

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from: [http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/California/Publications/California\\_Ag\\_Statistics/2010cas-ovw.pdf](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/California/Publications/California_Ag_Statistics/2010cas-ovw.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Source: <http://www.prb.org/Articles/2010/usfarmworkersfoodprices.aspx>

America has been accelerated post NAFTA<sup>12</sup> and has provided an abundant supply of cheap labor for growers to continue to exploit (Chomsky, 1999).

In 2004, a study of 1,028 California farmworkers<sup>13</sup> conducted by the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (CRLAF) in the San Joaquin Valley found that many workers had experienced wage and hour violations during the prior year. Some of the most significant findings included:

- 49.8% of them said that their paid stubs did not show all hours worked. 45% of these farmworkers reported that this discrepancy had occurred between 1 and 3 times, 21% reported between 8 and 10 times, and 11% reported more than 10 times.
- 48% reported that they had been paid in cash at least once during the prior year (and had received no itemized pay information at all).
- 50% said they were not always paid overtime owed.
- 72.5% reported that, when working on piece rate they often worked right through their rest periods to avoid losing money. 63.8% of these farmworkers stated that they would take their rest breaks more often if their employer paid them their average piece rate during that time.
- 45.3% reported that, when working on piece rate, they often worked right through their meal period in order to avoid losing money.

As the above survey findings demonstrate, farmworkers are frequently taken advantage as they are in the bottom rung of an oppressive farm labor system. To further illustrate this

---

<sup>12</sup> The North American Free Trade Agreement between Canada, Mexico, and the United States was signed into law in 1994. Chomsky (1999) states: What was stressed outside the mainstream about the goals of NAFTA is also now quietly conceded: the real goal was to “lock Mexico in” to the “reforms” that had made it an “economic miracle,” in the technical sense of this term: a “miracle” for U.S. investors and the Mexican rich, while the population sank into misery. The Clinton Administration “forgot that the underlying purpose of NAFTA was not to promote trade but to cement Mexico’s economic reforms,” ... “Locking Mexico in” to these reforms, it was hoped, would deflect the danger detected by a Latin America Strategy Development Workshop in Washington in September 1990. It concluded that relations with the brutal Mexican dictatorship were fine, though there was a potential problem: “a ‘democracy opening’ in Mexico could test the special relationship by bringing into office a government more interested in challenging the U.S. on economic and nationalist grounds”—no longer a serious problem now that Mexico is “locked into the reforms” by treaty. The U.S. has the power to disregard treaty obligations at will; not Mexico (p. 105).

<sup>13</sup> “A 2004 Survey of 1028 California Agricultural Workers Found Widespread Wage and Hour Violations,” M. Schacht, et. al. California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, Sacramento, CA, January 2005. As cited in Manuel Espinoza's dissertation "Humanization and social dreaming: A case study of changing social relations in a summer migrant educational program"



point, according to the Bureau of Field Enforcement<sup>14</sup> in 2004, only 81 citations were issued for minimum wage violations and an additional 113 for violations of the state's overtime laws. The lack of enforcement power by state regulators (or unwillingness) demonstrates once again the disposability and inhumane treatment of migrant farmworkers in the political economy of California.

### **Health**

Besides salary disparities, farmworkers as is commonly reported, also have increased rates of health risks and a life expectancy of less than 50 years, a figure that is 25 years less than the average person in the U.S (National Migrant Resources Program and the Migrant Clinicians Network, 1990, Bugarin & Lopez, 1998). This discrepancy is often attributed to the excessive exposure to deadly pesticides (Triplett, 2004) and harsh and unsafe working conditions (Bugarin & Lopez, 1998). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that farmworkers suffer the highest rate of chemically related illness of any occupational group--about 300,000 a year<sup>15</sup> (General Accounting Office, 1992). In fact, farmworkers are at risk of an occupational related death more than 31 times<sup>16</sup> than a clerical worker (Sokas, 2002).

Furthermore, it is not uncommon during the hot summer months where temperatures reach in upwards of 100 degrees for farmworkers to die of heatstroke. In 2005, the state of California was the first state in the nation to introduce regulations to allow employees to demand

---

<sup>14</sup> In California, "Labor Code § 90.5(d) requires the Labor Commissioner to report annually to the Legislature concerning the effectiveness of the Bureau of Field Enforcement (Bureau). This report shall include: (1) the enforcement plan adopted by the Labor Commissioner and the rationale for the priorities, (2) the number of establishments investigated by the Bureau, and the number and types of violations found, (3) the amount of wages found to be unlawfully withheld from workers, and the amount of unpaid wages recovered for workers, and (4) the amount of penalties transferred to the General Fund as a result of the efforts of the Bureau." Retrieved on February 4, 2009 from <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/BOFE-2004.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Farm Worker Exposure to Pesticides Testimony before the Washington State Board of Health June 13, 2001. Daniel Ford

<sup>16</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.hhs.gov/asl/testify/t20020227.html>

breaks in excessive heat.<sup>17</sup> This was in response to the deaths of 5 farmworkers during one of the hottest summers in recorded history for California. For example, in some areas of the Central Valley during that year, the temperature was in excess of 100 degrees for over 24 consecutive days. While changes in the regulatory process for the protection of workers by the state of California should be applauded, simply passing new regulations without enforcing them deny farmworkers improved working conditions and a sense of justice.

In places like the California Central Valley, many of the communities that farmworkers have settled in over the last 25 years have changed dramatically as Whites have moved out leaving them highly segregated. These communities are afflicted from high levels of unemployment ranging from 20% to 35% even during the peak of the harvest season (Allensworth & Rochin, 1996). The settlements patterns in some of these communities are often referred to as extended labor camps as some have populations consisting in upwards of 95% of farmworkers (Taylor, Martin, & Fix, 1997).

### **Setting the Context: A Qualitative Look at Immigrant Farmworkers**

As a way of capturing what it means to be a migrant farmworker, what many are forced to endure, and the value placed on their life, I will first provide several *qualitative* examples from press clippings over the years. The following clipping is from the United Farm Workers of America (UFW) website:<sup>18</sup>

*Los Angeles Times*  
*Friday, August 27, 1999*

#### ***'This Tragedy Happened Because of Greed'***

---

<sup>17</sup> SF Gate <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2005/08/03/BAGD7E1R6I1.DTL>

<sup>18</sup> Retrieved on January 26, 2009 from:  
[http://www.ufw.org/\\_page.php?menu=research&inc=history/13.html](http://www.ufw.org/_page.php?menu=research&inc=history/13.html)

***Farm workers: UFW's founder spoke to the same issues 25 years ago as were raised by a recent van accident that killed 13.***

By CESAR CHAVEZ

*The following is excerpted from a Los Angeles Times Commentary piece published Feb. 11, 1974, in the wake of a bus accident that killed 19 farm workers. Two weeks ago, 13 tomato workers died and two workers were injured in the crash of a farm labor van in the Central Valley. Legislation is pending in Sacramento to require seat belts on farm worker vehicles and tougher enforcement against violators.*

\* \* \*

*On Monday, Jan. 14, 1974, Pablo Arellanos, 54, started picking up farm workers at 2 a.m. for Jesus Ayala, a labor contractor. By 3 a.m. or 3:30 a.m., Pablo had a busload of people and began his 135-mile trip to High and Mighty Farms lettuce fields near Blythe. Then, after a full day working in the fields himself, Pablo drove the workers back to Mexico at night and cleaned the bus before trying to get some sleep for the next day.*

*Early Tuesday, he again picked up a crew of farm workers and headed north. On approaching Blythe shortly before sunrise, the bus missed a turn and careened off the road into a drainage ditch. On impact, seats and farm workers were thrown to the front of the bus, crushing Pablo to death and trapping many others who soon drowned in the ditch.*

*For three days, we visited the families of the dead workers and sought more information about the causes of the accident.*

*Among the dead, we discovered, were men, women and children. In one family, a father and his three teenage children were killed.*

*Amid the grief there was great bitterness. The workers were--and still are--bitter because they've been through this kind of tragedy too many times before. The workers learned long ago that growers and labor contractors have too little regard for the value of any individual worker's life.*

*The trucks and buses are old and unsafe. The fields are carelessly sprayed with poisons. The laws that do exist are not enforced. How long will it be before we take seriously the importance of the workers who harvest the food we eat?*

*On Saturday, Jan. 19, 2,000 farm workers crowded into the Calexico National Guard Armory for a funeral mass celebrated in Spanish. Afterward, at the request of the farm workers' families, on behalf of their union, I made the following remarks:*

*"We are united here in the name of God to pay final tribute to our brothers and sisters who lost their lives in a tragic bus accident. We are here also to show our love and solidarity for the families who have lost so much in the deaths of their loved ones.*

*"We are united in our sorrow but also in our anger. This tragedy happened because of the greed of the big growers who do not care about the safety of the workers and expose them to grave dangers when they transport them in wheeled coffins to the fields.*

*"There have been so many accidents--in the fields, on trucks, under machines, in buses--so many accidents involving farm workers.*

*"People ask if they are deliberate. They are deliberate in the sense that they are the direct result of a farm labor system that treats workers like agricultural implements and not as human beings. These accidents happen because employers and labor contractors treat us as if we were not important human beings.*

*"But brothers and sisters, the men and women we honor here today are important human beings. They are important because they are from us. We cherish them. We love them. We will miss them.*

*"They are important because of the love they gave to their husbands, their children, their wives, their parents--all those who were close to them and who needed them.*

*"They are important because of the work they do. They are not implements to be used and discarded. They are human beings who sweat and sacrifice to bring food to the tables of millions and millions of people throughout the world.*

*"They are important because God made them, gave them life, and cares for them in life and in death.*

*"Now that they are gone, how can we keep showing how important they are to us? How can we give meaning to their lives and their sacrifice?*

*"These terrible accidents must be stopped! It is our obligation--our duty to the memory of those who have died--to see to it that workers are not continually transported in these wheeled coffins, these carriages of death and sorrow. The burden of protecting the lives of farm workers is squarely on our shoulders.*

*"Let the whole world know that the pain that today fills our hearts with mourning also unifies our spirits and strengthens our determination to defend the rights of every worker.*

*"Let the labor contractors and the growers know that we will never stop working and struggling until there is an end to the inhuman treatment of all farm workers."*

*As alluded to in the above examples, although the two accidents mentioned are 25 years apart, they provide a glimpse into the reality of how matters pertaining to the lives of farmworkers are almost always dealt with little urgency by the authorities. United Farmworker founder and leader at the time of the first incidents Cesar E. Chavez, illuminated the intricate system of oppression that he believed was a direct result of a "farm labor system that treats workers like agricultural implements and not as human beings."*

More recently in 2008 several heat-related farmworker deaths made major news headlines across the state of California. This newspaper editorial detailing the death of a minor in the fields appeared in the Sacramento Bee<sup>19</sup> in May of that year:

***Editorial: A tragedy in the farm fields is all too familiar***

*Published: Saturday, May 31, 2008*

*The tragic death of Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez is a classic farmworker tale. An undocumented worker laboring in 95-degree heat without sufficient water or shade or rest collapses. The labor contractor who employed the 17-year-old, apparently unaware of the seriousness of the medical emergency, does nothing at first, then all the wrong things.*

*The unconscious teenager lies on the ground for five minutes cradled in her fiance's arms. Then she is placed in the back seat of a sweltering van. By the time she reaches a Lodi clinic, her body temperature is 108 degrees. She dies two days later without regaining consciousness.*

*Such stories are all too familiar. So is the story of Merced Farm Labor Contractors, which employed Vasquez Jimenez.*

*The state fined Merced Farm Labor in November 2006 for failing to provide heat-stress training for employees. The company was also fined for failing to have a written injury and illness prevention program and for not providing sufficient bathrooms or clean water for washing. The company was supposed to have corrected these failings, but no state inspectors checked to ensure that it did. There is no record that the company paid its fines.*

*The labor contractor is under investigation. The same is not true for the grower, West Coast Grape Farming. Vasquez Jimenez had been working nine straight hours pruning vines at*

---

<sup>19</sup> Retrieved on January 26, 2009 from: <http://www.sacbee.com/110/story/977923.html>

*the company's vineyard east of Stockton. What responsibility should growers have to ensure that workers who labored in the hot sun in their vineyard had water, shade and rest?*

*Under California's farm work rules, farm laborers are employed by middlemen. These labor contractors are often poorly financed and just a step away from the fields themselves. These contractors are liable for violations of safety and wage and hour rules. The farmers they contract with and whose crops they tend and harvest are not.*

*For decades, farm worker advocates have tried to make farmers responsible for the plight of the workers who labor in their fields, vineyards and orchards. Politically powerful growers have blocked bills that would make them responsible for workplace safety.*

*Given that many farmworkers in California have entered this country illegally, that they are fearful of being deported and often unable to speak English, they have no realistic ability to assert their rights.*

*The state is an inadequate guardian. There are 80,000 farms in California and more than 600,000 farmworkers and not enough state inspectors to protect them all.*

*The best way to protect Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez and others like her is to treat growers like factory owners or mine owners – make growers responsible for the safety of people who work on their land. Then, when negligence causes a death, it will be clear who is responsible.*

And then later in the year, a 63 year old female farmworker died of heatstroke in the Coachella Valley. The following piece appeared in the UFW's website<sup>20</sup>:

---

<sup>20</sup> Retrieved on January 13, 2009 from:  
[http://www.ufw.org/board.php?mode=view&b\\_code=news\\_press&b\\_no=4577&page=1&field=&key=&n=541](http://www.ufw.org/board.php?mode=view&b_code=news_press&b_no=4577&page=1&field=&key=&n=541)  
I thank Dr. Manuel Espinoza for the inspiration of creating qualitative representations of farmworkers.

***August 8, 2008:  
Coachella Valley Farm Worker Latest Victim to Succumb to Probable Heat-Related Causes;  
Fifteen have died since Governor Schwarzenegger took office***

*BAKERSFIELD--Maria de Jesus Alvarez, 63 has become the latest farm worker victim of this scorching summer. Alvarez had been picking table grapes for Anthony Vineyards and was employed through farm labor contractor Manuel Torres during the afternoon of July 15. She began feeling ill and went home. According to witnesses, she was working in a crew of 150 workers and they had no shade nor had they received training in heat stroke prevention and precautions as mandated by state law.*

*After her condition deteriorated, Alvarez was taken to a hospital on July 29. The doctor determined she was severely dehydrated and had suffered heat stroke. After being treated and admitted by two different hospitals, Alvarez died on Aug. 2.*

*“Once again we must bury another farm worker, who died needlessly and all because a criminal grower and labor contractor did not respect and honor the importance of the life of a farm worker,” said UFW President Arturo S. Rodriguez. “We ask Gov. Schwarzenegger when this black summer will end.”*

*Six farm workers deaths are being or have been investigated because of heat-related causes since May. This brings to 15 the number of farm workers whose death have been investigated as heat-related since CA Governor Schwarzenegger took office.*

*Funeral services for Maria de Jesus Alvarez:*

*Rosary: 5 p.m., Aug. 10, Casillas Family Funeral Home, 85891 Grapefruit Blvd., Coachella, CA*

*Mass: 9 a.m., Aug. 11, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, 65100 Dale Kiler Rd., Mecca, CA*



The tragedy of these two recent events raises many important questions. One key and important one that I have tried to answer is what does it mean to be a migrant farmworker in the U.S. today? And by extension, who are “migrant families” and “migrant students?” What do the continued deaths of migrant farmworkers mean to the consciousness of the U.S. public at large? What responsibility do we have to a segment of the population (and their children) that fulfills a very important function in society? What considerations must educators account for when working closely with these families and their children?

### **Parent Engagement Literature**

This study will contribute to the existing literature on parental engagement that has yet to fully explore how migrant families think about educational engagement in this context of their own life histories. In this next section, I first provide a review of the role that families play in the education of their children. Then I challenge the dominant typology and definition of parental involvement and engagement by providing a more holistic definition that incorporates the parents’ life experiences and outlooks towards education. Finally, I provide an overview of some of the limitations in the current literature on family involvement.

### **An Overview on Parent Engagement**

Historically, the relationships between the school and the home has been political (Cutler, 2000) and distant as Lawrence-Lightfoot (1978) highlighted in her seminal work “Worlds Apart.” This distance remains in many schools across the country even as new calls for increased family-school-community partnerships have persisted with the establishment of No Child Left Behind (Lareau, 2003; Rogers, 2006.) Studies over the past 20 years have demonstrated a *link* between parents being involved in the education of their children, and their children doing better in school, especially in the lower grades (Chavkin, 1993; Epstein, 1995;

Henderson & Berla, 1994). These purported benefits as a result of parent involvement include: higher grade point averages and scores on standardized tests (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Fan & Chen, 1999; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Henderson & Mapp, 2002) enrollment in more challenging academic programs (Shumow & Lomax, 2002); more classes passed and credits earned (Barnard, 2004); better attendance (Epstein, Clark, Salinas, and Sanders, 1997); improved behavior at home and at school (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002) and better social skills and adaptation to school (Marcon, 1999). As a result, even the federal government “has recognized” the importance of parental involvement by tying Title 1 funding (Baker & Soden, 1998) and making it a key provision in the No Child Left Behind Act with the belief “that informed and engaged parents can play a central role in holding the school system accountable for providing a quality education to all students” (Rogers, 2006, p 2).

While most educators and policy makers agree that greater parental involvement is a welcomed school reform strategy, in the literature there exists a lack of consensus of what effective “involvement” is (Baker & Soden, 1998; Lawson, 2003). This lack of clarity stems from the way that parental involvement is operationalized by educators, policy makers, and parents themselves (Lopez, 2001; Lawson, 2003). There is also a greater likelihood of misunderstandings and conflict developing between the school and the home when differing or competing understandings of involvement are in place (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2008; Lawson, 2003). The most common and frequently used typology of involvement is Epstein’s (1995) family school community partnerships which “assumes consensus and cooperation between parents and educators” (Auerbach, 2001) and pays little attention to conflict (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1978), power relations (Lareau & Horvat, 1999) and parent advocacy (Auerbach, 2002; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001) often quite common in schools that migrants and immigrant

students attend. Much of the work based on this model assumes that schools are neutral spaces and ignores the reality that schooling and education are political and ideological<sup>21</sup> (Freire, 2000).

The process of schooling, or formal education, is very political especially when it pertains to meeting the educational needs of low income students of color, whether in urban or rural schools. Research has shown that these students often attend some of the worst schools in the country and are more likely to receive an inferior education than their white counterparts (Oakes et. al, 2006; Rumberger & Gandara, 2003;). In many of these schools that have long track records of failure, it is often easier to rationalize the underachievement of students through genetic or cultural explanations, than to look deeper at the social, economic, and political forces that affect those communities (Noguera, 2003). When these deficit explanations become the dominant narrative in schools, parents are often blamed and marginalized for seemingly not being involved or caring for the educational success of their children. In communities with high percentages of recent immigrant and farmworking families, where the primary language is not English, and most have low levels of formal education, participating in school normative forms of involvement can be an intimidating process (Chavkin, 1989). How then can school officials outreach to these families? What would these relationships consist of? Fundamentally, what are the ideologies of involvement informing educators that are seeking the participation of migrant farmworking families? What are the specific behaviors or “scripts” that educators expect migrant families to “perform” when they participate in the education of their children?

Traditional definitions of parent involvement have been driven by the concerns of the school and relegated it to a scripted role to be performed, rather than to “unrehearsed activities that parents and other family members routinely practice” (Lopez, 2001; p 417). Involvement as

---

<sup>21</sup>Brazilian Educator Paulo Freire argued that education was a political act and that educators had the moral responsibility in siding with the oppressed against their oppressors. Taking a neutral position was also political as one’s neutrality served as a camouflage for reinforcing the preexisting power relations in society.

traditionally defined then is predicated of having prior knowledge of the socially sanctioned scripts. Familiarity with these scripts is not sufficient as parents must also be willing to perform these scripts, as well as have specific opportunities to be involved in these ways (Hoover Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Some researchers have suggested that traditional roles of involvement (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Lopez, 2001; Suoto Manning & Swick, 2006; Valdes, 1996) may fall outside the cultural repertoires of some families, marginalized parents in particular, who may be unfamiliar with U.S. schools, be economically oppressed, or who may have had negative prior experiences with school officials (Lopez, 2003). Other scholars posit that parent's role construction may make certain activities unacceptable, especially when traditional/normative notions of involvement fall outside of what they perceive as appropriate actions (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Either way, parents who do not participate in traditional norms of involvement may be perceived as not caring or not being involved in the educational well being of their children (Valdes, 1996).

### **Latino Parent Involvement**

“Simply bringing parents to school will not change the racist or classist responses that teachers may have toward them and their behaviors.” (Valdes, 1996)

The aforementioned quote problematizes the popular idea held by some in the field of education that if only minority parents were to become more involved (small solution) in the education of their children, the existing gap (complex problem) between whites and non/whites would cease to exist (Valdes, 1996). In recent years, there has been a wealth of literature that has documented that parental involvement leads to improved student academic achievement (Chavkin, 1993; Epstein, 1986; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). As Valencia and Black have noted (2002), much of that research however, has failed to include Mexican American descent families.

A challenge for current scholars of education is to conduct more parent involvement research with Mexican American populations.

An emerging problem with the parental involvement literature is that there is no one set of consensus of what “it” is (Lawson, 2003). On the one hand, teachers often assume that it is a parent’s responsibility to get involved through formal channels (school events, teacher assistant, tutor), and that it is a parent’s responsibility to contact the teacher (Scribner, Young, & Pedroza, 1999). On the other hand, Mexican American parents often view involvement as informal activities in the form of “checking homework assignments, reading and listening to children read, obtaining tutorial assistance, providing nurturance, instilling cultural values, talking with children, and sending them to school well fed, clean, and rested” (Scribner et al, 1999, p 37). The differing notions of involvement maybe rooted in the belief systems of Whites and Mexican Americans concerning the purpose of education, or its Spanish translation, *educacion*. For many Mexican American parents, *educacion* “has a much broader meaning and includes both manners and moral values” (Valdes, p.125) as they focus on supporting the overall well being of the child (Scribner et al, 1999). In addition, *educacion* also refers to an individual’s competence in the social arena in which one is expected to respect the dignity and individuality of others (Ceja, 2004).

Furthermore, Ceja (2004) has argued that some forms of involvement and encouragement that Mexican American parents provide may in fact be different and manifest itself through culturally specific forms such as *consejos* (folk wisdom), family stories, or through lessons learned from viewing their parents and the importance and valued placed on hard work (Lopez, 2001). In these ways, parental encouragement plays an important role in mediating the harmful risk factor effects that many of these students may face. School officials calling for higher levels

of parental involvement make the mistake of measuring only formal levels of involvement and thus get an incomplete picture of how Latino parents are involved in the informal and less visible forms.

### **Teacher invitations to Involvement**

Another important component of the parental involvement literature is the role that the school plays in eliciting or creating invitations for involvement. While most of the literature on parental involvement examines what parents do or not do to be involved, less attention has been focused on what school officials do to create “invitations to involvement” (Hoover Dempsey et. al, 2005). Prior research on this topic has generally found that the school climate and school environment influences parents’ ideas about involvement (Griffith, 1996; 1998; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Of particular importance towards improving the involvement of low-income and socially marginalized families was the notion of “*respeto*” or respect (Valdes, 1996), where the attitudes of school staff were positive towards students and their families (Anson et al., 1991.; Comer, 1985; Comer & Haynes, 1991).

Some studies have also examined invitations to involvement by teachers. The work on teacher invitations by Epstein (1986, 1991) has shown that teachers’ attitudes about parents and teachers invitations to involvement play a significant role in parents’ decisions to become involved. These studies are of critical importance as they serve as a response to parental concerns of how they could best support the learning practices of their children (Epstein, 1991; Epstein & Varvoohis, 2001). Unfortunately, most teacher education programs do not address sufficiently the role that educators can play in bridging the distance between schools and the community (Epstein, 2005). In school districts where a mismatch exists between the

cultural/linguistic and class background of the teaching staff and the families who send their students there, communication and invitations for involvements take up even more significance.

### **Limitations of the Present Literature**

While the current literature on family involvement has finally begun to acknowledge the differing forms of participation that non-mainstream families may be engaging in (Hoover-Dempsey et. al, 1995), scholars in the field have been challenged for the limitations in the conceptualization of parent involvement (Lawson, 2003), methodology of the studies (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005), and parent & school official perceptions of involvement (Lawson, 2003). In the next section, I provide a brief overview of the limitations of the present literature.

### **Conceptual limitations**

Recently, scholars have begun to examine the engagement practices of low income Latino families (Auerbach, 2002; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Gonzalez & Moll, 2002; Calabrese-Barton et. al, 2004; Ceja, 2004, 2006; Olivos, 2006) and have acknowledged the differing notions of involvement that often times exist between working class and immigrant families and school officials. Few studies have yet to examine the engagement practices of farmworking families (Lopez, 2001, Treviño, 2004). Most of the research on family engagement still conceptualizes being “involved” in school centric terms where engagement or “involvement” is driven by the concerns of school officials (Olivos, 2006; Perez-Carreon, et al., 2005), assumes egalitarian power relations in “partnerships” between the school and the home (Auerbach, 2001), and subscribe to assimilatory ideologies.

Conceptually, additional research in education is needed that examines migrant farmworker family engagement practices in the socio-historical context from which they originate from. In other words, most research is guided by the understanding of parent roles and

involvement largely in terms of what parents do or don't do and how that fits in to the needs of the child and the school (Calabrese-Barton et al., 2004). Future research studies should seek to better understand the family's "orientations to the world" and how those orientations have framed and shaped their actions. What are the socio-political factors that lead these families to come to the United States in the first place? What are the social, historical, and political factors that relegate these families to the lowest sectors in society? How does the work that they do impact the way that they view the educational opportunities of their children and their engagement practices? What is the cultural logic behind the way these families view schooling and engagement (Fuller, Elmore, & Orfield, 1996)? What do parents view to be their responsibility in the educational matters of their children? How do school officials create opportunities and invitations for these families to be involved? What are the educational and life goals and dreams that parents have for themselves and for their children?

Understanding *how* migrant farmworking families think about and understand their engagement in the education of their children and how school officials understand and interpret this is imperative if we are to effectively create policies that can narrow the existing distance between migrant families/communities and schools. I argue that family engagement is more than coming into contact with school officials or assisting their children with their school work, or participating in school governance. For some migrant farmworker families with long histories of poverty and limited exposure to formal education, to be engaged and involved in the education of their child may come to mean a deep sacrifice of toiling in difficult labor to ensure that their children are afforded the opportunity they never had to pursue an education. In many places in



Mexico for example, going to school past elementary school is considered a privilege for the well to do<sup>22</sup>.

### **Methodological Considerations**

Many of the claims now widely accepted as fact about parental involvement have more recently come under fire. A large body of work on parental involvement has been scrutinized for suffering from weak methodological design and having little empirical support when tied to the “improvement of student achievement or changing parent, teacher, and student behavior” (Mattingly et al., 2002, pg 549). Some of the limitations in many of these studies stem from the fact that they are correlation studies and not systematic evaluations of the particular programs and the effects that these programs have on student learning. Mattingly et al. (2002) suggest that the failure to create strong research designs has called into question whether claims about parental involvement in these studies are valid. For example, they examined 41 studies that evaluated K-12 parent involvement programs and concluded that serious flaws in design, methodology, and analysis needed to be addressed before any decisions about program effectiveness could be reached. These findings reveal some parallels with other research (White et al., 1992) that have questioned claims of purported benefits made about parent involvement in early childhood education. White et al.’s (1992)<sup>23</sup> review of the research analysis examined the benefits attributed to parents involved in pre-kindergarten programs in 172 research studies and they found “no convincing evidence that the ways in which parents have been involved in

---

<sup>22</sup> For example, in Michoacán, one of Mexico’s largest labor sending states, of the 100,000 jornaleros (day laborers) that work in the state, a minimum of 40% are under 14 years of age, and they generally began working at 7 or 8 years of age. About 50% of this population speaks an indigenous language such as *náhuatl*, *purépecha*, or *tlapaneco*). Source: La jornada Michoacán. *Hijos de Jornaleros agrícolas migrantes, sin pleno acceso a la educación básica*. 2/5/2008

<sup>23</sup> There study examined the type of intervention, nature of the participants, assessment procedures, internal validity of the design, study implementation, and outcomes of the 172 programs in these studies.

previous early intervention research studies result in more effective out- comes” (p. 91). More research is needed that is methodologically strong that can capture the nuances inherent in “parental involvement” that can sustain the scrutiny in design. My study is a qualitative attempt to examine the specific ways that migrant farmworking families support the education of their children.

## **CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The educational engagement of migrant farmworking families is remarkably complex and is important to examine within its own political, economic, and social context. In order to make sense of this complex process, I draw on multiple theoretical frameworks: Political Economy Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Freirean Social Theory. This study is situated within the political economy of the California Central Valley. Understanding the social location of migrant farmworkers in California can provide critical insight to the many educational, social, political, and economic challenges they face.

### **Political Economy of Migrant Farmwork**

Orthodox economic theory assumes that wealth equity and resources distribution is impossible through the imposed power of regulation, but instead, only through the absence of power, hence, an “invisible hand” in a “free market” (Finlayson, Lyson, Pleasant, Schafft, & Torres, 2005). Thus the implications are clear, only when markets are unfettered by regulation can they then produce efficient and optimal wealth distribution. The “invisible hand” serves as a powerful metaphor that naturalizes “the existence of well-functioning markets that efficiently distribute labor, resources, and wealth” (p. 518). Instead, what this narrative of neo-classical economics does is naturalizes and prescribes optimal modes of social organization. Finlayson, et al. (2005) argue that the capacity to impose particular modes of social organization are actually nothing more or less than the consolidation and allocation of power.

Galbraith (2001) offers his own criticism of the disguising of power relations in modern economic analysis. He states:

The most damaging feature of neoclassical and neo-Keynesian economics is the arrangement by which power – the ability of persons or institutions to bend others to their purposes – is removed from the subject...Rather, in eliding power – in making economics a nonpolitical subject – neoclassical theory destroys the relation of economics to the real world. In that world power is decisive in what happens. (136)

Galbraith's criticism of mainstream contemporary economic thinking, shed light on the importance of exposing the hidden relations of power in society.

Contrary to neoclassical theory, one of the key functions of political economy theory is exposing the linkages between economics and power in society. The political economy of the California Central Valley for example, demonstrates the global nature of California agriculture beginning in the 1860's and continuing until its eventual transformation into a fruit and vegetable world power (Daniel, 1981; McWilliams, 1971; Mitchell, 2002). The progression leading to California's rise as an agricultural power depended from its onset on a twofold process. First, there was the process of "primitive accumulation," or the use violence to take land away from the indigenous communities and peasants with the goal of "tearing asunder of established social relationships and their replacement with a regime of modern private property, trade in goods and labor, and capitalist social relations in general" (Mitchell, 2002, p. 146). The second process consisted of the "cultivation of a large, transient, highly pauperized, and non-local workforce" (146) thus making the development of export crops across the country and abroad possible. The intensification of agricultural capitalist relations in California drove Karl Marx in 1880 to write to Frederich Sorge, a German-American socialist inquiring, "I should be very much pleased if you could find me something good (meaty) on economic conditions in California. California is very important to me because nowhere else has the upheaval most shamelessly caused by capitalist centralization taken place with such speed" (in McWilliams, 1971, as cited in Mitchell, 2002).

The process of “primitive accumulation” and expansion of agriculture in California has been well documented most famously by Cary McWilliams (1971) in his landmark work “Factories in the Fields” in the late 1930’s. A historical look at agriculture in California has shown that the progressive development of capitalist relation “brought with it a continuing impoverishment, or, immiseration, of agricultural workers” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 147). The immiseration of California agricultural workers has been necessary precondition as it has sought integration into global markets and global food production systems.

The growth and expansion of the California agriculture industry has always rested on the assumption of a continual and ever cheapening labor force<sup>24</sup>. To maintain its status as a global agriculture superpower and to fulfill the aforementioned assumption, immigration policy and an available source of labor has been critical to help facilitate California’s agricultural needs. Historically, (with the Chinese and the Japanese in the late 1800’s, and in the early 1900’s with Europeans, South Asians and Mexicans, and then Pilipinos and Mexican in the 1920’s, and then after World War II), California, and the United States for that matter, has continuously looked around the globe to encourage a continuous oversupply of “foreign” labor, mainly from Mexico and Latin America, a process which has intensified more recently (Martin, 2003; Mitchell, 2002). California’s positioning as one of the global leaders in agricultural production has relied most recently on a “strong border policy” as a principal mechanisms to regulate the flow of “unauthorized” immigrant labor. This approach has increased the consequences of getting caught, thus resulting in the entrapment of many of the foreign workers who would otherwise choose to return to their home country (Andreas, 2000).

---

<sup>24</sup> See Varden Fuller in The Supply of Agricultural Labor as a factor in the Evolution of Farm Organization in California: Hearings Pursuant to S. Res. 266 Before the Senate Comm. On Education and Labor. 76<sup>th</sup> Cong., 3d Sess. 19777, Ex. 8762-A (1940)

Don Mitchell (2002) argues that the current wave of globalization can best be understood “as a process not just of expansion of markets, but ongoing, uneven geographical development” (p. 150). Capitalism’s need to continue capital accumulation necessitates the economy to expand either through the taking of new space or through the reconfiguring of old spaces (Lefebvre, 1976). During colonial times Mitchell (2002) argues, economic expansion was made possible through the taking of new land in the Americas, Asia or Africa. In California, economic expansion was made possible first by the taking the land away from Native Americans, and then from Mexicans, leading overtime to the transformation of the land into one of the “premier regions of capitalist development and innovation” (151). With the end of colonialism, and with the onset of globalization, the absolute expansion of capitalism is no longer tied solely to the nation state making the taking up of new space increasingly difficult. In places like California, one answer to the continued expansion of agricultural capital has been the “production and reproduction of relative geographical space” (151). A key function of relative geographical space<sup>25</sup> has been to generate and produce surplus value. Relative surplus value has been generated through the elimination of welfare, as well as other working class subsidies, crippling the power of collective bargaining, which has driven down wages by creating a labor surplus, and by also normalizing poverty as a natural feature of the landscape (Mitchell, 2003).

A specific way in which surplus value is also produced is by the growth and oversupply of the labor force. Estimates by Martin and Taylor (2000), show that in California, the agricultural economy demands anywhere from 800,000 to 900,000 workers per year, yet only

---

<sup>25</sup> Relative geographical space as defined by Neil Smith (2000) is the relationship between places and landscapes and the differences between the spaces that allows them to be related. Mitchell (2002) argues that the difference between farmworker housing and suburban housing development is tied to in part to the drive under capitalism to extract relative surplus value. Relative surplus value is created either through the decline in value of labor power often resulting from a rise in productivity, but also from the socialization of the laborers’ reproduction costs. This is often done through state subsidies for housing, basic foods, transportation, among other ways.

300,000 to 350,000 year round jobs were actually filled. A major shift in recent years has been the move towards hiring a greater number of seasonal workers, as evident by an increase of 20% in labor demand during the decades of the 80's and 90's. A direct result of the shift in labor demand has been an increase in undocumented labor force as some estimates have them as high 50% (Martin, 2003). The passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA)<sup>26</sup> of 1986 served as an amnesty to legalize immigrant farmworkers and also created employer sanctions for hiring undocumented workers. The burden of compliance with laws relating to hiring, wages, working conditions, health, safety, and farmworker housing has largely fallen on private Farm Labor Contractors (FLC). Under current federal and state law, the FLC's are considered the official "site" of employment as well as the official employers (Mitchell 2002).

One of the consequences of the passage of NAFTA in the mid 1990's was the loosening of employment regulations and lack of oversight and enforcement of labor laws, leading to the frequent abuse of farmworkers. As a result, estimates points to only 1/5 of the entire 155,000 FLC's are inspected in a given year (Bugarin & Lopez, 1998). Another consequence of the growth of FLC's has been the decline in employer based housing for workers, as growers no longer have to account for what used to be there responsibility. In a span of fifty-four years since 1955, the number of registered employer owned labor camps has dramatically reduced from 9,000 to 500 (Bugarin & Lopez, 1998). This has resulted in workers seeking shelter in barns, sheds, automobiles, trailers, in packed housing, or self constructed shacks, with little access to clean water and toilets (Bugarin & Lopez, 1998). In the past, labor and living

---

<sup>26</sup> Through IRCA, passed in 1986 under President Reagan. The Act made it illegal to knowingly hire or recruit illegal immigrants (immigrants who do not possess lawful work authorization), required employers to attest to their employees' immigration status, and granted amnesty to certain illegal immigrants who entered the United States before January 1, 1982 and had resided there continuously. The Act also granted a path towards legalization to certain agricultural seasonal workers and immigrants who had been continuously and illegally present in the United States since January 1, 1982

conditions have improved for farmworkers only when worker power has been generated through collective bargaining, best exemplified through the United Farmworkers Union (UFW) at the height of its power in the 1970's and 1980's. As Bugarin & Lopez (1998) note, over the past 20 years as the worker power has declined, so have the working and living conditions for farmworkers. Employer hiring practices have more recently preferred undocumented indigenous workers from southern Mexico, and there is some evidence that they have used the new workforce to divide workers along ethnic lines by preventing and weakening collective bargaining opportunities (Krissman, 1999). Poorer indigenous workers are less likely to report labor exploitation and work place violations than their mestizo (lighter skinned) counterparts who are more likely to be documented and aware of their legal rights (Krissman, 1999). The lack of workplace regulatory enforcement by state and federal agencies gives cover to state and federal government to say they are against "illegal" immigrant labor by pointing to the border as a means to divert migrant flows, yet do very little at the point of employment to ensure that the rights of farmworkers are not being violated.

### **The Border: Fortification by Convenience**

The passage of NAFTA in 1994 was billed as a monumental move towards the further integration of the economies of North American countries. One of the compromises resulting from NAFTA under the Clinton Administration (with the support of Mexican Government) was to fortify the US-Mexican border (Mitchell 2002; Chomsky, 1999; Andreas 2000). Part of this stemmed from the complaints of American nativist groups that sought to stem the flow of undocumented migrants as well as the perceived influx of illegal drugs, something that the Clinton administration was a willing supporter of (Mitchell 2002). Andreas (2000) has pointed that the border serves the dual purpose of functioning for a borderless economy (capital and



goods) while at the same time servings as a barricaded border (for potential migrants and drugs). In the end, what determines “the level of porosity” of the border is whose interest its serving and what the type of transnational flow that is crossing the line (Nevins, 2001).

Mitchell (2002) argues that the fortification of the border functions to regulate the movement of people as well as goods, and who primarily benefits from capital/labor dichotomy is the capital side. One of the major consequences of the fortification of the border through the implementation of Operation Gatekeeper<sup>27</sup> in 1994 has been the increased death toll of migrants as they have been pushed to cross through the mountains and the dessert (Mitchell 2002; Chomsky 1999; Andreas, 2000). Another aspect that has impacted migrants has been the increase in cost of crossing the border, as some estimates have the smuggling industry to be a \$7-8 billion per year (Gross, 1999). The extra costs of border enforcement have been passed on to those seeking to migrate (Mitchell, 2002) leaving them often times with high amounts of debt, something labor contractors have utilized to exploit workers they recruit seeking to pay off their debts (Krissman, 1999). This leaves many undocumented farmworkers oftentimes in situations of powerlessness where fear of retribution and deportation, and the lack of enforcement power in state regulatory agencies makes it unlikely that they will report employment, housing, health, and other forms of abuse and exploitation (Heyman 1998, Villarejo, 2003) and just as unlikely to report any occupational injuries and don't seek assistance from government supported services providers (Herries-Hathron, 1998 ). Worse yet, growers and businesses have benefited from a drop in wages of about 40% during the decades of the 80's and 90's, a phenomenon largely attributable to the border (Mitchell, 2002). Mitchell (2002) states, “The border has served to

---

<sup>27</sup> Operation Gatekeeper passed under the Clinton administration and aimed to stem the flow of drugs and immigration.

lower the cost of the reproduction of labor power by helping to ensure the immiseration of a whole class of working people made powerless to confront their conditions” (p. 160).

