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The Educational, Living, and Social Conditions of Farmworker Families Residing in a California Migrant Housing Center

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THE EDUCATIONAL, LIVING, AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF FARMWORKER FAMILIES RESIDING IN A CALIFORNIA MIGRANT HOUSING CENTER

by

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Abstract

Every year, thousands of agricultural workers and their families migrate across states and countries, playing a vital role in global food production, especially in California, home to the largest population of farmworkers in the U.S. Historically, migrant families lived in inadequate housing, but today the state offers 24 seasonal rental housing centers with approximately 1,883 units across 15 counties. However, this type of subsidized housing requires that families live outside a 50-mile radius from these centers for at least three months during the off-season, often forcing children to change schools multiple times a year, disrupting their education. This study explores the educational and social challenges faced by families living in a migrant center, particularly how the 50-mile regulation affects academic performance and social integration. Following a 2018 modification of the rule, there is limited data on how families use the exemption and how each center promotes local residency. Using Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) and testimonios, this research includes participants such as migrant parents, migrant youth, and community leaders and activists. The study aims to inform policies and interventions to improve educational opportunities for farmworker children, focusing on how they navigate the educational systems of the U.S. and Mexico and how their living conditions affect their sense of belonging. By understanding these experiences, we can develop more supportive educational environments for migrant children.

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Chapter 1: The Research Problem

Statement of the Problem

Every year, thousands of agricultural workers and their families undergo multiple migrations, often spanning states and even countries, in their crucial role of nourishing both the nation and the world. California, housing the highest number of farmworkers in the U.S., including undocumented agricultural workers, continues to dominate agricultural commodity sales year after year (Rosenbloom, 2022). Prior to the mid-twentieth century, the customary living conditions for migrant farmworker families coming to the U.S. involved cramped hotels, motor vehicles, and makeshift shacks. In 1965, California, in collaboration with the federal Department of Labor, established the Office of Migrant Services (OMS)—this initiative aimed to provide migrant farmworker families with safe, decent, and affordable rental housing units, along with support services during the peak growing and harvest seasons (California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2019). The state has 24 seasonal rental housing centers accounting for about 1,883 home units in over 15 different counties throughout California: Colusa, Fresno, Kern, Madera, Merced, Modoc, Monterey, San Benito, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Stanislaus, Sutter, and Yolo (California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2017).

In a 2016 survey conducted at migrant housing centers across the state, it was concluded that the majority of households, 54.87%, have school-aged children, of which many are natural-born U.S. citizens (Bazaz, 2019). Some migrant housing centers offer amenities like laundry facilities, day care services for ages 2 to 5, playgrounds, soccer and basketball courts, as well as after-school activities for children. However, this housing is typically accessible solely during the peak growing and harvest periods, with families allowed to rent the units for a

six-month span, usually during April to October or May to November. One of the prerequisites for qualifying to reside in any of these 24 migrant housing centers is that families must live outside a 50-mile radius from the chosen center for at least three months, during the off-season. Consequently, the children of these families often have to change schools multiple times in a single academic year, thereby impacting the educational opportunities available to them.

During my undergraduate studies, I joined Human Agenda, a non-profit organization in San José, California whose mission is to "envision a world where the human needs of all can be met, engage the community in forging local institutions that are democratic, cooperative, equitable, sustainable, and kind, and take individual responsibility to embody the change we'd like to see" in our society (Human Agenda, 2021). Within my role as a field interviewer for Human Agenda and later as a board member, I learned about the devastating 50-mile state regulation affecting families with school-aged children residing in the state-sponsored migrant housing centers. Through a collaborating organization that engaged with farmworker families on a daily basis, , the Center for Farmworker Families, I learned that many of these families' hard work in the fields is motivated at least in part by the sheer desire for their children not to follow in the same footsteps as farmworkers. Their greatest desire was to witness their children achieve success through education, despite the challenge of having to change schools multiple times a year due to the state's 50-mile regulation.

On June 14, 2018, community advocates achieved a milestone after nearly one and a half decades of working endlessly with multiple agencies and collaborating together (López, 2018). Each of the 24 housing centers was given the opportunity to apply for a waiver of the 50-mile regulation through the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The implementation of the 50-mile waiver permitted 25% of each center's home occupants to

stay locally during the off-season. The waiver was in effect only until January 2024, and a handful of organizations and individuals are ready to fight and advocate again. The ultimate goal is for the State of California to abolish the 50-mile regulation. My personal life journey as the daughter of former farmworkers, granddaughter of a Bracero—along with my prior experience in engaging with migrant students and families and striving to eliminate the state's 50-mile regulation—are key motivations as I pursue a doctoral degree.

Research Objectives and Questions

The study aims to investigate the educational and social challenges faced by families living in state-sponsored migrant housing and to learn how the 50-mile regulation influences the academic performance, social integration, and general well-being of migrant children. Following the modification of the 50-mile regulation in 2018, there was a notable lack of data regarding the extent to which families were utilizing the exemption, as well as the specific contributions of each of the 24 centers in promoting the option for families to stay within the local area. This study seeks to contribute to the development of policies and interventions that can improve the educational opportunities and support the educational needs of farmworker children. In this study, I explored the following research questions that help shed light on educational experiences of migrant students in relation to the 50-mile regulation that has been affecting migrant children across California for decades: (a) "How do migrant students residing in a state-sponsored migrant housing center navigate and negotiate the complexities of their educational journeys within the educational systems of both the United States and México, in relation to the 50-mile rule?" (b) "How do the multifaceted lived experiences and living conditions of migrant families residing in a state-sponsored migrant housing center shape their sense of belonging and social integration?"

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to learn about the experiences of farmworker families residing in state-sponsored homes in relation to their children's education. By listening to their voices, their stories, we as a community can develop a deeper understanding of their lived experiences, thoughts, and emotions. This understanding allows us to empathize with their unique situations, learn from their viewpoints, and incorporate their perspectives and experiences into decision making processes. Actively listening to and learning from people's experiences helps us foster inclusion, respect diversity, and gain a fuller and more accurate understanding of the world around us. Equally important, it allows us to identify and address systemic issues, advocate for policy change, and ultimately strive to improve the living, working, and educational conditions of the farmworker community.

Various aspects of my dissertation topic are unique and significant. First, the literature and research on migrant and farmworker families are limited and outdated. Second, farmworkers' daily job duties and responsibilities make their work one of the country's most hazardous occupations, yet not enough is being done for the people who feed us. With the recent climate changes we have been experiencing due to global warming, the health risks faced by farmworkers working in the state's fields continue to increase. Farmworkers are classified as "essential workers" and must report to work under all weather conditions, including wildfires (Doubek, 2020). If educational leaders want to improve the school experience and outcomes of migrant and farmworker students, then we must also talk about environmental and housing justice, which is often unaccounted for in research relating to migrant education. Housing and environmental rights are topics I have incorporated into my study to provide the public with a

deeper understanding of the importance and responsibility we have towards improving the conditions of migrant and farmworker families.

Assemblymember Robert Rivas introduced AB 1654 Farmworker Housing on January 4, 2022. Signed into law by Governor Newsom in September 2022, AB 1654 addresses the need for affordable housing for farmworkers by "requiring the California Department of Housing the Community Development to conduct a statewide study of current farmworker housing conditions and needs. This law allocates a minimum of 10% of funding from the affordable housing tax credit to farmworker housing for the next ten years" (California Legislative Information, 2022). With this in mind, my research in learning about the current experiences of farmworker families and students can provide information and insights to the California Department of Housing and Community Development for them to make the necessary changes to provide farmworker families with affordable housing that can allow their children to have access to a stable education. California is home to the largest group of migrant students—one out of every three migrant children in the United States resides in the state. In the 2018–2019 school year, as many as 78,947 youth ages 3 to 21 were identified as migratory youth within the State of California (California Department of Education, 2023). My hope is to be able to present my findings to institutions serving migrant families including the state. I desire my research to center, empower, and amplify the voices of the people who plant, harvest, pack and load our food because they and their children deserve better in every aspect of their lives. To accomplish this, I centered my data collection around *testimonios*. *Testimonios* provide valuable insights from personal narratives that allow participants to share their own stories, perspectives, and emotions with the power of their own voice.

Local Context and Background

In Nahuatl, the word “Tlaloc” represents “He Who Makes Things Sprout.” To the Aztecs of México, Tlaloc is the god of rain, fertility, and water. The town of Tlaloc (pseudonym) in California is an agricultural region known for its farms and fields. It is home to a significant number of farmworkers who contribute to the labor-intensive tasks of cultivating crops and harvesting produce, thereby feeding millions of people in our country and around the world. Within recent years, a levee in the county broke, causing severe flooding. Within a short time, the streets, houses, and businesses in this predominantly Spanish-speaking town were submerged in several feet of water. Due to the recent floods caused by heavy storms, the problems of inequality in this agricultural area have become more evident. Nevertheless, injustices in this area are not new, as racist border disputes date back to the 1840s where the county lines in California were drawn, dividing several regions in the town of Tlaloc without much attention from state and local officials. After the new county lines were drawn, the town of Tlaloc became home to farmworkers.

Beginning in the 1880s, amid anti-Chinese sentiment in the region, other people of color migrated or immigrated to the region for work. Due to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, Japanese workers moved into the area and started working in the fields. However, the Japanese Exclusion Act of 1924 started to restrict immigration from Japan and several other Asian countries by imposing strict quotas based on nationality, a reflection of U.S. nativism and discriminatory sentiments (Solomon, 2012). This Act was signed into law on May 24, 1924 by President Calvin Coolidge and remained in effect until it was repealed by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. During World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, leading to the establishment of Japanese internment camps. Between 1942 and 1945, the U.S.

government placed over 120,000 individuals of Japanese descent—the majority of whom were U.S. citizens—within isolated camps across the states of California, Washington, and Oregon, where there was a significant Japanese American population.

After the Japanese community was pushed out of the labor force due to the multiple racially biased and xenophobic policies enacted by the U.S. government, the Filipino community started to work in the fields. Soon, though, race-based violence pushed the Filipino community out of the community and fields. In the 1930s, state and local politicians made many anti-Filipino comments, calling the farmworkers a threat and insisting that Filipino residents should be sent back to their home country. Soon after, a local group of white people roamed the Tlaloc community and surrounding farms, physically harming Filipino farmworkers and damaging their properties.

The deep history of marginalization and racism in this area continued, and in the 1940s, when the Bracero program started, millions of Mexican workers moved into this area to work on the fields. The Bracero Program was a bilateral agreement between the United States and México, initiated in 1942, allowing Mexican laborers to work temporarily in the U.S. agriculture and railroad industries. It aimed to address labor shortages during World War II and continued until 1964, providing over four million contracts. The program had significant impacts on both economies but faced criticism for poor working conditions and exploitation of workers. Since then, the majority of farmworkers, who have long been marginalized, continue to be of Mexican descent and face daily struggles including not being able to have enough money for basic necessities, including food and rent. For some farmworkers in the town of Tlaloc, work begins around March and April; yet, due to the storms and flooding in recent years, work started later, affecting the lives of thousands of farmworkers and their families.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit)

To understand and challenge the systems of oppression affecting the lives and health of millions of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in the United States, a group of researchers created a multi-disciplinary framework called Critical Race Theory (CRT). In the 1970s, Derrick Bell, Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Dr. Richard Delgado, Alan Freeman, Cheryl Harris, Charles R. Lawrence III, and Patricia Williams coined the term CRT. Years later, the Latina/o Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) framework emerged in the field of CRT with a specific focus on the experiences and perspectives of the Latinx community in the United States. LatCrit scholars have contributed to discussions on race, ethnicity, law, and social justice from a Latinx perspective. The CRT and LatCrit theoretical frameworks help guide the path for informing educational institutions on how to support BIPOC students. Academic theories often evolve through collective efforts and contributions from multiple scholars and activists, and some of the key scholars associated with the development of LatCrit are Dr. Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, Francisco Valdes, Mari Matsuda, and Dr. Daniel Solórzano. By focusing on the distinctive encounters the Latinx community experiences within multiple intersections, LatCrit has paved the way for people like me.

Although CRT is mainly taught in law school, as an undergraduate sociology major, I learned about many different theorists and theoretical frameworks, including CRT. CRT helped me understand and examine how this country's systems, structures, and policies perpetuate systemic racism in our daily lives as people of color. CRT provides an academic, multi-disciplinary framework that invites practitioners, researchers, and scholars from all disciplines to critically examine and question how social, political, health, and economic

structures function through decentering the typical white narrative. Solórzano and Yosso (2001b) explained that CRT in educational institutions:

> challenges the traditional claims that the educational system and its institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Critical race educators argue that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in US society. (p. 597)

CRT provides scholars with a critical lens to understand the origins of racism and explains the roots of why and how social inequities exist. The CRT academic framework centralizes race and racism; however, the BIPOC community experiences oppression and subordination through various entry points due to positionality and intersectionality identities. Due to our multiple identities, it is essential to examine the roots and branches of CRT. Solórzano and Yosso (2001a) provided readers with a graphic representation of CRT's family tree. The research and literature work of Ethnic Studies & Women's Studies, Cultural Nationalism, Critical Legal Studies, Marxist/Neo-Marxist, and Internal Colonial gave birth to the CRT branches.

CRT features a specific lens in helping people comprehend and interrogate the foundation of racism across all aspects of life for people of color; however, it only provides one stance, one angle. LatCrit was developed to deepen our perception of the experiences of the Latinx community. "LatCrit is concerned with a progressive sense of a coalitional Latina/Latino panethnicity and addresses issues often ignored by critical race theorists such as language, immigration, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, and sexuality" (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 311). As Latinx people, we navigate life through our multiple intersecting identities and our unique positionality. The systematic oppression we face as individuals and as a community is a long-term struggle, which is why understanding and applying LatCrit in

academic research is pivotal. The application of the LatCrit framework allows us to obtain a more precise analysis of our community by integrating the elements of intersectionality, a richer comprehensive description delimited by the CRT framework.

The ability to focus on multidimensional identities provides a more profound frame and analysis by allowing scholars the ability to bridge the gap between research and theory with practice and teaching. In the early 21st century, faculty of color, like Dr. Daniel G. Solórzano and Dr. Dolores Delgado Bernal, authored an abundance of literature on CRT and LatCrit related to educational access and experiences of marginalized communities. For example, in "Examining Transformational Resistance Through a Critical Race and LatCrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context," Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001), in examining the theorem of transformational resistance in the educational lives of Chicanx students, postulated a five-theme scheme that configures perspectives, methodology, and pedagogy of CRT and LatCrit theory in the context of education.

The first theme is the centrality of race and racism and intersectionality with other forms of subordination. Although race and racism are the premier conceptualizations of the frameworks of CRT and LatCrit, each of our multilayered identities does not stand in isolation. All the modes of oppression live and intersect with our sexual orientation, gender, the languages and dialects we speak, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and our level of education. The integration of the multifaceted identities delineates some of the questions related to the scholarship methodology in researching resistance among the Chicanx student population.

The second theme is challenging dominant ideologies, especially in education, perceived as the "great equalizer." The assimilationist, colorblind, and meritocratic ideologies contribute to developing a deficit framing. The dominant ideologies perpetuate racism and put a blind eye on

how white supremacy is the source of marginalization for the BIPOC community. The dominant ideologies construct a fraudulent reality by making people believe that education levels the playing field when in reality, it is another standardized system that operates by and under the interest of the dominant white population. In the field of education, the LatCrit framework offers insights to scholars and practitioners to address the educational inequities facing Latinx and Chicanx students.

The third theme is the commitment to social justice by responding to all the faces of oppression for the profound desire for emancipation. “We envision a social justice research agenda that leads toward (a) the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty and (b) the empowering of underrepresented minority groups” (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 313). With the imperativeness to transform educational spaces for Latinx students, LatCrit academics recognize the paradoxical complexity of how educational structures and processes operate. A personal metaphor I use for the antilogy and contrariety of educational institutions is the manipulation of string puppets. While some strings pull to marginalize and alienate, others strings have the potential to empower and liberate Latinx students.

The fourth theme is the centrality of experiential knowledge. Through a LatCrit lens, students of color are the experts on their own narratives, joy, and struggles. A critical race methodology centers and empowers student voices through different methods—*anécdotas, consejos, cuentos, testimonios, recuerdos, leyendas e historias familiares.* These types of storytelling and oral history data are a strength to the world of academia because they honor the lived experiences of people of color.

The last theme is the interdisciplinary perspective that challenges traditional analyses and draws on progressive literature through a framework that includes Chicanx and Latinx Studies,

sociology, economics, history, and law. A transdisciplinary framework and interdisciplinary methods intensify scholars' understanding of how the endless forms of marginalization, discrimination, and oppression function at every level of society.

Scope and Limitations

In the realm of the lived experiences of migrant farmworker youth and their educational journeys, the availability of extensive data and current research is limited. This prevailing scarcity of comprehensive, reliable information represents a direct constraint within the scope of my study. This limitation arises from the challenges in consistently capturing the dynamic and often transient nature of migrant student populations, which can hinder the accurate representation of their educational experiences and outcomes. For my specific topic centered around the 50-mile regulation, as it is enforced across all the 24 subsidized migrant housing centers in the State of California, it is imperative to recognize and address the inherent limitations of this study. First, the research is focused around a singular migrant housing center, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other centers with different dynamics, including but not limited to the operating site managers and support from local organizations. Furthermore, my study's scope is also limited by a relatively small number of participating families, migrant youth, and community leaders who chose to share their *testimonios*. It is essential to interpret the results of this study within the context of these limitations.

Motivation and Role of Researcher

My first experience as an advocate for migrant students began in the summer of 2012—the summer I graduated from high school—with the East Side Union High School District's Migrant Education Program. As a volunteer tutor for migrant students, I was responsible for providing academic support, personalized guidance, and instructional assistance

to foster a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The majority of the students enrolled in the program were at high-risk of not graduating high school. This meaningful experience confirmed my belief that all students are capable of achieving greatness, but first they must feel safe, supported, and respected. I continued as a migrant tutor for several years, including serving as a college tutor under the California Mini-Corps Program (CMC). Reflecting on my experiences as an academic tutor for migrant students, I gained significant and meaningful insights into the daily realities faced by migrant farmworker families and students. This experience has served as a source of profound inspiration, shaping my purpose in life, shaping my perspective and influencing my thoughts and actions in various impactful ways.

Since obtaining my teaching credential, I have dedicated myself to a personal mission of serving migrant students continuously throughout my summers. Within my district's Migrant Education and English Learner (EL) program, I have had the privilege of instructing hundreds of migrant youth, including those attending Saturday Academies, and devoting specific weekends during the academic year to provide additional assistance to migrant and EL students. Furthermore, as a former virtual Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) instructor at STEM Center USA, I extended my teaching to migratory students across both California and Colorado, offering robotics and coding education. Each summer spent working with migrant students reinforces my life's purpose and strengthens my connection to my familial roots. This connection is particularly powerful as it deepens my understanding of the experiences my parents and grandfather went through as they worked in the fields across various states.

I am interested in learning more about the journey and experience of farmworker families living in a state-sponsored migrant housing center. My topic grew out of deep passion and a personal connection I have with the farmworker community—I am indeed the proud daughter

and granddaughter of former farmworkers. My family's history in working in the fields in the United States dates back to my paternal grandfather. In the late 1950s, my grandfather, José Santana Perez (1934–2021), embarked on a temporary journey away from his family and home in San José de los Guajes, Jalisco. He ventured to *el norte* to work in the fields as a Bracero. Nevertheless, within a year, *mi abuelito* returned home traumatized by the inhumane treatment he and fellow Braceros had endured. This experience led my grandfather to opt out of further work in the fields, choosing instead to relocate from his *pueblito* to the city of Guadalajara. During this time, Guadalajara was becoming an industrial hub, which led to increased demand for labor in factories and manufacturing plants.

As a result, more people from rural areas, like *mi abuelito*, were drawn to urban centers like Guadalajara in search of employment opportunities in the growing industrial sector instead of working *en el norte.* Almost three decades later, following in my grandfather's footsteps, my father, as the eldest of eight siblings, became a seasonal farmworker. Spanning between México and various states including Alaska, Washington, Oregon, and California, my father's work took him across different locations. Simultaneously, my mother, in tandem with my father's binational farm labor, also started working in the fields, primarily within a rural county in Washington. As a result of my parents' role as seasonal farmworkers in different states, I grew up in a mixed-status family. For many years, my mother and my older sister were undocumented, while I have been a U.S. citizen since birth.

Shortly after my first birthday, my father passed away at age 32, leaving my mom a young widow with two children at just 23. In order to save money for us to immigrate to the United States, my beloved mother worked three jobs. The neighborhood in which we lived in México was overrun by gangs, with more methamphetamine labs than schools, parks, or

churches. My mother strongly believed that immigrating to the United States would offer us educational opportunities and a chance to break free from the cycle of poverty in our family. In the year 2000, we arrived at the Tijuana border, where I was separated from my family due to our mixed-immigration status. Soon after, my aunt sheltered us in her trailer located in East Side San José. I was soon enrolled at our local Title One elementary school, and where my struggles took on a different form. Coming from a non-English speaking home with a mother who only received an elementary school education and who worked menial jobs, I was presented with endless obstacles—from moving schools more than three times in search of a bilingual teacher to experiencing constant violence in my neighborhood. Growing up, I waged an eternal battle that simultaneously gave me courage and motivation to seek critical change.

As a proud Latina daughter of immigrants and farmworker parents, and granddaughter of a Bracero, I want to continue advocating for and building conditions that create equitable spaces and climates for students, focusing on migrant, bi/multilingual, and farmworker students and families. My role as the researcher was to listen to the *testimonios* of families and students who reside in a state-sponsored migrant center. According to Greenleaf (1970):

> ….natural servants are trying to see the world as it is and are listening carefully to prophetic voices that are speaking now. They are challenging the pervasive injustice with greater force, and they are taking sharper issue with the wide disparity between the quality of society they know is reasonable and possible with available resources….(p. 3)

By actively listening to farmworkers and centering their voices, I took appropriate actions in alignment with their desires and wishes, as well as supporting and encouraging others to do the same.

Focusing my dissertation on farmworkers serves as an in-depth means of delving into my family history and understanding the struggles and experiences that shaped my upbringing while also seeking social justice. By examining the lives of farmworker families, I gain valuable insight into the challenges parents and students face and the sacrifices they make each day as they too dream of a better future. Through my research and writing, I not only connect with my roots, but also develop a greater appreciation for the resilience and determination of farmworker families that make our living possible. This allows me to honor their journey and shed light on the larger narrative of farmworker communities, helping to amplify their voices and advocate for their rights.

Definitions of Relevant Terms

Many of the terms and definitions used within the agricultural and farmworker communities can vary based on specific regulations, state and federal programs, legal frameworks, and other specific contexts, including educational institutions. Since the early 20th century, due to social and historical conditions, immigration policies, and advances in technology, the U.S. agricultural workforce has consisted of a mixture of workers; however, since 1990, the numbers of agricultural and farmworkers have stabilized (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2018). Some common terminology continues to change and might appear different from time to time. Definitions form the foundation of policies and regulations, as programs are designed based on specific definitions. Therefore, if the definitions change, they can impact how policies are applied and who is subject to them. Nevertheless, as definitions continue to fluctuate with evolving agriculture and labor practices, it is essential to track and understand these changing definitions in order to create effective support systems for the farmworkers who contribute significantly to the agricultural sector. Definitions may need to be updated to reflect

the changes and ensure that such terminology accurately portrays the realities of 21st-century farmworkers. The following relevant terms will be explained from federal to state level to provide an overall understanding of how definitions vary across different agencies.

Federal Level

Definitions of Agricultural Employer and Agricultural Employment

Under the United States Department of Labor, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA) was created in 1983 as a replacement of the Farm Labor Contractor Registration Act (FLCRA) of 1963, in order to reflect the ongoing changes occurring during that time. MSPA is a federal law in the United States designed to protect the rights of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers by establishing certain labor standards and requirements for their employers. The MSPA aims to ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, safe transportation, safe and clean housing, and access to accurate information about the job and pay. Many MSPA posters and workers' rights cards clearly mention that the services provided under this Act are free and confidential, regardless of immigration status. As used in this Act, here are some of the definitions:

> The term "agricultural employer" means any person who owns or operates a farm, ranch, processing establishment, cannery, gin, packing shed or nursery, or who produces or conditions seed, and who either recruits, solicits, hires, employs, furnishes, or transports any migrant or seasonal agricultural worker.
>
> The term "agricultural employment" means employment in any service or activity included within the provisions of section 3(f) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 203(f)), or section 3121(g) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (26 U.S.C. 3121(g)) and the handling, planting, drying, packing, packaging, processing, freezing, or

grading prior to delivery for storage of any agricultural or horticultural commodity in its unmanufactured state. (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d)

Definitions of Seasonal and Migrant Farmworkers

As per the United States Department of Employment Services (DOES) and American Job Center (AJC), the definition of seasonal and migrant farmworker are as follows:

Seasonal Farmworker is a person who meets the following criteria:

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

Migrant Farmworker is a seasonal farmworker who has to travel to do the farm work and is unable to return to his or her permanent residence within the same day (DOES, 2022).

State Level

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (2019) defined farmworkers as follows:

Farmworkers are traditionally defined as people whose primary incomes are earned through permanent or seasonal agricultural labor. Farmworkers are generally considered to have special housing needs due to their limited income and the often unstable nature of their employment.

Migrant Education

The Migrant Education Program (MEP), operating across all 50 states and the territory of Puerto Rico, is a federally funded program. Its core purpose is to offer comprehensive educational programs and services for migrant children. The MEP aims to

alleviate the challenges arising from frequent relocations from town to town, state to state, and even country to country. Although California's MEP is supported by both federal and state laws, the state does not provide funding for the program; yet what it does at the state level is outline the organizational structure and framework for delivering MEP services. According to the California Department of Education, in alignment with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), the purpose of Migrant Education is:

1) To assist States in supporting high-quality and comprehensive educational programs and services during the school year and, as applicable, during summer or intersession periods, that address the unique educational needs of migratory children.
2) To ensure that migratory children who move among the States are not penalized in any manner by disparities among the States in curriculum, graduation requirements, and challenging State academic standards.
3) To ensure that migratory children receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards that all children are expected to meet.
4) To help migratory children overcome educational disruption, cultural and language barriers, social isolation, various health-related problems, and other factors that inhibit the ability of such children to succeed in school.
5) To help migratory children benefit from State and local systemic reforms. (California Department of Education, 2023)

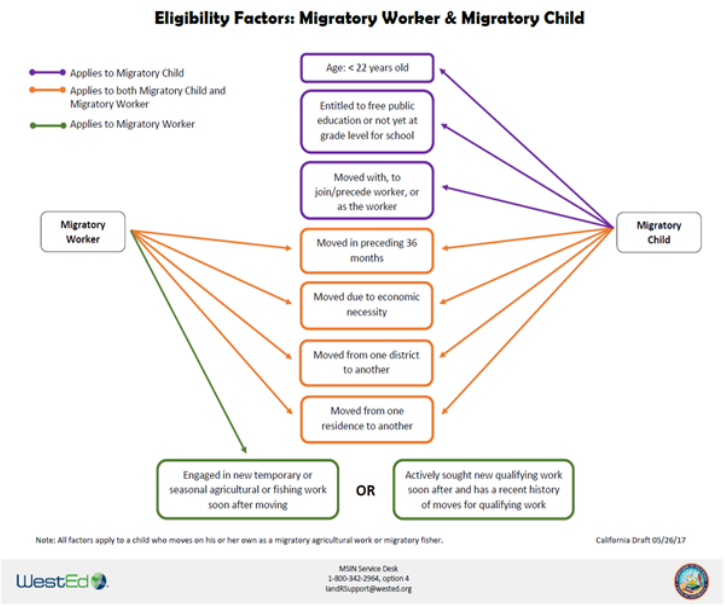
Migratory Children

According to the California Department of Education (2023), the eligibility requirements for students to participate in the MEP are as follows:

1) A child is considered “migratory” if the parent or guardian is a migratory worker in the agricultural, dairy, lumber, or fishing industries and whose family has moved during the past three years.
2) A “qualifying” move can range from moving from one residence to another or across school district boundaries due to economic necessity.
3) A young adult may also qualify if he or she has moved on their own within the past three years to engage in qualifying work or sought to obtain qualifying work (with a history of qualifying moves).
4) The eligibility period is three years from the date of the last move.
5) Eligibility is established through an interview conducted by a Migrant Education recruiter who visits both home and employment locations where migrant workers are employed.
6) The law states that migrant education services are a priority for those students who have made a qualifying move within the previous one-year period and who are failing, or are most at risk of failing to meet state academic standards, or who have dropped out of school.

