

ACADEMIC BARRIERS FOR MIGRANT MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN  
SALINAS, CALIFORNIA

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Anthropology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Alexa Terhorst

May 2017

© 2017

Alexa Terhorst

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Designated Thesis Committee Approves this Thesis Titled

ACADEMIC BARRIERS FOR MIGRANT MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN  
SALINAS, CALIFORNIA

by

Alexa Terhorst

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2017

Marco Meniketti, Ph. D.

Department of Anthropology

A.J. Faas, Ph. D.

Department of Anthropology

Charlotte Sunseri, Ph. D.

Department of Anthropology

## ABSTRACT

### ACADEMIC BARRIERS FOR MIGRANT MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SALINAS, CALIFORNIA

by Alexa Terhorst

The educational barriers facing migrant students are examined in this research based on the experiences of teachers and Mexican migrant middle school students in Salinas, California. Through the research, I ask if academic barriers for migrant students differ from obstacles of their peers and if so, what are those differences? The barriers to migrant students' education were explored through a literature review, examining themes of parental involvement, teacher-student relationships, student self-esteem, and the use of educational programs. Through snowball sampling, semi-structured interviews, and surveys, data were collected from four teachers and 18 migrant students to understand how these themes manifested and affected educational experiences. Research results have shown that positive teacher-student relationships were dependent on respect and understanding of one's cultural background. Both academic and migration stresses affected student self-esteem and attitude towards schooling. Educational programs organized by various educational institutions helped students develop skills needed to meet state testing requirements despite outside social and cultural factors. Interviews demonstrated parents' inability to support their children academically due to educational, language, or working restrictions. This research contributes to an increased understanding of migrant education by identifying and analyzing consistent experiences of migrant students within the American educational system.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As with everything in life, one does not achieve personal success without the help and support of others. My appreciation first goes to my committee members. Throughout my three years at San José State University, they have discussed the topic of migrant education with me and challenged my approaches to this thesis. The time and continual effort they have dedicated in helping me frame this research has been gracious and much appreciated.

I am also grateful for the invaluable participation from members of the MCOE community including, but not limited to, Summer Prather-Smith, Jorge Morales, Christopher Cambern, and all MCOE migrant counselors. Without their help, this research could not exist. They gave me the resources needed to work with students, parents, and teachers to make my interviews and surveys possible. It was an honor to work with them and an encouragement to see their dedication for migrant students.

I am eternally thankful for the teachers and students involved. These individuals took time to discuss issues related to migrant education and were willing to share personal stories and experiences with me. They saw the importance of this topic and generously offered to share their experiences for others to read and learn from. Thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .....	ix
Chapter 1: Problem Statement and Background.....	1
Introduction .....	1
No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 .....	5
NCLB and Migrant Region Requirements .....	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	9
Bourdieu and Passeron’s Cultural Capital.....	9
Ogbu and Simons’ Cultural–Ecological Theory .....	12
Parental Involvement.....	14
Migrancy and Economics .....	18
Teacher–Student Relationships .....	20
Effects of Self-Esteem.....	24
Education Programs .....	31
Academic Performance and NCLB .....	33
Chapter 3: Methods.....	38
Research Goals .....	38
Networks .....	39
Interviews .....	40
Surveys .....	44
Analyzing Data.....	45
Applying Theoretical Concepts.....	46

Chapter 4: Fieldwork and Results.....	49
How Teachers and Students Understand Migrants .....	49
No Child Left Behind and State Testing .....	51
Student Academics .....	54
Migration Behaviors .....	59
Parental Involvement.....	63
Education Programs .....	67
Teacher and Student Relationships .....	69
Self-Esteem in School .....	75
Theoretical Frameworks .....	78
Chapter 5: Discussion .....	81
Methods Migrant Students Use to Meet California Academic Standards.....	81
Educational Barriers .....	83
Social Factors Affecting Confidence and Self-Esteem .....	87
Cultural Capital and Cultural–Ecological Theory .....	89
Chapter 6: Conclusion .....	94
Research Conclusions.....	95
Limitations.....	98
What I Would Have Done Differently .....	100
Recommendations for Future Research .....	102
References.....	106
Appendices.....	111

Appendix A: Teacher Interview Consent Form .....	111
Appendix B: Parent Consent form for Student’s Interview Participation.....	114
Appendix C: Parent Consent form for Student’s Survey Participation.....	117
Appendix D: Student Assent form for Interview Participation.....	120
Appendix E: Student Assent form for Survey Participation .....	122
Appendix F: Sample Teacher Interview Questions.....	124
Appendix G: Sample Student Interview Questions.....	125
Appendix H: Student Survey.....	127
Appendix I: MCOE Letter of Consent .....	130
Appendix J: IRB Approval Letter .....	131
Appendix K: Materials Used.....	132



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Student Survey Responses on Homework Space.....	57
Table 2	Student Survey Responses to Working in the Fields.....	58
Table 3	Student Survey Responses on Changing Schools.....	63
Table 4	Student Survey Responses on Asking for Help.....	72

## **Chapter 1: Problem Statement and Background**

### **Introduction**

Many Americans have opinions regarding immigration to the United States. The difference between the terms “immigrant” and “migrant” worker becomes more difficult for the American people to distinguish, as definitions become diluted. With a country so involved in migrancy and migrant work, it is important that Americans grasp these two concepts and understand their definitions clearly. Immigrants move from one country to another, staying either for a short time or permanently. Migrants or migrant workers temporarily move from one country to another for work. While immigrants can work any job in the United States, migrant workers are legally defined as individuals who work in the fishing or agricultural industry (Klein 2015; Monterey County Office of Education 2014; US Department of Education 2005). Knowing the difference between these two crucial terms will help in understanding what it means to be a migrant worker and, more specifically in this thesis, what it means to be a migrant student.

The academic barriers for migrant students can vary depending on location, age, gender, and ethnicity. For this thesis, I focused on Mexican migrant students in grades six through eight in Salinas, California. This is an important area to study because Salinas is located in one of the most lucrative agricultural communities in the United States. It is dependent on migrant workers to help fulfill the demand for produce. This research asked if there are academic barriers for migrant students that differ from the obstacles of their student peers and if so, what are the differences? To identify any potential educational barriers for migrant Mexican middle school students in Salinas, I focused on (1)

understanding the methods migrant students use to meet California academic standards, (2) identifying variables that create barriers in their education, and (3) understanding the social factors that affect students' confidence and self-image in their school work. The research in this thesis was framed around Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron's (1990) concept of cultural capital, in which they discuss how the dominant culture within a community determines the behaviors and languages that are acceptable within that society. I also discuss John Ogbu and Herbert Simons' (1998) cultural-ecological theory to understand how migrant students view themselves academically within the dominant, English-speaking, Anglo-American culture. I examined their concepts of voluntary and involuntary minorities to understand where migrants fall within that spectrum. The findings and results were compared to literature relating to migrant students in the American classroom setting.

To understand the barriers for migrant students, it is important to know how the American school system is organized, and how George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001 has shaped our academics since its inception in 2002. NCLB was proposed and passed as a measure intended to improve the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) by closing the education gap caused by their cultural or economic background (Department of Education 2005). Under the provisions of the bill, statewide standards were developed with the aim of raising students' academic comprehension and of "leaving no child behind." While its stated intentions were benevolent, these standards easily allowed the assumptions that all students, regardless of language and citizenship, struggle in school for the same reasons, in the same areas of academics, and learn

curriculum in the same way. NCLB has made educational attainment difficult for Mexican migrant students in the United States.

The remaining content of this chapter discusses NCLB and how its enactment has affected current school structure and state testing results. In particular, I discuss potential consequences schools face when test scores repeatedly rank below average. I explain how the NCLB legislation defines the term “migrant student” and how NCLB attempted to address the academic needs of migrant students. The chapter ends by discussing the importance of migrant educational programs in helping students meet these academic standards.

Chapter Two consists of current literature on migrant education, including cultural, political, and economic factors that affect students academically. The first two sections discuss Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1990) concept of cultural capital and Ogbu and Simons’ (1998) cultural–ecological theory. Their ideas are referenced to help explain how relationships between dominant and minority cultures influence individuals’ behavior, speech, and thinking. The following subsections address common themes found throughout the literature: parental involvement, migrancy and economics, teacher–student relationships, effects of self-esteem, and education programs. I end this chapter by discussing the educational experiences of Latino students and how NCLB has affected them specifically.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the research methods used for data collection. I restate my research goals and explain how I established relationships within the academic community in Salinas, California. I discuss how I used my research question to structure

interviews and survey questions for teachers and students. I describe what tools I used to collect data and how I analyzed the material to highlight themes found in the research and discussed in the literature review.

I use Chapter Four to discuss the fieldwork and results of my research. The subheadings are based on the themes found in literature and my research methods. I add an additional subheading titled, “How Teachers and Students Understand Migrants,” to elaborate on teachers’ and students’ understandings of migrancy. I compare excerpts from teacher and student interviews in the literature in order to understand how these factors specifically affect students in Salinas, California.

Chapter Five is used to generate discussion around the information presented in the literature review and fieldwork results. I divide this chapter into three subheadings that serve to represent my three research focal points. The first section discusses methods migrant students use to meet California academic standards. The second section highlights educational barriers for migrant students such as lack of school supplies, parental involvement, and seasonal moves to other schools. The chapter ends with a third section related to social factors that affect students’ confidence and self-esteem.

Chapter Six contains my research conclusions. I discuss the limitations I encountered in the field, including working with vulnerable populations and scheduling conflicts. I examine aspects of my research that I would handle differently if I were to conduct my research again. Areas for potential improvement include changing research methods and incorporating the experiences of migrant counselors. The chapter concludes with my

recommendations for future research, including the beneficial role of future anthropological research within the field of migrant education.

### **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001**

The NCLB Act was signed into law in January 8, 2002 by President George W. Bush to bring about educational equality and opportunities. As an update to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965), the federal government took a more active role in managing each state's educational standards. In doing so, each state was held accountable for students' academic achievement and progress. Since its enactment, the act has affected how students learn, the methods behind teaching, and schools' organizational structure. For states to receive educational funds from the federal government, they must create and uphold specific educational standards statewide to take responsibility for their students' educational progress. The act was intended to persuade schools and teachers to pay closer attention to students with low academic scores, especially those from poor or minority backgrounds. Programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL) were encouraged for bridging language barriers of immigrant and migrant students. While states were not obligated to follow the guidelines and rules created by the federal government, failure to cooperate could result in loss of school funding.

Each state was required to develop a uniform test for all students that demonstrated its educational standards by grade level. Students in grades three through eight were tested in reading and math. The results from these tests were reported to the state and federal government and categorized information on the student based on: grade, school, and subgroup level. Subgroup levels included students from immigrant, minority, economic,

or special education backgrounds (Kim and Sunderman 2005:7). States focused on meeting their expected adequate yearly progress (AYP), which served as yearly academic improvement goals. There were consequences for schools that failed to meet these standards (Klein 2015), one of which was a ten percent withholding of a schools' Title I money. A reduction on Title I money meant a decrease in additional tutoring resources for children thought to be disadvantaged, including migrant students. If schools did not meet the academic standards and Title I funding was withheld, the ability of students to maintain or improve their academics became more difficult.

These disciplinary actions by the federal government made few changes in improving state testing and students' comprehension. Schools with a high concentration of ESL students were found in heavily low-income neighborhoods (Cosentino de Cohen 2005:5), where teachers had less teaching experience. Simultaneously, students who spoke English fluently were found in schools with higher income, less ethnic and racial diversity, and with teachers who had more teaching experience. By the 2013-2014 school year, states were expected to raise their tests scores in reading, writing, and math. If a school failed to do so by an agreed deadline, the Obama administration offered failing states an alternative to the requirements of NCLB. The Obama administration claimed these new regulations would help meet the ever-changing needs and learning methods of today's students living in America.

### **NCLB and Migrant Region Requirements**

While NCLB still aims to bring all students-regardless of income, race, or ethnicity-to the same level of academic comprehension, migrant students can come into the

American school system already behind in reading, writing, and speaking English. The language barrier can affect how students approach all school subjects as all materials in their class are written and taught in only English. Students' communication with their teachers could also be affected by language, as they lack the vocabulary to explain what areas they need help in. Federal migrant programs have been put in place to help migrant students in filling the academic gaps based on cultural, linguistic, and economic factors.

While migrant students are immigrants living in the United States, not all "immigrant" students can be classified as "migrant." The NCLB's legislation section titled "Education of Migrant Students" in Part C, section 1309 states:

The term 'migratory child' means a child who is, or whose parent or spouse is, a migratory agricultural worker, including a migratory dairy worker, or a migratory fisher, and who, in the preceding 36 months, in order to obtain, or accompany such parent or spouse, in order to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work: (A) has moved from one school district to another, (B) in a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or (C) resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of twenty miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in a fishing activity. [U.S. Department of Education 2005]

Due to these specific conditions, migrant students often experience different social conditions than their non-migrant peers, resulting in varying educational needs.

To help students meet the state testing requirements and to bridge the education disparity, Monterey County Migrant Region's "Harvests of Hope" works to identify migrant students and their subject areas needing improvement. The program's recruitment process involves interviewing migrant students and asking each student if they: are younger than 22 years old and have moved with their parents in the last 36



months to seek temporary employment in the fishery or agricultural industry. This recruitment process is organized through schools, parent's work, or through community-based recruitment. Full program eligibility is listed on Harvests of Hope's website (Monterey County Office of Education 2014).

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Current literature did not always provide information specifically on Mexican migrant students in grades six through eight. Many pieces of literature focused on the Latino population as a whole, the topic of immigration as one body, high school migrant students, or types of migration outside of the United States. The literature reviewed below focuses on migrant middle school students in the United States wherever possible, while including articles that study Latino immigrant students as well. The works collected provide a clear picture of the academic experience of Mexican migrant students, while also demonstrating the need for more research on the topic.

In this literature review, I first discuss Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) cultural capital to explore how the school system has caused migrant students to adopt Anglo-American behaviors, also known as "habitus." I discuss Ogbu and Simons's (1998) cultural-ecological theory to understand how dominant cultures influence behaviors and attitudes in the classroom. The literature review goes on to demonstrate migrant students' academic barriers affected by parent-teacher communication, student-teacher relationships, migrant education programs, effects of migrancy, and factors contributing to students' self-esteem.

### **Bourdieu and Passeron's Cultural Capital**

In Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) theory, they discuss the academic institutional roles in developing habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:30-32). They state that cultural capital is an understanding of the dominant culture within a community. It is a comprehension of the dominant language and behaviors that are

deemed more educated or valuable in everyday settings. Bourdieu and Passeron explain that cultural capital can take on three different forms of habitus: the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state. The embodied state consists of knowledge that we as individuals learn at a younger age and can define who we are as people when we are older. Parent teachings, problem-solving skills, communication, reading and writing are examples of the embodied state because, depending on how individuals are raised, the outcome can vary (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:32). The objectified state refers to material items that symbolize wealth and social class, such as technology and the car one drives (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:156). It gives visual evidence of which social and economic class one believes he or she is in. Lastly, the institutionalized state illustrates the role institutions, such as businesses and education, play in cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:63-65).

Bourdieu and Passeron's embodied and objectified state play a role in how the institutionalized state views individuals. For example, Doctorate, Master's, and Bachelor's degrees have varied values. A Bachelor's degree has lesser value than the Master's, and Master's less than a Doctorate (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:46). The level of degree one obtains is often crucial in determining what career and what economic capital one potentially possesses (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:148). The higher the degree an individual obtains, the more money an individual expects to make in his or her lifetime. A college or university diploma ultimately has more worth than a high school graduate with years of learning experience. "Street smarts," or life experience, does not hold the same value as there is no institution claiming these particular skill-sets meet

formal educational criteria. As such, cultural capital can cause social inequalities within communities. Individuals in the lower class work harder if they want to gain these types of capital that are valued in their society.

Individuals who come from a low-income family may lack the material objects institutions deem necessary for school, such as a computer or tuition money. In these cases, one's institutionalized education is unfulfilled because one lacks the resources necessary to achieve their academic degree (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:55). Higher-income families may have more resources to obtain cultural capital, such as institutionalized education. Educational credentials can be used to emphasize power and privilege. Credentials from an institution encourage wealth and power, creating a class divide between the upper and lower classes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990:176).

With regards to migrant education, Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) cultural capital is particularly relevant as most are not equipped with the same objectified materials and resources. Migrant programs attempt to fill those voids by providing tutoring, school supplies, and college counseling. The embodied state of migrant students can contrast American students as well. Language, manners, education, beliefs, and cultural preferences vary based on an individual's upbringing and place of origin. When a migrant student moves, his or her embodied beliefs may be challenged based on the ideologies introduced by the dominant culture. With teachers and counselors encouraging the college path, migrant students are developing a desire to meet these educational institution's standards by furthering themselves in high school and eventually into a four-year college. They view the institutionalized state as a means for a better life outcome,

betting that a Bachelor's degree will provide more upward mobility than a high school diploma. To successfully make their way through the school system, migrant students are taught to understand how the dominant culture behaves and how to mimic those behaviors.

### **Ogbu and Simons' Cultural–Ecological Theory**

Ogbu and Simons' (1998) work aims to understand the differences in behavior and achievement between minority and dominant groups in the U.S. Their cultural–ecological theory influences the idea that differences in minority students' school performance are based on how the dominant group treats them. “Ecology” refers to the environment in which minority individuals live. “Cultural” discusses how these minorities react to their environment based on how they are treated. In using cultural–ecological theory to discuss the minority perspective to education, Ogbu and Simons (1998) argue that one must understand how impactful the dominant culture's opinions and treatment are on minority communities.

They divide minority groups into two categories, voluntary (immigrant) and involuntary (non-immigrant). These classifications are used to help understand the personal experiences and histories of individuals that make up the minority population. Involuntary minorities refer to those who have been brought to America against their will, usually through ancestral histories of colonization or enslavement in the U.S. (Ogbu and Simons 1998:162). Examples of involuntary minorities include Native Americans, black Americans, and Native Hawaiians. Voluntary minorities include refugees, migrants, and immigrants. Unlike the first group, voluntary minorities made the decision

to come to America for political, social, or economic reasons (Ogbu and Simons 1998:160).

In discussing education within the context of cultural–ecological theory, Ogbu and Simons (1998) state that voluntary minorities have a positive outlook on American society and institutions because they move to the U.S. on their own free will. Moving to the United State voluntarily means agreeing with and encouraging American customs and behaviors. Regarding education, these minorities have high expectations for their children, blaming them for poor academic performance before blaming an institution. Voluntary minority students, according to the authors, share their parents’ ideologies of commitment to schooling by working hard, getting good grades, and showing teachers respect. These students have a desire to learn the English language and therefore are not met with much outside pressure to learn the language because they have the personal motivation to teach themselves (Ogbu and Simons 1998:161).

Throughout his explanation of voluntary minorities, Ogbu and Simons (1998) struggle to classify migrant workers within their theory. They mention that migrant workers should not be considered immigrants or voluntary minorities because they do not intend to obtain permanent residency in the United States (Ogbu and Simons 1998:160-161). They play a unique role in Ogbu and Simons’ cultural–ecological theory because migrant workers provide their own culture and language, developing a “tourist” attitude by learning the dominant culture and language only to the extent they need to survive and work within the American economy. In certain situations, adapting to the dominant culture may not include any form of education or schooling, instead relying on economics

and work security (Ogbu and Simons 1998:161). It is uncertain where migrant students fit within the authors' cultural–ecological structure.

While the authors are unclear how migrancy fits within their theory, this leaves room to discuss whether or not migrants can be thought of as one body or divided further into subcategories. They write of migrant workers in their theory, stating that migrant workers choose to seek employment in the U.S. However, Ogbu and Simons assume parents' decision to migrate means students also desire to move and change schools. Students should be acknowledged as individuals, separate from their parents, when understanding the voluntary/involuntary model. Migrant students have unique opinions and attitudes towards migration and assimilation into the dominant culture. Countries of origin and length of stay could be additional factors that require further analysis of voluntary and involuntary minority groups within the migrant community. In differentiating these subgroups, the cultural–ecological theory can be viewed from the migrant student's standpoint. This would allow us to understand how migrant students are viewed by the dominant culture and how their behaviors can be a reaction to those dominant views.

### **Parental Involvement**

In the United States, teachers often assume that lack of parental involvement in student's education is a result of parents' disinterest in their child's education. However, there are cultural differences in migrant parental involvement (Figueroa 2011: 277). Until recently in Mexico, it was expected that parents remove themselves from their child's academics and focus more on raising their children to be respectful and hard working.