What new insights might a political economy of migrant labor have for our understanding of migrant farmworker families and their educational engagement? Understanding the plight of these families, and their individuals’ histories is critical towards formulating policies to improve their quality of life and educational opportunities. Many have come to this country with the prospects of obtaining employment that will allow them to help and provide for their families here, as well as sending money back to other family they may have in Mexico. Mitchell elucidates (2002):

They are drawn across the border to work in services, manufacturing, and agriculture. But this only raises the further question of why so many people are on the move, why so many are willing to risk their lives and to pay exorbitant costs to cross the border; why so many will rip themselves away from their families – their children and their spouses, their parents and their communities – and risk not seeing them for years (if ever again) (p. 162).

The answer to the above question of why so many risk their lives lies in part with the push and pull factors in these neighboring countries.

Additionally, neo-liberal reforms such as NAFTA created the market mechanisms that eliminated communal rights to land (Massey, 1998; Chomsky 1999; Mitchell, 2002) and allowed a new round of primitive accumulation to take effect in Mexico allowing land to be mortgaged, sold off, or privatized. The result of these reforms was the displacement of hundreds if not thousands of Mexican, mainly indigenous farmers who in essence became minimum wage earners on what once were their own lands (Ross, 1998). This new “freedom” *campesinos* experience as a result of these free-market reforms created the conditions of desperation that forced them to migrate northward looking for employment to provide for their families.

For many migrant farmworkers then, their presence in the United States is a testament to their will to survive and their desire to improve their family's plight. What political economy theory illuminates is the complex social, political, and economic processes that they are forced to navigate to support their families. What can we learn from the labor histories of these families? How are they treated at work? Why are they doing the work that they do? What realistic opportunities exist for them to escape the migrant farmworking lifestyle? What lessons have they learned from their own work in the fields? How does their labor experience shape the advice they share with their children about work and schooling? What prospects do they hold for their children to be able to utilize the U.S. educational system for upward mobility? How do these histories frame their engagement with school officials?

### **Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed**

The early work of Brazilian educational philosopher Paulo Freire provides an invaluable lens for making sense of the cultural practices of *campesinos* as they are afflicted by oppressive social structures. In his most famous work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire called for the greater humanizations of the oppressed Brazilian *campesinos* by developing a pedagogy that sought the transformation of social and political structures that dehumanized them. While Freire's work has commonly been utilized to examine the educational and political situation of "urban minority populations in metropolitan centers" hardly ever has his work been used in the context in which it originated, in rural communities and schools (McLaren & Giroux 1990). Precisely because of this reason and the particular context of this study, the liberatory potential of Freire's work takes on additional importance.

In discussing the relationship between the oppressed and their oppressor Freire (2000) believed that the "great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed was to liberate

themselves and their oppressor. The oppressed, according to Freire, were the only ones capable of transforming the “unjust social order” that engulfed them, as any attempt from the oppressor to help the oppressed would be manifested through a form of false generosity. False generosity according to Freire, is a structure of dependence that maintains the oppressed in a subordinate position, that necessitates the oppressor to continue to dispense his generosity to the oppressed. Instead, Freire called for a “true generosity” in which the unjust social order that nourished this “false charity” would be transformed by eliminating the structure that perpetuated the dependency of the oppressed. Freire states:

False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the “rejects of life” to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands — whether of individuals or entire peoples — need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world. (p. 45)

In highlighting the oppressed and oppressors as contradictory poles in a structure of oppression, Freire succeeds in naming the oppressor as responsible for the action. Only through the recognition of the necessity to fight for their own humanity within the structure of oppression, do the oppressed then begin the path toward their liberation.

Freire posited that during the initial stages of their struggle for liberation, the oppressed rather than fighting for their freedom would often resort to becoming “sub-oppressors.” By this he meant that the consciousness of the oppressed was so conditioned in adherence to their oppressors, that in wanting to be more human, the only model they had to follow was in the image of their oppressors. Their submersion in this cruel reality negated their ability to critically analyze their existential situation, and they saw themselves in individualistic terms, and as result “they have no consciousness of themselves as persons or as members of an oppressed class” (p. 46). Freire gives the example of the rare peasant who when “promoted” to become an overseer,

“become[s] more of a tyrant towards his former comrades than the owner himself” (p. 46). This situation remains so, as a consequence of a *prescriptive*<sup>28</sup> relationship between the owner and the new overseer who in order to keep his job, has to reflect the values of the owner, and even more so. This condition led to what Freire called the *Fear of Freedom*, or the inability of the oppressed to think for themselves outside of the guidelines imposed on them by their oppressors.

According to Freire, to become free, the oppressed would have to become “autonomous and responsible” by ejecting their oppressors prescriptive world view from their consciousness. To conquer their “situation of oppression” they must be willing to recognize the causes of their oppression as well as engage in a struggle to transform it. Freire believed that the oppressed suffered from a duality that entrapped them between their own reality and the reality of their oppressors, but to accept their own reality required the courage to fight for it. Freire states:

The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided; between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them; between human solidarity or alienation; between following prescriptions or having choices; between being spectators or actors; between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and re-create, in their power to transform the world (48).

What Freire meant was that pedagogy for the oppressed must account for this situation of duality, so that the oppressed can choose for themselves---their oppression or liberation; to live in the image of the oppressors or to live for themselves as authentic human beings<sup>29</sup>.

A critical step in the journey towards becoming more authentic human beings happens “[o]nly as they discover themselves to be “hosts” of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy” (2000a, 48). For , the liberation of the oppressed was

---

<sup>28</sup> According to Freire, “Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual’s choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber’s consciousness. Thus the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor (pg 47).

<sup>29</sup> Authentic human beings for Freire are “no longer oppressor no longer oppressed, but human in the process of achieving freedom” (p. 49)

akin to a painful child birth born from the labor or struggle required to “bring into this world this new being” (p. 49) To engage in this struggle, the oppressed emerged with a critical perception of their oppression not as an unchangeable reality, but as a limit situation possible of transformation. In critically confronting their reality, the oppressed must be willing to “simultaneously objectifying and acting upon this reality,” (p. 52) or engage in *praxis*<sup>30</sup>. To engage in praxis for the oppressed is an act of rebellion and a challenge to the violence of their oppressors that dehumanizes them. For Freire, violence was a result of the oppressor’s (representative of the dominant class) and the oppressed submergence in a capitalistic structure that afforded the oppressors “the privilege to eat, dress wear shows, be educated, travel, and hear Beethoven” all while the oppressed “did not eat, had no clothes or shoes, neither studies nor traveled, much less listened to Beethoven” (p. 57). Freire spoke of the culture of violence of the oppressors resulting from a “strictly materialistic concept of existence” where money was the primary measure and profit was the primary goal, always wanting more even if it meant that the oppressed have less and less. He alludes to the mythology of the oppressor in which the oppressors perceive having more as their “inalienable right” and their material wealth is a consequence of their hard work and effort. Conversely they justify their privileged class position by pointing to the “have nots”, and signaling that their status is a result of their incompetence and laziness and view any threat to change this situation as coming from potential enemies who must be watched.

---

<sup>30</sup> Praxis, in Freirean terms refers to reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. Freire states “to achieve this goal, the oppressed must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality. A mere perception of reality not followed by this critical intervention will not lead to a transformation of objective reality — precisely because it is not a true perception. This is the case of a purely subjectivist perception by someone who forsakes objective reality and creates a false substitute.

A key characteristic of the psychology of the oppressed rests in their own self depreciation and in having internalized the views that their oppressors hold of them. Part of this self depreciation results from “[s]o often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything---that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive---that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitnes” (p. 63). Freire speaks of how the effect of this situation is that the oppressed fail to realize that they “too know things” that they have learned from their own interactions with the world and other and that they too are producers of culture. If and when they come to recognize themselves as producers of culture, the oppressed can then engage in critical dialogue with themselves and with those in solidarity with them as they struggle for their own freedom through direct action and reflection upon that action---their praxis. As a byproduct of this struggle comes the recognition that they are no longer objects to be acted upon, but subjects who have the capacity to write themselves into their own histories. In fighting for a fuller humanization then the onsets for a revolutionary movement is created.

What new insights might a pedagogy of the oppressed provide for understanding how the life histories of migrant farmworking parents mediate their educational engagement in the lives of their children? First, a pedagogy of the oppressed allows us to situate migrant farmworker families within the larger social structure of oppression that farmworker families are entrapped in. This goes beyond a mere description of farmwork as being hard and difficult labor, but of the acknowledgement of the all encompassing forms of oppression suffered by farmworkers that is structured into this type of work and lifestyle. An insight into the psychology of the oppressed is critical to understanding the impact of the alienation that they suffer through their work. How might parents’ own histories of education impact the way they think about educational engagement? How do migrant parents navigate the schooling process for their children? What

are their own beliefs about the purpose of education and what role do they believe they should play in that process?

### **Critical Race Theory**

With its origins in the 1970's in the legal arena and emergence from critiques of the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement, Critical Race Theory (CRT) seeks to address race and racism with prospects for more successful strategies towards social transformation (Yosso, Parker, Solorzano, & Lynn, 2004). CRT scholars argue that CLS failed to address the lived histories and experiences of people of color (Yosso, 2006). Founding members of CRT including Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman were interested in “studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).” Bell coined the term “interest convergence” which posits that large segments of the population have little incentives to eradicate racism and will only act when it's out of their own self interest (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). More recently, CRT has evolved and expanded into sub-disciplines in covering different groups such as FemCrit, LatCrit, AsianCrit, TribalCrit, as of way of addressing some of its limitations as well as some of the differences present in other groups.

### **Critical Race & LatCrit Theory in Education**

In 1995 CRT made its way to the field of education via Tate and Ladson-Billings article *Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education*. CRT in education has been utilized to study issues of school discipline (Watts & Erevelles, 2004), campus racial climate (Solorzano, Ceja, Yosso, 2000), teacher education (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano, 1997), tracking (Green, 1999), educational leadership (Lopez, 2003), curriculum (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), parent engagement (Auerbach, 2002; Calabrese-Barton, et al. 2004), access into higher education (Teranishi, Allen, & Solorzano, 1994; Yosso, Parker, Solorzano, & Lynn, 2004) and equality of



educational opportunity (Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). A CRT in education according to Solorzano (1998) “challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups (p. 122).” CRT in education helps to unmask the racial aspects of educational issues, such as tracking of immigrant students, No Child Left Behind, parental “involvement”, and high stakes testing, masked as color-blind ideology.

There are five basic tenets that form the basic perspectives of a Critical Race Theory and LatCrit Frameworks in education: *1) The Centrality of Race and Racism and their Intersectionality with others forms of Subordination 2) The Challenge to Dominant Ideology 3) The Commitment to Social Justice 4) The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge 5) The Interdisciplinary Perspective.* These five tenets separately or together comprise the backbone of CRT research that promises an understanding of issues of racism in society towards equality and transformation. Like CRT, LatCrit encompasses the same assumptions and theoretical underpinnings, but also focuses more specifically on the experiences and realities of Latinas/os (Valdes, 1996). For example, LatCrit goes further and analyzes issues affecting Latina/os like language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality that CRT cannot or does not (Haney-Lopez, 1997; Hernandez-Truyol, 1997; Johnson & Martinez, 2000; Villalpando, 2004). LatCrit has greater validity and reliability when analyzing the multidimensional nature of Latina/o identities, especially in addressing the intersections of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression that CRT cant (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). Finally, Delgado-Bernal (2002) notes that LatCrit permits us to examine Latina/o identity at the intersections of migration, immigration, human rights, language, gender, and class. These intersections are all critical towards gaining a more critical understanding of how farmworkers are affected by

multiple forms of oppression. Below I detail the five tenets that form the basic perspectives of CRT and LatCrit (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

### **The Centrality of Race and Racism**

CRT and LatCrit in the field of education posit that race and racism are endemic, permanent, and central in explaining characteristics of American society (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). There is also a recognition that “race and racism are imbedded in the structures, practices, and discourses that guide the daily practices” of institutions (Solórzano et al., 2005, p.274). Critical Race scholars have challenged notions of colorblindness often put forth by both liberals and conservatives that claim that race is no longer relevant. Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues that color-blind racism has become the dominant racial ideology, in part because it exculpates whites from any responsibility for contemporary racial inequality. He argues,

Whereas Jim Crow racism explained blacks’ social standing as the result of their biological and moral inferiority, color-blind racism avoids such facile arguments. Instead, whites rationalize minorities’ contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and blacks’ imputed cultural limitations. (p. 2)

Bonilla-Silva (2003) makes clear that contemporary racial inequality is reproduced through practices that are subtle, institutional, and that appear to be non-racial.

In the field of education, one of the ways that racial disparities in educational achievement have been rationalized are through cultural deficit theories (Valencia & Solorzano, 1997) that lay blame on the parents and students attitudes and behaviors (Noguera, 2003), for supposedly not being engaged, and thus not caring or valuing the education of their children. LatCrit goes further to challenge the normative aspects of parent engagement that define participation in very narrow ways and fail to account for the ways that linguistically and culturally diverse and poor immigrant families may already be participating in the education of their children (Calabrese-Barton, et al, 2004; Ceja, 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Lopez, 2001).

## **The Challenge to Dominant Ideology**

This tenet challenges our educational system to provide all students with the same opportunities and challenges systems of meritocracy, color-blindness and race neutrality (Yosso, 2006, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2000 and Solórzano 1997). Solórzano and Yosso (2001) for example, argue that these supposed claims of race neutrality and meritocracy function in effect to hide “the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society” (597). Bonilla-Silva (2003) has noted that “[c]olor blind racism became the dominant racial ideology as the mechanisms and practices for keeping blacks and other racial minorities “at the bottom of the well” changed” (2-3). Today, examples of contemporary racism are manifested through the high levels of segregation in some farmworking towns where upwards of 90% of its residents are Mexican as a result of White flight over the last 20 years due to increased Mexican migration (Allensworth & Rochin, 1996). This often times results in these communities being controlled by a small but powerful group of growers who form part of the leadership class of these communities through the city council, school board, or other powerful positions.

## **The Commitment to Social Justice**

CRT and LatCrit in education must be committed towards a social justice perspective that seeks to ameliorate the race, class, gender, and other intersecting forms of oppression that communities of color face (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001a). An educational project that is committed towards social justice is grounded in the empowerment of underrepresented minority groups and seeks to eliminate racism, sexism, and class inequality (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001b). Schools are political spaces that have the potential to continue to serve the interest of the dominant economic groups in society through a “banking education,” or can provide a problem

posing education that can empower the communities they serve to engage in cultural democratic action for dignity and respect and their greater humanization (Freire, 2000a, b).

### **The Centrality of Experiential Knowledge**

CRT and LatCrit operate from the standpoint that the stories and narratives of families of Color “are legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001;473). These experiences of People of Color are legitimate and appropriate when learning about the subordination and marginalized experiences of People of Color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). For Latinos, especially parents, their experiences in the educational system are a valid form of learning about their encounters with racism and feelings of isolation. Critical Race studies in the past have drawn from the strengths of the lived experiences of families of color through methods such as storytelling, family histories, biographies, parables, *cuentos and dichos*, and narratives (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991, 2001; Valdes, 1996; Auerbach, 2001, 2002; Olmedo, 1997; Herzog, 1994; Lopez, 2001, Ceja, 2004). The life histories of families of color focusing on the forms of “cultural wealth” (Yosso, 2005) or forms of non-dominant cultural capital (Carter, 2003) can illuminate the cultural logic (Fuller, Elmore, Orfield, 1996) of these families and how they choose to engage in the schooling process of their children. Looked at in a critical fashion, these histories can serve as a way to challenge the cultural deficit views (see Valencia & Solórzano, 1997; Calabrese-Barton, et al., 2004,) that are present in some parent involvement literature.

### **The Transdisciplinary Perspective**

This tenet “challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analysis and insists on analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in both an historical and contemporary context” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p.473). CRT and LatCrit in education draw

from its knowledge base in sociology, history, ethnic studies, law, women studies, and other fields. This perspective is necessary to come to a more nuanced understanding of the impact of racism, classism, and sexism in education. An historical approach towards immigration in the US would show the preferential treatment that “white” immigrant have received in obtaining citizenship at the expense of people of color (Ngai, 2004). Additionally, such analysis would also illuminate the historical and contemporary racialization of Latino immigrants and the discriminatory treatment that they have been subjected to as a result of racial exclusionary policies.

### **Conclusion**

The three theoretical perspectives informing this study — political economy of migrant farmwork, Freirean social theory, and CRT and LatCrit --- account for macro and micro level analysis of the social, political, cultural, and economic processes that impact the educational engagement of migrant farmworkers and their children. Understanding the macro structures of the global political economy for example, highlight the vulnerable situation that most farmworker families find themselves in. The logic of the cultural practices of migrant farmworkers makes much more sense within this context.

Freirean social theory illuminates the intricacies of the structures of oppression and the impact on the consciousness of those within them. The conceptual strengths lie in highlighting the agency and source of strength that the oppressed possess when they engage in the struggle for their own liberation through the transformation of those same oppressive structures. Practically speaking, in what ways do farmworker parents participate in the educational processes of their children, perhaps positioning them to have a greater opportunity in the schooling process than they had themselves.

CRT and LatCrit are especially helpful in providing an analytical frame to improve our understanding of the experiences of Mexican migrant farmworkers, given how U.S. society has historically used race, ethnicity, national origin, language, class, and an ever changing conception of justice in the construction and implementation of laws that influence the quality of life and educational opportunities. In centering the life histories of these families in this study, I operate under the assumption that the cultural assets these families possess are legitimate and serve as a form of resilience. Finally, a CRT and LatCrit of migrant farmworkers attempts to account for the contradictions present in local, state, federal, and global policies that affect the quality of life and educational opportunities that these families have access to.

## **CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Rationale**

The previous chapter serves to validate the important role that parents play in the schooling process of their children and also reveals the limited focus within the literature on Mexican origin migrant farmworking families and how they make sense of their engagement practices. This study seeks to address gaps in the literature regarding how Mexican origin migrant farmworking families conception and practices of engagement in the education of their children are shaped by historical processes. As this study's primary concern is the meaning making of parents, it calls for qualitative research methods that examine “how” and “why” questions holistically, rather than questions that examine “what,” “how many,” and “under what conditions” that could best be served through quantitative measures (Merriam, 1988). My desire to study a small number of families in depth in one community lent itself to a case study approach (Yin, 2003).

This chapter provides a rationale for the use of life history case studies in this research study. I begin by providing an explanation for the design of the study, the selection of the research site and the study participants, the methods for the collection, management, and analysis of the data.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was an attempt to provide a rich and detailed account of the important role that migrant farmworking families’ play in the schooling process. A second purpose was to strengthen the theoretical understandings of the literature on family engagement,

specifically of immigrant farmworker families. Grounded in the funds of knowledge<sup>31</sup>, this study sought to challenge existing theories that frame families of color as culturally deficient and lacking the requisite social and cultural capital to effectively support their children's educational endeavors. Instead this study explored the multiple ways farmworkers rely on their funds of knowledge to navigate and resist the micro and macro forms of racism and economic exploitation. In centering the individual life histories of each parent along with the messages they send to their children about education, data emerged that speaks to particular understandings of how those histories mediate the way they engage and disengage in their children's education.

The following research question guides this study:

1. How do the life histories of Mexican (im)migrant farmworking families' lead to particular conceptions and practices of educational engagement?

To answer the complex processes embedded within the above research question, I utilized a qualitative methodological approach and case study design (Yin, 2003). This design allowed me to investigate the complex and rich life histories of farmworker parents navigating the educational system alongside their children. Unlike most studies on parental engagement, I specifically sought to examine their engagement practices within the larger social, political, and economic structures of farm labor in the California Central Valley. Through their life narratives, I sought to examine the way they supported their children's educational endeavors and to understand the messages they sent to their children about education. In this study, I articulated a

---

<sup>31</sup> The term funds of knowledge originates with the work of Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg (1992) which they originally defined as "as the central core concept to mean all rural and urban skills, experience, technical knowledge of habitat and survival, and the full inventory of social knowledge that households have developed for survival. In the field of education, Moll and Gonzalez (2002) have utilized the concept to argue that "people are competent and have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge (p. 625)." They have utilized home-ethnographies to research the family homes and have incorporated the funds into classroom use as they argue that students learn best when they start with something that they are already familiar with. This same concept has been utilized by other scholars and applied to parent engagement (Civil, 1998, 2001; Hammond, 2001) in adult science and mathematics classes.



definition of parent engagement beyond simplistic “school-centric” notions (Lawson, 2003) of parent involvement, to a broader holistic one that accounts for context, culture, and embedded power relations in normative definitions of parental involvement. I specifically sought to illuminate the ways and spaces that Mexican migrant families choose to engage and not engage in, and the reasons for their choices. In the next section, I elaborate on the different components of the research design that were implemented.

### **Research Setting**

The city of *Trabajo* is a small farmworking community of over 6000 residents (U.S. Census 2000), located somewhere in the San Joaquin Valley<sup>32</sup>. In the year 2010, the population of the city was 96.6% Latino, mainly of Mexican origin, and over 60% of families lived in poverty (about 5 times the state average). Furthermore, 45% of the populations were foreign born, and over 95% spoke a language other than English at home. The characteristics of the population were reflected in educational attainment as only 26% of the population over 25 years of age had completed high school, a total that is one-third of the national average. The geographical isolation of this rural community makes it increasingly difficult for the residents to have access to employment, education, health services and opportunities that are present in the nearest metropolitan area approximately 50 miles away.

The city of *Trabajo* has both an elementary and middle school, but to this date does not yet have a high school. The students from *Trabajo* are bussed almost 20 miles to the nearby

---

<sup>32</sup> For the first time in this country’s history a human development standard previously used to evaluate developing countries ranked the 435 congressional districts and the District of Columbia in the *Measure of America Report*. The human development standard incorporates health, education, and income indexes and found that the 20<sup>th</sup> congressional district was the lowest ranked in the nation. For instance, only 6.5% in a Congressional District (located in the Central Valley) adults have graduated from college. In the top-ranked New York City district, 62.6% of adult residents claim a college degree. Similarly, the median income for the same New York city District was \$51,139, yet only \$16,767 for the 20<sup>th</sup> district. These stark differences in quality of life issues result in a 4 ½ year difference in life expectancy for the average person from the two districts and are illustrative of the Central Valley Region.

community of Big Mountain, which houses the high school for the district. The most recent demographics available from the 2009-2010 school year<sup>33</sup> show that *Trabajo* Elementary School had a total of 799 students, 98% of them Latino, almost exclusively of Mexican origin. English Learners (EL's) are a large part (72 %) of the student population with almost all having Spanish (98 %) as their native language. A total of 98% of the student population qualify for a free or reduced lunch, reflecting the high poverty levels of the community and the poverty wages that their mainly farmworking parents earn. At the elementary school, all the teachers have met state certification requirement, while 45% of the teachers are Latino and 48% are white. These numbers reflected positive changes in a slight increase in Latino teachers at the school and a decrease of 11% in the number of teachers lacking proper certification to teach. At *Trabajo* Elementary all the core courses were taught by a highly qualified teacher as designated under the No Child Left Behind Act according to the school's accountability report for the 2009-2010 year once again reflecting improvement from past years. In terms of performance on state wide standardized tests, *Trabajo* Elementary has consistently received an API ranking of "1" for the last 12 years, the lowest score possible. *Trabajo* Elementary, at least by standardized measures is one of the lowest performing schools in the state.

Similarly, in the 2009-2010 school year *Trabajo* Middle School<sup>34</sup> had a population of 341 students, 97% of them are Latino, as almost all are of Mexican origin. The population of EL's in the middle school is higher than the elementary, as 85% of the student population still is classified as EL's, and 73 % of students qualify for a free or reduced lunch. The teaching force at *Trabajo* Middle School was 47% Latino and 47% white. Of these teachers, all were fully credentialed--a drastic improvement from two years before where only 68% had a valid teaching

---

<sup>33</sup> Demographic characteristics for *Trabajo* Elementary were retrieved from the Ed-Data website.

<sup>34</sup> Demographic characteristics for *Trabajo* Middle School were retrieved from the Ed-Data website.

credential in the state of California<sup>35</sup>. The difficulty for *Trabajo* Middle School administrators in finding “qualified” teachers in the past has forced them to hire a larger number of uncredentialed teachers, or teachers working outside of their area of specialization. In years past, the school has a high rate of new teachers with as many as 50% having less than 2 years teaching experience at the school, a figure almost 3 times the state average of 15%. To the school and administrations credit, that number seems to have lowered over the last couple of years. For schools wanting to develop strong relationships with parents, the inconsistency and revolving door in the teaching force creates potential difficulties in forming lasting bonds and meaningful relationships. A critical component in forming closer relationships with the community is a teaching force that understands, knows, respects, and is respected by community members (Valdes, 1996).

### **Sample Selection and Participants**

This study drew its sample from participants of 8 Mexican origin<sup>36</sup> migrant farmworking families. The principle criteria for family eligibility in the study consisted of Mexican origin families that were from two parent households, where at least one of them was a farmworker, and that they meet eligibility requirements receive services from the Migrant Education Program (MEP), and had at least 1 child attending either *Trabajo* Elementary or *Trabajo* Middle School. I developed such an approach because I wanted parents who had kids attending schools in the community. I recruited participants when I made a brief presentation at a migrant education program monthly meeting in the community of *Trabajo* of my personal background as a former Migrant Education student and as someone interested in researching farmworking families. My

---

<sup>35</sup> In fact, the School’s Accountability Report Card (SARC) for the 2007-2008 year shows that 17% of them had an emergency permit to teach, more than four times the state average. Thirty-Four percent of the courses taught at the school were by someone not considered a “highly qualified” teacher according to federal standards in NCLB (SARC, pg. 19).

<sup>36</sup> I define Mexican origin families as those where a minimum one of the parents has ancestral roots originating in Mexico.

presence in the event was well received, and I was asked several questions about my study by the parents. At the end of my presentation I notified parents that a colleague from the community of *Trabajo* and I had applied for and were awarded a grant of \$10,000 to establish a youth group in *Trabajo* and was recruiting students to participate. I asked parents to fill out a sign-up sheet with their contact information if they were interested in participating in the research study and/or if they had an interest in having their children participate in the youth group. I also asked for their assistance in referring parents who they knew would be interested in participating in the study and who might also have children who benefit from the participation in the youth program. Afterwards I proceeded to call parents who had signed up expressing interest in the study and then I asked for referrals of people who they knew would also be interested.

## **Design and Methods**

### **Qualitative Case Study Design**

There are several reasons why it made most sense to utilize a qualitative case study design for this dissertation study. The first is the use of “how” questions and seeking to provide an explanatory answer to links between parents’ conceptions and educational engagement and their life histories. Case studies are a preferred method when the researcher can exercise little control over events but also allows the researcher to investigate “a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p.13). Second, as Yin (2003) underscores, case studies are particularly useful when the “boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” A particular strength in this approach is that it allowed for greater examination of the contextual conditions that can have the potential to influence parent. For example, by spending time in the community and observing parents and their children not only did I get to know my study participants better, they also had an opportunity to get to know me. Understanding the

community context provided me with an added layer to understand the everyday happenings of *Trabajo* as well as seeing what type of resources youth had available in the community. For example, as part of the youth group that my colleague and I created, we were able to run weekly sessions with youth around issues that they found most pressing in the community. Their voices also provided an important perspective that helped shape the analysis and the types of questions that I asked in my data collection sessions with their parents. Yin also states that, case studies rely on “many more variables of interest than data points” resulting in its reliance on “multiple sources of evidence” and data convergence through “triangulation” (p. 15). In other words, this case study research design was strengthened from multiple sources including the interviews, life histories, and multiple observations with parents and children.

Lastly, the use of a case study design was well suited for my study as it is my belief that my findings and particular approach to this subject help strengthen the theoretical foundations on parental engagement research. The design and method of a holistic case study as Yin argues, “benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collections and analysis” (p. 14). In this way, the “analytic generalizations” from this study will allow me to formulate and refine prior theoretical models of parent engagement and create new ones.

### **Holistic Case Study Design**

I utilized a holistic case design in this study to examine familial perspectives (Yin, 2003). As previously stated, eight families living in the community of *Trabajo* were selected for a series of life history and in-depth interviews and observations. A common approach when seeking to understand the involvement and participation of parents in education, especially those in high poverty urban areas, has often been framed in deficit perspectives (Gutman & McLoyd,

2000) and largely understood by what “parents do” and how that fits in with the priorities of the school (Calabrese-Barton, et al., 2004). The literature on the engagement of farmworker families is limited (Lopez, 2001; Treviño, 2004) and this study strongly represented an ideal case to understand this phenomenon from the standpoint of the parents and how they understand and construct their own roles for educational involvement and engagement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). While each case contained one primary unit of analysis (the family), the cases also incorporated embedded subunits of analysis (the perspectives of children) turning it into an embedded case study. Whereas the main interest in researching families’ was in the engagement of the adults, an understanding of how their children interpreted or made sense of the messages they received from parents also formulated into how engagement was understood in the educational process.

### **Bounding the Case**

Each of the 8 families participating in the study formed a case. For each case, it will be necessary to demarcate clear boundaries within, so that I will be able to most efficiently gather and manage data collected and ensure that the research questions for the study are answered. I utilize a purposive sampling (Babbie, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990) and limited the investigation to the adults in the family: in this case consisting primarily of both parents, as they are the primary stake holders in the education of the children.

Because my inquiry consisted in examining the ways that these families engaged in the educational process of their children, it made sense to limit my initial data collection to the parents only (the children formed an incidental part of the study). Because I defined educational engagement broadly, I did not limit it to the experiences or things parents did to be involved at

the school only, but instead I defined engagement to also include the ways that parents thought about and understood the roles they played in supporting all aspects of their children's education.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection for the study consisted of two different phases. During the first phase, I primarily focused on exploring the families' life histories. In these interviews I began by asking each parent separately about their family's history growing up in Mexico. I proceeded to ask relevant questions about their migration to and their eventual settlement in the U.S. Parents also spoke specifically about their past and present labor experiences in the U.S. and Mexico. To finish the interview we spoke about the community context and the ways parents believed their life experiences shaped their everyday practices of educational engagement. Because of the sensitivity of some of the topics discussed, some parents cried and were very reflexive during the interview process. In this interview parents also shared specific factors about the community that enriched the context. In the second phase of the data collection I focused on exploring the parents' beliefs and understanding of their engagement practices. Here, what was of greatest significance to me was having parents share with me how they thought about educational engagement, and why they did what they did when it came down to supporting their children's education. I was specifically ensuring that parents defined participation in education on their own terms, by making sure that I was not purposefully defining "involvement" through their eyes of school officials. During this phase I also made sure to follow up on items we may not have finished in our first interview or questions that I had after reviewing the first interview.

Below I detail the specific methods I relied on during each phase of the data collection. In order to explore the complex life histories of these families during the **first phase** of data collection, I relied on oral history interviews. As a secondary source of data, I used field notes

from my visits to the families' homes for these interviews. I also recorded voice memos from the many times that I was present in the community of *Trabajo* working with the youth group. To examine the educational engagement strategies of these families during the **second phase**, my primary method of data collection consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews. A secondary method of data collection consisted of participant observations at home and at several school events that I attended. In the following section I provide in greater detail an overview of the data collection methods.

### **Oral History Interviews**

I conducted oral history interviews (Weber, 1989) as a data collection strategy because “[o]ral sources give us information about illiterate people or social groups whose written history is either missing or distorted” and represent a critical method in examining “the daily life and material culture of these people and groups” (Portelli, 1991, 47). One of the unique characteristics of oral histories is that they tell us less about particular events as such than about their meanings. This does not mean that oral histories are weak on ‘facts,’ instead “they always cast new light on unexplored areas of the daily life of the nonhegemonic classes” (Portelli, 1991, p. 50). Italian historiographer Alessandro Portelli states, “oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did” (p. 50). In this way then, the benefits of this particular method lie in being able to see the place in which the narrator finds her/himself as they tell their own story, how they make meaning of past events and now, which provides a window for them to exercise their own agency and critically reflect upon it.

While some have argued that oral histories may lack in credibility in comparison to other types of sources Portelli (1981) reminds us:



the credibility of oral sources is a *different* credibility... the importance of oral testimony may often lie not in its adherence to facts but rather in its divergence from them, where imagination, symbolism, desire break in. Therefore there are no 'false' oral sources. Once we have checked their factual credibility with all the established criteria of historical philological criticism that apply to every document, the diversity of oral history consists in the fact that 'untrue' statements are still psychologically 'true,' and that these previous 'errors' sometimes reveal more than factually accurate accounts" (p. 100).

In other words, the strengths of oral histories lie in the way that the narrators telling their stories come to understand what they experienced, how they experienced it, and the meanings they now attribute to what they experienced. In conducting life history interviews with my participants I was particularly effective in getting at my participants' understandings of their roles and how they came to understand their engagement relative to their own life experiences.

Upon receiving consent from my participants, I communicated with those families that agreed to participate and began a series of detailed life history interviews with each parent individually. These life history interviews took place in a variety of places including the households of my participants, at the school, or at a public location like a park or other convenient setting for them. I purposefully interviewed fathers and mothers individually to obtain their own personal stories as a concern existed that one of the participants may dominate or negatively influence the interview if interviewed together. I began the life history interviews by asking each parent about their educational, migratory, and labor histories. I inquired about their place of birth and hometown, specifically about their experiences in school and the amount of formal schooling they were able to access. For example, what was the highest grade level they were able to attain? Did they complete school, and if not, what were the reasons for leaving school? What were the goals or dreams that they wanted to achieve through their formal schooling? Were the parents currently enrolled or did they have any plans to attend adult school?

How did their own education shape the way that they think about their children's education? And what did they think was their role and the school's role in the education of their children?

I then proceeded to inquire about their migratory histories, rightfully believing that this would be an important component to investigate more fully. How old were they when they migrated to the United States and why? What led them to their eventual migration to the U.S.? What were some of the lessons learned from having to migrate? Why did they come to the community of *Trabajo*? Finally, I inquired about their labor histories and the role that it played in shaping how they think about their own children's education (Lopez, 2001). How many hours did they work and what impact if any, does it have on the ways they can engage? I also inquired in families who had only one adult working at least during part of the year, and how they dealt with educational issues in the household?

Their responses to these questions and more were important as they provided a foundation of critical prior experiences to understand how they have shaped their current thinking around educational engagement. I audio recorded every interview with an Olympus DS-30 Digital Voice Recorder and transcribed the interview promptly using F4 Transcribing Software that synced digital audio with the transcription. This allowed me with great facility to return to different areas of the transcription to check it for accuracy or to capture nuances in the voice or the tense of the respondents. Interviews were audio recorded in Spanish or English, depending on the language participants feel more comfortable utilizing. All but one of the interviews was conducted in Spanish. The range in duration for the life history interview was from 1.5 hours to 3 hours.

## **In Depth Semi-Structured Interviews**

In addition to conducting oral history interviews, I also conducted in depth semi-structured follow up interviews with each parent participant. After a preliminary analysis of the data collected from the oral history interviews I reviewed and revised my interview protocol accordingly. In a similar way as the oral history interviews, these interviews lasted usually between an hour and 15 minutes to 2 hours. As with the prior interviews, they were conducted individually with each parent and sought to specifically examine their own understandings of their educational engagement practices. Through this process, I explored the different ways that these parents engaged in their child's education. In this particular interview I sought to understand when, where, and why, and in what contexts they choose to engage or not engage. The theoretical frameworks informing this study centered the parents' lived experience and perspectives and situates their engagement in a much broader sense than "traditional" school centered forms of involvement. Through my research design I seek to give parents a voice to exclaim their own standpoint.

These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in a similar fashion to the oral history interviews. At the conclusion of the transcriptions, I followed up with parents if there were any areas that needed further clarification. It is worth emphasizing that these semi-structured interviews constituted an important piece of the overall data collection for this study.

## **Secondary Methods of Data Collection**

In addition to the interviews and histories collected from parents, I also conducted participant observation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) and took detailed field notes of social interactions that took place when I visited their homes and at other places that I conducted interviews. In my visit to participants' homes I took notice of the interactions and conversations

that parents had with each other as well as with their children, especially those pertaining to education. During my time in the field, I attended events some of these families participated in such as back to school night and parent teacher conferences, as well as events organized by migrant education program including the mini-conferences and leadership retreats.

I also attempted to document the different types of social interactions that parents have with children. Overall, as a way to “gain better assessment of the validity and generality” of the analyses of the data I utilized the parent and child observations to triangulate with data collected through interviews (Maxwell, 1996).

### **Data Analysis**

During the data collection process, I developed and utilized a consistent system to store electronic copies of my data. Additionally, backup copies of the interviews and oral histories collected from participants were recorded and stored onto a compact disc. I imported my data into qualitative computer software program, Atlas Ti to facilitate the coding and analyses. The use of such qualitative software will facilitate the process for others to trace each step of the data collection process and analyses that I partake in.

Although I conducted the majority of the analysis after the data collection process was finished, “some analysis must take place during data collection” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 148). This type of preliminary analysis allowed me to focus on the data that was most significant and pertinent to my study. I also wrote theoretical memos prior to and during the process of data analysis, as these memos not only helped capture my analytic thinking about data, but also facilitated thinking and stimulate analytic insights (Maxwell, 1996). The writing of these memos served the purpose of being reflexive of my role as a researcher and challenged me to reflect on my methods, theory, and purposes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Maxwell 1996).

To proceed with my data analysis, like most qualitative research, I relied on an inductive approach that produced codes, hypothesis, and analysis that were grounded in the data collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Maxwell (1996) posits that the goal of coding is to “‘fracture’ the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts” (p. 79). I began by focusing on powerful quotes and stories in the in-depth interviews, writing theoretical memos, and on developing codes. I also analyzed the available data in a way that allowed me to examine “broader themes and issues” that emerged in the study. A key step in the analysis process was to ensure that my memos and codes remained linked through cross-referencing so as to maintain the original context in which they developed (Maxwell, 1996).

I also relied on *contextualizing strategies* for the analysis of the life history interview data (Maxwell, 1996). Rather than “fracturing” the “initial text into discrete elements” as codes do, contextualizing analysis attempts to understand the data in context. This type of strategy proved invaluable while analyzing the interview data collected, especially data lending to narrative analysis that was present in the oral history interviews. The strengths of contextualizing lie when we “look for relationships that connect statements and events with a context into a coherent whole (p. 79). Ideally, I would be able to utilize both categorizing and contextualizing strategies to provide a well rounded account of the families that I studied.

Finally, I also utilized data displays consisting of matrices and tables, and conceptual maps as an additional analytic strategy (Maxwell, 1996). The strengths of displays lie in the systematic presentation of data in a visual format allowing the researcher to draw valid conclusions and take the correct course of action (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This dissertation employed a holistic case approach that benefitted from the use of matrices and tables to facilitate

cross case analysis. Event listing matrices were exceptionally useful with family life histories as it allowed me to arrange a series of concrete and important events by chronological time periods and dividing them into categories in a manner that would elucidate the role that key moments and events have impacted the way they engage in and with schools. Overall, the analytics strategies I used in examining this data provided a systematic manner of answering my research questions.

## CHAPTER 5: SETTING THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

In examining the literature on parental engagement, especially of immigrant families, a critical factor often absent in research studies on the topic is the socio-historical context of the immigrant sending and receiving communities. As I previously stated in chapter two, it is essential for studies on (im)migrant parent engagement studies to provide a rich and detailed historical context to help capture the nuances often present within diverse populations and communities. The community of *Trabajo* is one such community where parental engagement practices are largely determined (as I show in the following chapters) by parents' employment, immigration status, and ideologies and beliefs about education shaped over a period time by the immigrant experience.

In this chapter, I provide a background overview of the families that participated in the study and share their experiences and perceptions about living in the community. I first begin with an introduction of each family, focusing on key characteristics. I then provide general information about the community from my observations and the first hand experiences of participants living in the community. Finally, I also draw from available print media, archival, and government data to provide a historical context highlighting key events that have shaped the schooling experiences of students and parents attending the BM-T School district. Through detailed descriptions of each family, the community of *Trabajo*, and the schools, it is my hope that the reader will gain a more nuanced understanding of the educational experience of families within the community of *Trabajo*.