Due to the complexity of defining migratory families, the MEP under the Santa Clara County Office of Education encourages individuals to visit “the Non-Regulatory Guidance for the Education of Migratory Children under Title I, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965” and to follow the chart in Figure 1:

Figure 1. Eligibility Factors: Migratory Worker & Migratory Child.



Source: Santa Clara County Office of Education (n.d.).

Migrant Housing Centers

In accordance with the provisions set forth by the California Department of Housing and Community Development, Subchapter 7 focuses on the Office of Migrant Services (OMS) (2018). Article 1 outlines the regulations and definitions for migrant families residing in any of the 24 sponsor-state housing centers. Here are some of those critical definitions:

- "Agricultural employment" means work on a farm, ranch, or orchard, or the processing of agricultural products.
- "Applicant" means an individual who signs an application for admission to a migrant housing center.
- "Immediate family" means a migrant center resident and his or her parents, children and spouse, or any other related dependents or persons who regularly live with the family and whose income(s) and resources are available for use in meeting the living expense of the group. In addition to sons and daughters of a resident, "children" shall include minors

who are financially dependent on a resident, whether or not they are related to the resident. “Spouse” shall include a person who acts as the husband or wife of the resident, whether or not they are legally married.

- “Migrant center” and “migrant housing center” mean a housing center administered by the Department and operated by a contractor for the purpose of providing housing for migratory agricultural workers pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 50710 and shall include all housing units, common areas and structures, equipment and furniture within a housing center, excepting those facilities owned exclusively by a contractor or other interests and not meant for the use of migratory agricultural workers.
- “Migratory agricultural worker” means an individual who:

    1) has the employment status of one of the following:

        (a) during the current or preceding calendar year, derived at least 50 percent of his/her total annual household earned income from agricultural employment, or

        (b) can produce current evidence of a current job offer in agricultural employment; and

    2) performs, has performed, or will perform such agricultural labor during the current or preceding calendar year under conditions which require round trip travel exceeding 100 miles per day such that he/she was unable to return to his/her chosen place of residence within the same day of labor; and

    3) has resided together with his/her immediate family outside a 50 mile radius of the migrant center for at least 3 months out of the preceding 6 month period. (California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2018)

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 establishes the groundwork for my research, which is centered on migrant families residing in a state-sponsored migrant center. This chapter covers the statement of the problem, research questions, purpose and significance of the study. The chapter also contextualizes the research within the local context and introduces the conceptual framework of Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit), while acknowledging the study's limitations. Additionally, this chapter outlines my background and role as the researcher, while also defining relevant terms within the realm of multiple governmental agencies that provide services to migrant families.

Chapter 2 then delves into the literature review, which starts by focusing on the growing Latinx population in California and providing a general portrait of who makes up the farmworker community in the state. This chapter then examines the multifaceted events that have impacted the farmworker community in California in recent years, including climate change and the effects of COVID-19. The literature then transitions to migrant education programs and services designed to support the education of migrant youth. Last, the chapter examines the 50-mile regulation and previous research and advocacy related to it, including a focus on the coalitions that have advocated and continue working to end this policy.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology that I employed in my original research. My methodological approach remained firmly grounded in the collection and analysis of *testimonios*, providing an intimate understanding of the experiences of migrant families and community leaders. This chapter details the research site, offering context of the specific migrant housing center's location. Furthermore, this chapter explains participant selection and recruitment strategies, data collection procedures, and my positionality as the researcher. Last, I discuss the

data analysis process and the study's risk and benefits, and I provide a summary of the study's timeline.

Chapter 4 delves into the portraits of all study participants, starting with migrant parents, then migrant youth, and lastly community leaders and advocates. The chapter emphasizes the specific phrases from each *testimonio*, it highlights the experiences, shared struggles, and individual narratives among migrant parents, youth, and community advocates. Migrant parents, predominantly from Michoacán, México, with a multigenerational background in farm work, especially in strawberry fields, commonly express themes of low educational attainment and a fervent hope for their children's educational success. Their testimonies frequently echo the sentiment of wanting "a better future for our children."

Chapter 5 is organized into two parts, each addressing a key research question. The first part explores how migrant students navigate their educational journeys within the U.S. and Mexican systems, focusing on the 50-mile rule. It identifies three themes: access to education, quality of education, and educational attainment impacted by the 50-mile waiver. The second part examines how the lived experiences and living conditions of migrant families shape their sense of belonging and social integration. It highlights housing stability, family and community support, and access to transportation. These themes collectively illustrate the complex factors influencing the educational and social experiences of migrant families.

Chapter 6 discusses the implications of the findings and their contributions to the two research questions: (1) "How do migrant students in state-sponsored housing navigate their educational journeys within the U.S. and Mexican systems in relation to the 50-mile rule?" and (2) "How do the lived experiences and conditions of migrant families in state-sponsored housing shape their sense of belonging and social integration?" The findings highlight the significant

challenges migrant students face as they adapt to different educational systems and curricula, leading to educational instability and emotional strain. These implications point to the urgent need for policy interventions to support this vulnerable population. This chapter also examines AB 2240, a bill introduced in 2024, aimed at addressing the 50-mile rule in the 24 migrant housing centers across the state. The proposed legislation could play a crucial role in mitigating the educational disruptions experienced by migrant students and improving their overall academic and social outcomes.

Chapter 2: The Literature Review

This research study is guided by two primary bodies of literature: (a) the social, work, and living conditions of California's farmworker and Indigenous migrant communities, and (b) the educational experiences of migrant and farmworker students. In this chapter, I review the literature from various disciplines. The bodies of literature are presented through the changing social and environmental context in the twenty-first century, including the COVID-19 pandemic. In today's world, the research on the education of migrant students should also include the topics of economic globalization and agricultural and housing practices, policies, and structures. If educational leaders want to improve the school experience and outcomes of migrant and farmworker students, we must also talk about environmental and housing justice, which is often unaccounted for in research relating to migrant education. Recent studies highlight these issues' urgency and underscore how climate change is making life more difficult for migrant students and families.

California's Latinx Surge: A Demographic Transformation

The State of California is home to the largest Latinx population of any state in the United States. According to the latest census reports, Latinx in California make up 40.2% of the state population, compared to 35.2% for non-Hispanic whites, 15.9% for Asian Americans, 6.5% for African Americans, and 0.5% for Native Americans (United States Census Bureau, 2021). The Latinx population not only represents a significant portion of the state's total population but has been growing rapidly in recent decades. Although the Latinx population in California is diverse—reflected in the many different languages spoken, including Spanish, Mixteco, Triqui, Zapoteco, and many more—about 77% of Latinx immigrants in California are from Mexican descent (McGhee, 2022). In the span of almost two decades, between 1999 and 2016, the growth

of Latinx and Hispanic students enrolled in PreK-12 and colleges increased 80% from 9.9 million to 17.9 million students (Gramlich, 2017). As research highlights, the demographics and educational enrollment among the Latinx population in this country have been changing rapidly since the start of the twenty-first century.

By 2065, it is estimated that almost one in four residents in the United States will be of Latinx descent. Over the past decade, the number of Latinx students "dropping out" of high school has decreased—declining from 32% in 2000 to 12% in 2014—reaching a new low even for the national "dropout rate" (Krofstand, 2016). Despite the decline in the high school "dropout rate" and the increase in college enrollment among Latinx students, the Latinx student population still has among the highest high school and college "dropout rates" among student groups in this country. Disaggregation of the data on Latinx students graduating from high school and attending college in prior literature reveals that one of the most undereducated groups in the country is the children of migrant farmworkers. It is estimated that over 70% of migrants did not complete high school and that over 75% of this population is illiterate, which significantly impacts their social mobility and limits them to essentially working the same jobs as their parents as farmworkers (Romanowski, 2003). This and other studies commonly employ deficit terms such as "dropout" when referring to the educational experiences and outcomes of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students. When we use labels like "dropout," it solely focuses on the students, putting the blame on them, dismissing the circumstances that the students faced in the first place—the term "pushed out" is more appropriate because it focuses on the educational inequalities (Rios, 2011). Terms matter, and with this in mind, I utilize the term "pushed out" instead of "dropout" throughout the remainder of this study. With deficit terminology we are potentially creating misconceptions about the individual rather than critically analyzing the

practices and policies in our school system.

A Portrait of Latinx and Indigenous Communities in California Agriculture

As the workforce data shows, the majority of farmworkers in California are Latinx, especially from Mexican descent, including Mexican Indigenous (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2018). Indigenous Mexicans, mostly from the southern state of Oaxaca, are one of the newest groups working in California's fields. It is estimated that they make up about 25% of the state's farmworkers (Thompson, 2017). Recent studies have shown that educational attainment in México has been rising in recent decades, in particular at the post-secondary level (Mines et al., 2010; Noe-Bustamante, 2020; Terrazas et al., 2011). Between 2000 and 2021, the age group of 25- to 34-year-olds with a postsecondary degree increased on average by 21% (OECD, 2022). The literature review shows regional variation in educational achievement among people aged 25 to 34. In México City, 30% of that age group has a postsecondary degree, while in Chiapas, 12% has a postsecondary degree. (OECD, 2022). The research presented by OECD does not provide sufficient context to fully understand the broader implications and underlying factors, such as socioeconomic status, gender, early childhood experiences, and the existing laws related to the Mexican public education system.

Despite overall rises in educational attainment in Mexico, the overall education level of Mexican farmworkers in California has remained steady. According to the Indigenous Farmworker Study (IFS), in conjunction with the Indigenous Program of California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), this can be explained by a change in California farmworker demographic. From 1991 to 1993, 7% of the farmworkers in California were Indigenous Mexicans, predominantly immigrating from the states of Guerrero, Puebla, and Oaxaca. Mexican mestizo (people of mixed heritage who have Spanish and indigenous origins) farmworkers—primarily

immigrating from the states of Jalisco, Guanajuato, Michoacán, and Zacatecas—accounted for 92% of the farmworkers in California from 1991 to 1993. From 2006 to 2008, Indigenous Mexicans in California agriculture accounted for 28% of the farmworkers in the state, while mestizos accounted for nearly 70% (Mines et al., 2010). Young Indigenous Mexican immigrants tend to have 6.5 years of school compared to 7.3 for mestizos (Mines et al., 2010). The difference in schooling years is due to multiple factors, including proximity to schools and Spanish language skills. Indigenous communities are located in remote areas of México, which limits their access to educational institutions and opportunities. In addition, it is common for many Indigenous Mexican farmworkers not to speak Spanish, which puts them in a state of linguistic isolation, making them more vulnerable to abuse and mistreatment, becoming the "invisible of the invisible" (Thompson, 2017). The combination of these three factors—an overall increase in the educational level in Mexico, a tendency in Mexico for Indigenous Mexicans to have a lower level of educational achievement than mestizo Mexicans, and an increase in the proportion of California farmworkers who are Indigenous Mexicans—has contributed to the educational attainment of Mexican farmworkers in California remaining steady.

The three predominant Indigenous communities working in the agricultural fields of California are Mixtec, Zapotec, and Triqui primarily from the state of Oaxaca. Many studies on the migration and immigration patterns of Indigenous communities in México have concluded that when Indigenous citizens need to migrate for necessity, they first migrate to different states in México and then to the U.S. (Mines et al., 2010). The Mexican destination states have changed according to the decade. For example, in the 1940s, Indigenous communities mainly migrated to Veracruz to work in the sugar cane and pineapple fields. In the 1960s, they began to

temporarily move to the states of Morelos, Sonora, and Sinaloa to work in the vegetable and cotton fields. In the 1970s, the Indigenous communities started establishing long-term settlements in Baja California to work primarily in the asparagus, tomato, and wine grape fields. Mexican mestizos, in contrast, tend to immigrate directly to the United States.

It should come as no surprise that migrant and farmworker Latinx and Indigenous families and children face endless obstacles, seldom have access to quality education or safe working conditions, and suffer from food and housing insecurity. In the twentieth century, key social science studies played a pivotal role in foregrounding the long-standing inequalities and struggles faced by Latinx California farmworkers, including the scholarship and activism work of Ernesto Galarza (1905–1984), Herman Gallegos (1930–Present), and Julian Samora (1920–1996), also known as "Los Tres Grandes" (Samora, 2011). Galarza conducted seminal studies of the living, working, and social conditions of Braceros through epistemologies of transformational leadership rather than relying on "bureaucrat-supplied" data. Galarza visited the fields to engage with farmworkers and listen to their lived experiences; Galarza's books included *Merchants of Labor* (1964), *Spiders in the House and Workers in the Fields* (1970), and *Strangers in Our Fields* (1956). Galarza's pivotal and meticulous research publications on the inhumane treatment of farmworkers under the Bracero Program's laws and diplomatic agreements were instrumental in ending the program in 1964 (Rosales, 1997).

In the twenty-first century, contemporary farmworker communities continue to face a series of injustices in their daily lives, from the fields to where they live. "Hired farmworkers make up less than 1 percent of all U.S. wage and salary workers, but they play an essential role in U.S. agriculture" (USDA, 2018). While the economy relies heavily on farmworkers, the physical toll of working in the fields directly impacts the health and well-being of farmworker

families.

During World War II, Nazi Germany developed chlorpyrifos, which is part of the organophosphate class of chemicals, and used it for chemical warfare (Earthjustice, 2021). After the war, agricultural farmers in the United States sprayed their crops with chlorpyrifos as an organophosphate pesticide. Chlorpyrifos pesticides can cause neurodevelopmental damage, cancer, and reproductive toxicity, which is why for decades, many agencies and activists fought relentlessly against the use of chlorpyrifos. As recently as August 18, 2021, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a ban on the use of the pesticide chlorpyrifos in all foods to stop jeopardizing the neurodevelopment and neurological function of children, particularly in the farmworker community (EPA, 2021). The Californians for Pesticide Reform (CPR)—a statewide coalition of more than 190 organizations established in 1996—recently prevailed again in another successful movement. In 2021, California Governor Gavin Newsom allocated $10 million to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) to develop a statewide notification system to provide communities with information about upcoming pesticide applications in their area (DPR, 2023). As of January 2023, the counties of Riverside, Santa Cruz, Stanislaus, and Ventura either completed or are currently piloting different versions of the notification system program as the DPR anticipates full implementation of the new statewide system to begin in 2024.

Grassroots and community advocacy were key components in securing funding for this system; however, the fight to protect farmworkers and the community from pesticide exposure is not over yet. In November 2022, the DRP hosted public hearings where residents and advocates shared their feedback on the state system; the community is concerned that the system will include only a limited number of pesticides that are listed and classified as “restricted” (Sanchez,

2023). As is well-known among farmworkers, however, many pesticides that are hazardous are unrestricted. The ramifications of being exposed to toxic pesticides will persist for decades, possibly endangering the health of future generations, as farmworkers inherit generations of exposure (Peña, 2005). The daily, long and ongoing inequities experienced by the farmworker community are numerous and rooted in social, economic, and political levers and pulleys created decades ago.

Farmworkers Amidst COVID-19 and Climate Change

Often referred to as the Golden State, California is one of the world's leading and largest agricultural regions in the world, producing a wide variety of crops that are distributed both domestically and internationally. The Golden State has a long-standing tradition of thriving in the cultivation of a wide range of crops, spanning fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grains like wheat, rice, oats, barley, corn, rye, and triticale (Golden State Grains, 2020). The state's ability to succeed in agriculture is largely attributed to its favorable atmospheric conditions and fertile soils. In 2019, California's agricultural industry employed nearly half a million people and generated more than $50 billion in annual revenue (California Department of Food and Agriculture, 2020). Some of the state's most important agricultural products include almonds, grapes, berries, pistachios, lettuce, and walnuts. The top five agricultural counties in the state are Fresno, Kern, Tulare, Monterey, and Stanislaus. California's agricultural commodities are exported to over 200 countries worldwide (Plant Sciences College of Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences, n.d.). Notably, California's agricultural sector is the nation's only exporter of many agricultural products, "supplying 99 percent or more of the following: almonds, artichokes, dates, figs, garlic, kiwifruit, olives and olive oil, pistachios, prunes, raisins, table grapes, tomatoes for processing, and walnuts" to the top agricultural export markets of the European Union, Canada, China,

Japan, South Korea, México, and India (California Department of Food and Agriculture, 2020, p. 8). A wide variety of scientific and government data is available in the field of food and agriculture, as different state and federal agencies are required to provide annual reports; however, a series of questions remain unaddressed regarding the educational experiences of the children of farmworkers. The interrupted schooling experiences and educational attainment of farmworkers cannot be disconnected from their everyday lives as they directly relate to their strenuous, physically demanding occupation.

California's farmworkers are the backbone of the economy and ensure that we have nutrients for our bodies. In short, they feed our nation and countries around the globe. Despite their essential role and their positioning on the frontlines of major crises in the twenty-first century, the farmworker community is often undercompensated, disregarded, and marginalized. Farmworkers are among the most oppressed groups in our society—they face a multitude of injustices and challenges, from low wages, deteriorated housing, and hazardous working conditions to limited access to education and healthcare (Rogers & Buttice, 2013). During the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic in late 2019 (COVID-19), the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security created a mandate on identifying essential critical infrastructure workers; farmworkers were one of the first groups to be classified as "essential workers" under the "food and agriculture" sector. The rationale for creating the list of "essential workers" was to assist "State and local officials as they work to protect their communities, while ensuring continuity of functions critical to public health and safety, as well as economic and national security" (Krebs, 2020, p. 1). This demonstrates the unvarnished truth that our country cannot move forward without the gracious hands of the farmworkers that keep us alive through putting fresh food on our tables.

The farmworker community was disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic due to factors such as deprived working conditions and crowded, multigenerational households. Through a community-engaged research approach, the University of California, Merced Community and Labor Center collected data from 1,242 farmworkers across five California regions, from August 2021 to June 2022. The purpose of this study was to examine the social and health obstacles farmworkers endure, in addition to local and state policies related to healthcare access. This recent study found that 62% of respondents reported difficulty paying for essentials bills, including rent and food, since the outbreak of the pandemic; 49% disclosed that they did not have health insurance; and 43% reported that their employer "never" provided a prevention plan for heat illness as required by law (Brown et al., 2022). Two major strengths of this study included (a) their stakeholder committee (a farmworker union, farmworker-serving community-based organizations, and local and state public health officials) that provided oversight of the research project, and (b) conducting the interviews in six different languages (English, Ilocano, Mixteco, Spanish, Triqui, and Zapotec). As the authors noted, more research is needed to fill gaps in knowledge of farmworker health that addresses and incorporates key social factors such as work, sex, and race.

In July 2020, the University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health in collaboration with *Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas* (CSVS) conducted a study of active and prior SARS-CoV-2 infection among the Salinas Valley farmworker community, using surveys and biological measures. The goal of the research was to "identify risk factors of infection among California farmworkers to inform evidence-based preventative strategies in this vulnerable population of essential workers" (University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health & Clinica de Salud del Valle de Salinas, 2020, p. 3). The research findings, which

included data from 1,091 participants, predominantly Latinx and Indigenous immigrant farmworkers, confirmed the nationwide trend of Latinxs being disproportionately impacted by COVID. In Monterey County, Latinxs represent 59% of the population; yet they accounted for 74% of the COVID-19 cases and 75% of the total fatalities (Proulx, 2020). In the same study, researchers found that 58% of the farmworkers were still going to work, despite experiencing symptoms and subsequent diagnoses with COVID, due to concerns about losing income, losing their jobs, and knowing that no one else could replace them at work to perform their critical duties (UC Berkeley School of Public Health & CSVS, 2020).

Dr. Maximiliano Cuevas, CSVS's chief executive officer, offered a helpful overview of the importance of undocumented farmworkers:

> undocumented workers, who account for more than half of California farmworkers—there are an estimated 90,000 undocumented workers in the Monterey Bay Area alone—don't want to register for testing because they have to provide their name, address and telephone number. (Gross, 2020)

Similarly, according to Thompson (2017), a significant number of field workers in California, as much as 50% or more, are undocumented. This places them in an even more vulnerable position, given their already vulnerable and unsafe social, living, and working conditions. Undocumented farmworkers may be afraid to speak up or report mistreatment, as they fear deportation or other legal consequences. Historically, across the twentieth century, an abundance of literature exists on the social determinants of health (income and social protection, working life conditions, food insecurity, housing, basic services and the environment, education, and early childhood development) and how the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, and live influence the general health outcomes of individuals, creating health inequities (WHO, 2022).

Although the UC Merced, UC Berkeley, and CSVS studies advance the literature on farmworker health in relation to prevalence and predictors of COVID, climate change, and the social determinants of health, the studies all missed an opportunity by limiting the questions of educational attainment among their participants. For example, in the UC Berkeley and CSVS research study, it appears that the researchers only asked participants one closed-ended question about education, reporting that 44% of farmworkers (484 participants out of 1091) had the equivalent of primary school or lower education (UC Berkeley School of Public Health & CSVS, 2020). If education is a critical social determinant of health, then a new and holistic approach is needed when engaging with farmworker communities. A more systematic and theoretical analysis is required to focus on their school experience and educational attainment through qualitative methods.

Risking It All: Farmworkers' Dangers In and Beyond the Fields

The threat of infectious diseases like COVID does not stop farmworkers from working and neither do catastrophic wildfires in California. The Golden State has been experiencing its most disastrous wildfires in history with a report estimating that 1.7 million hectares burned in 2020 alone (CalFire, 2022). "Many of the worst fire years in California's history have occurred in the past 20 years, with eighteen of the top 20 most destructive fires in terms of loss of life and property since 2000 and five in 2020" (Jerrett et al., 2022, p. 1). Since 1990, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) research agency, under the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has studied employee wellness to develop strategic plans to create safe and healthy work environments. This agency supports extramural research on injuries associated with the agricultural sector, including, but not limited to, pesticide exposure, pulmonary disease, and musculoskeletal disorders. In its decades of research, this agency ranked

agriculture as the nation's most dangerous industry, as farmworkers experience a high risk of fatal and non-fatal injuries. In 2019, the reported death rate in agriculture-related injuries was 19.4 per 100,000 workers (CDC, 2021). In the same year, California's farmworkers accounted for 10% of the officially recorded worker deaths, despite comprising about 1% of the state's workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). Moreover, the endangerment farmworkers experience is not limited to their workplace. This agency also found that agriculture is one of the few occupations where the never-ending threat to health continues beyond the work area because farmworkers often reside near fields, putting their health at risk day and night, as well as that of their family members due to pesticides (CDC, 2021).

With agriculture already being one of the most dangerous industries in the United States, the health problems facing farmworkers are likely to worsen in the coming years due to the impact of climate change, as they are expected to report to work even during severe weather events, such as droughts, heat waves, and wildfires. During wildfires, we see farmworkers endure illnesses related to climate-related events in real-time, including a range of smoke-related symptoms such as wheezing and shortness of breath, nausea, chest pain, and nosebleeds. Through a mixed methods study that included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and archival analysis, using the California's 2017 Thomas Fire as a case study, it was reported that agricultural employers did not provide farmworkers with the N95 masks recommended by public health officials and, in some cases, employers told local volunteers who tried to hand out masks for field workers to leave the property (Méndez et al., 2020). Adopting Nixon's (2011) term and definition of slow violence, the authors argue that "given their pre-disaster marginalized status, undocumented Latino/a and Indigenous immigrants require special consideration in disaster planning. Their differential vulnerability to disaster is mainly a

consequence of structural inequality" that is connected to intersectionality identities, including race, gender, indigeneity, immigration status, and occupation (Méndez et al., 2020, p. 51).

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) recognizes agriculture as a "priority industry" for prioritizing strategic enforcement policy due to being a sector where high numbers of systematic violations of basic labor standard are common and where workers are often unable to exercise their rights. Between 2010 and 2012, the DOL conducted inspections of more than 6,100 farmworkers across the country to (a) investigate violations of rules and regulations related to job safety and wellness, and (b) make recommendations based on their findings. To critically review and address the findings outlined in the DOL report, Farmworker Justice, a nonprofit organization advocating for and empowering migrant and seasonal farmworkers since 1981, re-analyzed the raw data. They concluded that 70% of employers had violated a broad spectrum of key federal employment laws and regulations (Farmworker Justice, 2015).

In addition, the advocacy group highlighted another ongoing and chronic problem among the inspections conducted by the DOL—the limited enforcement personnel in the fields. For instance, out of6,100 inspections conducted over several years, the DOL only reached 1% of farms (Farmworker Justice, 2015). The DOL and other state and federal agencies responsible for enforcing laws that protect farmworkers must continue to demand resources to make the working and living conditions of farmworkers more humane. These and many more inequities and injustices extend to educational institutions as well, since no social, economic, or political systems were created for farmworkers to thrive; on the contrary, our current social and economic systems are designed to ensure a continuous supply of future farmworkers, generation after generation.

Roadblocks to Learning: Farmworker Students' Education in Crisis

On December 10, 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), a document that marks a turning point in the history of human rights. For the first time in human history, the Declaration outlines basic and fundamental rights to be universally protected by and for all communities around the world. "Article 26" of the Declaration focuses on education:

1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. (United Nations, 1948, p. 7)

Compared to other student populations, migrant farmworker students face more serious challenges such as poverty, social isolation, limited educational opportunities, and limited social mobility, putting them at a disadvantage in society. It is common for their right to an education to be violated, as they are one of the groups with least access to a stable, quality education. Without such access, the cycle of poverty and marginalization will often continue. It is especially poignant that this is the same cycle that parents had tried to avoid by immigrating to the United States in the first place.

California is home to the highest number of migrant students of any state in the country, and over half of them are estimated to be pushed out of high school (CDE, 2007). Although it is difficult to obtain exact data on the graduation rates and academic achievement of migrant farmworker students due to inconsistent tracking systems implemented by each state, estimates for farmworker students graduating high school are extremely low and alarming. In *Migrant Students: What We Need to Know to Help Them Succeed*, Lundy-Ponce referenced several studies that report the pushed out rates among migrant farmworker students. These rates vary, ranging between "45 and 65 percent for high school (NCES, 2001)" to as high as "87 percent for all school-aged migrant children, according to the 2002-2003 National Agricultural Workers Survey (NCES, 2010)" (Lundy-Ponce, 2016, p. 7). Lundy-Ponce also included individual state data: "In California, the state with the highest number of migrant students, the dropout rate is estimated to be above 50 percent (CDE, 2007; USDE, 2006)" (Lundy-Ponce, 2016, p. 7). Another study indicated that the pushed out rate for migrant students ranges from 45 to 90% (McHatton et al., 2006). Some studies from the late twentieth century found that the rate for migrant students graduating was between 10 to 20% (Lunon, 1986; U.S. Department of Education, 1993).

