

EXPLORING FACTORS THAT MOTIVATE MIGRANT GED GRADUATES
TO PURSUE AND PERSIST
IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

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This exploratory case study investigated the factors that motivate migrant students who graduate from the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) in the lower Rio Grande Valley of South Texas with a General Educational Development (GED) certificate to move on to post-secondary education.

The results of the study indicate that the most salient motivating factor for enrollment and persistence was self-efficacy. Other motivational factors include the support received from family and teachers. Other findings indicate that the migrant lifestyle both hindered and encouraged matriculation. Additional findings detail a predisposition for choosing a career in the medical field due, in part to the shortage of medical personnel and the growing number of health facilities in South Texas.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Each year, migrant students in Texas are recognized for their exemplary achievements in high school, postsecondary level, as well as when they complete GED programs. The recognition not only reaffirms their success, but it demonstrates the resiliency of the migrant population. They understand first-hand the importance of education and how difficult life is without it. The perseverance and passion of migrant students is derived from the strength of the family, the essence of the migrant lifestyle, itself. Through academic achievement and resilience, many migrant students rise above adversity, beating the odds, to become engineers, doctors, nurses, teachers, scientists, and business entrepreneurs, not only in Texas, but throughout the nation (Trevino, 2004).

Nevertheless, farm worker families are among the most socio-economically deprived groups in the country with some of the lowest educational levels in the nation. This seasonal and migratory workforce claims over 3 million dependents, with more than 750,000 school-aged

children and youth (DiCerbo, 2001). Seasonal migration of these school aged children adversely affects school performance and the prospects of higher educational attainment (Gabbard, Mines, & Boccalandro, 1994). Mobility alters the learning environment and is seen as the greatest risk for failure among migrants (Biernat & Jax, 2000).

The migrant and seasonal farm worker population is 86% Hispanic (Salinas & Reyes, 2004). Hispanics have the highest dropout rates among all ethnic groups. In studies conducted from 1972 to 1996, the data indicate that Hispanic students are more likely to drop out of school than any other ethnic group (Romo, 1999). Even in more recent studies conducted by the United States Department of Labor (2003) and the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute (2003), Hispanics still have higher dropout rates than the rest of the student population. On average, Hispanics drop out between the eighth and 10th grades (American Federation of Teachers, 2004) while the majority of migrants drop out with only an 8th grade education (Harrington, 1987), creating a seemingly unending cycle of poverty and educational barriers.

The mobility that is the essence of this special constituency is a chronic barrier to educational success. As a result, 50% of migrant students do not graduate from high school (Salinas & Reyes, 2004), with a dropout rate that is almost double that of non-migrant families (Martinez & Cranston-Gringas, 1996). Contributing to this high drop out

rate, at least a quarter of a million migrant students must withdraw from school each year to join their families as they follow the harvests.

Moreover, migrant families must relocate at least six times per year, sometimes moving not just from one rural area to another, but from one state to another (Leon, 1996). Students who migrate with their families must be prepared to encounter different curricula, textbooks, educational standards, and policies as each move approaches (R. Arceo, personal communication, 1999). The migrant lifestyle is harmful academically as well as socially and psychologically due to the aspects of constant readjustment and the severed relationships (Prewett-Diaz, Trotter, & Rivera, 1990).

The migrant lifestyle that continues to keep entire families economically and educationally marginalized and isolated is evident throughout the United States. Migrants are the most undereducated, among major subgroups (Romanowski, 2003). In 1998-1999, school districts throughout the nation identified over 780,000 migrant children and youth. In 1999-2000, the Texas Education Agency identified approximately 125,988 migrant students, with the majority in the Rio Grande Valley region of Texas (Alanis, 2004), the home to the second largest interstate migrant population in the nation (Romo, 1999).

Accessing a postsecondary education, even at the community college level is difficult if not non-existent for migrant youth, especially

when attempting to do so without a high school diploma. Migrant students, 86% of whom are Hispanic and 40% of whom are limited English proficient (LEP), eventually drop out of high school (Salinas & Franquiz, 2004). The first language for 75% of migrant students is not English (Thompson & Wiggins, 2002) further limiting their chances at high school completion or a postsecondary education. The majority of schools cannot meet the academic needs of LEP students because teachers and paraprofessionals are not properly trained or they are not familiar with language acquisition or how to effectively instruct culturally diverse populations such as the migrant population (American Federation of Teachers, 2004).

Pursuing a college education may seem untenable, but many migrant dropouts take the initial step toward that goal by enrolling in General Educational Development (GED) classes such as those offered by the High School Equivalency Program (HEP), a federally funded GED program for migrants.

HEP has three main objectives, to retrieve migrant dropouts, ensure they graduate, and provide guidance and access to a postsecondary education. Meeting these objectives involves a process that acknowledges and understands the plight of the migrant, addresses the current educational needs of the migrant, provides a positive learning environment, offers flexible class schedules, has professional staff that

not only provides structure and guidance, but does so by instilling positive expectations.

Rationale for the Study

Although some research has been conducted regarding the barriers that exist for migrants in secondary and postsecondary institutions, there is virtually none regarding motivation of migrant GED graduates in their pursuit of a college education. Furthermore, very little research exists that specifically addresses the migrants who graduate from HEP in the Rio Grande Valley region of Texas.

HEP has been a federally funded program for over 35 years; however, there is no consistent documentation regarding the retention and academic success of HEP graduates, if and when they enter a college or university. Although studies indicate that migrant farm workers value an education (Martinez, Scott, & Cranston-Gringas 1994; R. Arceo, personal communication, 1999), the fact remains that there is a paucity of research regarding migrant education (Salinas & Reyes, 2004).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the motivating factors that compel migrant students who graduate from the HEP program in the lower Rio Grande Valley of South Texas with their GED, to move on to postsecondary education.

Research Question

Despite the barriers identified in the literature, what do migrant GED graduates from the High School Equivalency Program in the Rio Grande Valley say motivates them to pursue and persist in postsecondary education?

The study will also include questions regarding the decision to enroll in postsecondary education, persistence in postsecondary, and the migrant lifestyle.

Definition of Terms

1. College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) – A federally funded program that assists migrant and seasonal farm workers acquire a postsecondary education. It was initially funded by the Department of Labor in 1967, but is now funded through the Department of Education.
2. Colonia – An unincorporated border community that often lacks adequate water and sewer systems, paved roads, and safe, sanitary housing (Border Colonia Geography Online n.d.).
3. Extrinsic motivation – Motivation that occurs as a result of perceived desirable outcomes such as rewards and praise (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).
4. General Educational Certificate (GED) – High school equivalency certificate developed in 1942 by the United States Armed Forces

Institute, first administered to WWII veterans so that they could more easily pursue educational, vocational, and personal goals.

American Council on Education. (n.d.).

5. Farm workers – Laborers who cultivate, harvest, and prepare a variety of seasonal crops for market or storage, including fruits and nuts, vegetables, horticulture, and field crops (Thompson & Wiggins, 2002).
6. High School Equivalency Program (HEP) – A federally funded program that assists migrant and seasonal farm workers acquire a General Educational Development certificate. HEP helps persons 16 year of age and older who are currently not enrolled in school. The Department of Labor began funding HEP in 1967, but it is now funded by the U. S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education. Higher Education Act, n.d.).
7. Hispanic – An English Language term that means pertaining to ancient Spain; the U.S. Census Bureau adopted this term to refer to all Spanish-speaking and/or Spanish-origin populations in the United States (Thompson & Wiggins, 2002).
8. Intrinsic motivation – Motivation to perform activities for no apparent reward other than for the activity itself or the feeling of accomplishment (Deci, 1975).

9. Interstate migration – Migration that occurs within two states or among several.
10. Intrastate migration – Migration that occurs within a migrant's own state.
11. Latino – Includes all people from Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries, Spain, and persons who identify themselves as Hispanic, Chicano, and who are living in the United States (Thompson & Wiggins, 2002).
12. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) – Primary language is not English (Romo, 1999).
13. Migrant – An individual whose primary employment is seasonal agriculture, who lives in temporary housing and who travels more than 75 miles to obtain a job in agriculture, dairy farming, and in the fishing industry (Thompson & Wiggins, 2002).
14. Migrant Education Program (MEP) – A federal program that serves migrant children between the ages of 3 and 21 by providing supplementary education and support services.
15. Migrant Stream – Three principal “paths” exist for migrant agricultural workers; the Eastern stream that includes southern states and the eastern seaboard, the Central stream which stretches from Texas through the central United States, and the Western stream that includes all of the west coast and western

states.