## Overview of Families

The eight families included in this study all lived in and had children attending schools in the community of *Trabajo*. The table below provides additional demographic information about the families participating in the study.

**Figure 1: Familial Demographic Information**

Name	State of Origin	Highest Level Education Mexico/US	US Arrival	Immigration Status	Occupation
Ricardo Zamudia,	Jalisco	9 <sup>th</sup> /	1990	Undocumented	Farmworker/ Mechanic
Amanda Zamudia	Jalisco	9 <sup>th</sup> /GED	1993	Undocumented	Farmworker/ Housecleaner
Valente Mendoza	Nayarit	10 <sup>th</sup> /	1989	Undocumented	Farmworker
Isabel Mendoza	Nayarit	9 <sup>th</sup> /	1997	Undocumented	Farmworker
Saul Gonzalez	Guanajuato	9 <sup>th</sup> /GED	1978	Documented	Farmworker
Felicia Gonzalez	Guanajuato	12 <sup>th</sup> /GED	1985	Documented	Daycare Worker
Abel Martinez	Nayarit	5 <sup>th</sup> /12 <sup>th</sup>	1980	Undocumented	Farmworker
Rosa Martinez	Jalisco	9 <sup>th</sup> /12 <sup>th</sup>	1993	Documented	Housewife
Miguel Sanchez	Oaxaca	No School	1981	Documented	Farmworker
Maria Sanchez	Oaxaca	9 <sup>th</sup>	2003	Undocumented	Farmworker
Alvarez, Diego	Oaxaca	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1994	Undocumented	Truck Driver/Farmworker
Alvarez, Irma	Oaxaca	10 <sup>th</sup>	2000	Undocumented	Housewife/ Farmworker
Juan Perez	Veracruz	11 <sup>th</sup>	2000	Undocumented	Farmworker/ Welder
Guadalupe Perez	Veracruz	6 <sup>th</sup>	2002	Undocumented	Farmworker
Francisco Gutierrez	Zacatecas	6 <sup>th</sup>	1985	Documented	Farmworker
Teresa Gutierrez	Zacatecas	6 <sup>th</sup>	1994	Documented	Farmworker



As chart above shows, there are many similarities amongst the participants in the study. Most evident is the relatively low educational attainment levels of each parent. Most parents did not study beyond the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in Mexico due to a variety of factors; explored in depth in the following chapter. Other parents in the U.S., when offered the opportunity, enrolled in adult night school taking English language courses hoping to learn to speak the language. Three parents even enrolled in adult school earning their graduate equivalency degree (GED).<sup>37</sup> Almost all the parents in the study entered the labor force before they became teenagers, an important factor that greatly influenced their school-to-work trajectory. Also, the majority of parents first migrated and settled in the U.S. in the 1990's or after. As a result, most missed a critical opportunity to obtain legal residency during the Simpson-Rodino Act (amnesty program) of 1986, the last time specialized legislation targeting farmworkers was passed during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Given the selection criteria for this study, almost all of the parents work in the agriculture industry, with the exception of three female parents who are currently homemakers.

However, there were also significant differences present between these families including their current immigration status, region in Mexico where they were from, and family size, and the current grade level of the children. These characteristics also point to the within diversity and variability also reflected in the narrative experiences of these families. For example, most of the families originally came from the traditional agricultural sending states in central Mexico, though two families were from the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. All of the families had children in the elementary or middle school in *Trabajo*, and a few had children at the high school

---

<sup>37</sup> A graduate equivalency degree is considered a high school diploma in the United States. Two of the three parents with GED's have expressed interest in enrolling in college courses in hopes of one day obtaining a four year university degree.

in Big Mountain as well. In this next section, I provide a brief description of each of the families, and highlight some of the key characteristics in each of them.

## **The Families**

### **The Mendoza Family**

*I did want to continue going to school. But even though almost all of us worked already, the money that we made still was not enough so that they could buy books, uniforms, and everything else we needed. So I didn't continue in school because of that.*

--Isabel Mendoza

Isabel along with Valente Mendoza, and Mayra their daughter, are originally from a small town outside of Tepic in the Mexican State of Nayarit. Isabel comes from a family of farmworkers who mainly worked harvesting tobacco and beans, the most popular crops grown in her home state. Isabel is from a large family and has 3 brothers and 3 sisters. She proudly stated that her oldest brother was the only one of her siblings that had an opportunity to study at the university level, a pathway principally funded through very competitive state sponsored scholarships. As children according to Isabel, the poverty faced by her and her siblings forced them to enter the labor force working full time by the time they had completed the sixth grade, usually by twelve years of age. Such early exposure to hard labor, coupled with limited educational access in agricultural communities led her to be pushed out of school.

Not to be deterred because she was working full time at 12 years of age, Isabel enrolled in the open-enrollment *secundaria*(7 to 9<sup>th</sup> grade) school in the afternoons and was able to graduate having completed the 9th grade. Although Isabel stated she felt she could have gone further had she only “willed herself,” the same financial and labor constraints that afflicted and limited her siblings would most likely have made her continued progress into the *preparatoria* an

improbability. The culmination of her formal education was not a result of fulfilled expectations, but of barriers she encountered.

Valente Mendoza grew up in the same community as his wife in the state of Nayarit. In 1989 at the time of Valente's departure from his hometown he describes the municipality having over 20,000 people, a couple of libraries and theatres, 3 or 4 pharmacies, a presidential municipality. It rained for 6 months out of the season and the area was well known for its agricultural products like mangoes, guayabas (guavas), coconuts, and tobacco. A key benefit of living in a tropical area and the heavy raining season was the ability to grow corn and not have to pay someone to irrigate it.

Valente describes his family as close knit consisting of 5 siblings (4 brothers and 1 sister). He tells of his parents' tumultuous relationship who were married for more than 20 years until his mother separated from his father after tiring over her husband's years of alcoholism. They have been separated now for more than 15 years and his mother has since moved to the neighboring state of Sonora. In the past Valente arranged for his mother to visit at least once year by obtaining a Visa, and during good times even once every four months. Most recently it has become increasingly difficult for her to come visit as Valente and his wife have fallen under increasing financial stress and his mother has become ill.

Valente's father, a farmworker, has always been a strong figure in his life, whom he describes as being authoritarian and self-sufficient who at one time "worked himself up from the bottom" to become successful cattleman only to squander his good fortune through mismanagement. It has been more than 16 years since Valente last saw his father since he came to the United States and has not been able to return to Mexico to see him because of his

immigration status. He feels additional emotional pressure for having to provide financial support for his extended family in Mexico, especially for his father who is now severely ill, even as his own family continues to struggle in the United States.

Valente mentioned that his father always supported his children in their scholarly pursuits. His oldest brother became a structural engineer, two other brothers became teachers, and his younger sister earned a vocational degree in computer data entry. Valente on the other hand, only completed his first year of the *preparatoria* (10<sup>th</sup> grade) and then attempted a variety of different vocational programs, but did not complete any. To this day he regrets not having been a more serious student. Ironically, he is able to provide the most financial support for his family in Mexico, even when his brothers have obtained higher education degrees.

The Mendoza's have lived in *Trabajo* for 16 years. Valente is currently a foreman for a local ranch that he's been working at for several years. His main responsibilities include worker recruitment and availability to complete the work his boss needs. Isabel and Valente are both currently undocumented in the U.S, and that stat has dramatically limited the opportunities to provide for their family, especially for Valente whose upward mobility in the agricultural industry has been limited because he is undocumented.

The primary concern for the Mendoza's is finding how to ensure their daughter Mayra will be able to pursue a college degree in less than a year when she graduates from high school. Mayra is a strong student but has grown increasingly frustrated with the prospects of how her family will be able to finance her education due to her ineligibility or most forms of financial aid because of her immigration status. Mayra's parents are fearful that she will get discouraged and lose interest in her schooling. They encourage Mayra by telling her that they will find a way to

be able to help her. They are navigating a terrain that is unfamiliar to them and many families like them.

### **The Zamudia Family**

My father would say, that he would provide us with as much schooling as he was able to...He would say that his inheritance was that of school. That we would have no other inheritance than what we wanted to study in school...His phobia was that we would not go to school. He would say 'I don't want dimwits, for dimwits you have me and your mother' ---Amanda Zamudia

Amanda Zamudia recounts in the above quote the frequent saying that her father, a farmworker and former bracero, would share with them when they were of school age living in Mexico. When Amanda was a child, her father would tell her stories of his own youth and having to milk “who knows how many” cows before he was allowed to finally attend school for the day. Because he was forced to prioritize work over school as a child, Amanda’s father told his children that he most feared their life chances would be similarly limited through early labor force participation and not maximize the already limited opportunities available for school. Though their father had high aspirations for Amanda and her 6 siblings, none were able to go past the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, or *la secundaria*, as it is commonly known in Mexico.

Amanda firmly believes that the economic hardships they experienced forced them all to be pushed out and abandon their hopes of continuing with their education. At the time her career aspiration was to become an early childhood educator. However, like the rest of her siblings, her labor force participation as a child derailed any chance she had to pursue a higher education. When she was in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, her father suffered an accident leading to a broken leg. As the sole income provider and unable to work, her father urged her to remain enrolled in school, but she saw no choice but to drop out to help her family deal with the accumulating costs of her father’s unemployment.

Ricardo Zamudia is from a small community an hour and fifteen minutes outside of the city of Guadalajara. Raised in a farmworker family, he and his siblings were greatly afflicted by the passing of their father when he was only 3 years old. From that point forward, his mother singlehandedly raised him and his 8 siblings. At a young age, Mr. Zamudia and all his siblings were forced to work to supplement the family income and fill the void left with the death of their father. Ricardo and his siblings would work early in the mornings and would attend the only school in town, the local elementary during afternoon hours. Ricardo began working at 7 years of age planting corn, selling milk, and delivering food to others, and has worked continuously since. During the growing season when planting was the heaviest, his mother would remove them from school, forcing them to make prior arrangements to take exams. While his siblings had the desire to go beyond the *primaria*, the costs associated with paying for the bus ride, buying books, and taking their own lunch were prohibitive. From his small hometown, only those whose parents had money continued on to the *secundaria* and beyond, for everyone else formal schooling typically ended at the *primaria*.

Determined to go beyond others from his community, Ricardo realized that his only choice to continue his schooling was to move to the neighboring state of Colima with relatives and attend the *secundaria* there. During that time, he continued to work full time and simultaneously go to school, excelling in his academics averaging 9's<sup>38</sup>, or the equivalent of a 3.5 GPA in his classes. His goal upon graduation was to continue on to the *preparatoria*, and then to the university aspiring to become a veterinarian or an educator, but he was no longer able to afford going to school due to the expenses associated with room and board, tuition, and transportation. At the time Mr. Zamudia contacted his brothers who had already migrated to the

---

<sup>38</sup> In Mexico the grading system is based on a 1-10 scale. The grading scale is roughly equivalent to 6=D, 7=C, 8=B, 9 & 10= A.

US and had been working hoping they could help with costs, but was unfortunately told they could not since they now had their own families to support. Ricardo was left with no choice but to begin working and leave school, a process that would bring him to the U.S. and the community of *Trabajo* in 1990.

The Zamudia's have 3 U.S. born daughters ages 16, 13, and 10. The oldest two daughters attend high school and the youngest one is now in middle school. The Zamudia's are both deeply engaged in the education of her children and are very hopeful that the oldest daughter will soon attend a university like UCLA and blaze a path for the two youngest siblings to follow. Ricardo and Amanda's life experiences around having had limited educational access have been instrumental in informing and shaping their interactions with their children around education. The additional responsibilities of having to work to help and support family and expenses associated with education in their home country impeded their educational progress. They remain hopeful their children will maximize the opportunities they are being provided with and value the sacrifices their parents are making. The biggest concern for the Zamudia's is with their 10 year old who has struggled in school due to memory retention and attention span issues. Amanda in particular has worked with the school trying to get her daughter the proper assistance she needs, but to date most of her attempts to seek help have been unsuccessful, as the school has been slow to react.

### **The Gonzalez Family**

So then I told him, 'So you'll leave but I will no longer stay here alone. Or we all live over there or we all live here. But we are not going to be like this (separated). I don't like this lifestyle for our children.' I told him, 'If I didn't have my parents as a child, I don't want my kids to be without their father for such a long time. You are not going to see them grow up...In order to guide our children it's two of us, it is not just one. So you decide either the two of us over there (U.S.) or the two of us here (Mexico).' –Felicia Gonzalez

Felicia Gonzales was born and raised in the agricultural based city of Silao, in the Mexican state of Guanajuato. She recounted how they would live in the city but made a comfortable living off of a small ranch with livestock and crops they harvested that they worked in the countryside. Early on in life however, she encountered tragedy when her mother and father both passed away by the time that she was 6 years old. Felicia and her siblings were taken in and raised by her three aunts who stepped in and served as their caretakers. At the time, she iterated that her family had been doing quite well, soon after however, both her grandfather and grandmother passed away also. After the passing of her grandfather, who at the time had been the main “pillar” of all the operations within the ranch, the family’s economic stability collapsed. Though these difficult losses took their toll on her family, she noted however, that her three aunts worked doing what they could to provide Felicia and her siblings with the necessary support to pursue an education. For Felicia, the tragic loss of family members early on shaped her desire to have her family together as much as possible.

Of Felicia’s 5 siblings, she was the one that went the furthest in her education and completed technical certification in business administration-accounting (roughly equivalent to an Associated of Arts degree in the U.S.). The rest of her siblings either began working after *la primaria* (6<sup>th</sup> grade) or opted for specialized training in an *academia* (similar to a career training program) that would prepare them to work as a secretary or similar entry level position. Her educational aspirations then were to become a teacher, but it was not to be since she struggled passing her chemistry class in the *secundaria*, and was not awarded a diploma for it. Having completed 3 years of schooling for her career in accounting, she was able to secure employment for a national bank in Silao. She would work there for a little more than a year, marry her husband, quit her job, soon after at his suggestion accompany him to the United States.



Saul Gonzales also was raised in and around the city of Silao by a farmworker family. He is the youngest of 7 siblings, raised mostly by their mother as Saul's father would come for long stretches of time to the U.S. to work as a farmworker in California. He would send money to his wife to help support his family and in combination with his mother's frugality allowed Saul's siblings to pursue an education passed what was customary---*la secundaria*. His father's absence although unfortunate, also came with the added benefit of U.S. legal residency as he applied for and obtained his green card in 1972, and by 1978 had legalized the rest of his family. This move alone would advantage Saul and his family in the future to derive the benefits that come with legalization.

His oldest brother attended and graduated from the Universidad de Guadalajara having earned a bachelor's in mechanical engineering. His oldest sister and another brother only went as far as completing *la secundaria*, she stayed in Mexico and married and he came to the U.S. to work as a farmworker and is presently a foreman for a large company. Another sister studied to become a secretary and his two younger brothers both completed university degrees, one in veterinary medicine and the other as an architectural engineer. The educational success that some of his siblings enjoyed didn't come around to him.

Saul unlike his brothers only completed up to *la secundaria*, and just barely. When speaking of his educational experiences he attributes his limited success to the company of peers he had at the time. When he entered *la secundaria* he failed math one year, then physics, and in his third year failing chemistry—though he still barely passed the classes and obtained his diploma. Saul's father tried to convince him to remain in school, but Saul refused. Instead, Saul began working for a local bus company for several months until he was laid off. After being laid off, he returned to school and enrolled in *la preparatoria* for a little more than half-a year when

he decided to leave school after it became extremely difficult and exhausting to work during the day and attend school at night. At this time Saul came with his family to the U.S. and began to work in a ranch with his father in Northern California.

Saul soon after returned to Mexico and Silao to marry Felicia who had been his girlfriend for several years. Two months after their marriage they came to live in Northern California with Saul's parents, Felicia having crossed the border then with a tourist visa. Saul worked in the ranch and over the next year they would give birth to their first child, Carlos, who unfortunately was born with congenital birth defect in his foot. Doctors advised the Gonzales family that they would not be able to correct the defect until he was 12 years of age. Feeling desperate and helpless in not being able to get treatment for their child they returned to Mexico with the belief that their concerns would be better addressed there. They would not return again as a family for over 10 years, until they began to struggle economically. By the time they returned, this time to the community of Trabajo, they had a 10 year old son and a 6 year old daughter, Rebeca. Carlos would eventually receive corrective treatment for his birth defect. Saul became a US citizen in 2000 and was able to soon after obtain legalization for the rest of his family.

The Gonzales's now have three children. Carlos, the oldest is 25 years of age and is a university graduate with a degree in Electrical Engineering. Rebeca, the middle child is 20 years of age, majoring in marine biology and aspires to become a therapist for children with special needs. Joaquin, the youngest is 10 years of age and is a fifth grader at the local elementary school. Saul and Felicia once settled in the US both went back to school and earned GED's. While Saul has continued to work in the fields mainly as a tractor driver, Felicia now works for a local non-profit taking care of young children. To this day she aspires to take classes at the university and earn her bachelor's degree and fulfill her goal of becoming a teacher. While all

seems well for the Gonzales's at one time they faced great uncertainty as Felicia and her middle child Elizabeth were at one point undocumented which greatly impacted their life chances in the United States.

### **The Martinez Family**

Abel and Rosa Martinez have been married for 14 years. Abel is from the western coast in the state of Nayarit. As a young child he grew up traveling back and forth between the US and Mexico living with several family members. Though undocumented, back then when he was growing up he never encountered any issues crossing across the border, especially because of his excellent command of the English language having attended mainly schools in the US and even obtaining his high school diploma. He did not continue on to college because he did not believe he was eligible due to his undocumented status and had lost motivation to do well in his academics as a result.

Abel's wife Rosa grew up in the state of Jalisco for the first 13 years of her life having completed thesecondaria in there. Though she did not want to come to the U.S. at the time, she was brought over by her parents when their father (a former Bracero) was able to obtain legal residence for his entire family in 1993. When she arrived in the US she was placed in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at a high school in a community with similar demographics nearby that of *Trabajo* and recalls experiencing initial difficulties as other students teased and harassed her for not speaking English. Despite these initial difficulties Rosa quickly began standing out due to the strong educational background that she had acquired in her schooling in Mexico. She would graduate four years later with honors from her high school, though without a strong command of the English language.

Abel and Rosa would marry 1 year later and he gained employment working for the same farming company that had employed several of his brothers. He has worked for that company now for 17 years. Though the company he is employed in provides him with housing and a work truck to drive, he is on call 24 hours a day and is in heavy demand. Additionally Rosa worries about Abel because he handles dangerous pesticides at work on a regular basis and has concerns those chemicals will cause him or their children harm through exposure over an extended period of time.

The Martinez's have two elementary school aged children and a one year old daughter. Rosa does not currently work and instead stays home to care for their young daughter and as a result has an opportunity to be very active at the elementary school where her two young children attend. She is well known by the school staff and has a strong presence in her children's classes that she is even called teacher by the other students. They are very hopeful that in providing as much support as they can to their three children will result in them going to a university and obtaining a degree.

### **The Sanchez Family**

Miguel and Maria Sanchez are both immigrants from the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Miguel first came as a young man in 1981 to the community of *Trabajo* and has seen it change over that time. He tells of the struggles that his family endured in Mexico and in not having had an opportunity to go to school as a child even though he badly wanted to go. He has worked in almost every job in agriculture including as an irrigator, picker, and tractor driver, to name a few. He was able to adjust his status during the time of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 like many of his countrymen and other community members from *Trabajo* who were in the

community at the time. He has since filed an application that is currently in progress for his wife Maria and son to become legal U.S. residents.

Maria like her husband Miguel, is originally from the state of Oaxaca but left at a young age to live with his grandparents in Mexico City because her parents were experiencing great difficulties supporting her and her siblings. A benefit for Maria was that unlike her siblings in Oaxaca, she had increased educational access in Mexico City and was able to complete school and finish the *secundaria*. Though she had aspirations to continue with school onto the university, she knew her grandparents would not be able to assist her with her expenses and instead began working in a *Maquiladora* for several years. After saving some money, she was able to return to Oaxaca and open a small *abarrotes*<sup>39</sup> store that she ran successfully until she came to the United States and to the community of *Trabajo* when she married her husband Miguel. She is currently a seasonal farmworker and works most of the year when she can find employment.

The Sanchez's have two children, the oldest attends the sixth grade at the middle school and the youngest attends kindergarten at the local elementary school. Maria has indicated to me that she is worried that her son has been bullied by other kids at school, as he is made fun of because his parents are indigenous and from Oaxaca. Her son (who is undocumented like Maria) has also expressed concern after seeing reports on television of anti-immigrant legislation in the neighboring state of Arizona. Maria has reassured her son that they both will be ok, but still worries that this will negatively impact his self image as an indigenous undocumented Mexican student.

---

<sup>39</sup> *Tiendas de abarrotes* are the small corner store markets that Mexicans open when starting a business.

The Sanchez's are very attentive to their children's progress in school and encourage them to do well, though they have many questions about the affordability of a university education for their children. They have high aspirations for both of their children though they worry that their son might have difficulties if his immigration status isn't adjusted by the time it is time to go to college or a university.

### **The Alvarez Family**

Diego and Irma are also both from the state of Oaxaca. Diego has lived in the community of *Trabajo* since 1994 when he first came to the U.S. with his family. Before then, he remembers attending the local elementary school in the small town of Ayoquezco and struggling trying to grasp the material. In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade he remembers being in school and not being able to retain any of the information that he was being taught and began developing a negative academic self-identity. He now attributes those learning difficulties to a learning disability that went undiagnosed. He began telling his parents that he no longer wanted to attend school—before long, his dad agreed and took him to work in the fields with him. Besides a brief interruption when he was initially enrolled in school upon his arrival in the U.S. he has continued to work. He currently works for a large meat producing agricultural company, the largest in the west coast, driving trucks and sometimes picks fruits and vegetables when the ranch he works at slows down during the winter months. He feels immense financial pressure as the only source of income in the family, but luckily with the help of his documented parents who cosigned on the property, he and his wife were able to buy a home.

Irma is from the small agricultural community in Ayoquezco Oaxaca and lived there until the year 2000 when she married and decided to follow her husband Diego to the U.S. In Oaxaca she attended school until the 10<sup>th</sup> grade when she noticed her parents could no longer afford to

give her money for the bus pass and food to a neighboring community where she was studying at a private preparatory school. She dropped out of school and instead began taking a series of short courses to learn arts and crafts to sell at the local market place. She was disappointed and sad that she was not able to continue with her studies, at that time she aspired to become a kindergarten teacher. Since living in *Trabajo*, she initially began working in the fields doing hard labor. She has since stopped working when her husband suggested that after the birth of their second child, they would be better off sacrificing one income and having her care for their children instead of paying for a babysitter that “who knows how they would care for our children”.

They have three children and the two oldest are in the elementary school. Their oldest child has also struggled in school and Diego in particular is worried that his daughter, like him, may have a learning disability. He suspects that part of the reason he struggled in school was that he most likely had a learning disability himself that went undiagnosed from his childhood for which he was never tested for. In his short stint in high school he was able to learn how to read and write basic words, though he says that he has a hard time putting letters together.

### **The Perez Family**

Juan grew up in the Mexican state of Veracruz and aspired at one point to become an engineer. By the time he was 12 he had left northward to the state of Tamaulipas to work. He joined the Mexican Marines at 16 by lying about his age and presenting a fake identification showing that he was the required 18 years of age. He enrolled in school during that time with the assistance of his brother who had a high paying job working for Petroleos Mexicanos (PEMEX). He would only go as far as tenth grade until his brother married and could no longer afford to support his schooling. He came to the US as an undocumented immigrant in 2000 and began

working in the fields. After seeing how hard it was, he was able to use some of the skills he learned in Mexico welding and has since moved over to a ranch and now works repairing and welding machinery and equipment that breaks down.

Guadalupe is also from the state of Veracruz. She remembers growing up with a hard working mother who was widowed at a young age and left to raise her seven kids. She was only able to attend school until the sixth grade and then had to leave because she had to help take care of her siblings. Now, she works as a farmworker around the community of *Trabajo*.

Juan and Guadalupe have three children. They have had difficulty with their oldest child who is now in high school to take her academics seriously. They voiced their frustration as she has struggled to perform well academically, and those concerns were amplified given that she is an undocumented student. Hoping to motivate her to take her studies more seriously, Guadalupe recently took her to work in the fields with her. By midday of working in the fields, Guadalupe shared that her daughter was crying and wanted to go home as that kind of work was very difficult and did not want to do it. After that experience Guadalupe reminds her daughter about her academics and tells her that she will take her again if she notices a drop in her grades.

### **Setting the Context for the San Joaquin Valley and the Community of *Trabajo***

The community of *Trabajos* has historically been a labor community. Founded in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the community began as a part of an interstate system serving a railroad company. Overtime major crop production was developed starting with cotton in the 1940's, transforming it into one of the leading producers in the country. The community of *Trabajo* would incorporate and become a city a few years later. With the onset of the Bracero program starting in the 1940's and 50's hired farm labor hands were brought in significant numbers to Central California and in



the process created and fortified labor networks especially from the central Mexican states of Michoacan, Zacatecas, Jalisco and Guanajuato. As I mentioned in chapter 3, in this region battles between large growers and the UFW would ensue leading to a rise in farmworker benefits and wages during the period of the middle 1970's to the early 1980's. As some scholars have noted, rural communities in Central California starting in the 1970's to the present have gone through drastic demographic changes transforming from largely non-white to largely Latino (Allensworth & Rochin, 1998; Rochin & Lopez, 1995), and mainly Mexican. Communities in the San Joaquin Valley have indeed shown that even in places like *Trabajo* the White populations has been in steady decline for at least the last 30 years.

In and around *Trabajo* the principal agricultural crop production includes lettuce, onion, tomato, cabbage, cauliflower, garlic, broccoli and melons. Labor networks developed since the time of the Bracero program in the 1940's and 50's have led to the majority of the current residents of the community being from the previously mentioned regions of Mexico. Only in the last 25 years has there been a general shift in the population increase with immigrants from southern Mexican states of Oaxaca and Chiapas, as well from Central America, especially Guatemala making up the bulk of new additions.

In recent years growers in the region, and in the community of *Trabajo* claimed to have struggled due to a three year drought, likely leading to some small job losses in the region (Michaels, 2009). Making matters more complex, during the time of the drought, a federal judge reduced the water flow out of the San Joaquin Delta a major source of water for farmers and ruled in favor of environmentalist who had sued the government for the endangerment of the Delta Smelt fish (Michaels, 2009). However, as a show of power and influence in the area, the agricultural industry was able to generate intense national media attention for the supposed

devastating blow that the water shortages were sure to cause Valley farmers, but especially farmworkers. Industry funded groups organized campaigns that included several marches to Sacramento to highlight what they claimed were attacks on farmers and specifically the high unemployment rates (some in excess of 35%) of racially segregated farmworking communities in the area. At the time, the region received attention from throughout the nation as some were predicting that shortage in water would be responsible for causing many farmers to lose or not grow their crops for that year. Both local and national media focused on the long lines at community food banks in the county and attempted to frame the issue as one of small farmers whose primary interest was looking out for the well being of the farmworkers

The unemployment numbers of those communities were indeed shocking, however, placing those numbers in a historical context show that under closer scrutiny unemployment rates for those San Joaquin Valley communities were not very different than in years prior. Instead, as economists from the region have pointed out, perhaps some of the job losses evident in the Valley are more of a result of the housing down turn and the drop in demand for workers in the construction industry ((Michaels, 2009). Still others, have argued that poverty and high levels of unemployment are a byproduct of the political economy of a large scale agricultural industry that is focused on maximizing profits by externalizing costs of housing, education, and healthcare to local communities that do not possess the infrastructure to do so (Carter, 2010; Goldschmidt, 1947; Galarza, 1962; McWilliams, 1939; Mitchell, 1996; 2003).

A walk down the main street of the community of *Trabajo* one sees an assortment of small businesses including grocery stores, a couple of beauty salons, meat market and several Mexican restaurants, a couple of gasoline stations, several non-profit organizations, and the community's only bank. The absence of additional financial institutions according to

community leaders is attributed to the dependence of a cash economy in the community and the distrust of formal institutions due to the large percentages of undocumented immigrants. This structure is in part responsible for limiting the tax structure of the community, and in turn, denying it the much needed tax bases and the additional resources to the community that would come with it.

Taking a drive through the main street in the community as one enters and sees the dusty and pock marked roads as diesel trucks drive continuously throughout the day as they transport a variety of fresh produce that was just picked from some field. Further along the proud spirit of the community is evident through the many small businesses and the peeling paint from the old buildings they are housed in. The community also has several bars that cater to the farmworker population especially during the height of the growing season in the spring and summer when the population increases dramatically and workers from out of town arrive for the harvest. The absence of key services from a high school, pharmacy, or its own hospital is really felt in the community as the added revenue from those important institutions would definitely lead to the creation of many other much needed jobs. Furthermore in certain sectors of the community, residents have complained of pesticides drifting in when strong winds carry it into parts of the community leading some becoming lightheaded, developing nausea, or even getting headaches or rashes as a result. The community also has extensive rental units and could benefit from the creation of additional homes for farm working families to settle permanently. The combination of all of these vital services leaves residents from the community deprived of vital and key resources.

## **Schooling in The Community: A Historical Look**

*Discrimination has been going on for a long time. It's the same thing as when I was here. It was the same thing then as it is now—*Parent alum of Big Mountain High School

In the late 1980's students at Big Mountain-Trabajo Unified School District (BMTUSD) revolted at the increasing frustration that came from having their concerns repeatedly disregarded and being made to feel less than. In late January of 1989, about 50 students at BMHS walked out of class to protest years of discriminatory treatment aimed at Mexican students when two Latinas were turned over to police after being arrested for fighting on school grounds. According to local newspaper reports, the Mexican students at BMHS became angry after learning that the day before two white male students who fought on campus had not been similarly arrested. The next school day the protest had increased to include over 150 students and did not end until the school district and parents came to an agreement after a tense 3 hour long meeting. The agreement called for no longer arresting students, nor pressing charges against the students involved in the fights, and for the appointment of a Latino support committee to provide input to the school. Surprisingly, the school acknowledged the need for more culturally appropriate events including providing translators for non-English speaking parents and no longer punishing students for speaking Spanish at school. The event had such a strong impact that the school principal at the time was forced to admit that there were insensitive teachers on the staff and that they “needed some time to adjust”.

Apparently, students and their families had been treated in that way for many years leading up to protest. Students who spoke to news reporters were quoted as saying that “teachers put us down all the time” and some teachers would tell Mexican students “you're not going to amount to anything.” Still other students shared that they were often ignored by their teachers, humiliated, and were not listened to. One of the parents who was a former student at BMHS

twenty years prior was quoted as stating, “Discrimination has been going on for a long time. It’s the same thing as when I was here. It was the same thing then as it is now.” Even though students were not very confident that things would meaningfully change after their agreement with the school, they went ahead and gave school officials the benefit of the doubt. But it would not last very long.

Later on that year in May, more than 700 students from the district once again boycotted in protest of the perceived inaction on the part of the school administration. Students felt that administrator’s had failed to address claims of discrimination that Mexican students were experiencing in the district. At the elementary school in *Trabajo* over 500 students out of 800 in the grades K-6 stayed home in protest. At the junior high school and high school at least 245 out of 350 students who were bussed from *Trabajo* to Big Mountain for the district did not go to school either. At the time *Trabajo* only had an elementary school so students were bused to Big Mountain for middle school and high school—a 20 mile distance. The boycott was in part organized by a committee of parents and community members who were fed up with disparate treatment. According to the committee leaders, the boycott was organized to bring attention to the lack of Latino teachers and counselors, and courses examining Latino culture and the open hostility directed towards Latino students, issues that have been directed at students from *Trabajo* for years.

A newspaper report revealed that the White female principal at the school seemed unaware and surprised that people in the community were upset. She seemed out of touch given the historical under layer of racial relations in the community and the gap existing in communication with parents when she stated “not one parent has told me of being dissatisfied with the instructional program”. This however was not the end to the turmoil.

A month later in June, a group of Mexican parents still upset from the inaction of BM-TUSD filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking to address issues of representation within the school board as no Latino up to that point had ever been elected to the board of trustees. The parents presented a compelling case given that shameful history since over 50% of the student population in the district then was made up of Latinos. The slow action of the school administrators compelled parents to seek alternative measures to the district in hopes of gaining greater control and democratic representation for the community of *Trabajo*. Given the structure of elections at the time, parents from *Trabajo* were pushing for single member instead of at large voting, which would require trustees to live in the area that they would represent ensuring a greater likelihood of there being Latino representation. Parent leaders charged that the school district was violating the Voting Rights act and that the situation at CHUSD was similar to the *Gomez vs. the City of Watsonville*. In *Gomez v. Watsonville* the Supreme Court of the U.S. ruled that the way districts (at-large) held elections were set up to dilute Latino votes and would inevitably lead to discrimination. A federal judge would rule for the community and parents in *Trabajo* allowing them to have their own 2 seats while, but Big Mountain would still retain a hold on the majority with 3 seats.

The move to single member voting for district trustees was a welcomed change and it finally gave community members from *Trabajo* some representation, yet the fundamental structure of power still remained in Big Mountain with a 3-2 split. The changes helped pave the way for *Trabajo* to finally getting their own middle school after years of fighting for one in 1996. While parents and community members were much more satisfied having a middle school in the community, some of the issues that had caused earlier tensions nonetheless remained. While the

residents of *Trabajo* also wanted their own high school, some community leaders would wait until changes in the city's infrastructure were upgraded before pushing for one.

In 2006 talk was taken up in the district about the possibility of constructing a high school in the community of *Trabajo* as a result of legislation that was passed in the California legislature and signed by the governor. AB 1465, introduced the possibility of building small schools in districts by receiving up to 60% of funds from the state. In 2007 the BHUSD met to discuss the possibility of trying to pass a bond measure seeking funds for a high school in *Trabajo*. While community residents seemed enthusiastic at the possibility they continued to meet resistance from the district, as they argued that a high school in *Trabajo* did not make sense given that it would only be for 350 students and they would not likely have fairness when compared to the extended course offerings that would be provided to the students in Big Mountain<sup>40</sup>. The issue would not die down and in fact picked up momentum.

In 2010, *Trabajo* resident and community activist Roberto Jimenez wrote a letter on behalf of *Trabajo* community residents to the County Committee on District Organization seeking a public hearing for *Trabajo* so officials could hear some of the concerns that were being voiced by residents about their children in BM-TUSD. The letter highlighted the frustration of many community residents of not having a high school and being marginalized from the schooling process from having children attending a school that many feel does not take their considerations seriously. The letter read in part:

Unfortunately, the community of *Trabajo* is not satisfied with the Big Mountain – *Trabajo* Joint Unified School District. The students of *Trabajo* have scored at the bottom

---

<sup>40</sup> The irony is that while students theoretically have a greater degree of access at Big Mountain high to what would likely be a greater range of courses, students from *Trabajo* are regularly tracked out of the honors and higher level course due to perceived language ability. The effect is the same—even if a wider variety of courses are offered at the high school, the majority of *Trabajo* students still do not have access.

10% of the state for the past six years, and this can no longer be tolerated. The High School has had a 49% dropout rate over the same period of time and now has increased to 50% for the 2010 class. We as a community see no value in our relationship with the Big Mountain – Trabajo Joint Unified School District. Over 800 students are bussed to Big Mountain which is 20% of the District population and the affects have been devastating to the education of the Trabajo students. Student population in total for the Big Mountain – Trabajo Joint Unified School District is approximately 4,399 of which 1760 or 40% are from Trabajo.

All attempts to build a High School in Trabajo have been meet with distain by the administration and the three school board trustees from Big Mountain. There is a constant battle between the three trustees from Big Mountain and the two trustees from Trabajo who are always out voted. The Trabajo trustees have no say in the running of the School District...All information coming out of the School District about Trabajo is always of a negative nature. All attempts to find resolutions are met with misinformation or placating the Trabajo trustees and residents. In the end nothing is done for Trabajo.

In leveling these accusations Mr. Jimenez was not without evidence. He compiled data from several sources that lent credence to his argument and the frustration of those he represented. He continued on and highlighted the one-sided relationship between *Trabajo* and Big Mountain and the bias towards Big Mountain in resources allocation:

Funds to the school district are not being proportionately spent instead funds are directed to Big Mountain. Some examples are the six million dollars sent by the Department of Corrections to the school district to be spent district wide to accommodate growth, all six million was to be spent in Big Mountain on roofing projects and not one cent was to be spent in Trabajo for growth. Trabajo has had a slow but steady growth and Big Mountain has had a slow but steady decline in enrollment. The school district received a \$1.9 million refund from the construction of Big Mountain Middle School and \$ 200,000 refund from the construction of Trabajo Middle School. The \$2.1 million was spent in Big Mountain and not one cent was spent in Trabajo. A special school board meeting was held to supposedly formulate a priority list; all projects placed on this list were from Big Mountain and not one from Trabajo. All hardship eligibility that the school district has is to be used in Big Mountain. Now the administration wants to formulate a Master Plan to let the people of Trabajo know when a High School can be built, which is another attempt to stretch out a process and to placate the people of Trabajo. While Big Mountain projects are not subjected to the same process. There will be two new wings to Big Mountain High, and construction of two elementary schools in Big Mountain.

Programs such as the Migrant Program of the school district are the second largest program behind Fresno with 75% of the students coming from Trabajo. The school district has split the funding 50/50 between Big Mountain and Trabajo. There are further irregularities when it comes to the District finances, which will be demonstrated once you come.



The accusations leveled by Mr. Jimenez are of a very serious nature, and if true would prove once again that earlier actions taken by BMUSD administrators and the court order that created representative voting districts did not go far enough to meet the needs of students from the community of *Trabajo*. In fact, Mr. Jimenez argued in the letter that the only way to really empower *Trabajo* students would be by breaking away forming their own high school and build their own district though current district arrangements prevent that from occurring.

He continued with his stringent critique of the unified district arrangement:

Administrators always tell the people of *Trabajo* to wait for their turn. Now they are being told to wait again. The administration continues to promote the projects that the City of Big Mountain has approved, but the housing market in Big Mountain is in a slump with 45% of the existing homes for sale.

The assets of the district do not belong to Big Mountain or *Trabajo*, they belong to everyone. The unincorporated areas of Fresno County within the Big Mountain – *Trabajo* Joint Unified School District account for 70 % of the assessed value of the district. The three trustees from Big Mountain along with the administration act as if all the assets belong to Big Mountain, and that *Trabajo* has no rights them. We as a community will not allow our students or city to be suppressed. *Trabajo* will fight as long as we are shackled to Big Mountain.

Mr. Jimenez's letter was accompanied by a proposal highlighting other communities of similar size to *Trabajo* and what they have done to build and sustain their own high schools in their communities. According to Mr. Jimenez, if other similar sized communities can gain their independence, why not *Trabajo*? While Mr. Jimenez has been at the forefront of pushing the issue, others from BM-TUSD have been resistant because they fear that split high schools would drastically reduce the funds that BMHS receives and negatively impact instruction at Big Mountain High School. BMHS would likely lose large amounts of funding directed at migrant education students and English Language Learners if *Trabajo* had its own high school.

### **Concerns about Big Mountain-Trabajo Joint Unified School District**

In describing the community of *Trabajo*, most informants shared their frustrations of the limited opportunities for youth to be engaged. The parks in the community have many potholes making it dangerous for kids to run, the grass in many places was dry, and sometimes adults could be found there drinking alcoholic beverages. Some parents stated that they believed that was why gangs were so popular at one point—because the community lacked the ability to support youth in activities to engage them positively. While a heavy gang presence in the mid 1990's has come under control due to increase in police presence in the last several years, parents generally expressed reservation and reiterated the importance of keeping a close eye on their children. In the past, gang members would assault farmworkers on payday taking their cash and had little fear of getting caught. Overtime the attacks on farmworkers have diminished thanks in part to the police presence. A heavier police presence in a community with high percentages of undocumented has also led to some community resident mentioning that they have felt targeted in the past by police. When pulled over, several of the informants indicated that they were issued citations for driving without a license or insurance, they had their cars impounded often resulting in fines of over \$1200 per incident when all costs were totaled. This has led many community members to stay at home as much as possible and only risk driving when absolutely necessary.