Although results appear consistent with prior research, one report, *California Migrant Education Program, Comprehensive Needs Assessment: Initial Report of Findings* (CDE, 2017), appeared to be inconsistent with previous graduation and pushed out rates. The CDE collects data on high school graduation and pushed out prevention rates as the two critical areas of focus for measuring student engagement. According to their findings, "[migratory] students appear to be closing [the] graduation and [pushed out] rate gaps" (CDE, 2017, p. 26, Figure 14). Between 2010 and 2015, the graduation rates among migrant students increased by eight percentage

points, from 73% to 81%, while the graduation rate among "All Students" also increased, from 77 to 82% (CDE, 2017). During the same five-year period, migrant students' pushed out rate decreased by six percentage points, from 17% to 11%, while the pushed out rate for "All Students" also decreased, from 15% to 11%. (CDE, 2017). In other words, according to this report, in 2014–15, the pushed out rate for both groups of students was virtually the same (CDE, 2017). This report contradicts previous literature, likely for several reasons. First, the main challenge of this study was data reliability and availability, as much of the data used in the literature review was limited and not representative of migrant students. For example, for the School Climate Module of the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), the migrant population response rate was low. In the 2014–15 academic year, the migrant population for middle and high school students in California was 34,671, yet only 2,704 migrant students participated in the CHKS (CDE, 2017). Second, the report is deficient in not integrating a conceptual or theoretical framework of culturally relevant pedagogy, like many other governmental reports focused on migrant education. Lastly, under CDE's (CDE, 2017) list of concern statements, it indicates, "[we] are concerned that there is not enough data to exactly pinpoint the things that contribute to migratory students dropping out of high school or graduating from high school" (p. 70). As of today, no previous Comprehensive Needs Assessment mentions the 50-mile rule as a contributing factor that jeopardizes the educational opportunities of migrant children. Additional studies are required to understand migrant student graduation and pushed our rates, as there is insufficient reliable quantitative and qualitative datato draw clear conclusions about the scope of the issues and their underlying causes.

Guiding Lights: Migrant Education Programs

Students from migrant farmworker families experience countless challenges that prevent many of them from attaining formal education. Migrant farmworker families follow the growing seasons within the state they are located in, across the United States, and in many cases across México or Central American countries. The children residing in the centers tend to leave in mid to late fall and return to the housing centers in early to mid spring, which significantly impacts their learning due to a lack of curriculum and instruction alignment and high school credit transfer across local, state, and national boundaries. McHatton et al. (2006) indicated that in the United States, it is estimated that there are roughly 500,000 to 800,000 migrant students and that the pushed out rate for this community is significantly higher than any other group. Due to the alarming rate and limited literature on migrant students, McHatton and colleagues interviewed 57 students enrolled in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at a metropolitan university in Florida through a survey that included seven domains: demographics, student self-perceptions, students' interest in pursuing an education, high school experiences, transitioning to college, study habits, and diverse student success in school.

Through this federally funded educational support program that helps migrant students complete their first year of college, the study found that students have a strong sense of determination and self-reliance but also a "blame the victim" mentality (McHatton et al., 2006). When asked about the barriers they face in high school as migrant and seasonal farmworker students, participants did not mention or identify the institutional and systemic obstacles placed on them (McHatton et al., 2006). In order to study the same CAMP program, but this time in New Mexico, Bejarano and Valverde (2012) implemented a mixed-methods research approach that included an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from a five-year period (2006 to

2011). They obtained data from 130 self-administered questionnaires, nearly tripling the number of participants compared to McHatton et al. (2006). Using Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) Framework, the authors framed their findings in relation to two specific forms of cultural capital—familial and navigational—that help migrant students navigate college. Migrant students build relationships through their common fieldwork or immigrant background with other peers, staff, and local community members within the program (Bejarano & Valverde, 2012).

Every academic year, approximately 2,400 migrant students participate in CAMP at 35 to 40 different colleges and universities across the country, and it is estimated that nearly 75% of all CAMP students graduated with a bachelor's degree (Lundy-Ponce, 2016). Nevertheless, future studies should start to ground their work on research justice methodologies because hearing the *testimonios* of CAMP graduates in different institutions would allow us to understand more about the experiences and retention of farmworker students in higher-educational institutions. There is a significant scarcity of educational literature on migrant students in general and, more specifically, in the sphere of postsecondary education. Centering the lived experience of CAMP graduates, their voices, and their knowledge in the fight for better educational opportunities is recommended to address the literature gap on the educational journey of migrant students.

The opportunity to attend college is limited for many migrant students, research on inequities in access is also limited. Nuñez (2009) found that interventions through leadership and mentoring programs contribute to a positive college-going experience for migrant students. An example of such a program is the California Mini-Corps Program (CMC), one of the state's most prevalent and established programs for supporting migrant students academically and socially. CMC was founded in 1967 by the State Department of Migrant Education to provide the children

of farmworkers with direct support and instruction inside the classroom. By hiring college students who come from similar backgrounds as tutors, CMC provides valuable professional development for their goal to become multilingual-multicultural credentialed teachers. Through an extensive case study of CMC, Ginsberg et al. (2018) suggested that teacher preparation programs can better prepare prospective educators by incorporating CMC's best practices to assist migrant students. Undoubtedly, promising and targeted programs like CAMP and CMC are critical to helping migrant and seasonal farmworker students to overcome obstacles to completing high school and pursuing a post-secondary education. These types of assistance programs can provide a significant and impactful experience for migrant students navigating their transition through unfamiliar terrain.

One of the challenges for researchers in this domain is the notable lack of reliable and available data to explore the educational experiences of seasonal and migrant farmworker students. The creation and implementation of a system for tracking students over time would permit the implementation of longitudinal studies addressing educational processes and outcomes for migrant farmworkers students. For example, longitudinal studies can help us understand the long-term effects of childhood experiences on adult outcomes, such as educational attainment, employment, and health. They can also shed light on the effectiveness of interventions or treatments over time. Furthermore, longitudinal studies can provide valuable information for policy makers, as they can help identify risk factors for negative outcomes and inform the development of programs and policies aimed at preventing or mitigating these outcomes. Indeed, longitudinal studies are a powerful tool for gaining insight into complex phenomena that cannot be fully understood through cross-sectional studies.

Perpetual Cycle: The 50-Mile Regulation in California

The Center for Farmworker Families, Human Agenda, Food Empowerment Project (F.E.P.), and other dedicated advocates for farmworker families became aware of the 50-mile regulation's impact on the education of thousands of children across the state during the late 1990s and early 2000s. These organizations joined forces to drive transformative change, first approaching multiple politicians and government agencies with the proposal of operating the state-run migrant housing centers year-round to address chronic housing shortages among the farmworker community, while providing the opportunity for migrant children to attend the same school year-round. In 2010, former Assemblyman Paul Fong, a San José Democrat, presented AB 2010 to modify the 50-mile rule by creating exemptions for families with school-age children, allowing them to stay in the state-sponsored housing centers year-round (López, 2016). The bill died in committee due to multiple factors, including the expense associated with keeping the centers running year-round in the midst of the U.S. housing bubble, the global financial crisis, the Great Recession (December 2007 to June 2009), and the absence of data indicating a necessity for policy modification. In particular, there was a perceived lack of evidence for the need to create en exemption to the 50-mile regulation.

Thereafter, Human Agenda received a grant from the Castellanos Family Foundation to conduct original research on attitudes toward and effects of the 50-mile rule on farmworker families In the spring of 2014, with the support of volunteers, Human Agenda and the Center for Farmworker Families conducted semi-structured interviews with residents living in the four largest migrant housing centers in the state, located across the counties of Colusa, Fresno, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz. The interview protocol included a combination of closed-ended questions, which offer predetermined response options, and open-ended questions that encourage

participants to provide both concise short responses and more detailed, longer responses. All questions were designed by a Human Agenda Committee. The short-answer and closed-ended question responses were coded and frequencies were calculated while the longer open-ended "items were mined for illustrative examples" (Solomon & Williams Leng, 2014, p. 2). The analyses specifically centered around housing units that included at least one school-age child, ranging from ages 4 to 19, residing within the unit. The aim was to better understand the dynamics and circumstances of households with children of school-going age, allowing for insight into their living conditions and educational needs based on being forced to leave their schools every year at the end of the growing season. According to the *Migrant Farmworker Children's Education Project* research report, 96.7% of families expressed the belief that their children would benefit from completing the school year in the same educational institution (Solomon & Williams Leng, 2014). Additionally, 91.4% of the interviewed participants indicated that the 50-mile rule had a direct (negative) impact on their children's education (Solomon & Williams Leng, 2014). When asked about their off-season relocation after being required to leave the state-sponsored migrant housing centers, approximately 43% of farmworker families indicated that they move to a non-local area in California, while roughly 25% indicated moving to México (Human Agenda, 2015).

In the summer of 2014, based on evidence that farmworker families preferred to reside locally to support their children's education, Human Agenda created the coalition Apoyo Campesino. Composed of multiple individuals and agencies dedicated to advocating for the rights of farmworkers, Apoyo Campesino embarked on a series of frequent meetings spanning several years. The coalition's goal was to collaboratively establish a social justice agenda aimed at eliminating the 50-mile regulation, or at the very least, obtaining a waiver option for families

with school-age children. Apoyo Campesino conducted four meetings with the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). During these sessions, the coalition provided HCD with empirical evidence, including both quantitative and qualitative data, showcasing the adverse effects of the 50-mile rule on the lives and education of migrant farmworker youth (Hobbs & Apoyo Campesino, 2015). Unfortunately, HCD exhibited a lack of awareness regarding the regulation's origins and an inability to grasp the necessity to modify or eliminate the 50-mile rule (Hobbs & Apoyo Campesino, 2015).

HCD's inadequate responsiveness and lack of accountability motivated Apoyo Campesino to delve into extensive research on definitions, historical backgrounds, and regulations pertaining to subsidized housing for migrant farmworkers in various other states. Drawing from their research, Apoyo Campesino discovered that "no other state imposes a distance requirement to demonstrate the 'move' required in the definition of 'migrant'; For example, the Texas definition requires a move, but not a move of any particular distance" (Hobbs & Apoyo Campesino, 2015, p. 2). The discovery reinforces the uniqueness and potential challenges of the 50-mile rule.

A year after the publication of their initial research findings, in the spring of 2015, Apoyo Campesino articulated four potential pathways to address the 50-mile rule:

1) Attach elimination of the regulation to existing proposed legislation addressing farmworker housing or education.
2) Create a spot bill, which makes minor changes to a code section without altering the law significantly, to amend the code that created the 50-mile rule.
3) Using the regulatory process, the California Administrative Procedure Act (APA), and the public comment process, work with HCD to eliminate the regulation.

4) Create a regulatory waiver to the 50-mile rule for migrant farmworker housing in the 24 subsidized housing centers. (Hobbs & Apoyo Campesino, 2015, p. 2)

Meeting after meeting, year after year, Apoyo Campesino continued to advocate for change. Throughout this period, Apoyo Campesino obtained substantial support from various farmworker organizations, media outlets, legal advocacy nonprofits, lawmakers, as well as educators working directly with migrant youth (Hobbs & Apoyo Campesino, 2015). However, these efforts were unsuccessful.In early 2024, a new bill, AB 2240 (D-Arambula), was introduced in the California State Assembly. The development of AB 2240 will be discussed further in later chapters.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

California is globally recognized as a leading agricultural region, renowned for its year-round crop production. This thriving sector, essential to both domestic and international markets, underscores the crucial role of farmworkers who sustain the nation's food supply. Despite their significant contributions, migrant and farmworker families face severe challenges. Distressing statistics reveal that more than half of migrant students do not complete high school (CDE, 2007). Compared to other student populations, migrant students are systematically disadvantaged by pervasive poverty, social isolation, limited educational opportunities, and frequent relocations. These barriers violate their right to education, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and marginalization that their parents sought to escape by immigrating to the United States. Having already discussed the myriad obstacles that migrant students face and their educational journey in relation to the 50-mile regulation, in this chapter, I describe the study's methodology. This dissertation aims to address the following research questions:

(a) How do migrant students, residing in a state-sponsored migrant housing center, navigate and negotiate the complexities of their educational journeys within the educational systems of both the United States and México, in relation to the 50-mile rule?

(b) How do the multifaceted lived experiences and living conditions of migrant families residing in a state-sponsored migrant housing center shape their sense of belonging and social integration?

Methodological Approach

The principal methodological approach I applied in my study is deeply rooted in my family's assets and cultural history. *Testimonios* encompass narratives that recount individuals' experiences of struggles and challenges, often in the face of oppression and injustice. In Latin

America, *testimonios* possess a rich history and are firmly grounded in oral cultures. *Testimonios* were initially utilized by individuals who had endured violence and persecution at the hands of governments and other powerful socio-political forces. A *testimonio* serves as both a process and a product, aiming to raise awareness and foster consciousness regarding the injustices inflicted upon people (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). It calls upon the listener and reader to embrace resistance, solidarity, and unity. Human rights activists have effectively harnessed the power of *testimonios* to document human rights abuses and mobilize support for their causes. Over time, *testimonios* have emerged as an integral part of the global struggle for human rights, playing a pivotal role in social and political activism (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). By sharing their personal experiences, individuals can help shed light on issues that might otherwise remain unnoticed and inspire others to act and drive change.

In *Chicana/Latina Testimonios: Mapping the Methodological, Pedagogical, and Political*, Delgado Bernal et al. (2012), explained in depth the beauty of what it means to use *testimonios* as your guiding methodology:

> *Testimonio* differs from oral history or autobiography in that it involves the participant in a critical reflection of their personal experience within particular sociopolitical realities. That is, it links "the spoken word to social action and privileges the oral narrative of personal experience as a source of knowledge, empowerment, and political strategy for claiming rights and bringing about social change" (Benmayor, Torruellas, & Juarbe, 1997, p. 153). *Testimonio* transcends descriptive discourse to one that is more performative in that the narrative simultaneously engages the personal and collective aspects of identity formation while translating choices, silences, and ultimately identities (Beverley, 2005; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; López & Davalos, 2009). As such,

> *testimonio* is pragmatic in that it engages the reader to understand and establish a sense of solidarity as a first step toward social change (Delgado Bernal, 2012, p. 364).

Testimonios are the most appropriate method for my study because they capture lived experiences, provide contextual understanding, and can be used as a tool for empowerment and agency (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Mangual Figueroa & Barrales, 2021).

In my study, *testimonios* ensured that the participants' stories were preserved in their own words without being altered or filtered through the research process. Compared to other research processes with qualitative data, *testimonios* are different from interviews in the sense that *testimonios* have a sense of political urgency for change. *Testimonios* provide a deeper understanding of the cultural, social, and historical context surrounding the experience of migrant and farmworker families. Through having the honor of listening to *testimonio*s, I gained insights into families' daily lives, challenges, and aspirations, as well as the broader structural and systemic factors that shape *las vidas de las familias migrante y campesinas.* The act of sharing lived experiences through the method of *testimonios* can empower and provide agency because participants have the autonomy of voicing their own reality while at the same time representing the struggles and joy of the greater community they are part of (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2005). With this in mind, *testimonios* have the ability to disrupt the traditional power dynamics often present in research and in our everyday lives where voices of marginalized communities are often silenced and disregarded. As an example of liberation, *testimonios* can aid in the process of healing and reclaiming our own humanity through our lived experiences (Fiandt, 2005; Padilla, 1993; Pérez Huber, 2009).

Since a young age, I have been privileged to be exposed to the *testimonios* shared by various generations of my family in diverse contexts. Similar to *testimonios*, my family's

struggles were never meant to be concealed or kept as secrets. Instead, they served as intentional and politically charged reflections, aimed at challenging the oppressive social systems that my family faced as *mujeres*, *vendedores ambulantes*, and *trabajadores campesinos*. As I navigate my journey as a doctoral student, I constantly reimagine research in the context of what it means to be a scholar-activist and a teacher-scholar. Simultaneously, I am driven by the desire to make my research accessible to the community and action-oriented. Employing the methodology of *testimonios* allowed me to critically re-evaluate the significance of carrying forward my family's labor in the fields—a legacy that encompasses my grandfather's experience as a former Bracero and my parents' work in various fields across different states. *Testimonios* evoke a sense of belonging and familiarity for me. They hold profound meaning and have a significant impact as they contextualize the human experience, encapsulating hopes, aspirations, and struggles. Moreover, they actively elicit the reader, compelling them to join the fight, develop a critical consciousness, and take a stand for social justice.

By using a qualitative method, my research offers a multifaceted perspective of the lived experience surrounding migrant families, fostering a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of my topic.

Research Site and Context

The town of Tlaloc is located in a county that is surrounded by agricultural fields. Tlaloc's economy heavily depends on agriculture, with berries being one of the primary crops. Other crops grown in the area include apples, lettuce, artichokes, and fresh flowers. The city is home to many manufacturing and canned food companies. Besides agriculture, fishing, hunting, forestry, and manufacturing are also leading industries in Tlaloc. The town of Tlaloc has a labor force of over 20,000 people, with an unemployment rate of about 6%.

According to a recent Census report, Tlaloc has a population of over 50,000 people, with a median age of 30. Over the past several years, the population of Tlaloc has been decreasing every year. The majority of the population is of Latinx origin, accounting for more than 80%. The median household income is about $65,000, with one-tenth of the population living in poverty. In Tlaloc, about half of the population are renters.

The school district that serves the Tlaloc community consists of more than 30 schools with a cumulative enrollment of almost 20,000 students for the past few years. The majority of the students are classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged. Migrant students make up between 5 to 10% of the student population, while nearly half of the student population is classified as English Language Learners. The percentage of homeless students is nearly 15%, a figure almost four times higher than the state average—homeless youth make up 4% of California's students (California Department of Education (CDE), 2023). In the same academic year, no college or career data were reported. Due to geographical isolation, Tlaloc only has one college center that offers associate degrees and certificates through a community college.

Regarding academic performance, the percentage of students who met or exceeded the English language arts and literacy assessment standard was nearly 30% in recent years, while 17% of the student population met or exceeded the standard for mathematics assessments. School absentee data is high and trending sharply upward. In recent years, the school district in Tlaloc had a chronic absenteeism rate of approximately 12%, which increased to almost 16% the following year and then nearly 40% in the next two years. Among migrant students, the chronic absenteeism rate was even higher at approximately 35% (Ed-Data, 2022). The most common languages of English Learners in the district are Spanish (35%) and Mixteco (2%). Due to the number of students and families that speak Mixteco, the school district offers resources for

parent engagement in their native language. For example, the school created virtual videos to provide helpful content for Mixteco families to assist parents with navigating technology usage. These videos cover a range of general school topics, including scanning QR codes, basic Chromebook operations, creating email accounts, navigating the school district's website, using video conferencing tools, and completing online surveys and forms.

The location in Tlaloc where I conducted my research was one of the 24 state-sponsored migrant housing centers. Within a short distance of the state migrant housing center there is a landfill and a recycling facility. The center has 100+ housing units:

- Less than ten housing units of 1 bedroom with a daily rental rate of $11.00
- 50+ housing units of 2 bedrooms with a daily rental rate of $11.50
- 40+ housing units of 3 bedrooms with a daily rental rate of $12.00

According to "Subchapter 7. Office of Migrant Services Article 1. General," the occupancy standards for one-bedroom units are four maximum people, two-bedrooms for seven maximum people, and three-bedrooms for ten maximum people (California Department of Housing and Community Development, n.d.).

It is essential to recognize that this beautiful community of hardworking families has a multifaceted identity beyond mere statistics. *La comunidad campesina* has endless funds of cultural capital that often go unrecognized. For centuries, *la comunidad Latinx y Chicanx* has significantly contributed to forming what is now the town of Tlaloc. The rich history of immigration and farmworkers' humanitarian contributions have allowed this community to thrive even amid a global pandemic. The community of campesinos continued to work in essential industries, allowing the entire nation to continue nourishing their bodies and for the

economy to carry forward. For this and many reasons, we must remember *sin campesino, no comemos*.

Participants and Recruitment

All participants in this study were classified as either migrant parents, migrant youth, or community leaders and activists. Each group met specific criteria, as shown below in Figure 2. The first group consisted of farmworker parents who met the following criteria: (a) they resided in the state-sponsored migrant housing center of focus; and (b) their household included at least one school-age child (aged 6 to 12 years) or one adolescent (aged 13 to 17 years) residing in the center with them. The second group encompassed migrant youth aged between 15 and 24 years who met the following criteria: (a) they were either current or former high school students; and (b) they were current or former residents of the state-sponsored migrant housing center of focus. The third group of participants comprised community leaders and activists who have been actively involved in advocating against the 50-mile regulation for a minimum of five years. Such involvement included activities such as forming part of a coalition, collecting data, organizing groups of supporters against the 50-mile regulation, or participating in meetings to discuss the 50-mile regulation.

Figure 2. Eligibility Criteria of Participants.

# OF PARTICIPANTS FOR EACH GROUP	CRITERIA	DETAILS
FOUR MIGRANT PARENTS	RESIDENCY	RESIDE IN THE STATE-SPONSORED MIGRANT HOUSING CENTER OF FOCUS
	HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION	HOUSEHOLD INCLUDES AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL-AGE CHILD (AGED 6 TO 12 YEARS) OR ONE ADOLESCENT (AGED 13 TO 17 YEARS) RESIDING IN THE CENTER WITH THEM
FIVE MIGRANT YOUTH	AGE	15 TO 24 YEARS OF AGE
	EDUCATIONAL STATUS	A CURRENT OR FORMER HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT
	RESIDENCY	RESIDE IN THE STATE-SPONSORED MIGRANT HOUSING CENTER OF FOCUS
FOUR COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ACTIVISTS	ADVOCACY EXPERIENCE	ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN ADVOCATING AGAINST THE 50-MILE REGULATION FOR A MINIMUM OF FIVE YEARS
	ACTIVITIES	FORMED PART OF A COALITION, COLLECTED DATA, ORGANIZED GROUPS OF SUPPORTERS AGAINST THE 50-MILE REGULATION, OR PARTICIPATED IN MEETINGS TO DISCUSS THE REGULATION

For each group of participants, I aimed to have four to five participants. I successfully met my recruitment goal, with four migrant parents, five migrant youth, and four community leaders and activists participating in this study. This resulted in a total of 13 participants, 13 *testimonios* from their lived experiences. I chose to have this specific number of participants per group to focus on their in-depth experiences. This manageable group size allowed for deeper exploration of their narratives, providing richer, more detailed insights compared to a broader approach. This methodology aligns with LatCrit, as it honors and treats each individual as an expert of their own experiences, ensuring their unique voices are heard and valued.

The recruitment of migrant families residing in a state-sponsored housing center was carried out through two primary approaches. First, I actively participated in community events that were associated with farmworker families. These events served as valuable opportunities to engage with the target population directly. Second, I reconnected with community leaders whom

I had encountered in the course of my previous advocacy work, particularly in my involvement with migrant students and the 50-mile regulation.

My first approach to recruiting was facilitated by actively participating in local events organized by non-profit organizations advocating for migrant families. I attended these community events to connect with the community and establish rapport with potential participants. Examples of these events included film screenings followed by *testimonios* from community leaders and impacted farmworkers, donation drives, and tours of migrant housing centers. Additionally, I sometimes had opportunities to share meals with participants and farmworkers, engaging in reflective conversations while at these events. These gatherings provided a platform for community building, raising awareness, and fostering solidarity among attendees. While attending these events, I introduced my research project, explained its purpose and benefits, and invited interested families to participate voluntarily. After an initial group of families had participated in the study, I implemented a snowball sampling technique. The snowball method is a technique in which participants are asked to assist with identifying other potential participants. The definition most often applied, as proposed by "Patton, Atkinson and Flint, Cohen and Arieli, and Bhattacherjee, is as a sampling method in which one interviewee gives the researcher the name of at least one more potential interviewee. That interviewee, in turn, provides the name of at least one more potential interviewee, and so on, with the sample growing like a rolling snowball if more than one referral per interviewee is provided" (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018, p. 1). Snowball sampling was beneficial for this study because of its "main value... for obtaining respondents where they are few in number or where some degree of trust is required to initiate contact" (Atkinson & Flint, 2001, p. 2). Participants were more likely to have connections with other migrant families, whether as neighbors, colleagues, or friends.

Leveraging these existing social ties, I kindly asked the initial participants to refer me to other migrant families who might have been interested in participating and who fit the study inclusion criteria.

My second approach in recruiting migrant families was through reconnecting with community leaders I had met and/or worked with in the past through my own personal involvement with advocating for migrant students and families. As previously mentioned, I served as a research assistant for the Apoyo Campesino project, which was managed by nonprofit organizations with the aim of eliminating the 50-mile regulation. Over the years, I actively participated in various community roles concerning the 50-mile regulation that significantly impacted numerous children residing in state-sponsored centers. These roles encompassed (a) conducting educational workshops at the university level to educate current and prospective educators about the 50-mile regulation and effective ways to support migrant students, (b) attending protests outside the California Department of Housing and Community Development in Sacramento, (c) engaging in postcard and letter-writing campaign to voice opposition to the 50-mile regulation, and (d) conducting interviews with educators serving migrant students in two different school districts serving a high number of migrant students. Throughout my involvement, I have actively contributed to raising awareness and advocating for change in relation to the 50-mile regulation and its impact on the lives of migrant students. With my extensive community network, I have had the privilege of connecting with numerous exceptional leaders who were integral to this research study.

The quota sampling technique was implemented to ensure diversity and representation within the study. “Quota sampling is a non-probability sampling method where the researcher selects participants based on specific characteristics, ensuring they represent certain attributes in

proportion to their prevalence in the population. It's like stratified sampling but without random selection within each stratum" (Simkus, 2023, p. 1). This technique helped capture a range of experiences, such as differentiation between families who stay locally and those who move to Mexico, migrant youth who graduate from high school and those who did not graduate from high school, and community leaders with diverse roles contributing to efforts to end the 50-mile rule. The quota technique was particularly helpful for enhancing the validity and reliability of the study findings, especially when certain subgroups are small or difficult to reach, as the criteria is extremely specific.

Data Collection: Procedures and Instrumentation

For data collection, I began by inviting community leaders and activists who have played crucial roles in advocating for migrant families and students in ending the 50-mile rule to participate in my study. I re-established connections with (a) the executive director of the Center for Farmworker Families, (b) a board member from Human Agenda, and (c) the founder and president of the Food Empowerment Project. Each of these community leaders represents a nonprofit organization that has been at the forefront of efforts to abolish the 50-mile regulation. By cultivating these connections and integrating participants from three unique non-profit organizations into my research study, my objective was to encompass different perspectives and experiences. Some of the guiding questions in this phase of data collection focused on their roles and experiences in fighting against the 50-mile regulation, the most significant challenges they have encountered in their efforts, and the notable successes or milestones achieved in the battle against this regulation (see Appendix 8). The data for this study were collected by means of semi-structured *testimonios* conducted in person or via Zoom.