Academic aspects of children's education were believed to be between the student and teacher (Bollin 2003:200).

Though Mexican parents are culturally influenced to disconnect from their child's education, in the American school system parents are told that supporting their child academically is considered vital to their child's success. Karther and Lowden (1997) claim parents who are continually involved in their child's academics feel more confident as a parent, and feel more comfortable with their child's teachers and school. Gettinger and Guetschow (1998) connect parental involvement with an increase in students' test scores, attendance rates, and personal self-esteem. However, migrant parents may find being involved in their child's life emotionally is easier than academically.

Cultural sensitivity regarding parental involvement can be demonstrated through teachers' understanding of migrant parents' work hours, language barriers, and other factors preventing parent involvement at school. Cassity and Harris' (2000) work reported that 46 percent of parents believed both transportation and time aside from work affected their involvement in their student's education. Many parents in their study also mentioned the need for Spanish-speaking school staff, which affected how involved they were able to become in their student's school (Cassity and Harris 2000:60). Even if students have parents who are home in the evenings, parents may not have the language comprehension or academic knowledge to provide adequate school support.

Communicating with parents for whom English is a second language (ESL) and whose children are struggling academically highlights the difficulty of teacher-parent communication in a context of linguistic and cultural differences. For these ESL parents



and students, language is the major barrier to communicating with teachers. Guo (2006) reported that ESL parents often depend on their children to interpret mail, answer the telephone, translate newsletters, and translate for parents and teachers during school conferences. Asking ESL students to act as translators can be problematic as their language skills may prevent them from understanding the subtleties of coded speech in the school context. However, hiring aids and interpreters for teachers, students, and parents have also demonstrated a disadvantage in effective teaching and communicating (Hertzberg 1998:412). The responsibility is left to the educators to properly convey important school information to students and their migrant families. The responsibility of understanding migrant culture and the Spanish language becomes complicated when teachers are also trying to run a classroom and grade papers on time. Teachers cannot be held entirely accountable for migrant education, but it is important to note that participation is key in student development.

López et al. (2001) researched schools that had effective curricula and successful parental involvement for migrant students. Teachers in these schools aimed to prioritize parental needs above other staff or outside variables. Whether this meant home visits or aiming to understand migrant home life and experiences, the informants expressed the need to know students and their families on a more personal level. Teachers felt that without this knowledge, it would be very difficult to understand the lived reality of their migrant students. All literature indicated that students' academic needs varied. However, their child's success in school was found to be a common desire among parents. Therefore, our frame of thinking cannot assume migrant parents have no interest in their

child's education. There can be a variety of reasons why they are not present in the classroom. Understanding what causes the lack-of parental involvement is crucial for developing effective academic structures and policies.

Policies such as NCLB rely on teacher-parent communication in some form. Cassity and Harris (2005) discussed how school systems should schedule regular meetings and school conferences with parents of ESL students to encourage and maintain continual teacher-parent communication (Cassity and Harris 2000:57). Services described in this study aimed to help students' family dynamics and health. It demonstrated schools' assumption that ESL parents are unaware of their children's personal, medical, and academic needs because of their lack-of presence. Schools assumed there was a need for more teacher-parent meetings so as to encourage parents to care about their child's education. However, time constraints with work, transportation issues, and childcare are just some valid reasons for lack of parental presence at school.

Teachers are thought of as potential solutions for encouraging parental involvement. They are also told to take time to learn and understand their students' personal lives and history to influence how they teach their migrant students (Guo 2006:92). But having teachers carry the responsibility of customizing migrant students' educational environment is not only unfair, but also unrealistic. Teachers would not be able to meet their AYP organized by NCLB if they additionally had to consider each student's personal history in addition to their expected job responsibilities. Some schools have put in place Spanish-speaking counselors, who come from immigrant or migrant backgrounds, to help migrant middle school students' transition into their classrooms (Thorn and Contreras 2005:169).

However, the funding for such counseling is dependent on each school's testing performances. High performing schools receive the funding they need to provide additional services to their students while schools with low performance testing lack the funding needed to do so.

### **Migrancy and Economics**

The wealth accumulated by a family has a direct effect on a child's education. Child Trends (2001) reported that during the early 2000s, children from Latino backgrounds were more likely to live in very poor neighborhoods as opposed to their non-Latino peers. Sixty one percent of poor Hispanic children lived in neighborhoods with a high concentration of poverty (a neighborhood where at least 40 percent of residents were poor), compared to 56 percent of white children and 53 percent of black children. Sixty one percent of Latino children lived in low-income housing (Conger 2015:571) and were more likely to have less educated parents than non-Latino students (Fry and Gonzales 2008). As education can affect an individual's financial income, less education can result in low-income employment. This is important to note as a family's finances can dictate where their children attend school. Income affects where families can afford to live, and their housing location determines what nearby school their children enroll in (McGinnis 2009:63). Education and income appear to work for and against one another simultaneously.

The remedies for these long-standing issues would not feel as complex if distributions of school funds and resources were evenly distributed for all schools and students. In 2005, 70 percent of students with limited English proficiency made up ten percent of the

elementary schools in the nation (Cosentino et al. 2005:4). These majority-ESL schools had more students in poverty, using Title I services. Their teaching staff had higher turnover rates due to complications in teaching diverse populations with unique needs. Administrators at 47 percent of these schools reported feeling like their positions were easy to fill, often turning toward substitute teachers as their main source of classroom teachers (Cosentino et al. 2005:8). An uneven distribution of ESL students in school, some of which are migrant, means an uneven distribution of students with struggling testing performances. This could result in uneven funding and sanctions on the schools that perform poorly. It becomes more understood how NCLB's method in creating one testing standard can generate a larger gap between native and non-native students. Creating one standard becomes complicated when schools are facing diverse students with unique teaching needs. As the population of Latinos increases, so will this demand on new teaching methods and the desire to close the education gap.

Wortham, Mortimer and Allard (2009) discussed how the Model Minority theory has been used to describe Mexican students in the classroom. This minority concept claims Mexican students are viewed positively when discussing work ethic, but are thought to have poor academic habits and comprehension (Wortham et al. 2009:393). These stereotypes can generate negative ideologies between school faculty and among student peers. It teaches that migrant students, while good people and hard working, will never advance past their blue-collared way of living because they lack the ability to meet academic standards. The idea behind the Model Minority sounds harmless, but its subtle discriminatory features cause an isolation of the Latino population, making them appear

different or less intelligent than the dominant Anglo-Americans. Having this type of mentality in the classroom is detrimental to a student's education, as they rely on the words of their teachers and family members to know how to speak and behave. It can, knowingly and unknowingly, cause students to limit their potential or future endeavors simply because they do not feel like others would support them.

Aside from the ability to comprehend new school material, migrant students have additional stresses that can also contribute to their homework understanding and completion. These unique factors vary, but common barriers include: not having a designated space to do homework, not enough sleep or time due to having a job, chores, restricted English vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes (Bang 2011:8-9). These variables can be addressed outside of state testing when a student struggles with one or two of these barriers. However, when students possess several of these factors, it becomes more difficult to teach these academic standards in a timely fashion while keeping the rest of the class on schedule. Thus, most students with fewer barriers to overcome continue testing at or above proficiency, progressing forward. Those who are unable to learn the material are forced to continue forward with an unstable foundation to building on. With the guidelines of NCLB, school systems either learn the histories behind their students' academic barriers, or use false ideologies, such as the Model Minority, to assume migrant students are uninterested or incapable of learning.

### **Teacher–Student Relationships**

Teachers who have positive relationships with their students have built trust and acknowledged respect for one another (Delgado-Gaitan 1988, Shiu et al. 2009; Cosentino

de Cohen et al. 2005; Furrer et al. 2003). For some teachers, this means attempting to understand where students live, how often their parents work, and how migration affects students' curriculum. Romanowski's (2003) research in Ohio examined the role of cultural capital in the migrant education from the perspectives of the school administration, teachers, and migrant students. It examined how cultural capital is distributed within migrant families compared to non-migrant families and how these contrasts in material and resources affected migrant students' educational experiences. Romanowski concluded that teachers involved in the school district's migrant education program were unaware of their prejudices until they became more active in migrant students' lives. He argued anyone who teaches migrant students should read current literature on migrancy and apply those concepts into their classroom. Migrant students who would write or tell about their life experiences felt more comfortable with their teachers and classmates. Teachers asked their students questions about their personal experiences to gain valuable insight into migrant culture.

Reasons for students' lack of trust in the educational establishment range from: inconsistent schooling, attendance at multiple schools, different expectations from various teachers, and instructors' perceived lack of interest and academic capabilities. The older migrant students are when they arrive to the United States, the more difficult it becomes for them to adjust socially and academically in school (Cobb-Clark et al. 2012:40). Iziarry and Williams' (2013) research came to the conclusion that trusting their teachers was a continual issue for migrant students, who tended to trust teachers of Latino heritage more than those of a different background. Irizarry and Williams (2013) stated

migrant students and their families preferred teachers to know the Spanish language, be Latino, or understand Latino families. Students also valued teachers who understood the unique position migrant families found themselves in. In accepting and incorporating migrant students' culture and experiences in the classroom, thus associating value in their personal histories, teachers were building a trusting relationship with their students. Students felt more confident in their relationships with their teachers and their student peers because they were contributing cultural knowledge to the classroom.

Students also learned to distrust and distance themselves from their teachers who make them feel undervalued. Irizarry and Williams (2013) claimed teacher–student relationships fail:

(a) when teachers do not pay attention to their students, (b) when students feel ignored, (c) when English-only rules are used in a way that implies that there is something negative about Spanish in the classroom setting, and (d) when teachers do not take the time to talk with and truly get to know their students. [Irizarry and Williams 2013:182]

The social separation between students and teachers causes isolation (Dejaeghere and McCleary 2010:235) and personal insecurity that then affects academics (Delgado-Gaitan 1988:363). Overall, students in the literature wanted teachers to understand who they were as individuals as well as academically, caring for both students' personal lives as well as educational. Students can sense when teachers take a true interest in them and build their trust in them accordingly. Chilman's (1971) work appears outdated, but it discussed the ideal scenario of parents and teachers communicating students' academic and personal struggles. These collaborations aimed to improve student–teacher relationships and break down academic barriers. Chilman's (1971) work shows that

teachers–student relationships can be built by approaching and responding to students in a manner that is personable, trustworthy, and overall more helpful to their students’ well-being.

In McGinnis’ (2009) research, the teachers in a migrant education program believed in the American dream so strongly that they projected these beliefs onto their students. No matter students’ circumstances, teachers told them to work hard in school and that in time, they would be successful. The idea of working hard meant studying to earn good grades to get into college, which would lead to a successful career. In dealing with kindergarten and first grade students, teachers noticed less resistance in the acceptance of the American dream. Middle school students did not pay as close attention to teachers when they spoke about hard work and persistence. They turned to talk to their friends and were unconvinced they could attain success in America. Even though students were in middle school, guest speakers and teachers told students that colleges would start looking at their report cards in ninth grade and that they needed to take their academics seriously. The migrant students felt their teachers did not understand how home life and racial tension in their community affected their academic resources and confidence in school. As a result, students disconnected from their teachers’ lessons and motivational messages.

Students often faced racial discrimination in their neighborhoods, which affected their perceived place in American society, including potential career outcomes, no matter their level of effort. Due to teachers’ over-simplified outlook on migrant students’ personal and academic plans for success, migrant students were unmotivated by their teachers’



words of encouragement (McGinnis 2009:70). Students felt that their teachers did not understand their personal backgrounds. Educators were recommended to step back from the American Dream mentalities and instead learn about the unequal power relations within education and how the complexity of students' lives affected their experiences in school and outside the classroom.

### **Effects of Self-Esteem**

Americans have created and instilled stigmas against Mexican migrant workers. The common argument revolves around exhaustion of American resources and little contribution to the American economy. However, most immigrant and migrant individuals provide a source of cheap labor and pay American taxes (Bollin 2003:200). These principles have created prejudices towards Mexican migrant students, causing negative effects on their self-esteem and relationships with other students. Student peer relationships are essential in motivating a student academically (Furrer 2003:148) and preventing adolescent depression (Neary and Joseph 1994:184). Decreases in self-esteem and student relationships, can cause migrant students to feel isolated and less valued as individuals.

Garrett and Baquedano-López (2002) discussed the nature of bilingual and multilingual socializing. They argued that living in a community with two or more languages is generally tied to socio-historical events that are, "...rarely a neutral or unproblematic state of affairs," (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002:350). This means that communities with a diversity of languages do not randomly come into existence, but are the result of a social or historical event that has taken place. This can be seen in

America's connotation of the Spanish language, drawing parallels to immigration and agriculture. In contrast, the English language can resurrect emotions of colonialism and power. The results of these historic events leave one dominant language spoken by the public, while other languages are spoken privately at home or with friends. Differences in languages can also construct boundaries of ethnicities, race, class, and nationality (Garrett and Baquedano-López 2002:350). When children learn how to use a language, they learn the socially acceptable ways of dealing with these categorical groupings. Bilingual individuals may be forced to challenge these categories and social restrictions as they communicate and behave according to each cultural linguistic practice.

Students' relationships with their peers and teachers affect their behavior and outlook on schooling. Changes in students' cultural affiliation and national pride have been used to conform Mexican migrant students to other students and faculty. Dejaeghere and McCleary's (2010) research demonstrated migrant students' desire to distance themselves from "Mexican Mexicans" or "those who speak mostly Spanish." The students they interviewed concluded that their "Mexican" ethnicity had become derogatory and they were searching for ways to generate more positive social identities. One Mexican student went out of their way to demonstrate he was "not like other Mexicans," in that he wanted to be professional and learn proficient English (Dejaeghere and McCleary 2010:236). This demonstrates an instilled ideology in students that being Mexican has a negative connotation. Students feel they must prove themselves in order to fight the socially discriminatory and stereotypical label that describes their nationality.

In Razfar's (2012) research, an ESL teacher discussed her three brothers' experiences with assimilation in the United States. Her older brother resisted American culture, never learning English and seeking ways to identify himself as Mexican. The middle brother accepted both American and Mexican cultures by adopting American clothing, listening to American music, and knowing adequate English. The youngest brother, however, had adopted the American lifestyle to the extent of rejecting his Mexican culture. He changed his name from Jorge to George, spoke in only English, went on to college and found a successful career. The teacher argued the differences in her brothers' success assimilating were due to their language preferences, culture, and political ideologies. She rationalized her older brother's failure in schooling based on individual traits and cultural resistance rather than institutional or societal influences (Razfar 2012:74).

Success was based on how well each brother was willing to adapt to American behaviors instead of their individual talents, skills, or abilities. Although she praised the success of her youngest brother and was disappointed in the less-successful oldest brother, the middle brother was only celebrated for small successes. This story implied school and career successes were dependent on the rejection of Mexican culture and full acceptance of American culture. The fact that this story came from a teacher implies the institutional beliefs and mentality in developing a universal, concrete method in student performance and success in school. How well or poorly a student performs in school depends solely on the student, even though the singular learning culture has proven problematic in diverse, multi-cultural classroom settings (Bollin 2003:200; Romanowski 2003:30).

Relations between students and faculty can also affect students' outlook on education. Lynch et al. (2013) describe, "school-wide peer culture" as the overall atmosphere within a school district (Lynch et al 2013:6). Within this school-wide peer culture resides both relational and behavioral components. Relational components are developed through student's perception of their relationships and how they are developed in school. This would describe how students view their relationships with other students and teachers. Behavioral components describe students' actual behaviors around academic achievement and engagement in school. Students' behavior can be influenced by how they perceive their peer's behaviors and how students interact with one another. The authors concluded that school peer culture strongly affects student academic progress and school engagement (Lynch et al. 2013:18).

Other noted research concluded that daily levels of peer victimization have negative impacts on students' perceived role fulfillment as a good student. Espinoza et al. (2013) found that students who reported more victimization experiences did not show a change in self-confidence as a good student. However, there was a strong correlation between bullied students and their lack-of confidence on the day they were bullied. Tutoring programs, discussed further in the Education Programs section below, are realistic ways to help migrant students with education and language, while also creating academically supportive peer groups.

While the research done by Espinoza et al. (2013) demonstrates students' decrease in confidence on the day they were bullied, other research suggests that as children experience victimization in school, their sense of confidence and belonging decrease

overall, not just on the day they are picked on (Buhs 2005; Furrer and Skinner 2003). Students who were victimized tend to report less positive perceptions of their schoolwork and academic ability (Neary and Joseph 1994). The literature on isolation and victimization had similar traits and conclusions, but differ enough to show that no two students will react the same to bullying or isolation. Some students were discouraged for just one day, while other students allowed it to weigh them down on a more long-term scale.

To help with peer victimization and social insecurities, migrant counselors have been hired by school districts with substantial migrant populations, tasked with helping Mexican migrant students through personal and academic changes. These migrant counselors came from similar cultural backgrounds and shared similar experiences with their students, which made them relatable (Buhs 2005; Furrer and Skinner 2003). The counselors helped to create new social networks for students, which decreased the chance students would drop out of school due to isolation or lowered self-confidence (Neary and Joseph 1994). To develop these support networks, counselors focused on creating positive student relationships by assigning a partner to help new students find their classrooms, introduce them to teachers, and find their school bus home.

Social experiments done at Waco Independent School District in Texas showed Latino students placed in advanced placement classes with higher confidence levels. These students had a strong peer support group that encouraged learning and making academic mistakes (Shiu et al. 2009:65). Students also experienced greater acceptance and cultural value. They demonstrated that speaking Spanish is not a barrier, but a strong

communication skill that can contribute to students' success in the adult world. NCLB pushes for children to learn English and has, perhaps unintentionally, excluded most Spanish from the classroom. Excluding Spanish causes immigrant and migrant students to believe that their native language is preventing their education in the American, English-speaking classroom. With language being a strong cultural tie to an individual (Collins 2012:199), believing that Spanish is unacceptable in the classroom can cause negative self-esteem for students and make them feel shame (Collins 2012:202). While English-only classrooms may be used to fully immerse Spanish speakers into the English language, it can limit students' ability to express themselves, creating language gaps when trying to explain curriculum difficulties. Unknowingly, it can isolate them socially as well as academically within the classroom. If the only way students can express their thoughts is in Spanish, and teachers discourage the Spanish language in the classroom, migrant students can feel restricted in learning the curriculum, asking for help, and making friends (Collins 2012:202-204).

Espinoza et al. (2013) demonstrated how teachers could use students' personal migrant experiences to increase positive self-esteem in the classroom. Positive self-image can encourage students to achieve higher academic goals with more confidence and willingness to imagine their futures. Students who are first-generation immigrants are shown negotiating their beliefs and practices more frequently, while also having lower emotional well-being as compared to students born in the United States. Latino students in the advanced placement courses had higher self-esteem because they were not forced to negotiate their cultural values and beliefs (Espinoza et al. 2013:1781).

Espinoza et al. (2013) described two types of stress that were relevant to immigrant children: discrimination stress and immigration stress. Discrimination stress refers to the contrast between student's ethnicity, skin tone, and cultural practices from other students. How this affects the student's self-esteem and how other students relate to one another can cause stress that deters students from staying focused and motivated to learn. Immigration-related stress deals with the social and emotional factors that a student experiences after moving to another country (Espinoza et al. 2013:1777). The health of that student can be affected by the sudden change in their home life, family dynamics, and daily routine. Overall, outside social variables relating to migration and culture can influence migrant students' performance in school, as students and teachers learn these behaviors outside of school and bring their beliefs into the classroom.

Thorn and Contreras (2005) believed counselors should have regularly scheduled sessions with their students that focused on recognizing and addressing student's personal, emotional, and educational experiences (Thorn and Contreras 2005:168). Their research organized a series of counselor-led interventions designed to create cultural awareness and support networks for immigrant Latino middle school students. Students first sketched a picture of the people they were currently living with and shared the information with their peers and counselors. This helped counselors obtain a better understanding of students' home structure and allowed them to address students' needs more appropriately. In the second session, students talked about their family members living with them in the United States as well as those in Mexico. Students mentioned what they liked and disliked about their new home in the states by sharing their

difficulties and mentioning worries or fears they currently had about their migration. The third session consisted of students talking about personal goals and how the American school system differs from their school system back at home. The results of these interventions led to counselors' better understanding their immigrant students. However, these series of counseling sessions required additional funding, staff, and training which, as discussed above, is unevenly distributed to schools based on academic performances (Klein 2015).