Other parents expressed their frustration regarding the schools in the community. Some felt the administrator at the elementary and some of the teachers had very little regard for their children. One parent said “He has been there for more than 20 years and the schools are still the same”. Another parent indicated that for youth to make it through the school system they are either really smart or they have very strong support systems in the home, or both. As an

example, one of the most involved parents and a frequent volunteer at the school shared how when her son who attends the elementary was absent with an illness from school for a week and the school didn't even contact her to find out how her son was. She stated, "if a child doesn't matter to them how much can they expect out of them?" During the time that I spent in the community of *Trabajo*, parents had begun to mobilize the community to push for its own high school given that an estimated 40 to 45% of the student population at the high school in [Big Mountain High] are from *Trabajo*, yet they are still bussed more than 20 miles to attend high school. Another parent when asked why a school has yet to be built in *Trabajo* had this to say:

In this town here they harvest melon, tomato, watermelon, peppers, everything you can imagine that is in the fields, all of it we have it here. But, there are companies -- transnational corporations, those companies are huge. Companies like Dole, Primar, Tanimura-Antle, we have many other companies. The same with tomatoes, there are many. But when they come they use the town like a bridge...through this little town they have to pass to X person's cooler, so the companies generate or give some revenue for the town. What do the mayor or city planner do, 'I didn't see, I didn't hear, I didn't know anything'. They play dumb so the lettuce, melon, the tomato companies do whatever they want. You have trucks sideways, busses parked. Why? Because they all pay the city some money, and that money we don't know what happens to it or what it is invested in. And since we are a small town that depends on Big Mountain, we can say they are the municipal head and they are the ones that give us a proposal to the city of *Trabajo* and I think that it doesn't benefit those in power in Big Mountain or *Trabajo* [if the relationship ended] because in *Trabajo* the little gold mine would end.

In the past, local elites, those that own large amounts of real estate and some small business owners have united to resist even modest changes that could potentially positively impact the community. Instead, for them they benefit in that *Trabajo* in many ways is still controlled by procedures that happen in Big Mountain because their parks and recreation and school board are setup in ways that Big Mountain still holds majority decision in whatever happens in regards to community matters. In the following chapter I explore the specific ways that parents arrive at their conceptions of engagement for the education of their children.

## CHAPTER 6: PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CONTEXT OF LIFE HISTORIES

In the prior chapters, I have proposed a conceptualization of parent engagement that accounts for the actions of parents within the context of their own life experiences, and situates their conceptions and practices within the cultural milieu of their lives as (im)migrant farmworkers. Parental engagement, as I articulated in Chapter 2, not only includes what parents choose to do (and not do) for their children in regards to school matters, but also those other “invisible” acts of engagement that parents do that provide *apoyo*, or broad based forms of critical support. These forms of *apoyo* are a byproduct of parents’ sacrifices to position their children to have the privilege to study and therefore gain educational access, in ways that most of them never had. As a result, the way (im)migrant farmworking parents engage in schools and in the educational processes of their children may differ in key ways from the normative expectations typically derived from middle class parents.

In this chapter I provide an alternative history of educational engagement by documenting the powerful, but commonly ignored, life narratives of (im)migrant farmworking families. These narratives provide a window into the lives of (im)migrant parents that reveal the hopes and dreams they hold for their children, while occupying a space within the labor market as second class citizens in U.S. society. In the following, I present the voices of 16 parents from 8 families as they share critical insights into the multiple processes that impacted their own educational aspirations and opportunities and those of their children, along with the experiences that move them to particular ways of supporting their children. Life stories create an opening into the social, political, and economic realities that parents experienced providing us with a rich

understanding of how their conceptions of educational engagement have been shaped. I propose that the engagement of (im)migrant families is manifested in more nuanced ways than has typically been presented in the literature and available evidence demonstrates parents' desire for their children to take advantage of the educational access they have. Though these parents (and their children) have experienced social and economic marginalization, they remain hopeful and believe that the U.S. educational system can afford their children opportunities for upward mobility. It is precisely this realization and hope that drives many of them to do everything in their power to provide their children with as supportive a home environment as they possibly can.

In structuring this chapter, I first present the conceptions and practices of engagement shared by parents. Then, I reveal key “life moments” that emerged in their life histories that were critical in shaping their conceptions and practices of engagement. I believe this structure best helps answer the following research question: **How are the educational engagement conceptions and practices of Mexican Immigrant Farmworkers shaped by their life histories?**

### **Conceptions and Practices of Educational Engagement**

In developing this chapter I begin first by sharing the specific ways that parents conceived of educational engagement. For these Mexican (im)migrant families, their conceptions of education have evolved and developed not only by the current educational experiences of their children in U.S. schools, but by their own Mexican education, labor, and migratory experiences. The experiences have been influential in shaping the particular ways that these parents conceive of educational engagement and how they employ specific practices that at times reflect those conceptions. Parents in this study generally conceived of educational engagement as providing

*apoyo*. *Apoyo* has been identified in the literature (Auerbach, 2007) as a general form of broad based support that Latino parents provide for their children. I define *apoyo* more specifically as a broad based support in the form of social, economic, moral, familial, historical, and cultural resources learned from life-experiences provided by Mexican immigrant parents to their children for the nurturing of their *educación*, and life and well being. *Apoyo* can broadly be understood as all the school and non-school related things that parents do for the educational, spiritual, moral, and social well being and development of their children. Going beyond traditional parent involvement, my definition of *apoyo* builds on prior definitions of parent engagement (Auerbach, 2002; Calabrese et al. 2004) that account for the socio-historical context of families as (im)migrants, and in this study specifically of farmworkers. This is of significance as I argue that these specific life experiences lead to a unique way of parents constructing and conceiving of their role in education given their marginal status in society. In this next section I share the principal findings emerging from the data that answer the first part of the question consisting of the ways that parents conceive of educational engagement. For organizational purposes I have created overlapping categories that emerged from the data which help capture the essence of *apoyo*.

### **School Based *Apoyo***

As previously mentioned, one of the most important ways that parents conceptualized their engagement in the education of their children was by providing “*apoyo*”. The first type of *apoyo* that was repeatedly mentioned by the study’s participants I call school based *apoyo*. This type of *apoyo* consists of the specific forms of support provided by parents by establishing a presence in the school and in the home that are typically at the behest of school officials. *Apoyo* in this way can best be understood as being most similar to traditional school sanctioned and

school centric (Lawson, 2003) parent involvement cited in the literature. This type of involvement typically includes attending parent teacher conferences, open house events, assisting and monitoring a child's progress with homework, ensuring a child attends school and is on time, and participation in organizations like PTA, Migrant Education Program (MEP), or other school based events.

Parents in this study could be categorized along a continuum in terms of their participation in school sanctioned events. For example, mothers like Rosa, Amanda, and Maria would be considered as being highly "involved" and proactive in regards to school participation by traditional measures. They showed an inclination to volunteer at their children's school and were in frequent contact with teachers. Rosa would often be called "teacher" by students in her son's 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class because of her visibility and willingness to help within the classroom serving as a teacher's assistant. Amanda was well known and respected in the community as an active parent leader and closely monitored her youngest daughter in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade who had experienced learning difficulties and differential treatment for several years. Amanda feared her daughter's special needs would continue unaddressed, likely resulting in her being labeled a "problem" student and other teachers questioning her daughter's abilities, intelligence, and work ethic. She viewed her visible and active participation as a preventive measure to ensure her daughter would be treated justly and receive the much needed help. Finally, Maria spoke highly of the positive experiences of her involvement through the Migrant Education Program and the culturally relevant and specific services they provide to parents.

Other mothers like Irma, Isabel, Felicia, Guadalupe, and Teresa were "less proactive" at the school site but still had a presence (Perez-Carreon, et al) in their children's school matters. For example, Felicia, Guadalupe, and Irma monitored the progress of their children by checking

homework, attending some school meetings when invited or when they found it necessary, and provided encouragement and rewards for their children when they excelled academically. For Isabel and Teresa, they too attended school meetings when called by school officials, but were often prevented from having a stronger school presence due to a heavy work load. Parents who also had high school aged children (including some who were most visible at the elementary and middle school levels) indicated being “distanced” from their child’s high school. This was in part due to the 25 minute drive, but mainly due to a climate of hostility where parents felt they were not treated with respect due to language and cultural barriers, issues that have been unresolved for many years in the school district. These grievances were shared with officials from the Migrant Education Program, the main advocacy arm for these families, but parents (especially those whose children attend BMHS) felt that little progress had been made over time.

The fathers participating in this study were the primary income earners of their families and as such generally worked extensive hours. As a result, their ability to participate in traditional forms of involvement suffered with a greater responsibility for formal schooling issues falling on mothers. All the fathers played the role of disciplinarians and took on an increasing responsibility when their children struggled academically or were in need of special assistance. The fathers’ in this study indicated having a solid grasp of the academic progress and school matters of their children, and remained informed through regular conversations with their wives, or through progress reports and notices sent home from school, and by “checking in” with their children. What became clear from both fathers and mothers was that regardless of gender, parents showed a greater degree of school sanctioned forms of participation when their children were of a younger age, a finding reflected in the literature (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).



Amanda Zamudia has faced numerous challenges for several years in getting the elementary school in *Trabajo* to respond to her daughter's special needs. As one of the most actively engaged parents in the community, she has continuously fought so that her three daughters received the best education possible. When her youngest daughter was in kindergarten, her teacher suggested that she seek assistance for learning and speech difficulties her daughter was exhibiting. Amanda immediately sought specialized help through the special education program at *Trabajo* Elementary. Sadly as so often happens in struggling schools, Amanda's daughter was delayed real assistance until the fourth grade. Amanda now worries her daughter has internalized a negative academic self-identity due to frequent teasing by classmates for her speech patterns. Amanda questions if her daughter would have been better off in a neighboring high performing school district 16 miles away that would likely have provided the needed speech therapy for her daughter in a timely fashion. For the Zamudias, most of their current in-school involvement has revolved around their youngest daughter's struggles in school.

BMHS where Amanda's two oldest daughters attend was mentioned repeatedly as a hostile place for (im)migrant parents. As the previous chapter revealed, the school has historically not been a welcoming place for Latino students and parents. According to Amanda:

During events like open house it does feel bad when you show up and the teacher is talking to others and won't even acknowledge you to shake your hand. Is it because of her education or what not? But if another person comes that speaks English they shake their hand right away. It's different how they treat you and that is how they make you feel less than.

A common complaint by Amanda and other parents was that BMHS does not offer adequate translation services and the staff lacks cultural sensitivity. This is most surprising given that over 80 percent of the student population is Latino and 40 percent are English Learners. Parents previously have complained to the BM-T school district through the Migrant Education Program

(MEP) for the lack of translation services and hostile treatment hoping their concerns might be addressed. Despite these complaints parents believe that little has been done by the district to address their concerns.

Also serving as a place of refuge for parents from the community of *Trabajo*, the MEP was used by most parents as their place of contact with school officials for educational related events. Every parent mentioned MEP as being the best of any of the school based involvement programs because of the cultural relevancy and attendance to their needs in the programming that they offered. They provided all events in Spanish, staff members understood the needs of migrant parents, and they knew how to work with parents from the community of *Trabajo*. For example, Rosa elaborated:

All the information that MEP brings about all these different topics is what is most useful. Sometimes teachers from other places come, they come to give talks. They try not to talk about just one theme, but about many themes ... I didn't know about all the help that it could provide us. For example, what the kids can get--different types of activities, not staying behind at home in the summer. When kids are on vacation they provide a lot of activities for different ages, they give them their backpacks. Those are things that are really worth it.

The MEP program at the regional level also sponsored parent leadership retreats for 2 or 3 days consisting of workshops on how to best engage in the education of their children. Felicia Gonzalez had a similar positive experience through the MEP program. She shared:

Well I really like to go to the MEP because they give you a lot, they give you information on scholarships for those doing well. Also they give you information on different types of conferences, I have gone to a few. They also give you access to mini-conferences here and in Los Angeles...I would say the program helps you, like when you first arrive. There are many families that don't have, and then you get here and don't have guidance on how to go see a doctor and these other things...They also help with immunizations for children...They help focus on children, on helping students succeed. They also provide educational utensils that they need like dictionaries or calculators that parents may not be able to purchase for them.

The broad array of services provided by MEP serve to solidify it as the principal presence for migrant parents to engage with at the school site. Parents appreciated the culturally responsiveness and friendliness of the staff—something missing from teachers and other school officials from BMH in particular. Unfortunately, the tightening of eligibility requirements<sup>41</sup> for MEP has made it difficult for some families like the Zamudia's, Mendoza's, and the Gutierrez's to remain eligible for the program. These issues led parents from the community of *Trabajo* to actively engage and push for their own high school and break away to form their own district in hopes of gaining autonomy and seeking different processes that may serve students from *Trabajo* better. At the time of the study different options were being proposed in hopes of bringing a high school to the community of *Trabajo*. Besides having a school in town, the community would likely receive an economic boom for the non-farm jobs likely to be created in the community.

### **Economic Apoyo**

Another form of *apoyo* that emerged from the data concerned the importance of economic support that parents provided for their children. One factor above all was mentioned repeatedly by parents as being responsible for derailing their own academic aspirations when they were once students in Mexico--*lo economico*, the economic. As I discuss later in this chapter, for parents going to school in Mexico passed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade was generally not a realistic possibility due to the lack of financial support for food, school supplies, clothing, and the economic demand from their families. Other factors include geographical isolation and diminished educational access for rural communities, familial responsibilities and the absence of

---

<sup>41</sup> Students are defined as migratory when he or she moves from one school district to another in order for one or more family members to seek temporary or seasonal work in agriculture or fishing. Previously the window for a qualifying move was 6 years but has since been reduced to 3 years making students in families who begin to find some degree of employment stability ineligible.

critical mentorship in times of difficulty. In the next section I present data that highlight the specific ways that parents spoke of providing economic *apoyo* in supporting their children.

The life experience for the farmworking parents in this study revealed that the opportunity structure in Mexico did not allow for educational advancement and the fulfillment of their aspirations. This cruel fact came with the realization that their social location in the U.S. potentially threatened to do the same to the aspirations of their children. For example, Isabel Mendoza compared her own educational aspirations and those of her children:

Like us that have a desire that our children better themselves or succeed...But if we can't support them economically they are going to remain exactly like us. Because an education is dependent on costs...sometimes a lot, sometimes a little but sometimes one's own resources are not sufficient like to pay for food, the rent, or sometimes additionally the education of your children. Well...in regard to that [economic support]...until now, we have been able to bring them along, but who knows if once they want to start college or the university, and it costs you...Well, we don't know if we will be able to continue to support them...We will make an attempt, but if we can't, they will have to look for it [support].

In the above quote Isabel discloses the necessity for parents, to provide financial support given her self-awareness of the role that economics played in limiting her own educational advancement. While the Mendoza's have been able to support their children economically, they also realize their undocumented daughter's future educational trajectory and persistence maybe more dependent on their support than the daughter's own hard work or effort.

In a similar case Juan and Guadalupe Perez reassured their children that they are committed to providing the economic support needed for them to continue past high school and obtain a career. As I elaborate later in the chapter, Juan was only able to advance past the *secundaria* through the help of an older sibling who had stable employment working for PEMEX, Mexican Petroleum, a state owned company. Juan spoke about his desire to see his daughter continue on with schooling despite her undocumented status. He has encouraged her to

pursue a quick vocational career that will allow her to make a nice living, and he has promised to pay for it.

For migrant students who are undocumented, their ineligibility for most forms of financial assistance severely limit their prospects for continuing on to higher education. Undocumented parents also face severe limitations including a lower earning and promotion potential, abuse at work, do not qualify for unemployment insurance, leading to greater difficulties in providing as much support as their children may need. Thus, the best advice Juan could provide his daughter in the context of their undocumented status was to focus on a short career that would afford her the opportunity to make a decent living. From his own experiences having enrolled and completed courses in welding at the community college for his job, he sees that as a realistic career trajectory for his daughter given its relative affordability.

### ***Apoyo as Sacrifice***

A third way that parents conceived of providing *apoyo* was through the idea of self-sacrificing for the overall well being of their children. The specific ways that parent narratives articulated conceptions of sacrifice for their children varied, but the common theme revealed parent actions creating a greater access to education or career preparation. Implicit in the self-sacrifice of parents was an expectation of their children valuing and taking advantage through academic or career preparation in hopes of leading to different and better employment. In other words, this type of *apoyo* provided by parents was with the hope that children gain awareness of the family's marginal position within society and thus maximize the available opportunities--opportunities that were non-existent for them in Mexico.

For example, the narratives of Valente and Isabel Mendoza, similarly revealed a desire to provide *apoyo* to their children as their primary role and responsibility. The Mendoza's understood that within a year their daughter would enroll in a college or university and be ineligible for most forms of financial aid as an undocumented student. The recently passed California Dream Act will likely provide access to many forms of state based financial assistance for students like their daughter Mayra's beginning in January of 2013. Valente made his expectations explicit to his children regarding their academics. He stated:

I'm going to put it for you in very simple terms. When Valente Jr. or Mayra's grades begin to drop—and this rule I have always maintained and have imposed. Perhaps I'm wrong or I'm right, but I negotiate with my kids. Bring me good grades, and I will give you I will buy you, I will take you, I will let you go places. Don't bring me good grades? There is no permission, no going out, no buying things, there is nothing. And I have always implemented this since they started. The day that they fail me as a student, they know that they have a right to nothing. Why? Because you failed, because I'm expecting, just like I'm making the effort to go to work and give to you, I also want the same because you have nothing, nothing else to do but to go, study, prepare yourself, and bring me good grades. That is a deal that I make with them.

For Valente, making his children aware of what a privilege it is to focus exclusively on their studies is of great significance given the educational barriers and experiences he and his wife struggled through as child laborers in Mexico. On numerous occasions Valente and Isabel indicated having told their children that they would “find a way” to cover expenses so that they could participate in different activities or events that accrued costs. In addition to providing for their own two children, the Mendoza's have also continuously helped Isabel's youngest sister who is currently enrolled in a nursing program at a university in Mexico. The remittances sent by the Mendoza's from the U.S. for a younger sibling's education in Mexico ensures that she has opportunities that were denied to Isabel because their parents could not afford back then. This specific form of sacrifice is yet another way in which migrant farmworker families place a high value on education within and across borders.

In six of the families, both parents worked full time, while only two families had a full time stay at home parent. Both of the stay at home mothers had younger children who were not yet of school age. These parents would rather sacrifice income from a second earner to ensure their children were receiving adequate attention, something they felt was not guaranteed in day care. For Irma Alvarez, that became clear when her husband suggested that she stay home and no longer work when their third child was born. She shared how they came to that decision:

But sometimes we think more about having money...It's what he [husband] tells me because he cares deeply about his kids. I think that because of his kids he works and 1000 times he works so that I can be with them. And he says 'I don't want my kids to suffer. You and I have the right to scold them and to sometimes give them a spanking if they misbehave but not for another person to mistreat them, no.' And I tell him 'yes, yes it's true' but sometimes I want to go work so that we could have some money. But I'm going to wait for them to grow up a little more and then I will go to work. But it's real hard and that's why I haven't gone to work.

Ensuring their children are well taken care and looked after were more significant priorities to the Alvarez family than having additional spending money. On numerous occasions they sacrificed getting a much needed pair of shoes or an article of clothing to purchase something for their children first. Diego believes it's a worthwhile investment even if it means their own needs become secondary to that of their 3 children. While parents relied on slightly different strategies, they sacrificed necessities to ensure that their children were taken care of.

For undocumented parents in particular, having migrated to the US has also come with the great sacrifice of not seeing loved ones for long stretches of time. Most initially came to the U.S. with the idea of returning to Mexico upon establishing some savings, but hardly any ever returned. After settling down and starting a family, more than a decade has passed for some parents since they last saw their mother or father, some have lost their parents during that time. In that context Juan Perez stated the following, "You know we are here alone. They have no one, they have no cousins, they have nobody here, only the people that they have met when we

got here.” The alienation of being away from family has been a huge sacrifice, yet they still remain in the US because in the end, parents like Juan believe their children can be successful here. He continues:

And that is what I want with them, otherwise what good was our effort? Because we could practically go back to Mexico and be with our family and everything would be ok. But there is no education. There is no future, and here there is. But what is required is that they take advantage of it. That’s the principal thing, and hopefully they can come out ahead. Because I can give you my wife and I as an example that we work in the fields and we go to work really early and return late and full of mud. So that is why we put ourselves as examples for them, so that they see and value right now that we are making the effort for them so that they not be exactly like us. So that they be better than us, that they have a better education than us. But there are very few that are able to reach that level. Yeah that’s the way it is.

The above quote illustrates the trap that some of the parents find themselves in—their personal happiness and quality of life lies in Mexico, yet the future well being of their children likely lies in the U.S.

Finally, perhaps the most significant form of sacrifice that parents expressed was through the break down and deterioration of their own bodies. Parents repeatedly mentioned working in the fields and the physical and grueling toll they endure to make a living. From consistent exposure to pesticides, musculoskeletal pain from repetitive motion or being bent at the waist, to working 12 hour or more shifts, to referring to this type of work as *el mas matado*—the most backbreaking. Javier gave his family’s experience as an example:

We have always tried to tell them that school is the base for whatever it is that they want to be. If you don’t study, wherever you stop studying that is where your future ends. We have always inculcated that in them...and I always give them the example of our family and those of us that didn’t study. How we are working in the fields, killing ourselves, working a lot of hours. I think that is part of it.

Javier rightfully highlights above the quandary that parents find themselves in longing to be reunited with their own families and in supporting the educational aspirations of their own



children. Felicia Gonzalez echoed a similar sentiment about what she tells her children and the contributions of her husband to the family:

Working in the fields is hard, I don't want to see any of you there. I see how your father is when he comes home ...Your father sometimes comes so tired that he eats and he falls asleep sitting down exhausted. I don't want to see you that way. I want another life for you. Your father has helped us a lot, he has provided for us, he gave us a home, he gives us food, he gives us but the way he earns it is hard. The fields are a really hard way to labor. It's really heavy work and I have always inculcated in them, I'm not sure if its right or wrong, to do something, something where they will not have to...That they won't have to work as much, that's so strenuous because the fields are very strenuous.

The above two testimonies from parents help contextualize the labor intensive and grueling nature of farmwork in California today (Martin, 2003). In the end, what awaits these parents that have placed their well being at-risk so that their children have the possibility to access greater educational opportunities? Isabel Mendoza provides one answer to that question as she imagines the cruel reality that may await farmworkers like her in less than ten years time. She states:

I have always said...if right now that lets say, I'm still young, right and I struggle...can you imagine working by the time I'm fifty years old? Because we have to work to live. I think that I'm no longer going to be able to carry out my job. If right now I don't yield enough in some jobs, much less when I'm at an older age, and oh well...what are we to do? Go cause pity somewhere? But that's how it is like we can't save [money] because we have to pay rent, we have to pay bills, buy food, that his shoes wore out, the clothes, what have you. And we aren't making enough to be able to say 'I have a little savings for when I get older, when I can no longer work, I will be able to live off of what I have saved.' Nope we have nothing. And well we will have to go elicit pity and see if they will be able to give us one day or two of work. But that is the future that awaits us. And with children, sometimes you get lucky that they help you at and all. But, sometimes there are other children that don't help out their parents so then you have to look. Like look for something to eat or for ways to pay the rent. Oh well, then you have to work even if we are not able to any more.

Farmworkers like Isabel, especially if undocumented, have little labor protections and have no choice but to invest in the hope that their own children may one day become professionals and be able to care for them when they can no longer work. The tragedy lies in that these parents are

an expendable commodity that as soon as their bodies can no longer produce at a high level, farmworkers like Isabel are discarded and replaced with a younger set of workers to begin the process all over again. It is clear in the data that parents who are undocumented had higher stakes in their sacrifice as a result of not qualifying for most forms of public assistance and being marginalized in many realms. A concept that helps to explain *apoyo* as sacrifice especially for the undocumented is the idea of self-immolation, which I provide an extensive detail in chapter 7.

### ***Apoyo as Cultivating of Agency***

Parents also saw as their responsibility to motivate and encourage their children academically in the face of adversity. Drawing once again from experiential knowledge, parents assumed the role of providing moral and critical support so their children would not give up on their goals. Parents accomplished this numerous ways-- one key way was by consciously linking contemporary experiences or challenges children had to difficulties experienced in the past by parents. Students responded very positively to the encouragement provided by parents. The data revealed numerous examples including parents 1) not allowing children to quit when facing adversity 2) telling their children they would find a way to pay for college 3) providing messages of self affirmation for their children when experiencing racial micro-aggressions, 4) exposing children to the hard work they do, 5) and making children conscious of their privilege across borders and providing rewards for excelling in school.

This type of *apoyo* was an essential pedagogical tool for these parents to help their children develop identities of resilience and agency. This provided further evidence of parental awareness of their children's academic and social experiences in and out of school and revealed the specific responses that parents relied on to support their children to remain focused

academically. In this section I provide a series of examples utilized by parents that illustrate how parents cultivated agency in their children.

Maria Sanchez actively sought to cultivate a sense of agency in her two young elementary aged school children. She shared with them the importance of doing well academically to avoid ending up in the same place that she has—working in the fields.

For my kids, I have a goal for them, and I motivate them. And more than anything I tell them you have an example here in us, you are not going to be working in the fields. I try to motivate them myself so that they don't follow my path and they can accomplish their goals. That "yes they can," more than anything! Because you know there are some parents that say "if you don't want to study then don't study and go to work." In that case I would say work hard you can do it and try to motivate them to keep going.

Through her frequent conversations with her children, Maria motivates her children to do well academically so that they realize they have greater opportunities to be successful. Maria's narrative to her children is one that even as the family struggles, the opportunity to study in the U.S. far exceeds what they would have in Mexico. For Maria, daily communication with her children was a method of ensuring her children remained focused on school and remain on the right path.

Other parents like Felicia Gonzalez relied on availability to her children at all hours as one of the most important ways that she engaged in their education. Her daughter attends a four year university and majors in marine biology and looks to become a therapist for children with special needs. During the prior academic year, Felicia's daughter took a difficult course load and was failing an intensive biology class and on the verge of dropping out. Felicia remembers the frequent conversations she held with her daughter that particular semester and recounts of a specific two hour phone conversation at 2 A.M. on the eve of the test. Felicia told her daughter:

I know that no course material should be defeating you. You have to come out ahead, you have always succeeded in everything you have set your mind to. If we leapt over the

puddle together [U.S. Border]...we both have to come out ahead. Make that leap we took together worth it. Simply just look back in your past, and see all that happened, look back and see all that we suffered to cross over the border. You have to succeed. Anytime at whatever time you need me, at whatever time you want to call me, I'm always going to be here to listen to you.

In short, Felicia's daughter failed the course, but in the process of several conversations with her mother, she realized that it was acceptable to retake a university course. In reminding her daughter of the suffering and struggles they jointly endured in the three attempts it took to cross the border, those experiences served as a critical reminder of the long way they have already come, and provided an opportunity for healing and refocusing on the goal of obtaining a university degree. Felicia's daughter was reminded that being successful at accomplishing what one sets out to do requires persistence and resilience

Isabel Mendoza has also resorted to providing positive encouragement as a form of *apoyo*. The most significant challenge the Mendoza's face is the future educational prospects of their daughter Mayra upon her impending high school graduation. They have struggled in the past when Mayra has become discouraged at the possibility that she may not be able to continue to study at the university because of her immigration status. Isabel explains:

Well, her father and I always tell her, 'Don't focus on that *mija*. Maybe in the future, God willing, there will be an opportunity for you to get your papers or there may be an amnesty'...That's what we tell her--to not focus on that, to not feel bad about it. We try to encourage her, but we too, how can I tell you, we feel bad but we do not show her because we know that she has less opportunities than a person who has their papers to enter the university. She is going to have to work harder, to look for more support than another person. But anyhow, we don't tell her about these thoughts that we have. Maybe she will be able to get in or maybe not, but we will continue to tell her that. We try to tell her to not think about that, to work hard in the meantime...that God willing there will be a solution.

The strategy that Isabel and her husband Valente relied on ensures Mayra remains focused and motivated to continue her studies. Mayra is an honor student at BMHS, and if not for her immigration status, she would likely be applying to some of the more competitive universities

throughout the state of California. Still, while this was a particularly painful situation for the Mendoza family, they have no choice but to remain positive and hopeful about the educational prospects of their daughter. The above cases demonstrate the lengths that they go to provide *impulso* or motivational support hoping that their efforts sustain the aspirations of their children.

### ***Apoyo* as Modeling and Mentoring**

The variability in the forms of *apoyo* parents provide also includes concrete examples of their own struggles in formal learning spaces in the U.S. In this section I detail the specific ways that parents modeled for their children the importance of education and served as mentors through in-school and out of school activities. Their actions served as pedagogical testimonies of resiliency tools for their children to remain proactive when facing the challenges they encounter.

The Martinez family used the participation of their children in extracurricular activities to teach about familial commitment and persistence. These are values that according to Abel Martinez would serve them well when their children go away to college or the university and “make sure they go through with it.” Abel related a recent experience he had with his eight year old son:

That’s why I told my son like I can use football as an example for now. I go, ‘if you join, you join. I don’t want you [to quit]’...The 2nd day of practice [during conditioning] he quit because it was real hard. He actually went walking to our [other son’s] baseball practice, and my wife got him in the car and she took him back. She goes, ‘You were told that if you join you have to commit’. To me it’s, if you give them the easy way out they will use that excuse for everything and that’s what we don’t want. We want to make sure that if they are going to get involved, because if he joins, we have to pay. We have to go take him to his practices, so it’s not just him, it’s all of us.

By eliminating the "easy way out" their children are forced to persist when faced with adversity. Both Abel and Rosa turned an experience with football and the rigors of conditioning into a teachable moment about persistence. As Abel predicted, once his son was able to get through the rigors of the first two weeks of football conditioning, his son enjoyed playing on the football team. Now Abel and Rosa use his participation in football to motivate him to complete all of his homework and excel academically or he is not allowed to play. As a skill, Abel believes that it is important his kids learn not to be quitters. "That's the way I have been basically all my life...if I start something I don't really like to quit," Abel stated. Other families relied on more conventional ways of modeling for their children the significance of completing school.

Felicia and Saul Gonzalez were not able to fulfill their educational aspirations as youth in Mexico, but that did not stop them from enrolling in adult school in the U.S. According to Felicia, her desire to attend school was in part to better understand the experiences of their children in US schools by learning English. She also tells of another benefit that comes with being an example for her own children seeing her go to school:

When they [kids] see that we are working hard as well, for example, those of us that go to school, I think that Juanito [son] also pays attention. He'll say, 'Mami are you going to school today? Are you going to do homework I will help you?' When we were getting our GED we went all the way to Strickland. I went together with my husband Saul because I wanted to change jobs...[In my previous job] they never raised your wage year after year and they would demand but not give...Saul passed everything right away, but I struggled with math and had to retake the test. That frustrated me because I would say 'I'm not going to pass.' But thanks to them-- my children and my husband-- they would say 'No mom, of course you can do it!' ...I retook my exam and I passed and that's when I submitted an application and was hired at the MEP daycare.

The pursuit of a GED led Felicia to obtain a higher paying employment opportunity as a daycare worker through the Migrant Education Program, and with employment based incentives she has continued to take courses at the local community college. More importantly, Felicia and Saul

modeled for their three children their own desire to advance educationally by obtaining their high school equivalency degrees (GED). Felicia derived satisfaction from the encouragement of her children who reciprocated *apoyo* for her to succeed, something she modeled for them.

In a similar manner Amanda Zamudia also pursued her GED. Amanda was pushed out of school in her youth in Mexico when her father suffered a broken leg. This event led Amanda to begin working when her father could no longer support her school efforts or the family. Since then and in her time in the US she has never given up on her dreams of becoming an educator or a nurse. Amanda enrolled in adult school with the specific goal of learning English hoping to become a better advocate for her three daughters in advancing through the educational pipeline. In the context of being undocumented and having no prior schooling in the US she elaborated:

I was like 28 when I decided that I wanted to continue studying and I went to the adult school in [Grand Rio] and in 3 years I got my high school diploma. But I did it more so to show my daughters that it can be done! I don't want them getting stuck. And my purpose is that if I don't know the language, that I face more obstacles, and I was able to do it, they can too. And I think that up until now they are doing it. It served them as motivation.

Amanda was admired and repeatedly mentioned by other parents for being proactive and having a strong presence in the school community, all while holding full time employment. By earning her G.E.D Amanda helped model and raise expectations for her children, especially given that her three daughters are US citizens and will not face discrimination as she does because of her status as an undocumented migrant. Today, Amanda's conversations with her daughters are no longer based on whether they will go to college, but more so which one they will be attending.

Guadalupe Perez attended night classes to learn to speak English. Unfortunately, her adventure in U.S. night school was short lived by factors outside of her control. She shared her experience:

I was studying... last year I enrolled in English classes there in front of the middle school. I went like for two months. What was your brother's name? He was our teacher and gave us classes. Then after that they ran out of funds, and from there I went back to work and didn't continue to study.

Guadalupe benefitted from two months of night school instruction before the grant that funded the adult school ended. Though her initial goal was to stay enrolled until she learned to speak English fluently, she attended until funding for night school was exhausted. The more than 20 parents that attended the English courses twice a week were left with no other option to continue English language acquisition. In serving as positive models for their own children, the experiences of these Mexican (im)migrant parents also serve to counter stereotypes of their supposed unwillingness to learn English. Instead what this experience reveals is that English language instruction is needed and in high demand in communities like *Trabajo* with large immigrant populations.

### **Key “Life Moments” in Parent Narratives**

In this section I present the key themes that arose in the context of the life narratives of the participants in the study. The most significant themes reveal that early entry into the labor market and their subsequent push out from schooling has led them to emphasize schooling and were driven to create greater access to it for their children. In this next section I share emerging themes that evidence how (im)migrant parents develop their conceptions and practices of engagement. The emergent themes are 1) poverty as a limiting situation, 2) early labor force participation, 3) border crossing, 4) the grind of farm labor and 5) salience of migrant (il)legality.

The aforementioned themes were key life experiences in shaping the ways parents and families came to construct and conceive of educational engagement and their parental roles. The first emergent theme was *poverty as a limit situation* that consists of the obstacles that



parents encountered as youth that limited their access to education due to poverty related factors. Second, *early labor force participation* refers to youth obtaining employment while still of school age. Often participants worked during the day and would attend school in the afternoon and only at the culmination of their work day. Third, *border crossing experiences* consist of the act of literally crossing the U.S.-Mexico border, sometimes authorized other times not—an experience that was memorable for all the interview participants. Fourth, *laboring in the fields* encompasses the things that parents do in terms of employment to provide for their children and families. The fifth and final theme that emerged from families was *the salience of being (un)documented* and dealt with a unique set of issues that prevented these mainly mixed citizenship status families from accessing important educational and employment resources. As a precaution I remind the reader that these categories are themes emerging in different areas in the oral history data and the organizational structure employed in this section presents them in sequence.

### **Poverty as a limiting situation: Aspirations without opportunity**

Unsurprisingly, the life narratives of migrant parents in this study reveal that poverty was closely associated with working in agriculture (Martin, 2003). A few of the participants came from families that at one point worked their own land, and in a good year would yield enough for subsistence, and have excess crops at the end of the harvest. Two parents (Valente Mendoza and Felicia Gonzalez) came from families that owned land, cattle, and equipment, and thus farming for their families at one point brought in significant amounts of income allowing them to live in greater comfort than others. Though their families would eventually encounter economic collapse, at one point they enjoyed a degree of financial stability. However, some years didn't yield much so these families struggled. For other families, especially those that didn't own land,

working in agriculture usually entailed internal northward seasonal migration in search of employment. The entire male and almost all of the female participants shared the common characteristic of having worked in agriculture in Mexico prior to migrating to the United States. With limited formal education and social networks, and as undocumented (im)migrants, farmwork led them to the community of *Trabajo*.

Amanda Zamudia recounts a saying her father, a farmworker and former *bracero* during the 1960's and 1970's, would share with his children when they were of school age in Mexico. As a kid, Amanda's father had to work and milk "who knows how many" cows before he was allowed to finally attend school for the day. Having entered the labor force as a child and having no opportunity to study, Amanda's father most feared that the life chances of his children would be similarly limited if they did not succeed in school and have a career preparation. Though her father held high aspirations for Amanda and her 6 siblings, none went past the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, or the *secundaria*.

Amanda is certain that the economic hardships experienced as children led to her siblings being pushed out from school and abandoning their aspirations for higher education. At that time her dream was to become an early childhood educator, but was indirectly pressured by her father to enroll in a vocational school to become an executive secretary. Her only other option would have been to enter a government run *preparatoria* which were difficult to gain admissions into without the social or political networks or appropriate guidance through the admissions process. During the time of her vocational school attendance her father suffered an accident working and broke his leg. As the sole income provider for the family and unable to work for a prolonged period of time, her father urged Amanda to stay in school but she saw no other choice.

I was enrolled from September to December when my father broke his leg. Since he was the only source of income, I had to leave [school]. I wasn't able to [study] anymore, I saw the situation and he was not going to be able to do it. He would tell me not to leave school...But looking at the situation where was I going to get the money for the monthly [tuition] fee? I had to pay every month so my decision was to leave school and begin to work.

For Amanda, going to school at the time was very important as she desired nothing more than to fulfill her aspirations of becoming an early childhood educator. Since it became less likely that she would fulfill her career goal, I asked how she felt being pushed out of school when she could no longer afford the expenses associated with continued schooling. After a brief silence her voice quivered and she stated:

Well your heart just breaks. Because sometimes you have to, you want to do it, but if it couldn't be done it couldn't be done. Looking at the situation, where was I going to get money from? My brothers, there were three older than me, but if they weren't coming to the US then they were getting married and by then they 'it was a whole new ballgame'. And that is where the barriers come in, and so I asked myself either I go to school or we eat. So I decided that we were going eat instead.

Most people from the neighborhood that she grew up in Guadalajara didn't get to go to school past the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The common experiences of her friends and people from her neighborhood almost always came down to the "*economico*" or not having the finances to pay for tuition, school supplies, food, transportation to and from school, or supporting their families through a full time job.

Another parent whose life narrative parallels Amanda's is Isabel Mendoza. At a young age, Isabel was already working, if not on her own accord, at least assisting her parents and siblings for the collective good of the family unit. Isabel's parents had little, if any formal education and were barely literate. The poverty that Isabel's family experienced forced them all to begin working full time leading to their push-out of school by the time they finished *la primaria*, or the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. A clear example of how her early labor force participation impacted

her formal education was her leaving school to work the summer harvest with her family traveling northward to a neighboring state prior to end of the 6<sup>th</sup> grade school year. Isabel explained:

In elementary school everything went well, in sixth grade the principal got mad because my parents didn't wait until graduation to finish the academic year. When we returned, I asked her for my diploma so that I could go enroll at the *secundaria* in town. And no, she wouldn't give it to me. She held on to it and I didn't get a spot in the *secundaria* as a result.

The economic demands for Isabel and her siblings' labor led to serious educational consequences. Not being around for her 6<sup>th</sup> grade graduation resulted in her being denied a diploma, complicating plans for her enrollment in the traditional *secundaria*<sup>42</sup>.

Though Isabel was initially denied entrance into the *secundaria*, she insisted in continuing on with her education and had to resort to enrolling in the *tele-secundaria*. Unfortunately for Isabel, her family's economic situation would continue to play a role in limiting her academic progress.

After that, the administrator didn't give me my diploma, I got into the *tele-secundaria*. There are differences between the *secundaria* and the *tele-secundaria*. When the teacher went in to talk to me she said 'here we will not discriminate you,' And I had good grades, and I knew they were going to put me in the *escolta* for the flag. But since my parents couldn't buy me the two outfits [that were required], she was going to replace me with another student whose parents could buy them for her. So I got out, I finished it [school] but it was the *secundaria abierta*-- more like an adult school. I didn't even remember that I had completed the *secundaria*, because it's not the same! To finish it in the afternoons for a couple of hours versus having gone to the [regular] *secundaria* full time, I think it's not the same even though my diploma maybe worth the same because it has the seal and all.