The second phase of data collection engaged migrant parents residing in the state-sponsored migrant housing center of focus. I started with a comprehensive demographic questionnaire (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2) that addressed including marital status, education level, language proficiency, household composition, and employment status. The questionnaire also addressed knowledge of key housing policies such as the 50-mile rule and the waiver. Following questionnaire administration, qualitative data were collected, including in-depth *testimonios*. The *testimonios* allowed for the exploration of individual stories, perspectives, and the unique challenges faced by migrant families. To initiate the *testimonios*, I introduced several guiding open-ended questions (see Appendix 5 and Appendix 6). These questions addressed interviewees' experiences living in the migrant center, their children's overall educational journey, the challenges their family has encountered in accessing quality education for their children, and how the 50-mile regulation has affected their children's school experiences. Lastly, the final phase of data collection involved eliciting *testimonios* from migrant youth. I informed parents that I was looking for potential migrant youth who might be interested in participating in the study. Some of the migrant parents introduced me to their children, who then became participants of this study. After those *testimonios* were conducted, I asked each migrant youth if they knew of other migrant youth who fit the criteria and might be interested in participating in the study. In general, all five migrant youth in this study knew each other either as friends, family members, or neighbors.

When engaging with migrant youth, similar to the approach with their parents, I began with the administration of a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and Appendix 4). This questionnaire encompassed aspects related to their educational journey, including details about their grades, the number of different schools they attend during an academic year, their

involvement in extracurricular activities, and whether they have taken part in advanced or honors classes. After the demographic questionnaire, I introduced a set of guiding questions aimed at gaining insight into their lived experiences throughout their educational journey (see Appendix 7). These questions addressed how migrant youth manage their attendance at multiple schools, the level of support they receive from school staff, and their perspectives on ways in which governmental agencies can enhance their support to better facilitate their education and help them realize their dreams.

Procedures

This study was conducted following ethical guidelines and received approval, based on an expedited review, from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Santa Clara University. All adult participants provided informed consent before participation, and all minors provided assent with accompanying informed consent from their parent or guardian prior to participation. For this study, different consent forms were utilized to ensure ethical compliance and clear communication with participants. Adults were provided with a “Letter of Consent” and an “Informed Consent Form,” which detailed the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, as well as their rights as participants. For minors, parental permission was obtained through an “Informed Consent Form for Minors”, which required parents to consent to their child's participation in the study. Additionally, minors themselves were provided with an “Assent Letter” and a “Written Minor Assent Form,” which explained the study in age-appropriate language and confirmed their willingness to participate. These measures ensured that all participants, both adults and minors, were fully informed and had provided voluntary consent, all consent and assent forms were available in English and Spanish.

All the audio recordings were stored securely and only, I, as the primary researcher, had access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept for five years and then erased. All original audio recordings, transcripts, and data were stored on a personal computer that was password protected followed by a second set of passwords to access all data files.

In recognition of each participant's time and contribution, a monetary incentive was provided for completing the questionnaire and sharing their *testimonio*. Migrant parents and migrant youth aged 18 years and older had the option of either receiving a $50 gift card to a local grocery store, Target, or $50 in cash. For migrant youth under 18 years of age, their parents had the option of receiving a $50 gift card or $50 in cash. Community leaders and activists were offered the choice of a $50 Target e-gift card or a $50 electronic donation to their preferred non-profit organization for participating in the study. This monetary compensation was intended to demonstrate appreciation for the participants' willingness to share their experiences and insights, as well as to value their time and acknowledge the importance of their involvement in shedding light on these crucial issues.

The *testimonios* were conducted either in person or over Zoom, which each session lasting from one to two hours. All the *testimonios* from migrant parents took place in the comfort of their homes within the migrant center. Two out of the five *testimonios* from migrant youth were also conducted in person at their homes in the migrant center next to their parents, while the remaining three *testimonios* were conducted over Zoom. The *testimonios* of community leaders and activists were all conducted over Zoom.

Instrumentation

A demographic questionnaire was created only for the groups of migrant parents and migrant youth; community leaders and activists did not have a demographic questionnaire. For migrant youth, two different demographic questionnaires were developed to tailor to their age

groups — the first demographic questionnaire for migrant youth who were minors and another for migrant youth who were adults. For the guiding questions for the *testimonios*, I verbally read the questions as a starting point. Separate sets of guiding questions were developed for migrant parents, migrant youth, and community leaders and activists to customize them to their specific profiles and lived experiences.

The questionnaire and guiding questions for the participants were originally developed based on my personal experience and the knowledge I accumulated over the years, as well as from recent events I attended regarding the 50-mile rule and lived experiences of migrant families reising in the centers across the state. The instruments included key questions that I encountered in various forms by having the opportunity to listen to some of the participants speak on different occasions and in multiple settings.

All instruments used in this study were developed specifically for this project and were not piloted prior to use. All questions in the questionnaire and guiding questions were open-ended. The questionnaire was administered orally, with the principal investigator recording the responses on an electronic device. On average, respondents were able to complete the questionnaire verbally in about 10 to 15 minutes. After the questionnaire, we started the official *testimonio* using the guiding questions as starting points. For the *testimonios*, they were audio-recorded with the participants' permission.

All instruments used in this study for migrant parents were originally created in Spanish and then translated into English. All *testimonios* from migrant parents were conducted in Spanish. For migrant youth, all instruments were created only in English; however, the *testimonios* for all migrant youth participants were in both English and Spanish, as they

frequently code-switched between the two languages. For community leaders and activists, all instruments were created only in English, and all of their *testimonios* were conducted in English.

Positionality

Being the proud daughter of immigrants and former farmworkers, the values I inherited are not a limitation in this investigation but rather a strength that I must embrace. From an early age until now, my mother constantly reminds me of the hard physical labor she and my late father underwent while working in the fields in various states across the United States. My mother's *testimonios* have opened my eyes to the reality and burden farmworkers face as they engage in one of the most hazardous jobs in the nation. My personal experience and advocacy on behalf of the migrant and farmworker community give me both insider and outsider perspectives that strengthens my research work. I was identified as an English Learner for most of my school years. My linguistic identity and background as a child of former farmworkers inspired me to help students from similar backgrounds. I have worked directly with migrant families at different stages of my life, including working for the California Mini-Corps program and teaching at my district's Migrant Ed and English Learners Saturday Academies program. However, I must acknowledge that my positionality has changed throughout the years. Due to the formal education I received and the higher education degrees I hold, I have gained a new social position and power across society. My socioeconomic status has drastically changed; I now hold the highest socioeconomic status of anyone in my family. Through intergenerational mobility, I now have a stable profession that allows me to live comfortably and reside in a stable environment. Through the different positionalities I possessed across different stages of my life, I have often navigated life with the dilemmas of colonizer-colonized relations (Fanon, 1963). I have had to be conscious of the many ways and forms my privileges are present and how I needed to leverage

them to ensure families remain at the forefront of this work and are included in the research decisions being made.

Data Analysis

My analysis is grounded in the data collected from the *testimonios*. By conducting *testimonios* with all participants, I aimed to centralize their voices as the experts of their own lived experiences. To protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, the data was pseudonymized immediately after the initial transcripts were produced, ensuring a higher level of data protection throughout the study. After producing the transcripts from the audio recordings, all identifying information was replaced with pseudonyms before any further review or editing took place. During the review, editing, and analysis of the pseudonymized data, I ensured that all references to participants used the pseudonyms consistently. Participants had the autonomy to select any name they prefer, and their chosen pseudonym was how they were referred to in all research-related activities. The pseudonym ensured that all identities of the participants remained confidential, providing a level of privacy and protection during and after the research process. The exemption to pseudonymization applied to the community leaders and advocate participants who chose to use their real names throughout this study. Following each *testimonio*, I wrote memos summarizing the main components. These memos served as valuable aids in the analysis process. All *testimonios* conducted in Spanish were transcribed using Airgram, while those conducted in English were transcribed using Otter.ai. Both of these companies use artificial intelligence to create transcripts from the submitted audio. After transcription, I compared all the original audio to the transcribed documents to verify all words and expressions were included. Next, I read and familiarized myself with each *testimonio* to gain a holistic understanding of the data.

I translated and coded the *testimonios* by categorizing the content into different themes or concepts utilizing MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software. Coding serves as a bridge between the qualitative data collection phase and the data analysis phase. A code is "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). I conducted a thematic analysis by examining the coded data to identify recurring themes, emotions, and patterns while also looking for similarities, differences, and variations in participants' experiences. LatCrit was instrumental in shaping the coding scheme for the *testimonios*. For example, I specifically looked for instances where participants discussed race, ethnicity, and other intersecting forms of subordination, such as class. In addition, my coding scheme included codes related to social justice actions and aspirations. I reviewed the data for evidence of participants' efforts to fight for equitable educational opportunities, better living conditions, and policies that support migrant families. For the analyses, I employed an inductive approach that involves identifying common themes, emotions, and patterns in the data. Lastly, I interpreted the themes, emotions, and patterns that emerged to gain insights into the lived experiences of migrant families residing in a migrant housing center and advocates fighting to end the 50-mile regulation. I used quotes and examples from the *testimonios* in my writing to support my interpretations while contextualizing the *testimonios* within the broader context of our society through a social, cultural, and historical lens.

Risks and Benefits

The participation of migrant families and community leaders in this study was entirely voluntary. All participants had the right to choose not to participate and could withdraw from the study at any moment without facing any penalties or consequences. However, conducting

testimonios carries inherent risks, as it may involve revealing deep, personal aspects of one's life, potentially leading to feelings of anxiety, emotional stress, and psychological discomfort. In addition, *testimonios* can contain sensitive and emotional information, especially when participants have experienced trauma or violence. The loss of confidentiality is another risk that could have significant social, occupational, and other types of consequences for participants. For example, many ranch owners and property managers do not like it when farmworkers speak out and tell the truth about their working and living conditions. Consequently, farmworkers can often face mistreatment or retaliation if their employers or property managers discover they have been discussing their conditions. Therefore, this fear of negative repercussions is a risk that could harm farmworkers.

To address these concerns, measures were taken to minimize distress for the participants. They were reassured that they could take breaks or stop their involvement in the study if they felt overwhelmed. Additionally, a list of community resources for counseling and support was provided to the participants, giving them access to professional help if needed. The well-being and comfort of all participants was a top priority throughout the entire research process.

The measures taken to maintain confidentiality, in addition to pseudonymization, data encryption, and secure storage described earlier in the chapter, included providing estimates rather than precise numbers, percentages, and calendar years when using data from other sources. This additional measure further reduced the risk of identifying participants, ensuring their privacy is protected. By using estimates, the data remains useful for analysis while safeguarding sensitive information that could potentially be traced back to individuals. This practice is particularly important in contexts where detailed information could inadvertently reveal the identities or location of participants, especially in small and specialized population groups.

Participating in this study did not offer any direct benefits to the participants, apart from providing them with the opportunity to be listened to and advocate on their behalf. This experience was particularly valuable, as migrant families are often isolated from society based on the locations of the migrant centers. Additionally, sharing their stories empowered participants by giving them a platform to voice their concerns and contribute to broader discussions about their conditions and experiences. By participating in this study, they also contributed to the body of knowledge that may inform policies and practices aimed at improving their circumstances and those of others in similar situations. It was anticipated that the valuable information obtained from this research would contribute to raising public awareness and promoting critical understanding of the experiences faced by farmworker families and community leaders in connection with the 50-mile.

Chapter 4: Narrative Demographics of Participants

The dissertation answered the following key questions: (a) “How do migrant students residing in a state-sponsored migrant housing center navigate and negotiate the complexities of their educational journeys within the educational systems of both the United States and México, in relation to the 50-mile rule?” (b) “How do the multifaceted lived experiences and living conditions of migrant families residing in a state-sponsored migrant housing center shape their sense of belonging and social integration?” To effectively address these questions, it is essential to first narrate the lives of the participants. This approach not only humanizes them but also paints a vivid portrait, enriching the context of the study. This chapter begins with the demographic information of the participants. It then weaves a collective narrative based on this demographic data, followed by detailed portraits of each family and individual participant. These narratives are enriched with specific quotes from their *testimonios* and lived experiences. The chapter is organized into sections that separately focus on the three distinct groups of participants: migrant parents, migrant youth, and community leaders.

Migrant Parents

The study encompasses four migrant parents, all residing in the sponsored migrant housing center in Tlaloc, each with at least one school-age child currently enrolled in a local school within the community. Figure 3 presents additional detailed demographic information about the parents involved in the study.

Figure 3. Migrant Parents Demographic Information.

NAME	BIRTHPLACE	HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION	# OF CHILDREN	# OF YEARS LIVING IN A MIGRANT CENTER
ERICA SÁNCHEZ	MICHOACÁN, MX	ELEMENTARY	3 OR MORE	25+ YEARS
ROXANA OLIVARES	MICHOACÁN, MX	ELEMENTARY	3 OR MORE	10+ YEARS
AMANDA GONZÁLEZ	CALIFORNIA, USA	MIDDLE SCHOOL	3 OR MORE	25+ YEARS
ARMANDO GÓMEZ	MICHOACÁN, MX	ELEMENTARY	3 OR MORE	25+ YEARS

Figure 3 presents all participating parents using pseudonyms, emphasizing the commonalities among the migrant parents involved in the study. Particularly noteworthy is the prevalent low educational attainment evident across the majority of participants. The causes behind this educational disparity are extensively explored later in this chapter. All participating parents share a common background of growing up in rural areas of México. Furthermore, their labor trajectories align as current or former farmworkers, predominantly engaged in the cultivation of strawberry fields. At the conclusion of each season, parents are offered unemployment benefits, which encompass opportunities for adult education or other skill development classes. The high cost of living compels the majority of parents to relocate, even farther away than 50 miles, preventing them from availing themselves of the educational offerings associated with unemployment benefits.

An additional similarity of the participants' lives is that all the parents in the study have children who have grown up in a migrant housing center from almost birth to adulthood. This unique environment shapes the educational and social lived experiences of parents and children alike. Given the selection criteria for this study, all parents have encountered and navigated the

challenges posed by the 50-mile regulation, further highlighting the shared experiences among them.

While the participating parents share numerous affinity identities, noteworthy differences also exist among them, encompassing their immigration journey and status, household characteristics, family size, their children's educational journeys, and their community involvement. These distinctions emphasize the rich diversity within the group, showcasing the unique narrative experiences each family undergoes while resiliently navigating a shared political landscape. Despite facing oppression and limited opportunities, they demonstrate strength and resilience in overcoming challenges through their similarities and differences while providing "apoyo" (Nava, 2012) to their children and neighbors.

One of the differences among participating parents, for instance, is that despite all parents originating or growing up in the state of Michoacán, México, they hail from distinct cities and towns across the state, leading to variations in the quality of education and available opportunities for their children when they migrate to México during the off season. This geographical diversity adds a nuanced layer to their experiences. Furthermore, disparities manifest in the educational attainment of their children, ranging from an incomplete high school education to the attainment of a master's degree. This spectrum highlights the diverse trajectories and aspirations within this group. In the following section, I provide a succinct yet comprehensive description of each family, shedding light on key characteristics that define and distinguish them within the broader context of the study.

Portraits of Migrant Parents

The Sánchez Family

> El sueño de mi hija siempre fue que quería llegar a una universidad y que si yo la traía para allá y para acá, no iba a llegar nunca a la universidad.
>
> – Erica Sánchez

La Señora Erica was born and raised in a small rural town in Michoacán, México, within a family of farmworkers. With over 30 years of experience, she has dedicated her life to nourishing the world by picking strawberries, enduring long hours from Monday to Saturday and earning less than $20,000 annually. As a second-generation farmworker in the United States, Erica inherited her father's dedication and hard work in the fields, as a Bracero. In the early 1980s while still living in México, Erica met José, also a second-generation farmworker in the United States. Erica and José got married and started a family shortly after.

In 2001, Erica became the sole provider for her family when her husband suffered a back injury attributed to years of bending his back in the fields. It is important to note that José had started working in the fields at the age of 15. The family faced further challenges when José passed away in a car accident in December 2017, shortly after their arrival in México following the closure of the migrant center in November. Newly widowed and a single mother of five children, currently aged 17 to 37, Erica is considered a "*guerrera*" and a "*luchona.*"

Erica's five children were born in the United States and raised in both California and Michoacán. From their preschool days to high school, all of her children have lived in a migrant housing center. Among Erica's children, four live independently with diverse occupations and lives—three are married, one is pursuing a master's degree, and her youngest daughter is currently a high school student. Each adult child has graduated from high school, except for her

youngest son, who became a farmworker at age 18. Although this narrative shows that children from this specific family living in the center finished high school, it does not represent the norm.

Despite qualifying for retirement, Erica continues working in the field to maintain eligibility for the migrant housing center, where her youngest daughter, a junior in high school, resides. Facing multiple health issues herself, Erica perseveres in the fields to support her daughter's education. Once her youngest daughter graduates from high school and moves to college, Erica looks forward to retiring in México with her 85-year-old mother.

When not working, Erica actively engages in the community, sharing her farmworker experiences in educational and community events. She finds "*poder*" in educating the public about the struggles she faces as a farmworker and the challenges faced by migrant families residing in a housing sponsored center.

The Olivares Family

> A comparación de mi pueblo, trabajar en el campo y vivir en California está bien. Sí es un poquito más cansado, pero cuando comparamos el sueldo y la vivienda, estamos muy bien . . . es que, la verdad, en mi pueblo no hay nada, uno ni siquiera tiene para comer bien.
>
> – Roxana Olivares

Roxana Olivares recounted the significance of her job as she shared the story of her family's immigration journey from Michoacán, México to California in pursuit of a better life. Currently, at 36 years old, both Roxana and her husband work as farmworkers. Roxana first arrived in the United States at the age of 17, and the couple now has three U.S.-born children, aged 8 to 19. The younger two attend the local elementary and high school, while the eldest works as a farmworker in the blackberry fields, despite graduating from high school last year.

Roxana and her husband aspire for their eldest to seek further education and move away from the life of a “campesino.”

Roxana has been contributing to the agricultural industry since the age of 18. Presently, she and her husband pick blackberries from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Their compensation is based on hourly wages and the number of boxes of blackberries they harvest, earning $2.75 per box. At the beginning of each season, they secure a new contract and are allowed only 24 hours of paid sick leave. Since working in the fields, Roxana has only worked for two companies. Recently, she switched employers due to feeling exploited in her previous position and found a company where she feels more fairly treated.

During the Great Recession (December 2007 to June 2009), the Olivares family returned to México due to economic and housing uncertainties in the U.S. At that time, their oldest son was five, and their middle daughter was three. The family knew that once they left California, they would not be able to come back again anytime soon, as crossing the border had become more difficult compared to when Roxana was a teenager and crossed the border for the first time. The Olivares family remained in México for nearly five years, facing endless challenges such as food and housing insecurity due to the difficulty of finding a job in their town.

In 2014, bravely taking the risk once again, the Olivares family returned to California, settling in a migrant housing center. Roxana and her husband harbor dreams of their children pursuing formal education and obtaining “una carrera,” as they do not want their children to endure the physically demanding work in the fields, “lo que no quiero uno es que regresen a donde uno está, en el campo.” When Roxana talked about her second dream, with tears in her eyes, she shared how she dreams of her son fixing her immigration status, “Mi otro sueño es que mi hijo me pudiera arreglar mis papeles para poder viajar a ver a mis papás, pero pues no se

puede todavía. Es difícil estar aquí, sin poder ver a tu familia . . . piensa uno que con un poco de dinero soluciona, pero la verdad hay cosas que no." Despite the challenges she and her husband face, Roxana remains hopeful and positive, and that one must "pedirle mucho a Dios."

The González & Gómez Family

> Lo que yo no quiero para mis hijos es que trabajen en los fields. Yo nunca he dicho que el trabajo del field sea malo, pero es muy duro, bien difícil y muy mal pagado. Y como tengo tan mala experiencia, no quiero que mis hijos vayan a pasar por lo mismo.
>
> – Amanda González

Amanda González and Armando Gómez have lived in the United States for more than 35 years. As a newly married couple in Michoacán, México, they are the proud parents of four U.S.-born children, spanning the ages of 13 to 32.

Armando's story is one of resilience and hard work. Since the 1980s, he has been a seasonal farmworker, crisscrossing between California and México in his early years. During Armando's early years, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act passed, granting Armando with documentation; he is a U.S. resident. Once married, Amanda and Armando desired to make California their permanent home in order to provide their future children with opportunities that were not available in their hometown.

Amanda, although born in California, spent her formative years in México, under the care of her grandparents while her parents built a life in California. When Amanda and Armando decided to settle in California, Armando navigated the immigration process smoothly with his "mica," but Amanda faced challenges due to having only a copy of her U.S. birth certificate. After tears and persuasive efforts with immigration officers, Amanda set foot in the U.S. for the first time since her birth.

For 27 years, Amanda bent her back in the strawberry fields until an injury forced her to step back. Despite not qualifying for disability status and related accommodations, her spirit remains unbroken and has found alternatives to make money—two times a month, Amanda makes and sells food outside the home of a friend.

Armando, with 38 years in the fields, is eligible for retirement, yet he continues to work in the fields to qualify for affordable housing and to be able to live temporarily in a migrant housing center. Armando will continue to work as a farmworker until their youngest son, currently in middle school, is able to graduate from high school and become independent.

Amanda and Armando's adult children have carved their paths with pride. The eldest, at 32, manages a party rental company and owns a home in Central Valley. The 26-year-old son, a skilled mechanic, lives independently. Their 24-year-old daughter, who married a neighbor from the migrant center at 15, has two children and works in a high school serving food to students.

Amanda and Armando's greatest joy was witnessing their three oldest children walk across the stage to receive their high school diplomas. In those moments, the parents glimpsed their own aspirations, realizing that their hard work had paid off and their children had seized opportunities they wished for in their own upbringing. For Amanda and Armando, witnessing their children graduate from high school also meant providing them the chance to break free from the demanding fieldwork they intimately knew, understanding its harmful toll on both the body and mind.

Migrant Youth

The study delves into a second group of participants comprising five migrant youth, aged between 16 to 24. The migrant youth in this study all share the common experience of residing in a migrant housing center and grappling with the challenges posed by the 50-mile rule during

their most formative years, from childhood and adolescence. Figure 4 represents a demographic composition of the five migrant youth, which provides detailed information about the participants included in the study.

Figure 4. Migrant Youth: Demographic Information.

NAME	AGE	BIRTHPLACE	HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION	OCCUPATION	YEARS OF RESIDING IN A MIGRANT CENTER
MONICA PÉREZ	16 YRS	CALIFORNIA, USA	11TH GRADE	HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT	8 YRS OF AGE TO PRESENT
EMMA GARCÍA	17 YRS	CALIFORNIA, USA	11TH GRADE	HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT	BIRTH TO PRESENT
GUADALUPE PIMENTAL	23 YRS	CALIFORNIA, USA	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	GRADUATE STUDENT	BIRTH TO 18 YRS OF AGE
JULIAN MARTÍNEZ	24 YRS	CALIFORNIA, USA	12TH GRADE (NO DIPLOMA)	FARMWORKER	BIRTH TO PRESENT
JOSEFINA RUÍZ	24 YRS	MICHOACÁN, MX	HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA	FARMWORKER	12 YRS OF AGE TO PRESENT

The five migrant youth at the heart of this study collectively share a remarkable array of experiences, extending across the realms of education, social interactions, and living environments. A significant commonality binding them is their roots with Mexican farmworker parents, individuals whose dedication to working in the fields spans nearly their entire lifetimes. The parents of the five migrant youth contribute to feeding our country and the world, enduring challenging and harsh conditions daily, all with the hope of providing their children with the best opportunities. This shared background forms the foundation of a unique affinity group, knitting these youth together through a shared familial and community aspect, where they have created bonds with each other and many other migrant children residing in the center. All the migrant youth participants in this study know each other; they are either family members connected by blood or marriage, friends, and/or neighbors.

Adding another layer to their collective narrative is the years spent within the same state-sponsored migrant housing center, a shared home and community that has witnessed their growth and experiences over an impressive span of 9 to 24 years. Their home in a migrant center has shaped their lived experiences, dreams, and aspirations in multiple dimensions, from having to attend at least two different schools each academic year to finding alternative housing during the off season.

Beyond the confines of their shared community residence, the journey of education presents a common challenge for these youth. Compelled by circumstances to relocate a minimum of 50 miles annually, they have encountered the experience of attending schools in two different countries within a single academic year during their formative years. This transient academic path adds a dynamic layer to their shared experiences, marked by adaptability and resilience in the face of constant change. Amidst the systemic and political challenges, the migrant youth in this study have mastered the art of navigating the system by crafting their own opportunities that align with their aspirations and what best supports their desires.

A fascinating nuance emerges as we delve into the familial aspect of their lives. Despite each of the migrant youth having two to four siblings, their navigation through the educational landscape unfolds uniquely from their own siblings. The diversity in their experiences with schooling, when compared to their siblings, unveils a mosaic of individual strategies and circumstances in response to the challenges posed by their migratory experiences. In essence, these five migrant youth not only share a collective history but also craft individual narratives, intricately woven into the rich fabric of their shared experiences.

Portraits of Migrant Youth

Monica Pérez

> Me dan consejos, they tell me to keep going to school and to do well. Me dicen que le eche muchas ganas y que me ponga las pilas. My mom cooks for us and does our laundry. My mom tells me that the only thing I am responsible for is to go to school and do my work. Mi única responsabilidad es ir a la escuela.
>
> – Monica Pérez

When Monica Pérez (she/her/hers), a current junior in high school, shared her lived experiences as a migrant youth, one of the first things she conveyed to me was the significant role her family plays in supporting her education and the encouraging words her parents share to motivate her academic success. Born in California and the middle child in her family, Monica's journey took an unexpected turn when, at the age of three, her family moved permanently to Michoacán, México for five years due to the economic recession in 2008.

Upon returning to the United States, Monica vividly recalled grappling with the challenges of school, primarily due to the language barrier of her limited fluency in English. Her English learning journey commenced in fourth grade, marking a turning point in her academic trajectory. Throughout elementary and middle school, Monica and her family faced the recurring need to relocate at least 50 miles away from the migrant center.

Compounded by her parents' immigration status, Monica's family opted to reside in the Central Valley during the off-season instead of returning to Michoacán. However, the implementation of the 50-mile waiver during Monica's high school years brought a positive change, allowing her to remain in the same high school, from August to June, since her freshman year.

Monica, when describing the resources and support she receives from school, highlighted her regular attendance at after-school tutoring sessions within the career center. The assistance provided by the "migrant teacher" became instrumental in aiding her with homework. However, reflecting on her own academic progress, Monica recently stopped attending the tutoring sessions as she is excelling in all her classes and feels confident in her abilities.

Inspired by her own success, Monica now harbors dreams of attending college, particularly aspiring to become a professional in the medical field. Eager to explore her options, she mentioned, "I need to start asking questions . . . tomorrow college people are coming to my school from Sacramento State. [Mr. Enrique], the migrant teacher, organized the event." Monica's narrative reflects perseverance, curiosity, and a determination to overcome challenges, showcasing her inspiring journey as a youth living in a state-sponsored migrant center.

Emma García

> School in México is cool, but they don't really accept you to a certain point because you are from here. They don't like it that we switch places back and forth. They want you to stay there and to finish your studies, but I cannot do that. It also affects my grades here when I go to México because I miss a lot of school.
>
> – Emma García

Emma (she/her/hers), a junior in high school and the youngest of five siblings, all leading independent lives as adults, has been a resident of a migrant center since birth. Her unique sense of home extends beyond the center, reaching back to Michoacán, México. In her household, it's just Emma and her mother, who works tirelessly in the strawberry fields, often leaving before Emma wakes up at 6:00 a.m. Despite the local high school being less than eight miles away and starting at 8:30 a.m., Emma's commitment to education leads her to wake up early every day to

ensure she catches the school bus.