16. Motivation – To choose to engage in an activity, sustain the activity, and determine the intensity of that activity (Sellers, Dochen, & Hodges, 2005).
17. Non-traditional students – Students, older than 22, who enter postsecondary education.
18. Rio Grande Valley – South Texas region that encompasses 9,662 square miles, in seven counties alongside border with Mexico. Region One Education Service Center. (n.d.).
19. Seasonal Farm Workers – Individuals whose principal employment is agricultural labor, residing permanently in a single community (Thompson & Wiggins, 2002).
20. Self-efficacy – A personal estimate of how competent one feels in a certain environment (Bandura, 1986).
21. Traditional students – Students who enroll in college upon graduation from high school.
22. TRIO programs – Programs begun as a result of Lyndon Johnson’s Economic Opportunity Act, that now include Upward Bound, Talent Search, Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers, and the McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program.

Significance

The daily adversities and lifetime struggles of migrants have been widely documented (Coles, 1967; Cranston-Gringas, & Anderson, 1990; Rothenberg, 1998; Salinas & Franquiz, 2004; Thompson & Wiggins, 2002; Velasquez, 1996), but limited research has been conducted regarding the academic achievement and persistence of migrant adults at the postsecondary educational level (Martinez & Cranston-Gringas, 1996). The significance of this study, then, is to explore the motivating factors that compel migrants to achieve academic success after having dropped out of high school, entered a GED program, and graduated from HEP.

Although this study will focus on HEP graduates from the Rio Grande Valley region of South Texas, its significance will facilitate the work of other migrant advocates and help to fill the gap in literature related to the challenges in educating migrants beyond high school.

The lower Rio Grande Valley is comprised of four counties with a population of approximately one million people. Ninety percent of the population is Hispanic. One-third of the entire valley population relies on agriculture as its major source of income. Although the region has experienced tremendous growth, it remains one of the poorest in the nation (Larson, 2002).

The region is home to the second largest migrant population in the United States (Romo, 1999) with 20% of migrant students not at grade level according to age. Additionally, 25% of students that do remain in school through the 12th grade do not graduate (Trevino, 2004).

For over 35 years, the High School Equivalency Program has provided the first step toward breaking out of the migrant lifestyle, for many young dropouts and their parents, but its success in doing so is going uninvestigated. No current studies exist indicating either the transition rates from HEP to college or the retention in and graduation rates out of college. As a result, this study will provide insight, not only to the plight of migrants, but to the motivation HEP students have to help them complete a GED and achieve academic success at the postsecondary educational levels.

In the current era of federally funded accountability of all programs and the erosion of federal support for a number of social programs such as family literacy and adult education, it is important that HEP successes be recognized by policy makers who can continue to support the program. Programs such as HEP and CAMP have been in existence for many years, yet their success rates are going uninvestigated. I expect that my efforts in showcasing the students enrolled in the Texas State HEP, will foment other HEP programs throughout Texas and the nation

to do likewise. Perhaps a unified research approach will demonstrate the legitimacy of service delivery programs such as HEP and CAMP.

Summary

This chapter discusses the migrant farm worker, one of the most socio-economically deprived groups in the country. This seasonal and migratory workforce has some of the lowest educational levels in the nation.

The mobility of the migrant farm worker population is a chronic barrier to educational success. Migrants are the most undereducated, among major subgroups. Accessing a postsecondary education, even at the community college level is difficult. Although pursuit of a college education may seem untenable, many migrant dropouts start the process by enrolling in General Educational Development (GED) classes such as those offered by the High School Equivalency Program (HEP).

This exploratory study will seek to answer one central question, “What do migrant GED graduates from the High School Equivalency Program in the Rio Grande Valley say motivates them to pursue and persist in postsecondary education?”

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Estimates suggest that there are approximately 800,000 migrant children and youth in the United States (DiCerbo, 2001; Mines, Gabbard, & Steirman, 1997), yet a paucity of research exists regarding the migrant lifestyle, as such, and the education that it affords the migrant student (Salinas & Reyes, 2004). There is an even greater dearth of research about the migrant dropout who returns to school by enrolling in a migrant specific program such as HEP, graduates, and enrolls in a postsecondary institution.

With the barriers that migrants face, the question remains, what motivating factors exist for HEP students in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas to obtain a GED, then pursue a postsecondary education?

Barriers to Educational Success

Mobility. Mobility, the essence of migrant farm work, is the dominant cause for failure of not only students, but sometimes entire families (Gouwens, 2001). While it is true that some migrant families are

ultimately able to overcome adversity, the lifestyle of a migrant is such that the children and young adults frequently are the ones who face the greatest risk of succumbing to the barriers that lead to failure in school (Martinez & Cranston-Gringas, 1996). Although most Hispanics face a multitude of barriers that prevent them from academic achievement, graduating from high school, and attaining a postsecondary education, for the migrant, the mobility issue is the most debilitating (Huang, 2003; Weyer, 2002).

As each move approaches, students must be prepared to encounter not only a different learning environment, but different curricula, and textbooks, coupled with this is the impact of new teachers and classmates who may or may not accept the new student who appears in the classroom during mid year (R. Arceo, personal communication, 1999). With each impending move, students lose up to two weeks of school. Moreover, some families are forced to follow work opportunities by moving to the harvesting fields, and may as a result move up to 10 times within a school year. In addition, many migrant students begin a school year up to 30 days after it has begun (Trotter, 1992). Skandera and Sousa (2002) found that about 40% of migrant children change schools frequently, making them two and a half times more vulnerable to repeat a grade. Their research also indicates that

there is a greater likelihood that children will drop out by the eighth grade if they changed schools four or more times.

Throughout the United States, migrant youth must overcome constant interruptions in school attendance which leads to high drop out rates, with an average of 17.5 school changes compared to 10.3 for those who graduate. Additionally, non-migrant graduates attend classes 90% of the time while migrants average 72.7%, attendance in classes (Guffain, 1991). There is no doubt that migrant students continue to have the highest dropout rates due to the mobility factor that overrides any other aspect of the migrant lifestyle.

High mobility has a detrimental affect on the academic achievement of migrants at all levels. Despite efforts by the federal and state governments and school districts, migrants are still one of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in the nation (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). A study conducted by Hinojosa and Miller (1984) and later supported by Paiz (1985) and Johnson (1985), substantiate the relationship between failing a grade and migrant status. Moreover, constant mobility often creates other problems such as low school attendance, poor nutrition, poverty, as well as health issues due to substandard housing (Hanley Melecio, 2004). According to a report on education (Skandera & Sousa, 2002), the main concerns regarding achievement gaps are often attributed to disparities in educational

resources and learning environments at home and in school. Yet, the United States General Accounting Office (1994) reports that mobility is a more relevant indicator for low achievement scores that often lead to failure. There is a greater likelihood that mobility hinders students more than any other factor because the curriculum is different in each state, district, and sometimes within districts.

Poverty. Poverty leads to other barriers such as substandard housing, poor health, and nutrition problems, and the inability to afford basic school supplies, lessening a student's chances at meeting academic goals. Farm workers live in some of the most deplorable conditions in the United States. Often, they are forced to live in substandard housing that sometimes lacks heating and plumbing as well as refrigeration and cooking accommodations (Helsinki Commission, 1983; Hanley & Melecio, 2004; Holden, 2002). Some states establish farm labor camps to house incoming migrants, but often there is a fee for housing while affording migrants only a bare minimum (Solis, 2004).

The majority of housing units for migrant farm workers are overcrowded and substandard. One-third of all migrant children reside in such conditions, making it difficult for many children to find adequate space to study or often have to compete for private areas with siblings or adults (R. Arceo, personal communication, 1999; Holden, 2002). Because many families do not stay in one place long and children often have to

work alongside adults, parents may not have the space or time to provide a study area needed for schoolwork. Equally inhibiting are chores that interrupt study time, forcing submission of incomplete assignments or none at all, leading to embarrassment in the classroom and ultimately lower self-esteem (R. Arceo, personal communication). As one administrator from the Weslaco Independent School District stated, “if you want to know why a student did not complete his homework, you should visit his home and you’ll understand that studying is not his main concern” (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), an overcrowded housing unit is defined as an average of more than one person per room. Almost 85% of farm labor camp housing is overcrowded, with sometimes as many as 10 to 12 people packed into a one or two bedroom house (Thompson & Wiggins, 2002).