---

<sup>42</sup> The Mexican educational system expanded in the 1970's to include program for youth who work or are in rural communities and otherwise are denied access to traditional schooling. This system of education has been moderately successful in bringing access, at the same time that other unmet needs still present barriers for students and their success in schools.

The above example shows how the withholding of Isabel's diploma by the principal complicated her enrollment in the *secundaria*, and her desire to follow in her older brother's footsteps into the university. She was forced to continue her formal education first through the *telesecundaria*, Mexico's system of distance education that provides educational access primarily to students in rural and agricultural areas (Zorrilla, 2004). During the day, she would continue to work alongside her family, and in the afternoons attend school. Isabel eventually earned her diploma, but the quality of education she received in the *secundaria abierta* was likely not at the same quality as if she had she been able to attend the regular *secundaria* full time.

Another example revealing how poverty impacted family well being and educational access arose in the narrative of Maria Sanchez. Maria was born in a rural community in the state of Oaxaca and lived there with her 5 sibling and parents until she was 6 years old. Her family experienced grinding poverty limited at times to only tortillas and coffee to eat. As a result, she was sent away to live with her grandparents in Mexico City who found opportunities for employment outside of agriculture: grandpa as a brick layer, and grandma cleaning homes. A key benefit for Maria now living in a major urban area was the privilege of attending school starting from the *primaria* uninterrupted all the way to the *secundaria*.

When I finished the *secundaria* I began to work. I told my grandparents I wanted to work so that I could buy me my clothing. Then I started liking having money. Then when they were going to enroll me in the *bachillerato* the first semester I took the exams. I was gonna qualify but then I got the idea that I wanted to make money, I wanted to work. So it became easy for me to tell them 'you know what right now I'm not going to go to school I'm going to work for a year and then I'm going to return to my studies'. But what happened? I kept on working and I liked it, they were going to make the effort into supporting me in my studies. But it was me the one that didn't want to continue. When I eventually wanted to return to my studies I began to see my grandma looking tiresome and the money that they were earning was not enough anymore, and during that time my sisters came to live with us as well. So I saw if I went back to studying they were not going to have any money. I saw that money was scarce and I was going to have to stop putting that capital that I was already giving them, like for the house, and the

expenses, and instead of giving them I was going to be taking from them. So I began thinking for them and didn't realize at the time that in the future I would be missing my education much more.

Today, Maria clearly realizes that her economic situation would be significantly different had she delayed working and instead continued with her education. The example of a younger sister who obtained a college degree in business administration and now lives very comfortably, has led Maria to now regretting the decision to not return to school. Maria did mention however, that her father who had begun to migrate to the U.S. to work was able to fund and support the educational goals of her younger sister---an economic stability that the family did not have when Maria lived with her parents.

In the life narratives of the study participants presented above, they discuss how poverty forced them to leave school prematurely before having the chance to fulfill their educational aspirations. It is clear from the data that as youth, they were aware of the financial constraints their families found themselves in. And although they received messages of affirmation and support from their parents to continue with their education, behind those messages of support were real limitations in terms of the degree of support their parents could assist them with. Thus, based on the experiences of these parents as youth, poverty and the agricultural context restricted them in severe ways from having educational success and greater mobility.

### **Early labor force participation of children in Mexico**

The political and economic context that led to the participants in the study to be pushed out of school for being poor also led to factors forcing most of the participants in this study to enter the labor force as children. A recurrent theme of all male and some female study participants was their exposure to child labor. Some began working as young as five years of age, either alongside their parents or caring for their younger siblings when their parents were working.

Early labor force participation was repeatedly mentioned as accelerating their maturation process and increasing their household responsibilities. In every instance, having to work extensively at a young age contributed to their premature exit from school.

Ricardo Zamudia, grew up in a small rural community, located approximately one hour outside of the city of Guadalajara in the Mexican state of Jalisco. As part of a family of farmworkers greatly afflicted by the passing of Ricardo's father at the age of 3, his mother struggled with the task of raising 9 children. Early on, Ricardo and his siblings were forced to work in their father's absence supplementing the family income. The Zamudia children would wake up early in the mornings and work full time during the day and attended the local elementary school in the afternoons after completing a full day of work. Ricardo began working at the age of 7 planting corn, and selling milk and food to others in his hometown. During the harvest when planting was heaviest, his mother would pull the Zamudia children out of school requiring them to make prior arrangements with their school teachers to take exams early. According to Ricardo, all his siblings desired to continue past the *primaria*, though the "economics and geography" of paying for the bus ride to a *secundaria* located in a neighboring community, purchasing books, and not having resources for lunch made it prohibitive. From his small rural community Ricardo recounts, only those with money and resources were able to persist through the educational system, everyone else only went up to the *primaria*.

With a strong likelihood his schooling would end at *la primaria* if he stayed in his community, Ricardo decided to move to the neighboring state of Colima to live with relatives, and attended the *secundaria* there. He continued to work full time while attending *la secundaria*

and excelled in his academics, averaging 9's<sup>43</sup>, equivalent to a 3.5 G.P.A in the U.S. grading system. His goal upon graduation was to continue on to the *preparatoria*, to then enroll at the university in hopes of fulfilling his educational aspirations of becoming a veterinarian. Ricardo shared:

I always liked working with animals. My goal was to one day become a veterinarian, that was what motivated me, or a teacher as well. I would get along real well with my teachers. But more so, if I had the opportunity to continue studying I wanted it to be as a veterinarian. I wanted a career, to study...But no, it just couldn't be done because we had to work. Even after I graduated from *la secundaria* I left to the capital city in Guadalajara to work. And I wanted to keep studying, but I wasn't able to. I was 16 then and it was so difficult to work and study. And on the side I had to help my mother as well, she was alone and it was really hard. Once you start to work and then you start making money and you just want to continue to make money it become hard to study, either it's one thing or the other.

At the time Ricardo contacted his brothers who had already migrated to the United States to work in hopes they would help support his academic pursuits. Unfortunately, his siblings were unable to leverage that assistance for him.

When they told me they couldn't help me then I even enrolled in a technical school that dealt with learning about computers, but it was too expensive. Over there I was required to pay the whole fee and I didn't have enough to continue...[In sad tone] Then I just dedicated myself to farmwork. It really affected me because I really liked to study. I had a desire to become a professional and not be the same thing, to be able to leave what I was doing, but it couldn't be done. So I dedicated myself to work and since then I came over here and have continued to work in the fields.

Since his arrival in *Trabajo*, Ricardo has always worked in agriculture and has obtained promotions at his place of employment. Today he spends most of his days working as a mechanic in the shop repairing agricultural machinery when it malfunctions. Employers use Ricardo's status as an undocumented migrant to keep his wages low, and combined with the fact that farmworkers don't earn overtime until after 60 hours, he ends up working 10 to 12 hours per

---

<sup>43</sup> In Mexico the grading system is based on a 1-10 scale. The grading scale is roughly equivalent to 6=D, 7=C, 8=B, 9 & 10= A.



day, 6 or even 7 days out of the week. His only wish to have more time to spend with his wife and children.

The relatively privileged economic position that Valente Mendoza's parents once held and the higher quality schooling that his older siblings received afforded them the opportunity to continue ahead past the *preparatoria* and into the university. In the early 1980's Valente's father made a series of bad investments mismanaging his businesses and coupled with the Mexican economic crisis resulted in economic instability for their family. This led to Valente's early labor force participation, and similar to his wife Isabel, he believes it had a negative impact on fulfilling his educational aspirations.

I think that I started [working] like at 12 years of age [with] a man that opened a store and gave me a part time job. In the morning I would go with him to the market, I would help him for a bit, and he would then take me to...the *secundaria*. I would return from the *secundaria* and would go help him once again...I started with him like that going to the market place at 4 in the morning, and he would load up the cream and cheese, and I would carry the bread in a basket on my back. It was a way of being able to work. He started paying me, maybe that is where I started to deviate and I no longer liked school. The *secundaria*, I finished it, but because I had to.

In the passage above, Valente hints at his early labor force participation affecting his desire to study and following the path of his older siblings. He completed the first year of *la preparatoria* only to drop out at the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade "because I would just go in and out, I would leave my notebook and in the afternoon I would go pick it up. I no longer liked school." Afterwards, with the support of his family he enrolled in several vocational schools but never obtained any certification. His life aspiration was to become a *Federal de Caminos* (Highway Patrol) but was denied entry into their academy when he applied for not having graduated from *la preparatoria* and failing to meet the minimum height requirements.

The main thing that I think jaded me was them not admitting me [into the academy]. And the other was the wanting to study for a veterinarian. I wanted to afterwards, but I think

that I was coming in with my own plans and intentions ...They [wanted] to make me return to the *preparatoria* and go back and finish it in order to be able to start the program. And that's when I decided it was best not to. I felt really bad with myself.

Valente's disappointment was evident when he realized he would be unable to fulfill his career aspirations of becoming a *Federal de Caminos*. His failure to meet the minimum educational requirement (exacerbated by the fact that he also dropped out of the *preparatoria*) limited his educational and occupational options. His backup plan of becoming a veterinarian was similarly curtailed by not having met the educational requirements.

For Irma Alvarez and her siblings, attending the *primaria* and the *secundaria* in her small hometown of Ayoquezco in the state of Oaxaca was very convenient. At that level the books required for school were provided by the government, so all students like her were required to purchase pencils and notebooks to write on. Her mother would go to school during recess to take them lunch so they wouldn't have to spend money on food. Attending the *preparatoria* however, would require Irma to leave her hometown and take a 30 minute bus ride to a neighboring community. By this time, her musician father who was absent for long stretches of time decided to return home. Though he was now living with his family, the trade off for him being there was a diminished earning potential. At that same time Irma's older sibling was enrolled in medical school and the resources for her parents were now being divided amongst both of them. She shared her experience:

So when we went to the *prepa* they had to spend money on the bus rides, and had to buy us uniforms, and buy us books. Because in the *prepa* you have to buy the books and they ask you for special note books, the regular don't work anymore so there were more costs for them. We would find out of things, they never told us anything, that they couldn't help or they would tell us 'yes, but I can't right now but tomorrow I will.' We would need help for something and they could no longer provide it. I never asked them 'why can't you buy it for me.' But sometimes you say to yourself 'ah, well they can't help me all the time' and you begin to get discouraged. And sometimes I would want to go to the library to do my homework, but part of it was also not having the money or the liberty. I

would say 'I'm gonna go to the library.' And they would say, 'no you're not going to go because that's just a pretext that you want to go over there'... They didn't give us the trust that we should have gotten and I think that also led me to not want to study. I then just told my dad 'you know what dad, I don't want to go.' They were going to go enroll me for the following year and I said 'no I'm not going to go.' They asked me why and I told them that I didn't want to study anymore. That I would study instead in town whatever was available and I could learn there.

Irma's situation was especially disheartening as she had worked hard to excel in her academics to gain admittance into one of the best and most selective *preparatorias* in the region. Along with the prestige of the school however, also came the higher tuition costs. Tragically though, Irma would leave the *preparatoria* after only her first year and gone with her were also her future aspirations.

I wanted to finish the *preparatoria* and from there I wanted to study to be a nurse or become a teacher--a kindergarten teacher. I would tell my mom of those two choices. But no, no, I didn't attain it, I just got to the grade 10<sup>th</sup> grade. But I did aspire to study more, I wanted to, but no. But I also saw that my brother said that he was leaving school and was dropping out of medical school. And well then I too said I'm going to get out--that was it. But yeah sometimes we make mistakes that sometimes when you are an adult we say 'I should have tried harder and it could have been done' but now it's too late.

Irma's decision to drop out of school early was in part influenced by her older brother's decision to leave his medical school studies after 2 years. Irma's oldest brother who had previously migrated to the U.S. and was working began sending remittances to their parents to save for him. When the younger brother in medical school found out the amount of money his older brother was sending, he dropped out of medical school, convinced that coming to the U.S. to work alongside his brother presented a better economic alternative than continuing to struggle through medical school in Mexico. Irma's decision to leave school due to family and the aforementioned factors shattered her dream to become an early childhood educator. As unfortunate as it was that

the participants in this study were pushed out before fulfilling their educational and career aspirations they were fortunate to have some schooling access.

From a very young age Miguel Sanchez who grew up in a rural community in the state of Oaxaca aspired to become an agricultural engineer or perhaps a local politician to bring integrity to the political system. Miguel's desires to attend school were crushed when his father had no one else to help him work and the poverty they experienced didn't allow him to do without his labor. Miguel would ask his father, "why do my siblings go and I don't go?" His father would respond, "Well first they are going to go study and then you will go." Miguel's chance never came. He elaborated:

The only time I was able to go was one day to school, only one day. Only because I went in the afternoon. And that was the only day that I went and was able to. I even learned how to do my name. And even here I learned how to read and write a little bit. I don't know much but I can read and write. I don't write well but I can read and it was here that I started learning a little to do some of that. But what I have always dedicated myself to is work, always work. I have always worked in the fields.

Miguel's labor experience began when he was 5 years old and began helping his father work. While he never had an opportunity to attend school, his education came from experimenting when he planted and grew crops by applying different amounts of fertilizers and water. He often wonders what changes he could have made in his community had he become the municipal president or how he could have applied his practical knowledge learned from years of successful planting techniques as an agricultural engineer. Miguel was the only parent who had no formal education and that experience has been influential in how he and his wife Maria think about the future educational prospects of their two children.

The above narratives of parents as young adults show that poverty, geographic isolation, and limited educational access all intersected to limit their life chances. Beyond having a strong

desire to succeed and high aspirations, the political economy of agriculture made it extremely difficult for the participants of this study to fulfill their aspirations. Instead, the allure of coming to the U.S. with the false promise of making quick and easy money led them to attempt a northward trek usually by the time they were 20 years old. The crossing of the border proved for most to be a difficult experience for these parents that to this day serves as a contradiction of a painful hope.

### **Border Crossing**

The crossing of the border was repeatedly mentioned as a tense and difficult experience. All but two parents were undocumented at the time of crossing the border which led to difficult and often contentious, yet memorable border-crossing experiences. Saul Gonzalez and Rosa Martinez's first encounter with the U.S. border was a pleasant one having migrated when they obtained legal residency through their parents. The crossing of the border into the U.S. was a traumatic experience, in particular for those accompanied by their young children like the Perez, Mendoza, and Gonzalez families. For one U.S. educated parent, Abel Martinez crossed the border on a regular basis with facility by "passing" as a U.S. citizen through his excellent command of the English language. Unfortunately he was finally apprehended attempting to pass as a legal resident<sup>44</sup> into the U.S. a month after September 11, 2011 with the fortification and increased security measures at the border. From these experiences above, parents utilized these events from their life histories to convey important messages to their children.

---

<sup>44</sup>Abel accompanied his mother to Mexico to collect the body of a brother who had been tragically murdered in Tijuana, Mexico. None of his brothers, though they all have legal documentation, offered to accompany their mother during this difficult time for her. Sadly, Abel had previously applied for legal residency and had been waiting for the last notification so that he could become a resident. He received a letter from INS a week after he returned to the U.S. after first being apprehended.

Saul Gonzalez's border crossing experience came at the age of nine when his family's immigration status was regularized by their father, a former *bracero* who himself had obtained permanent residency in 1972. The family returned to Mexico without their father upon obtaining legal residency so that Saul and his sibling could continue in school. Saul finally returned to the U.S. at the age of 17 to work seasonally in the U.S. before once again returning to Mexico at the end of the harvest. He followed this lifestyle until he married his wife Felicia in Mexico in 1985 and she came with him to the U.S. on a tourist visa. Saul and Felicia stayed in the U.S. until the birth of their first child, only to return to Mexico 3 months after his birth, believing they could obtain superior medical treatment for their newborn son born with a congenital birth defect. The Gonzalez's decided to try their luck in Mexico and lived there for the next 12 years, seeing the birth of a daughter in 1990. At first their finances were strong with Felicia managing a shoe store and Saul working various jobs as a mechanic and a delivery driver. At one point, Saul no longer felt that they could save enough for the surgical procedure his son needed when he turned 12. Saul then decided he would then come to the U.S. and work in the fields seasonally. Eventually, Felicia grew tired of her husband living away from her and their children and gave him an ultimatum—"either we all stay in Mexico together, or we all go to the U.S." Coincidentally, in Saul's last trip alone working in the U.S. in *Trabajo* he saw a flyer from Shriners Hospitals for Children<sup>45</sup> offering free services to low income families with children needing medical assistance. Saul applied for the free services and when they were selected to receive the free treatment he convinced his wife and family to join him in the U.S.

---

<sup>45</sup> Shriners Hospitals for Children is a network of Hospitals throughout North America that provide services for "orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate are eligible for care and receive all services in a family-centered environment, regardless of the patients' ability to pay."

In 1998 Felicia and her eight year old daughter crossed the Tijuana border with help of a *coyote*, but not before being apprehended twice by the border patrol after hours long treks across hilly terrain. After these two disheartening experiences Felicia had given up and was ready to return home. She related the incident:

So we got a hotel and we were there and I'm not sure how he contacted these other *coyotes*. So he comes and tells me 'I have contacted other people and that they are going to cross you through the line.' And I said to him 'Yeah right, don't make things up, not me I'm not crossing anymore. Not for me, not for my daughter.' He said 'So then?' And I told him 'nope, I will just return home.' But I come back to the same thing, I turned and saw my daughter's little face and she would only look at me, and I would look at him, and I would turn to her and I didn't know what to do. And I asked him 'What should we do?' And he said 'well, it's your decision' and I told him 'this will be the last try cause I'm risking a lot.'

Finally on their last attempt, they were able to cross over an aluminum fence nearby the official border and only walked for a half an hour before being picked up by their *coyotes*. They were driven to Arizona to avoid the border patrol check point in San Clemente before being handed off to Saul who drove his reunited family home to the community of *Trabajo*. This border crossing experience served as a powerful moment for Felicia to turn to in difficult moments to remind her children of sacrifices made for the benefit of the whole family.

Amanda Zamudia had a similarly difficult experience crossing the border for the first time as a twenty-one year old in 1993 when she followed her husband Ricardo to the U.S. Ricardo had already been in the U.S. for a month when he returned to the border region to wait for Amanda to cross over. She revealed:

It was a crazy experience, I was skinny back then [laughing], so I was able to run. It was difficult for me because, first of all I had never left home before. And when I got to Tijuana and I saw, when we crossed through a ladera I felt like I was choking. We walked a lot, we hid underneath some shrubbery because the *migra* was around there watching. I had a really bad cough, and the coyote would tell me, shut up! And at the end there was a steep climb, I almost didn't make it! They crossed us over in a car. I was the first person in, but then they put 7 people on top of me. I don't wish that on anyone, it

gets ugly... I don't know how or what time we crossed. In the end they put us in a trailer, and from there the different connects were coming, I think there were a lot. They would come pick us up 2 or 3 at a time, but they separated all of us.

Amanda eventually crossed over safely and was reunited with her husband before leaving together to the community of *Trabajo*. Luckily for Amanda, without a deportation on her record she is likely to have an easier time obtaining "legal" documentation. Since 2001 the Sevilla's have a submitted application on record with the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS)<sup>46</sup> to become permanent residents. They have received two correspondences in more than 10 years regarding their immigration case and believe they are likely to wait 5 additional years for their case to be considered. Amanda's border crossing narrative has provided her with a powerful experience to use to connect her children to a legacy of struggle and marginalization.

Besides the physical and emotional tolls related to the border crossing experiences of migrants there are also the economic. Juan Perez was persuaded to come to the U.S. by a cousin who had been working here for a few years. He was led to believe that in a short period of time he could save enough money to build a nice home in Mexico. He took a bus from Veracruz to Mexico City and then flew from there to the border region. Once there, Juan was quickly approached by coyotes offering to get him across. He explained:

Some came right away, 'You going to the other side?' 'Yes,' I responded. And then we got there and they took us to a house. On the first night we tried to cross, we passed through a pasture, and there were many cows. We crossed through a canal on an inner tube, and then we ran like 2 miles more or less when the border patrol caught us behind a stack of alfalfa that was there. And the next day, they let us go at 4 A.M., and we tried and were caught again. And from there we went back and it was Saturday already. On Sunday at night we tried once again but this time we went through another side and we finally successfully crossed on that day. We went through an onion field, like 3 miles, It was an onion field there in Calexico and there on that side we walked a lot--the whole

---

<sup>46</sup> INS since 2003 has been under the Department of Homeland Security. These were changes triggered in large part due to the political climate after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001.



night. We arrived at a freeway, I don't know the name of it, there was a Chevy truck --It was like 25 of us and all of us in the back of the truck. It was ugly, ugly, ugly.

Juan finally succeeded in crossing the border on his third attempt. What his narrative and those of the other parents reveal however are the social networks that migrants rely on to raise the economic capital to pay for the smuggle across the border place migrants in a vulnerable situation. Juan, who was a welder in Mexico made \$400 to \$500 per week and worked a flexible schedule and was compensated for the amount of projects he finished per week. When he began working in the U.S. moving heavy irrigation lines he thought about returning to Mexico as the American dream he had been sold on was not exactly as he imagined it. He elaborated on his particular case:

When I got here and I got this job I wanted to return home. But by then I was already deeply in debt. A cousin of mine who was living here is the one that sent the money so that we could come in the airplane. We came in the bus from Veracruz to Mexico and from Mexico to Mexicali on the airplane. But for that I was already in the whole like \$400 more or less. The crossing was \$1800, it was already \$2,300. And when I got here, you are barely learning to do this kind of work and adapting to here as well. And every week I had to send my wife money. He would let me borrow like \$100 here and \$50 there, and they keep track of everything. By the time that I started working I already owed him \$4000 and that's when I said 'I have to start working and find a job.' By the time I learned how to do that job right, I was over here on the West Side, and really didn't like it. You would get up at 3 AM and its very heavy work.

What the passage further reveals is the financial hardships that undocumented migrants find themselves in just to come across the border. Juan would continue to work and eventually was able to find a better job as a welder—a skill he had mastered in Mexico. Two years later in 2003, he arranged for his wife, daughter, and son to join him in the U.S. and they have been living in *Trabajo* ever since.

As the above narratives reveal, each of these parents undertook big risks when they crossed the border. Prior to the fortification of the border after the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, migrants would travel back and forth between the U.S. and Mexico much more frequently. The

militarization of the border has made it increasingly difficult and more expensive for smugglers to get their clients across the border and an (un)intended consequences has resulted in migrants remaining trapped in the U.S. and not wanting to risk returning to Mexico, even for a short visit. As Juan alluded to, coming to the U.S. is one thing, working here in the fields is totally another.

### **Laboring in the fields**

Most informants reported being part of dual income earning households. The men in the study indicated having longer periods of employment. Those lucky to work for a local ranch usually had secure yearlong employment and were compensated marginally better than the typical seasonal farmworker. The women tended to be employed mainly as seasonal workers in packing houses or in the fields. For other women like Rosa or Irma, and most recently Maria who have really young children, it was more convenient to stay home with their children, rather than working and paying for day care. Amanda worked part time as janitorial staff at a hotel and Felicia for MEP daycare. A common experience for informants who were undocumented was working many hours for near minimum wage pay in backbreaking labor. In this next section, I provide the narratives that illuminate those experiences.

The typical day for a farmworker in the community of *Trabajo* begins very early in the morning. Like many other farmworking women in the community, at 3:30 A.M. Isabel is already up to make “*el lonche*” for herself and her husband. She will finish *el lonche* and other necessary chores around the household by 4:30 A.M. By 5 A.M. she leaves her home and walks to the center of town at a central location to awaiting her *raitero* that will take her to the designated work site for the day. That site can be as little as a 5 or 10 minute drive just outside of the community of *Trabajo*, or it can be as far as a one and a half hours away. For most people living in a community like *Trabajo* where large percentages of farmworkers are undocumented, they

must rely on *raiteros* (ride providers) to take workers to and from work, for an additional fee.

They typically start their work day as soon as the morning light makes it possible, usually by 6

A.M. Isabel shared her experience:

You start the day with enthusiasm, but as time is going by, you get a break at 9, have breakfast, and continue working. You await lunch and a break at 12. You take half hour, sometimes you don't eat food, you eat a fruit or drink a soda. Then we start again at 1, by then you start feeling the tiredness. In the morning you talk with others. In the afternoon, you don't even want anyone talking to you! It even bothers you that someone has the humor to laugh. You are tired, but oh well, everyone feels that. When you work 10 hours, at 4 you almost don't do anything the last hour, it's almost a waste. There are certain jobs that after 8 hours it doesn't yield much anymore.

Most jobs in the fields according to parents paid a flat hourly rate usually at or around the minimum wage. Farmworking is a profession that becomes increasingly dangerous during the scorching summer months where the temperature routinely hovers above 100 degrees, or in the winter months where temperatures can be below freezing, especially in the early morning. Working in a sector often depending on hard grueling labor, complicated by weather hazards is very physically demanding and exhausting. Parents indicated that in the last couple of years, employers have been required to provide training that teaches employees their rights as laborers to protect themselves when working under tough conditions, especially in the heat. She elaborates:

Like right now, today, I was comfortable in the morning. But the last pass [of the field] that we got today, there were some huge melons...of those I can't lift two because they are really big. One, I can't lift them with my hand. I lift one up and then I go for the other one. But yes, it's all will power because you have to finish the day. Like today, another lady went and she couldn't make it. She said that she was agitated and drank water. She drank too much water and her stomach started turning. She didn't come out for the last pass. She told the foreman that she couldn't anymore. And well they do give us training here...like right now that there is a lot of heat...And well, one has to work really hard to get ahead on your work even if the work is heavy...They [foremen] don't like to bring women for these jobs because of the same reason that it is real heavy. But they gave us jobs here anyways...But, I think that all the people because of necessity or...they make the effort to tolerate it, even when you are really tired. Just like in the

afternoon... In the morning one is well rested from the previous night and what have you, but in the afternoon, your body begins to tire more and you feel it more. And like I tell you, more so right now that it's the time of extreme heat...you are agitated more by the climate and everything. This is what is the hardest type of work, cause you tire even sooner with the heat and all.

Parents, especially women, who worked at the height of the growing season, reported feeling overwhelmed with the multiple responsibilities that they had as providers and as parents concerned for their children's overall well being. Isabel and other parents shared that when they work ten hour days finishing at 4:30 P.M., the work site is sometimes one hour and a half away meaning that they arrive home close to 6 P.M. They also reported however, that if it meant that chores for that day would get pushed behind then it was worth the sacrifice.

Unsurprisingly, Valente at times questioned the utility of his wife working if in the end, the income gains were not significant, and wondered about the tradeoffs if working so much and having less time around their two children was worth it. Other parents indicated being concerned that they did not have a chance to monitor their children as closely as they would like to and voiced concerns of fears of their children straying from their goals due to negative peer influences. Valente spoke on his frustration with work:

The one thing that I do sometimes tell them is...it's unjust because I'm in a place that I would never have liked to be in, ok. But the economic situation made me come here. However, I never asked to stop being able to see my brothers and sisters nor much less my parents. But in the end, that's where I stayed in. I brought my wife at 1 year and 8 months of me being here, she came. And I have not been able to return since. I have not been able to move. Until things start going well for her at work, its two months that I could have done now May, June, July. But then after this, there isn't a run of work for her because jobs are limited. Days yes, days no, days yes, days no and the whole year goes by again. In October, November, December there also isn't any work. Then comes the lettuce and two, three weeks and then it's over. And to earn \$250, \$300 or her that she earns let's say \$400, right now. We pay up to \$80 [per week] so they can take care of our kids. And even though Mayra is a young lady, I don't care to continue to have to pay for her, and for my son. I prefer that they have a set hour to come in, a set hour to leave, that they did this, that they ate, so that we can have that security and tranquility. Then, of the \$400 that she earned, \$80 pays for someone to take care of them. Of the \$400 that

she earned, she has to pay the “ride”, another \$40. How much is left over? \$280! And for the thrashing she took at work the whole week till 6 pm working in the fields, waking up at 3:30 or 4 A.M. to make lunch, go and come back. Is that something just? Of course it’s not just, that’s why I tell you. But one has to get used to it, we have to adapt to it, we have to.

The Mendoza’s find themselves in the predicament of farmworker families working an extended and grueling schedule during the season, and yet, finding it difficult to make ends meet during the down time of the year where less jobs are available. Luckily for the Mendoza’s, Valente has worked the past seven years for a local rancher as a foreman which has ensured that he works year round. Their status as undocumented workers means that they do not qualify for most types of public benefits including unemployment insurance. Unemployment insurance is a critical component especially for seasonal farmworkers--taxes are removed from their paychecks for it. This implies that unlike documented workers, the undocumented must always be working even if it means traveling long distances as they do not have the luxury to rest for a month or two collecting unemployment insurance to subsist through the down months.

Other parents also shared a similar sentiment on their work in the fields and the limited time they have to devote to their children. Amanda, in particular stated that “the work in the fields is the worst paid, and what people are earning is just for surviving on a day to day basis only, you can’t afford the most minimal luxury.” The long day-to-day grind starting early in the morning that both documented and undocumented farmworkers expose themselves comes as an undercurrent of racist discourse is telling them that they are taking American jobs (Chomsky, 2007). She continued:

Bearing in mind that we give our children to care to someone else, here we neglect our kids in that aspect for trying to give them a better life when we go to work. We drop them off to be taken care of and we don’t end up returning until 4 or 5 in the evening if it goes well and then cook, clean and prepare for the following day. That is the same routine of always, and farmwork like I tell you is heavy work and lots of getting up early

in the morning and of having the gall to do it. I admire the people that do that work. Not everyone can do that type of work. I would love to invite those that have never been so that, only 2 or 3 hours so that they can see what working in the fields is really like.

Some parents confided in me feeling bad for not being able to spend more time with their children. With the cumulative effects from the home and work responsibilities these women have left them exhausted. Guadalupe Perez shared the sacrifices she has made in supporting her family.

To go to work at Janville I had to get up at 3 A.M. because the *raitera*<sup>47</sup> would pick us up until 4:30 A.M. so that we could be at work by 6...and we would work sometimes till 6 P.M. And I would get home by 7:20 P.M. I would come home and cook dinner for my husband and kids and then fix their clothes, at least for the little ones. The oldest one she is old enough and knows what she is going to wear for school. But it is very complicated to work, very difficult. Because one day comes and then the next and it's the same thing. And sometimes we work on Saturdays as well...It is very hard work. You know they say that one should sleep eight hours, well sometimes I only sleep five maybe even six. I always sleep on my *raiteras* car to work. She would ask me 'you didn't have enough time to sleep?' and I would tell her no because I end up sleeping at 10 almost 11 P.M. And it is very stressful to work, for one who is also married.

I asked her specifically what was it about her work that was the most difficult. She continued:

All the jobs from the fields or packing houses are very exhausting. Because the forewomen they stress you out, because even when you are doing good work they want you to work even faster. And sometimes you come out with your hands all calloused and they don't want you to wear gloves or anything in your hands. And sometimes one gets really broken down--but what can one do?

Guadalupe was not alone in lamenting the lack of time they have to spend with their children.

Ricardo Zamudia similarly felt conflicted in not having more time to spend with their children.

When asked if there were more things that he would like to do right now with his kids but can't,

he responded:

Well yes, a lot of things. Perhaps take them out more but unfortunately we can't because of work, because the type of job that I have is an everyday job and of many hours--that is what field work is. Sometimes I think that is something they are missing out. For me taking them out more, engaging them more, having more time, perhaps those are the

---

<sup>47</sup> Raitera is the driver of a work vehicle that provides rides for workers in a car, bus, or a van to a designated work site.

things that raise difficulties. When we have time we don't have money, when we don't have work we have time but we don't have money. In this country we always have to be paying our bills and all that.

Though most of the families were dual income earners, a few like the Martinez and Alvarez families relied on the income of the husbands only. Fortunately for both families, the husbands worked for local ranchers and had stable year round employment—Abel Martinez as a key equipment operator in three different ranches and Diego Alvarez driving a truck and picking. Though this meant Abel was an “on call” employee and sometimes slept in his work truck rather than return home. If any pieces of machinery broke down he drove to the work site to fix them and also handled toxic chemicals and sprayed pesticides on crops. For his services his family lives rent free in a house and is provided with a company truck. This work arrangement allowed his wife Rosa to be a home maker and care for their 1 year old daughter. This arrangement however often requires Abel to regularly work six days a week at inconsistent and irregular times and was often called to work a seventh day when the growing seasons was at its peak.

### **Salience of Undocumented Status in the U.S.**

With the exception of the Gonzalez's and the Gutierrez's, the rest of the families were either undocumented or of mixed status. For undocumented parents who workers this likely meant being relegated to agriculture or other forms of poorly paid manual labor and limited from advancing and receiving promotions. School issues arose limiting the opportunities available for the children, and parents had difficulties in forming meaningful relationships with school officials. In this section, I detail the challenges that parents and families' encountered as a result of their immigration status. These challenges include language differences, limited access to transportation, racial micro-aggressions, unnecessary clashes with police, amongst other issues.

Perhaps the most significant issue that has profoundly shaped the experiences of (im)migrant farmworker parents in this study was their citizenship status. In my sample those who did not possess legal residence in the U.S. experienced limited social mobility, were denied promotions and access to more coveted positions, experienced greater incidences of racial micro-aggressions, and lived constantly under stress. In this study, participants fell into 3 general status categories of migrants: 1) those obtaining permanent residence through a family member prior to 1986 2) those that legalized with the 1986 passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) 3) those are still undocumented in the present day. Presently, Ricardo and Amanda Zamudia, Valente and Isabel Mendoza, Abel Martinez, Maria Sanchez, Diego and Irma Alvarez, Juan and Guadalupe Perez remain undocumented<sup>48</sup>.

In 1989 shortly after arriving in the U.S. as a 19 year old Valente missed a key opportunity to obtain legal residency during the passage of IRCA. The aunt he was living with at the time did not lend him the \$250 he needed for a contractor letter<sup>49</sup> because she didn't find news reports of immigrants gaining legalization through IRCA credible. In missing out on that opportunity Valente believes that his employment mobility has been effected by his citizenship status and the privileges that come with it. He now struggles with the exploitability of being undocumented and the reality of not being able to drive "legally."

For me, the fact of not having a driver's license limits you like by half of what you could do. I have 'fought,' because I tell you that I don't ask for anything more than to work.

---

<sup>48</sup> As I previously listed, the Mendoza, Alvarez, Sanchez and Perez families all have children that are in need of adjusting their citizenship status. The Sanchez, Perez, Zamudia, and Alvarez families are in the long process of becoming legal residents.

<sup>49</sup> There were two pathways for legalization under IRCA, the Residence based legalization and Special Agricultural Workers programs. According to Martin (2005) were: "Residence-based legalization allowed those in the US "continuously" since January 1, 1982 to legalize their status during in 1987-88, while the employment-based Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) program permitted unauthorized foreigners who did at least 90 days of farm work in 1985-86 to become immigrants."



As long as God continues to be kind to me I have my truck there...How do I drive? Until now, only God knows. I have a license (from God) that is the only one that covers me. But as long as I don't have any problems with the police, I don't see what would be the impediment. Because I don't ask any company for a truck, no company, what I do ask for is work. What would be the impediment for them as a company to accept someone like me that does not have papers? Well, first of all they are gonna tell you that you don't have papers. What is my answer to that? Who does the work, the papers or me? Right?

In sharing his frustration with the imposed limitations Valente made an impassioned argument for the undocumented and why they should be allowed to work regardless of documentation. On more than one occasion, Valente echoed the sentiment of other undocumented working parents not understanding why they are targets if they are willing to do the work that others refuse to do. Valente's helplessness pertaining to his family's immigration status is captured by the ways that being undocumented also impacts his daughter Mayra. He elaborated on a recent experience:

Here the other day I made a comment, I made a reference to something. My Mayrita is very intelligent she has received invitations to the White House, Belgium, and England for student exchange programs, for many programs. And sometimes she cannot go because she doesn't have a paper...It's frustrating, it's frustrating and tiring ok. The other day Johnson, the person who is running for congress came. They asked me if I would let my daughter go and have her say some words at a breakfast that this congressional candidate Johnson was going to have and say whatever. I tell you... what did they want me to say? That for her it is very frustrating, that she also has dreams as a student, that she has those letters and invitations, and that she hasn't been able to go to any! Because of the congress, because of the government, because of whatever, they have marginalized us because of a fucking paper. Is that what you want her to go to? I'll make her go, I tell you. But if she gets going and lets loose don't try to silence her or get her off the stage. You will have to listen to her until she is done talking. It's frustrating, it is frustrating! It does limit you. I know that at least it has for me.

Valente expressed anger at how many hard working students like his daughter Mayra are denied opportunities to continue with their education or have opportunities for meaningful civic participation in society. Instead, he offered a critique of how others who at times are not engaged in the most positive activities are automatically granted opportunities while talented and outstanding students like his daughter Mayra are denied. Even more infuriating to him are the

games politicians at the local, state, and federal level play utilizing immigrant and Latino communities promising support for immigration reform, but never accomplishing anything.

Central California agriculture business interests are powerful and typically both Republicans and Democrats are at their mercy—making it one of the most politically conservative regions in the nation. A growing dilemma in this region is the indispensability of immigrants (especially undocumented) and their labor, all while they are scolded for supposedly being a drain on resources. Valente alluded to those contradictions especially since he, his wife, and thousands of other undocumented workers throughout the Valley are ineligible for almost every form of public assistance, even when they are taxed for them. He argues how farmworkers like him who are contributing to the betterment of society should be acknowledged and given full membership in the form of citizenship to the larger society.

When they give me a license and they put ‘*you are not autorizado para manejar.*’ It feels bad that they mark you with that letter x, that you are not authorized to drive. What label are they placing on you, and what are they telling you? Why do they label people in that way? Why not let us leave it blank? If I’m asking for a license to become a foreman, they should give it to me or leave it as it is. If I need to move somewhere that will be my problem! But why do they label me that I’m not authorized to drive? Those are the rules, I can’t break them, but I don’t agree with them. I don’t agree that I shouldn’t be given an opportunity wherever I’m at, that they mark me...label me, because I don’t have a license, that I’m not legal, that I don’t have papers. I come back to the same thing, what are papers good for? So that people can become lazier? So that they work for 2 months and then go and step in front of a government window and ask for unemployment for 8 months, 6 months and then ask for an extension? And they go the whole year without working until another two months then they work again. Right? And meanwhile people like me have to do backbreaking labor to half way make it. And to know that of everything I generate there are people that are eating out of my money. Wouldn’t it be easier that they let me work freely to be able to generate even more? Life is ironic.

Valente’s frustration echoed in the commentary above was of a similar sentiment to other informants in the study. They recognize that they are in a country that is not their own, but contribute to make it better in ways that many “citizens” would be unwilling to. In the end,

Valente notes that ending the discriminatory treatment aimed at undocumented migrants in the form of lower wages and denial of necessary services is in the nation's best interests. A second opportunity for Valente to become legalized occurred in 2000 through a 245i application<sup>50</sup>. After spending \$6,500 on an attorney, his application was halted when an employer failed to provide him with proper documentation as evidence that he was employed. The process of migrant legalization has been painful and slow for these families.

A close relative of Ricardo and Amanda Zamudia submitted an application sponsoring them for legal residency and they have been "waiting in line" more than ten years. In the meantime, Ricardo is always under high stress when he drives and only does so as little as possible to reduce the risk of being pulled over by the police and be cited for driving without a license. When Ricardo first arrived in the U.S. in 1990 he obtained a drivers license (needing then only a birth certificate) and drove a company truck until the state of California increased the requirements for a license to include a social security number and a green card to legally drive. He shared an experience:

They have taken my car away before and I had to pay. It was like a \$700 fine. Because you have to pay the police, to take your car out of impound its \$150, the tow truck, and then they take it for two or three days then you have to pay for parking, the ticket is \$400 for driving without a license. Two times I have had to pay that. But I told the judge, 'I have to work, I have my daughters and if I don't drive I'm not going to be able to work' He told me, 'if I catch you again in 18 months I'm going to throw you in jail'...I told him, 'I'm going to have to keep driving.' He said, 'you better hope I don't catch you.' 'I have to drive because I have to work'. I told him that I previously had a license. Someone who had never had a license he only charged them \$200 and he charged me \$400. I asked him why? Since I knew how to drive and knew the laws. He said 'Because of that I'm charging you more because you know the laws and you are still driving. This other person didn't know that it was illegal to drive.' That's why he charged me more.