### **Education Programs**

Setting aside enough time to interact with students on an individual basis can be difficult for teachers. The Migrant Education Program is federally funded that provides additional education for migrant students on the weekend, after school, or during the summer. Pavri et al. (2005) researched a summer migrant program in Illinois in search for efficient methods to improve students' academics. In this program, the instructors shifted their approach to teaching based on students' troubled areas. Reading, writing, and speech were the areas most emphasized.

In their research, teachers focused on increasing writing interest by allowing students to write on a topic of their choosing. Through peer editing and teacher revisions, students learned from their mistakes, as well as those from other student papers. Speech and literacy were taught and assessed each week to measure improvements. If teachers found there was a pattern in an area of struggle, they would incorporate it into the following week's lesson. The authors charted realistic and ambitious growth scores depending on the age of the student. Overall, the teaching method had positive results. Six out of the 11



students experienced improved growth in speech and comprehension. Eleven out of 11 students achieved ambitious results in at least one subject area (Pavri et al. 2005:160). The peer review technique and continual online assessments of teachers allowed for more effective teaching and prepared students for their move to a new school come fall. Since this program was run within a smaller group of students during the summer, the application of such a program during the school year could be considered more problematic.

A vast majority of Mexican students can relate to immigration through personal experiences or those of family and friends (Suárez-Orozco and Gaytán 2009). When it comes to the number of migrant workers in the United States, there is no way to accurately collect that information as some are undocumented and others are continually moving from place to place. Federal education programs, such as SMART and Estrella, have been put into place as a result of the increasing migrant populations and need for more educational resources. These particular programs were built to help adults and students track academic performance as a child moves schools, which can also aid in students' confidence level and ability to keep up with their peers in the classroom (Branz-Spall et al. 2003:60). These types of language programs positively target Latino middle school students and create academically supportive peer groups. Instead of blaming the academic gap on teacher training or parental involvement, the readings from 2003 to 2016 seek to understand how to bridge the gap between seasonal mobility and school curriculum through school and federal programs.

Although teachers cannot be expected to add responsibilities to their schedules, finding ways to get teachers more involved with students on a one-on-one level could improve teacher–student relations and students’ confidence in asking for help. School programs have grown interested in child development over the past 20 years, and they have continued to be recognized by educators and policymakers as a tool to improve academic comprehension (Kahne et al. 2001). School programs have become a tool in providing additional resources to students who need it (Kahne et al. 2001). Enrollment of middle school students in after-school programming can generate higher grades, increased self-esteem, and decrease risky behavior (Fredricks and Eccles 2008). Fredricks and Eccles (2008) concluded that these positive outcomes of after-school programs could be the result of students feeling more confident academically and believing that a successful future is realistically attainable.

### **Academic Performance and NCLB**

Latino students have been labeled as a group experiencing an “educational crisis” (Garcia-Reid and Reid 2009:58). This means that the Latino student body has consistently fallen behind their non-Latino peers, despite making attempts and even progressing in educational areas, such as college enrollment. Garcia-Reid and Reid (2009) claimed Latino students have high-grade retention and behavioral issues, higher dropout rates, and lower college completion rates than their white student peers. The gap in academic achievement between Latino and white students begins at an early age. By grade three, Latino students have already begun falling behind national standards in core reading, writing, and math subjects (Cooper et al. 1999). Meanwhile, as students continue through

high school, 90 percent of white students have met the standards to receive their high school diploma, compared to 60 percent of Hispanic students (Garcia-Reid and Reid 2009).

The futures of Mexico and the United States are closely knit together and continue to be so through trade, politics, and geographic location. Regardless of whether migrant students remain in the United States or return to Mexico, the United States has reason to see that they receive the best possible education. Middle schools have an important role to play in reducing the dropout rate. Although the law enforces school attendance until the age of 16, students' misbehavior and low academic performance develops early in their adolescent years. How students behave in their middle school years likely determines how students react to schooling when they are older and whether they will eventually graduate from high school. Identifying what experiences students bring from their previous schooling, and from cultural traditions, may help students develop positive identities as Mexican migrant students.

Gándara (2015) discussed the need to rethink bilingual education in the United States. While the work force values bilingual employees and seeks individuals with dual language comprehension, the school systems discourage bilingualism. Gándara explained that bilingual instruction helps students to focus better, strengthens short-term memory, and helps to develop problem-solving skills. Students who are bilingual also tend to develop larger social networks in both their school and personal lives. An interest in developing more dual language classrooms is increasing throughout the United States, as studies emerge concluding that bilingual students are more likely to be accepted to

college than monolingual students (Gándara 2015:61-62). Gándara mentioned that being bilingual should be an asset for Latino students. In her research, she wrote “Because Latinos in general are the least likely of all subgroups to go directly to a four-year college, and to get a college degree, the significance of this finding is difficult to overstate,” (Gándara 2015:62). If dual language classrooms continually demonstrate positive results, the question remains why English-only classrooms still exist and why our schools rely on NCLB (Fine et al. 2007:78).

Given the unique needs of migrant students and the inflexible structure of NCLB, there are several areas in which its standards have negatively affected migrant students specifically. The annual test scores allow schools to know when a student is struggling academically, but does not tell teachers what precisely causes students to struggle. While the national dropout rates have decreased since the enactment of NCLB, many state dropout rates have increased dramatically. Test scores of white and Latino students have improved, but state testing does not grade based on improvement. Instead, the state bases a student’s success on whether state standards have been met. State testing does not take into consideration student improvement in academic comprehension. The state’s primary concern is to gauge students’ ability to score at or above the average educational standards. Inability to meet these standards labels students “below average.” Therefore, the gap remains (Kim and Gail 2005:4;Klein 2015).

If 69 percent of students with who test poorly in English are enrolled in ten percent of U.S. schools, this means that those schools are likely in need of more academic resources for students’ needs. Yet if student test scores from these schools do not meet federal and

state regulations, they face negative financial consequences. Due to budgetary constraints, low-income schools often must eliminate non-English and math subjects such as art, music, history, or physical education. Schools with high-income, high-scoring students have the luxury to keep these subjects, encouraging creativity and abstract thinking. Additionally, teachers with years of experience are more likely to take jobs in high-income school districts that can offer higher teaching salaries versus teachers with less experience. This can affect what type of education a student receives.

Pacheco (2010) discussed the value of bilingual classrooms and how students improve physiologically and academically when other cultures and languages are incorporated in classroom curriculum. Pacheco's primary case study focused on an ESL student who struggled to have his homework signed by a parent each night. His teacher assumed that all parents knew English and had the academic background to review homework effectively. Yet this student's parents did not understand English adequately enough to review and sign off of their child's homework. Signing their child's homework did not mean they participated in their child's schoolwork, or that they checked their child's homework for accuracy. This student did not get the benefit of having academic support outside of the classroom, his parents' signature serving only to complete the homework requirement.

The use of bilingual classrooms in California would allow ESL parents the ability to work alongside their children, allowing them to have the same academic support at home as non-ESL students. Pacheco (2010) concluded that education reforms, such as NCLB, have developed a narrow mindset on academic achievement, and have marginalized low-

income ESL students. As English Learners continue to score below the education standards put in place by NCLB, Pacheco stressed the importance of understanding how marginalizing minority students is inevitable when establishing one, generic educational policy to represent all students regardless of cultural upbringing. Discouraging bilingualism can affect students' behaviors, attitudes, and opinions on schooling, while also preventing English Learners from reaching their academic potential.

### **Chapter 3: Methods**

In collecting data for my research, I distributed a student survey with 11 questions discussing students' school materials, migrancy, and relationships with their teachers and student peers. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers and students on their personal experiences with migrant education and migrant culture. Both surveys and interviews were organized around the five themes found in the literature review. This chapter first discusses the initial phase of the research project, including my research goals and how I developed a social network to find informants. I discuss my method for organizing the interviews and surveys questions. Concluding this chapter, I discuss data analysis, minor setbacks with participants in the data collection process and the final count of participants involved in the research. I draw from David Fetterman's (2010) *Ethnography: Step-by-Step* when discussing procedures and intentions behind research structure.

#### **Research Goals**

To gather a reliable sample size, I aimed to collect four semi-structured interviews with teachers, four interviews with students, and 30 student surveys generated through Google Survey. Similar to Fetterman's (2010) discussion on creating semi-structured interviews to develop common themes in research, I divided the interviews into five themes based on the literature review: education programs, parental involvement, student self-image, academic performance and teacher–student relationships (Fetterman 2010:40). Questions were geared towards each participant's classroom experiences as a migrant student or as a teacher. Student interviews and surveys concluded by asking, "If

you could tell your teacher and classmates one thing about your life, what would it be?”

This question was intended to bring out important thoughts, issues, or struggles I had not thought to ask about. In developing an effective survey, I focused on writing comprehensible questions appropriate for ESL middle school students. I also wrote detailed, specific questions, with no room for interpretation (Fetterman 2010:44). The student surveys followed the same themes as teacher and student interviews. Since I did not have a large enough survey sample size for statistically significant results, I intended to use the survey to determining future areas of research, and to compare to my interview findings and results.

## **Networks**

To obtain multiple perspectives on migrant education in Salinas, I needed to develop a network of individuals who could introduce me to parents, students, and teachers. Initially, I contacted individuals within the migrant department at the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE). While students were on vacation, I went to staff meetings on student development held at MCOE. There, I met with directors and coordinators to brainstorm how I could effectively recruit teachers and students for the study. I emphasized that I respected the rules and boundaries of schools, faculty, migrant families, and their students. I gave short presentations on my thesis and those in attendance asked questions. Afterwards, these individuals directed me to middle school principals and to migrant counselors, who work with migrant students on an individual basis. Working with the migrant counselors directly gave me a level of rapport when introduced to migrant students and their families. Because I had no role in the school



system, students and parents felt hesitant to be involved in my research. They were unsure how discussing their private lives with a stranger could help in understanding and improving the academic obstacles of migrant students. Migrant counselors helped to ensure parents and students that I would keep their identities confidential and not exploit their experiences for personal gain. The migrant counselors helped make connections to the migrant community and provided an opportunity for dialogue.

Some schools were not interested in participating in my research. They wanted to protect students and prevent any potential solicitation. As such, I find it important to not name the schools that chose to participate in order to protect the identities of my informants. Since migrant students are considered a vulnerable population, given their age and migratory status, it is understandable that schools would be concerned with protecting students who chose to participate in my research.

## **Interviews**

In collecting interviews of both students and teachers, I relied on snowball sampling. Teachers, migrant counselors, and principals that I met with recommended teachers who work with migrant students in their classroom. I relied on migrant counselors to recruit students and talk with parents about their child's participation in the research. Students and counselors recommended other students they thought would be interested in being interviewed on the topic. I was able to email and call teachers outside of scheduled school hours to ask for their participation, and I used migrant counselors to communicate with student participants about the surveys or interviews.

In order to interview my participants, I needed to work around their school and personal schedules. Student interviews took place right after school, while teacher interviews took place either on the weekend or during their preparation period. Participating teachers allowed interviews to take place in their classroom with the door open. Since interviews took place after school or during their preparation period, there were fewer teachers and students walking around campus. The open windows and propped classroom doors allowed the space to be open, but allowed a sense of privacy and familiarity for my informants.

Finding and communicating with students was a more difficult task than with teachers. I discussed my research goals and methods with migrant counselors, and we developed a strategy that would allow me to find migrant student informants. I wrote a cover page, in English and in Spanish, which explained the research and consent forms for both the interviews and surveys. This was to ensure both the student and parents understood the research's motive and their rights as participants. Divided into two packets, one interview and one survey, I printed consent forms for parents and students, sample interview questions, survey questions, and my contact information. I gave each migrant counselor seven to eight manila folders -each with a cover page, interview packet, and survey packet- to distribute to their students during counseling sessions. If the student did not want to participate or if the parent was not willing to allow their student to participate, the forms were not returned to me. If students expressed interest in participating in either of the two methods, I was notified to pick up their folder and either collect their survey, or schedule their interview. Student interviews were required to be in

a public space that allowed for privacy, as specified by the IRB and school regulations. I located public libraries that had private areas, and the migrant counselors helped transport students to the library. Their parents met us at the library to pick their children once the interviews were completed. One student could not make it to the library, but we were able to have our interview session in an empty classroom afterschool, without teacher presence and with the door open. Making student participation simple and comfortable was a priority when scheduling interviews.

In writing the interview questions for teachers, I focused on topics related to education programs, policies, and Monterey County's migrant education programs. I then asked questions to understand how these policies and programs affected their personal experiences working with migrant students and families. I touched on parental involvement, students' self-image, academic performances of migrant students, and teacher-student relationships. I wanted to develop an understanding of what teachers experience daily in their classroom, and of their opinions on the overall academic progress of migrant students. As mentioned in the literature review, a common solution for improving migrant education is to increase teacher involvement and training. Teacher involvement can contribute to better parent-teacher communication and higher student academic achievement. I wanted to understand what stressors were put upon instructors, how it affected their teaching, and how it affected the learning comprehension of their students.

In the interview questions for migrant students, I emphasized that there were no "wrong or right" answers, as these questions were based on their personal experiences in

their American classrooms and home life. Interviews began by asking students about their home life and migration. Questions asked included, “Who do you currently live with in the states?”, “How many times can you remember moving to a new school?”, and “Is it hard to understand the routines in the classroom when you move to a new school?” I continued with questions relating to parental presence in their student’s studies by asking parental involvement with homework.

I then shifted to asking about students’ experiences in the classroom, with questions regarding their relationships with teachers, other students, and the curriculum. I asked questions such as, “Do you feel comfortable asking your teacher for help?”, “Do like learning?”, “Do you want to go to college?”, and “What do you want to be when you grow up?” These questions were designed to help me understand students’ overall relationship with school and their viewpoints on their personal academic progression within the system. I wanted to ask specific questions about teachers, parents, friends, and schooling to explore whether themes in the literature would appear organically in student interviews. I was apprehensive towards discussing these themes with students prior to asking them questions in fear that they would tailor their answers to what they thought I wanted to hear. The interviews ended with a discussion on education programs students had participated in and their experiences within the programs. Learning about these programs from the perspective of the students allowed me to understand how effective students believed them to be.

With both the teacher and student interviews, I asked participants to pick an alias for themselves to help protect their identity in my research. Most came up with a name based

on a hobby, a family member or a friend. Those who could not think up a name were assigned one based on the conversations we had prior to the interview. In the consent forms, teachers and students were asked to choose whether their interview session would be audio-recorded. Three teachers and two students consented to this request. I transcribed the recorded interviews and labeled each theme that emerged by color. I looked for patterns of teacher–student relationships, academic performance, students’ self-image in school, parental involvement, involvement in education programs and definitions of the term “migrant.” I took extensive notes from the non-recorded interviews by printing out the interview questions ahead of time and writing notes under each question. The questions on the interview page were separated by these themes, and all content from these interviews were written under the appropriate theme.

### **Surveys**

The students selected for the survey were also identified through the snowball sampling process. I used migrant counselors to communicate with parents on the research topic and allowed them to recommend students for surveying. Students then recommended other students who they believed would be interested in taking the survey and I spoke with migrant counselors to confirm their interest. The survey’s purpose was to collect students’ experiences and challenges on a more macro level. Initial survey questions asked students their gender, their grade level, and the number of times they remembered moving to a new school. Questions regarding student experiences included: if they have worked in the fields, school resources, experiences completing homework at home, and their comfort level with their teachers. I made most questions multiple choice

to avoid complicated questions or too much abstract thinking. I was not sure how seriously students would take the survey, but I took a risk by using a combination of open-ended and close-ended questions to give the survey more variety and potential for more meaningful data (Fetterman 2010:46). The two open-ended questions that I used were designed for students to interpret what they believed was important to mention such as “Are there any school supplies you don’t have that would make finishing homework easier?” and “What is something you wished your teacher or classmates knew about you?” I wanted to ensure students were able to provide additional information to the research even if I had not specifically asked for it.

Apart from one student who wanted to participate in both the interview and the survey, students who participated in the survey did not participate in the interview. The student who did both the survey and interview gave a small overlap of information, but otherwise the information differed. This student was aware of how class, race, and citizenship played a role in his experiences in the United States, and he wanted to speak out about its effects on him. Throughout the rest of the research, my goal was to get as many perspectives and opinions as possible without duplicating the data from the same participants. No other student participated in both the survey and interview process.

### **Analyzing Data**

If the informants allowed me to record our interviews, I used the recording to transcribe our conversation, analyzing each transcription based on the common themes found both within the interview and based on themes discussed in the literature review. Three interviews did not give permission to be audio-recorded, for which I printed out the

interview themed questions and took detailed notes on participant answers. On both transcriptions and interview notes, I color-coded each theme, highlighting valuable data based on the theme's color. Surveys were collected and totaled for later comparison.

I collected four semi-structured interviews from teachers, six student interviews, and 15 surveys from students. Two students withdrew from the research project and had their transcription and audio-recordings from their interviews erased from the research. Due to this, my data included four teacher and four student interviews. Three students wanted to participate in the survey and declined last minute, decreasing our survey sample size from 15 surveys to 12. In my Discussion and Conclusion, I discuss how, despite falling short of the desired 30 student surveys, the data collected can still contribute to the literature published. It can validate patterns that other researchers have discovered, and highlight barriers, cultural variables, and behaviors that need further investigation.

### **Applying Theoretical Concepts**

When applying the concept of cultural capital from Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), I saw the embodied, objectified, and institutionalize states having distinct places in migrant education. When reflecting on the embodied state, I thought of the general transmission of culture from older generations to younger generations. In this case, I recognized two types of relationships: the parent–student relationships and the teacher–student relationships. The parent–student relationship passes down culturally-instilled Mexican values and beliefs. The teacher–student relationship teaches American values, language, skills, and other institutional ideologies. To discuss these relationships further, I asked interview and survey questions related to parental involvement in students' lives and

teacher–student relationships. I hoped to demonstrate similar intentions between parents and teachers with regards to student development by illustrating differing participant perspectives. The teacher and the migrant parent have different life circumstances and therefore their influence on the student differs.

The objectified state related to migrant students when examining the resources students needed or lacked to complete school assignments. I asked students about the school supplies needed to complete their homework, what supplies they wish they had, and if they knew of any programs that could provide these missing materials. I wanted to understand if parents or siblings were used as a tutoring resource for students and if students had a designated area at home where there could do homework. Discussing what materials students had versus what materials students needed demonstrated differences in wealth and social class between migrant and non-migrant students.

The institutionalized state was discussed in terms of students' desire to go to college, and how parents' level of education affected their ability to support their children academically. I asked students questions related to elective courses, as teachers had mentioned they pitch electives as a way to build a college résumé. I discussed what careers students wanted to have in the future and how education programs have helped them develop stronger reading, writing, and speaking skills. I also asked questions regarding their parents' levels of education to identify the educational gap between students and parents. Teachers replied to questions related to academic improvement by stressing the need for students to do well in school so that they could progress with less resistance in high school and into college. I also asked about state testing and school



standards in the classroom, specifically with migrant students. I wanted to understand how teachers interpreted these standards and applied it in their classroom setting.

The cultural–ecological theory by John Ogbu and Herbert Simons (1998) was also used in developing my research questions. This was useful in understanding the complex nature of migrancy and treatment of migrant students by the dominant culture, the American school system. I aimed to understand the class difference between the migrant and the Anglo-American culture by asking questions related to the five themes found in the literature. Elaborating on these questions in the interviews, and asking detailed questions in the surveys, helped me to understand migrant culture from a child’s perspective, and how migrant students react to these differences and perspectives at school.

## **Chapter 4: Fieldwork and Results**

In discussing my fieldwork and results, I introduce my informants and discuss my interview and survey responses. I compare the results from teacher and student interviews, taking excerpts from participants who showed more notable themes and issues. Relevant survey results will be mentioned in relation to the outcomes of the interviews, discussing common themes and factors that leave room for exploration in future research. I end by discussing how the cultural concepts made by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), as well as Ogbu and Simons (1998), correlate with the results of my research.

I interviewed four teachers: Mike, Santiago, Heidi, and Michelle. Mike taught English and Physical Education for grades six and seven. Michelle taught English, Social Studies, and Spanish for grades six, seven, and eight. Heidi taught seventh grade English and a separate English class for EL students. Santiago taught seventh grade Social Studies. The students interviewed were in grades six and seven. Students had chosen their own name for the purpose of this study: Link, Leonl, Libertad, and Captain Falcon (Captain).