Returning home around 5:00 p.m., Emma takes on household responsibilities, including cleaning, supporting her mother who arrives fatigued from a day's work in the fields. With her only available time for homework being the evenings, Emma dedicates herself to both academics and assisting her mother, checking in on her day while they enjoy a hot meal together.

Emma's life has been marked by a unique, challenging rhythm common among the children living in migrant housing centers across the State of California. Since the beginning of her primary education, the migrant center's annual closure has meant a journey to México. Out of her 17 years, she has spent an entire year in the United States only once. Reflecting on her experiences, Emma shared, "They teach differently; what I learn in México is not gonna help me here because they don't teach the same. At first, I thought it was fun switching schools, but it actually affects us a lot; it affects your grades, your learning, your friends, so it's not cool."

Her realization of the impact of constant relocations intensified in high school. As a freshman, Emma recognized the importance of a stable education for pursuing her dreams of majoring in fashion and traveling the world. Despite grappling with the challenges of the 50-mile rule and coming from a single-parent farmworker household, Emma remains true to her dreams. Beyond personal aspirations, she actively contributes to her community by serving as an interpreter and translator for events addressing the realities faced by farmworker families in the center. Emma's *testimonio* embodies *valentía* and *fortaleza*, with a commitment to both her personal development and that of her community, symbolizing her relentless pursuit of achieving her dreams.

Guadalupe Pimental

> Living at the camp kinda was like its own little shelter because we were surrounded by other poor farm workers. So I didn't really see the outside world that often, and because my parents would come back so tired from work, they would just go straight to getting ready for the next day . . . my parents were taken away from me, farm worker labor stole my parents from me, and so I feel like I never had them next to me while growing up.
>
> – Guadalupe Pimental

Guadalupe Pimental (they/them/theirs) is a 23-year-old graduate student, just one semester away from receiving their master's degree. Guadalupe's parents, who worked as farmworkers, moved to a migrant center years before they were born. When recounting their experiences, their happiest moment was leaving the migrant center to begin a new life at a four-year institution as an undergraduate student. In the migrant center where Guadalupe grew up, attending a four-year institution is like winning the lottery, with slim odds exacerbated by the challenges posed by the 50-mile rule and the recurrent disruptions to schooling and housing.

Guadalupe, the second youngest child, in their *testimonio*, shared core memories of growing up with limited resources. They reflected, "I feel like throughout life, my mom and my dad were hesitant to speak about money because they were ashamed of it, right? Ashamed of not having money, of being poor, and so we didn't really talk about money." Despite their parents' silence on the matter, at a young age, Guadalupe realized that they were "poor" because they noticed their mother's facial expression every time they went to the stores, "She looked lost, gazing at items she wanted but knew we couldn't afford. . . . Every time we left the grocery store, she'd double and triple-check the receipt to make sure she wasn't overcharged." In their adolescent years, Guadalupe analyzed their family's situation, recognizing that their economic

struggles were tied to their parents bending their backs and picking strawberries every day for 10 hours. Guadalupe also recognized that their parents' job in the field meant that they could not be fully raised by them.

Guadalupe's older siblings, who were in high school when Guadalupe was about seven years old, took on caregiving responsibilities, fostering a strong bond among them. From a tender age, Guadalupe harbored dreams of leaving the migrant center and pursuing higher education, recognizing that this was almost impossible if they continued traveling to México during the off-season. Yet, determined to stay in the same high school year-round, Guadalupe found a solution when their parents and other siblings moved to Michoacán. Their older sister, already independent with a family residing in the same town, provided the support needed for Guadalupe to stay in the same school year-round. During the winter, when their parents were in Michoacán, Guadalupe found *un hogar* and *cariño* at their sibling's home.

Additionally, another pivotal moment that supported Guadalupe in achieving their educational goals was when their high school hosted representatives from the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) from several universities, providing Guadalupe insights into the requirements for university acceptance. This encounter ignited a spark, offering a way out from following their parents' footsteps in the fields. Guadalupe's path involved extra effort—staying after school, seeking tutoring services, attending summer school, and maintaining regular communication with the migrant teacher at their high school. Guadalupe dreams of a future where parents do not have to "sacrifice their body and soul to stay alive, even though that sacrifice itself is what's killing them."

Julian Martínez

> I just wish that 50 mile rule would have never been there, you know. That would have helped me and many other migrant students a lot. That would have just been it. It would have definitely helped me to keep up my grades, not fall behind. I mean, once you get back from México, you do go back to school, but you don't know what's going on. You can try to catch up, but it's hard. You start from zero every time you come back.
>
> – Julian Martínez

Julian (he/him/his), age 24, is a third-generation farmworker in the United States. Like many others in the center, he was born and raised in a migrant center. As the middle child, he is the son of farmworker parents and the grandchild of a former Bracero. Throughout his 24 years, he has annually traveled to and from México during the off-season, except for one year when he lived independently in a small trailer near a local city.

In his *testimonio*, Julian frequently referenced the 50-mile rule, expressing a wish for its nonexistence as it complicates the living, social, and educational aspects of an already difficult life in the fields. Currently, Julian is working in farm work involving "four different crops—lettuce, *apio*, *betabel*, and *repollo*." His responsibilities include cleaning and preparing the fields, as he explained, "limpio los fields, los preparo para que sean cosechados." Growing up, Julian harbored no desire for a job like his parents' due to witnessing the toll it took on their bodies. He recalled, "My dad estaba doblado toda su vida . . . but to live here, to have affordable housing, one needs to work in the fields."

During high school, while navigating between two borders, Julian aimed for academic success but faced numerous obstacles. The job and responsibilities his parents had in the fields did not provide Julian with the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities, reflecting

on these challenges, he stated, ". . . For me, I remember that I could never miss the bus because my parents were either working or resting at home, tired. Who's going to want to drive all the way to [another city] to pick up your kid after working nine to ten hours, bending over in the strawberry fields?" For migrant youth like Julian, having parents who work in the fields becomes not only a sacrifice for the parents but also for the family, as they have to limit many of their activities due to the isolation of where the migrant center is located.

In his sophomore year, Julian was transferred to a continuation high school, where he witnessed school violence—intimidation, gangs and drugs. His senior year brought the loss of his father, his best friend. Overwhelmed by grief, Julian could not focus on his studies and was not able to graduate from high school. During this challenging period, he found support and love from his current wife, who stood by him and his family through their darkest times.

At the age of 17, Julian and his then-girlfriend, now his wife, began living together at his parents' home in the migrant center. Reflecting on his lived experiences, he noted, "Por todo lo que pasó con mi dad y todo, encontré apoyo en mi esposa. Ese año también me junté. Me ayudó mucho. El primer año fue muy difícil porque no estaba puesto en estar con una pareja, era un niño, pero teníamos que sobrevivir, fue difícil. . . . Poco a poco, salimos adelante, pero la que me ayudó mucho fue ella. . . . siento que es la persona que nos ayudó mucho." As school became more challenging due to the emotional turmoil and depression Julian was experiencing following his father's unexpected passing, he stopped attending school but wanted to support his family as best as he could. He began working in the fields but promised himself that he would never work particularly in the strawberry fields due to witnessing the chronic back problems his parents experienced.

Despite the challenges he faces as an agricultural worker, what brings Julian immense

happiness is coming home to his wife, as they wholeheartedly support and uplift each other through life's challenges. When Julian envisions his future alongside his wife, he dreams of a brighter tomorrow. After six years of working in multiple occupations—having experience in various fields, including raspberry fields and landscaping jobs—Julian anticipated "finding a better job in the future," aspiring to secure a more stable position for the well-being of his body and his family.

Josefina Ruíz

> Going over there and then coming back, what they were teaching us was totally different. Even the way they solved math problems was different, and they would try to show me how to solve them but it was hard. Then I would come here, the answers would be the same, but the methods of how to solve it would be totally different. It's hard to have to learn something all over again.
>
> – Josefina Ruíz

Josefina Ruíz (she/her/hers), a 24-year-old young woman born in Morelia, Michoacán, México, immigrated to California at the age of five with her parents and younger sister, who was less than a year old at the time. Her father, no stranger to the journey, had been crossing the border for work starting about 30 years ago when he was in his late teenage years. He joined family members in the USA as a farmworker, including his father, uncles, and cousins. Upon settling in California, Josefina's mother also began working in the fields.

Reflecting on her father's 15-year journey as a farmworker, Josefina shared, "He would always work in the raspberry, for some time, he was even the *mayordomo*. In México, he would make doors and windows, but that was before he got married. After he got married, a year later, my mom got pregnant, and he came to the U.S. right away." Josefina's father has since

transitioned to working as a driver for a roofing company, significantly improving their family's circumstances and educational journey.

At the age of 12, Josefina, along with her parents and two sisters, began living in a migrant center. Owing to the constraints of the 50-mile rule, Josefina experienced schooling in both California and México during her formative years, spanning middle and high school. Her two younger siblings, with just a year and a half of age difference between each other, faced disruptions only in their elementary school education, until the family secured a permanent home. In 2016, Josefina's family's living situation changed when Josefina's grandfather, desiring retirement in México, decided to stop paying for the home he had purchased and pass down the property to his son, Josefina's father. Josefina's family moved to a stable home in the city, an opportunity facilitated by Josefina's father taking over her grandfather's mortgage. Despite her family's departure from the migrant center, Josefina continued living there with the family of her then-boyfriend, now husband.

A few years ago, Josefina and her husband, both agriculture workers responsible for cleaning and harvesting fields, secured their own home in the migrant center. Josefina deeply values her residence in the center, as it resonates with the atmosphere of her hometown in México. Originating from nearby towns, the families have created a strong community characterized by support and harmony. While the sense of living in a close-knit community brings joy to Josefina, she harbors concerns about the future, especially if she and her husband decide to have a child. With over 12 years of living in the migrant center, Josefina, aware of the challenges imposed by the 50-mile rule, is cautious about starting a family due to the potential impact on their child's education while living there. She acknowledged the difficulty: "I honestly can't picture myself having a baby here, like living here in the center with a baby; that is hard. I

mean, that's why we haven't because it's just hard." With this in mind, Josefina looks forward to one day continuing her education, possibly securing a higher-paying job with improved working conditions, which in turn would mean better housing for her and her family in the future.

Community Leaders And Advocates

The study involves a third and final group comprising community leaders and advocates who have organized through grassroots practices to raise awareness about the challenges faced by farmworker families on a daily basis. Their collective effort aims to bring an end to the 50-mile rule, which deeply impacts the educational opportunities of migrant children residing in migrant centers across the state. All four community leaders and advocates in this study are familiar with each other, having collaborated in coalitions with the common goal of advocating for farmworker families in migrant centers. Figure 5 presents a demographic composition of the four community leaders and advocates, offering general information relevant to the focal point of their work. I explore this aspect in greater detail later in the study and how it relates to their advocacy work in relation to the 50-mile rule.

Figure 5. Community Leaders and Advocates: Demographic Information.

NAME	ETHNICITY	OCCUPATION	YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH OR ON BEHALF OF MIGRANT FAMILIES
DR. ANN LÓPEZ	MEXICAN-AMERICAN & ANGLO-AMERICAN	EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ***CENTER FOR FARMWORKER FAMILIES***	30+ YEARS
DR. JULIE SOLOMON	WHITE	PROGRAM EVALUATION CONSULTANT	14+ YEARS
LAUREN ORNELAS	MEXICAN DESCENT	FOUNDER & GENERAL PROGRAMS COLLECTIVE MEMBER ***FOOD EMPOWERMENT PROJECT***	11+ YEARS
AGGIE EBRAHIMI BAZAZ	IRANIAN-AMERICAN	DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER, WRITER & EDUCATOR	10+ YEARS

Portraits of Community Leaders and Advocates

Dr. Ann López

> I have been very frustrated with the 50-mile rule for decades . . . when I started doing my research, I found out that people who are living in the migrant camps had to move at least 50 miles away at the end of the season if they wanted to come back the following season…some of the people I interviewed, their kids went to three to even four different schools in one year, in two cultures, two languages, and two countries, being México and the United States. And so what happens is that the students fall further and further behind and eventually drop out.
>
> – Dr. Ann López

Dr. Ann López (she/her/hers) is the founder and Executive Director of Center for Farmworker Families, a nonprofit organization officially established in 2012. In 1994, she pursued a Ph.D. in environmental science, the focus of her doctoral research delved into the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on farms in west central México. Through this exploration, she gained profound insights into neoliberal capitalism, where NAFTA epitomized a trade agreement model rooted in deregulation, privatization, and the erosion of public services. Dr. López highlights the tendency to blame individuals who struggle in this economic framework, "a phenomenon evident in the homeless populations and among farmworkers."

Throughout this journey, Dr. López also became aware of the 50-mile rule that impacts farmworker families residing in state-sponsored migrant housing centers. Since the 1990s, Dr. López has been intimately acquainted with the families living in migrant centers. She has observed small children evolving into second- and even third-generation farmworkers as adults,

given that the 50-mile rule denies them the opportunity to obtain a stable education. Dr. López is also the author of *The Farmworkers' Journey*, a published book that comprises interviews conducted over ten years with farmworkers across California and México.

The realization of the plight faced by undocumented farmworkers, forced off their Mexican farms by NAFTA, prompted Dr. López to establish the Center for Farmworker Families. Her academic aspirations shifted as she typed the final page of her dissertation in 2002, leading her to a "crucial epiphany." Rather than pursuing a conventional path in academia, she felt compelled to address the issues uncovered in her research. The Center for Farmworker Families, born out of this realization, is dedicated to raising awareness about the unjust circumstances faced by the population of farmworkers, upon whom the majority relies. Dr. López emphasized the indispensable role of farmworkers, asserting that "without them, the entire industrial food system would crumble."

For the last 30 years, Dr. López has devoted each day to enhancing the lives of farmworker families through active engagement, support, and advocacy. Her commitment to this cause shows no signs of waning; she is determined to advocate for the fair treatment of farmworker families for the remainder of her life. Widely regarded as a hero within the farmworker community, Dr. López stands as a symbol of humanitarian work.

Dr. Julie Solomon

> A cycle of poverty is perpetuated, where the parents are living in poverty, and they're working as hard as they possibly can, trying to help their children get out of poverty and have other kinds of opportunities in life. They're not able to do that because their children are not able to complete their [high school] education, much less, go on to higher education.

– Dr. Julie Solomon

In her everyday and professional life, Dr. Julie Solomon (she/her/hers) serves as a consultant specializing in program evaluation within the health sector. Operating under her own consulting firm, she collaborates with "non-governmental organizations, grantmakers, government agencies, universities, and coalitions both domestically and internationally"—her focus is on evaluating program outcomes and facilitating learning and program enhancement. Dr. Solomon is dedicated to serving her community through various roles, from holding the position of Vice President of Infrastructure on the Board of Directors at Human Agenda at the time of the interview to previously serving on the Human Relations Commission within the city where she resides.

Dr. Solomon gained awareness of the 50-mile rule around 13 years ago during her involvement with Human Agenda, "a non-profit human rights and human needs-focused organization . . . engaged in locally focused work in the county [and] . . . addressing national and international issues." Despite Human Agenda being a volunteer-based board, where members juggle full-time jobs and other life responsibilities, Dr. Solomon, along with Richard Hobbs, the Executive Director (until 2024) and co-founder of Human Agenda, and other board members immersed themselves in advocating for farmworker families. Adopting a true servant-leadership approach, they initiated their efforts by attentively listening to the *testimonios* of farmworker families. Their goal was to formulate an action plan based on the voices of those residing in migrant centers—the voices of farmworker families often silenced, disregarded, and hidden.

For numerous years, Dr. Solomon helped spearhead the work with the coalition called Apoyo Campesino within Human Agenda, collecting data from the four largest migrant centers in California and collaborating with other organizations, including Center for Farmworker

Families and Food Empowerment Project. Over the past decade, Dr. Solomon has consistently attended events, unwavering in her support for farmworker families. She utilizes her skills and knowledge to contribute in every capacity available, showcasing a lifelong commitment to the essential cause of improving the education of migrant children across the state.

lauren Ornelas

> I was just outraged, I mean, saddened and outraged to know that our state was literally responsible for impacting the education of these kids whose families have given up so much, and I just said, we need to do whatever we can to stop this.
>
> – lauren Ornelas

lauren Ornelas (she/her/hers), the founder and general programs collective member of Food Empowerment Project (F.E.P), established her nonprofit organization in 2007 with a focus on food justice. With over 30 years of experience in advocating for the human and animal rights movement, Ornelas has collaborated with activists across the country. Her work centers on making direct and straightforward changes, and she fearlessly uses her voice to champion these causes. For example, she successfully "persuaded Trader Joe's to discontinue the sale of all duck meat" and brought about corporate changes within Whole Foods Market, Pier 1 Imports, and other companies. Ornelas was also influential in "inspiring the founder of Whole Foods Market to adopt a vegan lifestyle."

Ornelas's legacy of advocacy and commitment to change continued when, about a decade ago, she became aware of the 50-mile rule during her participation in a "Farmworker Reality Tour" with Dr. López and the Center for Farmworker Families. Deeply moved and outraged by the impact of state policies on the education of children from farmworker families, Ornelas decided to take action. Initiatives included "pressuring heads of Housing and Community

Development, engaging with legislators, organizing protests, and participating in forums," Ornelas shared during her *testimonio*. Despite encountering challenges with the regulatory agency, in her *testimonio*, Ornelas also shared that she embraced the roles of "advocate and agitator, actively seeking media attention and urging those in power to address the issue." Describing herself as a relentless "campaigner," Ornelas emphasized her commitment to persist until achieving positive outcomes.

Ornelas's work and advocacy have proven highly successful and essential to society. Dolores Huerta, Co-Founder of the United Farm Workers and President of the Dolores Huerta Foundation, expressed support for Ornelas's organization, stating, "As a vegetarian and someone who has dedicated my life to causes of justice, I strongly support Food Empowerment Project's efforts to connect the issues of justice for farmworkers, food, and animals, protecting the environment and providing equal access to healthy foods" (Food Empowerment Project, 2024).

With the conclusion of the 50-mile waiver in January 2024, Ornelas initiated a new coalition with Dr. Joaquin Arambula, an assembly member representing California Assembly District 31. Aligned with other community leaders and advocates in this study, Ornelas remains dedicated to fighting against injustices faced by migrant families. She is focused and committed to uplifting the voices and needs of farmworker families.

Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz

> When I was there, I was struck by the place we were because in the background I was hearing the gunshots of the shooting range next door while seeing the adorable children riding around on their bicycles, so gleeful and happy . . . [migrant centers] were designed to be invisible from the public eye . . . they were designed that way to be by the public dump or the jail, off the public county roads.

– Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz

Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz (she/her/hers), an award-winning, Iranian-American documentary filmmaker, writer, and educator, actively participates in practice-based research focused on community-engagement. Leveraging her firsthand understanding of immigration experiences, as an immigrant herself, Bazaz is committed to films that frequently explore the dynamics of migratory and immigrant communities. Her primary focus lies in crafting critical documentaries with the goal of harnessing power through the voices of those intimately connected to the documentary's narrative. Furthermore, Bazaz's thematic emphasis revolves around immigration, diasporic identities, belonging, and Freirean praxis. Notable among Bazaz's works are "La Casa De Mama Icha" (2021), "How to Tell a True Immigrant Story" (2019), and "Inheritance" (2012).

Bazaz's encounter with the concept of the 50-mile rule occurred in 2015 during her research on former Braceros. Initially focused on creating a documentary centered on interviews with Braceros in the San Joaquin Valley, she crossed paths with Luis Magaña, a Central Valley activist, advocate, farmworker and son of a Bracero. Invited by Señor Magaña to a migrant center, Bazaz had the opportunity to interview a Bracero who, after more than 40 years, still resided in a migrant center with his family. This marked Bazaz's initial visit and introduction to a migrant center. During her visit and through interactions with families, she gained insights into the 50-mile rule.

Prompted by this encounter, Bazaz delved into online research to further explore the 50-mile rule. Her investigation addressed fundamental questions concerning its origins, purpose, and impact on families—similar to the inquiries posed in this study. Eager to connect with others working on the same issue, Bazaz diligently sought information, leading her to discover Apoyo Campesino's page on the Human Agenda website. Intrigued and invested in hearing the voices

and stories of families affected by the 50-mile rule, Bazaz was inspired to create “Como Vivimos” (How We Live), the first-ever published film on the 50-mile rule, released in spring 2024.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter highlights the experiences, shared struggles, and individual narratives among migrant parents, migrant youth, and community advocates in relation to the 50-mile rule. The migrant parents, predominantly from Michoacán, México, and with a multigenerational background in farm work, especially in strawberry fields, exhibit a common pattern of low educational attainment coupled with a strong desire for their children to obtain an education. Migrant youth, growing up in a migrant housing center, share a unique set of experiences. These are shaped by frequent relocations due to the 50-mile regulation, attending schools in two different countries, and coping with a transitory lifestyle. Despite these shared circumstances, there is a remarkable diversity in their educational paths. The community leaders and advocates are familiar with each other’s work and collectively strive to challenge policies like the 50-mile rule, which impacts the education of migrant children. This narrative weaves together the collective resilience and individuality of these groups, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of each family’s story and the advocacy efforts against the 50-mile rule.

Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter is divided into two parts. The initial part addresses the first question of this study: (1) “How do migrant students residing in a state-sponsored migrant housing center navigate and negotiate the complexities of their educational journeys within the educational systems of both the United States and México, in relation to the 50-mile rule?” From the first question of the research, three dominant themes emerged from *los testimonios* of migrant parents and youth. The first theme, “Access to Education,” pertains to factors influencing migrant families' access to educational resources. This includes enrollment barriers, language barriers,

and discriminatory practices within the curriculum and instruction. The second theme, “Quality of Education,” addresses aspects related to the educational quality received by migrant children, encompassing the migrant education program and teacher support. The final theme, “Educational Attainment and the 50-mile Waiver,” focuses on the educational levels achieved by migrant youth and how factors associated with the 50-mile rule and its waiver influence their educational attainment.

The second part of this chapter addresses the second research question: “How do the multifaceted lived experiences and living conditions of migrant families residing in a state-sponsored migrant housing center shape their sense of belonging and social integration?” Through this inquiry, three themes emerged: housing stability, family and community support, and access to transportation. In the first theme, *los testimonios* reveal issues of affordability and overcrowding, and describe how families navigate their living situations. The theme of family and community support highlights a strong sense of belonging among families residing in the center, creating an atmosphere akin to a large family. Friendships formed within the center often extend into school, and young adults frequently marry their neighbors. Finally, in the theme concerning transportation focuses on how migrant families manage their limited public and school transportation options.

In this chapter, Figure 6 presents a general overview of each migrant youth's educational journey, including their use of the 50-mile waiver, participation in extracurricular activities, and the approximate distance to the nearest high school in their town in México. These topics will be further discussed in the chapter.

Figure 6. Migrant Youth's Education Journey.

NAME	UTILIZED THE 50-MILE WAIVER	WHEN THE 50-MILE WAIVER WAS IMPLEMENTED...	PARTICIPATED IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL	ATTENDED A FORMAL HIGH SCHOOL IN MEXICO	DISTANCE TO THE NEAREST HIGH SCHOOL IN THEIR TOWN IN MEXICO
MONICA PÉREZ	YES	PARENTS SEARCHED FOR A LOCAL ROOM TO RENT DURING THE OFF SEASON	NO	NO	25+ MILES
EMMA GARCÍA	NO	DUE TO THE HIGH COST OF LIVING, SINGLE MOTHER CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY NON-SUBSIDIZED RENT	NO	NO	18+ MILES
GUADALUPE PIMENTAL	NO	STUDENT WAS ALREADY LIVING IN COLLEGE DORMS	NO	NO	18+ MILES
JULIAN MARTÍNEZ	NO	PARTICIPANT WAS ALREADY AN ADULT	NO	NO	18+ MILES
JOSEFINA RUÍZ	NO	PARTICIPANT GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL A YEAR BEFORE THE WAIVER WAS INTRODUCED	NO	NO	12+ MILES

Section I: Learning and Schooling Experiences

Access to Education

As the end of the growing season approaches and migrant centers prepare to close for the winter, families receive a formal "Move Out Appointment Information" letter specifying the date and time they must vacate their units. It is crucial to ensure that nothing is left behind, as any items left will be disposed of, and families must also return their keys. Receiving this letter annually prompts migrant families to schedule a visit to their children's school, where they need to disenroll their children. “Es literalmente el último paso que tenemos que tomar antes de irnos para nuestro pueblo,” Amanda shares. Migrant parents postpone this step until the end to ensure that their children do not lose any more days. Every day they miss school represents a significant loss of opportunities, prompting parents to prioritize this process in order to minimize disruptions to their children's already unstable education.

Upon arriving at the U.S. school their children have attended since the beginning of the school year, secretaries or registrar staff provide families with the necessary documents to obtain a "carta binacional." Amanda describes this document as a transfer, allowing a legal transition from one school to another. She explains,

> Una tarjeta binacional viene siendo una transferencia, como que vas de esta escuela directo allá y tiene su importancia porque si nosotros nos fuéramos por avión hoy y llegamos hoy mismo, ellos saben. Entonces yo inmediatamente tengo que ir al día siguiente a apuntar a mis hijos en la escuela de nuestro pueblo (Amanda).

Amanda and many migrant families moving to México during the off-season are well acquainted with the three specific requirements necessary to qualify for the "Transferencia del Estudiante Migrante Binacional." This official document and program grant recognition from first to twelfth grade for the migrant population frequently traveling between México and the United States. It facilitates their placement in the receiving school based on their age and the corresponding grade, allowing migrant students to continue their studies in México.

The three requirements mentioned by migrant families are 1) "Información general del estudiante," 2) "Información general de los padres," and 3) "Boleta de calificaciones del año" (a report card or transcript). To complete and officially file "la carta binacional," families must then drive to their closest "Consulado General de México," located 45 to 100 miles away from the migrant center. If parents are fortunate, every other year, the Consulate of México offers mobile services in their city, sparing them the need to drive to the closest office. However, families are aware that they cannot rely on mobile services and must drive north before heading south to the border.

Once migrant families arrive in Michoacán, México, the schooling journey continues for migrant students, yet the challenges they face persist, making it feel like a recurring battle each year. Starting school in México implies a pause in everything migrant students were learning in the USA schools, redirecting their focus to new material and new methods of learning. Emma, Monica, Guadalupe, Julian, and Josefina shared comparable sentiments when discussing their educational experiences in México. They consistently expressed similar observations and comments concerning the available educational resources and the teaching methods employed in the schools they attended. Julian described the feeling,

> You would arrive, and the material was completely different from what one was learning back in the States. It was super different. Gracias a Dios, soy bilingüe, entiendo bien y todo, pero regresando acá, el inglés era un poquito diferente. Uno siente que se atrasó porque solo era español por unos meses. Siento que las tareas de allá no estaban ni cerca de cómo se estaba haciendo aquí en la preparatoria. No era nada igual.