---

<sup>50</sup> According to agriculture economist Phil Martin, the "245(i) adjustment of status program looms large in US immigration. It allows foreigners in the US to pay \$1,000 and adjust status in the US, that is, without returning to their countries of origin and obtaining a visa at a US consulate.

Ricardo was also quick to point out that living in the U.S. is like living in a golden cage because he is not able to go out very much and is constantly worried wherever he travels because of his status. Referring specifically to the racist nativism (Perez-Huber, Benavides, Malagon, Velez, & Solorzano, 2008) that he has experienced in the U.S., he shared the following thoughts:

I feel attacked. Because we come here to work and it feels like someone is throwing rocks at you. That they are attacking you and you only come to work. And well for me since I came here in 1990, I have worked continuously, even with the minimal amounts that we earn per year. I have worked during that time and have never asked for any type of help. But sometimes other people do it, and sometimes I saw both sides of the equation and I see some that do take advantage of the system here because I see some people that never work and they are driving better cars than I do. They live well, they don't work and are dressed well. And those are the ones that are born here, so it is not us that came here who are the problem, because those of us that comes because we come to work.

Ricardo described above the frustration that some of the undocumented parents shared in realizing that due to their citizenship status, were not eligible for unemployment insurance or other services that their documented peers were. This implied that they had to be working as many days as possible days where they did not work meant one day less of income. For them not having to rely on social services was a source of pride, although at times they wish they had health and unemployment insurance as they had delayed seeking medical care or tending to their own needs because of the need to continue working. At the time of our second interview, Ricardo's right cheek was swollen having gone to the dentist for severe tooth pain and being told he would need a dental bridge with an estimated cost of \$7000 for the procedure. Ricardo had been tolerating the pain for more than two weeks and since he didn't have the money he would in effect delay the procedure and continue to tolerate the pain as long as he could. He even joked that it would be cheaper for him to go to Mexico to have the procedure there and pay a *coyote* to bring him back across the border, than to pay the U.S. dentist.

One of the few parents that had an opportunity to graduate from a U.S. high school was Abel Martinez. Though Abel grew up the majority of his life in the U.S., he was born in Mexico and therefore had not yet been able to legalize. As a result of his experience in U.S. schools, prior to September 11, 2011 he would cross the border and with his command and fluency of the English language by passing as a U.S. citizen. Shortly after the events of September 11, 2011 Abel's brother passed away so he accompanied his mother to Mexico to assist her with the funeral planning services since his brothers refused even though they were all documented. On his return to the U.S. he attempted to once again cross the border like he had many times before—but was unsuccessful. He was apprehended and deported to Mexico and ended up hiring a coyote to bring him to the community of *Trabajo*. The irony of the entire situation is that Abel had a legal permanent resident application pending and when he returned to *Trabajo*, he received a letter in the mail (a week later) notifying him of a date with INS to regularize his status. Since Abel now had an apprehension and deportation on his record, if he applied now for legal permanent residency, he likely would be punished for up to 10 years before being granted an opportunity to apply again and be forced to stay in Mexico away from his family. Rather than run the risk of potentially being separated from his family, he has instead not bothered applying for residency.

For Abel too, living undocumented in the US has been a frustrating and limiting experience. To this day he laments not being able to regularize his status at the time of IRCA because he was in Mexico in school living with his mother. He believes that in not having papers, opportunities have been missed that would otherwise have been there for him. For example, as a high school student living with an older sibling and his kids, he felt appreciated and cared for, but out of place and didn't really seek out assistance as he felt that doing so would

mean taking resources away from his brother's children. When I asked Abel if being documented would have changed his educational trajectory he mentioned:

Yes because it would have been easier for me to be able to get financial aid. But like at that time what I would hear is that if you don't have papers you can't get an education you can't get financial aid. And now that I'm more involved [pause]I know there are programs...But then, maybe like my sophomore year I realized that I wasn't going to be able to further my education I didn't have the support so I kind of started slacking off. And that's where I went down on my grades, stuff like that. But like I said if I would have had the support or financially I might of you know. What career I don't know, because I was I was like since I was a kid I was like firefighter or police but you know I couldn't get or can't get those kinds of jobs. So I don't know if my situation would have been different at that time. But like I said I have been working here and you know, they know my situation, so like I said I don't know.

A combination of factors according to Abel discouraged him from continuing with his studies, principally his status as an undocumented immigrant. At the time when he was in school he was not aware of services that were available to students with his status. Through Abel's participation in a leadership retreat through the Migrant Educational Program exclusively for fathers, he learned that there are private sources of funding and scholarships to support undocumented students. This knowledge was very empowering to him, had he known of this information while he was younger he would have seen that it is possible for undocumented students to attend and graduate from a college or a university. In recent years awareness and the amount of resources available to undocumented students has increased significantly with the issue becoming one of national importance.

Another parent, Maria Sanchez, indicated that her oldest child has in the past become very sad at the thought that he or his mom might be deported. Maria shares that he is aware that both he and his mom are in the process of regularizing their status through their father who has been a resident for almost 25 years. Maria shared how there are times when her son thinks a lot about being undocumented. She stated:

Because when he watches the news, and you know with the Arizona law [S.B.1070] he gets really nervous and tense and says, ‘Mami and if they take us, and if this happens?’ ‘No son,’ I tell him, ‘That will not happen. And even if it happens, well I will be with you, we won’t leave each other. Not because of a law will we be separated, wherever they take us we will go there together.’ But yes sometimes I feel that it happens for a period of time, like when there is a lot of news coverage about that he kind of gets very contemplative. But outside of that he is very calm.

Maria tries to assure her young son to feel safe even as he is aware at such a young age that there is an anti-immigrant discourse in the U.S. Maria’s son has also been harassed at school for being Oaxacan, a state from Mexico with large percentages of indigenous population. The implication of that type of intra-ethnic based bullying and harassment is a reinforcement of racial hierarchies from Mexico that are used to relegate Oaxacans and other indigenous students to a lower status than other Mexican mestizo students<sup>51</sup>. Even so, Maria tries to encourage her son to do the best academically as he can, even with both of them being undocumented.

But I always try to tell my son, ‘Mira *mijo*, the only thing that is stopping you is that your paperwork is in process right now and we don’t know if we are going to be able to regularize our status. But I hope that one day we will. And I know that we are going to work hard.’ That is the only thing because my son does know what steps to follow where he is heading to and all that.

As positive as Maria is with her child by encouraging him to do well in school, she knows that he will eventually face some very serious obstacles. To her knowledge, and what she has seen, she believes undocumented students typically only go up to high school unless they are lucky and are able to obtain financial assistance in the form of private scholarship as a result of excelling in their studies. These issues and others, Maria will have to grapple with to make sure that her son

---

<sup>51</sup> More recently, indigenous communities in California have begun addressing this issue. For example, in the city of Oxnard, the Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project organized a *No me llames Oaxaquita (Don’t call me little Oaxcan)* campaign that seeks to eliminate language use and bullying aimed at the Mexican indigenous youth community. For more information see: <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/may/28/local/la-me-indigenous-derogatory-20120528>

stays motivated through the high school transition and ensure that he maintains a positive outlook.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter specifically addressed the question: *How are the educational engagement conceptions and practices of Mexican Immigrant Farmworkers shaped by their life histories?* By focusing specifically on life histories, we are able to not only see the adversity that parents experienced in their own educational pursuits, but also how parents learned from those experiences to develop specific strategies to engage in the education of their children. Moving away from the prescriptive notions of what parent engagement is and examining it within a historical context of farmwork, we see how parents in this study are very actively engaged in providing *apoyo* for their children. In the next chapter I provide a critical analysis of the five thematic areas that emerged from the data and provide further context on how schools, parents, and the community can respond to maximize on the specific forms of engagement that these parents participated in.



## **CHAPTER 7: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF *APOYO* AS PARENT ENGAGEMENT**

In prior chapters, I have provided a historical context of the school-community and overview of participants, and examined the ways that parents arrive at their conceptions and practices of engagement. My research findings revealed how parents' conceptions of educational engagement were tempered by their immigrant farmworker experience, and as result, fostered unique forms of educational support strategies that they utilized for their children. In this chapter I provide a conceptual framework that illustrates the explicit and nuanced approaches to parental engagement. This framework highlights the unique ways in which these parents resist and struggle against multiple forms of marginalization within the schools while remaining hopeful their children will have "a better life" devoid of economic hardship and labor exploitation.

Parents in my study are steadfast about the improved opportunities and job prospects for their children if they attain higher levels of formal education—a theme that was consistently emphasized. The purpose of this chapter is to outline a conceptual framework to explain immigrant parents' school engagement. I introduce a conceptual model of *Apoyo*, which expands the parental involvement discourse to account for the unacknowledged out-of-school roles that farmworking parents play in supporting their children across different educational domains. This framework is helpful in contextualizing and historicizing how immigrant parents' life narratives serve as pedagogical points of reference and shape their views and beliefs about the nature of their parental roles in the education of their children. Thus, analyzing the experience of these parents through a unique lens, the emergent counterstories allow for

centering of parents' perspectives highlighting the manifold ways in which they resist an exploitative agricultural political economy in the service of affording educational access to their children—a process that is rarely acknowledged.

Through the framework of *Apoyo* I argue that traditional approaches to parental involvement fail at capturing the diverse strategies of engagement (or *apoyo*) employed by (im)migrant farmworking parents. Traditional frameworks including those delineated by Epstein (1995) and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler<sup>52</sup> (1997) still rely on school centric notions of parent engagement without critically accounting for macro level contextual factors that arise in the immigrant experience. As such, they fail to capture the richness of their non-formal and out-of-school and less visible forms of participation. From the perspective of these parents, what counts as educational engagement and what likely will have the greatest impact in the educational trajectory of their children may, but often may not, include being present at the schools, particularly when parents experience barriers to accessing school personnel. Second, I present examples from parental narratives that when viewed through these critical lenses re-imagines and redefines the capacity for these parents to be engaged in meaningful ways. Lastly, I discuss how using a framework of *Apoyo* with immigrant and farmworker families can help capture a more holistic picture of the ways these families not only participate in the education of their children, but sacrifice themselves to mitigate the potential of future economic exploitation, and at the same time promote educational access and improve their post higher education job prospects.

---

<sup>52</sup> In Hoover-Dempsey et. al updated model of 2005, they acknowledge shifts in the field of parental engagement and begin to account for greater contextual factors. However their model as other mainstream models still place a premium for formal school participation at the expense of less visible, but just as important, forms of engagement.

### **From Parent Engagement Toward a Model of *Apoyo***

In chapter 5, I discussed the historical and contemporary context for schooling and situated such contexts within the community of *Trabajo*. I described the colonial like relationship *Trabajo* maintains with the community of Big Mountain, both spatial and social (linguistic and cultural) distance. In chapter 6, I drew from the life narratives of parents in my sample to show how transnational agriculture has shaped their educational, migratory, and occupational trajectories. In what follows, I situate the life narratives of parents within the historical and contemporary context of schooling to illuminate the ways in which the farmworker experience is hindered by socio-economic factors that parents navigate daily and help shape the strategic logic of their participation in schooling. In introducing a framework of farmworker parent engagement, I hope demonstrate how life narratives reveal places of strength and unique and powerful ways that they conceptualize engagement in the schooling process by resisting macro and micro levels of oppression.

Traditional parent involvement models typically assume egalitarian “parent-school-community partnership” with mutually beneficial goals (Epstein, 2001). Parents’ values and views about education are often disregarded when at odds with what school officials consider important (Calabrese-Barton, 2004). The literature in this subject area reveals school officials most often place value on behaviors typically associated with white middle class parents that demonstrate high levels of visibility at the school site and participation in school centered scripted behaviors (Lawson, 2003; Lopez, 2001; Perez-Carreon, et al. 2005). Scholars have challenged traditional notions of involvement in the literature (Calabrese-Barton, et al 2004; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Lopez, 2001; Olivos, 2006; Suoto Manning & Swick, 2006; Valdes, 1996, 1998) and conceptions of involvement have evolved over time to include more holistic

perspectives that account for a wider array of parent and teacher roles (Hoover-Dempsey, et al. 2005). However, regardless of the positive improvements reflected in the literature and in scholarly communities expanding the notion of around parent involvement, the fact remains that far too often parent engagement conceptions of school officials remain mired in cultural deficit ideologies of communities of color (Valencia & Black, 2002). Further research is necessary that critically explores the how and why parent engagement challenges cultural deficit explanations by centering the experiences of parents, especially those of marginalized populations. (Im)migrant parents are also constrained by institutional barriers that hinder and often limit their opportunities to participate in schools. Before discussing my findings around family involvement, I will first summarize the ways in which immigrant parents' opportunities to get involved in schools are related to social (cultural and linguistic) and spatial distances.

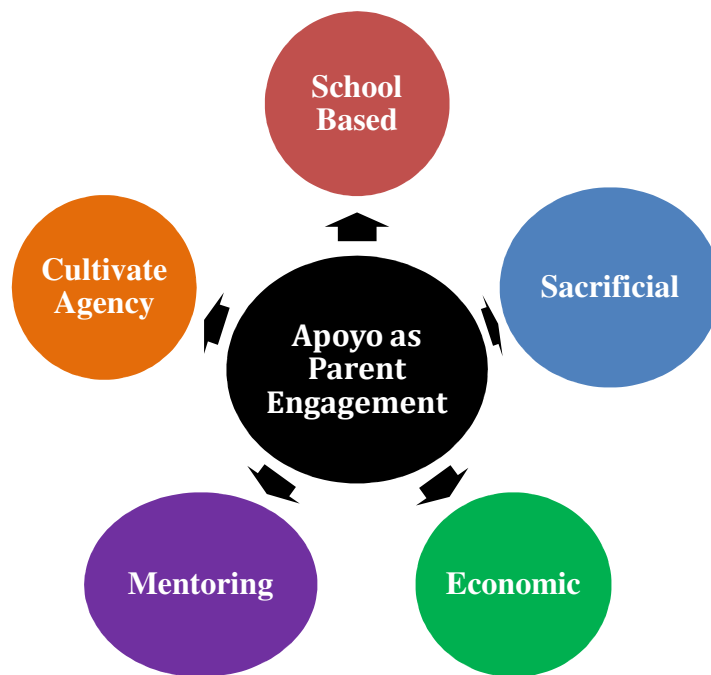
### ***Apoyo as School Based Parent Engagement***

Susan Auerbach (2006; 2007) in her work on parental engagement and college access found that in contrast to White middle class parents, Latino immigrant Spanish speaking parents referred to their role in education as providing *Apoyo*, rather than being involved. She refers to *apoyo* as a form of broad based support with multiple meanings ranging from “positive approval of the child’s desire to go to college to specific forms of instrumental help.” Similarly, immigrant parents in this study also refer to their roles and their participation in the education of their children in broad terms. They see their own roles and responsibilities as providers and creators of opportunities through their own migration and labor as filling the void of the limited opportunities existed for them. Specifically, I build on Auerbach’s finding and argue that the uniqueness of the immigrant experience where parents’ own high aspirations were insufficient

and now see themselves as subjects creating avenues of opportunity, or *apoyo*, of educational access for their children to meet their educational goals and aspirations.

In the prior chapter, I detailed how the role of poverty, entrance into the labor force as a child, geographic location, along with other critical factors eventually led to the pushing out of all the parents from school. Parents drew from a wealth of important lessons from their own educational experience of limited educational access, and learned to believe in the prominence of the U.S. educational system and its potentiality to lead to greater schooling opportunities for their children, including university attendance or acquiring a specialized skill. The methodological approach I employed utilizing (im)migrant farmworker life-histories allowed me to focus on how particular life events related to the political economy has led to their conceptualization of *apoyo* and the practices they emanate. Emerging from my data was a conceptual model of *Apoyo* (Figure 1) highlighting the key and unique ways that parents support their children.

**Figure 2: Model of Apoyo**



I identified five specific forms of *apoyo* (school based, economic, sacrificial, modeling, cultivation of agency) that farmworker families provide for their children hoping the educational access they have leveraged will result in a pathway to a career for their children. In the following section I provide an analysis of the interrelated nature of each of the forms of *apoyo* utilized by these parents.

In my conceptual model of engagement, school based *apoyo* typically includes attending school structured events like parent teacher conferences, Parent-Teacher Association events, school festival events, serving as classroom or office volunteers, attending open house events, assisting and monitoring a child's progress with homework, and becoming part of committees and school leadership organizations (Epstein, 1995; Lawson, 2003; Peña, 2000; Perez-Carreon, et al., 2005). This type of formal and visible participation is most like traditional school based and school centric notions of parent involvement that are often aligned with the expectations and priorities of the school. This type of participation can be most effective when school officials work to engage parents by seeking to address the needs of the parents and the community and are open to learning from the community they are serving. This can be accomplished by developing culturally sensitive and responsive engagement strategies that meet the needs of the population (Valdes, 1996). More often than not, parental participation entails school officials assuming that it is the responsibility of the parents to be at school centric functions regardless of parents finding relevance or utility in the given activities. In *Trabajo* parents indicated a higher degree of participation at the elementary and middle schools, but showed a degree of ambivalence when participating in events especially at BMHS. While on the one hand they generally stressed the importance of being informed of their children's school progress, and meeting with teachers when necessary, parents also indicated that the schools themselves had a responsibility in

creating welcoming environments for parents. Below I address the two main themes that parents indicated were barriers towards engagement in schools.

### **Social Distance--Cultural and Linguistic Barriers**

As I referenced in the prior chapter, living in the community of *Trabajo* spatial and linguistic distance was an important factor that played a key role in the degree of school based support parents were able to provide their children. School based engagement was strongest at those events organized by the MEP, drawing the greatest amount of parental participation when meetings were held at the middle school in *Trabajo*<sup>53</sup>. The MEP program was spoken about by parents in the highest terms for providing assistance and helping to meet some of the educational (and non-educational) needs the (im)migrant parents and children had. As Felicia stated:

Like when you first arrive, there are many families that don't have...you arrive but you need to be oriented to go see a doctor, to go do 'x' thing. Well you see they help you so that vaccinations are given or other such things...they help you with a lot of things. They acquaint you in getting familiar with the schools, how to tend to, how to go about motivating your children so they get scholarships, that they get ahead, that they stand out, that they continue to study. It is a program that provides lots of help.

Similarly Maria Sanchez also stated about the Migrant Education Program:

Oh, it's really good. Because my daughter, during vacation time she was here for two and a half weeks, almost three, and they helped her a lot. My son went camping to Fresno, and the same, there was a lot of activities there. Now with my daughter I have a teacher that comes one day a week, she comes and helps her because she is just learning her numbers and all... All the meetings and workshops they have given us have been very useful for my husband and me. But I think it has helped me even more because I involve myself more with the kids in that program. The speakers, when they came to talk to us about university, I didn't know anything I was like this look...I was with my eyes closed and there I found out what is what happens and everything else.

Both Maria and Felicia's experiences reflected a consensus with the other parents that MEP provided the best opportunities for school based engagement—beyond school participation, the

---

<sup>53</sup> The Migrant Education Program holds meetings once a month in an alternating fashion either at the Trabajo Middle School or the BMHS.

program also addressed some of the issues that were most relevant to parents. MEP also partners with the regional and state programs and they provide leadership institutes for students and leadership retreats for parents, so they acquire a wider array of formal engagement strategies and skills. In the community of *Trabajo* the MEP program is more tightly integrated with the elementary and middle school and it plays a central role given the large migrant student population in the schools. The present issue that *Trabajo* parents are experiencing is that fewer and fewer of them are remaining eligible for MEP services due to the required migratory move at least once every three years<sup>54</sup>. The same cannot be said about the MEP in BMHS where they are a marginal part of the high school, with parents often voicing frustration to me during interviews that the school lacks even basic translation services and they often rely on students to fill that role. This lack of concern by BMHS school officials for *Trabajo* parents has created conflict and contentious relationships with parents not feeling welcome at the high school.

*Trabajo* parents indicated a degree of ambivalence in regards to even attending school based events at the high school specifically referencing the cultural and linguistic distance in regards to communicating with staff and their indifferent to *Trabajo* parental concerns. Maria Sanchez shared her experience:

Well with the school board meetings and with the school events, unfortunately, we speak up but the majority are from Big Mountain. I have gone to speak over there with the school board but...they don't take us seriously. I used to go before a lot to the school board meetings I would go but ... They would say 'oh ok, yeah its good' and that was it. That's the only event that I feel they don't take me seriously. I would rather go to the migrant meeting, to open house, or another event. The open house is really beautiful because there you find out all that your children have done.

---

<sup>54</sup> To qualify for the Migrant Education Program, a migrant child must have moved within the past three years across state or school district lines with a migrant parent or guardian or on his/her own to enable the child, the child's guardian or on his/her own to enable the child, the child's guardian, or a member of the child's immediate family to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural, fishing, or food processing activity.



Staff indifference was not the only issue parents encountered when dealing with the school board or staff from BMHS. Those who had children attending BMHS also indicated that the school often lacked translation services to communicate effectively with families—this in a school where forty percent of students and fifty percent in the district are English Learners<sup>55</sup>. In the absence of highly qualified bi-lingual/bi-cultural staff to serve this population, parents and community activist would point out in city council meetings that Big Mountain always received a greater split of district resources and the concerns of the community of *Trabajo* always fell behind the priorities for schools located in Big Mountain. Other parents also held critical views of BMHS indicating feeling marginalized when attending school functions like open house or back to school night when ignored by teachers because they did not speak English. Ricardo Zamudia heard from the parents he regularly spoke with of similar complaints of mistreatment by school officials, something that has always been present at the school. He shared:

I have heard comments from parents when their kids start going to Big Mountain High that teachers start having preference for one racial group (whites) over others. Like here it is all Mexicans, in Big Mountain there are different cultural groups perhaps there are different types of discrimination that affect Mexicans... Teachers often give preference, and they expect more out of them (white), or they try to push those students harder. Sometimes when small things happen they make a big deal to take certain (Mexican) students in to the office. And other (white) students who did something much worse things they don't tell them anything...What happens is that some students start getting labeled (Mexican) and then it becomes hard for them to get rid of the label making it hard for them to graduate.

The allegations made by Ricardo are not new to BMHS and point to an ongoing rift between the two communities. And to the degree they are accurate, it paints a very toxic school culture and calls into question the degree to which the joint school district is interested in creating a welcoming environment to the parents from *Trabajo*. Even if the allegations were untrue, it

---

<sup>55</sup> Even more disturbing is that *Trabajo* has 75% of the Migrant students yet only receives 50% of the funding that the district obtains for Migrant Education Program

would still point to the need for the school district to find new ways of engaging parents who have been disappointed and in need of school officials reaching out in a more welcoming manner. These challenges are not only exacerbated by the linguistic and cultural mismatch between teachers and members of the community but by the geographical space that separates the two communities, something I cover next.

### **Spatial Distance**

Another critical issue that arose from the data was the additional problems created by the physical distance between the communities of *Trabajo* and Big Mountain. Many of the parents in this study did not have access to their own transportation to attend the school or events at BMHS, outside of events sponsored by MEP<sup>56</sup>. In six of the eight families that I interviewed, at least one of the parents was undocumented and making it difficult to get around the community without a driver's license or accessible public transportation. That fact alone has also impacted their school participation and without an innovative solution to that problem from the school district, parents found themselves in the predicament of Isabel:

There was an open house, but I was unable to go. With Mayra, like I tell you, I have not assisted BMHS because of not having a ride and all, I have not gone. But when she was here in *Trabajo* I would go to the middle school all the time.

The 25 minute drive separating both communities complicates any attempts on the parents' behalf to have a presence on the Big Mountain campus and attend any meetings with teachers or other events. While MEP provides transportation to their meetings when held in BMHS, undocumented (im)migrant parents are at a disadvantage for all other school functions given the spatial distance that exists between communities. Something as routine as driving takes on very

---

<sup>56</sup> MEP provides transportation to all events or meetings held in the community of Big Mountain.

serious ramifications when one is undocumented and part of the working poor. Ricardo elaborates:

It is more pressure that one has, you don't feel at home. Here at home I'm very comfortable, but going outside and having to leave in my car then I'm no longer comfortable because you carry with you the all worrying—that if the cop pulls me over? He is going to take my car away. So you live with that constant pressure and that even makes you ill.

The fear of being pulled over by police was common amongst other parents, as Ricardo stated that living in this country was like living in a golden cage<sup>57</sup>. Stressors associated with being undocumented are serious and was commonly articulated as a feeling of being trapped. Research on the mental health of undocumented Mexican (im)migrants has shown that there is an increase in the likelihood one will suffer from fair or poor mental health as a result of stressors associated with legal status (Finch & Vega, 2003; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). In *Trabajo* with high rates of undocumented (im)migrants powering the one of the most productive agricultural counties in the U.S., the “big lie” is to pretend that farmworkers are here to take advantage of social services they are not eligible for. Instead, they fill the role of being a readily available supply of exploitable and deportable labor.

Parents in *Trabajo* seeking to participate through formal channels in the education of their children have to contend with the additional obstacles of being socially and spatially distant from BMHS. The failure on the school's behalf to reach out to families through channels outside of the Migrant Education Program marginalizes parents in a vulnerable and stressful, and potentially costly situation where they risk getting pulled over by the police if and when they

---

<sup>57</sup> The metaphor of the golden cage was popularized by the Norteño group Los Tigres del Norte *La Jaula de Oro*. The song states: “What's money good for if I live like a prisoner in this great nation. When I'm reminded of this, I cry although this cage is made of gold it's still a prison.”

embark on the 25 minute drive to the high school<sup>58</sup>. The results of such breakdown, is that Migrant parent visibility through formal channels is extremely low with parents attending school functions at BMHS only on a needed basis. While parents indicated monitoring their children's progress through communications sent via mail or telephone from the high school, they potentially miss out on building additional social capital (Lareau, 2003) through stronger relationships with their teachers.

Finally, parents in this study have shown a desire to participate and build relationships with their children's schools when they feel welcomed and are respected (Valdes, 1996). It is clear that the Migrant Education Program is the conduit for clearest communication between parents and officials from the school, at least in *Trabajo*. In BMHS, the existing distance between the parents and school officials is something that has been ongoing for decades. In part, as the school district student population has increasingly diversified, stronger calls have been made for a high school to be built in *Trabajo*. Parents, community activists, and local elected representatives have pushed especially hard in recent years as they have grown increasingly frustrated with the second class status they feel the citizens of *Trabajo* have within the school district. Parents in this study like the Zamudias, Mendozas, Perezs, and the Martinezs believe that the creation of a high school in the community would have an overall positive effect on the community. Parents specifically mentioned that the community would benefit by further diversifying the local economy, eliminating spatial distance, and likely eliminating linguistic and cultural barriers as well, while acquiring autonomy and self-determination by once and for all breaking away and forming their own school district.

---

<sup>58</sup> As was revealed in the prior chapter, fines accrued by parents can top \$1200 for every driving infraction without a license.

In this section I have introduced school based *apoyo* and detailed how parents in *Trabajo* engage in this particular way with schools. One of the principal means I found parents engaged in school based *apoyo* was through the critical role the Migrant Education Program plays in bringing families closer to the school. The culturally relevant approach they employ, the support and orientation they provide for new families to the district, and the leadership retreats all make for an excellent organization that helps bridge the distance for parents in *Trabajo*. Existing asymmetrical power relationships between Big Mountain and *Trabajo* have led to parents from *Trabajo* feeling as if they do not matter. The historical relations between communities have preserved the power base in Big Mountain and until only 20 years ago did *Trabajo* even have Latino representatives in the school board. These tense relationships along with issues of immigrant “illegality” and inaccessible transportation has led them to only having a limited presence at BMHS. While some may assume that this limited presence or low visibility means that *Trabajo* parents are not engaged in the schooling and education of their children, that could not be further from truth. In the next section I introduce the other four forms of *apoyo* that emerged from my data. When examined through the theoretical frameworks I employ in this study, they reveal the parent agency enacted for the purposes of creating opportunities for their children. These unique and lesser known ways that these families support the educational process of their children are key to understanding how (im)migrant parents arrive at their practices of engagement.

### ***Apoyo* as Economic Sustenance**

These (im)migrant farmworker parents learned from their own life experience that one of the greatest impediments in Mexico to continuing with their education was the structure of farm labor and the absence of economic support to continue with schooling. For example, costs

associated with transportation when living in rural geographic isolation, expenses in the form of schooling supplies and tuition, child labor to support family, and the limited financial assistance (in Mexico), were key reasons parents were pushed-out and educational dreams derailed. Parents intuitively knew the political economy of agriculture would present similar obstacles to their children in the U.S. and developed appropriate strategies of resistance. For example, Felicia when asked about the educational opportunities for her children stated:

We wouldn't be able to provide him [11 year old son] with the same access to education over there in Mexico. First, because we are not going to find a stable job for the both of us, and we are both older now. You know that over there in Mexico after 35 it's no longer easy to find a job so that would be a barrier that we would face. And he would lose many opportunities because there is governmental help once you are here, and over there well it's a big difference. Over there, if you have money you study, if you don't have money well you don't study. And here there are more possibilities to give them an opportunity to study and get a career.

As Felicia stated, if the family were to return to Mexico her son would like not be afforded similar educational opportunities due to the difficulty in finding stable employment and limited governmental assistance. *Apoyo* as economic sustenance is the expressed commitment by parents who deeply value the education of their children to create greater educational and career opportunities through U.S. migration and a vow to economically support their goals and dreams. Parental aspirations lie in the belief that through continued hard work economic costs associated with their children's pursuit of a college education or specialized training in a given field will be met. Implicit in this form of *apoyo* is the belief that these career paths will lead to better employment prospects in a field where they can avoid backbreaking labor and economic exploitation, acquire greater labor protections, and be afforded a greater degree of respect. This was especially true for parents of undocumented children whose children would not be eligible for most forms of financial assistance and likely face additional barriers in their pursuit of a college education. An example for the need of parents providing economic *apoyo* is the case of

Juan Perez who shared a recent conversation with his children on educational opportunity in Mexico. Juan states:

And what they ask me is ‘Why didn’t you study?’ [I tell them,] ‘Well I didn’t study because there was no money. But what I always wanted to do was to study. Because in my big family, only two or three of us studied, and that is because there was no money available. And here there are many opportunities.’ That is why I always tell them to study all the time and to come out ahead and be something in life. And not just be another one in the pile without an education.

Given his own family’s experience, Juan realizes having economic support is critical to fulfilling one’s career and academic goals. For his 17 year old undocumented daughter who is ineligible for most forms of federal and state financial assistance she likely faces rough challenges ahead.

He elaborates:

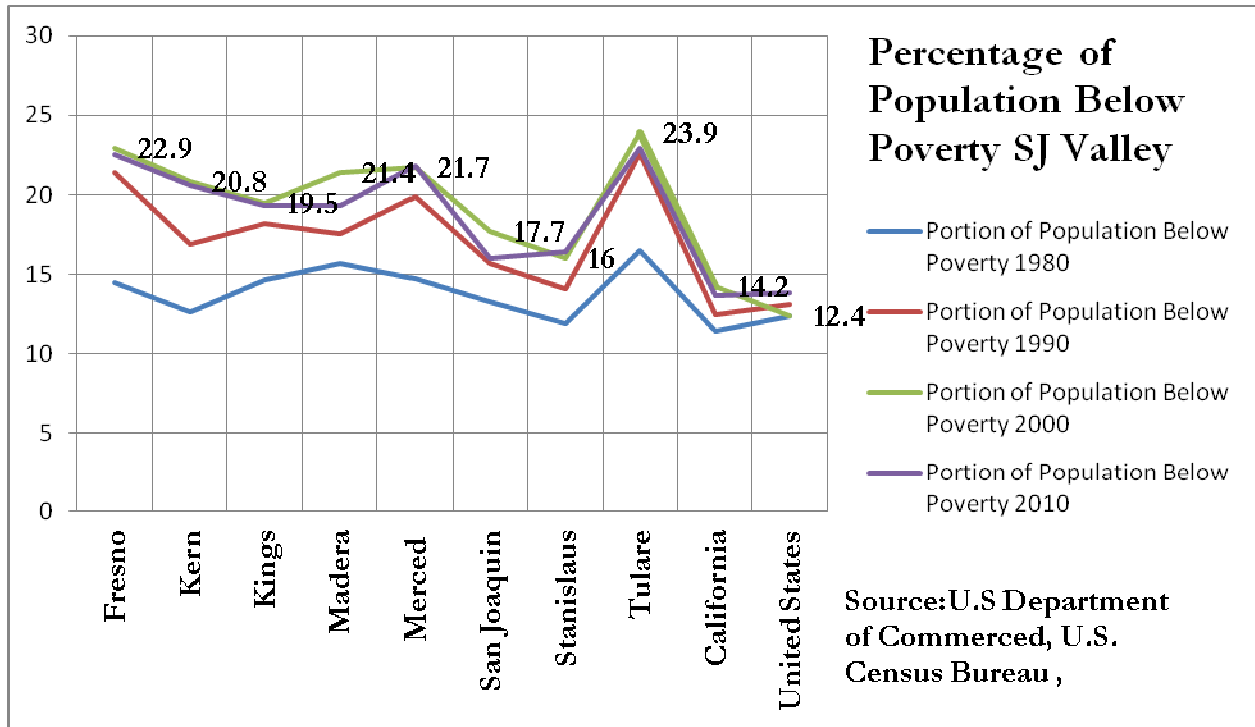
Well she wants to keep studying, and I tell her to study. I would like very much for her to study, but you also know that without documentation here you also can’t get very far-- and she does not have any. But I also tell her to pursue a shorter career...because she likely won’t pursue a career like engineering or something like that because of her documents ... She likely won’t get very far because of her documents. I’m willing to help her with money as much as I can and all that will be needed is for her to work hard.

Juan’s prior experience taking welding courses and earning three levels of certification at the local community college has shaped his belief that with economic support, and hard work from the student, the possibility exists for undocumented (im)migrant students (or even parents) to develop a course of study at a community college or a university.

The cases of parents in this study reveal that employment as farmworkers requires working long hours for low pay and under stressful conditions due to exploitative and seasonal nature of their employment. For example, Fresno County, the leading agricultural producing

county (5.9 billion) in the state also had the distinction of being the county with the highest poverty level with 27% of residents and 36%<sup>59</sup> of school aged children living in poverty.

**Figure 3: Percentage of Population Below Poverty**



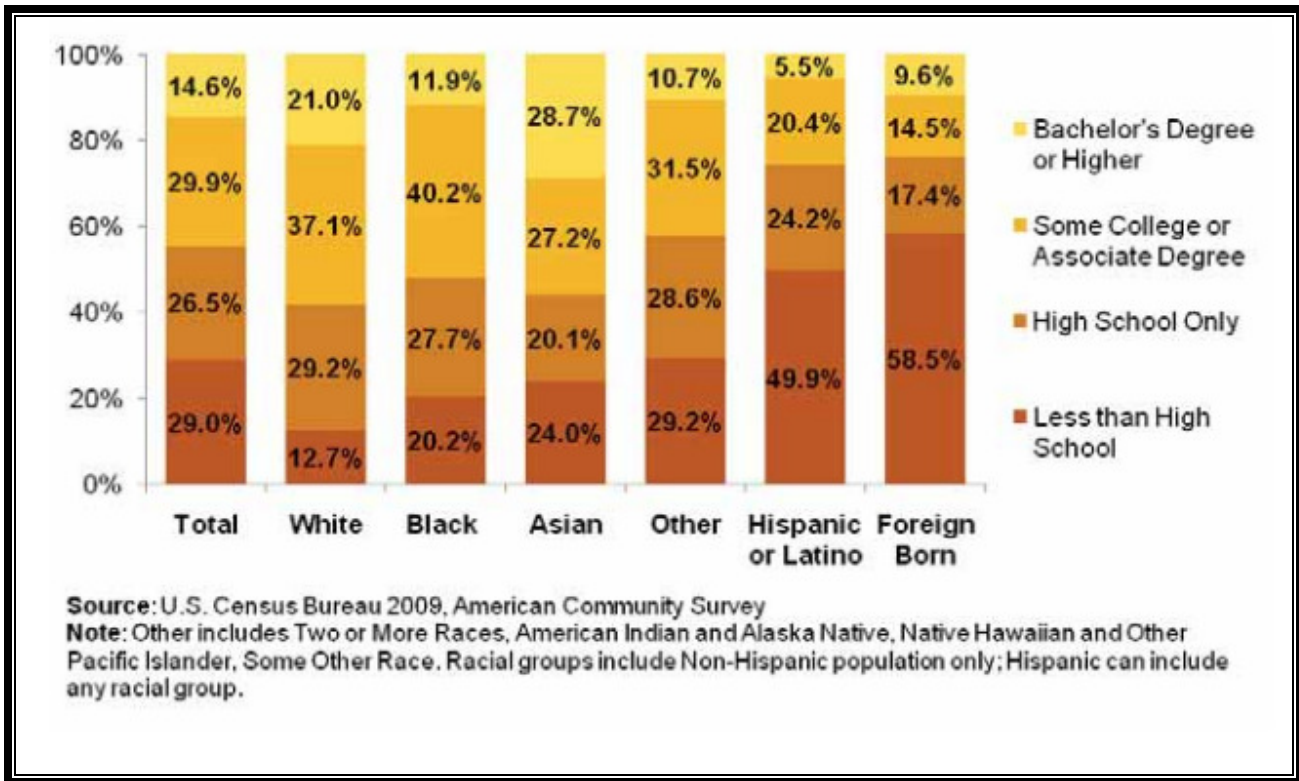
The high farm sales go hand in hand with high poverty levels in the San Joaquin Valley even when farm employment may pay higher than the \$8 hour minimum wage, as the seasonal employment ensures that farmworkers do not work sufficiently throughout the year to pull their families over the poverty line (Martin, 2012). In a study examining the Appalachia and San Joaquin Valley regions, the Congressional Research Service (2005) found that high levels of poverty were present in areas anchored by a single natural resourced based industry, such as mining for the former and agriculture for the latter. One of the principal ways that the above

<sup>59</sup> This number is 15% higher than the state average of 21%.



socio economic and demographic conditions could potentially be improved would be through increases in the educational attainment. Unfortunately, as can be seen in figure 2<sup>60</sup> below

**Figure 4: Educational Attainment in the San Joaquin Valley, 2009**



almost half of Latino adults over 25 years of age in the San Joaquin Valley have less than a high school education, this number is largely made up of “low-skilled” immigrant workers. As a result of the economic structure of the San Joaquin Valley, without adding other specialized industries and due to the lack of institutions of higher education in the region, it likely suffers from “brain drain” as many of its residents with college degrees are less likely to stay due to the need to find employment elsewhere (Johnson & Hayes, 2004).

<sup>60</sup> Source: Place Matters For Health in the San Joaquin Valley: Ensuring Opportunities for Good Health For All. A Report on Health Inequities in the San Joaquin Valley

What are the consequences then for farmworkers living in a region that produces and sustains high levels of poverty, and being part of a labor sector that in California does not benefit overtime provisions until after 60 hours in a work week or 10 hours in a day? Attempts in California by Senator Dean Florez to pass legislation to have farmworkers earn overtime pay after 40 hours in a week or 8 hours in a day were defeated when then Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed the proposed law in July of 2010. Farmers have continued to exert political pressure and have used their power to influence control over governing bodies to ensure farm wages are maintained low. For example, in a report for the Economic Policy Institute, Martin (2011) found that between 1989-2009 the value of U.S. agricultural exports increased 2.5 times. During that same time period however, the average hourly earnings for farmworkers only went up \$1.52 from \$8.55 to \$10.07. Farmers utilize the excuse that increases in labor expenses would lead to U.S. agricultural being less competitive at the global level. However, Martin (2011) found that:

A 40% increase in farmworker earnings would lift a typical seasonal farmworker's earnings from about \$10,000 a year to \$14,000 a year, above the poverty line for an individual...[This increase] would at the most raise U.S. household spending about \$16 a year, roughly the price of two matinee movie tickets. U.S. consumers, who spent less than \$430 per house-hold on fresh fruits and vegetables in 2009, would need to spend less than \$446 to accommodate the tiny share of retail prices going to farm labor.