### **How Teachers and Students Understand Migrants**

Before beginning the interviews, I wanted to understand what students' and teachers' definition of migrant was, and what they knew about the qualifications needed to be a part of the migrant education program, Harvests of Hope. When I asked the teacher participants what their definition of migrant was, Mike stated it was difficult to define a term that is continually changing. He understood the program to be geared toward Latino

students, primarily Mexican students, who had come to the United States to work in the agricultural industry. He replied,

I think it's because it's changing so often. It's continued to move, you know. Initially I understood it as, you know, migrant students being students whose, you know, families, you know, didn't have to be a whole family. It could be maybe one parent, you know, sought work based on seasonal labor opportunities moving back and forth. And so I think, you know, what you see are some students who, you know, that I think have answered a questionnaire early on, and this is just me guessing, speculating, and that it's like, you know, "*Do your parents work in agriculture.*" Um, "*Have you come from another area to this area recently for work?*" [Mike, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 5, 2016.]

Other than seasonally moving to meet working needs, Santiago was not sure what being a migrant worker or a migrant student meant. I asked all four teachers if they knew what legal criteria defined a migrant worker or student and, other than what they observed in their classrooms, all four of them were unclear about what justified being labeled a migrant student. Both Heidi and Michelle had similar answers reflecting the general concept of seasonal migration for agricultural work, but no one knew the details that make up the legal definition. Santiago and Mike asked me to show them the legal definition and what constituted additional aid and resources under Title I, section C of the migrant education program. There were pieces of information that were new to them, and that contributed to their overall understanding of their students.

The sixth grade students, Captain and Libertad, had no idea why a migrant student is different from a non-migrant student, but both were conscientious about social and physical traits that made them appear different than non-migrant students. Having migrant parents was not uncommon among their friends, but they knew that their parents'

profession was different from those of non-migrant families. Leonl and Link focused their answers on skin tone and having a job in the fields. They understood that migrant students had parents that worked in agriculture, but they also mentioned skin tone as a qualifier to knowing who was migrant and who was not. Neither teachers nor students knew the legal definition of migrancy, or how it related to migrant education and educational programs. While students focused on what made them feel different from other non-Latino students, teachers only knew of migrancy from their experiences in working with their students.

### **No Child Left Behind and State Testing**

In discussing the effects that migrancy had on students' academics, all four teachers had strong opinions on the NCLB policy and the "teach to the standard" technique. When Heidi heard the topic we were to discuss next, she smiled and sighed. She had just finished standardized testing with her students and she commented:

I just feel like that particular program was just not, well, it just puts schools that are already in low socio-economic conditions, so all of our kids, even some of the non-Latino kids, that aren't, you know, higher upper middle class, so it just puts those schools at a disadvantage and specifically when we were doing the California state testing, we're looking at how much our students with disabilities and how much our EL's improve and if one sub group didn't improve, we would get less funding. So it's like putting extra pressure on these kids that are already on these tests that are not really measuring their abilities and then we don't get funding to get extra things if they don't do well so I don't. And the new test is also really difficult for high achieving kids. So for the lower kids, and I, we just finished testing and I gave my LED kids extra time so they had extra time with me to do things and they're just-I mean, it's overwhelming. It's a lot of work. It's like a page of directions and then everything has like five parts to it. Every question. So it's really challenging. [Heidi, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 24, 2016.]

I asked her how students who recently come from Mexico, or migrant students who had just moved back from other agricultural areas, react to this test if they are experiencing academic gaps or language barriers. We discussed the scenario:

Heidi: And the kids, as a school, we already know the kids have a hard time reading directions, so this test is just really hard for them, to just read the directions and then, *“Ok, it’s asking you to find two details and this asks you to explain the details.”* Then it’s asking them how to tie it all together and they don’t understand that there are all these things that they have to do so-

Author: and then of course you have students who are English language learners and they can be just learning English or be proficient in English and they’re taking the same exact test?

H: There are modifications. If they are newcomers, I think they get the same test in Spanish so there are some modifications or they’ll get a glossary, and if they are in CR2, CR3, or ELD then just get the same test as the regular mainstream kids. [Heidi, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 24, 2016.]

I found that CR stands for “Comprehend and Respond.” CR1 and CR2 ranked below average in English language comprehension. CR3 was just below Limited English Development (LED), and CR4 and CR5 were considered more proficient levels in English learning. In Heidi’s experience, for students arriving from Mexico without any prior English training, they would be given a modified test to help complete questions and gauge their knowledge. However, students who were currently being assessed for their English, but ranked lower on the English language scale had to complete the same state testing as native English speakers. Michelle commented very little on NCLB or state testing, but she did comment that these academic foundations and structures are “so removed from migrant students, that they have to have these other programs just to help them catch up,” (Michelle, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 1, 2016). She

mentioned that creating a state standard, where every student must learn the same concepts and think in the same manner, did not allow for creative learning or imagination.

Mike participated in SELT (Secure English Language Test) as an instructor and had seen the frustrations students had in taking a specific English test just for EL students. He discussed an experience he had with his students on the topic:

I know this is probably different but I've done SELT testing for English-language learners to test their level of English and I've seen the kids get really upset, and they'll semi-jokingly say, "*Oh these tests are racist. They're only making us take this because we're Mexican.*" I have to tell them, "*Well, you have a stay in this. If you work hard and take this test seriously and pass it, you'll no longer be considered as an EL and you won't be required to take the test every year.*" The reality is, they don't even understand why it is that they have to take it, and that's because they marked that at home their primary language is Spanish, and generally speaking, they may have been selected based on scores from English assessments along the way. The thing is a lot of folks don't understand why they're being tested and that's kind of problematic. [Mike, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 5, 2016.]

Mike's students did not understand why they were being instructed to take these additional standardized tests. They knew they needed help in English, but the purpose of these formalized tests was difficult for students to understand. Students could not help but feel they were being targeted because of their nationality or skin color. It was difficult for them to see what macro social-structures have been put in place because of the US/Mexico political relationship. Students only understood what they experienced in their day-to-day lives: school, sports, and home.

## Student Academics

Aside from state testing, there were areas in Common Core where teachers found migrant students struggled most. Common core refers the state standards each student is expected to meet in order to pass their grade level. Most difficulties were related to the English language. Mike had to have his students read literary classics to discuss character development and to draw parallels in book issues revolving around family, society, and growing up. Mike said there were many literary classics that were very respected in the literary world, but were practically ineffective when teaching migrant students. *Little Women* was the example he used in discussing its value to American literature, and his students' inability to relate to the characters and themes. We discussed this topic further:

Mike: We teach that, and I mean you can draw relationships out of that all day long, but that doesn't make that relevant to their life. The language in there, whether it's academic or not, it's not language that goes with Common Core. I push as a grade level lead many times could we, you know, Cisneros' *Eleven* is in there, but if we were to get more things where this is perceived as true and not "*I have to be a Latino to understand it*" as a way for them to relate to me, but if I'm talking about their culture and they can take it home with them and ask their parents about it, you know Cisneros.

Author: House on Mango Street

M: Yeah or you know *Never Marry a Mexican* and the stories where it's all about border culture and stuff, you know they could take that home and talk to their parents about it and bring that back and they're going to be far more engaged, and that engagement is going to lead itself to language, and more relevant academic language to what we're doing and so on. You know, that other stuff, save that for history class. That's me being kind of critical of the people that develop Common Core. Their hearts are in the right place, their rigor is there, and all that, but baby steps. Let them learn to love that stuff. They do well at the elementary level, you know, and it's middle school where they're supposed to turn them on to be these wide-ranging, eloquent people where they don't have the background

knowledge you know, and you're jumping them around and so on. [Mike, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 5, 2016.]

While this excerpt is lengthy, I believe it shows an important debate on what literature is classified as appropriate and relatable to students. Mike asked why the state had to set standards that push Anglo views on students who have no concept of American history or American culture. To ease them into the required academic reading, Mike proposed drawing from authors, such as the Mexican-American writer Sandra Cisneros, to develop relatable social problems, characters, and histories. He hoped this would allow students to develop the vocabulary they needed by keeping their interest in their book's plot and characters. He claimed the school board believed reading books from Latino authors excluded other non-Latino students from understanding or comprehending the literary material. Mike argued the same goes for migrant students when they were forced to read books like *Little Women*.

Heidi discussed her English learners who had difficulties in writing. She explained,

I just know for me specifically, because it has to do with writing. Just the grammatical things they do, you know, like they add the letter "S" to things and prepositions and things like that are really hard for them. [Heidi, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 24, 2016.]

Leonl agreed with Heidi's conclusion of migrant students and their English, commenting that Spanish was spelled as it sounded and English had more rules and rule exceptions. Heidi mentioned that students made specific language errors that could be attributed to their native language. Michelle, Heidi, and Santiago all mentioned that students were given one elective each semester. If students were struggling in English or Math, they lost those electives and were enrolled in additional English or Math courses



instead. Schools offer band, choir, wood shop, art, and journalism. A migrant student could have two English classes and two Math classes if they show signs of difficulty in those areas. If they needed help in both subjects, Heidi said her school would pull them out of Social Studies to make room for the additional Math or English course. Migrant students could have these electives presented to them and yet not be able to take an elective if their English and Math grades showed signs of struggle.

Link and Leonl mentioned the additional English classes they must take in lieu of an elective. Link, who wanted to be a robotic engineer or a middle school teacher, worked to pass his English class and was excited to take an elective next year for the first time. Leonl, who wanted to be an engineer, had almost completed his English Learner (EL) class, but still struggled with fluency in reading. As of then, he was still studying to pass his English exam so he could use his electives to explore other topics and develop skills outside of state testing. Leonl and Link mentioned that EL specialists had come to their schools to encourage migrant students to pass their Math and English courses. In doing so students could take electives in high school in preparation for college applications. Even if migrant students reacted positively to these specialists' advice, they often had a difficult time passing their English and Math classes. Michelle and Heidi both agreed it could be frustrating for students who are falling behind to not have an elective. Being behind meant they were unable to enjoy other types of learning and would continue to miss out on those luxuries until they had proven to be proficient in English and Math.

In dealing with space at home to do school work, the student survey asked if there was a specific place where they could do homework and store school materials. Seven

out of the 12 students said they did not have a designated area for their schooling. Table 1 illustrates these responses.

Table 1. Student Survey Responses on Homework Space

Student Responses	Number of Students
Yes	5
No	7

Libertad said she did not have a desk, but she had a kitchen table where she could do her homework. When finished, she put all her school items in her backpack and set it on the floor next to her bed. Captain said he usually did homework on the floor or on his brother's desk. He wanted to use the kitchen table, but said there was never any room because it always had other items on it. Link said he tossed his backpack on the floor when he got home and Leonl described in detail a wooden desk with a large drawer that he put his backpack and school supplies in.

In discussing the necessary items each student needed to complete their homework, I asked each student if there were any school items they wished they had to make homework easier. All four students claimed they had all the necessary school supplies for their homework. Asking students in the survey the same question, students responded: Wi-Fi, glue, pencils, colored pencils, white sheet paper, calculator, pencil sharpener, books to read, a computer, white out, 0.5 lead, and pens. When asked if they had a space at home to put their backpacks or to do homework, seven students out of the 12 said no.

In asking students in the survey if they had worked with their parents in the fields, Table 2 shows three out of the 12 said yes, while nine out of the 12 said no.

Table 2. Student Survey Responses to Working in the Fields

Student Responses	Number of students
Yes	3
No	9

Similarly, in student interviews only Leonl had worked with his parents in the field. I asked Leonl further about his experience. He told me that he started work at 7:00 a.m. and by 8:30 a.m., his back hurt and he was physically tired. I asked how he was able to work at age 13, and he said migrant children were allowed to work in the fields if they were 12 or older. I could not find information to prove this comment was true or false, but regardless, he experienced manual labor at a young age.

I asked Leon if working in the fields affected his schoolwork and he said he only worked in the fields during the summer. If he wanted to participate in a migrant education summer program, he would stop working for that period of time. He did not like to stop working, however, because he liked making money. He gave most of his money to his mom to help support the family. Leonl reported that his parents made sure his work in the fields would not interrupt his studies, signaling that his schooling was a priority. No other student claimed they had worked in the fields with their parents. The student interviews had showed the same results. Not one student claimed to ever have worked with their parents in the field. Parents allowed students to focus on schoolwork instead of helping in the fields. They may not live at a comfortable level of income, but they had never asked or ever expected their children to take on that level of responsibility for the family.

## **Migration Behaviors**

When a teacher invests time and effort into migrant students, there is no guarantee the student will be enrolled at that school during state testing. Santiago told me that he did not know which children were migrant students unless they told him specifically. When they did, he worked closely with them to make sure they did not fall behind in the curriculum. He told me when migrant students came and went, it was difficult for him to teach them the historical events in his Social Studies class because:

If they disappear from my computer list, I either know in advance or I don't. If I know in advance, I do something positive to send the kid on his or her way. When they show up, I start teaching them and when they leave, they do- if they're off here then hopefully they're on at the school in Yuma and that's where the student is going to be present. [Santiago, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 11, 2016.]

Santiago conceded that Social Studies was not a cumulative subject, you do not have to understand Japanese history before you learned the Aztecs or Mayans. Therefore, students could join a class, missing a few terms and concepts, and still have a relatively clear understanding of the course. If Santiago's experience with fluctuating students were mirrored in English and Math classrooms, there would be academic conflict and struggle with comprehension. If migrant students left and returned to the school within the same academic year, schools attempted to pair students with the same teachers in order to maintain familiarity in course expectations. Mike commented on academic barriers for migrant students and the importance of creating familiarity:

When there's a language deficit, there tends to be a knowledge deficit, and you know in many cases a learning deficit. So I mean, there's no simple answer. Generally speaking, language and usually when they get to about this age, their language deficit academically, they're way behind and so on so it's always about catching, kind of catching up, but all that comes with

creating a safe, comfortable environment and that looks different to a lot of different people. [Mike, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 5, 2016.]

Not every teacher reported experiences with migrant students moving away. Heidi mentioned that her migrant students were staying for the full academic year. When their parents moved for work, the children stayed behind in the same house so they could continue their academics in the same school. Heidi mentioned how her job contract discussed class sizes:

They purposefully would make [classes] bigger in the fall because they knew in the spring, that we'd lose kids. But we've actually seen that we're losing less kids in the spring. So we've actually had to change class sizes in the contract because we're losing less kids to migrant work. So I think it's, at least from personal experience, kids are staying, but the parent is going more so. [Heidi, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 24, 2016.]

Mike and Michelle both mentioned that they had noticed a difference in migration behaviors, as migrant students stayed in the same school since kindergarten while their parents commuted to pursue work. Mike commented that some students commuted from Soledad to school every day. He joked about how far migrant parents traveled for work, mentioning that he traveled further than Soledad to get to work and he was not considered migrant.

Teacher interviews showed that students moving during the year could cause strain on a student's learning and a teacher's ability to teach effectively. However, migration behaviors had begun to change. Migrant parents found the means to keep their children enrolled in the same school as they themselves moved seasonally to obtain work. This had a positive academic effect on students since they did not need to change schools

seasonally. Other teachers wondered if this change in migrant behavior affected academic funding for migrant students.

I asked each student about their home life, inquiring with whom they lived and what their parents did for a living. Leonl said he stayed at home with his sister while his parents were in Yuma. When I mentioned his bravery at being a seventh-grade boy living without adult supervision, he told me he had neighbors next door that checked on him. Link on the other hand, moved six times from Mexico to Salinas. He explained how he had to move back and forth from Mexico the U.S., spending no more than a year at a time in the U.S. and two years at a time in Mexico. Throughout that time, Link went to private school in Mexico. He discussed his parents' reasons behind private schooling:

Author: You went to a private school? How did your parents afford private school?

Link: Well, my mom was a teacher in Mexico.

A: Oh that helps.

L: That helped so she helped pay for it because she didn't want me to come here learning no English at all. So she had me in private school.

A: Ok remind me again because you said your mom... your dad worked in the fields, and you mom did as well, but in Mexico she was a teacher?

L: She was a teacher. She was a kinder teacher.

A: Kinder teacher. So she probably couldn't come here and be a teacher too huh?

L: No, she needed to go through the whole school again.

A: Oh, ok.

Leonl: Oh, for the degree?

A: You have to do a different teaching degree, a US teaching degree.  
[Leonl and Link, interview by author, Salinas, CA., March 17, 2016.]

Link was unsure why his parents moved out of Mexico when his mother had a teaching job at a private school. He only remembered having to move to new schools, acquainting himself with new classroom expectations, and making new friends. Captain and Libertad had never changed schools. Captain's and Libertad's fathers both worked in agriculture, while their mothers worked in more rooted professions. Captain's mother ran a daycare and Libertad's mother worked at the school. Family dynamics differed for each student. Captain and Libertad only had one migrant parent, while the other parent worked locally. This allowed students to stay locally and maintain enrollment in their same school. Leonl stayed in the same school, but had little adult supervision at home, seeing his parents every couple of months. Link moved regularly since he was a baby from Mexico to Salinas, depicting the more familiar image of a migrant family. Students' experiences with moving and parent dynamics mirrored the experiences teachers saw when discussing parental involvement.

Student surveys demonstrated similar results to those discussed in the student interviews. Table 3 shows that two students out of the 12 said they remembered moving six or more times in their childhood. One student remembered moving three to four times, while nine students recalled moving zero to two times in their short lifetime.

Table 3. Student Survey Responses on Changing Schools

Student Responses	Number of Students
0 Times	4
1-2 Times	5
2-3 Times	0
3-4 Times	1
4-5 Times	0
6+ Times	2

Most students recalled moving zero to two times, which paralleled with student interviews. While two students shared similar experiences to Link in moving six or more times with their families, most rarely relocated.

### **Parental Involvement**

The parental involvement section of the interview received varied responses. Michelle had students tell her that their parents were working while they slept, or were sleeping when they returned home from school. These students had little to no parental influence when they got home. Michelle made the connection that her students with the lowest test scores were the students whose parents were the most difficult to contact. She stressed that students needed an involved adult figure to be successful in their studies. There were many reasons for the absence of parents in their child's education. Mike commented that a common assumption was that migrant parents did not care about their children's schooling:

You're hard fought to find a parent that doesn't care about their kid, number one. I think a good teacher would tell you their job is to educate the parents as well. Ultimately parents don't know how to help their kid and they get frustrated and when they don't know or they are too busy. There are a lot of parents that are just too busy and that's part of our degradation of society so to speak. Parents are unable to be there and support their kids as much as they'd like to be. It could be because they're



a single parent or any combination thereof. They take time off work, which makes them incapable of better income, better income, which usually means more free time, more access to resources so it's just a double-edged sword. There are a lot of parents that work hard and work to be in their child's life but to me it's cultural. What kind of culture do you set at home? I see parents of migrant students that approach it in two very different ways, and I think that's personal values to some extent. [Mike, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 5, 2016.]

Mike saw parental involvement in his classroom as a team effort. He felt parents were not available because they were working to maintain their household. While Mike knew it was important for parents to understand their children's schooling, parents were unable to efficiently support their children due to money and resource restrictions. However, the time parents did spend with their children at home on their schoolwork helped to develop a strong work ethic and higher academic retention.

Santiago tried to depend on parent communication as little as possible, claiming he had developed a system in his classroom that demonstrated his expectations while giving students a sense of control. He did not allow students to miss a class assignment, claiming they could complete their assignments in their allotted homework tutorial time, called "Intervention". If students did not have the materials they needed to complete their assignment, they could purchase them from Santiago's supply. Developing this level of accountability and responsibility allowed him to work with the students more personally without the need for parental involvement.

I am unusual in that I have very little parent communication because everybody succeeds with me but as I explained to you, they succeed because of the freedom thing and after a while it becomes a positive spiral where I get a couple of gold bricks, but they see everybody else is doing it so they don't see me as much as they might somewhere else, but when you don't have a D or an F, you're not even required to communicate with the home and yet I always send home progress reports so the parents get

something good rather than something bad from me it's preventive Alexa is what I'm trying to say. [Santiago, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 11, 2016.]

Santiago knew that communicating with parents can be difficult and so he did his best to develop a strong sense of accountability with his students. Once a few students reacted positively to his method, more of his students were willing to follow suit.