In Texas, many migrant families live in *colonias*. The word *colonia* is a Spanish term for neighborhood community, but in Texas, a *colonia* refers to an unincorporated settlement along the Texas-Mexico border that may lack basic water and sewer systems, electricity, paved roads, and safe and sanitary housing (Border Colonia Geography Online, n.d.).

Most *colonias* are not conducive to a healthy lifestyle, nor are they places where a student can comfortably concentrate on school assignments. Colonias exist in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and

Texas. The Rio Grande Valley of Texas has approximately 2,000 colonias, housing 400,000 residents (Ramos, May, & Ramos, 2001). Sixty-five percent of all colonia residents are American citizens.

According to Rothenberg (1998) and Thompson (2002), 75% of farm workers earn less than \$10,000 per year. As a result, 61% of migrant households and approximately 75% of migrant children live below the poverty line (Romanowski, 2003). Guerra (1979) explicitly defined the migrant and seasonal workforce as the poorest of the poor. Currently there are over 1.8 million seasonal farm workers and almost one million migrant farm workers in the United States (Rothenberg; Thompson & Wiggins, 2002). Financial hardships are a constant in migrant households and often children and youth are compelled to join the labor force, impacting school attendance and limiting academic success, and graduation rates (Cranston-Gringas & Anderson, 1990; Romanowski).

The lives of children and youth are further complicated by the need to join the workforce in order to contribute to the family income. A study conducted by Nixon (1995) found that students who work more than 20 hours per week completed less homework, were less likely to produce quality assignments, or take advanced courses preparing them for a postsecondary education. Several studies also indicate that the rate of school enrollment, historically, has been dependent on the economic

needs and survival of the family, (Cardenas, 1976; Chin, 1984; Inter America Research Associates, 1976; Lopez, 2004).

Language and cultural differences. An additional barrier that migrant students must contend with is the language difference. The primary language of many farm worker families is Spanish resulting in school children who cannot actively participate in classroom activities. Forty percent of migrant children are considered Limited English Proficient (LEP) (Salinas & Franquiz, 2004), and 75% of adult migrants are considered functionally illiterate (Hodgkinson, 1985). Often LEP students face additional problems in the classroom. Among them is the lack of trained and certified teachers to provide instruction to English Language Learners (ELL) or LEP students. LEP students with disabilities are at a greater disadvantage than for the mainstream LEP students. Often school district staff makes the wrong decision by misdiagnosing LEP students and referring them to special education classes (American Federation of Teachers, 2004).

Although many migrant students are bilingual, they have not acquired adequate language skills to produce quality work expected in many classrooms (Gouwens, 2001). Often, teachers must make key pedagogical adjustments to classroom instruction ensuring that migrant students have a realistic opportunity for learning and succeeding (Hayes, Baruth, & Kessler, 1998). Having poor language skills sometimes

compels teachers to group migrant students with slow learners which eventually may lead to weakened academic development and self-esteem issues (Trotter, 1992).

Culture, like language is evident in every aspect of life, migrant or otherwise. Hallowell (1955) considers culture to be a relationship between the self and the environment, with reactions and adaptations. According to Romo (1999), cultural perspectives are sometimes taken for granted because they stem from common, everyday values, attitudes, and beliefs. Vasquez (1999) sees culture as a phenomenon that guides and motivates behavior, remaining evident across generations and consisting of specific personal views regarding the world and self.

Hispanic culture encompasses a diverse set of values, attitudes, and beliefs. Mexican-Americans, immigrants from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries, as well as migrant and seasonal farm workers, the majority of whom are from Mexico, continue to foster cultural beliefs within families and sometimes within entire communities.

Many of these families have assimilated or have adapted to mainstream society's social, economic and political values (Keefe & Padilla, 1987). Others have even chosen to acculturate or change their own cultural patterns so that they are more similar to those of mainstream society. This is seen by some as conforming to the Anglo lifestyle and investing in Anglo beliefs (Gordon, 1964). Yet, for others

selective acculturation occurs. That is, some ethnic groups, especially Mexican-Americans, choose to retain the core beliefs or cultural traits that many Hispanics value. Most prominent is the importance of family ties and how they choose to raise their children. Retaining traditional foods and music is also important. Selective acculturation is reinforced in some areas by the concentration of Hispanics in specific geographical areas such as in the southwestern states as well as by the proximity to Mexico (Keefe & Padilla).

Due to cultural differences and maybe differing stages of assimilation and acculturation Hispanic students find themselves at odds with the mainstream culture and the home-country culture (Reese, 2002). The cultural differences often hinder students' academic development and success in the classroom. Teachers must be willing to learn about specific cultural differences and create an environment conducive to learning without cultural clashes. It may be difficult to rid classrooms entirely of misunderstandings stemming from cultural differences, but just being aware of the tangible aspects of migrant culture will help.

Often migrant students are labeled as troublemakers for creating problems in the classroom and fighting on the school grounds when in reality they were doing what they were taught to do, value and defend family honor (Romanowski, 2003). Students, however, who are

suspended for fighting or whose parents are summoned to a parent conference because of a cultural clash, may consider it much easier to leave school than to confront the cultural dilemmas (Romanowski, 2002).

Many factors interfere with migrant students' ability to succeed, such as mobility, poverty, limited English proficiency, lack of self-esteem, among others. Reyes & Fletcher (2003), write that there is often a contradiction between school philosophy or mission and the practical everyday treatment given all students. This disconnect may be an added barrier for migrants.

Low self-esteem. A migrant's perception of self-worth is dependent upon a variety of factors, some from within and some from external influences in society. Academic performance is an extension of self-esteem and a result of a positive combination of thoughts and feelings. Morse (1989) stated that high self-esteem produces academic achievement while low self-esteem produces dropouts. Morse further contends that low self-esteem may be the result of cultural beliefs and that are further compounded by low expectations from teachers and school or program administrators.

Migrant families face many hardships. Children sometimes feel compelled to help by joining their parents in the fields. The older the children, the more apt they are to work longer hours, adversely affecting grades. The embarrassment that comes from submitting incomplete work

or failing tests, often leads to lower self-esteem. Research conducted by Guffain (1991) posits that a migrant student's self-esteem is the lowest in the 9th grade, possibly due to the combination of self-esteem issues as well as the age factor. Often, as soon as the child reaches a certain age or level of maturity, the family feels compelled to have him drop out of school to contribute to the household income (Arceo, Kusserow, & Wright, 2002). Conversely, a student's self-esteem is highest in the 12th grade because graduation is near and initial academic goals have been met (Martinez, Scott, Cranston-Gringas, 1994).

Although not a model used directly with migrants, Finn (1989), identified a self-esteem model based on frustration. Failure in school or unsuccessful school outcomes in general, may precipitate an impaired self-perception, leading to frustration with school, truancy, absenteeism, and dropping out. Finn also states that to overcome low self-esteem, a student must experience success in extracurricular activities and class activities, such as joining in discussions or asking questions. When a student participates in affirming experiences, he identifies with school and this influences self-perception and self-worth (Harter, 1987), a major barrier to achieving academic success.

The key to success in life often starts in the classroom. Teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and expectations have a profound effect on students' self-expectations and performance (Brophy, 1986). A student's

motivation to do well and stay in school becomes somewhat diminished when they sense a daily lowering of expectations in the classroom.

Bramburg (1994) uses a theory that relates to expectancy times value to posit his concepts regarding lower teacher expectations. He states that the potential to learn is sometimes lost because students will not invest in the time it takes if they believe they are incapable of completing the task successfully.