This change in earnings would have no impact on farmers, and consumers would see the cost of a \$1 pound of apples rise to \$1.04. Yet the \$9.78 average hourly wage for a farmworker would increase to \$13.69 and would result in the individual worker earnings rise above the poverty line.

While seasonal farmworkers may experience periods of unemployment and can qualify for unemployment insurance during times of low employment demand, undocumented workers must look for year round work as they are ineligible for almost all forms of public assistance

even when money is deducted from their pay for that. This leads to an educational poverty paradox where these parents may earn relatively more money than they could have in Mexico and may form part of the working poor, but they are better situated to support the educational goals of their children. For families like the Mendoza's, Perez's, and the Martinez's who have undocumented children they will need to resort to additional employment and income streams to provide even greater support after their children leave high school.

Parents in this study universally indicated a strong desire for their children to “not end up” working in the fields—that would be a personal failure. For these parents their children either needed to complete a university education or specialized training that would provide a better quality of life. This in turn implied parents drawing from their life experiences seeing their role and responsibility to support their children economically so they could complete their studies, fulfill their aspirations, and study uninterrupted by demands for their labor as the parents in this study did. The explanatory potential of political economy lies in helping understand macro level phenomena—specifically the migratory processes that led these parents to the community of *Trabajo*-phenomena embedded in their life histories. While macro-level analysis is important in arriving a greater understanding of unequal structures of oppression faced by these families, it often overlooks the micro-level, individual agency enacted in resistance to those same structures by these participants, something I examine later in the chapter.

### ***Apoyo as Sacrifice***

*Apoyo* as sacrifice entails parents foregoing their own personal needs for the benefit of the children in the family unit. Parents demonstrated this type of *apoyo* by willingly sacrificing basic necessities for themselves so their children could have their necessities met. Perhaps a concept that more accurately captures the sacrifices that these parents undergo to provide a better

life for their children is self-immolation. Self-immolation<sup>61</sup> is defined as a “voluntary sacrifice or denial of oneself, as for an ideal or another person.” This concept is particularly significant because without a deep understanding of the struggles (im)migrant families undergo, this form of *apoyo* may go unrecognized.

*Apoyo* as self-immolation recognizes that parents work in a segment of labor where they experiences high degrees of exploitability, replaceability, and deportability (Mitchell, 2003). Parents are willing to undergo serious damage to their bodies working in agriculture “in voluntary sacrifice” so that their children may reach the ideal of obtaining a university education and achieve a greater degree of empowerment. Parents in the agricultural sector experience chronic pain, illness, and are likely to die at much younger ages than the general population, and because large percentages are undocumented, they are not afforded the same labor protections that documented residents or U.S. citizens are eligible for (Brumitt, Garside, Reisch, Marshall, Gilpin, Kinsey, & Imondi, 2011). Parents also demonstrated their willingness to sacrifice by remaining in the US against their own desires to return to Mexico and be with family and loved ones and in all likelihood happier. Some parents had been away as long as 16 years without having seen parents or other family members. In the end, they relented because they recognized that returning to Mexico would mean diminished opportunities for their children’s future educational and life prospects.

Perhaps the most well known case of a self-immolation occurred in June of 1963 when a Vietnamese monk named Thich Quang Duc lit himself on fire to protest the persecution of Buddhists by the Roman Catholic led church under the presidency of Ngo Dinh Diem during the peak of the Vietnam War. This action captured the imagination of the entire U.S. and the world

---

<sup>61</sup> Self immolation definition derived from the Random House Dictionary.

and brought attention to the turmoil the country of Vietnam was undergoing at the time. Two years later, Thich Nhat Hanh another Vietnamese monk living in the U.S. and teaching at Columbia University wrote a letter to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. asking him for his support to help bring an end to the Vietnam War and help bring peace to the country. In the Hanh letter entitled “An Open Letter from Thich Nhat Hanh to Martin Luther King, Jr., June 1, 1965” he explained to Dr. King that self-immolation was not a suicide in the traditional sense like many westerners had seen it. Hanh wrote:

The self-burning of Vietnamese Buddhist monks . . . is somehow difficult for the Western . . . conscience to understand. The Press spoke then of suicide, but in the essence, it is not. . . . What the monks said in the letters they left before burning themselves aimed only at alarming, at moving the hearts of the oppressors, and at calling the attention of the world to the suffering endured then by the Vietnamese. To burn oneself by fire is to prove that what one is saying is of the utmost importance. There is nothing more painful than burning oneself. To say something while experiencing this kind of pain is to say it with the utmost of courage, frankness, determination and sincerity...The monk who burns himself has lost neither courage nor hope; nor does he desire non-existence. On the contrary, he is very courageous and hopeful... the monk believes he is practicing the doctrine of highest compassion by sacrificing himself in order to call the attention of, and to seek help from, the people of the world.

Hanh’s message in the letter to Dr. King and the western world was that Buddhist monks deemed it necessary to self-immolate as a sacrificial tool to bring attention to the oppression they faced and sought the help others. Rather than viewing them as cowards seeking an easy way out through suicide, Hanh urged his contemporaries to view these monks as making the ultimate sacrifice with the hope that their actions would lead to the transformation of consciousness in others and result in ending oppressions and creating greater humanization.

In a similar fashion, I argue that (im)migrant farmworking parents in a way also are self-immolators. From leaving their loved ones in their behind and risking their lives to cross the border, to enduring physical and emotional labor working in the fields as they sacrifice their

bodies, these parents selflessly give all in hopes that their children may have a better life than they have. The voluntary sacrifice they engage in is to provide their children with the opportunity to have an education uninterrupted and all they ask in return is for their children and larger society to recognize and value their sacrifice. Valuing of parental sacrifice requires thinking more broadly about conceptualizations of parental engagement to account for the historical context and the new educational possibilities for these children that result from the actions of these parents. When Valente was asked what he hopes school officials learn from their experience, he stated:

That they care about us, that they try to learn from us so that our children can do it! I would really like that they implement, at least a program within the school where students could socialize more and where white American culture comes in contact with Latinos, so they can understand our way of thinking about things. I'm not asking that we educate teachers in our way of thinking, but that teachers can learn how we think about things. That they walk in the shoes of the undocumented, that they understand that she, I, and all parents make a strong effort working in the fields, working in the factories, working for companies and we leave in their hands the education of our children—their learning. But that they value also, that we give to and contribute to this country with great effort. That they give value to the things that we do and what our contributions are.

This quote above by Valente reflects the desire of parents to be treated with *respeto* (Valdes, 1996) and have their culture and lived experiences acknowledged by school officials. Pedagogically, Valente's commentary is reflective of Freire's views on dialogic education (Shor & Freire, 1987) and best approximate his desire how educators should begin to approach and welcome the parents of their students into their schools by learning and understanding where they come from. He is asking school officials to view their *apoyo* as forms of community cultural wealth and validate their knowledge and ways of knowing (Yosso, 2005).

### ***Apoyo* as Cultivation of Agency**

This form of *apoyo* acknowledges the adversity that (im)migrant farmworker families face daily and highlights the unique ways that parents motivate their children to exercise agency. Universally, parents in this study had high aspirations for their children and believed that with sufficient support their children would be successful in obtaining a higher education degree or a good paying job in a specialized field. One key aspect in this form of *apoyo* was the belief by parents that regardless of the support they or the school could provide to their children, in the end the students themselves were the main actors responsible for their own education and through hard work they could be successful. This type of *apoyo* proved to be important as it helped students to remain resilient and not give up on reaching their goals when dealing with adversity in the forms of racial micro aggressions inside and out of schools, discouragement for being an undocumented student, contemplating leaving school when failing coursework, and by understanding privilege across borders. Parents cultivated agency in their children primarily by connecting contemporary struggles of their children to their own life experiences in school and at work engaging in backbreaking work.

Prior research on the aspirations of immigrant and minority parents has consistently shown that communities of color, especially Latino (im)migrants place high value on formal education. Scholars like Solorzano (1991,1992), Ceja (2004), Delgado-Gaitan (1990), Gandara (1995), Valencia and Solorzano (1997), Valdes (1996) and others have found that immigrant and Latino parents care deeply and support the educational endeavors of their children. Despite the positive and hopeful attitude that (im)migrant parents hold they experiences real limitations as a result of their status as undocumented immigrants. One of this study's principal findings was that in the context of finding themselves undocumented in this country, parents remained

optimistic that they would find a way to continue supporting their children's educational endeavors.

Educators in the BMTUD could go a long way in serving the families whose children they teach if they understand this particular type of *apoyo*. For example, educators at BMHS could acquire a greater literacy around undocumented student issues or create spaces so that those who are experts could provide additional information given that a sizable student population are in that predicament.

### ***Apoyo as Modeling of Persistence***

This type of *apoyo* can be understood as the ways that parents teach their children, either by telling them, or through the setting a personal example that models persistence under difficult circumstances. For example, holding a child accountable to the decisions that they make may begin to teach them the value of resilience. Youth making decisions, from wanting to quit playing football during a week of grueling conditioning drills, or considering dropping out of a university for failing a class, can benefit from hearing the counter stories and advices from their own parents experiences and how they navigate difficult situations. Parents use these life experiences to model for their children persistence—and to not shy away from difficult situations. Through the experience of crossing the border and migrating to the U.S., and the current status of some parents as marginalized undocumented immigrants, children learn that to be undocumented means there is no choice but to persist. Parents have enrolled in adult school and in night classes to model for their children educational excellence and if they can complete school successfully, surely their children can too.



The experiences that these families have undertaken to model for their children educational persistence are very telling. For example, several parents in this study attended English Adult Education courses in *Trabajo* as they had shown a strong desire to learn English to be a better advocate for their children in schools and in hopes of being employed in other industries. However, the current economic crisis has resulted in the elimination of the programs that were providing those courses. Regardless of parental aspirations for acquiring formal education, what is clear is that their immigration status played a critical factor in their ability to further progress through the adult educational system. As undocumented immigrants, their desire to further their education became severely “limited” as they no longer had access to the course of study they desired to take regardless of their high aspirations. The counterstories of these parents revealed that they had a strong desire for self improvement and betterment through education. Parents utilized generative themes (Freire, 2001) from their life experience as counterstories (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) to teach their children of the oppressive working conditions and the physically grueling nature of it. They reminded their children of the “limit situations” they encountered in Mexico as they pursued their own education and the need for them to undertake “limit acts” by migrating to create greater transformative opportunities for their children. The one key way that most were open to creating transformative conditions is through the education system. In enrolling in GED programs or in adult education courses seeking to learn English and obtain more education parents were modeling for their children that the current situation they found themselves is “not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform” (Freire, 2001;49). Educators within the community of *Trabajo* could learn from the example of these parents by similarly having faith in these students to transcend their limiting situations by becoming authentically caring

(Valenzuela, 1999) mentors and building on the pedagogies that these students bring from home (Bernal, 2001).

### **Conclusion**

Taken together, these five overlapping forms of *apoyo* form a conceptual model that more accurately captures the multiple and critical ways that these parents engage and provide their children support in school and out of school contexts. As I previously stated, a failure to examine and understand the social-historical processes that these parents have experienced in their home countries and in the U.S. can lead one to overlook the overwhelming significance and importance that they place on formal education. Deficit explanations that focus primarily on the school as a site and on the visible aspects of parent engagement, almost always overlook the other domains of *apoyo* highlighted by the model. School officials especially at Big Mountain High School could benefit from re-examining their current policies around parent engagement by learning from the Migrant Education Program and creating greater school wide policies that reflect that. In doing so, the high school could provide additional assistance and support for those students and families that are ill served by the school and no longer qualify for the MEP. In the next chapter I offer a set of recommendations for school leaders and practitioners on how to build on ways that parents already provide *apoyo* to their children.

## CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This dissertation addresses the following research question: How are the educational engagement conceptions and practices of Mexican (im)migrant farmworkers shaped by their life histories? In addressing this question I investigated the life histories of 16 parents from *Trabajo* and identified the nuanced in which key life experiences shaped conceptions of their role in the schooling processes of their children. My study reaffirms the deep commitment and engagement that Mexican (im)migrant farmworker families have towards educational advancement through the distinct, yet often overlooked, forms of *apoyo* they commit to the education of their children.

This chapter provides an overview of the main findings from this study and demonstrates how parental narratives broaden our understanding of (im)migrant parental engagement in farmworking communities. First, I begin by examining this study's contributions to theory and research methods. Second, I offer a summary of key findings that illuminate distinctive parent conceptions and practices of engagement, and schools' corresponding relationship to mediating parental participation. Third, I discuss implications for further research. Fourth, I discuss the limitations of the current study and make specific recommendations. Lastly, this chapter closes with final thoughts and reflections pertaining to the families participating in this study.

### **Critical Migrations of Educational Engagement**

The intent of this research is not to generalize findings to other studies on parental engagement. Rather, the aim of this holistic case study is to expand existing theory (Yin, 2003) on parent engagement and advance a conceptual framework that lends critical insight to particular forms of *apoyo* in Mexican (im)migrant families. *Apoyo*, as a construct, is derived from building on

existing literature (Auerbach, 2006) and refined through my qualitative inductive analysis of the data. My analysis identifies five critical life moments that helped shape parents' conceptions and practices of engagement as evidenced by distinct forms of *apoyo*. These five critical life moments contributed to how parents conceived of and enacted *apoyo*: living in poverty, early labor force participation, border crossing, laboring in the fields, and the salience of their undocumented status. These life moments heightened parental awareness of the oppressive aspects of agricultural work and the critical importance of education as a pathway and transformative opportunity leading to their engagement. The figure below illustrates the five step Critical Life Moments trajectory that parents typically experienced as their views and beliefs about the educational opportunity structure in the U.S. and Mexico were shaped.

**Figure 5: Critical Life Moments Chronologically**



In chapter three I advanced a conceptual framework, the Critical Migrations of Educational Engagement, that draws from and integrates Political Economy Theory, Latino Critical Theory, and Freirean Social Theory. The political economy theory allowed me to examine the experience of (im)migrant farmworking families' journey from their communities of origin in Mexico to California's San Joaquin Valley. This analysis reveals a historical path toward low-wage agricultural and service sector employment that is primarily concentrated in low income and highly segregated rural spaces (Allensworth & Rochin, 1997; Carter, 2009). Furthermore, the economic pathways that facilitated social mobility in the mid 1970's and early 1980's through unionization and led to higher farmworker wages, benefits and a higher quality of life no longer

exist (Martin, 2012). Explanations for such decline in unionization include: flawed union leadership, changes in political parties at the state level, changes in the structure of farm employment, and a rise in the numbers of undocumented immigrants entering the U.S. labor supply (Martin, 2012). Undoubtedly, the intense segregation and poverty experiences in these communities have resulted in the children of farmworkers having to attend schools that provide an inferior academic preparation that minimizes college going opportunities. In the next section, I use a political economy lens to chronologically analyze the critical life moments that shape how parents in this study arrived at their present circumstances.

The chronology of critical life moments in the life narratives of parents were examined through a political economy framework and persistently revealed narratives fraught with experiences of enduring struggles and suffering. Most participants grew up in poor, rural, and isolated, small Mexican communities. As youth, these parents held high aspirations for their own educational success only to encounter severe poverty and rural isolation that in most cases closed off opportunities to continue their schooling past the ninth grade. According to the Secretary of Social Development in Mexico, poverty is almost seven times more severe in rural areas than is in the city (Sedesol, 1999). The poverty context in rural Mexico has led to prior generations migrating towards either larger cities areas or northward migration across the border, has becoming a rite of passage in some agricultural communities (Mere, 2007).

As a result, the familial demands for additional income in rural isolated communities most often resulted in an early entry into the labor force. These youth would assist their families as farmworkers, and in a few cases obtained employment with local merchants, mainly at corner stores. In time, the labor demands typically increased and commitment to school inversely decreased. Thus, it becomes clear why in isolated rural communities it became challenging and

often impossible to stay in school beyond the ninth grade. Those who persisted in school until the ninth grade found that attending the *preparatoria* was typically out of reach due to the high tuition costs and the long distances they needed to travel to attend school. At this critical juncture, most participants had stopped attending school and instead obtained employment. For most of the males in the study, migrating northward soon became a more attractive option.

A political economy lens has also been instrumental in illuminating how California's implementation of a "strong border policy" has served to regulate the flows of undocumented immigrant labor (Andreas 2000). For participants in this study, crossing the border was one of the most powerful memories they held from their journey into the U.S. The border still serves as a reminder for parents who have yet to regularize their status that they are second class citizens in a land that they identify with and call home with each passing day. It is precisely such flows of labor that ensure California has an adequate labor oversupply, and in turn, guarantees that wages and living condition costs remain low. The economic conditions of farmworkers are further complicated by the more recent migratory flows of workers from indigenous communities from southern and central Mexico due to greater percentages of undocumented individuals than in the past (Krissman, 1999). In response, employers purposefully divide workers along ethnic lines to weaken collective bargaining opportunities.

A political economy lens has also helped unearth the exploitative nature of migrant farmwork. On the one hand, one of the most inspiring aspects of this research was hearing parents describe their belief that by enduring the grueling labor demands of their job, their children would one day have improved career or professional opportunities. On the other hand, it was disheartening to hear the daily frustrations that parents shared through their experiences in a labor sector that was slowly breaking their bodies down. A common theme mentioned by

undocumented parents was that if only they could become legal residents, their earning potential would be much higher, which would make it easier to support their children. Living as undocumented migrants in a rural community provides a greater degree of anonymity from immigration authorities, yet it also isolates families from valuable resources they could enact and utilize for educational purposes.

Understanding the work context in rural agricultural communities through a political economy lens for (im)migrant farmworkers is critical as it reveals a more nuanced understanding of their everyday reality. To gain a more complete picture of parental engagement in this context, it is essential to understand the sacrifices parents are actively making to create greater opportunities for their children's educational trajectories. While a political economy lens is important for illuminating such material conditions and the level of deprivation families endure, it fails to address the key role that race and racism play in structuring parent engagement. Below, I discuss the particular ways that LatCrit extends political economy to account for the racialization of Mexican (im)migrant families.

As I discussed in chapter three, CRT and LatCrit are important elements because they help center race and racism in the analysis. Much like CRT, LatCrit encompasses the same assumptions and theoretical underpinnings, but also centers the analysis on the experiences and realities of Latinas/os (Valdes, 1996). For example, LatCrit goes beyond examining Latina/o specific issues such as language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality that CRT cannot or does not (Haney-Lopez, 1997; Hernandez-Truyol, 1997; Johnson & Martinez, 2000; Villalpando, 2004). A key aspect that LatCrit brings to bear on this analysis is the centrality of experiential knowledge (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a). Solórzano and Yosso argue that LatCrit "recognizes the experiential knowledge of Parents of Color as legitimate,

appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education" (p. 314). Through LatCrit then, life history interviews positioned parents as experts and allowed their voices and stories to emerge detailing the racism they were experiencing at the level of language and culture through the BM-T school district. As I illustrated in chapter five and in the following sections, besides the physical distance separating *Trabajo* and Big Mountain, perhaps the bigger offense lies in the schools unwillingness to accommodate and meet the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse population (Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002a).

The LatCrit framework also revealed the discriminatory treatment that students experienced through the voice of parents. For example, Maria Sanchez noted how her children were picked on and teased<sup>62</sup> at school for being Oaxaqueños, indigenous Mexicans from the state of Oaxaca. In Maria's particular case, her disappointment arose when she learned of the racialized teasing her son was experiencing and the schools failure to do anything about it. Maria herself was no stranger to this racialized teasing as she was also picked on by mestizo workers as well in the past.

Another important aspect of LatCrit lies in trusting that the experiential knowledge of parents as experts and trusting that their experience as (im)migrants provide a set of rich knowledge to understand how to best support their children. For example, it was through common experiences of racialization, such as when they crossed the border, that parents drew upon to motivate and inspire their children to persist in the face of adversity. Finally, LatCrit also provides a critique of the traditional and marginalizing approach toward parent involvement that BMHS undertook. As leaders of a school with a student population of over 40% English

---

<sup>62</sup> The unfortunate aspect of the racist teasing was at the hands of other Mexican-American children who came from primarily mestizo backgrounds. In the racialized Mexican hierarchy indigenous Oaxaqueños are at the bottom rungs, so much so that being called a Oaxaca is considered a major insult.



Learners, there was no excuse for the school's failure to provide extensive translation services for parents in need of communicating with teachers and school officials. The fact that such issues have yet to be adequately addressed shows the low regard held toward Mexican parents at BMHS. In order to build strong relationship with community members across difference, a new pedagogical approach is needed that is informed by LatCrit and CRT.

Freirean Social Theory has its roots in the field of critical pedagogy. While compatible with political economy and LatCrit, Freirean Social Theory picks up where LatCrit leaves off as it seeks to provide a method for disrupting the asymmetrical oppressive power relations that are embedded in traditional approaches to teaching learning. As I stated in chapter three, Freire's problem-posing approach directly challenges the traditional banking concept of education through a dialogic approach to learning. In this approach according to Freire:

Dialogue is the sealing together of the teacher and the students in the joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study. Then instead of transferring knowledge statically, as a fixed possession of the teacher, dialogue demands a dynamic approximation towards the object. (p. 15)

This dialogic model transforms a vertical teacher and student relationship into a horizontal one between a teacher-student and a student-teacher. In this new configuration, both teacher and student (or parent-school official) work collaboratively and humbly towards co-constructing a new and more humanizing reality. What dialogic learning means to parents and school officials is that parent involvement shouldn't be packaged in a predetermined curriculum, and that much tension and struggle should be expected initially as they mutually work to transition from the old to new ways of doing things.

Contemporaries of Paulo Freire have begun to take dialogic learning in new and promising directions. For example, Ramon Flecha (2000) has established his seven principles of dialogic learning: egalitarian dialogue, cultural intelligence, transformation, instrumental

dimension, creating meaning, solidarity, and equality of differences. According to Flecha's concept of egalitarian dialogue (2000) diverse contributions are taken into consideration and in this model "both students and teachers learn, since they all construct interpretation based on contributions made to the group" (p.7). In regards to parental engagement in schools, egalitarian dialogue consists of teachers and parents critically reflecting and collaborating on new ways for each other to share their experiential knowledge. The Dialogic learning model provides a structure from where parents can begin to be seen by teachers as meaningful partners who possess a wealth of useful information. In a place like BMHS, this implies that Spanish speaking parents will begin to be respected and school officials would go out of their way to incorporate the voices of these parents. Furthermore, teachers would be interested and excited about learning from parents' life experiences.

Perhaps a missing element that stops teachers from even thinking about egalitarian dialogue with parents is the belief of some educators in deficit theories regarding the culture of (im)migrant farmworkers. According to Flecha one of the benefits in considering cultural intelligence is that it adequately deals with deficit theories. The concept of cultural intelligence has the capacity to be transformative because it recognizes that all human being have the capacity to move beyond classist, racist, sexist, or ageist discrimination (Flecha, 2000). Because everyone has cultural intelligence, the inequality we see in society is as a result of "varying development in different environments (p. 7). In the end, for egalitarian learning and cultural intelligence to succeed, all parties collaborating must be convinced that she or he can do it, and that she or he must be given the opportunity to prove this (p.7). What this implies for a new model of parental engagement is that as educators we must be willing to have the humility to trust in others to do great things. For example, this suggests that with proper support, parents

with low levels of education and limited knowledge of the school system can still become strong school leaders if others believe in them and are willing to support their development. Practically speaking, this may consist of teachers allowing parents to not only facilitate school meetings but also dictate and even make meaningful contributions to the daily agenda. The question now then is do BMHS and the school district have the will to establish egalitarian dialogue with parents and do they believe that they have the capacity to make meaningful contributions to the school community.

The intersection of these three critical theories make up the conceptual framework of Critical Migrations of Educational Engagement (CMEE). CMEE accounts for historical processes of (im)migrant families and their material conditions, while accounting for the role of racism in leading to various forms of stratification. When combined with Freirean Social Theory and the process of dialogic learning, a framework is created that allows for not only the identification of nontraditional forms of educational engagement (apoyo), but it also provides a framework for educators and parents to follow that results in the greater humanization of both parents and school officials. In the next section I explore key findings from this study and necessary policy recommendations.

### **Summary of Key Findings and Policy Recommendations**

This study offers new directions for research and practice pertaining to immigrant families, and educational success and failure. Apart from its theoretical contributions, this study presents empirical findings that are informative in various educational contexts. While numerous key issues highlight how parents engage and support their children's educational trajectories, nonetheless important limitations remain. Next, I outline key findings and offer thoughts on implications and policy lessons from this study

1. Parents conceive of educational engagement in more nuanced ways than traditional notions of parent involvement.

Parents in this study overwhelmingly viewed engagement in the education of their children as critically important. In my conversations and interviews with parents nothing filled them with greater joy than the prospect and possibility that their children would climb the educational system and one day become a professional. That simple reality, above anything else, compelled them to provide their children with as much support or *apoyo* as possible. A model of *apoyo* as parent engagement is this study's main contribution to the literature. The nuance and complexity of *apoyo* parents spoke of and exhibited derived from patterns in the data. As illustrated in chapter six and seven, these distinct forms of engagement originate from the centering of the life histories and experiential knowledge of these immigrant parents. This methodological approach disrupts the banking method of education (Freire, 2000) so prevalent in parent involvement work because it privileges the voices and perspectives of those at the margins of society, the so-called uninvolved minority parent. In examining the educational and labor trajectories of parents historically, it moves parents from objects who are stagnant to subjects in the process of social transformation. As a result, the new forms of *apoyo* uncovered in my data reveal key ways that parents are actively pursuing ways to position their children to not only have educational access but to strive to excel.

In this study, five major forms of *apoyo* emerged in the data: school based, sacrificial, economic sustenance, a mentoring, and cultivating of agency. School based *apoyo* is most similar to traditional notions of parental involvement that are driven by school priorities and concerns at the expense of parental voice. In the literature, this dominant type of involvement is almost always predicated under the Freirean banking model of education which assumes that

these families have little of value to contribute and thus must be assigned prescribed roles in order to fit with goals and ideals of the school. Most parents exhibited school based *apoyo* not through regular school channels, but through MEP, as the program mediated and served as a bridge with the schooling community especially in *Trabajo*. The MEP program served as an important site to activate social capital and remained informed for families in this study. I return to this point below and discuss in greater detail some of the challenges parents faced when they attempted to become involved school through channels outside of the MEP especially at BMHS.

The other four forms of *apoyo*-based engagement were as significant, and perhaps even more so, than school-based *apoyo*. The community context and the type of work parents do revealed particular strategies they relied upon to provide *apoyo*. For example, without parents' making their sacrifices explicit some of these student may not have otherwise remained in school, or would they consider working like their parents in the agricultural industry. Parents clearly articulated their unhappiness living in the U.S., and often linked it to the marginalization they faced as undocumented residents. Although life would be more challenging economically, some parents would much rather return to Mexico to be with family and loved ones. But as Juan Perez noted, "but there is no education. There is no future [in Mexico] and here there is." A key reason parents stated for why they remained in the U.S. instead of returning to Mexico was because of their faith that at least here they could work to provide economic *apoyo* for their child's schooling. Parents also mentored their children and modeled for them the importance of an education by pursuing additional schooling themselves and obtaining G.E.D.'s or career certification. Finally, parents were also instrumental in motivating their children to persevere when in the face of adversity related to their academics in school, in extracurricular activities, or in other social situations.

2. *Parents practices of engagement were embedded in narratives of providing apoyo shaped by (im)migrant farmworking experience.*

The parents in this study experienced distinct educational, migratory, and labor experiences. These life experiences led to particular ways that shaped how they viewed their roles and responsibilities and what they felt was most significant in regards to supporting their children's education. Data from this study revealed that, for parents, educational access and aspirations were tempered by poverty—more specifically, the costs associated with going to school and familial labor demands. These parents felt a deep sense of regret and sorrow for failing to fulfill their educational aspirations and at times even blamed themselves for not persisting in school. In the process of narrating their life histories interesting patterns emerged. Upon reflecting on the moment they left school, some parents would say “if only I would have tried harder” or “if I wouldn't have given up so easily,” implying they would have attained a higher level of education. But as they continued with their life narrative and process of reflection they would reconsider and state that they attained the highest level of education possible given the context of poverty, the early labor force participation, and familial income demands.

For other parents, living in rural areas with limited access beyond elementary made it increasingly difficult for them to continue with schooling. For Ricardo Zamudia and Maria Sanchez, even when they sought out greater opportunities by migrating to live with relatives in larger communities with greater educational access, their aspirations were still derailed because of costs and lack mentorship. What was clear from the data was that parents placed a high value and importance on their children obtaining a formal education because they saw it as a pathway to “a better way of life.”

It is in part through these experiences of being denied the opportunity to reach their goals and dreams that drove fathers to come to the U.S. to work in hopes of obtaining a higher standard of living and leveraging support for their families. Once in the U.S., fathers typically brought their wives and started a family. Initial goals of returning to live in Mexico were typically abandoned due to the difficulty associated with crossing the border for the families, most who were undocumented. Instead, parents saw that even when their children attend schools in the U.S. in one of the worst performing districts in the state they felt hopeful that their children had greater access to education than they otherwise would have in Mexico. Parents also felt that even though they worked in one of the most physically demanding and worst paid industries they could sacrifice enough to provide the necessary *apoyo* for their children to be successful in their educational pursuits. In this respect, it can be argued that parents' specific forms of educational engagement are a direct response to the material conditions and the racism they experienced as marginalized farmworkers. One of the strongest sources of support and social capital for parents was MEP facilitating contact with the school and providing much needed services and resources.

3. *Parents' school based engagement was mediated by social and spatial distance.*

Data from this study clearly revealed that certain academic structures facilitated greater degrees of traditional parental involvement or what I call school based *apoyo*. For example, while parents from *Trabajo* indicated a greater degree of comfort and facility participating in school based activities at the elementary and middle school in their own community, the middle school had a stronger culture of engaged parents. Specifically, parents reported having a more welcoming environment at the middle school as it was perceived to have friendlier staff and administration as well as more relevant events for parents to participate in. *Trabajo* elementary

was mentioned numerous times by parents as not having a comprehensive parent engagement plan and instead they offered programs like "coffee with parents" where parents met with school administrators periodically. As Irma Sanchez stated, "the program felt artificial, as if all they wanted for us was to show up for the meeting to give them our signature." Ineffective communication by *Trabajo* Elementary with parents such as sending notices through the mail on the day the meeting or event was to be held didn't allow parents sufficient time to make arrangements to attend events or be involved. Among parents, the general sentiment was that the school leadership was out of touch with parents.

At the middle school, however, parents indicated being treated much better than at the elementary. *Trabajo* Middle School was much more proactive with parents and had established stronger channels of communication with the community. An important reason for this was also the presence of the MEP program and the approach they take in meeting multiple needs of farmworking families. The MEP staff was very approachable and understood the needs of parents and operated by integrating them directly into the leadership structure of the organization. The workshops, leadership retreats, conferences, trips and activities, provided by MEP sought to expand the leadership capacity of parents and involved them in more traditional ways. The program became a central source of information for parents to learn about the K-16 school structure of U.S. schools and provided important information about scholarships and funding, even for undocumented students. While the program as of late began to face challenges in retaining parents due to the tightening of eligibility requirements and drops in funding, it still played a critical role as source and disseminator of resources and information. To that end, parents in the community of *Trabajo* have used the MEP program as a platform to file



complaints against the school district when they dealt with issues of marginalization especially once their children entered BMHS.

Two major issues arose with parents and their relations with BMHS school officials. Data from this study revealed that even parents who showed high levels of school based participation when their children were in *Trabajo*, tended to be less enthusiastic about their relations with BMHS staff. The first issue was the spatial distance between the two communities, especially for working parents to have a proactive presence on campus. While BMHS was more effective at notifying parents of ongoing events and activities that were taking place, the inaccessibility of any form of transportation and the 25 minute driving distance really limited the participations of parents and school based *apoyo* that parents could provide their high school aged children. For most parents, being an undocumented and unlicensed driver not only places them at risk of being ticketed but they only drove to the school when absolutely necessary. Parents did benefit from having available transportation to MEP events and meetings held in Big Mountain. Besides the transportation issues, greater barriers have been present for many years that have prevented the creation of partnerships between school officials at BMHS and *Trabajo*.

Regardless of the distance from Big Mountain, parents from *Trabajo* indicated repeatedly that one of the main obstacles preventing their full participating was the negative treatment and disrespect they felt when they attended school functions at BMHS. Their experiences of feeling disrespected reflected a general perception about the community of Big Mountain and the historical racial tensions between the two communities. They spoke of a social distance from the school that was manifested in poor and differential treatment due to their language and culture. Some parents recounted attending school events like open house and being ignored by teachers

for not being English speakers. Others spoke about the favoritism and higher expectations that school officials held for students from Big Mountain. The frustration from the perspective of some parents had built over years of having the district devote more resources to the community of Big Mountain while ignoring projects that were supposed to be completed in *Trabajo*. *Trabajo* parents utilized the MEP program to file complaints with the district administration but they always felt their complaints were not taken seriously. In the end, the second class status that many of these parents experienced was one of the primary reasons why they organized in the community to try to establish a high school that honored *Trabajo*.

### **Implications for Further Research**

This dissertation study begins to answer many questions concerning the plight of parents of color and their children in U.S. schools. Through an examination of the political economy of the San Joaquin Valley vis-à-vis Critical Race Theory and Freirean Social theory around parent engagement, my work underscores central out-of-school issues that can facilitate the impact of parents on their children's educational trajectories. Data from this study also reveals a strong link between parents' life experiences, schooling and community context, that give rise to specific modes of educational participation in support of student academic performance. However, this primarily examines one community, and further research is needed that investigates similar issues other communities and schools.

Theoretically, in the field of parental participation, it is necessary to move beyond school centric notions of parental involvement to insider conception of parental engagement. As my study highlights, Mexican American (im)migrant farmworking parents engage in diverse ways to support the educational trajectories of their children. This study contributes to a subset of qualitative studies that offer a direct challenge to the myth that Mexican families do not care

about or participate sufficiently in the education of their children (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992; Lopez, 2001; Perez-Carreón et. al., 2005; Solórzano, 1992; Valdes, 1996; Valencia & Black, 2002). Future work in this field should continue to examine how and why parents resort to specific forms of participation that likely lie outside of what schools' recognize as legitimate forms of participation. However, in advancing this line of work, close attention must be paid to the particular life experiences and socio-cultural context that lead to unique, but often unacknowledged, forms of parental engagement. It should be in the best interests schools personnel to meet families half-way and acknowledge the cultural assets, or *apoyo*, that parents leverage to support their children's educational endeavors. Future studies should continue to examine and document such cultural assets and to gauge the degree to which they are similar or different across different (im)migrant groups within and across the U.S. border. An interesting component that merits further interrogation is a focus on students' reactions to the multiple forms of *apoyo* that parents bring to bear on their education. Do certain students respond more positively to certain forms parental support, but not to others? If so, why?

Another key finding from this study was that the migratory experiences of farmworkers demonstrated a sense of agency under challenging circumstances. Parents were motivated to migrate, in part, as a pathway to creating greater educational opportunities for their children. While I examined how conceptions and practices of engagement were shaped by the life histories of farmworkers, it is important to also assess other types of experiences (external and internal migration) in different geographical contexts. It would be interesting to compare the forms of engagement and agency of poor urban African American or Chicana/o parents that relocate to suburban communities or to other neighborhoods that can provide their children greater educational opportunities. Do such parents also exhibit similar forms of *apoyo* as do

(im)migrant families? The goal of these comparisons would be to ascertain the impact of migration, poverty, and labor on the agency exerted by urban and rural migrants of distinct racial/ethnic groups. Such an approach would yield valuable data that would allow for the furthering of theoretical propositions regarding parental agency and engagement and its generalizations to a broader social context.

In order to refine theory and practice around parental engagement, the findings from this study suggest the need for further research in several areas. Findings from this study revealed that although parents are born into poverty, they exert tremendous agency to ensure their children avoid a similar , through obtaining a formal education. I also found that when race and class were significant determinants of school participation, particularly when their children went off to BMHS. The MEP program was highly effective in engaging parents because it addressed the social and spatial distance that often marginalized Mexican (im)migrant parents and served as a mechanism of exclusion from the school community. Unlike BMHS staff, MEP understood directly addressed the specific needs of parents. This provided MEP parents an opportunity to have a voice and leadership role within the two schools in Trabajo and a platform to address grievances regarding their treatment by BMHS staff at the district level. Unlike many parent involvement programs, the success of MEP in engaging families stemmed from creating a welcoming environment for and designing activities and extracurricular activities that parents and their children found to be valuable. Future research should seek to examine parent groups like MEP and how the culture of the group serves to facilitate greater participation by respecting parents and what they offer the school community. This study highlights issues of adaptability by (im)migrant parents and groups like MEP that lead to positive results and greater communication which is an area that can be further explored.

### **Policy and Practice Limitations**

This dissertation focused on the importance of understanding how life experiences lead to distinct forms of educational engagement that are often overlooked and delegitimized by school personnel. The following section outlines the major policy and practice limitations associated with the findings of this study.

1. The Migrant Education Program and other community and school based programs typically only serve a small percentage of families that are in need. While programs like MEP have received high marks for playing a critical role in building bridges between schools and the broader community, program funding is always under threat of reduction. Furthermore, eligibility requirements for MEP participation continue to become stricter, thereby excluding many families who would otherwise be eligible and in need of such services. The culturally relevant approach that MEP employs led to parents in this study having high levels of school based participation. To increase school based participation, in similar ways, school leaders from the BM-T school district must first find ways to make school spaces welcoming by 1) providing support staff to translate and help parents communicate with teachers, 2) train teachers on cross-cultural communication and respect, and 3) address race and class issues by creating structures that promote egalitarian dialogue where the voices of parents are weighed as much as those of teachers and administrators (Flecha, 2000). Hence, we must move from inquiring about "why are parents not participating" to asking "how can we get to know families to better to engage them around the specific concerns they have regarding the future educational trajectories of their children?"

2. This study also revealed meaningful ways that parents participate outside of the school to support their children's educational trajectories. Most research establishing links between parental participation in education and improved academic achievement focuses on grades, test scores, and attendance. The benefits of an examination of family histories is that it contextualizes how the benefits of educational support extend beyond factors such as achievement, and further highlights how farmworker families' low levels of educational attainment are more closely related to lack of access to educational opportunities than to a lack of effort. By inquiring and learning about the struggles of (im)migrant farmworker families, educators can be better positioned to support the learning opportunities of farmworker youth and potentially interrupt the likelihood that children will end up leaving school and consigned to the same profession as their parents. While there is no guarantee that children will maximize the opportunities they are afforded due to the forms of apoyo they garner from their parents, having access to such supports can ensure that they have realistic opportunities for success.

3. The demographic shifts that the BM-T School District has experienced over the last 30 years call into question the ability of staff to adequately respond to the unique needs of the community of families and students they are serving. Currently at BMHS about 80% of the students population is Latino but more than 70% of the teachers are White. Given the concerns shared by the Spanish speaking parents from Trabajo, BMHS and the district at large should immediately begin a campaign to not only diversify their teaching staff, but to make translators readily available for parent conversations with teachers. Taking the above approach would go a long way to ease tensions that have historically existed between the two communities along racial, cultural, and linguistic lines. Long term, it is in the best interests for the community of Trabajo to establish its very own high school as it would serve to diminish the physical distance

between parents' home and the high school their children attend. By breaking away and forming its own school district, residents from the community of Trabajo would be empowered to have new leadership roles and decision making power to more effectively address the needs of their own families and students.

### **Final Thoughts**

This holistic historical case study on Mexican (im)migrant parental engagement illustrates the complexity of experiences in a small rural community. It suggests that while high value is placed typically on particular forms of parental participation, there are additional, lesser known forms of parental engagement that are just as important in determining students' educational trajectories. The critical junctures in parental narratives reveal the specific ways that the life experiences of parents have shaped what roles parents believe are most appropriate for the educational success of their children. In addition, parents in the community of *Trabajo* reveal the importance that schools and school programs have in creating the conditions to foster school-based engagement that can potentially lead to greater academic success of students. Most importantly the actions of these parents in providing distinct forms of *apoyo* serve to remind school officials that there is no one-size fits all answer to the ways parents choose to engage with schools.