Heidi took a similar approach when unable to reach migrant parents, especially those absent for half of the year. Like Leonl's home life, Heidi had migrant students that lived with older siblings, grandparents, or had neighbors check on them daily. When she had assignments that needed parent signatures and no parent was present, she stated:

I've talked to kids and have them say that and it's like, "*Ok if you go over to a friend's house, have their parents sign it,*" or an older sibling because I do know that some students have parents that work at nights or other things. [Heidi, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 24, 2016.]

Heidi discussed Back to School Nights as being a way parents could catch up on their students' progression in school. Even though the school had provided outside resources to help with language barriers, the attendance remained low. Most parents worried about their child's behavior rather than their academic performance. Heidi commented:

Most parents are not involved and it's hard to get them involved in Back to School Night or Open House. It's usually very few students or parents show up to that. We do have a community liaison and a translator, but I don't usually see parent interest with parents of migrant students or EL's with their grades. Like if they show up they're usually like, "*Oh, how's their behavior?*" so they're mostly concerned that they're being respectful and not talking and those kinds of things rather than their grades. [Heidi, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 24, 2016.]

Regardless of the reason for low parental involvement, each teacher had taken a different approach in addressing the topic. Michelle sent students home with letters,

called parents, and used every avenue to provide all necessary information. Mike continually reached out to parents, regardless of his success, because he knew there were more factors that determined parental involvement than true disinterest. For those parents who had difficulty remaining updated on their child's progress, Mike found it part of his job description to build strong parent-teacher relationship and communicated with parents regularly about their child's progress. Heidi and Santiago attempted to teach students initiative through class expectations and flexibility in their classroom structure. In doing so, they removed the need for parent involvement unless the situation called for an intervention.

Captain discussed his desire for parental help on his homework. His mom did not speak English, but tried to help him with his math. He relied on his older brother to help him with all non-math subjects, as they were all written in English. When his older brother was available, he helped Captain with his homework. However, his brother was not always available to help, as he attended college in the area and was occupied with his own homework, campus activities, and a part-time job. This gave Captain a small window of time to get the help he needed with his schoolwork at home. Libertad had very similar school support at home. Her parents did not have the education to help her complete her sixth-grade homework. She relied on her older sister to help her with her studies, which varied depending on her sister's availability. Leonl said he was the same age his mom was when she stopped going to school. He said he dad had even less schooling and left when he was in 2nd grade.

Both parents lacked the education to help their son with his homework, even if they had the time and understood the English language proficiently. Link's parents stopped school at grades six and seven. This made Leonl's education at or above what his parents learned in Mexico. Next we discussed how school and migrant programs helped students in their studies.

### **Education Programs**

During my research, MCOE hosted an assortment of migrant programs aimed to strengthen learning, increase creativity, and develop skills outside of the classroom. Authors and Ideas, Junior Mesa Otter's program, Speech and Debate, and fieldtrips to college campuses were just a sample of migrant programs and events MCOE organized. Additionally, schools partnered with outside educational or grant programs that aimed to help low-income students in their academics. GEAR UP was a program I heard repeated regularly. This competitive grant program focuses on developing skill-sets for low-income students. They follow these students from seventh grade through their first year of college. Being chosen for this program is not to be taken lightly. Both Santiago and Heidi both mentioned how the GEAR UP program had helped their students understand the basics of applying to college. Heidi discussed the program proudly:

Well, we just got Gear Up to come and they started last year and they followed the seventh graders and they set up a college and a career center and we always have a college month but it's just like, "*Wear college t-shirts,*" which that was pretty much it. Gear up sets up actual meetings about like different schools and how you can get funding and scholarships so that's been really great and I'm sad that we're going to lose them next year. [Heidi, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 24, 2016.]

Michelle also discussed “Imagine Learning,” an online program used to assess EL students’ reading and comprehension. If schools participated in the same online program, migrant students could move to different schools and teachers could see their areas of struggle and previous test scores. This program was also geared to familiarize students with computers, fulfilling the technology requirement in the school’s S.T.E.M. criteria (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math). Teachers knew of other education programs within Monterey County, but they seemed more consumed with what their school had to offer: afterschool homework clubs, GEAR UP, English Language tutorials, college preparation groups such as AVID, or Imagine Learning. Even without teacher involvement, migrant students had more experience with these migrant programs and were connected to them through their migrant counselors.

Link participated in Authors and Ideas as well as their Speech and Debate tournament. He mentioned that both programs had helped him be more confident. Authors and Ideas allowed students to meet authors and introduce them to a large audience before an author’s speech. Leonl had participated in Speech and Debate as well, mentioning he had a speech coach that practiced his speech writing and speaking on a one-on-one basis. This allowed students to have special attention on their writing and speaking skills, otherwise unavailable in their large class sizes. Libertad and Captain did not use the programs at the school or with Harvests of Hope. They both did not know such programs existed for students who struggled in school.

Outside educational programs seemed to have had a positive effect on students. These educational programs taught students to value a college education. Survey results showed

12 out of 12 students wanted to go to college. Three students wanted to be a teacher, one a social worker, two an engineer, one a doctor, one a veterinarian, one in the military, and two undecided. Most careers were socially based, revolving around serving or protecting people. Migrant programs pushed the idea of college, teaching students to think about where they saw themselves in the future, even if they were only in middle school.

### **Teacher and Student Relationships**

The relationship that a student has with their teacher could play a crucial role in their academics. Migrant students' comfort level with their teachers developed confidence in asking questions, taking academic risks, and asking advice. Mike discussed the value in teacher–student relationships, but also explained the difficulty in maintaining quality relationships in a large classroom.

He mentioned,

A student must be able to relate and feel like they have some relationship with their teacher. There's always going to be a difficulty in like having a strong relationship with 30 different people. But hopefully a teacher who is open and considerate and wants to meet the needs of their students can at least make themselves approachable to their students and that's very valuable and important. [Mike, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 5, 2016.]

Mike felt that strong relationships could affect students' academics both negatively and positively, but the reality is he could only build relationships with the time he was given. In teaching his English and Physical Education courses, he tried to build relationships with the little time he had left at the end of a class period.

Santiago built relationships with his students by discussing soccer, asking about their favorite sports teams, and taking it upon himself to learn all his students by name before Back to School Night.

I work very hard to memorize all 150 names before Back to School Night in three weeks and I do it, but I line them up after class and I'm all, "*Gah, don't tell me. It starts with a B.*" Just practicing, repetition for a connection with the kid. It's like I'm looking for connections and memorizing their name is a big deal. I'm saying hi to the eighth graders from last year because I think it mattered to me when the teacher remembered who I was as an individual. [Santiago, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 11, 2016.]

Heidi said teacher–student relationships were more difficult for her, as a woman and someone who did not speak Spanish. Unsure if it was a gender, language, or ethnicity difference, she described her recent experience with a group of students and a new teacher,

Well first of all, young females have the hardest time with classroom management and we have an Asian teacher that just started and she's having a really hard time and I've heard that some of the kids made some insensitive racial comments. So because that's even more foreign to them I'm sure than just a white person. I know that young females, especially in the Latino culture, a lot of boys grow up not necessarily respecting women and I know we have a young female teacher who's Latina and she, I think has, she is able to talk to them I think about it a little more than I could, you know. So I think it does definitely help and the male teachers, there's a little more ease to their jobs than ours. [Heidi, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 24, 2016.]

Differences between students and teachers could be a combination of gender, language, and ethnicity. Literature discussed how an individual relates more easily to others who think, act, or look, like they do (McGinnis 2009; Dejaeghere and McCleary 2010; Iziarry and Williams 2013). Similarly, these variables can also affect how students relate to their teachers. Heidi claimed that female teachers have a more difficult time

controlling their students than their male counter parts. However, she shared with me that Latina teachers were able to correct students' misbehaviors towards, demonstrating that gender had less effect on students as language and shared culture. Heidi also mentioned that students speak Spanish in front of her because they know she does not understand the language:

No, like I understand very little and I try to ask my adult friends, "*Ok, what are the swear words?*" I try to recognize when they're swearing but that's about it and the kids get a kick out of it. They're like, "*You don't speak Spanish? Ok.*" Then they go and talk Spanish in front of me so it's like, ok. [Heidi, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 24, 2016.]

With students' common tendency to tell secrets between friends and keep information from teachers, Heidi's students used their native language to separate themselves from their teacher.

Michelle could not imagine a time where she had a negative relationship with one of her students, but had suspicions about the reasons behind some of her students' actions. Being a Spanish teacher for example, Michelle could speak to her students in both English and Spanish. Some Spanish-speaking students in her class understood Spanish, but took her class to learn how to read and write properly. She noticed when she addressed her Spanish-speaking students in Spanish, they would respond to her in English. She wondered if it was because she was an English-speaking, white, American. Her students would speak Spanish to one another and respond to Michelle in English. Michelle was symbolic for her school system's standards and values, such as Bourdieu and Passeron's institutionalized state. These standards and values included the push for



English-only classrooms, which could be an alternative reason to this exchange with her students.

Heidi created relationships with her students during class time, and if there were students struggling personally, she sent them to the counselor,

They usually will tell me if they want a pass to go talk to the counselor or something. I get some kids that will open up and there are kids that are bullied who will say, *“Oh I had to walk the other way around because there were some kids that were bullying me,”* and this or that. So then I report it to the counselor for them. [Heidi, interview by author, Salinas, CA., April 24, 2016.]

When Heidi needed to communicate with parents, the school provided a translator or asked the student to translate on their behalf. This language barrier caused Heidi to feel separated from her students. Leonl and Link said most of their teachers did not speak Spanish. They said it could affect the relationship a teacher had with their students, especially if the student only spoke Spanish. Table 4 states eleven out of the 12 students surveyed felt comfortable asking teachers for help if they needed it. The sharp contrast in results led me to believe this question would need to be investigated more in future research.

Table 4. Student Survey Responses on Asking for Help

Student Responses	Number of Students
Yes	11
No	1

All students who were interviewed gave examples of a time when they felt comfortable with their teachers, and also times when they did not. Their answers demonstrated that perhaps this is not a simple binary question. Leonl said he had a

healthy relationship with any teacher that showed him how to be a well-rounded student, but his behavior changed if he felt teachers did not support him academically.

Leonl: I had this sixth-grade teacher and she told my mom that I wasn't going to be anything, like in the world.

Author: Well, that's a horrible teacher.

L: I flipped her off. It was the last day of sixth grade. [Leonl and Link, interview by author, Salinas, CA., March 17, 2016.]

Leonl liked learning in school. He wanted to pass his EL class so he could enjoy electives. When teachers made him feel badly about himself, intentionally or unintentionally, his behavior retrogressed. He claimed in sixth grade, he had a teacher who discriminated against him because of his skin color. While this was something we could not prove to be true or false, it did reflect Leonl's attitude towards his teachers. He respected his teachers until he felt he was being disrespected. While other students might have felt insecure or reserved, Leonl talked back or acted out to defend himself. Libertad did not have much to contribute regarding her relationships with her teachers, but she said she did not ask them for help when she was struggling in school because of personality differences. When I asked her to clarify what that meant, she could not think of the words to explain.

The relationships between students and teachers varied depending on the personalities of the individuals. Some teachers put it upon themselves to make building relationships with migrant students a priority. In ways they could not help their migrant students, they referred them to their migrant counselor, who aided in any academic or social matters. The teachers interviewed all expressed a sense of loyalty to their migrant students. If

students worked hard, teachers would continue to take the time to help them. Santiago expressed himself best in this topic:

My ideal future world: every kid in the world would have equal opportunity. They won't end up the same, but if they started off equal and had equal access to the same resources in education, I would be delighted. It may not happen in my lifetime or in yours, but it's kind of the vision so when I'm dealing with the kids on a day-to-day basis it's like I don't always remember who's migrant and who's not, who's EL and who's not, um if the kid's got green skin and he's a jerk, I'll keep him and whatever you know? They're just kids. [Santiago, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 11, 2016.]

Santiago commented that migrant students did not pick their living conditions. Students did not make the decision to move to the United States and work in the fields. They were the aftermath of their parents' decisions to move for work and they enrolled into an American school with specific sets of social circumstances. He asked to make one last comment before the interview ended:

Salinas is the lettuce capital of the U.S. When the economy is good, everybody is delighted to have immigrants show up and help us with their agriculture. When the economy is bad, they want everyone to split, but the kids should not be caught in between like that. They're just kids, they don't know. [Santiago, interview by author, Salinas, CA., February 11, 2016.]

He mentioned that children notice outside social issues regarding immigration and migration. For example, they listened to what Donald Trump said on the news, and they reacted negatively to these social events. Santiago noticed this, and tried to counteract their negative reactions by helping to increase students' confidence levels and self-esteem.

## **Self-Esteem in School**

Link mentioned how being one of few Latinos at school made him feel uncomfortable, while being in a school with a large population of Latinos made him feel less isolated.

Depending on how many Latinos are in your school. Some are isolated, but if there are more Latinos in the schools, it's less likely. If there is more Americans, like in the school, it's more likely you'll be judged. [Leonl and Link, interview by author, Salinas, CA., March 17, 2016.]

When I asked Link what he meant by the word “judged,” he used words that described his physical attributes such as the clothes he was wearing or the color of his skin. He did not feel anyone would judge him for having parents who worked in the fields. Leonl said he came from a school where many students were migrant. Due to the high migrant population, his friends socialized in a large group and shared similar experiences, hobbies, language, interests and family values.

When I asked Captain if he liked school, he said no because his peers bullied him. He tried to talk to adult figures about being bullied, but it continued daily. He felt the bullying was because of his height, skin color, and his migrant status. It made him feel lonely. He did not like to go outside for recess and lunch because it forced him to interact with the other students. His home life affected his self-esteem in school as well. His mom ran a daycare and he admitted the additional children made him feel jealous. When I asked him what he would tell his teachers and classmates about his life if he were given a chance, he said:

Sometimes my life isn't always perfect. Students can get really stressed out. Homework for example, sometimes the instructions don't make sense.

My brother isn't there and my mom can't help me because she can't speak English. [Captain, interview by author, Salinas, CA., March 24, 2016.]

Not feeling like he fit in with his student peers at school, and not feeling he received the academic support from his family at home, Captain felt isolated.

The last question on the student survey asked, "What is something you wish your teacher or your classmates knew about you?" I wanted the question to be ambiguous to see what answers came to students' minds. Their answers were telling:

That they help me in my daily life.

I made a lot of challenges to learn English.

I wish my teacher knew that we all learn different.

That I don't like to speak in front of my class.

That I like to answer [answer] the questions they do. I like to help other when they need help.

I would like my tisters [teachers] to now [know] I am a nice kid.

I don't give up easily and I fight for what I want.

These responses above indicated a desire to learn and a willingness to work hard. They wished teachers understood no two students were similar in how they learned and where they struggled. They wished their teachers and students knew that they were putting forth great effort to pass their standardized tests and move on to the next grade like every other student.

Overall, patterns found in the survey results were also similar in student interviews. Teachers' experiences with migrant students mirrored the experiences students claimed they had their teachers. Besides moving seasonally for work, both groups were unsure

what legally constituted a migrant worker or migrant student. Students went as far to say that the color of their skin could indicate they were migrant worker.

Teachers felt frustrated with standardized state testing created by NCLB because they felt it assumed all students were at the same level of comprehension, ignoring the sub groups of students who performed below average. Likewise, students could not understand why they were being tested on English proficiency and were disappointed that they could not participate in elective courses, especially with EL specialists and counselors emphasizing their importance for college applications. Teachers and students both agreed that lack of parental involvement at home affected students' learning development. Results from the surveys and interviews showed that parents were not disinterested in helping their children with homework, but lacked the education, time, or language skills to help. Migrant educational programs run by MCOE had shown to improve reading, writing, and speech among the students who participated. Relationships between students and teachers were predominantly positive, and the teachers interviewed were taking the necessary steps to create good working relationships.

The use of migrant counselors and the language barrier between teachers and students at times affected teacher–student relationships. Students' self-esteem was also affected by feelings of isolation, disrespect, and bullying. These areas affecting self-esteem were all common themes among the student participants. The need for parental involvement at home added to the stress and isolation students felt, as they did not have tutoring help at home and felt insecure about their academics. I elaborate more on the meaning of these results in the following chapter.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

In comparing the results of my research to Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) embodied state and Ogbu and Simons' (1998) cultural–ecological theory, I first noticed parents and teachers' differing views on parental involvement. In Heidi's case, parents were more concerned with teaching their children how to be respectful and polite than they were in making sure homework was done and academic requirements met. This was not due to disinterest in their child's lives, but a result of Mexican beliefs that academic topics were for the student and teacher to discuss. Teachers, however, wished they had more parental involvement in their students' lives, as they believed it would increase students' confidence and overall school performance.

In reading *Little Women*, Mike believed his students were not able to relate to the material because the characters' life struggles and upbringings were different than theirs. He advocated for more Mexican-American books in the classroom so that migrant students could better relate to the text and find it easier to learn literary concepts, themes, and ideas. Mike felt students would not be able to grasp the classroom curriculum if they did not understand or relate to the assigned reading. The dominant culture's embodied state was present in the required reading, which caused minority students to struggle in understanding how these fictional cultural exchanges paralleled to their understanding of values, beliefs, and customs.

Students were taught at a young age to be proud of their Mexican heritage and yet, when they moved to the United States, they were told to speak only English in the classroom, experienced racial peer-bullying, and perceived teacher discrimination.

Students were left to balance what they were taught by their parents and what their teachers were instructing in the classroom. Through language preferences, selected literature, and inflexible teaching standards, migrant students learned how to transform the knowledge they learned at home into skill sets and behaviors that meet school requirements and standards. This demonstrated cultural–ecological theory, as students reacted to both the dominant and their minority culture.

The objectified state demonstrated migrant students' social class and wealth. Students being unable to use afterschool resources due to transportation issues demonstrated an academic barrier based on mere material wealth. In discussing a particular spot at home where students could do homework, results illustrated that most students did not have a regular area in which to do work. Most students did their homework on the floor or on their bed if they did not finish it in school. While interviewing teachers, I asked if they had participated in educational programs for migrant students and if so, what accommodations those programs had made for migrant students. Teachers commented on students' opportunities to visit college campuses, to meet famous authors, to participate in speech and debate competitions, and to receive additional tutoring through summer school and weekend programs. Teachers believed lack of school supplies or academic resources could be resolved through these programs.

The institutionalized state was also illustrated through these extra educational programs, as students needed to be migrant to qualify for MCOE's Harvests of Hope. There needed to be specific embodied and objectified factors that qualified students for these programs. These migrant programs aimed to increase students' performance. The



intention of these programs were to improve migrant students' chances of performing well in high school and to set students up with the skill-sets needed to potentially enroll in college.

The cultural–ecological theory intertwined with the three states of cultural capital, as students' personal upbringing (embodied state) and material wealth (objectified state) affected how educational institutions and student peers viewed migrant students. The actors involved in the educational institutions attempted to bridge gaps in migrant students' education by providing tutoring and material goods. Students responded well to these resources. However, teachers discouraging Spanish and the use of mostly Anglo-American literature in class generated feelings of isolation and a decrease in self-image. Non-migrant students who bullied Captain caused him to withdraw from his social circles and avoid student interactions. Leonl lashed out against his teachers if he believed they were disrespecting him or underestimating his intelligence. While teachers interviewed discussed their attempts to include migrant students in classroom discussions, migrant students still felt separated from other students and restricted having only Spanish-speaking friends. Students clung to encouraging words and advice on school success, despite the ethnically and racially based discrimination they felt by their student peers or teachers.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

In the methods chapter, I address three focal points to help address if and how academic barriers for migrant students differ from their student peers. I focused on (1) understanding what methods migrant students use to meet California academic standards, (2) identifying which variables create barriers in their education, and (3) what social factors affect students' confidence and self-esteem in their school work. In this chapter, I explain how the research results compliment Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) cultural capital and Ogbu and Simons' (1998) cultural-ecological theory. The research results are compared to the literature, discussing the commonalities my work had with past research, as well as unique findings and results.

### **Methods Migrant Students Use to Meet California Academic Standards**

Garcia-Reid and Reid (2009) categorize Latino student education as an "educational crisis." This categorization stresses the academic and emotional toll education has on migrant students. Research results had shown outside factors, such as social relationships and English development, affecting students' educational growth. However, students and teachers had found ways to overcome cultural differences. Parental involvement was stressed in many of the readings (Karther and Lowden 1997; Gettinger and Guetschow 1998; Thorn and Contreras 2005; Cassity and Harris 2000). However, instead of focusing on communication with parents, Santiago spent time with his students during tutorial sessions to ensure homework was turned in on the day it was due. He never allowed students to miss assignments, providing solutions when they lacked school materials, forgot their homework at home, or discarded the assignment all together. This

classroom dynamic worked well in his classroom, and worked around the need for parental involvement.