For migrant youth like Julian, navigating school between México and the United States was a constant struggle in the classrooms, and the experiences he endured are core memories he will never forget. In his *testimonio*, he recalls that, from a very young age, he vividly remembers attending kindergarten in México. To this day, he still cherishes memories of his friends from kindergarten and his teachers. Due to the limited resources in their small town in Michoacán, Julian's community only offered education from kindergarten to middle school. The classes Julian and other migrant students attended were specifically tailored for them, with teachers deliberately arranging them due to their intermittent attendance during certain seasons. These classes were so small that Julian had only about ten peers. Julian's narrative presents an insightful perspective on the challenges faced by students in rural areas regarding access to

education beyond middle school. His personal experience highlights the need for alternative arrangements, such as specialized classes, to accommodate students transitioning to high school in remote regions. Similarly, Josefina explains,

> In the US, I just graduated high school, and then I didn't continue studying after that. It was hard, going over there and then coming back, what they were teaching us was totally different. Even the way they solved math problems was different, and they would try to show me how to solve them, but it was hard. Then I would come here, the answers would be the same, but the methods of how to solve it would be totally different. It's hard to have to learn something all over again.

The narratives of migrant youth highlighted a commonality in their perceptions of the learning environment, shedding light on shared challenges or distinctive features that shaped their educational journeys and life outcomes. While the curriculum and instruction varied between countries, what remained consistent was the constant struggle of navigating limited educational resources. However, within this struggle, students were able to discover alternatives to a system they did not want to become victims of.

When attending school in México, in the town where all migrant participants lived, the nearest high school was located either in another municipality or nearby city. This meant that migrant students were unable to continue their education once they reached the high school level. To address this challenge, migrant families got creative and approached the town's middle school teachers, asking if their children could remain in a classroom to earn credits. For the migrant youth, this experience felt like repeating 8th grade all over again for four years. Looking back, Guadalupe reflects on the specific actions her parents and a handful of other migrant parents took to ensure they received proper credits that could be transferred back to the USA school system.

> Pretty much, we repeated 8th grade during our high school years, and, well, I don't know how my mom managed to transfer credits regardless, but I think she had to slip a couple of bills [laughs], if you know what I mean, to get some grades for me to transfer over to high school. And she did the same for my siblings, and other migrant families from the same center had to do the same.

This scenario exemplifies Luis Urrieta's concept of movidas y transas, where families devise strategies to navigate and survive within oppressive systems, showcasing the community's resourcefulness and resilience (Urrieta, 2009). Such strategies are often essential adaptations to overcome barriers and access opportunities otherwise inaccessible due to systemic inequalities. However, it is crucial to recognize that these adaptive strategies respond to systemic barriers that should not exist. By acknowledging the necessity of movidas y transas, this study also advocates for systemic changes to create a more equitable educational landscape for migrant families. Furthermore, what Guadalupe's parents did — movidas y transas — is a common practice in finding alternatives to navigate a system that works against migrant and farmworker families. Migratory families articulate the constraints within México's educational landscape, where high school access is primarily reserved for the affluent or well-connected due to the absence of local high schools in their rural communities. This socioeconomic barrier results in a significant portion of rural residents concluding their formal education at the elementary or middle school level. Consequently, the educational trajectory in these areas often necessitates migrant students returning to the same middle school location for their high school years. However, for Josefina and migrant families originally from a different town in the state of Michoacán, a viable alternative for high school education is not a possibility. Josefina's family attempted

unsuccessfully to persuade teachers to allow the children to repeat middle school to obtain high school credits upon their return to the USA. Josefina describes the situation as follows:

> Once you are in high school and migrate to my town in México, you no longer go to school. You wouldn't even be able to go to the middle school and repeat the year, like other families do it in the center, they are more strict here. In my town, the parents are involved, you see them doing activities, and there are more teachers, the schools are bigger. I even see parents inside the schools and classrooms helping out, either selling by a booth or being involved by helping the teachers.

Josefina provides insight into the dynamics within her hometown, where parental involvement is ingrained in the school's culture, evident through various activities and supportive roles within the educational institutions. She highlights the larger school sizes and the active presence of parents within classrooms, contributing to the higher quality of education students receive in her town during elementary and middle school years. Josefina expresses admiration for the quality of education provided to students from kindergarten through 8th grade, noting its superiority compared to the schools located in the hometowns of other migrant families residing in the same migrant center, often drawing comparisons of each town and resources. However, this praise is juxtaposed with the stringent regulations of her town's school, which came at a significant cost for Josefina's education. During Josefina's high school years in México, she spent her days at home with her grandparents, experiencing a pause from formal education lasting three to six months. Consequently, Josefina was able to attend school for only 26 out of 40 months during her high school career. This interruption in schooling exacerbated the challenges she encountered upon returning to the United States, further complicating her reintegration into the educational system, and life after high school.

Once migrant students return to the United States, back to living in the migrant centers, usually during the months of March, April, and sometimes May, the first order of business for parents is to visit the schools their children attended prior to their departure. Stepping into the school offices, they are overwhelmed with nervousness and anxiety, acutely aware of the uncertainty regarding available space for their children. Often, they find themselves facing a bureaucratic maze, where enrollment is not guaranteed due to limited capacity and a high number of students already enrolled. The process becomes a delicate balance of hopeful anticipation and apprehension, as parents wait anxiously for confirmation that their children can resume their education in familiar surroundings.

Quality of Education

When reflecting on California's education system, a pivotal element underscored and commended by migrant families is the Migrant Education Program (MEP), particularly during their high school years. This program offered the migrant youth in this study a range of valuable services, including *consejos* (advice), after-school tutoring, college presentations, establishing a constant communication line with parents — fostering connections with families — and creating a safe space where migrant youth felt a sense of belonging during their high school years. Notably, students from the migrant program took the initiative to form a school student association club, thereby creating additional avenues to support one another. The mission of this association is to cultivate a more positive and inclusive campus environment specifically tailored to the needs of migrant students. The findings from this study align with prior literature by Perez and Zarate (2017), which emphasizes the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy and supportive programs like the MEP in enhancing the academic success of migrant students.

Programs such as the MEP help address the unique challenges faced by migrant students and can make a difference in their educational journeys.

The migrant program services received by the high school participants are overseen by a single teacher, commonly referred to as the "migrant teacher" by both the youth within the school and the broader community. Among the memorable pieces of *consejos* (advice) migrant youth recall receiving from their migrant teacher is the recommendation to promptly contact their U.S. teachers upon arriving in México. This communication serves to request access to curriculum and assignments, enabling them to continue learning and to complete as much homework as possible while away. The migrant education teacher emphasizes the importance of reaching out to their teachers by email and ensuring they can provide access to Google Classroom. Emma vividly recounts her experience:

> One thing the school does when I travel to México is disconnect me from all my school accounts, including my email. I lose access to everything, so when I arrive to México, I email my teachers using my personal email address, asking if I can join their Google Classroom. This enables me to regain access to Google Classroom and complete my assignments.

This anecdote sheds light on the practical challenges faced by migrant students when navigating educational disruptions due to forced relocation, underscoring the importance of listening to the *consejos* provided by their migrant teacher. In similar research, Kozoll, Osborne, and García (2003) highlight that the academic success of migrant students is significantly enhanced when teachers embrace the students' home languages and cultural value systems. By recognizing and valuing the students' backgrounds, teachers can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. In this study, the migrant youth participants shared that their

migrant teacher encouraged them to develop skills in proactive communication and resourcefulness to the fullest extent possible. Another example of *consejos* received by migrant youth by their migrant teacher was the reminder to use all the migrant services available to them. For example, the migrant teacher also invited colleges from different parts of the state to make educational presentations during lunch in order for migrant students to learn about the opportunities and support they can receive when they enter higher education. These visits entailed presentations aimed at persuading students to apply for admission, emphasizing "the availability of reserved slots" at these universities for migrant students like themselves. The overarching objective was to facilitate access to higher education, with the colleges actively seeking to enroll migrant students to further their educational pursuits. What all college visitors had in common was that their universities offered the CAMP program, which promised to continue to support migrant youth once their transition from high school to college. To ensure that migrant students from the center attended the presentation, the migrant teacher would take an extra step to ensure student attendance. Guadalupe recalls the moment when the migrant teacher called home:

> Little did I know that they actually had access to my mom's phone number, and they had access to the phone numbers of all the high schoolers that were in the migrant program, and so they would call my mom and they would say like, "Oh, [Guadalupe] should come over to the presentations, we have information about financial aid" and stuff like that. And so my mom would then convince me to use the resources from the migrant program, to go to college right.

The migrant education program's multifaceted support signifies a crucial intervention in the educational landscape. Beyond academic assistance, it addresses the broader socio-cultural

and emotional aspects of the migrant students' experiences. The establishment of a student association further reflects a proactive response to create an environment that goes beyond education, aiming to enhance the overall well-being and integration of migrant students within the school community. This holistic approach not only recognizes the unique challenges faced by migrant students but actively works towards fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment. Research indicates that migrant students face numerous challenges that make them vulnerable in both health and academic performance. Social determinants of health significantly affect their emotional and physical well-being. Additionally, there is evidence demonstrating the interconnected impact of these factors on both their health and educational outcomes (Meroni & Velasco, 2023).

Migratory students who go to school in both México and the USA often find themselves navigating between two distinct worlds, each characterized by its own educational system, language, and cultural norms. School life is inherently challenging, but this complexity is further exacerbated by the 50-mile rule, the policy that mandates migrant families in state-sponsored housing centers to relocate a minimum distance to qualify for affordable housing, significantly disrupting the continuity of migrant students' education. Such frequent movements not only interrupt the learning of migrant youth but also impact the consistency of educational experiences, potentially leading to emotional and academic stress.

A recurrent theme among migrant youth, particularly regarding the quality of education they receive, pertains to their relationships with teachers in both México and the USA. Julian shares his experience: “En México, I don’t feel the teachers did much for me…lo único que hacían hasta el último era que te firmaban el papel, como si estudiaste.” Similarly, Josefina notes, “Teachers in México are aware that we were there only temporarily. We were just another student

in the class that was soon going to go back to California, nothing special." In México, migrant students like Julian and Josefina report minimal engagement from teachers, reflecting a lack of personalized attention. From the perspective of the migrant youth in this study, being "un estudiante migrante" in Mexican schools is perceived merely as a nominal status, carrying little significance for the schools or teachers within the Mexican education system. To them, "un estudiante migrante" indicates that a child, most likely born in the USA to farmworker parents, will join a classroom only equipped with a few desks and a chalkboard for a few months before returning to the USA, thus perpetuating a cyclical pattern. Based on the *testimonios* provided by the migrant youth in this study, schools in México did not offer resources specifically tailored to their needs. In the towns of Michoacán from which the migrant families originate, the nearest high school is, on average, 12 miles away, with the furthest being 25 miles away. These towns, typically with populations around 5,000 residents, feature traditional central plazas surrounded by agricultural fields, reflecting strong farming roots. The towns face challenges such as limited schooling facilities and resources, grocery stores, and medical services, often necessitating travel to nearby cities, requiring long commutes for residents.

In contrast, in the United States, teachers are often more cognizant of the students' migrant status compared to the teachers in México, and migrant teachers emerge as crucial figures in the *testimonios* of the migrant youth. Migrant teachers often acted as advocates and mediators, attempting to bridge the gap between the students' needs and the educational system's capabilities. When the migrant youth of this study were sharing their experiences in the classroom, I asked if they felt like their teachers knew their story and if they had connections with specific teachers. Josefina described her experience as follows:

> Well they knew what we were going through because I mean, there's a lot of kids that go to the same high school from [name of migrant center]. They knew of our story that we had to move but they couldn't do much about it. They have to follow the rules, too, you know. They can't let us graduate easier than other kids, either, we have to do the same jobs as everyone else. They have to treat us all the same in high school.

Josefina and other migrant students acknowledged that the teachers and school administration are aware of the unique challenges they faced as migrant students, as a good amount of students come from the same migrant housing center. This awareness, however, oftentimes does not translate into significant action or support tailored to their needs. The recognition of their struggles - having to move frequently - is there, but it is coupled with an inability or unwillingness to provide additional assistance. The quote also touches on a critical educational debate: equality versus equity. The school's approach of treating all students the same, irrespective of their individual challenges, reflects a focus on equality. This equal treatment fails to recognize the specific needs of migrant students, who require additional support to achieve equitable educational opportunities. It effectively erases the migratory status of these students, with schools often believing that addressing the challenges immigrant students face is not their responsibility. Instead, they leave it to the Migrant Education Program personnel. This approach overlooks the necessity for integrated support within the school system, which is crucial for helping migrant students overcome academic and social barriers related to their unique circumstances. Similarly, when Julian described the type of relationship he had with high school teachers in California, he shared:

> In high school, I felt like they didn't really care, they didn't really know who you are, nobody really cares if you are coming from a farmworker background or none of that.

> You are just there to do your work. The majority of people are white, they don't care, they don't focus on who is a migrant or who is not. But obviously the migrant teacher, he would care for you. He would help you out, but that was a specific teacher that was for specific kids like us, you know, since middle and high school. They knew we would be leaving, so they would try to get us some homework packets. They would be supportive until high school, because in high school, son más kids.

Julian's powerful palabras reflect a sense of disconnection and neglect experienced during his high school years, emphasizing a perceived lack of care or understanding from the majority of the school staff and peers, as the majority are white and unaware of the daily struggles and unique challenges migrant youth and families face. Julian's experiences illustrate racist nativism, where all Latinx are stereotyped as immigrants without recognizing their individual differences and specific needs. The contrast is drawn with the migrant teacher, who is seen as a figure of support and care, specifically for migrant students, providing tailored assistance like advocating for homework. In another example, Josefina mentioned that the migrant teacher would frequently inform the general education teachers about students who were soon to be unenrolled due to transferring schools:

> The migrant teachers would try to tell the other teachers to give us some work or something, you know, cause we were leaving. But, they would almost never give us homework, not in high school, so you would really fall behind. We would always have to end up going to summer school or make up the credits on the computer. There wasn't really any help from the teachers in high school. In middle school, they would give us homework to take but not in high school.

The migrant youth in this study expressed that the majority of the high school staff were not adequately prepared to understand and address the specific needs arising from their backgrounds as farmworker youth. Emma explains:

> Some teachers know, and some don't know my story, that my mother is a farmworker. I don't think they can really do anything about it. It's not like teachers give me homework or online access; somehow, you just have to learn all the missed homework by yourself. I'm often scared of checking my grades.

Additionally, Emma describes receiving support primarily from the migrant teacher, who is readily available and assists her and other migrant students with their homework. “He tries to help us improve, you know, he tries to help you with this migrant situation we are in which is very hard to be successful in,” Emma remarks, her eyes filled with a glimmer of hope.

Besides the migrant teacher, who was the primary source of educational support and guidance for the migrant youth in this study, another recurring theme in the *testimonios* of the migrant youth was the role of their Spanish teachers. Reflecting on and analyzing her own journey through the schools in the USA, Monica states:

> I don’t really talk to my teachers unless I need help. The only Latino teacher I have is my Spanish teacher. I connect with him well. My brother used to have the same teacher. When I don’t finish my work, he gives me more time. I wish all my other teachers would give us more time to finish the work and assignments…my teachers don’t really know me, they do not know that my parents are farmworkers. I really don’t communicate with teachers like that, I don’t have that type of relationship with them.

As indicated, Monica's interactions with her teachers are limited, except for her Spanish teacher, a Latino educator, which highlights the significant role of cultural and linguistic affinity

in educational support. Migrant students like Monica often need more time and support due to the process of adultification, where they are frequently responsible for helping their parents with younger siblings and household chores. This added responsibility can interfere with their ability to focus on schoolwork and participate fully in educational activities, necessitating additional understanding and flexibility from educators. Similarly, Guadalupe, reflecting on their educational experience in the USA, noted that besides the migrant teacher, support also came from Spanish teachers and peers of Mexican, Bolivian, and other Latino origins. Guadalupe recalls, "Many of the Spanish speaker students would come together and hang out with the Spanish teachers. We would also go to the migrant ed office, that's where we all hung out during lunch time." The support that Guadalupe and other migrant youth received was largely from individuals who shared an aspect of their identity, be it Latinx heritage and/or being Spanish-speaking.

The relationship between students having teachers with similar backgrounds and their success is well-documented. For example, Patricia Trejo, a former migrant student and current president of the Florida Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents, emphasizes the need for schools to hire more diverse educators. She argues that teachers who reflect the student population can foster a sense of belonging and support, particularly for migrant students facing unique challenges. Trejo highlights her efforts to promote equitable hiring practices and representation through her leadership role and encourages other educational leaders to do the same (Trejo, 2022). The cultural relevance in educational support for migrant students like Guadalupe is critical. The experiences of migrant youth in this study highlight the importance of having educators and peers who share similar cultural backgrounds, creating a supportive

community where students feel a greater sense of belonging. This alignment with their cultural and linguistic identity is a key factor in promoting better engagement and success in school.

Migrant students like Emma, Monica, Guadalupe, Josefina, and Julian often grapple with adapting to diverse educational settings, underscoring a systemic issue in delivering consistent support. Their experiences reveal challenges such as falling behind academically and needing remediation due to non-migrant-centric resources, frequent moves, and varying educational norms in the U.S. and México. These students typically engage in a negotiation process with educators and school systems, seeking tailored help and advocating for suitable assignments, amidst varied teacher responses. Crucially, as noted, migrant and Spanish teachers play a vital role in offering specific understanding and support, and they can sometimes make a significant difference in the educational journeys of migratory students through either creating safe spaces or networks of support.

After more than 32 years living in the same migrant center, Erica Sánchez's insights as a migrant parent offer a revealing glimpse into the educational challenges faced by migrant families. Erica, reflecting on a time when her eldest children were in high school, recounted the decisions she and her late husband made in pursuit of better educational opportunities. Rather than returning to México when the camp closed for the winter, they considered various options within their economic means. Eventually, they decided to move temporarily to California's Central Valley, as they had some “parientes lejanos” who invited them to come over temporarily. Erica shared in Spanish:

> Cuando mis hijos los mayores estaban en high school, hubo un invierno en donde no fuimos a México, nos movimos a Modesto y luego a Indio, les afectó muchísimo la

escuela. Nos quedamos en California para su escuela, pero me di cuenta que les afectó aún más.

Erica's primary goal was to enhance the educational quality and experience of her children. She recognized that the schools in México were not accessible to her children, as their town in México lacked a high school. The family's decision, driven by the desire to improve education quality, was based on the belief that schooling in the U.S., if it was in the same state of California and in English, would be more beneficial than returning to México. Despite these efforts and the continuity of instruction in English, Erica's children still faced academic struggles. These included misalignment across the schools' curricula, loneliness from not making friends, and an inability to relate to their teachers, who did not know their stories and where they were coming from. Erica's *testimonio* provides an insight into the complexities and unintended consequences families often encounter in their pursuit of a stable and quality education.

Educational Attainment and the 50-mile Waiver

In this study, the educational attainment of migrant youth presents a complex tapestry, shaped by a blend of shared and unique experiences. Key among these influencing factors is the 50-mile waiver, which, while designed to offer a type of level of stability, showed varied effectiveness in practice. For example, migrant centers typically close in November, and sometimes as late as early December. This timing poses a significant challenge for thousands of migrant children, particularly those in high school, as they are unable to complete their semester finals. Consequently, they are likely to receive an 'incomplete' for the semester. Upon their return to school in March or April, these students are then administered their fall finals. Their performance on these tests determines their final grades for the fall semester. For migrant students residing in state-sponsored centers, this cyclical pattern results in a constant struggle to

catch up academically. This situation not only impacts their immediate educational outcomes but also has long-term effects on their academic and career prospects and educational attainment. In this study, the impact of family and teacher support also emerges as a critical determinant, underlining how familial decisions and resources can significantly influence educational pathways and attainment. These elements, intertwined with individual circumstances and the broader socio-economic environment, have created a diverse spectrum of educational outcomes among the migrant youth in this study. This diversity reflects not only the challenges and inherent resilience in their journeys but also their continual search for creative solutions to navigate the constraints imposed by state regulations and policies.

The 50-mile rule mandates that migrant workers must relocate at least 50 miles away from their migrant center to access state benefits, including affordable housing. This requirement profoundly affects students' educational stability. Frequent relocations can disrupt learning, hinder educational continuity, and cause emotional distress. Moreover, the rule can also separate families, as they face the tough choice of either leaving their children with relatives or friends while the parents migrate to México, as illustrated by Guadalupe's *testimonio*.

Significantly, after persistent advocacy by organizations like the Center for Farmworker Families, Human Agenda, and the Food Empowerment Project, changes were made in 2018. These groups successfully campaigned for the allowance of families living in state-sponsored housing centers to request waivers from their housing managers. This waiver, effective from 2018 to January 2024, enabled up to half of migrant families residing in each housing center families to remain within a 50-mile radius after moving out of the housing centers, allowing their children to attend the same schools consistently. However, for families with school-age children to be eligible for the waiver, multiple steps needed to be taken. In this study, an inquiry into the

implementation of this waiver revealed challenges. All the community leaders and advocates interviewed for this study noted a lack of awareness and utilization of the waiver. They expressed concerns about inadequate dissemination of information, questioning the methods used to inform families, especially non-English speaking ones. lauren Ornelas, the founder of the Food Empowerment Project (F.E.P.), reflects on the passage of the 50-mile exemption waiver, emphasizing the importance of communication and outreach. She shares her concerns and proactive approach:

> When the 50-mile exemption waiver was passed, my immediate focus shifted to the dissemination of this information. I found myself repeatedly asking, "How are they informing migrant families? What methods are being used to ensure they are aware of this waiver?" For me, it became crucial to continuously engage with the Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department, ensuring that they were actively facilitating this communication.

This statement underscores lauren's commitment to ensuring that the waiver's intended beneficiaries were well-informed and able to access its benefits. Similarly, Aggie E. Bazaz, shared:

> I'm unsure about the extent to which families utilized the waiver. In [name of migrant center], for instance, its use was more widespread, largely thanks to Dr. López, who actively informed families about it. Unfortunately, other camps lacked such dedicated advocates. The state's communication efforts were minimal, so the waiver's impact remains uncertain. The information needed to be consistent, clear, and provided in Spanish. This should come not only from the state but also from the center managers,

community leaders, and mesa directiva. They should assist families in understanding and applying for the 50-mile waiver.

lauren Ornelas and Aggie E. Bazaz's words highlight key issues in the implementation of the 50-mile waiver, emphasizing its inconsistent application across different locations. They underscore that effective advocacy, as seen in one specific migrant center through Dr. López's efforts, plays a crucial role in informing families. However, a lack of similar advocacy in other areas and inadequate communication from the state resulted in underutilization of the waiver. The community leaders and advocates of this study suggested that extending the waiver is necessary but not enough; there is a pressing need for clear, consistent communication in Spanish and active assistance in the application process from various stakeholders, including state officials and community leaders. This reflects the need for a more coordinated approach to ensure the policy reaches and effectively aids its intended beneficiaries.

In this study, Monica Pérez was the only migrant youth who benefited from the waiver. The families of other migrant youths either could not afford to stay locally, as rent ranged from $2,500 to $3,500 per month, or the youths were no longer school-age and thus ineligible by the time the waiver was implemented. Compared to the unsubsidized rents outside migrant centers, the daily rental rates for housing units at the centers vary by location and unit size but are typically around $11.50 to $12.50 per day for one- to four-bedroom units, respectively. To put this in perspective, the monthly costs for a one-bedroom unit at the subsidized rate would be $345, and for a four-bedroom unit, it would be $375. This clearly contrasts with the market-rate rent for local housing, which is approximately 7 to 10 times higher, highlighting the significant financial challenge for families attempting to stay locally without the subsidized support provided by the migrant housing centers. Monica's parents became aware of the waiver through

the persistent advocacy of Dr. López. Since the waiver's introduction, Monica has been able to consistently attend the same high school throughout her freshman year and beyond. She shared, "I used to need help when I struggled in school, but now that we stay in [Tlaloc] all year, I no longer need it. I've improved a lot." The stability of attending the same school year-round has not only boosted Monica's academic performance but also her confidence and self-esteem. As a result, she now aspires to go to college, a goal that seemed unattainable before the waiver's implementation.

When reflecting on the waiver's impact, Monica's mother shares her gratitude, "La Señora López nos ayudó bastante, gracias a todo lo que ella hizo, mis hijos mejoraron sus calificaciones, yo he notado una gran diferencia. Mi hijo el mayor, pudo seguir estudiando por todo el año y sí se pudo graduar de la high school gracias al cambio." With the waiver enabling local residency, Monica's family needed to be strategic and plan accordingly. "Nos tenemos que salir de estas casitas, pero unos meses antes, mi esposo y yo buscamos un cuartito en donde vivir." Starting in late September, Monica's family begins searching for a room or studio to rent for themselves – a family of five – from December to March, until the migrant center reopens. Since 2018, they have resided in different rooms or studios each winter around the city. Despite the discomfort of living in a cramped space, Monica's mother believes it's worthwhile, saying, "A veces sí nos aceptan aunque estemos apretaditos en un cuarto pero nos quedamos para la educación de nuestros hijos, no quiero que mis hijos pasen por lo mismo que uno pasó." This is a form of cultural wealth, as defined by Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model, which recognizes the value of familial capital. This concept highlights how Monica's family draws upon their cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities to navigate and overcome obstacles, particularly in the context of supporting their children's education.

In Emma García's case, while the waiver represented a beacon of hope for many families at the migrant center, it fell short for her own family. Emma was unable to benefit from the waiver opportunity due to the high cost of living in the city. With rent prices soaring and her mother being the sole breadwinner, residing locally is financially unfeasible for them. When the camp closes, Emma and her mother migrate to México. However, to enable Emma to complete her finals and receive her fall semester grades, they temporarily stay in the city with family members or friends for a few days. After finishing the semester, they travel to Michoacán, engaging in a strategic migration also known as intentional *movidas migratorias*. Each year during period in a 50-mile regulation waiver could be obtained, Emma's mother did not lose hope of finding an affordable place to rent during the winter. Yet, despite her determination, she could not find affordable rental accommodation with a short-term lease. She explained, "Hay varios problemas, primero, las rentas son muy caras y yo no podría pagar una renta sola. También es muy difícil que solo te rente temporal, solo por unos tres meses."

To ensure Emma graduates from high school, her mother has a plan for during the off-season. While Emma's mother stays in México during the winter, Emma only goes to México for her Christmas vacation. When the spring semester begins in January, Emma returns to California to live with her oldest sister. Expressing optimism, Emma's mother shares, "Me dieron buenas noticias, el maestro de inmigrante, de que mi hija va muy bien en la escuela y le está echando muchas ganas. La voy a apoyar, la voy a dejar venir para que siga en la escuela. Solo le faltan dos años para graduarse de la high school." As a current junior, Emma is on track to graduate from high school. She is exploring community colleges and state universities to apply to during her senior year, aiming to find the best fit for her academic and career goals.

However, she is still unsure about the specific major she wants to pursue, considering a range of interests as she evaluates her options.

Emma is not alone in her story, as she and her mother have noticed that only a few families in the migrant center managed to fully benefit from the waiver, primarily due to the high cost of living in the area and the difficulty of finding temporary housing. Emma's mother believes the waiver mainly supported families with dual incomes, observing that those who could afford to stay locally typically have both parents working. Her savings were insufficient to cover even three months' rent. To cope, Emma's family's solution of staying with a sibling until the center reopens is common among families residing in the centers. However, this arrangement results in some migrant children being separated from their parents for several months. For teenagers, such separation during formative years can have significant emotional and developmental consequences. The lack of parental presence during these critical years can affect their social, emotional, and psychological development, potentially impacting their sense of security and overall well-being. The majority of migrant youth participants, in their *testimonios*, mentioned suffering from anxiety and depression while in high school. Many migrant youth participants noted that these emotional challenges hindered their academic performance and social interactions, leading to a sense of exclusion and isolation.