Motivational Factors

Migrants comprise 80% of the Hispanic population (Salinas & Franquiz, 2004). Over 40% of Hispanic children live in poverty (Gonzalez & Padilla, 1997) and forty percent of migrant students are limited English Proficient (Salinas & Franquiz, 2004), while 75% of adult migrants are considered functionally illiterate (Hodgkinson, 1985). The first language of 75% of migrant students is not English (Thompson & Wiggins, 2002). Twenty percent of migrant students are not at grade level according to age and twenty-five percent of those remaining in school through the 12th grade do not graduate because they do not pass state level tests like the TAKS (Trevino, 2004). Migrants are shown to attend class only 72.7% of the time compared to 90% for non-migrant graduates (Guffain, 1991). Migrant students lose up to two weeks of school per move and may move as much as ten times per school year (Trotter, 1992).

Therefore, a migrant living in poverty, whose first language is not English, whose parents speak little or no English and have no formal education is not someone who would be expected to graduate from high school, much less graduate from college. Yet each year, migrants are enrolling in and graduating from colleges and universities throughout the country (Trevino, 2004). The motivation necessary to achieve these goals often comes from the resilience that personifies migrants and the migrant way of life.

Motivating students is sometimes a difficult proposition. The process can become more difficult when distinct barriers exist such as those encountered by migrants on a daily basis. The challenge is great, but not insurmountable. Upon completion, the students who graduate with a GED from the High School Equivalency Program are encouraged to challenge themselves by enrolling in a technical school, community college, or university.

In 2000, the Hispanic population in the U. S. reached just over 13%, making it the largest ethnic minority group in the nation. The increase compelled Lane (2001) to assert that Hispanic growth was responsible for 40% of the national growth in population. Others (Collier, 1995; Parnell, 1990; Rendon & Hope, 1996; Tureba & Bartholome, 1997) had made previous assertions related to the significance of growth of the Hispanic population and the need to ensure that minority

populations, specifically Hispanics, are prepared to contribute to the future of this nation through academic achievement. Amid these assertions, the Hispanic population is expected to be at 13.5% by July 1, 2006 and at 14.6% by 2010 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000). Currently Texas has the second largest Hispanic population in the nation and by 2040 Hispanics should account for the majority of Texas' population (Murdock et al., 2003).

Although Texas and the nation have experienced and will continue to experience a great degree of growth in the Hispanic population, the same is not true for minority enrollment at the postsecondary level. Between 1976 and 1996, minority enrollment at the postsecondary level increased 63%, but the increase is not an accurate representation of degree attainment, as retention was substantially less than 100% (Sanchez, 2000). Motivation is the key to bridging the transitional gap after high school or programs such as HEP, for not only retaining students, but graduating them as well.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation. According to Deci (1975), the feeling or desire to accomplish an activity is often intrinsically motivated, with no apparent reward in mind. Simply stated, intrinsic motivation refers to activities performed without an external incentive. For instance, one of the informants in this study stated that, "this is something that

I've always wanted to do, continue my education." Another student added, "I just want to complete, that is all that I want."

Intrinsic motivation compels people to do things just for the fun of it at times or because the activity seems to be the right thing to do. As Malone and Lepper (1987) stated, intrinsically motivational activities are performed for no reward other than the interest and enjoyment that they bring. Two of the respondents made corroborating statements. One said, "college is fun and I'm going to learn stuff." Another respondent stated, "going to college was something that I had always thought I should do."

There are many factors that stimulate disenfranchised populations to enroll in higher education. I want to know what compels migrants to do so. In order to gain insight into the motivations of a sub-group like the migrant and farm worker population, I must first look at the Hispanic population in general.

In Texas, to increase diversity, high school students who graduate in the top 10% of their class are guaranteed admission into any state university. Yet, many graduates are not taking advantage of this proposition. Prospective Hispanic college students usually come from low-income families and they are usually first-generation college prospects. As a result, parents are unable to help, as they are unfamiliar with the process, as are the graduates. Additionally, many families do not make the substantial income that it takes to pay for tuition at many

colleges and universities. The parents are unaware that grants and scholarships exist, so as is often the case, the graduate and the parents may decide that getting a job is the priority. If a graduate does enroll in college, it is usually at a community college (Russell, 2006).

Hispanics enroll in postsecondary institutions for numerous reasons (Gonzalez & Padilla, 2001; Romo, 1999; Roueche & Roueche, 1993), generally practical ones. In general, most Hispanics realize that a tenable connection exists between a college education and employment, that not only pays well, but that provides opportunities for advancement (Weissman, Bulakowski, & Jumisko, 1998). In studies conducted by Benshoff and Lewis (1992) and Roueche and Roueche (1993), nontraditional students recognized that higher education was the most salient factor necessary for upward mobility to occur.

MacBrayne (1995) conducted a study to determine the role that motivation plays in deciding to enroll in a college course. He found that prospective college students all have similar motivational traits. They are all seeking a degree, they all have a desire to learn, a desire to participate, and are also seeking an opportunity for a better job. MacBrayne also found that the students had specific goals such as a desire to improve future job prospects, to enhance a current job, and a desire to improve job skills. The students in this study were found to be

both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to pursue a college education.

A study conducted by Santos (2004) focused on the motivations of prospective community college Hispanic students. Results address five motivational factors. Almost half of the respondents, 47.5 % stated self-encouragement was the greatest motivator followed by parents 34.0%, spouses 7.3%, friends, 6.7%, school personnel, 3.9%, and 0.6% by others. Additionally, the reasons given by these students for enrolling in college were for knowledge, self-development, job enhancement, social status, and improving social life.

This Santos study suggests that the primary motivations for enrolling in college are intrinsic factors such as to learn, for self-improvement, and to increase self-reliance, rather than improving their status among friends or society. Furthermore, Santos' study (2004) suggests that Hispanics enroll in college, to learn, the basis for the existence of institutions of higher learning. Hispanics want to go to college for the right reasons, but like many migrants potential barriers may dissuade them from doing so. Fortunately, the greatest advantage these students have is that they have the desire to learn and succeed.

Postsecondary institutions are looking for strategies that will enhance classroom dynamics to produce educational attainment and maintain student persistence (Sanchez, 2000). In his research, Tinto

(1997) asserts that the classroom is “the crossroads where social and academic integration occurs and the only place where students and faculty meet” (p. 599). The classroom becomes the focal point for initiating motivational dialogue and instruction that will lead to academic achievement and persistence.

Sanchez (1996) and Aragon (1996) conducted studies to determine the relationship between culture and learning styles as motivating factors in Hispanic and Native American students. The results indicated that both groups were motivated by the same type of classroom environment and by instructors that allowed time for feedback, whose assignments were participatory and collaborative in relation to real-life experiences. Minority students are more motivated to learn when they encounter instructors who acknowledge the student’s culture, learning styles, and real-life experiences. Strategies that incorporate a student’s culture are vital for educating migrants. Instruction that is culturally relevant and validates identity produces a classroom environment with active participation in the educational process (Sanchez, 2000).

Programs such as HEP and CAMP are successful mainly because these programs maintain a familiarity with the migrant culture, an awareness of existing academic barriers, and a positive classroom experience. A positive and motivational learning environment will lead to retention of students, educational attainment, and student persistence.

Currently, the Hispanic population is the fastest growing. By 2030, Hispanic students will comprise one-fourth of K-12 enrollments (Gibson, 2002). Yet, statistics indicate a wide discrepancy between the numbers of Hispanics and those that pursue a postsecondary education (American Federation of Teachers, 2004). There are many reasons for this, mainly the traditional ones such as language and cultural barriers, as well as poverty, racism, and low teacher expectations (Gibson). But research indicates that parental involvement could be the most salient factor that leads to academic achievement, especially for marginalized sub groups such as migrants.

There is no doubt that migrants face a multitude of barriers, due to the mobility, poverty, and language and cultural barriers that define the migrant lifestyle. According to various studies, ongoing parental support and involvement is paramount to the entire process of attaining a college education. (Ascher, 1988; Baker & Soden, 1998; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995; Lopez, 2001). Parents must remain engaged and spearhead discussions regarding education. Often teachers erroneously believe that parents don't care (Lopez). Teachers and administrators often misunderstand the reserved approach and respectfulness that characterizes many Hispanic parents. They misinterpret the situation, when actually, Hispanic parents do have a high regard for education,

have set goals for their children, and are interested in assisting their children (Chavkin & Gonzalez; Lopez).