Students' lacking access to school materials was the primary objectified variable discussed in teacher interviews, as students knew what materials they lacked to complete assignments more effectively. Santiago counteracted the students' objectified states by providing students with the resources needed to complete assignments on time. Due to this, students were willing to go to his classroom during tutorial sessions to complete their homework assignments. Heidi's willingness to have homework and reading logs signed by any adult figure instead of a parent also gave students fewer reasons to be unsuccessful in turning in assignments on time. She understood her students' unique situations and adapted her expectations so that home life would not affect their academics.

Students interested in a particular career or college path worked independently with teachers and counselors instead of using parental involvement. Link mentioned the school he wanted to go to, and the certificates and classes he thought were needed to graduate with an engineering degree. His plan may not be completely accurate, but he had put thought into what scholarships he would need to pay for tuition, and he knew what subject areas would need improvement before he continued to high school. He mentioned in his interview proudly that he just passed his EL class. The sixth grade students I interviewed had not been as involved in the migrant education programs, but the seventh graders I interviewed knew what colleges they wanted to go to, what degrees they wanted, and had used multiple migrant education programs to improve English. The

college field trips they had taken helped develop their knowledge of the college application process, course prerequisites, and financial aid requirements. Their dialogue around higher education was developing, and it is likely their familiarity with the idea of college would increase over time. Razfar (2012) and McGinnis (2009) reported similar results for students' academic goals and outlook on success. They wrote that advanced planning and hard work helped students achieve academic success.

No students were involved in the Junior Mesa Otters program, but Michelle's experience with teaching in the program helped migrant students meet their state requirements. This program allowed teachers to give additional help where migrant students struggled, or to reteach curriculum in some cases. English and Math were the main subjects taught, leaving the remaining hours in the day for fun science projects, acting skits, and art projects. This schedule gave students time to explore subjects outside of the core curriculum, and provided help in English and Math without the pressure to perform on a state test. It also prevented students from disconnecting with school subjects during the summer. Students were able to return to school in August with the curriculum still in their minds.

### **Educational Barriers**

One obvious variable thought to negatively impact migrant students' academics was their regular moves from one school to the next. As migrant student is legally defined, I presumed students would be moving seasonally with their parents. Yet both the interviews and the surveys indicated that most students were not moving with their parents, and in fact three of the four student interviews and four of the 12 in the student

surveys said they have never moved or changed schools. Five out of the 12 surveys said they remembered moving once or twice in their lifetime, still not meeting the required moving timeline of six to 36 months. However, parental involvement was affected by parents' seasonal move with the crops.

Students wished they could rely on their parents for additional homework help, and teachers wished parents could help support their children improve academically. Bollin (2003) discussed how parents in Mexico do not involve themselves in their child's academics, leaving the responsibility of schooling to the teacher and the student. Heidi's experience of having parents more concerned for their child's behavior instead of their academics demonstrated Bollin's analysis. The migrant parents Heidi worked with focused on teaching their children to be respectful instead of developing students' skills for academic achievement. Lopez et al. (2001) concluded that an effective approach to migrant education would entail teachers establishing consistent teacher-parent communication. However, like Mike's conversation in his interview, teachers had roughly 100 students, and only an estimated hour daily to help their students. The solution to academic barriers for migrant students could not rest entirely on the teacher. The participation of teachers, parents, and students must be present for academic success.

During the interviews, I asked students if there were school items they wished they had to make homework and studying easier. All students said they had all the supplies they needed, but in the surveys seven out of 12 students had listed items they wished they had, some as simple as pencils and paper. Two of the schools I went to had computer labs available for students after school, but the students interviewed mentioned that they had

to be picked up immediately after school. Teachers mentioned that students could get school supplies from the migrant counselor if they were in need, but the students interviewed said their parents bought their supplies, giving no insight to how often migrant students use counselors for these types of resources.

The need to meet English and Math requirements meant migrant students could lose their elective class period if they tested below average in a core area. If the student needed additional assistance in both classes, they lost their Social Studies class. There was outside pressure coming from counselors and EL specialists to pass English and Math standards so that they could take electives in high school. These students were thinking of where they wanted to go to college and which classes they needed to take in high school to earn admittance. Heidi's experience in discussing state testing was stressful for her as a teacher. Given the fact that state testing was identical for almost all students, regardless of their English level, Heidi felt discouraged. If students had difficulty reading page-long directions, Heidi worried English learners would not be able to respond to test questions correctly.

Even though the goal of these state tests, dating back to NCLB, was to bring all students' testing scores to the same level of proficient academic comprehension, Heidi felt it never gave students who test below average a chance to improve. Testing low caused the school to lose funding, a consequence that could prevent schools and teachers from being able to improve their students' education. Based on the interviews, students were aware of how they currently scored on state tests based on the number of English and Math classes they needed to take. They were aware of their academic gap and wanted

to work hard to improve their scoring. Their difficulty was not a lack of desire to improve, but not knowing how they could improve.

With regards to reading requirements in English classes, Mike mentioned his students had difficulty comprehending American literature. His Migrant students found it complicated to relate characters and plot lines in American literature to their own lives and cultural backgrounds. The institutionalized state played an essential role in this portion of Mike's interview. American history written in 19th century jargon prevented Mike's students from developing a passion for reading. The difference in culture and language discouraged students from reading because they disconnected from the material all together.

Even though migrant students are in an American classroom and education standards have to be set to improve students' education, there could be value in adding one or two pieces of Mexican-American literature, such as Mike's suggested Sandra Cisneros. Migrant students would likely find the material easier to relate to, and other non-migrant students could learn about Mexican immigrants and migrant workers. Romanowski (2003) argued that teachers who asked students about their immigrant or migrant experiences had better relationships with their students. Conversations around migrant students' experiences allowed positive relationships with their peers. Requiring all students to read at least one book with a Latino protagonist could open dialogues about cultural differences, similar to those in Romanowski's (2003) research. It would give migrant students material to contribute in class discussions, encouraging class participation and interactions with other students. Migrant students would also be able to

talk with their parents about what they were reading, which would encourage parental involvement.

### **Social Factors Affecting Confidence and Self-Esteem**

Identifying what social factors affected students' confidence and self-esteem took more effort than simply asking the thought-out questions I had written prior to the research. Isolating the variables meant stepping back from what I had read and allowing students to educate me on which topics and themes had importance. When I asked about self-image and confidence, I simply asked questions discussing their opinions on learning in school, ideas of college, and their ability to make friends. The questions I organized were incomplete compared to the additional topics introduced by student interviewees. Such topics included bullying, positive and negative experiences with their teachers, academic support at home, and outside social issues such as skin color and ethnicity.

Some of these ideas I had written to discuss, but did not foresee as topics that would affect students' self-esteem. As Lynch et al. (2013) discussed, there does appear to be a "school-wide peer culture" consisting of relational and behavioral variables. Students who felt the need to be ethnically aware perceived themselves as invisible or different when surrounded by non-Latino students. When they were around their friends who shared similar language and cultural values, they felt more comfortable and confident. As a result, students naturally gravitated towards other Latino friend groups. Bullying, as experienced by Captain, affected how he viewed school. When asked if he liked school, Captain first answered no. In further discussion, Captain said he loved math class and learning new equations. It became clear that Captain did not dislike academics, but being



bullied lowered his self-esteem and made him feel poorly about himself. It affected his ability to relate to other children in the classroom and at lunch. He disliked the idea of school because of this. Talking to teachers did not resolve the bullying, and Captain did what he could to stay out of the sight of those who bullied him. Captain's experiences are similar to Fuerrer (2003) and Neary and Joseph (1994), as the combination of his bullying and lack of school support at home affected his potential for learning. Captain was especially affected when his peers bullied him based on his height, migrancy status, and skin tone. These were three features he could not change about himself.

Teacher–student relationships had similar results to Irizarry and Williams' (2013) research. Students claimed they felt comfortable and had mostly positive interactions with their teachers who made an effort to know them personally. Student survey results showed that 11 out of 12 students felt they had a strong relationship with their teachers and were comfortable asking for help when they needed it. Yet the interviews showed both positive and negative experiences with teachers. Further research is needed to understand the full extent of teacher–student relationships.

Santiago's mention of memorizing the names of his current and past students made a lasting impression on the children. Santiago remembered how he felt when teachers took the time to know him as a person, and he wanted to make the effort to express that same interest in his students. In talking with other teachers, they mentioned that all the students loved him and looked forward to his class, even if they did not like history. The relationship Santiago created with his students gave them the incentive to work through

coursework that disinterested them because they felt comfortable and he made learning history enjoyable.

However, not all students had positive experiences with their teachers. Leonl responded to negative teacher comments by acting out, sticking out his middle finger or talking back to teachers. Although he reacted to his teacher's actions by lashing out, his contrast in behavior was a result of low self-confidence. There was discouragement in his tone as he spoke of teachers talking down to him, "She told my mom that I wasn't going to be anything, like in the world," (Leonl and Link, interview by author, Salinas, CA., March 17, 2016).

Teachers also mentioned their relationships with their students were mostly positive. However, they still told stories of students targeting new teachers, not feeling respected because of their gender, and students using Spanish in conversations to exclude teachers. Santiago and Mike stressed the importance of giving students second chances to improve themselves in the classroom. These teachers would continue to give second chances to their students who were willing to improve their academics, behavior, or relationships.

### **Cultural Capital and Cultural–Ecological Theory**

Both theories made by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) and Ogbu and Simons (1998) demonstrate the influence of institutions in migrant students' academic environment. The concept of cultural capital helps to identify what a dominant culture finds acceptable in regards to early developmental skills, material goods, and institutional involvement. Cultural–ecological theory identifies how a minority population views differences between dominant culture and their own culture, and how these differences affect their

behavior. Both cultural capital and cultural–ecological theory demonstrate that the foundation to understanding how individuals react to, and behave within an environment, depends on the understanding of the dominant culture’s language and behaviors within that community.

With regards to cultural capital’s embodied state, migrant students relied on their teachers to develop early-age academic skills such as: reading, writing, and communication. Use of the MCOE programs, such as speech and debate, also served students in furthering the development of academic skills. Parents demonstrated a desire for their children to be successful in school, yet could only provide school supplies and emotional support. The students interviewed mentioned that their parents had not finished school in Mexico, usually dropping out of school between second and sixth grade. This meant that parents could not be used as an academic resource. Parents also taught children their native Spanish language, which posed as a barrier when placed in English-only classrooms. Due to limited English skills, migrant students were taught and tested in a language they were unfamiliar with. If parents could not be used as an academic resource for students, the time spent in the classroom was the only place students learned and practiced the material with an adult figure present. Even though students had participated in MCOE migrant education programs, these programs were run on weekends or during holiday breaks. This meant if a student was currently struggling in a particular subject in school, they would depend on their time in the classroom or in after school programs.

As stated before, Heidi mentioned that parents were more concerned about how their children behaved than how their child progressed academically. Having well-behaved children was considered a parental responsibility in Mexico, while academics was the teacher and student's responsibility. Migrant parents' embodied state was shown by students' taught behavior towards their teachers. Teacher's embodied state taught migrant students critical thinking or creative expression in the classroom. Both parents and teachers attempted to pass their knowledge onto the migrant children, developing a transmission of mixed cultural beliefs.

Migrant parents strove to have the school materials their children needed to complete school assignments. The gaps in material items demonstrated the objectified state for migrant students and their education. Items taken for granted by non-migrant students, such as a computer or Wi-Fi, were not as common in migrant homes. Computer labs were available after school for students, but this required having alternate transportation home. If students left directly after school, most would have a ride home. If they left an hour or two after school, often no one was able to pick them up. Having multiple cars, or a neighbor with a car, was not common for migrant students. In seeing visually what material goods migrant students lack versus non-migrant students, I was able to understand how social and economic class affected students' academic achievement and overall functioning within the American school system.

The institutionalized state's dominant American culture was, in this case, the school systems in Salinas. The schools had influenced migrant students by encouraging learning, testing, speaking, and behaving in English only. The cultural-ecological theory becomes

present here, as migrant students began to recognize that speaking Spanish was discouraged and speaking English was praised. In the literature, teachers who misinterpreted the reasons for migrant parents' absence in their child's education demonstrated a cultural divide between teachers, migrant parents, and their children. While some understood the migrant culture enough to alter their teaching styles and homework requirements, others viewed low parental communication as laziness or disinterest in their children's academics. Teachers served as actors of the dominant culture's ideologies as they carried out academic standards and established a classroom habitus with their students. The institution's ability to shape educational outcomes for migrant students is significant, as educational standards and policies continually change and teachers find ways to adapt those changes into the lives of migrant students. Due to the weight of institutional diplomas and degrees, teachers in my research pushed to provide migrant students with a positive educational experience, inspiring them to ideally finish high school, or progress to college.

The cultural-ecological theory within the context of education showed voluntary minorities wanting to achieve American assimilation through their education, language, and behavior. This theory depicts voluntary minorities reacting positively to outside pressures from the dominant group and working to adopt similar mannerisms, language, and culture. However, with the case of Captain, reacting to the dominant culture and adapting to fit its culture did not mean his student peers welcomed him. Captain discussed being bullied in school because of his height, migrancy status, and skin tone. No matter if he learned the dominant culture and language, the continual reminders of his

differences in appearance caused him to have low confidence in his academics and personal development.

Ogbu and Simons' hesitancy in categorizing migrants as voluntary minorities demonstrates the complex relationship migrant workers have with the United States. Since migrant workers do not seek permanent residency in the United States, and only partially assimilate into the dominant culture to maintain temporary work, they are not considered voluntary or involuntary. In understanding migrant students, it is important to understand their place in the authors' theory. Students' attitude towards moving affects their attitude towards schooling. John Ogbu and Herbert Simons (1998) discuss migrant students' place in his order of minorities based on their parents' attitudes towards migration.

Using these standards in classifying migrants, it appears that migrant students fit the description of both voluntary and involuntary minorities depending on their attitude towards migration. If a child is too young to understand or shows resistance to moving, they should be classified as involuntary minorities. The parents' decision to move has no reflection of the student's desire to migrate. Children who show interest in migrating should be classified as voluntary minorities because, even if the decision was not based on their willingness to cooperate, they are willing and generally optimistic about temporarily moving countries. Reorganizing Ogbu and Simons' classification for migrants within this context would allow researchers and school faculty to understand more accurately how cultural–ecological theory affects migrant students in the classroom.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

The overall conclusion to my thesis rests on the same conclusions as my literature review. There is no single variable or solution that can improve migrant students' education across the board. Bourdieu and Passeron's ideas on cultural capital were used in this research to discuss how the embodied, objectified, and institutionalized states affected migrant education in the American school system. Embodied states such as parental involvement, teacher-student relationships, language skills and student self-esteem demonstrated how migrant students were raised and how their experiences have shaped their behaviors and personalities today. The institutionalized state, including educational programs and state testing played a vital role in students' ability to effectively learn school curriculum. The objectified state was expressed through their access to school supplies and additional resources for academic success. Ogbu and Simons' (1998) cultural-ecological theory was discussed to understand how the dominant culture's treatment of minority groups, in this case the school system's treatment of migrant students, affected students' behavior within the dominant culture. Understanding how the authors sees migrant workers within the context of voluntary and involuntary minorities allowed for discussion of migrant students and their placement within Ogbu's minority model (Ogbu and Simons 1998:182). Despite academic barriers, strategies were put in place to overcome these social and academic barriers for migrant students. In this last chapter, I discuss research conclusions, limitations, actions I would have done differently, and areas for future research.

## **Research Conclusions**

Teachers who saw problematic patterns in migrant students took the time to use their institutional powers to isolate problems and create compromises. Santiago found ways to have his students turn their homework in on time, and Heidi adjusted her requirement for parental involvement by allowing any adult to be involved in her students' schoolwork. Mike and Michelle pushed for parent involvement in their students' academics through phone calls or notes home. Mike spoke to the school board to try to add additional books to the reading list that would be of more interest to migrant students. The literature discussing teacher involvement encouraged teachers to be the primary solution for academic gaps. They recommended more teacher training, home visits, after-school tutoring sessions, and a reorganization of class curriculum to meet the needs of migrant students. Even though the teachers interviewed agreed that using instructors as the primary solution to migrant's barriers in school was unrealistic, it did not stop them from trying to make positive academic changes for their students. These areas did not have the potential to improve students' grades and test scores alone, but they were barriers that, if changed, could help to improve their education.

The major findings in my research are important because they demonstrate strong parallels between what the literature conveys and the information given during the research. Results from the interviews and surveys demonstrated that migrant parents move for work, leaving the student at home to go to school. Either one parent moves with the agricultural season, or both parents move. This leaves an older sibling or adult figure to supervise the student. Therefore migrant students were not moving with their parents



to meet the demands of agricultural labor, and therefore did not have that particular academic barrier of their migrant student peers who moved every six to 36 months.

Standardized testing had changed the way students learned in that they were being taught strictly by the book, standard by standard. With the exception of Libertad, there were no student participants who had consistent homework support at home. Language and parents' education were two primary reasons for lack of parental involvement at home. Libertad and Leonl had space for their schooling at home, but Link, Captain, and student survey respondents did not. Link did his homework on his bed because, even though they have a kitchen table, it always had things piled on top of it. Captain tried to use his brother's desk when it was not in use for homework, and mentioned that it was hard to do homework at the kitchen table. Students expressed a desire for a space to do school work and even sought out places where they could get their work done.

These findings are significant because there were many programs through the middle schools and through Harvests of Hope that identify and alleviate most of these barriers. The college tours run by Harvests of Hope drove students to local college campuses. Other migrant education programs allowed students to participate in the program curriculum at little or no financial cost to the family. Usually, however, parents or an adult figure had to drop the students off and pick them up from these programs at a certain time. Other school-run programs had after school clubs or open computer labs where students could stay after school to do homework. Yet migrant students claimed that if they stayed after school for these resources, they would not have a ride home. These were barriers to overcoming lack of parental involvement. The resources were

present, the students were willing, the teachers were available, but there still seemed to be barriers for migrant students and families, preventing their attendance.

When it came to students' self-esteem in school, the results indicated there were multiple areas causing students to less confident in the work they produced. Captain had a negative view when it came to school, not because he did not like the topics discussed or the material learned, but because he felt isolated as a result of peer-bullying. His experiences with bullying made it difficult for him to want to come to school, and distracted him from learning in class. Leonl had experienced times when he felt his teachers did not like him, which made him feel like they did not support him academically. There were times he admitted to trying less in class when he felt teachers did not like him, leading him to operate below his potential and prevent him from learning new material in the classroom. Literature discussed the effects of self-esteem on students' schooling, seeing peer victimization, along with social and cultural differences, to be the main cause.

Working with MCOE and participating middle schools in Salinas helped me to recognize the academic barriers for migrant students. My research experience conveyed social and academic barriers that affected students' ability to understand school curriculum and meet state testing requirements. Both teacher and student participants addressed English development, parental support, teacher–student relationships, and peer interactions as determining factors for students' confidence and success in school. Results from my research complimented the results found in current literature. Specifically, it contributed to previous research by providing information specifically on Mexican

migrant students in middle school. Literature had focused on the Latino population or immigrant students as one body, but there was not enough that specifically studied Mexican migrant students in American middle schools. Most literature was based on high school participants or migrant students in other countries. Distinguishing the difference between immigrant and migrant was difficult for students and teachers. Migrant students were almost indistinguishable in the literature as its focus was on immigrant or Latino students and did not elaborate on migrants.

### **Limitations**

I discovered limitations during data collection that affected my research methods and the extent of my results and findings. Two thirds of the participants in my research were migrant children. This meant they were considered a vulnerable population in two ways: being migrants and being children. I could not approach students directly to schedule interview times and hand out surveys. I had to first speak to the principals of the school who would direct me to teachers and migrant counselors. These teachers and counselors introduced me to parents and helped to schedule meetings, as I was not allowed to receive parent information directly from the school. Parents who worked during the evenings also presented a limitation, as I could not schedule meetings with students unless I had an adult presence and someone to drive the students to the libraries where I conducted interviews.