When the 50-mile waiver opportunity was introduced, Guadalupe Pimental (they/them/theirs) could not benefit from it, as they were already a college student residing in the dormitories of a four-year institution hundreds of miles away from the migrant center where they had lived from birth until the age of 18. Guadalupe's educational achievement is atypical compared to that of thousands of other children who grow up in migrant centers. Guadalupe became one of the first students from the migrant center to attend and graduate from a four-year

higher education institution. Reflecting on the support systems and resources that contributed to their educational achievements, including graduating from high school and, four years later, earning a Bachelor's degree, Guadalupe acknowledged the crucial roles played by their older sister and dedicated teachers. Guadalupe recalls, "During my high school years, instead of moving to México with my family for the winter, I was very lucky to be able to stay with my older sister and her family." This arrangement allowed Guadalupe to maintain educational continuity, as their sister assumed a parental role, significantly contributing to their academic success.

Additionally, Guadalupe benefited from extended after-school programs, remarking, "I was lucky that I actually stayed after school because there were after school buses running. We just had to take the late after school bus and get to the house around 7 or 8 PM. etc., so I would stay after school and catch up, my teachers tutored me and helped me enough to pass the tests and classes with a C." This opportunity was vital, as many teachers volunteered their time to assist students like Guadalupe, demonstrating a commitment to their students' educational progress. Guadalupe specifically remembers their chemistry teacher, who, despite being reluctant to stay after school, played a pivotal role in helping them pass the subject, thus maintaining the teacher's class grade average: "My chemistry teacher was kind of pissed to stay after school to help me [laughs], but he had to, his class grade would go down if I failed. I passed chemistry, he taught me well, not a very happy camper about it, but I learned and his ratings didn't go down."

Moreover, Guadalupe was proactive in utilizing resources available for migrant students. They were in constant communication with their migrant teacher, leveraging every opportunity tailored for migrant students at their high school. A significant milestone was learning about the resources and services available to migrant students in college. For example, Guadalupe

strategically applied to universities that offered the CAMP program, ensuring they had the necessary support as a migrant student. This careful planning and utilization of available resources underscore the importance of tailored educational programs and the impact of individual mentorship and support in overcoming the unique challenges faced by migrant students like Guadalupe.

Indeed, Guadalupe's educational journey emphasizes the critical role that college and university staff play in visiting high schools, especially in aiding migrant students to comprehend the pathways to higher education. This outreach is essential, as it enables migrant students to see themselves in higher education settings, while also informing them about their rights and the specific support systems available to them. Now one step closer to graduating with a master's degree, Guadalupe has applied to multiple Ph.D. programs. Guadalupe does not want to be the only one who is able to break free from the cycle of being a farmworker and residing in a migrant center; they "envision a world where farmworker families are free from poverty and children are able to pursue higher education."

For Guadalupe, improving the educational outcomes for migrant children requires multiple steps, not just the implementation of the 50-mile waiver. Guadalupe strongly believes that farmworkers should earn a minimum of $80,000 annually, considering the current economic challenges where surviving on under $20,000 is untenable. They argue for a fundamental "restructuring of the housing market to prevent farmworkers from being forced into camps," which often "leads to homelessness when these camps close." Guadalupe shares that the decision for migrant farmworker families to stay or travel to México should be a matter of free will and not a necessity driven by the 50-mile rule and the high cost of rents. Additionally, in their *testimonio*, Guadalupe strongly advocated for keeping farmworker centers open year-round, in

light of "climate change impacting agricultural seasons, which is decreasing the amount of income farmworker families earn." For Guadalupe, this change is crucial to prevent the ongoing displacement of farmworkers and their families, as limited financial resources reduce their ability to stay locally during the winter season.

Guadalupe is particularly concerned about the impact on children in migrant communities. They note a significant presence of children, including teenagers, who are undergoing similar challenges. Guadalupe shared:

> There are hundreds of kids right now that are going through the same thing I went through. Recently, I learned that they change some of the benefits I would get. Migrant kids no longer get priority for summer school. I used to get priority for summer school just for being a farmworker's kid, they don't anymore, so they're failing at ridiculous rates.

Guadalupe, who regularly visits the migrant center, notes that migrant children used to have priority for summer school, which significantly aided their educational progress. However, recent changes have revoked this priority, leading to increased failure rates as migrant children often re-enter the U.S. educational system at critical testing periods without adequate preparation. This situation exacerbates the challenges faced by farmworker families, highlighting the need for more supportive structures and policies.

Similar to Guadalupe, Julian Martínez was unable to benefit from the 50-mile waiver because it was introduced after he became an adult. Unlike Guadalupe, Julian did not complete his high school education. He works in the fields and lives in the same migrant center where he grew up, just in a different unit. When he learned about the 50-mile waiver, Julian expressed regret that such a policy was not available during his high school years. Reflecting on his

educational experience, Julian remembers the supplemental homework and tests he received, not specifically as a migrant student, but rather due to his enrollment in a continuation high school. "All the kids in that school were given packets of homework. The work was so basic and boring. They just tried giving you easy stuff to help bring up your GPA. I would finish the packets super fast; it would be like, 'What color is this?' 'Is this a triangle or square?' and easy stuff like that." Julian acknowledges that while the work was basic and sometimes monotonous, it aimed to boost students' GPAs. This method is common in continuation high schools, which are geared towards supporting students struggling academically. Furthermore, in his *testimonio*, Julian reflects that, although the work often seemed overly simplistic, it was part of an approach to provide manageable tasks to enhance academic performance. Julian views these efforts as attempts to motivate and aid students in their progress, particularly in remedial high school environments. "The packets were a way to support you, to help you get moving, maybe to motivate you?" Despite the challenges he faced growing up, Julian remains hopeful about eventually earning his high school diploma one day, showing resilience and a desire to continue his educational journey.

Josefina Ruíz was 19 years old when families living in State-sponsored centers with school-age children were given the opportunity through their property management to request a waiver to permit them to reside locally after the centers closed for the winter season. Josefina was no longer eligible for the waiver due to her age. A year before the waiver was introduced, she had obtained her high school diploma, graduating from a continuation high school. A significant aspect of Josefina's educational experience was the "50-mile rule," a policy affecting her since she was 12 years old. This rule had a profound influence on her life, dictating her educational path through her middle and high school years. Josefina's schooling in both the

United States and México made her educational journey a challenging one, filled with constant academic and emotional struggles as she navigated different educational systems. She always felt like she was playing a “catch-up game” where the rules seemed to be written against her.

As Josefina reminisced about her educational journey, she often drew comparisons with the experiences of her two younger siblings, both of whom are college students - one a freshman and the other a sophomore. These comparisons reveal a stark contrast in educational experiences within the same family. Josefina's younger sisters, in particular, had a markedly different experiences in middle and high school. This difference stemmed from the family's permanent move out of the migrant center, allowing them to establish a more stable home environment without the need to relocate.

This stability offered both her sisters the chance to attend the same middle and high school continuously, without the disruptions Josefina faced. "My sisters were able to attend the same high school without the need to move, and they had many opportunities that I did not have. Not being forced to move 50 miles and having a stable home and school, made all the difference for my sisters.” Reflecting on these differences and on the opportunities that were not available to her, Josefina's story serves as a testament to the challenges faced by other migrant children in similar circumstances, highlighting the significant impact that access to a permanent home, and thereby a stable education, can have on the educational attainment and trajectory of one’s life.

Section II: Living Conditions

Housing Stability

Before residing in a migratory farmworker housing center, every family in this study had endured extremely difficult living conditions, and all of them at one point shared a roof with many others, compromising their privacy and limiting their freedom within their living space. Amanda González and Armando Gómez, upon immigrating to California, faced significant challenges in finding a stable roof. Armando recounts, “Pues batallamos mucho en donde acomodarnos, nos movimos con mis suegros, luego con mi hermana y luego con otro hermano. Llegamos a vivir siete personas en un apartamento de dos recámaras y un baño, nos la ingeniábamos.” Reflecting on these conditions, Amanda and Armando are amazed at how they managed to live in such circumstances for several years. Armando's use of the word “ingeniábamos” (we were creative) captures their resourcefulness in overcoming the difficult living situation they faced. They devised systems like lining up towels to organize shower turns, and even shared showers to save time as part of their daily routine.

Josefina Ruíz and her family initially settled in “a small trailer” when they first arrived in California. It was only after two years that her grandfather managed to purchase a four-bedroom house. However, the house soon became a communal living space for Josefina's extended family. She explains, “My dad has five brothers and one sister, and we would all live in my grandpa’s house, we would all help pay rent. It was about five different families and each family had four to five family members. We were a lot, maybe like 20 to 25 people living in the house. They would also rent little RVs on the side, they would rent it to more families or sometimes to random people.” The vivid experiences of Amanda González, Armando Gómez, and Josefina Ruíz and her extended family highlight a universal narrative of struggle and resourcefulness among migrant families. Their stories reflect a common theme of overcrowded living conditions,

which necessitate creative problem-solving and communal living strategies. This adaptability, as seen through their shared living spaces and systematic approaches to daily routines, highlights not only their sacrifices but also a strong sense of community and familial solidarity. Furthermore, their words sheds light on the socio-economic challenges faced by farmwork migrant families, such as the lack of affordable housing and the need to rely on extended family networks for support.

In every region of the United States where the migrant families in this study have resided, a recurring theme in their *testimonios* is a profound appreciation for the housing units in the migrant center. The majority of the families learned about these affordable homes through relatives already living in the centers. Josefina recalls, "My parents got a house in [name of the center]. I had other uncles who got lucky and were able to get a home in [name of the center] before we did. It's based on a lottery system, you have to be very lucky to win them," Josefina shares. Listening to the families' stories about discovering the migrant center and the process of acquiring a unit, the term "lucky" frequently emerges, reflecting the gratitude and relief they felt upon being offered a chance to live there. Their detailed recollections of the day they received the news they were accepted to live in a unit in a center underlines the profound significance, appreciation, and love they hold for their *hogares* in the migrant center. Roxana Olivares expressed her contentment, "Vivimos aquí muy bien, muy bien, por muchas razones. Pues más que nada es económico la renta y está cerca de los trabajos. Y cuando las niñas eran chiquitas, pues ahí está la guardería. Es algo que beneficia mucho estar aquí. La guardería es gratis para las familias migrantes, y como eres migrante, dan más ayudas. La guardería está dentro del centro, muy cerquita." While outsiders might view and refer to these migrant centers as temporary "camps," for the residents they represent much more: a safe haven, a sacred space to call home,

and an opportunity for independent living away from the overcrowded conditions they previously endured.

When discussing desired improvements for the migrant center home units, the primary wish expressed by all families was the ability to reside in them throughout the year. Erica Sánchez comments, "...sólo si [name of center] no se cerrara, porque la verdad que yo vivo bien. No pagamos los biles de agua o de luz, no pago mucha renta, me siento como en México, bien calmado el campo muy bonito." If migrant families could have a single collective wish, it would be for the place they call home to remain open year-round. Beyond the benefit of affordable rent, what families greatly cherish about the migrant center is the strong sense of community that has developed among the families. They have formed close bonds, sharing commonalities ranging from their origins in Michoacán to enjoying homemade meals together during the weekends.

Family & Community Support

Early in the morning, as migrant parents set out for work in the fields, they leave their homes not only with their lunch boxes but also with their children's colorful backpacks. Their children, however, stay behind until it's time to walk to the bus stop to catch the school bus. Given the high number of school-age children in the center, several buses arrive to transport the elementary, middle, and high school students. To foster a friendly atmosphere where conflicts over bus boarding orders are mitigated, migrant families at this center have become architects of their own creative solution. Josefina recounts, "At 6:00 a.m., you already see the backpacks right there, lined up. When parents leave for work, they take their kids' backpack and then throw it right there so they can make a line already for their kids. When their kids come, they already have a space in line. They did that when I was in school, and until today, I still see parents do it. We all respect each other's place in line." This method successfully decreases the chaos of

children rushing and disputing over their place in line, offering a peaceful and orderly start to their school day. Stories like these highlight the underlying social dynamics and the sense of community created by residents in the migrant center. The practice of lining up backpacks serves not just as a practical solution for organizing the children's departure to school, but also as a cultural testament to the unity and respect within the community.

During COVID-19, one of the most challenging and unprecedented times in recent history, migrant families residing in the center demonstrated remarkable solidarity and support for each other. The onset of the pandemic posed significant hurdles for farmworker families. However, one challenge stood out particularly when listening to and hearing the testimonios : the absence of internet access at the migrant center. This was a crucial resource for education, particularly during lockdowns when traditional classroom learning shifted to home-based online learning. As research highlights, the absence of internet access significantly hinders academic performance, particularly among students from lower-income households. This digital divide exacerbates educational inequities, and the COVID-19 pandemic intensified these disparities, leading to substantial learning losses and widened achievement gaps due to the shift to remote learning (Chen, Mittal, & Sridhar, 2020; NCES, 2023; Saucedo, 2021). Reflecting on her educational experiences during this time, Emma García recalls, “We did not have internet in the center. We got hotspots and I would go outside the house with my friends. Sometimes our hotspots didn’t work, so we would have to borrow each other’s, we found support among ourselves.” Similarly, Monica Pérez recounts, “I would go outside with my friends and we would help each other with homework and we would try to use each other’s hotspots. All my school friends live here, in the same center.” Both Emma and Monica were in middle school when the pandemic started and their actions demonstrate a community-driven approach to

problem-solving. The ingenuity of migrant youth during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, either by sharing hotspots or working together, reveals the power of community solidarity in overcoming obstacles. This scenario sheds light on the importance of social support networks that migrant center families created among themselves.

When Dr. López discovered that migrant students struggled to access their education online due to limited or no internet access, she fought for stable internet connectivity for all the families in the migrant center. This narrative underscores the significant impact of the digital divide on migrant communities, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. The lack of internet access at the migrant center not only exemplified the broader challenges faced by underprivileged communities but also highlighted the disparities in educational resources. The resilience and ingenuity of the children, as illustrated by Emma and Monica's experiences, demonstrate the appreciation and support they have for each other.

Another prominent theme in the *testimonios* is the significant role of external community support in uniting families, particularly migrant youth, for unforgettable moments of fun. Due to the remote location of the migrant center, long working hours of parents, and generally limited access to extracurricular activities, children in the center often find themselves confined to their immediate surroundings, increasing their risk of gang involvement and drug use. Many families participating in this research highlighted “El programa del Señor Joseph,” a program credited with providing them, and numerous others in the center, with enriching experiences that positively impacted their social and educational lives. “El programa del Señor Joseph" refers to the formal community outreach tutorial program established by a man with a pseudonym of Joseph in the early 2000s. The program was inspired by Joseph’s transformative experience during a “"Farmworker Reality Tour” with his university sociology class. Profoundly affected by

the tour, Joseph was driven to initiate change for the children living in the center after he witnessed firsthand the urgent needs and lack of resources children face on a daily basis. As articulated by Amanda González, "¿Sabes también qué hacía Joseph? Los llevaba, por ejemplo, a la playa a recoger basura, jugaban aquí juegos, jugaban fútbol en la cancha, los tenía coloreando, tenía actividades todo el día. También les hacía una parrillada, salchichas. Y si se la pasaban bonito todos ellos." Joseph's program operated for many years, led by volunteer college students who were passionate about equity and social justice. Under Joseph's leadership, migrant students gained access to college tutors and participated in playtime activities and community service opportunities. This initiative fostered academic and social learning in ways that were not typically available for children living in migrant centers, especially during the school year and summer months.

When participants were asked to describe the most beautiful and memorable moments in their lives, Emma García immediately mentioned Joseph's program:

> When I was younger, around 2015 or 2016, a man named Joseph and a group of college students would come to [Tlaloc]. They would knock on people's houses during the summer and invite all the kids from the center to play. All the kids would go out, and we would participate in a lot of fun activities. They even took us to [an amusement park] and always organized fun activities. Those have been the best moments of living here…'

The quote from Emma poignantly captures the profound impact of Joseph's program on the lives of the children in the migrant center. It illustrates how the simple act of engaging children in play and organized activities can create lasting, positive memories, particularly in communities where such experiences might be rare. The mention of a specific, exciting outing to an amusement park highlights the extraordinary nature of these experiences, contrasting with their everyday life.

Emma's reflection serves as a gentle reminder of the significance that these types of enriching activities hold beyond mere entertainment — they foster a sense of community and provide a sense of normalcy amidst the daily inequities farmworker families face.

Unfortunately, Joseph's program stopped operating after Joseph's passing. Families still vividly recall the difference Joseph and other college students made in the community by offering unprecedented support to children. Through the *testimonios* of Erica Sánchez and Armando Gómez, it is evident that the impact of Joseph's program went beyond simply witnessing children smiling and having a joyful time together. The program significantly influenced the academic lives of students residing in the migrant center:

(1) Cuando venía el Señor Joseph, los niños estaban bien felices y les ayudaban mucho en sus tareas de la escuela. Era la primera vez que yo noté mucho la diferencia. (Erica Sánchez)

(2) Y a mí se me hacía muy bien ese programa. Muchos de aquí en ese tiempo, había muchos que se graduaron. Ahorita, yo creo que si vas a las casas va a haber muchos que están como nuestro hijo, que están atrasados y no hay mucha ayuda. (Armando Gómez)

These words capture the deep appreciation and recognition of the program's lasting effect on its youth and the community's sentiment towards everyone who made Joseph's program feasible inside the migrant center, even if it was for only a couple of years. The discontinuation of the program left a void in many families who desire for their children to have better opportunities and access to resources. In this study, participants suggested that during the program's operation, there was a noticeable increase in student success, implying that the program played a critical role in academic achievement. Armando's reference to current students being "atrasados"

(behind) and the lack of support in the lives of children residing in the center reflects a broader issue in the inequities that migrant children face in and outside school. The contrast between the past successes and the current challenges serves as a powerful testament to the program's positive influence and the urgent need for similar initiatives to be implemented across the state-sponsored housing centers for farmworker families.

Access to Transportation

This migrant center is located in a remote and isolated area, as is common with many farmworker housing locations across California and the U.S. This remoteness tends to make the farmworkers and their living conditions less visible to the general public and limits access to vital resources such as transportation, creating additional obstacles for families. The migrant center where participants of this study reside has no direct access to public transportation. In all the *testimonios* of migrant parents and youth, a common theme is the lack of and deep desire for access to public transportation.

When the migrant youth of this study mentioned the topic of transportation methods either for schooling, work, or their personal lives, they shared specific examples of what it means to have limited access to transportation. As current high school students, both Emma Garcia and Monica Pérez shared that due to the high number of school-age children that reside in the center, the school bus fills up quickly and that it is hard to arrange for before-school tutoring with their teachers because the school bus is often late.

(1) That bus comes here late, school starts at 8:30 am and we get there at 8:40 am, there is a lot of traffic but I also feel that the bus picks us late from our home. Arriving at school late affects me because I often miss tests, when it is not even my fault. The teacher told us that if we were late, we would not be able to take the

test. So when that happens, I wake up extra early and try to catch the first bus, and that is if there is any room. (Emma Garcia)

(2) I cannot afford to miss the bus, no one else can take me to school…our bus also takes the kids to the continuation high school, but for some reason, it first drops off all the kids from our high school, even though continuation high school is closer to the center. I cannot afford to miss the bus, no one else can take me to school. (Monica Pérez)

The continuation high school is within a four-mile radius of the center, while the high school attended by Emma and Monica is eight miles away. Despite the continuation high school's proximity, students experience longer wait times for school transport. Notably, for Emma, Monica, and other students residing at the center, missing the school bus means a public transit journey of approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes to the high school, which is normally a 20-minute drive. Google Maps issues a warning about this route: "Use caution - may involve errors or sections not suited for walking." This situation highlights significant transportation challenges for migrant students. The discrepancy between the 20-minute drive and the more than 2-hour public transit journey underscores a lack of efficient transportation options. This can have broader implications for students' attendance, punctuality, and overall academic performance, emphasizing the need for more effective transport solutions in the communities.

The absence of public transportation and limited school bus service affects not only educational access but the personal and economic lives of families living in the center. Emma Garcia expresses this concern, stating, "I wish our community had city buses. I wish we had easier access to transportation. If we had public transportation nearby, then I would probably have the opportunity to get a job and help my mom pay the rent. But we don't, so I can't get a

job.” Emma’s *testimonio* illustrates the broader social and economic ramifications of inadequate public transport among migrant farmworker communities. Emma's lived experiences sheds light on a vicious cycle where the lack of transportation options not only hinders educational opportunities but also limits employment prospects for young people in these communities. This constraint not only affects individual aspirations and financial independence but also places additional economic stress on already strained family budgets. Improving transportation infrastructure in such areas could have a transformative effect, empowering residents with better access to education, employment, and essential services.

In the *testimonios* gathered from migrant parents on the topic of public transportation, Amanda González highlighted a significant issue. She said, “Además, aquí, si te fijas, aquí no entra un autobús de de la ciudad para personas que no tengan un carro. Aquí, si a nosotros nos falta un jitomate y no nos llevamos bien con los vecinos, tenemos que ir por un jitomate hasta el pueblo a traerlo.” Amanda’s words underline the profound impact of inadequate public transportation in migrant communities. The lack of basic transit services not only complicates daily living but also isolates residents, exacerbating their challenges. The example of traveling to town for a single tomato illustrates how even simple tasks become major undertakings, limiting access to basic necessities and decreasing quality of life. In Armando Gómez's *testimonio*, he shared:

> Antes venía una troca a vender pan y leche, pero los manejadores lo corrieron, no quieren que la gente venda nada aquí. Cuando nosotros nos movimos aquí, durante el primer año, había otro manejador que era de donde nosotros somos, del rancho de nosotros. Y él dejaba entrar una troca que nos traía pan y nos traía galones de leche. También dejaba entrar a un señor que nos vendía frutas y verduras los martes y los jueves. Mucha

diferencia porque ya no necesitábamos que ir hasta la ciudad.

For every issue that families at the migrant center face, they ingeniously find an alternative solution, but these efforts become increasingly difficult as upper management of the housing centers, upon learning about the creative solutions, often moves to dismantle them, adding layers of complexity to the daily struggles of migrant families. Armando's words highlight how the housing management directly affects residents' access to essential goods like bread, milk, fruits, and vegetables. The ability to purchase these items within the community was a significant convenience, especially given the transportation challenges. However, with these solutions now unavailable due to management decisions, migrant families recognize the importance of fostering stronger community bonds. They understand that being extra considerate and supportive towards each other is crucial, as they heavily rely on this communal support network for assistance and solidarity in the face of ongoing challenges.

The migrant center is a closed, gated community with multiple signs outside the gate indicating that no outsiders or vendors are permitted entry. Participants in this study also mentioned the difficulty in securing rides from Uber and Lyft, attributing it to the center's remote location where almost no one else is around. For families at the migrant center, the nearest bus stop is about three miles away, requiring a walk of approximately one to one and a half hours just to get to a bus stop. The lack of public transit highlights the isolation experienced by residents of the migrant center. The combination of restricted access and the center's remote location poses significant barriers to mobility, effectively cutting off residents from easy access to transportation services like Uber, Lyft, and public buses. This isolation not only impacts daily convenience but also limits access to essential services, educational and employment opportunities, and social

interactions, potentially contributing to a sense of exclusion and hindering community integration.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications

Summary of Findings

This chapter summarizes and discusses the implications of the findings in relation to the two research questions: (1) "How do migrant students residing in a state-sponsored migrant housing center navigate and negotiate the complexities of their educational journeys within the educational systems of both the United States and México, in relation to the 50-mile rule?" and (2) **"**How do the multifaceted lived experiences and living conditions of migrant families residing in a state-sponsored migrant housing center shape their sense of belonging and social integration?" The findings of this research highlight the significant impact of the 50-mile rule on the education of migrant youth in both the United States and in México. Migrant students face significant challenges upon their return to California from México, including educational content that is vastly different from what they were learning in México, adding another layer to their academic struggles. The need for continual adaptation to different educational systems and curricula contributes to a cycle of educational instability and emotional strain. Despite efforts by families to seek alternatives within the system, farmworker youth remain one of the most marginalized student populations in society. Community activists and advocates reported that only a limited number of families were able to benefit from requesting an exemption to the 50-mile rule, primarily due to a lack of awareness about the exemption process and the scarcity of affordable local housing. The families and youth that participated in this study were aware about the exemption thanks to a few community advocates. Several migrant farmworker parents and youth who were interviewed also highlighted the challenge of unaffordable local housing. Generally, families who were interviewed expressed a desire to reside in the centers year-round and wished they had the option to do so. - Overall, the educational challenges reported by

migrant parents and youth who have resided in a state-sponsored housing center are similar to those reported in the literature for other migrant farmworker populations.

Interpretation, Explanation, and Comparison with Existing Literature

Educational Findings

As reported in the literature, the children of migrant farmworkers nationwide face significant educational hurdles, with a dramatically low likelihood of graduating from high school and an almost non-existent presence in postsecondary education (American Public Media (APM) Reports, 2019). As migrant families move across different regions to keep up with crop harvests, and when they are required to move at least 50 miles away, the educational progress of their children is disrupted. Migrant students must continuously adjust to new school systems and educational frameworks that can vary widely between different states and even school districts. In this study, for instance, to mitigate the consequences of changing schools during the school year, a family relocated to the California Central Valley, hoping that their children could continue their education in English within the California educational system. However, this move often resulted in greater challenges, with children experiencing more difficulties compared to if they would temporarily continue their studies in México. Empirical evidence supports the notion that stability in various aspects of the educational and social environment is essential for the academic success and overall well-being of migrant students.

Through Aggie E. Bazaz's documentary, "Como Vivimos / How We Live," we gain insight into the significant challenges faced by migrant youth, particularly how the 50-mile rule necessitates that many of them live apart from their parents in the off-season to continue their education (2024).The film depicts several high school seniors who, in order to graduate, must live independently in small trailers or with relatives and friends. This separation is driven by the

need to remain within an accessible distance from their schools while their parents move according to farmwork demands and the requirements of the 50-mile rule. The themes in Bazaz's work are echoed in the findings of my study, highlighting a similar struggle among the participants. The documentary's depiction aligns with the experiences of some of the participants of this study who successfully graduated from high school, one participant in particular, had to also live away from their parents. This parallel underscores a broader systemic issue where educational success for migrant youth often requires substantial personal sacrifice and adaptation due to restrictive policies like the 50-mile rule. Bazaz's work offers a crucial visual and narrative perspective that deepens our understanding of the personal and educational impacts of the 50-mile rule on migrant families. The frequent relocations correlated strongly with increased school absences and higher pushed out rates. Meanwhile, stability in the school environment is linked to better educational outcomes for migrant students (Cobb-Clark et al., 2012; Gibson & Bejinez, 2002; Schneeweis, 2009). Consistent support, positive home environments, and institutional stability are key factors that help migrant students overcome the challenges associated with migration.