A study conducted by Trevino (2004) asked why and how parents of high-achieving migrant students get involved in their children's education. He interviewed the parents of 5 migrant students from East, West, and South Texas. Using semi-structured audio-taped interviews, he asked open-ended questions in English or Spanish and found that parental beliefs and actions directly contribute to the academic success of children in higher education. Among the parental beliefs that were common was high expectations for academic success, professionalism, and strict self-discipline. Each parent held steadfast to the notion that they expected all of their children to have high academic expectations and eventually enter a profession. From the child's first years in school, the parents committed themselves to a partnership with the teachers and actually saw themselves as the child's first teacher. Additionally, even during travel time or work time, the parents continued to provide academic support to keep the children focused on returning to school and succeeding. The involvement of these migrant parents was instrumental in the children's academic achievement, but the teachers and administrators also had to create the environment that welcomed the parents' participation.

Self-Efficacy. Although intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play vital roles in the lives of migrant students and the educational decisions they make, it is clear that self-efficacy plays an even more significant role. Self-efficacy or beliefs about abilities to accomplish tasks involves a seemingly recursive model (Pajares, 2002). Students engage in an activity, study the results from that activity, decide how to interpret the results and how to use these interpretations in subsequent activities. Any future accomplishments are therefore part of what they have come to believe about themselves or their self-perceptions.

According to Bandura, (1986), regulating or directing behavior is the basis of self-observation. The self-observation leads to generalizations or reflections regarding general abilities. The appraisal of oneself through self-efficacy provides the motivation to accomplish goals. The belief then becomes self-regulated in a positive manner that in turn allows the student to remain persistent even in the face of setbacks.

Self-efficacy influences achievement at every educational level. Self-efficacy helps students decide what courses to take and helps determine activities based upon confidence levels from previous similar activities and results. Students are also capable of discerning how much effort a certain activity will require and the degree of perseverance necessary to complete an activity. Ultimately self-efficacy determines the

degree of motivation for any learning activity and ensuing academic success (Pajares).

Self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in academics because it enables students to become academically and socially integrated in the rigors of higher learning. Pintrich (2003) compares self-efficacy to the expectancy-value theory which suggests that behavior is dependent on the expectancies one has and the value of the goal toward which one is working. He states that when students feel positive and confident about completing a task and in their ability to do so, their self-efficacy is higher. The likelihood of persistence increases as well.

Studies have shown that a relationship exists between self-efficacy and self-regulated learning. If students are allowed to set their own goals, their levels of confidence, competence, and commitment to attain those goals increases (Schunk, 1985). Self-efficacy also increases when students are given immediate or frequent feedback regarding assignments (Schunk, 1983). Of greater consequence is for students to be able to attribute good results to their own efforts. In doing so, they will work harder, experience a heightened sense of motivation, and they will strive to learn more (Schunk, 1987). Feeling competent and responsible goal setting contributes to students' motivation and to the success they ultimately experience at all levels of the educational process (Zimmerman, 1994).

Studies have shown that self-efficacy does effect decisions to enroll and persist at the postsecondary level (Golden, 2003; Rayle, Arredondo, & Kurpius, 2005). Often students find that success breeds success. Additionally, Rayle, Arredondo and Kurpius found that parents who have little education often encourage their children to accomplish more than they did. By doing so, the parents are establishing a sense of educational self-efficacy.

The results of Trevino's study (2004), mentioned earlier, indicate that motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is vital to the success of migrant students. More significant is the fact that at an early age students must be exposed to positive self-perceptions and a self-efficacy that provides the motivation to persist in school at all levels.

Summary

It is obvious that although barriers exist, migrants can find a way to overcome them. Migrant students still in high school and those enrolled in the High School Equivalency Program can also become high achievers. A positive learning environment and a supportive living environment provide the motivation necessary to consider a postsecondary education. Additionally, migrant-impacted school districts that address the social, economic, and physical needs of migrant families facilitate the involvement of parents, often the greatest single motivator (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001).

Despite the complexities of the migrant lifestyle, some field studies indicate that given the opportunity, and with sustained support, Mexican migrant students will remain in high school in greater numbers than their non-migrant Mexican peers. The perceived explanation is that federally funded programs are the key. They provide the academic, social, and moral support that migrant students lack (Gibson & Bejinez, 2002). If federally funded programs do indeed provide the assistance for high school migrant students to persist in high school, then the same should hold true at the postsecondary level.

Created exclusively for the provision of academic support for first-generation and lower income students, TRIO programs at the postsecondary level could be the bridge to success for the migrant student. Of special interest to college bound migrant students, are the Student Support Services program that helps at-risk students succeed in college and the Education Opportunity Centers that provide guidance and planning at the postsecondary level prior to enrollment (McElRogelio & Armesto, 1998).

There is no doubt that the key to success starts and ends in the classroom, whether it is in high school, a GED class, or a university class. HEP students experience a rich learning environment, one that provides instruction toward completion of the GED and counseling services geared toward a postsecondary education or a career position.

The counseling sessions provide the migrant student with the opportunity to ask questions regarding college, to discuss different options outside university and college, including technical and vocational schools, as well as workforce related topics. However, HEP counselors make it clear that attending a postsecondary school is the primary option. Many students are bewildered by the prospect because attending college had not been a consideration. It is only after the opportunity is presented to them that they become motivated and eagerly complete all testing. Motivating the students is an essential component to academic achievement and persistence even at the GED level.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to identify, based upon self-reported data, factors that motivate migrant GED graduates to pursue a postsecondary education. The study design sought to answer the central research question by using three sets of supporting research questions. The central research question asked “What do migrant GED graduates from the High School Equivalency Program in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas say motivates them to pursue and persist in post-secondary education?”

The three sets of supporting research questions asked pertained to:

1. Regarding decision to go to college
2. Regarding persistence in college
3. Regarding being a migrant

Research Methodology

The qualitative approach selected for this research project was a case study. The focus of a case study is to conduct in-depth research

that will yield information that is representative of other such cases (Yin, 1994). The research conducted in this study yielded a greater understanding about the graduates in general and identified specific motivational factors that influenced the students' decisions regarding matriculation into a postsecondary institution.

The case study was the first forum for qualitative methodology used in American sociology to study rural and immigrant populations with an emphasis on the inclusion of contextual conditions (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993; Yin, 1994). Inasmuch, this research examined a similar population, one that is highly mobile, whose home base is in relatively rural communities, and that must be studied contextually to fully understand.

By using the case study approach, this research was able to focus on the migrant population within a specific system, as Creswell (1998) indicates, bounded by time and place. This study was limited to an inquiry regarding migrant GED graduates from the High School Equivalency Program in the Rio Grande Valley region of South Texas.

The majority of the literature on migrants focused on the barriers that exist for this population, such as mobility (Martinez, Cranston-Gringas, 1996; Gouwens, 2001; Skandara & Sousa, 2002; Huang, 2003; Hanley & Melecio, 2004), poverty (Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Holden, 2002; Romanowski, 2003; Solis, 2004), language and

cultural difference (Hodgkinson, 1985; Romo, 1999; Reese, 2002; Romanowksi, 2003; Salinas & Franquiz, 2004), and issues with low self-esteem (Guffain, 1991; Martinez, Scott, Cranston-Gringas, 1994; Arceo, Kusserow, & Wright, 2002).

There is little information regarding migrant GED graduates who enroll in postsecondary education. The majority of research pertains to the matriculation of the Hispanic population in general. Research regarding motivational factors for migrant GED graduates entering postsecondary education is virtually non-existent. The case study as the research design provided the means to conduct an in depth study of a few subjects; a quantitative study with large numbers of subjects would be difficult, due to the paucity of research pertaining to migrants.

Pilot Study. A pilot study was conducted, as Yin (1994) states, to give the investigator an opportunity to refine the data collection process. By doing so, any potential data collection issues encountered can be resolved.

Three recent GED graduates from Palo Alto College in San Antonio, TX participated in the pilot study. The pilot study focused on clarifying the data collection process and the data instrument.

The pilot study occurred on April 25, 2006. The pilot study data analysis resulted in no substantial changes to the interview protocol.

Procedures

Setting. After the pilot study, the formal data collection process began. The research for this project was conducted at different sites throughout the Rio Grande Valley. The High School Equivalency Program is a satellite site initiative, with 11 sites spread over three counties. Initially, students from four class sites were recruited to participate in the interviews. The investigator contacted the potential informants to schedule the interviews. The interviews were conducted in the different communities of the informants. The investigator ensured that each informant understood the reason for conducting the study. The informants were allowed to ask any questions to ensure that they understood the purpose of the study. Each informant signed the consent form.