I relied on teacher interviews to provide me the overall understanding of migrant students' academics, but I had to depend on student interviews to understand their personal experiences at home and in the classroom. This was difficult because students

between ages 12 to 14 do not always know how to express themselves, nor have they taken the time to reflect on how their actions affect their behavior. There were occasions when I asked students questions about their friends or home life, and received very short responses. I quickly knew the importance of asking very specific, detailed questions that were easy to understand. I changed my questions from, “Do you think making friends helps to build confidence?” to questions such as, “Is it important to make friends? Why do you think it is important? Is it easy for you to make friends when you move to a new school?” I made sure my vocabulary was simple so children could understand what I was asking with no room for misinterpretation.

At the same time, I could not rely on teacher interviews to understand how the full extent of migrant experiences in the classroom. These were questions I needed to hear from the students themselves. I needed to adjust my research questions to reflect exactly what information I wanted to receive from each question. Most research questions were understood and answered without complications, some questions were too advanced for students to understand and I had to go through great lengths to try and break the content down.

I had to schedule interviews, surveys, and meetings with faculty while school was in session. This meant that even though the IRB approved my thesis in late November, I had three weeks until school was on vacation and would not return until January. During that time, I could only focus on emailing faculty and scheduling meetings with staff after the holidays. Even after December, teachers had their own vacations and teacher training courses during the week. Teachers were off during the weekends, making communication

almost impossible at that time. Once school started, I had trouble contacting schools as they were occupied with new classes and student enrollments. I was able to schedule two teacher interviews during the beginning of school, but I could not realistically begin student surveys and the remaining interviews until the beginning of February. This gave me four and a half months for data collection.

### **What I Would Have Done Differently**

When I first approached this research, I reached out to the Coordinator and Educational Liaison of MCOE's migrant department. I met with them on several occasions. They were gracious enough to invite me to their student development meetings and recommended individuals for me to contact further for more information on my topic. Meeting with the Coordinator allowed me to discuss my research goals and get formal permission to use MCOE's schools in my data collection. She gave me a consent letter that I showed to principals and teachers repeatedly as proof I had permission from MCOE. I relied so heavily on the Coordinator and Educational Liaison to help direct me to the appropriate individuals, that I did not utilize the individuals I met at the student development meetings until February and March.

When I contacted the individuals from the meetings, they remembered my presentation and were willing to contact migrant students and their parents for me. I had not known it until after our initial conversation that I had spoken to the Director of Migrant Education/Special Projects and the migrant middle school counselors. These were contacts I could have researched ahead of time on the MCOE website, or asked the Education Liaison and Coordinator about. I had spoken to the director and at least two of

the migrant counselors at the student development meetings, but I was unaware of their role in MCOE and their connections to migrant students. I wanted to be respectful of the staff and faculty's time to such an extent that I was not intentional or assertive enough to build networks and contacts during the initial stages of my research.

The literature led me to focus so intently on teachers and students for data collection, that I did not think about interviewing migrant counselors who work with these students at least once a week. Thorn and Contreras (2005) mention how an increase in counselor interaction with students can help improve students' lives academically and personally. I did not know the impact counselors made on students in Salinas, nor did I think counselors would be specifically assigned to migrant students until I became more involved with my research. By that point, I was unable to restructure my methods. Migrant counselors talked with students about their academics and their home lives, and looked for resources that helped migrant students improve academically.

On two occasions, teachers told me anecdotes of sending students to the migrant counselor for personal matters such as bullying or problems at home. Migrant counselors translated conversations between teachers and parents at Back to School Night and Open House. They informed parents about migrant programs and additional resources for their children. With migrant counselors working so closely with migrant students, I missed important data that could have developed a stronger understanding of the migrant life and student academics. Although I did not collect the experiences of migrant counselors in this study, the data I collected still greatly benefits and contributes to current literature and future research.

The topic of teacher–student relationships could have been more in depth. Asking students in a survey if they felt comfortable asking their teachers for help and following up with, “If you do not feel comfortable asking teachers for help, why not?” did not give helpful or revealing results. If most students and teachers in the interview had at least one or two unpleasant experiences, there should have been at least four or five students who said they did not feel comfortable asking their teachers for help. Heidi even commented that she must directly approach students and ask to see their work. Santiago told his students they could write him a note or email him if they did not feel comfortable approaching him in-person. If students did not feel comfortable asking teachers for help, it was not a direct sign that they did not like or respect their teacher, but future research should consider why they avoided it. The results could be similar to their non-migrant peers, as they do not want to be singled out or they are too shy to ask for help. However, if there is a cultural, migratory reason for their lack of confrontation with teachers, that information could be valuable to build on current literature.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

For future research, I recommend interviewing migrant counselors for insight into their profession and experiences in working directly with the migrant students. I would ask counselors about their job descriptions and responsibilities in order to understand how the school system structures their roles to aid migrant students. I would ask counselors if they work at one school, or if they themselves move to different schools depending on the weekday. It would be important to know how many migrant counselors work in Salinas, considering I only met four counselors during my research. Knowing

counselors' memorable encounters with students could give additional insight that teacher and student interviews alone could not provide.

Getting the perspective of migrant parents would also add an additional perspective to the topic. I would ask questions regarding: their work schedule, upbringing, educational history, and overall understanding of their role in their child's education. Knowing how often, how long, and at what times parents work would give insight to their availability for their child's academic support. Parents' upbringing would help to understand how involved their parents were in their education, at what age they began working, and how far their parents progressed in school. An overview of their educational history would demonstrate what constituted a "normal" interaction between parents, teachers, and students. It would also give insight to the level of education they had in Mexico. If parents had stopped going to school in fifth or sixth grade, this could influence how impactful parents could be in tutoring their children at home if they themselves had not received education at that grade level. Although, interviewing teachers, parents, migrant counselors, and students would generate a large amount of data consisting of numerous topics and issues that, if not analyzed carefully, would have the potential to distract the researcher from their main research question.

A focus group consisting of parents, teachers, and counselors could also generate unique data that would contribute greatly to current literature. The identity of these individuals would no longer be anonymous, however, as at least four people would be in the room interviewing, the researcher included. This is a possible roadblock, as it could jeopardize the parents as migrant workers and their children as migrant students.



Questions that pertain to parents' actual migration, for example, could affect their children's migrancy status for the migrant education program. This would mean that if the parents interviewed admitted to moving for work and leaving their children at home, their students would be unable to participate in Authors and Ideas, The Junior Mesa Otter's Program, or Speech and Debate. Additionally, their students would not be able to go on the college field trips, nor would they have access to the migrant counselors for direction and guidance in their academics. However, if teachers were in focus groups with migrant counselors, students could potentially be identified based on the anecdotes mentioned.

Even though migrant counselors look out for their students' best interests, the research itself is meant to protect migrant families. Any piece of information that could potentially be linked to another student could be harmful to the student or parents. This is especially significant if sensitive information were discussed, as the researcher would not have time to prepare for, or prevent, those sensitive topics in conversation. Bringing individuals together from different sides of the migrant education spectrum could establish space for new topics, but could also cause potential harm to the researcher's informants.

I encourage anthropologists to continue researching how social and cultural factors affect the academic needs of migrant students in Salinas, California. Regardless of one's stance on immigration and migrant work, the desire remains to improve state testing across the board for all schools and all students. Anthropologists can help convey these principles to parents, teachers, and students, regardless of their citizenship status, skin

tone, ethnicity, and economic status. Researching this topic will help to improve students' academic comprehension, increase test scores, and increase the likelihood of success in high school and college. Considering all students follow the same academic standards and requirements, the educational system as a whole would benefit from further research on migrant education. Improvement of migrant education means overall improvement to school test scores, increasing school funding, resources, teacher experience, and quality of student education.

## References

- Bang, Hee Jin  
2011 What Makes it Easy or Hard for You to Do Your Homework? An Account of Newcomer Immigrant Youths' Afterschool Academic Lives. *Current Issues in Education* 14(3):1-26.
- Branz-Spall, Angela Maria, with Roger Rosenthal, and Al Wright  
2003 Children of the Road: Migrant Students, Our Nation's Most Mobile Population. *The Journal of Negro Education* 72(1):55-62.
- Bollin, G. G.  
2003 The Realities of Middle School for Mexican Children. *Clearing House* 76(4):198-201.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Jean-Claude Passeron  
1990 *Reproduction in Education, Society, and Culture*. London: Sage Publication.
- Cassity, Julie and Harris, Sandy  
2000 Parents of ESL Students: A Study of Parental Involvement. *NASSP Bulletin* 84(619):55-62.
- Child Trends  
Trends Among Hispanic Children, Youth, and Families. Electronic document, August 16, 2001, <http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Hispanicfactsheet2.pdf> (accessed May 15, 2015).
- Chilman, Catherine S.  
1971 Some Angles on Parent-teacher Learning. *Childhood Education* 48(3):119-125.
- Cobb-Clark, Deborah A., with Mathias Sinning, and Steven Stillman  
2012 Migrant Youths' Educational Achievement: The Role of Institutions. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 643(1):18-45.
- Collins, James  
2012 Migration, Sociolinguistic Scale, and Educational Reproduction. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 43(3):192-213.
- Conger, Dylan  
2015 Foreign-born Peers and Academic Performance. *Demography* 52(2):569-592.

- Cooper, Catherine R., with Jill Denner, and Edward M. Lopez  
1999 Cultural Brokers: Helping Latino Children on Pathways Toward Success.  
The Future of Children 9(2):51-57.
- Cosentino de Cohen, Nicole with Clemencia Deterding, and Beatriz Chu Clewell  
2005 Who's Left Behind? Immigrant Children in High and Low LEP Schools.  
Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, Program for Evaluation and Equity Research.
- Dejaeghere, Joan G. and Kate S. McCleary  
2010 The Making of Mexican Migrant Youth Civic Identities: Transnational Spaces  
and Imaginaries. Anthropology and Education Quarterly 41(3):228-244.
- Delgado-Gaitan, Concha  
1988 The Value of Conformity: Learning to Stay in School. Anthropology and  
Education Quarterly 19(1):354-381.
- Espinoza, Guadalupe, with Nancy A. Gonzales, and Andrew J. Fulligni  
2013 Daily School Peer Victimization Experiences Among Mexican-American  
Adolescence: Associations with Psychosocial, Physical, and School Adjustment.  
Journal of Youth and Adolescence 42(1):1775-1788.
- Fetterman, David M.  
2010 Ethnography: Step-by-Step. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Figueroa Mangual, Ariana  
2011 Citizenship and Education in the Homework Completion Routine.  
Anthropology and Education Quarterly 42(3):263-280.
- Fine, Michelle, with Reva Jaffe-Walter, Pedro Pedraza, Valerie Stoudt, Futch Stoudt and  
Brett Stoudt  
2007 Swimming: On Oxygen, Resistance, and Possibility for Immigrant Youth  
under Siege. Anthropology and Education Quarterly 38(1):76-96.
- Fredricks, Jennifer A. and Jacquelynne S. Eccles  
2008 Participation in Extracurricular Activities in the Middle School Years: Are  
There Developmental Benefits for African American and European American Youth?  
Journal of Youth and Adolescence 37(9):1029-1043.

Fry, Rick and Felisa Gonzales

“One-in-Five and Growing Fast: A Profile of Hispanic Public School Students,” *The Pew Charitable Trusts*, August 26, 2008, <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2008/08/26/oneinfive-and-growing-fast-a-profile-of-hispanic-public-school-students> (accessed October 20, 2015).

Furrer, C., and E. Skinner

2003 Sense of Relatedness as a Factor in Children’s Academic Engagement and Performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 95(1):148–162.

Garcia-Reid, Pauline and Robert J. Reid

2009 Finding Our Voices: Empowering Latino Students through Partnerships with School Social Workers. *School Social Work Journal* 33(2):57-69.

Garrett, Paul B. and Patricia Baquedano-López

2002 Language Socialization: Reproduction and Continuity, Transformation and Change. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31(1):339-361.

Gándara, Patricia

2015 Rethinking Bilingual Instruction. *Educational Leadership* 72(6):60-64.

Gettinger, Maribeth and Kristen Waters Guetschow

1998 Parental Involvement in Schools: Parent and Teacher Perceptions of Roles, Efficacy, and Opportunities. *Journal of Research and Development in Education* 32(1):38-52.

Guo, Yan

2005 “Why Didn’t They Show Up?” Rethinking ESL Parent Involvement in K-12 Education. *TESL Canada Journal* 24(1):80-96.

Hertzberg, Martha

1998 Having Arrived: Dimensions of Educational Success in a Transitional Newcomer School. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 29(4):391-418.

Irizarry, Stephanie and Sherie Williams

2013 Lending Student Voice to Latino ELL Migrant Children’s Perspectives on Learning. *Journal of Latinos and Education* 12(1):171-185.

Karther, Diane E. and Frances Y. Lowden

1997 Fostering Effective Parent Involvement. *Contemporary Education* 69(1):41- 44.

- Kahne, Joseph, with Jenny Nagaoka, Andrea Brown, James O'Brien, Therese Quinn, and Keith Thiede  
2001 Assessing After-School Programs as Contexts for Youth Development. *Youth and Society* 32(4):421-447.
- Kim, James S. and Gail L. Sunderman  
2005 Measuring Academic Proficiency Under the No Child Left Behind Act: Implications for Educational Equity. *Educational Researcher* 34(8):3-13.
- Klein, Alyson  
"No Child Left Behind Overview: Definitions, Requirements, Criticisms, and More," *Education Weekly*, April 10, 2015, <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/no-child-left-behind-overview-definition-summary.html> (accessed October 22, 2015).
- López, Gerardo R., with Jay D. Scribner, and Kanya Mahitivanichcha  
2001 Redefining Parental Involvement: Lessons from High-Performing Migrant-Impacted Schools. *American Educational Research Journal* 38(2):253-288.
- Lynch, Alicia, with Lerner Doyle, Richard M., and Tama Leventhal.  
2013 Adolescent Academic Achievement and School Engagement: An Examination of the Role of School Wide Peer Culture (42):6-19.
- McGinnis, Theresa A.  
2009 Seeing Possible Futures: Khmer Youth and the Discourse of the American Dream. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 40 (1):62-81.
- Monterey County Office of Education  
"Program Eligibility," *Monterey County Office of Education*, June 6, 2014, <http://www.monterey.k12.ca.us/programs-services/migrant-services/program-eligibility/index> (accessed September 23, 2016).
- Neary A, and S. Joseph  
1994 Peer Victimization and its Relationship to Self-concept and Depression Among Schoolgirls. *Personality and Individual Differences* 16(1):183-186.
- Ogbu, John, and Herbert D. Simons  
1998 Voluntary and Involuntary Minorities: A Cultural-Ecological Theory of School Performance with Some Implications for Education. *Anthropology and Education* 29(2):155-188.
- Pacheco, Mariana  
2010 Performativity in the Bilingual Classroom: The Plight of English Learners in the Current Reform Context. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 41(1):75-93.

- Pavri, Shireen, with Johnell Bentz, Bradley Janetta Fleming and Laurie Corso  
2005 'Me Amo Leer' Reading Experiences in a Central Illinois Summer Migrant Education Program. *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 18(2):154-163.
- Razfar, Aria  
2012 Narrating Beliefs: A Language Ideologies Approach to Teacher Beliefs. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 43(1):61-81.
- Romanowski, Michael  
2003 Meeting the Unique Needs of the Children of Migrant Farm Workers. *The Clearing House* 77(1):27-33.
- Shiu, Alexandra, with Todd Kettler and Susan K. Johnsen  
2009 Social Effects of Hispanic Students Enrolled in an AP Class in Middle School. *Journal of Advanced Academics* 21(1):58-82.
- Thorn, A. R., and S. Contreras  
2005 Counseling Latino immigrants in Middle School. *Professional School Counseling* 9(2):167-170.
- U.S. Department of Education.  
*No Child Left Behind Part C - Education of Migratory Children*. (Washington, DC, 2005), <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg8.html> (accessed August 27, 2016).
- Wortham Stanton, with Katherine Mortimer and Elaine Allard  
2009 Mexicans as Model Minorities in the New Latino Diaspora. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 40(4):388-404.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Teacher Interview Consent Form

#### REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICPATION IN RESEARCH

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Academic Barriers of Migrant Students in Salinas, California

NAME OF THE RESEARCHER: Alexa ter Horst, graduate anthropology student at San Jose State University.

#### PURPOSE

I am researching how migration affects Mexican middle school students in Salinas, CA. I am particularly interested in: (1) understanding what methods migrant students use to meet California academic standards, (2) identifying what variables create barriers in their education, and (3) how do these variables compare to immigrant students who are not from migrant families.

#### PROCEDURES

During the interview, you will be asked questions related to your experiences in working with migrant middle school students with regards to what role you have in the Continual Learning Program, what potential barriers migrant students have in making friends, learning in class, their comfort level and relationship with their teachers, how their home life affects their studies, and students' future school goals. Interviews will take place at Salinas Public Library in their small meeting rooms.

To make sure the data collected is accurate, I would like the interview to be audio-recorded and to take notes for data analysis. The tape will be transcribed by the interviewer and kept confidential in a password-protected computer. No video recording will take place.

☐

Please check this box if I have permission to audio-record your interview.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS

This project may draw attention to the migrant community in Salinas since the information collected will be focused on migrant children and their difficulties in school as a result of moving, language, or social pressures from outside communities or school faculty. To prevent any identification of the children involved in the project, I have



organized individual interviews for children so teachers and other students do not have access to the information these migrant child provide, and are unaware of the children's involvement in the project.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This research will add to public knowledge by demonstrating the barriers and specific needs migrant students have when getting an education in an American classroom setting. The information you can provide will directly encourage change in education programs, classroom behaviors, and the overall reputation of migrant communities.

#### COMPENSATION

There is no compensation for participating in this project.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

The names of the teachers and tutors who participate in this project will also be removed from the project. Although their involvement with the program is publically known, certain teachers work with certain students and should therefore be anonymous as well to prevent any likelihood of identifying any students participating in the research. Participant identity will be concealed using coding procedures. For legal purposes, data will be transcribed on my home computer and destroyed after the project is complete. Interviews will be done individually to make sure all information is documented confidentially

#### PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University or [name any other participating institutions. You also have the right to skip any question you do not wish to answer. This consent form is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to participate, and there is no penalty for stopping your participation in the study.

## QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study, please contact Alexa ter Horst by phone (949) 677-3938 or by email at alexacterhorst@gmail.com.
- Complaints about the research may be presented to Jan English-Lueck, Dean of College of Social Sciences, San Jose State University, at 408-924-5347.
- For questions about participants' rights or if you feel your child has been harmed by participating in this study, please contact Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of the Office of Research, San Jose State University, at 408-924-2479.

## SIGNATURES

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to be a part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

Participant Signature

---

Participant's Name (printed)

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

Researcher Statement

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to learn about the study and ask questions. It is my opinion that the participant understands his/her rights and the purpose, risks, benefits, and procedures of the research and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

---

Signature of Person Receiving Consent

---

Consent Date

## Appendix B: Parent Consent form for Student's Interview Participation

### REQUEST FOR YOUR CHILD'S RESEARCH PARTICIPATION – INTERVIEW

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Academic Barriers of Migrant Students in Salinas, California

NAME OF THE RESEARCHER: Alexa ter Horst, graduate anthropology student at San Jose State University.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of my research is to see if migration affects Mexican middle school students' experiences and schoolwork in their classroom. I am researching: (1) what resources migrant students use to meet their school standards, (2) what creates complications in migrant students' education, and (3) if students' friendships with their teachers and peers affect their confidence in school.

### PROCEDURES

During the interview, your child will be asked questions about to their experiences in making friends, learning in class, how comfortable they feel talking to their teachers about subjects they do not understand, what school supplies students believe they need to complete their school work, and their future school goals. Interviews will take place at Salinas Public Library in their small meeting rooms. I will focus on: where students do their homework, where they put forms needing to be signed by a parent if parents are not present at the time, what academic resources are available at home to help with homework and school projects, and if there is a place for students to put their school work when it is complete. To make sure the information collected is correct, I would like the interview to be audio-recorded and to take notes for data analysis. The audiotape will be transcribed by the interviewer and kept privately in a password-protected computer. No video recording will take place.

### POTENTIAL RISKS

This project may draw attention to the migrant community in Salinas since the information collected will be on migrant children and their difficulties in school as a result of moving, language, or social pressures from the communities or school faculty. To prevent any connection of your child in the project, I have organized individual interviews for children so teachers and other students do not have access to the information your child gives, and are not aware of your child's involvement in the project.