This study also revealed that migrant youth often do not have access to quality education in México, primarily because their hometowns lack high schools. Consequently, they are forced to either pay middle school teachers to sign documents attesting to their "continued education" in México or to stop attending school entirely while residing there. The educational attainment of migrant students is well-documented in various studies, which highlight how the transient nature of migrant life compounds educational challenges for these children. For instance, research points out that constant relocation can lead to significant educational discontinuity, making it difficult for students to achieve academic success (American Public Media (APM) Reports,

2019). Additionally, a study using longitudinal data emphasizes how these frequent moves undermine educational attainment, as each transition can result in lost school records, varying curricular standards, and adaptation challenges that further marginalize these students academically (Gasper, DeLuca, & Estacion, 2012). In my research, one of the migrant youth participants reported that he could not graduate from high school due to the frequent necessity to relocate between schools in the USA and México. This constant movement, compounded by a lack of sufficient educational support and resources, significantly hindered hisr academic progress. The challenges associated with adapting to different educational systems, along with the absence of a stable learning environment, made it exceedingly difficult for the student to meet graduation requirements. Additionally, this student represents the third or fourth generation of farmworkers in his family, a cycle perpetuated even though he was born in the United States and speaks fluent English. This generational pattern highlights the entrenched economic and social factors that continue to bind families to farmwork labor, underscoring the complex interplay of identity, economic necessity, and educational opportunities within migrant communities.

Some of the challenges migrant youth in this study faced regarding their quality of education in the U.S. include attending under-resourced schools that lack adequate support services such as bilingual education programs, academic counseling, and wellness services. Often behind in credits, students were often excluded and discouraged from taking challenging courses like AP and honors classes. The curriculum material was often outdated and did not reflect current knowledge or relevant cultural perspectives. Additionally, cultural differences made it challenging for migrant students to connect with adults and the majority of their peers. This isolation further impeded their academic progress and social integration, compounding the

disadvantages they faced in obtaining a quality education. Another barrier to a high-quality education was the limited access to counselors and mental health services, leaving migrant students without the support they needed to address the emotional and psychological stress of their circumstances.

With respect to educational programs and services, the migrant youth in this study found Migrant Education Program services and CAMP to be particularly beneficial. CAMP, in particular, emphasizes the importance of purpose through a sense of self, faculty support, and academic resources. Similar research by Lane-Holbert (2023) highlights the crucial role of migrant education programs and services in helping migrant students transition to higher education. These programs provide mentorship, goal setting, career exploration, and tailored academic support, all of which are essential for the success of migrant students in higher education. Studies have shown that CAMP participants exhibit higher academic achievement, persistence, and graduation rates compared to their peers. The program also fosters a sense of community and belonging, helping students navigate the challenges of higher education and promoting overall well-being (Araujo, 2011; Ramirez, 2012; Mendez & Bauman, 2018).

Housing Findings

All participants in this study, including migrant parents, youth, and community activists, emphasized the critical need for year-round accessibility to migrant centers. Migrant families should have the choice to whether they would like to reside in the center year-round, focusing on their children's education, or to migrate during the off-season. Families should not be forced to move but should have the right to decide based on their individual circumstances. Amanda González, a mother anticipating her son's middle school graduation and hopeful for his future college opportunities, stated, "I would like this center to stay open all year, mostly for our

children's education. That way, if the center were open all year, we could stay here and he could consistently attend school. We could go to México, yes, on vacation, and then come back so he could return to school." This sentiment captures the overarching desire among families for housing continuity to support their children's education, providing a foundation for breaking the cycle of farmworker labor.

The findings regarding the desire for the centers to remain open year-round are supported by a recent survey conducted by the *Sacramento Bee* at seven migrant farmworker housing centers in California, which found that over 80 percent of families would choose to stay in their units year-round if possible (Holden & Miranda, January 17 and March 28, 2024). The exemption active from 2018 to 2024 did not prove beneficial for many, as many families either did not know about the exemption or could not afford the non-subsidized rent during the off-season, forcing many to migrate temporarily to México. This points to a significant gap between the intent of policies and the economic realities faced by migrant families, underscoring the need for more sustainable housing solutions. Moreover, the challenges migrant families face in finding stable housing after seasonal closures have generational consequences, exacerbated by California's broader affordable housing shortage.

Transportation Findings

Lastly, participants highlighted the need for access to public transportation and more support from community organizations similar to Joseph's program. Often located in rural and isolated areas, these centers lack access to public transportation, which restricts families' ability to buy groceries and engage socially outside the centers and limits students' participation in extracurricular activities. The dream for families residing in the centers is not only to live in their "casitas" year-round but also to have access to public transportation and receive academic and

recreational support that could significantly improve their children's educational outcomes. This comprehensive approach could better address the multiple dimensions of migrant families' lives, fostering more supportive and integrated systems of support, which is the least we can do for farm workers who feed our nation.

Theoretical Framework

The integration of Latinx Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) in this study highlights the intersection of race, immigration status, and systemic inequality impacting migrant families, particularly within the educational system. Through this framework, we can examine racism, counter-storytelling, resistance and empowerment, and community grassroots movements that drive necessary social justice changes. The 50-mile policy exemplifies systemic racism, as it enforces educational disparities by forcing largely Latinx families to move at least 50 miles away, thus destabilizing children's education and perpetuating cycles of hardship that mirror those of their parents. Families residing in these centers often have generational ties to farmwork labor, a sector historically shaped by racism and xenophobia.

Drawing from various ethnic groups that have contributed to California's farmwork labor, such as immigrants from China, Japan, and the Philippines, the primary labor force since the twentieth century has predominantly been Mexican, with about 70 percent of workers born in México and over half potentially undocumented, adding layers of vulnerability (Thompson, 2017). Centralizing counter-storytelling through the *testimonios* and narrative portraits of participants challenges dominant narratives and brings to light the often untold lived realities of families residing in the state-sponsored centers. The *testimonios* reveal both the resilience and the empowerment inherent in how migrant families navigate and resist systemic barriers, highlighting potential areas for enhancing policy and community support to better meet their

needs and desires. Within the LatCrit framework, this approach advocates for more inclusive and equitable policies that are informed by the real needs and conditions of migrant families, rather than top-down policy-making, such as improvements in housing and education that truly reflect the community's experiences and challenges.

Practical Implications

In recent months, lauren Ornelas, the founder and senior programs director of the Food Empowerment Project (F.E.P.), "along with the Center for Farmworker Families, Center on Race, Immigration and Social Justice, Human Agenda, Organización de Trabajadores Agrícolas de California, current and past impacted farm worker students, and documentary filmmaker Aggie Ebrahimi Bazaz (director of *Como Vivimos*, which spends a year in one of California's 24 Migrant Family Housing Centers)," have led the next steps in improving the educational and living conditions for families residing in the state-sponsored centers (F.E.P., 2024). As a coalition, they have been working directly with Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Arambula and his staff to present a bill to the state that would eliminate the 50-mile rule and keep the 24 OMS-sponsored migrant housing centers open year-round Through their relentless advocacy, on April 10, 2024, AB 2240 passed its first hearing at the State Capitol with the Assembly Housing & Community Development Committee. As of July 2024, the AB 2240 bill has also passed the Assembly Appropriations Committee, an Assembly floor vote, and the Senate Housing Committee. Next, the bill heads to the Committee on Appropriations. As of the writing of this dissertation, the language of the bill was being further discussed and edited, and support for the bill on the part of advocates and farmworkers was mixed. However, without the efforts, work, and voices of the individuals and organizations mentioned above, bills like AB 2240 would never have been introduced.

Based on the current situation, the implications of this research are of relevant and practical significance for both practitioners working with migrant youth and policymakers seeking to improve the living and educational conditions of farmworker families. First, educators, who work with the migrant student population should undergo professional development to enhance their understanding of California's migrant farmworker housing centers. This training should cover the dynamics of how families navigate life within these centers and explore strategies for increasing advocacy and support for securing stable housing for migrant families. It is crucial that local, regional, and state programs supporting the educational needs of migrant students in California, such as the California Migrant Education Program (MEP), California Mini-Corps Program, and College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), provide comprehensive training to their staff.

For instance, the findings of this study indicate that migrant staff working in several colleges and universities located near the migrant center of focus in this study were unaware of the migrant housing centers and the 50-mile rule that has negatively affected students for generations. This gap in awareness underscores the need for educational programs aimed at assisting migrant youth—from high school to post-secondary education—to develop professional development plans that focus on the lived experiences of families residing in the centers to increase awareness among staff working with migrant students. Such initiatives should aim to familiarize educational staff with the realities of migrant life in these centers to foster a more supportive and effective educational environment. This approach ensures that educators are well-informed and equipped to make meaningful contributions, as they can also become allies who advocate at the state level for policy changes, such as bills like AB 2240.

By actively supporting such legislation, educators can play a pivotal role in improving the stability and educational continuity for migrant families, directly impacting their academic success and overall well-being.

For policymakers, effectively supporting and improving conditions for farmworker families requires direct engagement with the communities they serve. Policymakers should make concerted efforts to visit, converse, and engage with families residing in the migrant housing centers across the state. It is vital that migrant families have a seat at the table and are provided opportunities to participate in every conversation. Additionally, understanding the educational challenges these families face is crucial for setting informed and equitable educational policies. By prioritizing the inclusion of migrant voices and addressing their unique educational needs, policymakers can develop strategies that enhance educational outcomes for migrant farmworker communities, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable education system. After all, migrant families are the experts on their own lives and have firsthand experiences of the educational hurdles and housing conditions they face. Furthermore, all communication should be culturally sensitive to the needs of the families and should foster an environment where open conversations are encouraged. Communication must be clear, constant, and timely to ensure that the families' voices are not only heard but also acted upon effectively. This approach not only respects the dignity of the families involved but also enhances the relevance and impact of policy decisions made on their behalf.

Effective communication should extend beyond interactions between policymakers, migrant families, and community leaders. It is essential to create opportunities for migrant families to engage in dialogue among themselves. This need stems from observed misunderstandings between those who wish to reside in the migrant housing centers year-round

and those who do not. Such differences were highlighted during the public comments at the California State Assembly Housing and Community Development Committee hearing on AB 2240 on April 10, 2024. I participated as a supporter, speaking in favor of the bill. However, during the opposition testimony, approximately 10 to 15 farmworkers residing in the centers expressed their disagreement with the bill. The primary testimony against the bill came from a mother and daughter living in one of the centers. Misinformation and disinformation about the bill's implications have contributed to farmworker opposition. Many fear potential negative consequences that have been misrepresented. For example, some families believe that the rent will increase by 30% to pay for the necessary updates the units need to allow families to reside in them year-round. Another piece of misinformation is that the migrant center units will be available to anyone in the community, regardless of their farmworker status. It is essential to foster dialogue between farmworkers and among farmworkers, policymakers, and community advocates to ensure accurate information is shared. Open communication can help address concerns, dispel myths, and build trust, leading to more informed and supportive stances on the legislation. Given these dynamics, as the bill progresses and its specifics are debated, it is crucial to involve families directly in the conversation and decision-making process.

Strengths and Limitations

To effectively capture the rich and complex realities faced by migrant families, this study employed a qualitative approach to comprehensively explore their experiences in a California state-sponsored housing center. A closed-ended demographic survey gathered demographic data from participants. This data facilitated quota sampling and enabled the categorization of families based on their use of a 50-mile regulation waiver, distinguishing between those who have and have not utilized it.

Semistructured interviews elicited *testimonios*, a method with deep roots in Latin America where it has significantly contributed to documenting human experiences and advancing social activism. Unlike oral histories or autobiographies, *testimonios* involve critical reflection on personal experiences within specific socio-political contexts. This approach emphasizes empowerment and uses the narrative as a tool for social action, aiming to foster solidarity and encourage social change. By offering participants a space to voice their realities, *testimonios* challenge conventional research dynamics, empowering individuals and highlighting community struggles.

One of the strengths of this research was its ability to provide a thorough and empathetic understanding of the experiences of migrant families, thereby contributing to both research and policy. This strength is rooted in Latinx Critical Race Theory, which emphasizes the importance of lived experiences and counter-narratives in understanding social issues. By highlighting personal stories and experiences, this theory challenges dominant perspectives and brings marginalized voices to the forefront. Use of a qualitative approach facilitated a deep understanding of the topic. Furthermore, *testimonios* provided rich, detailed narratives that reflected the personal and collective experiences of migrant families, effectively capturing emotional and cultural dimensions often overlooked by quantitative methods. Collection of *testimonios* not only empowered participants by allowing them to express their experiences in their own words but also validated their stories as significant sources of knowledge. It also fostered community solidarity and advocacy, establishing *testimonios* as a powerful tool for social change. The study acknowledged and harnessed the diversity within the migrant community by respecting and elevating their voices through *testimonios*. This approach likely

encouraged greater participation and trust among participants, as one family recommended the study to another, creating a chain of engagement and interest in participating in this study.

One of the primary limitations of this research is the small number of participants, as well as its focus on only one of the 24 state-sponsored migrant centers. The most recent data indicate that over 7,000 people, including farmworker adults and children, live in the 24 centers across the state (Holden & Miranda, 2024). Future research endeavors could benefit significantly from expanding the scope to include more participants across multiple centers. This approach would enhance the generalizability of the findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the varied experiences within the broader migrant community. Incorporating multiple centers would allow for comparative insights that highlight unique needs or challenges specific to certain locations or demographics, enriching the depth and applicability of the research.

Moreover, integrating a participatory action research (PAR) component would greatly enrich future studies. PAR emphasizes collaborative inquiry and involves participants directly in the research process, which could be particularly beneficial for empowering migrant families. This method would provide them with more autonomy to influence the research agenda and outcomes. Increased autonomy through PAR can enable participants to take an active role in shaping the research, from identifying issues to developing strategies and solutions. This involvement not only fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among participants but also ensures that the findings and recommendations are more relevant and tailored to the actual needs of the community. Furthermore, engaging participants as co-researchers could lead to more effective advocacy and application of the research findings, as the outcomes would directly reflect their input and perspectives. Authors such as Reason and Bradbury (2008) highlight how

PAR facilitates greater involvement and impact by focusing on collaborative exploration and problem-solving. Some of the migrant families involved in this research have experience as advocates in their communities, which could make the application of PAR especially powerful. By leveraging their advocacy skills within the research framework, the study could become stronger and more meaningful, with change being driven by and originating from within the community itself. Such adjustments to the research methodology would help overcome some initial study limitations and provide deeper, more actionable insights that better serve the migrant community. If members of the community are leading the research then they can feel empowered to apply the findings in their advocacy work on behalf of the community.

Lastly, an area of inquiry I recommend for future research is to examine the perspectives of families who may not be interested in residing in the centers year-round. This is particularly important because, in this study, the participating migrant families were all interested in year-round residency. It is crucial to understand diverse perspectives and develop policies that support both those who wish to reside in the center year-round and those who do not. Maintaining the harmony of the community is essential. Since families in the center often form tight connections, it is vital to ensure that no harm is caused by introducing changes that might disrupt these established relationships. Understanding the diverse needs and preferences of the community through this approach would help facilitate a more inclusive and cohesive living environment among the centers.

Conclusion

The *testimonios* about the lived experiences of farmworker families residing in OMS-sponsored migrant centers reveal a complex interplay of desires and gratitude. The families express a deep desire for the removal of the 50-mile rule and the option to reside in the units year-round, while also expressing gratitude for having access to temporary affordable housing and community support. The frequent use of the word "lucky" underscores a shared recognition of the rarity and value of the affection ("cariño") they hold for the center, especially in a context where secure and affordable housing is scarce and where many families continue to be on a waitlist for a housing center unit.

The detailed recollections of the day they were chosen to live in the migrant centers highlight the transformative impact these events have on their lives. It is not merely a change in physical location; it represents a pivotal moment that brings a sense of security, community, and hope. The *testimonios* particularly illuminate the multifaceted benefits of the migrant centers, from economic affordability to the convenience of essential services like daycare, which significantly enhance the quality of life for migrant families. Overall, these sentiments reflect a broader theme in migrant experiences: the continual search for stable, safe housing and educational opportunities for their children to break free from the cycle of fieldwork. The centers are not only “casitas” but also a political space where families can reunite and raise their concerns. They are integral to the journey of building a stable and independent life, deeply valued by those who reside in them. Improvements such as year-round residency options would enhance opportunities for migrant parents and youth in multiple ways. By ensuring continuous access to education without the disruptions caused by seasonal migrations, these improvements would allow migrant students to maintain consistent academic progress. This stability would

benefit not only individual students but also positively impact their families and communities for generations to come.

Community advocacy plays a crucial role, as demonstrated by the efforts of the organizations and individuals mentioned in this study, underscores the urgent need for continual advocacy and leadership work. As AB 2240 progresses through legislation, it is essential to prioritize the needs and desires of migrant families, acknowledging the vital economic contributions of farmworkers to the state of California.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Demographic Questionnaire for Migrant Parents (English)

1. **Age**: How old are you?
2. **Gender**:
    - Male
    - Female
    - Non-binary
    - Prefer not to say
    - Other: _____
3. **Birthplace:** Where were you born? (city, state, and country)
4. **Race/Ethnicity:** What is your racial or ethnic background? Are you of Hispanic or Latino/a/x origin?
5. **Language:** What is your primary language? What other languages do you speak?
6. **Education:** What is the highest level of education you have completed? Are you currently enrolled in an educational program?
7. **Marital Status:** What is your marital status? (e.g., single, married, divorced, widowed)
8. **Children:** Do you have any children? If, yes, what are their ages, their school standing, and/or occupation?
9. **Household Information:** How many people live in your household? What is your household's annual income? Are you the primary earner in your household?
10. **Employment Status:** Are you currently employed? If employed, what is your occupation? How many hours do you work per week? How many years do you have working in the same occupation?
11. **Health Status:** Do you have any disabilities or health conditions that affect your daily life? Only share if you feel comfortable.
12. **Migrant Housing Center:** How many years do you have living in the migrant housing center? When you are not living here, where do you live?
13. **50-Mile Rule:** Are you familiar with the 50 mile rule? Did you use the exemption? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Appendix 2: **Demographic Questionnaire for Migrant Parents (Spanish)**

1. **Edad**: ¿Cuántos años tienes?
2. **Género**:
   - ☐ Masculino
   - ☐ Femenino
   - ☐ No binario
   - ☐ Prefiero no decirlo
   - ☐ Otro: _____
3. **Lugar de nacimiento:** ¿Dónde nació? (ciudad, estado y país)
4. **Raza/Etnicidad:** ¿Cuál es su origen racial o étnico? ¿Es de origen hispano o latino/a/x?
5. **Idioma:** ¿Cuál es su idioma principal? ¿Qué otros idiomas habla usted?
6. **Educación:** ¿Cuál es el nivel más alto de educación que usted completó? ¿Está actualmente inscrito en un programa educativo?
7. **Estado civil:** ¿Cuál es su estado civil? (por ejemplo, soltero/a, casado/a, divorciado/a, viudo/a)
8. **Hijos:** ¿Tiene hijos? Si sí, ¿cuáles son sus edades, su situación escolar y/o ocupación de todos su/s hijo/s?
9. **Información del hogar:** ¿Cuántas personas viven en su hogar? ¿Cuál es el ingreso anual de su hogar? ¿Quién es el principal sostén económico de su hogar?
10. **Estado laboral:** ¿Está actualmente empleado/a? Si estás empleado/a, ¿cuál es su ocupación? ¿Cuántas horas trabaja a la semana? ¿Cuántos años lleva trabajando en la misma ocupación?
11. **Estado de salud:** ¿Tiene alguna discapacidad o condición de salud que afecte su vida diaria? Comparte solo si te sientes cómodo/a.
12. **Centro de migrantes:** ¿Cuántos años ha vivido usted en el centro de migrantes? Cuando no vive aquí, ¿dónde vive?
13. **Regla de las 50 millas:** ¿Está familiarizado con la regla de las 50 millas? ¿Usó la exención? Si, sí ¿por qué? Si no, ¿por qué no?

Appendix 3: **Demographic Questionnaire for Migrant Youth (Minors)**

1. **Age**: How old are you?
2. **Gender**:
    - Male
    - Female
    - Non-binary
    - Prefer not to say
    - Other: _____
3. **Birthplace**: Where were you born? (city, state, and country)
4. **Race/Ethnicity:** What is your racial or ethnic background? Are you of Hispanic or Latino/a/x origin?
5. **Language:** What is your primary language? What other languages do you speak?
6. **Health Status:** Do you have any disabilities or health conditions that affect your daily life? Only share if you feel comfortable.
7. **School Journey:**
    a. What grade are you currently in?
    b. How many different schools do you attend throughout an academic year? Where are they located?
    c. Are you enrolled in any advanced or honors classes? (e.g., AP, IB)
    d. Do you participate in any extracurricular activities or clubs at school? If so, what are they?
    e. What is your overall GPA?
    f. Do you have access to a reliable internet connection and necessary technology devices for remote learning?
8. **How do you typically get to school?**
    - School bus
    - Carpool
    - Walk
    - Bicycle
    - Public transportation
    - Other: _____
9. How satisfied are you with your current school experience? (Scale: Very Satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied, Very Dissatisfied)
10. Besides going to school, do you have a part-time job? If so, can you please describe it?

Appendix 4: **Demographic Questionnaire for Migrant Youth (Adults)**

1. **Age**: How old are you?
2. **Gender:**
    - Male
    - Female
    - Non-binary
    - Prefer not to say
    - Other: _____
3. **Birthplace:** Where were you born? (city, state, and country)
4. **Race/Ethnicity:** What is your racial or ethnic background? Are you of Hispanic or Latino/a/x origin?
5. **Language:** What is your primary language? What other languages do you speak?
6. **Health Status:** Do you have any disabilities or health conditions that affect your daily life? Only share if you feel comfortable.
7. **School Journey:**
    a. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    b. Are you currently enrolled in an educational program?
    c. Growing up, how many different schools did you attend in a single academic year?
8. **Home Life:**
    a. Do you still live with your parents? If not, where do you live?
    b. How many years have you been living or lived in the migrant housing centers?
9. **Employment Status:** Are you currently employed? If employed, what is your occupation? How many hours do you work per week? How many years do you have working in the same occupation?

Appendix 5: Guiding Questions for the Testimonios of Migrant Parents (English)

1. Could you please share the history of your family's journey to this country?
2. How has your experience in the fields influenced your life experiences for you and your family?
3. What does your typical day at home and at work consist of? What type of work do you currently do and what type of work have you done before?
4. What has been your experience living in a State-sponsored migrant center?
5. After the season ends in this town, what is life like for you and your family?
6. What has been your children's overall educational experience?
7. Can you describe the challenges your family has faced in accessing quality education for your children?
8. What do you believe are the most important things that parents can do to support their children's education?
9. What are some of the barriers or obstacles you have encountered when trying to engage with your children's schools or educational institutions?
10. Have you experienced any discrimination or prejudice in your children's education system as a farmworker parent? Can you share some specific examples?
11. How does the 50-mile regulation relate to your children's school experience?
12. With the new modification of the 50-mile state regulation implemented in 2018, what has your experience been?
13. What changes would you like to see in your children's educational experiences?
14. How did COVID-19 impact your life as a farmworker?
15. How do you see global warming impacting the work that you do as a farmworker?
16. What message would you like to convey to politicians and society about your experiences and those of your family?
17. What are some of the most cherished achievements in your life? What have been some of the happiest moments in your and your family's life?
18. What aspirations or dreams do you have for your and your family's future? What are your wishes for your children?

Appendix 6: Guiding Questions for the Testimonios of Migrant Parents (Spanish)

1. ¿Podría compartir la historia del viaje de su familia a este país?
2. ¿Cómo ha sido su vida trabajando en el campo y cómo su trabajo ha influido en sus experiencias de vida para usted y su familia?
3. ¿En qué consiste tu día típico en casa y en el trabajo? ¿Qué tipo de trabajo realiza actualmente y qué tipo de trabajo ha realizado anteriormente?
4. ¿Cuál ha sido su experiencia viviendo en los centros de migrantes patrocinados por el estado?
5. Después de que termine la temporada aquí en esta ciudad, ¿cómo es la vida para usted y su familia? ¿A dónde se van y qué hacen?
6. ¿Cómo les ha ido a sus hijos en la escuela?
7. ¿Puede describir los desafíos que ha enfrentado su familia para acceder una educación de calidad para sus hijos?
8. ¿Cuáles cree que son las cosas más importantes que los padres pueden hacer para apoyar la educación de sus hijos?
9. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las barreras u obstáculos que ha encontrado al tratar de involucrarse con las escuelas de sus hijos?
10. ¿Ha experimentado alguna discriminación o experiencia negativa en las escuelas de sus hijos o en el trabajo? ¿Puede compartir algunos ejemplos específicos?
11. ¿Cómo se relaciona la regulación de las 50 millas con la experiencia escolar de sus hijos?
12. Con la nueva modificación de la regulación estatal de 50 millas que se implementó en 2018, ¿cómo ha sido su experiencia?
13. ¿Qué cambios le gustaría ver en las experiencias educativas de sus hijos?
14. ¿Cómo afectó el COVID-19 su vida como trabajador del campo?
15. ¿Cómo ve el impacto del calentamiento global en el trabajo que realiza como trabajador del campo?
16. ¿Qué mensaje le gustaría transmitir a los políticos y a la sociedad sobre sus experiencias de usted y de su familia?
17. ¿Cuáles son algunos de los logros más preciados en su vida? ¿Cuáles han sido unos de sus momentos más felices en la vida suya y de su familia?
18. ¿Qué aspiraciones o sueños tiene para el futuro de usted y su familia? ¿Cuáles son sus deseos para sus hijos?

Appendix 7: Guiding Questions for the Testimonios of Migrant Youth

1. In a few sentences, who is Cristian?
2. How many years have you been living in Buena Vista?
3. Can you tell me about your daily routine?
4. What does your parents' work in the fields meant for you growing up?
5. How has your family's work in agriculture impacted your access to education and learning opportunities? Specifically, the 50-mile rule? 50-mile waiver?
6. How do you navigate language barriers, cultural differences, and other factors each time you have to move schools and communities?
7. How do you feel about the multiple schools you attend and the support you receive from teachers and staff?
8. Have you experienced any difficulties or discrimination at school due to your family's background as farmworkers?
9. What kind of resources or support do you wish you had to help you in your education journey?
10. Are there any extracurricular activities or programs that you would like to participate in but find challenging due to family circumstances?
11. What role does your family play in supporting your education and learning?
12. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your education, and what challenges have you faced during this time?
13. Do you feel that the schools you attend are equipped to understand and address the unique needs of farmworker youth?
14. What do you think schools, communities, and policy can do to better support farmworker youth and their families in pursuing education and achieving their goals?
15. What changes would you like to see in our education and housing system?
16. What are some of the most treasured achievements in your life? What have been some of your happiest moments in your life?
17. What do you dream of? What are your dreams and aspirations?
18. How do you envision your future in terms of education and career aspirations?

Appendix 8: Guiding Questions for the Testimonios of Community Leaders and Activists

1. Can you share with me the history and context behind the 50-mile regulation and its impact on farmworker communities? What has been your role and experience in dealing with the 50-mile regulation?
2. What motivated you to become an advocate and fight against the 50-mile regulation?
3. How has the 50-mile regulation affected the lives and well-being of farmworkers and their families in the community? In what ways do you see that it has made a difference? In what ways have things stayed the same?
4. What are some of the most significant challenges you have encountered in your efforts to end the 50-mile regulation? Where do these challenges come from?
5. What are some notable successes or milestones in the fight against the 50-mile regulation?
6. In what ways have you collaborated with other organizations and individuals to build support for this cause?
7. What strategies have you employed to raise awareness about the 50-mile regulation?
8. How do you engage with policymakers and government agencies to advocate for policy changes?
9. Can you share some personal stories or testimonios from farmworkers impacted by the 50-mile regulation that have inspired your activism?
10. What role does community empowerment play in your efforts to challenge and overturn the 50-mile regulation?
11. How do you envision the future of farmworkers and their families once the 50-mile regulation is successfully eliminated?