The initial eight interviews and follow-up interviews were conducted at the Texas Migrant Council office in Alto Bonito, the Meadow Heights Community Center in Pharr, and the Weslaco Public Library in Weslaco. Three students from three different classes and rural communities were selected for the actual case study.

Population. The target population was migrant GED graduates who were enrolled and attending postsecondary classes. Five females and three males participated in the initial interviews. Three of the eight graduates were chosen for the case study based upon their detailed

responses during the interview sessions. All eight participants were asked the same 23 questions. Responses of all eight students were included throughout the discussion, but only the responses of three students were included in the case study. The three students that were chosen for the case studies were selected due to the detailed information derived from the interview protocol.

The participants were completing the first semester of college at the time of the interviews. The three participants for the case study are enrolled at South Texas College. All of the participants are Health Science majors. One student will obtain an associate's degree in radiology and the other two will become patient care technicians before they pursue careers as licensed vocational nurses.

Rights of the participant. Prior to conducting the interviews, all prospective participants were given an overview of the purpose of the study. Participants then were given time to read and sign the consent forms (see Appendix A). They were given time to ask questions regarding the study. The investigator asked each participant whether he/she understood the consent form and if they had any other questions before they submitted the consent form. The participants understood that they had the right not to participate and to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were informed that their identities would not be

revealed. Each participant was assigned a letter which was used as an identifier in order to maintain this confidentiality.

Data collection. Creswell (1998) recommends using various sources to corroborate evidence that validates the research. This exploratory study used three sources to obtain viable information to answer the central research question and the ancillary questions. The first source was the HEP application (see Appendix D) that each student/participant completed upon enrolling in the program. The applications provided pertinent information regarding eligibility as a migrant. Each application requires information about the type of farm work in which the migrant was engaged, where the employee worked, and the dates of employment as migrant farm workers. Each applicant must attest to the accuracy of that information. As investigator, it was important to ascertain that the participants were truly migrants. By doing so, a participant pool to select from was established.

The second source used was essays that the students had written in class regarding their experiences as migrants and their aspirations for the future. By reading these essays, it was possible to ascertain some background information on the student behind the program application.

The third and primary source was a list of open-ended questions (see Appendix B) used during the structured interviews. The interviews were conducted in English and were approximately two hours long, with

an additional follow-up structured interview that was approximately one hour. The follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify some of their responses. Both the initial and follow-up interviews were conducted by the investigator.

Research Instruments

A list of open-ended questions was used to gather data. The questions were developed upon review of the literature and they were designed to elicit thoughtful responses from the HEP graduates to determine the fundamental factors that motivated them to decide to enroll and persist in college.

The questions were divided up into three sets and correlated to the central research question and supplemental or support questions. The first set of questions concerned the reasons or factors that motivated students to make the decision to enroll in college. The second set of questions regarded their college experience to date and the reasons for persistence. The third set of questions concerned their perspectives on their personal experience as migrants.

Data Collection Schedule

The data collection schedule was tentatively scheduled after the approval of the study by the academic institution of the investigator. Adjustments were made to the data collection schedule to coordinate

with the class and work schedules of the participants. The data collection occurred from May 8, 2006 to June 9, 2006.

Data Analysis

Preliminary data analysis for this exploratory study was conducted simultaneously with data collection (Creswell, 1998). The data were not analyzed using qualitative software. To ensure validity of the data, all interviews were recorded. The audiotapes were transcribed as soon as possible to assist the investigator in the initial phase of data analysis.

The data analysis consisted of establishing a detailed interpretation or description of the case and the setting therein, followed by the use of two of Creswell's (1998) analytical strategies. Through categorical aggregation, meaningful and relevant information and patterns began to emerge. A matrix was used to assist in analyzing and organizing the information derived from the data analysis (see Appendix C).

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology for conducting the study to answer the research question "What do migrant GED graduates from the High School Equivalency Program in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas say motivates them to pursue and persist in postsecondary education?" The first section of this chapter discussed research methodology employed for this research study. The target population was

selected from the '05-'06 cohort of HEP graduates. Of the eight participants in the first phase of the research study, three were selected to participate in the case study. This chapter provided a brief description of the program as validation for the various interview sites. Also discussed were the rights of each participant, the research instruments used in this study, the collection of data, and data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This exploratory qualitative case study was conducted to answer the central research question “What do migrant GED graduates from the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) say about what motivates them to pursue a postsecondary education?” The interview protocol consisted of three sets of questions related to the decision to persist in postsecondary education and thoughts regarding migrant farm work.

The population for this study included recent GED graduates from the High School Equivalency Program in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas who have enrolled in postsecondary institutions. This data was gathered by conducting structured interviews using a 23-item protocol and structured follow-up interviews. Additional information was obtained from class assignments such as essays and other program documents. Through data analysis of the interviews, I was able to uncover several

themes and motivating factors that promote enrollment in college.

Interview protocol. The interview protocol was administered during two interviews. The 23-item protocol asked supporting questions regarding motivational factors, aspirations, and academic and social influences prior to entering college, self-concepts about being in college, as well as questions related to self-perceptions and other's perceptions following entry into college. All eight participants were asked the same 23 questions. Three of these students were selected for the case studies due to the richness of data elicited from the interview protocol.

Participant demographics. Eight first-generation students who are currently enrolled in college were selected to participate in this study. All are Hispanic and recent graduates from the High School Equivalency Program. As such, they qualified for HEP due to the agricultural work that they performed as migrants within the past two years.

All students are members of families who have migrated for many years. For example, one student migrated to Oregon, where she clipped onions along with other family members. Upon her return to the valley, she would cut cilantro and pick sugar beets. Another student migrated to Michigan, where she would live from April to November, picking cucumbers, apples, asparagus, and strawberries.

The participants graduated from HEP between July and December, 2005. They have all completed their first semester of postsecondary

education. I contacted all graduates from that cohort regarding participation in the study, and these eight were the ones who responded. Interview data from all eight students is included in this study, but only three students were the focus of the case study. The majority of the participants were members of families who had been migrating to other states for several years.

The median age of the participants was 31 years old. The average age of participants is 32, a direct correlation to the average age of students enrolled in the Texas State University-San Marcos HEP. The majority of participants completed the 11th grade and did not return for their last year of school. The primary reason they left school was to help support the family by joining their parents and siblings in the fields. All respondents are married and have school age children.

Interview questions. The primary research question relates to factors that motivate HEP students to enroll in postsecondary education. To ascertain specific information, students responded to questions regarding educational influences encountered prior to entering college, aspirations regarding their future, questions about self-concept while in college, and questions not only about self-perceptions after entering college, but also other's perceptions regarding their entry into college.

According to Deci (1975), intrinsic motivation relates to a desire to perform an activity for no apparent reward other than for the activity

itself or the feeling of accomplishment. A couple of the respondents stated that although they know that they are going to receive a degree, they just want to be able to complete for the sake of completing. One respondent said that initially she did not have a specific reason for thinking about going to college, just that it was something that she had always thought she should do. Another student explained,

I was in the fields working and I was thinking to myself that it was a very hard job. And since I was little I wanted to study. I liked going to school. I just wanted to go to school, just to go and learn.

These statements are corroborated by studies conducted by MacBrayne (1995) and Santos (2004) who found that college students are initially motivated by intrinsic factors such as a desire to learn and succeed.

Extrinsic motivation on the other hand occurs as a result of a perceived desirable outcome such as a reward or praise (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Most college students realize that a tenable connection exists between a college education and employment (Weissman, Bluakowski, & Jumisko, 1998). Furthermore, studies such as those conducted by Benshoff and Lewis (1992) and Roueche and Roueche (1993) found that non-traditional students recognize that higher education is the most salient factor necessary for upward mobility to occur.