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This research will add to public knowledge by showing the barriers and specific needs migrant students have when getting an education in an American classroom. The information your child can provide will encourage change in education programs, classroom behaviors, and the reputation of migrant communities. The information teachers and students can provide will directly encourage change in education programs, classroom behaviors, and the needs of migrant communities. Through this research, education program can understand how their programs have helped students in classroom learning, but also what other affected areas of migrant students' lives still need addressing. Students and parents will be given opportunities to reflect on their personal lives and how the classroom and programs run through the MCOE have helped students' academic standings and how they may help more in the future.

## COMPENSATION

There is no compensation for this project.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All individual identification from interviews will be removed from the hard copy of the transcript. Your child's name, school, or home address will not be included in the project. Participant identity will be protected using coding procedures. For legal purposes, data will be transcribed on my home computer and destroyed after the project is complete. Interviews will be done individually to make sure all information is privately documented.

## PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to allow his or her participation in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative feelings from San Jose State University. Your child also has the right to skip any question that he or she does not wish to answer. This consent form is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to allow your child to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to allow your child to participate and there is no penalty for stopping your child's participation in the study. Your child may also decide to stop at any time. Parents are given the opportunity to sit with their child during the interview process as well if that is more comfortable for the parent and/or child.

## QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions and to have your child ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study, please contact Alexa ter Horst by phone (949) 677-3938 or by email at alexacterhorst@gmail.com.
- Complaints about the research may be presented to Jan English-Lueck, Dean of college of Social Sciences, San Jose State University, at 408-924-5347.
- For questions about participants' rights or if you feel your child has been harmed by participating in this study, please contact Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of the Office of Research, San Jose State University, at 408-924-2479.

## SIGNATURES

### Parent/Guardian Signature

Your signature shows that you agree to allow your child to be part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you and your child, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form, signed and dated by the researcher, to keep for your records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Child or Minor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to Child or Minor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent or Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

☐

Please check this box if I have permission to audio-record your child's interview.

### Researcher Statement

I certify that the minor's parent/guardian has been given enough time to learn about the study and ask questions. It is my opinion that the parent/guardian understands his/her child's rights and the purpose, risks, benefits, and lay out of the research. The parent/guardian has voluntarily agreed to allow their child to participate. I have also explained the study to the minor in language to his/her age and have received assent from the minor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Assent Date

## Appendix C: Parent Consent form for Student's Survey Participation

### REQUEST FOR YOUR CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH – SURVEY

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Academic Barriers of Migrant Students in Salinas, California

NAME OF THE RESEARCHER: Alexa ter Horst, graduate anthropology student at San Jose State University.

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of my research is to see if migration affects Mexican middle school students' experiences and schoolwork in their classroom. I am researching: (1) what resources migrant students use to meet their school standards, (2) what creates complications in migrant students' education, and (3) if students' friendships with their teachers and peers affect their confidence in school.

#### PROCEDURES

During the survey, your child will be asked 11 questions about their learning experiences in the classroom, how their home life affects their schoolwork, and what are their future academic goals after high school. The last question asks your child what they wish their teacher and classmates knew about them. This question has no right or wrong answer. This question is answered to understand what your child feels is their own barrier in their classroom experiences.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS

This project may draw attention to the migrant community in Salinas since the information collected will be on migrant children and their difficulties in school as a result of moving, language, or social pressures from the communities or school faculty. To prevent any connection of your child in the project, I have organized individual interviews for children so teachers and other students do not have access to the information your child gives, and are not aware of your child's involvement in the project. Surveys will also be completely anonymous.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This research will add to public knowledge by showing the barriers and specific needs migrant students have when getting an education in an American classroom. The information your child can provide will encourage change in education programs, classroom behaviors, and the reputation of migrant communities. The information teachers and students can provide will directly encourage change in education programs, classroom behaviors, and the needs of migrant communities. Through this research,

education program can understand how their programs have helped students in classroom learning, but also what other affected areas of migrant students' lives still need addressing. Students and parents will be given opportunities to reflect on their personal lives and how the classroom and programs run through the MCOE have helped students' academic standings and how they may help more in the future.

## COMPENSATION

There is no compensation for this project.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

No individual identification will be collected from the surveys. Your child's name, school, or home address will not be included in the project. Surveys will be done individually to make sure all information is privately documented.

## PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to allow his or her participation in the entire study or any part of the study without any negative feelings from San Jose State University. Your child also has the right to skip any question that he or she does not wish to answer. This consent form is not a contract. It is a written explanation of what will happen during the study if you decide to allow your child to participate. You will not waive any rights if you choose not to allow your child to participate and there is no penalty for stopping your child's participation in the study. Your child may also decide to stop at any time. Parents are given the opportunity to sit with their child during the interview process as well if that is more comfortable for the parent and/or child.

## QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions and to have your child ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study, please contact Alexa ter Horst by phone (949) 677-3938 or by email at [alexacterhorst@gmail.com](mailto:alexacterhorst@gmail.com).
- Complaints about the research may be presented to Jan English-Lueck, Dean of college of Social Sciences, San Jose State University, at 408-924-5347.
- For questions about participants' rights or if you feel your child has been harmed by participating in this study, please contact Dr. Pamela Stacks, Associate Vice President of the Office of Research, San Jose State University, at 408-924-2479.

## SIGNATURES

### Parent/Guardian Signature

Your signature shows that you agree to allow your child to be part of the study, that the details of the study have been explained to you and your child, that you have been given time to read this document, and that your questions have been answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form, signed and dated by the researcher, to keep for your records.

☐

Check this box if you give permission for your child to be interviewed in this research project and your child is willing to participate.

---

Signature of Child or Minor

---

Parent or Guardian Name (Printed)

---

Relationship to Child or Minor

---

Parent or Guardian Signature

---

Date

### Researcher Statement

I certify that the minor's parent/guardian has been given enough time to learn about the study and ask questions. It is my opinion that the parent/guardian understands his/her child's rights and the purpose, risks, benefits, and lay out of the research and has voluntarily agreed to allow their child to participate. I have also explained the study to the minor in language appropriate to his/her age and have received assent from the minor.

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

---

Assent Date



## Appendix D: Student Assent form for Interview Participation

### REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN MY RESEARCH STUDY- INTERVIEW

Researcher Name: Alexa ter Horst, student at San Jose State University

Dear Student,

My name is Alexa ter Horst and I am a Master's student at San Jose State University. You are invited to take part in my research study to figure out what areas of school can be difficult for Mexican middle school students who have parents that migrate for work. In this study, I will ask you questions about your learning experiences in an American classroom. I will ask you questions about how often you move to new schools, how you create relationships at school with students and your teacher, who helps you with your homework, what school programs you have been in or are in right now, and if you want to go to college in the future. The interview will take 20 minutes to 25 minutes to complete.

When you help me in this study, you will give me new information on how the Monterey County Office of Education has helped students learn more and learn better study habits. Your information could also show me if there are problems migrant students have in school that these school programs are not helping with. I will also ask your parents for permission for you to do this study. Please talk this over with them before you decide whether or not to participate. You may ask me any questions you have about the research at any time.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You can also stop at any time, if you want to. If you check "yes," it means that you have decided to help and have read everything that is on this form. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form to keep. If you do not want to help with my research, even if your parents give permission, I will not encourage you to participate. I will not continue to ask for your help if you do not feel comfortable participating.

☐ Yes, I would like to be in the study.

☐ No, I do not want to be in the study.

Name of Child Participant and Signature	Date

Signature of Researcher

In my judgment the minor/youth is voluntarily and knowingly giving assent to participate in this research study.

Alexa ter Horst, Principal Investigator Phone: (949) 677-3938	Date

## Appendix E: Student Assent form for Survey Participation

### REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY- SURVEY

Researcher Name: Alexa ter Horst, student from San Jose State University

Dear Student,

My name is Alexa ter Horsts and I am a Master's student at San Jose State University. You are invited to take part in my research study to figure out what areas of school can be difficult for Mexican middle school students who have parents that migrate for work.

In this study, you will answer survey questions about your learning experiences in an American classroom. The survey will ask questions such as: your age, grade level, how often you move to new schools, if you work in the fields with your parents, who helps you with your homework, and if you want to go to college in the future. The survey will take about 10-15 minutes to complete.

When you help me in this study, you will give me new information on how the Monterey County Office of Education has helped students learn more and learn better study habits. Your information could also show me if there are problems migrant students have in school that these school programs are not helping with.

I will also ask your parents for permission for you to do this study. Please talk this over with them before you decide whether or not to participate. You may ask me any questions you have about the research at any time. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You can also stop at any time, if you want to. If you check "yes," it means that you have decided to help and have read everything that is on this form. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form to keep. If you do not want to help with my research, even if your parents give permission, I will not encourage you to participate. I will not continue to ask for your help if you do not feel comfortable participating.

☐ Yes, I would like to be in the study.

☐ No, I do not want to be in the study.

---

Name of Child Participant and Signature

---

Date

Signature of Researcher

In my judgment the minor/youth is voluntarily and knowingly giving assent to participate in this research study.

---

Alexa ter Horst, Principal Investigator Phone: (949) 677-3938

---

Date

## Appendix F: Sample Teacher Interview Questions

### Education Programs

Which educational programs have you worked in for MCOE's migrant region?

What is your position in this program? What are your responsibilities?

What accommodations does this program make for migrant students, and how can the program improve?

In your opinion, how have policies such as No Child Left Behind and Bilingual Education Act affect migrant students?

### Parental involvement

During those education program(s) you worked in through Monterey County Office of Education, how often do parents participate in these programs with their children?

### Consequences of self-image

How well do migrant children adjust to a new classroom setting?

Are there any steps you as the teacher take to help students adjust to their classroom better?

Have you spoken to your students about going to college? How do they seem to react to the idea of going to college after high school?

### Academic performance

In your experience in these programs, what subject do students appear to be struggling with most?

What school supplies do you notice students missing to complete their schoolwork?

### Teacher to student relationships

Do you feel students get the adequate attention they need from you during their time in the classroom?

Do you believe students are comfortable telling you as their teacher what issues occur in their home life?

## Appendix G: Sample Student Interview Questions

### **Personal**

How many times can you remember moving to a new school?  
¿Cuántas veces recuerdas haberte mudado a una nueva escuela?

Is it hard to understand the routines in class when you move to a new school?  
¿Es difícil entender las rutinas en clase cuando te mueves a una escuela nueva?

Have you ever had to work in the fields with your parents before or after school?  
¿Alguna vez has tenido que trabajar en el campo con tus padres antes o después de la escuela?

### **Teacher to student relationships**

Do you feel comfortable asking your teacher for help?  
¿Te sientes cómodo pidiéndole ayuda a tu maestro?

Is it easy for you to make new friends?  
¿Te es fácil hacer nuevos amigos?

### **Parental Involvement**

Who helps you with your homework after school?  
¿Quién te ayuda con tu tarea después de la escuela?

Where do you put all your school stuff when you come home?  
¿Dónde pones todos tus materiales escolares cuando llegas a casa?

Where do you put papers that need to be signed by your parents?  
¿Dónde pones los papeles que necesitan ser firmados por tus padres?

### **Education Programs**

Are there any programs after school that can help you with your homework, if you need it?  
¿Hay programas después de la escuela que pueden ayudarte con tu tarea, si lo es necesario?

What programs have you participated in with the Monterey County Office of Education?  
¿Qué programas de la Oficina de Educación del Condado de Monterey has participado?

### **Consequences of self-image**

Do you like school?  
¿Te gusta la escuela?

Do you want to go to college?  
¿Quieres ir a una universidad?

What do you want to be when you are an adult?  
¿Qué quieres ser cuando seas un adulto?

If you could tell your teacher and classmates one thing about your life, what would it be?

Si pudieras decirles a tu profesor y compañeros de clase algo de tu vida, ¿que sería?

## Appendix H: Student Survey

This project is looking into the daily life of migrant middle school students in the American classroom. Those who are not migrant workers or in a migrant families may not understand how being a migrant student can be different, at times more difficult, than an students in the classroom. This survey will be used in my project to educate others on the migrant student perspective in the American school system. This survey is voluntary. You do not have to take this survey if you do not want to. If afterwards, you decide you do not want to help with my project, you can notify me and your input will be deleted from the project.

All surveys will be anonymous, meaning no one will know you took the survey. Thank you for your participation.

Este proyecto está estudiando las vidas de los estudiantes migrantes de secundaria en un salón EEUU. Los que son trabajadores migrantes o los que no pertenecen a familias migrantes, no puedan entender la vida de un estudiante migrante. La vida del estudiante migrante puede ser diferente o más difícil que la vida de un estudiante inmigrante o de un estudiante estadounidense. Esta encuesta será utilizada en mi proyecto para educar a otros sobre la perspectiva de los estudiantes migrantes en el sistema escolar americano. Esta encuesta es voluntaria. No tiene que tomar esta encuesta si no desea. Si después, decide que no quiere ayudar con mi proyecto, puede notificarme y su encuesta será eliminado del proyecto.

1. Are you a boy or a girl?

¿Eres un chico o una chica? Marque sólo un círculo

☐ Boy/chico

☐ Girl/chica

2. What grade are you in?

¿En que año estás? Marque sólo un círculo

☐ sixth/6to

☐ seventh/7mo

☐ eighth/8vo

3. Have you worked with your parents in the fields before or after school?

¿Has trabajado con tus padres en el campo antes o después de la escuela? Marque sólo un círculo

☐ Yes/sí

☐ No/no



4. How many times can you remember changing schools?

¿Cuántas veces has cambiado de escuelas? Marque sólo un círculo

☐ 0

☐ 1-2

☐ 3-4

☐ 5-6

☐ 6+

5. Are there any school supplies you don't have that would make finishing homework easier?

¿Hay algún material escolar que no tienes que pueda facilitarte el proceso de la tarea?

6. Do you have a space at home that is just for your backpack and homework?

¿Tienes un espacio en tu casa sólo para tu tarea y mochila? Marque sólo un círculo

☐ Yes/sí

☐ No/no

7. When you do not understand classroom instructions, do you feel comfortable asking your teacher for help?

¿Cuando no entiendes las instrucciones en clase, te sientes cómodo pidiendo ayuda a tu maestro? Marque sólo un círculo

☐ Yes/sí

☐ No/no

8. If you do not feel comfortable asking your teacher for help, why not? Check all the boxes that apply to you.

¿Si no te sientes cómodo pidiendo ayuda a tu maestro, por que no? Marque todas las casillas que apliquen.

☐ I don't feel comfortable speaking in English / No me siento cómodo hablando en Inglés

☐ My teacher and I do not have a lot in common/ Mi maestro y yo no tenemos mucho en común

☐ My teacher does not speak to me a lot/ Mi maestro no habla mucho conmigo

☐ I do not like asking for help/ No me gusta pedir ayuda

☐ Other

9. What do you want to be when you grow up?

¿Qué quieres ser cuando seas grande?

10. Would you like to go to college in the future?

¿Te gustaría asistir a una universidad en el futuro? Marque sólo un círculo

☐ Yes/sí

☐ No/no

11. What is something you wish your teacher or your classmates knew about you?

¿Qué deseas que tu maestro o tus compañeros de clase sepan de ti?

--

## Appendix I: MCOE Letter of Consent



### Monterey County Office of Education

901 Blanco Circle • Post Office Box 80851 • Salinas, California 93912-0851 • [www.monterey.k12.ca.us](http://www.monterey.k12.ca.us)  
Salinas 831.755.0300 • Monterey 831.373.2955 • Facsimile 831.753.7888

Dr. Nancy Kotowski  
Monterey County Superintendent of Schools

To whom it may concern,

It is with pleasure that Migrant Education Region XVI welcomes Alexa ter Horst to conduct the study titled "'Academic Barriers of Migrant Students in Salinas, California'" from June 2015 to May 2016. She will work with identified students and their families through our monthly Migrant Family Collaborative, which is held in 4 of our local districts, Santa Rita Union, Chualar Union, Greenfield Union and King City Union. In these collaborative meetings parents have the opportunity to meet with the district migrant staff to discuss student progress, a guest speaker presents on a given topic of interest to parents, and students participate in guided child activities with credentialed teachers. As discussed with Alexa, the study must include permission from the parents prior to any direct interaction, interviews or survey's being conducted. We request that any forms signed by parents be in the parent's primary language to assure their understanding of the full scope and sequence of the study.

If you have any additional questions or require additional information please feel free to contact me directly at (831) 206-4448 or [sprather@monterey.k12.ca.us](mailto:sprather@monterey.k12.ca.us)

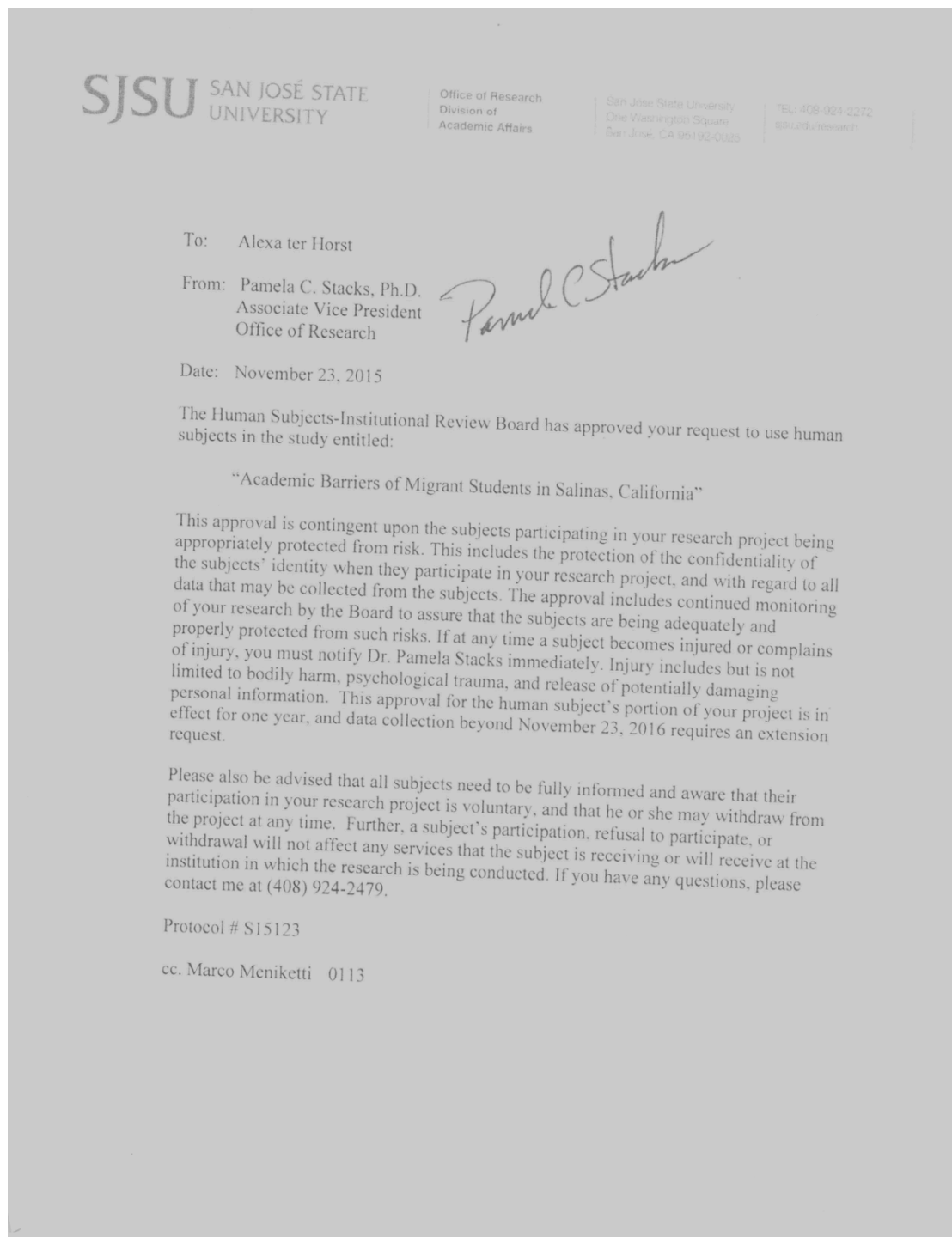
Summer Prather-Smith

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Summer Prather-Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Coordinator/Administrator  
Migrant Education Region XVI  
Monterey County Office of Education

*Leadership, Support, and Service to Prepare All Students for Success*

## Appendix J: IRB Approval Letter



## Appendix K: Materials Used