There is a need to create support systems within school and leadership structures that take parents into account and provide them with a voice in the decision making process. Schools must trust in parents by creating new leadership structures and positions for them that value their voice and democratic input. Without such structures, parental involvement programs or policies risk becoming top-down mechanistic processes with predetermined agendas and notions of the roles of families and communities, without consulting with their constituents about their needs

or concerns. These suggested leadership structures can go a long way in deepening the knowledge base in schools through dialogic learning (Flecha, 2000). Dialogic learning however supposes the right to fight for social justice in situations of inequality and educators must bring humility to bear and a willingness to collaborate, build, and do away with asymmetrical relations of power.

I began writing this dissertation with the goal of presenting and centering the voices of (im)migrant farmworking families and the ways in which they participate in the educational processes of their children. By focusing on narratives of parent experiences, I have shown that conventional notions of parental involvement do not adequately capture the struggles that families undergo seeking to support broad based support for their children. Listening to the narratives of these families has reinforced my belief and renewed my faith in the capacity of poor people to struggle and work to transform their lived experience with the hope of seeing a less oppressive and more humanizing future for their children. It is my hope to contribute to the field of education around parent engagement and educational inequality by highlighting the tremendous sacrifices these parents undergo because of the deep value they place on education. Their narratives of struggle truly are a testimony to the title of this project: "*sin sacrificio no hay recompensa.*" Today, I view my role as sharing the stories that were shared with me with the end goal of helping others gain a deeper consciousness about the daily experiences of (im)migrant farmworkers so that we may end the unnecessary suffering these families are forced to endure.



## APPENDIX A

### Protocolo de Entrevista Histórica

#### Historias de Migración

1. Platíqueme acerca de sus padres. ¿Quiénes son/eran ellos y a que se dedicaban? ¿Platíqueme un poco de usted. Donde nació y fue criada/o? Platíqueme acerca de su familia y de la comunidad en la cual creció. [Probe: tiempo/época y tamaño de familia]
2. ¿Podría recordar en qué año se migro a los estado unido por primera vez? ¿Cuántos años tenía? ¿Cuál fue el primer lugar donde vino a este país?
3. Platíqueme acerca de los diferente lugares adonde se ha movido y vivido. ¿Cuáles han sido unas de las razones por las cuales se ha movido ¿
4. ¿Durante ese tiempo a regresado a México en algún punto? ¿Tiene algunos familiares todavía en México? ¿Si es que si, quien? ¿Qué tan frecuenté se comunica con ellos?

#### Historias de Labor

5. ¿Qué tipo de empleo tuvieron sus padres? Trabajo usted cuando era más joven? A qué edad empezó a trabajar?
6. ¿Qué tipo de trabajo hace usted hoy? Platíqueme acerca del tipo de trabajo que ha hecho en el pasado. ¿Qué tipo de trabajo le gustaría hacer en el futuro?
7. Para esos que nunca han trabajado en el campo o la agricultura, o que quizás no sepan de que se trata el trabajo en la agricultura, platíqueme un poco su día típico trabajando. De qué piensa usted cuando trabaja? ¿Cómo se siente al final del día? Que oportunidades hay para personas que trabajan en el campo de aventajar?
8. ¿Alguna vez lo/a han maltratado o discriminado a usted en su trabajo? ¿Si es que si, como? ¿Cómo se resolvió ese problema?

#### Historias de Educación

9. ¿Cuánta educación formal tuvieron sus padres? ¿Y por que pararon?
10. Platíqueme de su propia experiencia en la escuela. ¿Cuántos años/grados de escuela pudo completar? ¿En dónde? ¿Por qué se detuvo allí? ¿Tuvo algunas aspiraciones para su propia educación? ¿Qué quería ser usted? ¿Que eran sus pensamientos acerca de la escuela en ese entonces? ¿Son igual ahora que es padre/madre? ¿Está actualmente inscrito o tiene algunos planes de atender la escuela de adultos? ¿Por qué? ¿O Porque no?
11. ¿Qué metas tiene usted para su hijas/hijos acerca de los logros educacionales de ellos? ¿Piensa usted que esas metas son realistas? ¿Porque o porque no?
12. Platíqueme acerca de la comunidad de Trabajo. ¿Cuando yo digo la comunidad de Trabajo, que llega a mente?

## APPENDIX B

### Entrevista de padre/madre protocolo

1. Platíqueme acerca de su familia. ¿Cuántos hijas/os tiene? ¿Que son sus edades y grado escolar? ¿Cuales escuelas atienden?
2. ¿Actualmente cómo describiría a su hija/o en la escuela? ¿Qué cosas o personas han contribuido a esto? Como sabe usted como va ella/él en la escuela?
  - a. [probe: influencias, y conocimiento acerca de calificaciones]
3. ¿Qué son algunas de las metas y sueños que tiene para sus hijas/os?
  - a. [Probe: acerca de aspiraciones, que significa el éxito]
4. ¿Cómo se comparan estas metas con sus propias experiencias y oportunidades para la educación? ¿Cómo fue la escuela para usted como estudiante? ¿Que fue el nivel/grado más alto que completo?
5. ¿Usted y sus hijas/os hablan acerca de cómo van las cosas en la escuela? ¿Qué tan seguido platicaron acerca de la escuela en el último año? ¿Qué tipos de temas tocaron? ¿Cómo es el ambiente cuando hablan acerca de la escuela?
  - a. [probe: relación entre padres e hijas/os, comunicación sobre la escuela]
6. ¿Habla usted con sus hijas/os acerca del futuro y continuar a ir a la escuela/colegio/universidad? ¿Qué tipos de temas tocan en la conversación? ¿Cómo es el ambiente cuando platican acerca del futuro? ¿Usted y sus hijas/os están de acuerdo acerca de sus metas para el futuro?
  - a. [probe: invitación de hija/o para discutir el futuro]
7. ¿Cuándo piensa acerca de la universidad para su hija/o, que tipo de lugar piensa usted en su mente? ¿Por qué? ¿Consideraría un colegio comunitario? ¿Porque, o porque no? ¿Consideraría usted que su hija/o viviera fuera de casa al ir al colegio/universidad? ¿Porque, porque no?
  - a. [Probe: punto de vista de 2 años vs. 4, publica vs. privada, local vs. lejos.]
8. ¿Qué piensa usted que se requiere para que estudiantes puedan ir a la universidad? ¿Me podría platicar acerca de los pasos que puede tomar uno ahora para llegar a una universidad?
  - a. [Probe: Conocimiento acerca del colegio]
9. ¿Cómo se ha enterado acerca de estos pasos? ¿Con quién habla acerca de esto? ¿Ha participado usted en algunos de estos pasos?
  - a. [probe: redes sociales, parientes que han ido a una universidad o colegio]
  - b. [participación formal e informal]

10. ¿Quién diría que es principalmente responsable por asegurarse que el estudiante tenga lo necesario para sobresalir en la escuela [e ir al colegio]: la escuela, los padres, el estudiante [la comunidad]? ¿Por qué?
  - a. [probe: creencias delegación]
11. ¿Qué rol piense usted que deberían tener los padres/madres en la educación de sus hijas/os? ¿Qué es su trabajo? [responsabilidad] Cambia esto de la “elementary” a la “high school”?
  - a. [probe: ejemplos- que tipo de cosas podrían hacer los padres y las madres—papa y mama]
12. ¿De donde adquirió sus pensamientos acerca de las responsabilidades de los padres en la educación de sus hijas/hijos? ¿Cómo describiría el rol de sus padres en su propia educación? ¿Alguna vez ha hablado con otros acerca de sus pensamientos sobre lo que padres deberían de hacer?
  - a. [probe: redes sociales, influencias, e historias familiares]
13. ¿Unos padres/madres a veces suponen que su hija/o va bien en la escuela si no escuchan nada de la escuela? ¿Qué piensa usted acerca de eso?
14. ¿Qué piensa usted que la “elementary/middle school” de *Trabajo* quiere que el rol (trabajo) de padres sea? ¿Ayuda la escuela a padres/madres en apoyar a sus hijas/os con su educación?
  - a. [probe: ejemplos e invitaciones de la escuela]
15. ¿Ha sido igual en otras escuelas que su hija/o ha asistido?
16. ¿Qué tipo de cosas a hecho para apoyar a su hijas/os en la educación cuando están en la escuela?
  - a. probe: unos ejemplos]
17. ¿Cómo reacciona su hija/o a sus esfuerzos de apoyo? ¿Cómo le hace para hacer que su hija/o haga lo que usted quiere que hagan en la escuela?
18. ¿Alguna vez se ha movida o a hecho planes para que su hija/o este en cierta escuela?

### **PREGUNTAS ACERCA DE MIGRACION Y LA ESCUELA**

19. ¿Qué tan seguido fallan días de escuela sus hijas/os? ¿Es algo que le preocupa?
20. ¿Siente usted que su participación en la educación de su hijas/os ha hecho una diferencia? ¿Cómo?
  - a. [Probe: participación no formal]
21. ¿Hay más cosas que le gustaría hacer para ayudar a su hija/o pero que se le dificultan ahorita?

- a. [Probe: tipo de barreras que se enfrentan]
22. ¿Sabe el GPA o promedio de calificaciones que actualmente tiene su hija/o?
  23. ¿Se siente bienvenida como padre/madre en la escuela de su hija/o? ¿Porque si o porque no?
  24. ¿Cómo se entera usualmente de lo que pasa en la escuela?
    - a. [probe: conocimiento escolar, redes sociales]
  25. ¿Va a eventos para padres/madres en la escuela? ¿Cuál fue el último evento al que fue? ¿Va usted usualmente a eventos como “back to school night, open house, pta”? ¿Que tal el programa migrante? ¿Porque si o porque no? ¿Cómo son estos eventos para usted? ¿Qué tipos de eventos en la escuela ha encontrado más útil? ¿A cuales han sido los que menos le han ayudado?

### **PROGRAMA MIGRANTE**

26. **[Si padres han ido a mas de tres juntas]** ¿Cómo describiría el programa Migrante a otras familias? ¿Porque va usted a las reuniones? ¿Qué es lo más útil para usted de las reuniones? ¿Y lo menos útil? ¿Qué impacto han tenido en usted y su familia, si es que lo/a han impactado? ¿En qué manera es el programa migrante similar o diferente a otros eventos de padres/madres en las escuela? ¿Cómo podrían ser las reuniones más útil para usted?
27. **[Si padre/madre solo ha ido 1 o 2 veces]** ¿Que le impide ir a reuniones o ir mas seguido? ¿Cómo podrían ser las reuniones más convenientes o útiles para usted?

### **CONTACTO CON EL PERSONAL DE LA ESCUELA**

28. ¿Alguna vez se a comunicado con el personal de la escuela acerca de un problema que haya tenido su hija/o? ¿Cómo fue esa experiencia para usted? ¿Que fue el resultado de esa situación?
29. ¿Alguna vez ha platicado con alguien en la escuela sobre cómo se debería preparar su(s) hijas/os para la “high school” [o “middle school”]? ¿Y para el colegio/universidad? ¿Con quién platico? ¿Cómo fue esa conversación? ¿Y que fueron los resultados de esa conversación?
30. **[Si tienen hijos/as en “high school”]** ¿Alguna vez ha platicado o se ha reunido con el consejero/consejera de su hija/o? ¿Cómo fue esa experiencia para usted? ¿Y cuáles fueron los resultados de esa reunión?
31. ¿Piensa usted que los alumnos mexicanos [latinos/migrantes/que están aprendiendo Ingles] tienen las mismas oportunidades que otros alumnos en la escuela? ¿Alguna vez han discriminado a su hija/o en la escuela? ¿Tiene algunas preocupaciones acerca del futuro de su hija/o basado en el tratamiento que recibe?

32. ¿Al pensar en el pasado y en la educación de su[s] hijas/os, sabiendo lo que sabe hoy, hay algo que hubiera hecho diferente como padre/madre?
- a. [probe: barreras impedimentos]
- ¿Hay algo que planea hacer diferente con su[s] otros hijas/os? ¿Hay algo que le gustaría que la escuela o el programa migrante hiciera diferente?
33. ¿Tiene algunos consejos para otros padres migrantes que quieren que sus hijas/os vayan a la universidad? ¿Tiene algunos consejos para educadores para como mejor ayudar a familias que quieren que sus hijas/os vayan a la universidad?
34. ¿Tiene algunas preguntas para mí? ¿Hay algo que quisiera agregar que no compartió conmigo? Muchísimas gracias por su ayuda. Yo me comunicare con usted después para compartir con usted sus respuestas. Ahora le quería pedir un nombre que le gustaría escoger como anónimo para usted y su esposo?

## REFERENCES

- Abedi, J. and R. Dietel (2004). Challenges in the No Child Left behind Act for English-Language Learners. *Phi Delta Kappan* 85(10): 782.
- Acuña, R. (1988). *Occupied America: A history of Chicanos*. New York, Harper Collins
- Agricultural Overview (2010). California Agricultural Statistics. Retrieved online: [http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/California/Publications/California\\_Ag\\_Statistics/2010cas-ovw.pdf](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/California/Publications/California_Ag_Statistics/2010cas-ovw.pdf)
- Alba, R. D. & Nee, V. (2003). *Remaking the American mainstream*. Harvard University Press.
- Allensworth, E.M., & Rochin, R.I. (1996). White Exodus, Latino Repopulation, and Community Well-being: Trends in California's Rural Communities. Research Report No. 13, Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.
- Andreas, P. (2000). *Border games: Policing the U.S.-Mexico divide*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press
- Anson, A. R., T. D. Cook, F. Habib, M. K. Grady, N. M. Haynes, and J. P. Comer. (1991). The Comer School Development Program: A Theoretical Analysis. *Urban Education* 1: 56–82.
- Auerbach, S. (2001). *Under co-construction: Parent roles in promoting college access for students of color*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies.
- Auerbach, S. (2002). “Why Do They Give the Good Classes to Some and Not to Others?:” Latino Parent Narratives of Struggle in a College Access Program. *Teachers College Record* 104(7), 1369-1392.
- Auerbach, S. (2006). “If the student is good, let him fly”: Moral support for college among Latino immigrant parents. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 5(4), 275-292.
- Auerbach, S. (2007). From Moral Supporters to Struggling Advocates: Reconceptualizing parent roles in education through the experience of working-class families of color. *Urban Education* 42(3), 250-283
- Babbie, E. (1998). *The practice of social research* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth
- Baker, D. P., & Stevenson, D. L. (1986). Mothers' strategies for children's achievement: Managing the transition to high school. *Sociology of Education*, 59, 156-166.

- Baker, A.J., & Soden, L.M. (1998, April). The challenges of parent involvement research. ERIC/CUE Digest Number 134.(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED419030)
- Barnard, W. M. (2004). Parent involvement in elementary school and educational attainment. *Child and Youth Services Review*, 26, 39–62.
- Bell, D. A. (1980). *Brown v. Board of Education and the interest-convergence dilemma*. *Harvard Law Review*, 33, 1-34.
- Bogdan, R. C & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative Research for Education: An introduction to Theories and. Methods* (4th ed.). New York: Pearson Education
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Bugarin, A. & Lopez, E. S. (1998, July). Farmworkers in California (CRB-98-007).
- Bureau of Field Enforcement (2004) Annual Report on the Effectiveness of Bureau of Field Enforcement. Retrieved on February 4, 2009 from <http://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/BOFE-2004.pdf>
- Brumitt, J, Garside, LI, Reisch, R, Marshall, T, Gilpin, H, Kinsey, J, Imondi, K. (2011). Musculoskeletal Healthcare for Latino Migrant Farmworkers: Interprofessional Collaboration to Provide Service and Educate Future Healthcare Providers. *Health and Interprofessional Practice*1(1):eP1002
- Calabrese-Barton, A., Drake, C. Perez, G. & St. Louis. K. (2004). Ecologies of parental engagement in urban education. *Educational Researcher*, 33(4), 3-12.
- California Department of Education (2011) Facts about English Learners in California - *CalEdFacts*. Retrieved on May6, 2012 from: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/cefelfacts.asp>
- Carbado, D. & Gulati, M. (2003). The law and economics of critical race theory. *The Yale Law Journal*, 112(7), 1757-1802.
- Carter, L.G. (2009) Reaping Riches in a Wretched Region: Subsidized Industrial Farming and Its Link to Perpetual Poverty. *Golden Gate University Environmental Law Journal* 3, 5-41.
- Carter, P. (2003). “Black” Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and Schooling for Low Income African American Youth. *Social Problems Vol. 50*, No.1
- Carter, P. (2005). *Keepin’ It Real: School Success Beyond Black and White*. New York: O Oxford.

- Ceja, M. (2004). Chicana College Aspirations and the Role of Parents: Developing Educational Resiliency. *The Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(4), 1-25.
- Ceja, M. (2006). Understanding the Role of Parents and Siblings as Information Sources in the College Choice Process of Chicana Students. *The Journal of College Student Development*, 47, (1), 87-10
- Chavkin, N. F. (1989). Debunking the Myth About Minority Parents, *Educational Horizons*, 119-123. Chavkin, N.F. (Ed.). (1993). *Families and schools in a pluralistic society*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Chavkin, N.F. (Ed.). (1993). *Families and schools in a pluralistic society*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Chavkin, N. (1996). Involving migrant families in their children's education: challenges and opportunities for schools. Retrieved from ERIC database
- Chomsky, N. (1999). *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and the Global Order*. New York: Seven Stories Press
- Civil, M. (1999). Parents as resources for mathematical instruction. In M. van Groenestijn & D. Coben (Eds.), *Mathematics as part of lifelong learning* (Proceedings of the fifth international conference of 'Adults Learning Maths - A research forum', Utrecht, Netherlands, July 1998) (pp.216-222). London, UK: Goldsmiths College
- Civil, M. (2001). *Redefining Parental Involvement: Parents as Learners of Mathematics*. Paper presented at the NCTM Research Pre-session. Orlando, FL, April 2001
- Comer, J. (1985). The Yale-New Haven primary prevention project: A follow-up study. *Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 23, 154-160
- Comer, J. P., & Haynes, N. M. (1991). Parent involvement in schools: An ecological approach. *The Elementary School Journal*, 91(3), 271-277.
- Conchas, G. Q. (2001). Structuring Failure and Success: Understanding the Variability in Latino School Engagement. *Harvard Educational Review* 71(3): 475-504.
- Cowan, T. (2005). California's San Joaquin Valley: A Region in Transition. *Congressional Research Service*, The Library of Congress
- Cotton, K., & Wikeland, K. R. (1989). Parent Involvement in Education, *School Improvement Research Series*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratories.
- Cutler, W. W. III. (2000). *Parents and schools: The 150-year struggle for control in American education*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.



- Daniel, C (1981) *Bitter harvest History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Learning and living pedagogies of the home: The mestiza consciousness of Chicana students. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 47,(5),623-639
- Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical Race Theory, LatCrit Theory, and Critical Raced-Gendered Epistemologies: Recognizing Students of Color as Holders and Creators of Knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), 105-126.
- Delgado Gaitan, C. (1990). *Literacy for Empowerment: The Role of Parents in Children's Education*. London: Falmer Press.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1991). Involving Parents in the Schools: A process of empowerment. *American Journal of Education*, 100(1) 20-46.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1992). School matters in the Mexican-American home: Socializing children to education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 29, 495-513.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1994). *Consejos: The Power of Cultural Narratives*. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 25(3), 298-316.
- Delgado Gaitan, C. (2001). *The Power of Community*, Denver: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical Race Theory: An introduction*. New York: New York University Press.
- Diamond, J., Wang, B.L. & Gomez, K. W. (2004). African-American and Chinese-American Parent Involvement: The Importance of Race, Class, and Culture. Harvard Family Research Project Research Digest.
- Epstein, J. L. (1983). *Effects on parents of teacher practices of parent involvement*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University, Report No. 346, pp. 277-294.
- Epstein, J. L. (1986). Parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement. *Elementary School Journal*, 86, 277-294.
- Epstein, J. L. (1991). Effects on student achievement of eachers' practices of parent involvement. In S.B. Silvern (Ed.), *Advances in reading/language research: Vol. 5, Literacy through family, community and school interaction* (pp. 261-276). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/Family/Community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(9), 701-712.
- Epstein, J. L. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

- Epstein, J. L. (2005). Links in a professional development chain: Preservice and inservice education for effective programs of school, family, and community partnerships. *The New Educator*, 1(2), 125-141.
- Epstein, J.L., Clark, L., Salinas, K.C., & Sanders, M. (1997). Scaling-up school, family community connections in Baltimore: effects on student achievement and attendance. Baltimore, MD: *CRESPAR and the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships*, Johns Hopkins University.
- Epstein, J. L., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2001). More than minutes: Teachers' roles in designing homework. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(3) 181-193.
- Fan, X., & Chen, M. (1999). Parental involvement and students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 13, 1-22.
- Fass, P. S. (1989). *Outside In: Minorities and the Transformation of American Education*. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Feagin, J. (2002) White Supremacy and Mexican Americans: Rethinking the "Black White Paradigm." *54 Rutgers Law Review* 959-987
- Finch, B.K., and Vega, W.A. (2003) Acculturation Stress, Social Support, and Self-Rated Health among Latinos in California. *Journal of Immigrant Health*. 5(3): 109-117.
- Finlayson, A. C., Lyson, T. A., Pleasant, A., Schafft, K. S., & Torres, R. J. (2005). The "invisible hand": Neoclassical economics and the ordering of society. *Critical Sociology*, 31(3).
- Freire, P. (2000a) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30th Anniversary Edition). N. Y: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.
- Freire, P. (2000b) Cultural Action for Freedom. Reprint: *Harvard Educational Review*. Vol. 68, 1998, no.4, p. 471-521
- Fuller, B., Elmore, R., & Orfield, G. (1996). Who chooses? Who loses? Culture, institutions, and the unequal effects of school choice. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Galarza, E. (1964). *Merchants of Labor: The Mexican Bracero Story, an account of the managed migration of Mexican farm workers in California, 1942-1960*. Charlotte: McNally and Loftin.
- Galbraith, J. K. (2001). *The essential Galbraith*. Houghton Mifflin: Boston
- Gandara, P., Rumberger, R.W., et al. (2003). English learners in California schools: Unequal resources, unequal outcomes. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 11(36).

- Gibson, M. A. (2003). Improving graduation outcomes for migrant students. ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools Document EDO-RC-03-2.
- Goldschmidt, W.R. (1947). *As you sow: three studies in the social consequences of agribusiness*. Montclair NJ: Allanheld, Osmun and Co.
- González, N., & Moll, L. C. (2002). Cruzando el puente: Harnessing funds of knowledge in the Puente project. *Journal of Educational Policy*, 16 (4), 623-641
- González, N., Moll, L., Floyd Tenery, M., Rivera A., Rendon, P., Gonzales, R., & Amanti, C. (1995). Funds of knowledge for teaching in Latino households. *Urban Education*, 29(4), 444-471.
- Griffith, J. (1996). Test of a model of the organizational antecedents of parent involvement and satisfaction with public education. *Human Relations*, 49(12), 1549–1571.
- Griffith, J. (1998). The relation of school structure and social environment to parent involvement in elementary schools. *Elementary School Journal*, 99(1), 53–80
- Green, F. R. (1999). Brain and learning research : Implications for meeting the needs of diverse learners. *Education*, 119(4), 682-688.
- Grolnick, W. S., & Slowiaczek, M. L. (1994). Parents' involvement in children's schooling: A multidimensional conceptualization and motivational model. *Child Development*, 64, 237–252.
- Gross, G. (1999) '5-year-old Gatekeeper is praised, denounced,' *San Diego Union* 31 October: B1.
- Guerra, R. S. (1979). Work experience and career education programs for migrant children. *Sourcebook of Equal Educational Opportunity*, 39, 437-450.
- Gutiérrez, D. G. (1995). *Walls and mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican immigrants, and the politics of ethnicity*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Gutman, L. M., & McLoyd, V. C. (2000). Parents' management of their children's education within the home, at school, and in the community: An examination of African-American families living in poverty. *Urban Review*, 32, 1–24.
- Hammond, L. (2001). Notes from California: An anthropological approach to urban science education for language minority families. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 38(9), 983–999. (Harvard Civil Rights Project;
- Haney-Lopez, I.F. (1997) Race, Ethnicity, Erasure: The Saliency of Race to LatCrit Theory, *California Law Review* 85: 1143,1165

- Henderson, A.T., and Berla, N. (1994). *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- Henderson, A. & Mapp, K. (2002) *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*. Annual Synthesis, 2002. Southwest Educational Development Lab., Austin, TX
- Hernandez-Truyol, B. E. (1997) Borders (En)gendered: Normativities, Latinas, and a LatCrit Paradigm.” *New York University Law Review*, 72, 882.
- Herries-Hathron, B. (1998) California Farmworkers: Dilemmas in Developing Interventions for Health and Medical Care Concerns, *57 Hum. Org.* 369
- Herrzog, W. (1994). *Parables as subversive speech: Jesus as pedagogue of the oppressed*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox.
- Heyman, J. (1998) State Effects on Labor Exploitation: The INS and Undocumented Immigrants at the Mexico-United States Border., *Critique of Anthropology* 18: 157-80.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., & Sandler, H.M. (1995). Parental involvement in children's education: Why does it make a difference? *Teachers College Record*, 97, 310-331.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K., & Sandler, H. (1997). Why do parents become involved in their children's education? *Review of Educational Research*, 67(1), 3-43.
- Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., & Closson, K. E. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *Elementary School Journal*, 106(2); 105-130
- Ho Sui-Chu, E., & Willms, J. D. (1996). Effects of parental involvement on eighth-grade achievement. *Sociology of Education*, 69(2), 126-141.
- Immerwahr, J., & Johnson, J. (2007). *Squeeze play: How parents and the public look at higher education today*. National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education
- Jencks, C. & Phillips, M. (1998). The black-white test score gap: An introduction. In C. Jencks and M. Phillips (Eds.). *The black-white test score gap*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Johnson, H.P. & Hayes, J.M. (2004). *The Central Valley at a Crossroads: Migration and Its Implications*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California.
- Johnson, K. R. & Martinez, G.A. (2000) Crossover Dreams: The Roots of LatCrit Theory in Chicana/o Studies, Activism and Scholarship , *53 U. Miami L. Rev.* 1143

- Johnson, K. R. (2002). Race and the immigration laws: The need for critical inquiry. In F. Valdes, J. M. Culp, & A. P. Harris (Eds.), *Crossroads, directions, and a new critical race theory*. (pp. 187-198). Philadelphia: Temple University Press
- Krissman, F. (1995), The Use of Bi-national Networks to Supply New Immigrant Farm Workers to Californian Agribusiness. *Culture & Agriculture, Vol. 16 (53): 3-8*
- Krissman, F. (1999) Agribusiness strategies to divide the labor force by class, ethnicity, and legal status. In Wong, P. (ed) *Race/Ethnicity/Nationality in the United States*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Lacar, M. S. (2001) The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996: Implications for Hispanic Migrant Farmworkers. *The Julian Samora Research Institute, Working Paper #53*
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies. N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (eds). *Handbook of Qualitative Research (Second edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97(1)*, 47–69.
- Lareau, A. (1989). *Home advantage: Social class and parental intervention in elementary education*. London: Falmer.
- Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lareau, A. and McNamara-Horvat, E. (1999) "Moments of Social Inclusion and Exclusion: Race, Class and Cultural Capital in Family-School Relationships" *Sociology of Education, 71*, 37-53
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (1978). *Worlds Apart: Relationships Between Families and Schools*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lawson, M. A. (2003) School–family relations in context. *Urban Education 38*, 77-133
- Lefebvre, H. (1976) *The Survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Production*. Translated by Frank Bryant. New York: St. Martin's Press
- Legislative Analyst Office (2006) Improving Services for Migrant Students. Online: [http://www.lao.ca.gov/2006/migrant\\_ed/migrant\\_education\\_021506.htm](http://www.lao.ca.gov/2006/migrant_ed/migrant_education_021506.htm)
- Lopez, G. (2001). The value of hard work: Lessons on parent involvement from an (im)migrant household. *Harvard Educational Review, 71*, 416-437.
- Lopez, G, Scribner, J, & Mahitivanichcha, K (2001). Redefining parent involvement: Lessons from high-performing migrant-impacted schools. *American Education Research Journal, 38*, 253–288

- Lopez, G. (2003) Parental involvement as racialized performance, in: G. Lopez & L. Parker (Eds) *Interrogating racism in qualitative research methodology* (New York, Peter Lang Publishing), 71–95
- Marcon, R. A. (1999). Positive relationships between parent school involvement and public school innercity preschoolers' development and academic performance. *School Psychology Review*, 28(3), 395–412.
- Martin, P. L. (1988). *Harvest of confusion: Migrant workers in U.S. agriculture*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Martin, P.L. & Taylor, J.E.(2000) For California Farmworkers, Future Holds Little Prospect for Change" *California Agriculture* 54(1):19-25.
- Martin, P. (2003). *Promise unfulfilled: Unions, immigration, and farm workers*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Martin, P.L. (2010) Migration's Economic Tradeoffs: Farm Worker Wages and Food Costs. *Population Reference Bureau*. Retrieved from: <http://www.prb.org/Articles/2010/usfarmworkersfoodprices.aspx>
- Martin, P.L. (2011) Farm Exports and Farm Labor: Would a raise for fruit and vegetable workers diminish the competitiveness of U.s. agriculture? *Economic Policy Institute EPI Briefing Paper #295*
- Martin, P.L. (2012) US Agriculture and Migration. Paper prepared for the Migration and Competitiveness: Japan and the United States UC-Berkeley March 22-23, 2011
- Massey, Douglas S. 1998. March of Folly: U.S. Immigration Policy After NAFTA. *AMERICAN PROSPECT* 37 (12): 22-33.
- Mattingly, D. J., Prislun, R., McKenzie, T. L., Rodriguez, J. L., & Kayzar, B. (2002). Evaluating evaluations: The case of parent involvement programs . *Review of Educational Research*, 72 (4), 549-576.
- Maxwell, J.A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interpretive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McWilliams, C. (1971) *Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor in California*. Little, Brown: Boston.
- McLaren, P., & Giroux, H. (1990). Critical pedagogy and rural education: A challenge from Poland. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 67(4),154–165
- Mere, F. (2007). Rural Migration in Mexico - An Overview. *Agricultural Outlook Forum* 2007 (8082).

- Merriam, S. B., (1998) *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mitchell D. ( 1996) *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press
- Mitchell, D. (2002). The Geography Of Injustice: Borders And The Continuing Immiseration of California Agricultural Labor In Era of "free Trade." *Richmond Journal of Global Law and Business* 2(2): 145-166
- Mitchell, D. (2003) California living, California dying: dead labor and the political economy of landscape. In Anderson, K., Domosh, M., Pile, S. and Thrift, N., editors, *Handbook of cultural geography*, London: Sage, 233-248.
- Moreno, R. P., & Valencia, R. R. (2002). Chicano families and schools: Myths, knowledge, and future directions. In R. R. Valencia (Ed.), *Chicano school failure and success: Past, present, and future* (2nd ed., pp. 227-250). New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.
- National Migrant Resources Program and the Migrant Clinicians Network (1990) *Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Health Objectives for the Year 2000*. Austin, Tex.: The Program.
- Nevins J (2001) *Operation Gatekeeper*. New York: Routledge.
- Ngai, M. (2004). *Impossible subjects: Illegal aliens and the making of modern America*. NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Olmedo, I. M. (1997). Family oral histories for multicultural curriculum perspectives. *Urban Education*, 32(1), 45-62.
- Oakes, J. (2004) Investigating the Claims in Williams v. State of California: An Unconstitutional Denial of Education's Basic Tools? *Teachers College Record* Volume 106 Number 10, 2004, p. 1889-1906
- Oakes, J., Rogers, J., & Lipton, M. (2006). *Learning power: Organizing for education and justice*. Teachers College Press, New York.
- Olivos, E. M. 2006. *The power of parents: A critical perspective of bicultural parent involvement in the public school*, New York: Peter Lang.
- Olsen, L. (1997). *Made in America: Immigrant Students in Our Public Schools*. New York, The New Press

- Noguera, P. (2003). *City Schools and the American Dream: Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education*, Teachers College Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Peña, D. C. (2000) Parent involvement: Influencing factors and implications. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 94 (1), 42-54.
- Pérez Carreon, G., Drake, C., & Calabrese-Barton, A. (2005). The importance of presence: Immigrant parents' school engagement experiences. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42(3), 465-498.
- Perez Huber, L., Benavides, C., Malagon, M., Velez, V. & Solorzano, D. (2008). "Getting Beyond the 'Symptom,' Acknowledging the 'Disease': Theorizing Racist Nativism." *Contemporary Justice Review*, 11, 39-51.
- Portelli, A. (1981) 'The peculiarities of oral history', *History Workshop*, 12, 96–107.
- Portelli, A. (1991). *The death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories: Form and meaning in oral history*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Portes, A. & Rumbaut, R.G. (2001) *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press
- Scribner, J. D., Young, M. D., & Pedroza, A. (1999). Building collaborative relationships with parents. In P. Reyes, J. D. Scribner & A. Paredes-Scribner (Eds.), *Lessons from high-performing Hispanic schools: Creating learning communities* (pp. 36–60). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Rogers, J. (2006). Forces of accountability? The power of poor parents in NCLB. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76, 611-641.
- Ross, J. (1998, September) The burro at the palace. *Progressive*. Vol: 28-29
- Ruiz de Velasco, J., & Fix, M. (2002). Limited English Proficient Students and High-Stakes Accountability Systems. in D.M. Pinche & W.L. Taylor & R. A. Reed (Eds.), *Report of the Citizens' Commission on Civil Rights*.
- Rumberger, R., & Gandara, P. (2004). Seeking equity in the education of California's English learners. *Teachers College Record*, 106(10), 2032-2056.
- Sanchez, G. & Romero, M. (2010) Critical Race Theory in the US Sociology of Immigration. *Sociology Compass*. Vol. 4(9): 770-788
- Selden, S. (1999) *Inheriting the Shame: The Story of Race and Eugenics in the United States*. New York, Teachers College Press.



- Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2002). Improving student behavior and school discipline with family and community involvement. *Education and Urban Society*, 35, 4-26.
- Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: dialogues on transforming education*. South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin & Garvey Publishers.
- Shumow, L., & Lomax, R. (2002). Parental efficacy: Predictor of parenting behavior and adolescent outcomes. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, 2, 127-150.
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: ZED Books.
- Smith-Maddox, R. & Solórzano, D. (2002). Using Critical Race Theory, Freire Problem Posing Method, and Case Study Research to Confront Race and Racism in Education. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 66-84.
- Sokas, R. (2002) CDC Efforts to Address the Health and Safety Needs of Immigrant Workers. *Testimony Before the Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Labor and Pensions, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions*. Retrieved from: <http://www.hhs.gov/asl/testify/t20020227.html>
- Solorzano, D. (1991). "Mobility Aspirations Among Racial Minorities, Controlling For SES." *Sociology and Social Research*, 75, 182-188.
- Solorzano, D. (1992). "An Exploratory Analysis of the Effect of Race, Class, and Gender on Student and Parent Mobility Aspirations." *Journal of Negro Education*, 61, 30-44.
- Solórzano, D. (1998). Critical Race Theory, Racial and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experiences of Chicana and Chicano Scholars. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies In Education* 11, 121-136.
- Solórzano, D. (1997) Images and Words That Wound: Critical Race Theory, Racial Stereotyping, and Teacher Education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 24, 5-19.
- Solórzano, D., Ceja, M. & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69, 60-73.
- Solórzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2001a). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: counter-story telling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, Vol. 14., No. 4,
- Solórzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2001b). Maintaining Social Justice Hopes within Academic Realities: A Freirean Approach to Critical Race/LatCrit Pedagogy. *Denver Law Review*, 78, 595-621.

- Solórzano, D. & Yosso, T. (2002). Critical Race Methodology: Counterstorytelling as an Analytical Framework for Education Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 23-44
- Solórzano, D., Villalpando, O., & Oseguera, L. (2005). Educational Inequities and Latina/o Undergraduate Students in the United States: A Critical Race Analysis of Their Educational Progress. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 4, 272-294.
- Sosa, A. S. (1996). Involving Hispanic parents in improving educational opportunities for their children. In Flores, J. L. (Ed.), *Children of la frontera: Binational efforts to serve Mexican migrant and immigrant students* (pp. 341–352). Charleston, WV
- Souto-Manning, M., & Swick, K. J. (2006). Teachers' beliefs about parent and family involvement: Rethinking our family involvement paradigm. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(2), 187–193
- Spring, J. H. (2001). *The American school, 1642-2000 (5th ed.)*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Sui-Chu, E. H., & Willms, J. D. (1996). Effects of parent involvement on eighth-grade achievement. *Sociological Quarterly*, 69(2), 126–141.
- Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (2001). *Manufacturing hope and despair: The school and kin support networks of U.S.-Mexican youth*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Suárez-Orozco, M. M., Páez, M., & David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. (2002). *Latinos : Remaking America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sullivan, M. M., & Rehm, R. (2005). Mental health of undocumented Mexican immigrants: A review of the literature. *Advances in Nursing Sciences*, 28, 240-251.
- Teranishi, A., Allen, W., & Solórzano, D. (2004). Opportunity at the crossroads: Racial inequality, school segregation, and higher education in California. *Teachers College Record*, 106(11), 2224-2245.
- Taylor, J.E., Martin, P.L., Fix, M. (1997). *Poverty Amid Prosperity: Immigration and the Changing Face of Rural California*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.
- Treviño, R. (2004). Against All Odds: Lessons from Parents of Migrant High-Achievers. *Scholars in the Field: The Challenge of Migrant Education*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education
- Triplett, William (2004). Migrant Farmworkers: Is the government doing enough to protect them? *CQ Researcher*, 14, 829-852.
- U. S. General Accounting Office. (1992). *Hired farmworkers: Health and well-being at risk*. Washington, DC: U.S. General Accounting Office, GAO/HRD-092-46,

- Valdes, G. (1996). *Con respeto: Bridging the distances between culturally diverse families and schools: An ethnographic portrait*. New York: Teachers College Press
- Valencia, R. (2002). *Chicano school failure and success: Past, present and future*. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Valencia, R., & Black, M. (2002). Mexican Americans don't value education! The basis of the myth, mythmaking, and debunking. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, v1 n2 p81-103
- Valencia, R.R., & Solórzano, D. G. (1997). Contemporary deficit thinking. In R. R. Valencia (Ed.), *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice* (pp. 160-210). London: Falmer Press.
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S. Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Vélez-Ibáñez, C. , & Greenberg, J. (1992). Formation and transformation of funds of knowledge among U.S. Mexican households. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 23, 313-335.
- Villalpando, O. (2004). Practical Considerations of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) for Latina/o College Students. In Ortiz, (Ed), *Addressing the Unique Needs of Latina/o Students*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Villarejo D. (2003) The health of U.S. hired farm workers. *Annual Review of Public Health* 24:175–193.
- Waters, M. (1990) *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America*. London: University of California Press.
- Watts, I. E., & Erevelles, N. (2004). These deadly times: Reconceptualizing school violence by using critical race theory and disability studies. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(2), 271-299.
- Weber, D. A., (1989 Fall) Raiz Fuerte: Oral History and Mexicana Farmworkers. *Oral History Review*, 17 (2), 47-62.
- White, K., Taylor, M. & Moss, V. (1992). Does research support claims about the benefits of involving parents in early intervention programs? *Review of Educational Research*, 62, 91-128.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. London: Sage Publications.
- Yosso, T.J., Parker, L., Solórzano, D.G., & Lynn, M. (2004). From Jim Crow to affirmative action and back again: A critical race discussion of racialized rationales and access to higher education. *Review of Research in Education*, 28, 1-25.

Yosso, T.J. (2005) Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth, *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 68-91.

Yosso, T. (2006). *Critical race counterstories along the Chicano/Chicana educational pipeline*. New York: Routledge.

Zorrilla, M. (2004). La Educación Secundaria en México: Al filo de su reforma. *Revista Electrónica Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación*, Vol2, 1. Retrieved from: <http://www.ice.deusto.es/rinace/reice/vol2n1/Zorrilla.pdf>