The migrant students in the target study population are not any different. Almost all of the respondents stated that they did not hesitate to drop out of school when they did because their parents needed them to go to work to help support the family. One student in particular described the day that she made the decision to drop out. She said, “I didn’t even think about it. I remember looking at my parents struggling to make enough for the family and I just wanted to help out. I thought that later on I could do something.” Another student recalled, “My family had been migrating for ten years since I was like seven, so one day I just decided that I was just going to help my parents more.” Another declared, “I dropped out to get a job and help my mother and father.” Now these same students who dropped out of high school want to earn a degree so that they can get better jobs to help support their own families. They want to demonstrate to their children, especially, that completing high school and obtaining a college degree will improve future job prospects.

Decision to enroll. In conducting the analysis of the data, I found several patterns or consistencies related to the students’ decisions to enroll in college. In some cases I was given specific dates when a participant recalled making the decision to not only acquire a GED, but to enroll in college, as well. All of the students acknowledged the

importance of an education, and their desire to complete what they were unable to accomplish many years before. One student recalled,

I made the decision to get my GED in September of last year and by November I had it. Because I had dropped out of high school, it was really hard. I felt I had missed out on something. I saw my sister going to college and she would talk to me, so I knew what I needed.

Another student recalled that, “for more than 10 years I was thinking about going to college, but it was like a dream.” Yet another student remembered how he felt when his own children graduated from high school. He recalled thinking, “I wish it was me. I never did tell my kids that, as far as they knew, they thought I had it. Even I thought I had it.”

Although, as is often the case for migrants, their parents had low literacy skills in Spanish and English or had little education, all of the students recognized the encouragement and support received from parents and other family members when they eventually started the GED classes. One student stated that her mother only had a third grade education, but her mother would encourage her often. On one occasion the mother told her, “You can do it, you can do it. Go ahead and go and not because of the kids, that’s not going to stop you.” Another student stated that her parents never went to school, but the mother told her, “It is better to continue to school. I guess you’ll be better off.”

The literature identified many barriers associated with the migrant lifestyle, but as far as these students were concerned, acquiring a GED was their greatest barrier. One stated that although migrant work was hard, “at least you had your family to help you pull through, but you have to get your GED on your own.” Prior to enrolling in the GED classes, all of the students had similar thoughts and expressed some degree of self-doubt and fear regarding the GED tests. They all had long term goals to enroll in college, but because they lacked a GED, their plans seemed futile. As one student said, “it was something I wanted to do, but I just wasn’t sure how I would do it or if I would even pass my GED because I have been out of school for 30 years.”

Of great interest to me were the comments made regarding how the GED classes facilitated their decision to pursue an education at the postsecondary level. All of the students recognized the GED classes as the focal point that provided the impetus, guidance, and motivation that they needed. At the end of each class day, the initial apprehension began to diminish. One student described how he watched as his first practice test was graded. He assumed that the check marks reflected errors, but to his surprise, he had made only two errors. He said, “I thought she was pulling my leg, but then I realized I had done well, and the next class day, the teacher said, how would you feel about going to college? That’s when it started.

Once they saw that they could be successful at this level, they sensed a feeling of accomplishment, a distinct contradiction to what many said that they felt when they dropped out of high school. In fact, one student stated that she was emotionally crushed, “when I dropped out of high school, it was really hard. I took it really hard because I wanted to get my diploma like everyone else. It was really hard.” Those feelings persisted in some cases for 10 to 20 years, until they conquered the barriers that had prevented them from completing a high school education and pursuing a college education. In response to a question regarding school, a student said,

The first time I thought about going to college had to be in high school in the 9th grade when we went from junior high to high school and we had to meet with our counselor. That is the first time she brought it up, ‘hey would you like to go to college some day and what would you like to be?’ That is when I first thought about college. At that time I was 15 or so. A year later I dropped out. Now after so many years...I have been out of school for 30 years and now I finally have my GED.

Another student said that she had not made any plans or set any goals for herself until she was in the GED class. “I was just taking it one day at time. Then, as soon as I got my results for the GED tests, I went to go apply for spring 2006.”

Each student expressed appreciation for the assistance they have received at various points of their journey. Most affirmed that if it were not for their spouses, parents, siblings, or children, they may have conceded defeat to the barriers that are a part of the migrant life. A student recalled, "Even before I had my GED, my sister would tell me, No Marta get up, being like that you're never going to get a job." She continued, "My family is my husband and son. My sister is my inspiration, but my husband is always supporting me, he's my leader." Another student said, "All of my family members are on my side. They take care of my kids while I go to school and work. I work 10 to 12 hours a day and I go to school right after work. My friends are on my side too. They back me. I have a friend who motivates me a lot."

Two students described problems they experienced due to language issues. One couldn't speak English well and another did not begin to learn to read or write in English or Spanish until she was 11 years old. The student who started school at age 11 stated,

"I was living in Mexico and they never put me in school. I was born here in Weslaco, but they took me to live in Mexico and they never sent me to school. When we moved back to Weslaco, they put me in school, but it was really hard because I didn't even know how to write my name. They put me in the fourth grade in November, then in May they put me in the fifth grade, then they moved me back to

fourth. I was like crying and asking my mother why, why and things were really hard.

Another student experienced self-esteem issues because she felt embarrassed and incompetent each time she returned to class. She stated that she felt so uncomfortable entering a class at mid semester that it kept her from participating fully in class activities. She described those days in this manner, “and then we would go up north and return and school had already started and I was all embarrassed. And everyone was looking at me.” Due to her inability to participate fully, she felt inadequate and unproductive. These feelings of inadequacy persisted until she enrolled in the GED class, took, and passed her first practice tests. She stated that upon learning the results of those tests, her whole outlook on life changed and, “then I was really proud of myself.”

Other students described their parents’ inability to find work other than farm work due to their low literacy skills. As a result, they were forced to migrate every year just so that they could have an income based upon six months of work. One student stated that his parents did not get a good education and did not have good jobs so he felt that he needed to do something different than continue to migrate, “I want to go to college for my future, financially, and to help my family. I know I need higher education. I’m sure that they want me to help them now.”

Another student expressed the difficulties he had while in school. He lived with his grandparents and felt that,

I was pretty much self-taught in everything that I have done throughout my whole life. Because my grandparents they never helped me. That is another reason why I was never all that into school because my grandparents never helped me with my homework. I did not have much of the support. They could not read or write so I struggled a lot and I don't know how it came to me.

These anecdotes illustrate what the respondents in this study overcame and the consequences of a life with little or no education.

Persistence in college. Although the students were compelled to drop out of high school, they never stopped thinking about the education they lost. The students seemed to just be waiting for an opportunity. Some students stated that they knew that if they ever had the chance to pursue an education, they would not allow anything to prevent them from completing. Now that these students are pursuing a degree, they understand what it takes to remain in school. Some mentioned patience, persistence, a positive frame of mind, and the desire to learn in order to be successful. Rogelio stated,

Going to class everyday is important. Because you know what, everyday you learn something new and it's so easy to fall behind. If

you don't show up, you're going to miss out. It might not be much, but you still have to be in class and have the attitude that yes I want to learn, have the proper attitude. There are a lot of kids that go there, but they don't want to learn. You have to want it.

The students are motivated and eager to continue because as one student said, "I remember how sad I felt about having to leave school and I know that sometimes things happen, but I want to finish what I have started."

The students have demonstrated progress. As migrants, they have overcome a multitude of barriers. In doing so, they have learned the importance of having positive attitudes and setting goals. One student said, "I want to learn and in order for me to learn and others to learn, we must have the proper attitude." Another student mentioned that his goal was to get an associate's degree in radiology within the next two years, but he also said,

I'm not going to be disappointed or discouraged because things do happen. In my long-term goal, I'm looking at three years. I could go to college for three years and not bat an eye. Going and completing is more important to me than trying to meet a two- year deadline because I'm sure I'm going to take some classes that I won't be able to pass and I may even have to drop some. So I've already

seen that. If I finish in two years, great, I'm just that much happier, but if I don't finish in two, I'll just wait to complete.

The students are motivated and eager to continue with classes.

The spring semester has ended and one student in particular mentioned that she didn't know what she was going to do for the next few months because she liked going to classes and staying busy. Several of the students expressed similar statements regarding the anticipation that they feel about returning for their second semester. They all reported doing well in all of their classes, and that is another incentive for returning. Several expressed that even if they did have a problem in a class, they knew whom to contact for extra tutoring or assistance, so they were not worried. One student declared,

I just think that everything is fine right now and I really don't see anything that would stop me. I'm really surprised because this semester went so fast. I did pretty good in all of my classes and that makes me want to come back. My lowest score was a B and I can hardly wait for next semester because I want to make all A's.

Family members and friends are also providing support. For some, the motivation to continue comes from within, but they all indicate that they want to advance in life not only for themselves, but for their families as well. All of the students in the case studies I will present have children. They have all expressed the desire to demonstrate to their

children the importance of having an education by continuing to attend college until they finish. One student said,

I want to motivate my son, my children to keep them going. Maybe they will look at me and I'm not so young and I'm doing the same, so they can see that I did it for them and for me. I always tell my children to study. I tell them I don't want 70's or 80's. If you don't study, you're going to have to do migrant work like I did. I don't want you to go find a job far away from your family like I had to do.

The children represent their most prominent reason for attending and persisting in college. Two students declared, "My kids motivate me to stay in school." and yet another stated, "My kids and my advancement are the most important because I know that if I stay in school, I will advance in life.

Regarding life as a migrant. Several study participants traveled from state to state as migrant farm workers for many years. Some traveled with family members and others on their own. I wanted to know how they felt regarding life as a migrant farm worker and whether they still considered themselves migrants. I included this question so that I could gain some first-hand insight regarding the work that they did, how they felt about the work, and how that life compares to their life now.

Their responses indicated that although they thought that being a migrant entailed a lifestyle dedicated to hard work, they all felt happy

and satisfied with what they had accomplished as migrants. They felt that the hard work prepared them for life to a greater degree. One student responded,

I still feel like a migrant. It's kind of like my roots. I feel proud of being a migrant because even if it's hard work, it's a way to show your family that you are persistent I think that if you can work in the fields, hoeing or pulling weeds, it makes you stronger and gives you an advantage because you know what hard work really is.

From other students, I heard similar comments. One student stated that she often thinks about the area in Minnesota where they would migrate. She stated,

I have good memories and bad memories. The bad memories were because I had to leave school, but the good memories were because I had most of my family with me. I did the work and just thinking about working in the hot sun makes me glad to be in school, but I won't forget those days either, it's a part of my life.

Another said that he would always consider himself a migrant because, if for some reason he needed a job, he knows there will always be the need for a migrant farm worker. He stated that he felt lucky because he had an easy job and if he had to, he could do it again.

For one student, migrant work represented an unhappy time in her life. She disliked that she had to drop out of school, yet she stated that

she still considered herself a migrant, but didn't think about it too often. She said, "But now I feel better because I'm going to school and I know that I don't have to go anywhere." This student had migrated for seven years. Her closing remarks were, "If I learned anything from my migrant experience, it was to go to school. I'm real happy now. I encourage those that are still doing that work to get their GED. I did it because I had to do it, but going to school is better."

All of the students interviewed have determined the salaries that they will be earning once they graduate from college. Several of the students will be working in the medical field, as radiologists, therapists, and as licensed vocational nurses. Just as there was a need for migrant and seasonal farm workers in the Rio Grande Valley, they know that there is a shortage of medical personnel in the Rio Grande Valley. As a result, the majority of the students have chosen these career paths in the medical field. Some students have already made decisions regarding an bachelor's degree after completing requirements for an associate's degree. One student laughingly described how she felt about being in college at her age. She stated,

Ha, I was thinking I was too old, but now that I am going to college, I see people who are almost my age or even older than me. And that keeps me going. I know I can get a master's degree when I get there because nothing has stopped me yet. It makes me feel

good when I hear people talking about me because I'm going to college. They are happy for me and I've heard people inquiring about where I'm going and they are probably interested in going. I hope they can join and get a degree like me.

Case Studies

Eight migrant students were selected to participate in a structured in-depth interview. This section will present a detailed case profile of three of those participants (Rogelio, Marisa & Marta). Each interview participant was assigned a code consisting of a letter, a number, and a pseudonym to protect the confidentiality of the participant.

Rogelio

Rogelio is 49 years old. He is currently married to his second wife, they have three children, and he does not have any siblings. He was born in Los Angeles and lived there for many years with his grandparents. At the age of 15, his grandfather died so Rogelio dropped out of school and began working. He later moved to Albuquerque and then to Texas. During those years, he was employed in maintenance, as a custodian, in pre-fabrication, as a forklift operator, a truck driver, and even owned a business. He was able to acquire all of these jobs without a GED. Rogelio explained how this was possible. He said,

When I was about 18, I went with a friend to a college where he was going to enroll. Later, at one of my job interviews, they asked

me if I had ever been to college and I go, yes, because I had been. Then they asked me, how long were you there? Was it less than a year? I said yes. So they said, you went to college, but you did not graduate from college. I said no. And that is how I made it through life.

For the next 29 years, whenever he had a job interview and was asked if he had ever been to college, he would say yes. He did not feel that he was lying because he had visited a college with his friend and responded truthfully when he said that he had been there less than one year. For the next 30 years or so, he lived with this secret and was able to acquire good jobs and establish a good work record, all without a GED.

At first he thought that since he had been out of school for so long, he wouldn't pass the GED tests, much less enroll in college. He felt that he was basically self-taught in everything that he did. His grandparents were illiterate, so even when he was in school, they were unable to help him with any assignments. As a result he struggled a lot in school. He really thought that he would struggle as well in the GED class, but he was pleasantly surprised with his rapid success.

He enrolled in the High School Equivalency Program in the Weslaco Public Library, in August 2005. He was eligible for the program due to his truck driving stint, loading and hauling produce. During the first couple of classes, all students are given GED practice tests to

determine entry-level knowledge in the five subjects, writing, social studies, science, reading, and mathematics. When Rogelio entered, he felt very uncertain about his ability to pass the tests, but that uncertainty quickly was dispelled.

The first practice test that he took was reading. Upon completion, the teacher immediately began to score the test. Rogelio stated,

They went up there and they started grading the paper. I saw them, check, check, check, and I thought oh my God I missed all of these questions, I only got two right out of all this. I did not know so that in my mind I go oh my God how embarrassing. Well, then it turned out that it was the opposite, all those check marks were right and I had only missed two in my first test taken in 30 years. They told me you did very good and I thought she was pulling my leg or what because in my mind I had missed all of those. Class was over and we really didn't get to talk about it, so the next day I returned to class and that is when they spent a little more time explaining to me. Hey you did pretty well on this test. How would you feel about going to college? That is when it started, my thinking about going to college.

Rogelio attended the GED class 24 times (classes were held only twice a week) and within four months, he had completed the GED requirements. By the time he completed, the HEP student advisor had already met with

him several times regarding college admissions and financial aid, and he had already received a letter of acceptance from a nearby college.

He has completed his first semester of a two-year program toward an associate's degree in radiology. When I asked him why he had chosen Radiology, he stated,

I decided on radiology because I am a humanities person. I enjoy helping people, working with people. I go, I volunteer at Special Olympics and by me volunteering and helping these kids that are disabled and stuff, I don't feel like I am helping them, I feel the opposite. They help me, they help me to see things in a different way, to be more positive. To see how to become a better person and not take things for granted. I enjoy helping them because they help me in return. I get a lot of satisfaction. Being in radiology, I will be doing that, I will be able to talk to patients and help them in one way or another.

Rogelio feels very proud of what he has accomplished. He feels that his greatest achievement is that two of his three children are also enrolled in the same college that he attends. He stated that his children have influenced him the most to enroll in college and complete his degree. He said,

I would look at them in a way and say to myself if they can see dad doing it, seeing that he can do it, there's no reason why I shouldn't

do it. I want to show them that it can be done. If I do it, they can do it.

When I asked Rogelio questions regarding the migrant work that he conducted, he told me,

I went and got my CDL (commercial driver's license). I started loading and hauling produce and did this for about a year, maybe less. I delivered in state and sometimes out of state. I loaded and hauled whatever vegetable was in season. Most of my runs were here in the valley. I still consider myself a migrant because if I needed to I could always go back to it. Some people grow it, some pick it, and some deliver like I did. I was very fortunate because I didn't have to work as hard as others.

Marisa

Marisa is 24 years old. She is married and has two children. She was born in the Rio Grande Valley, but at the age of four, her parents moved the family to Mexico. During those years in Mexico, Marisa was never taken to enroll in school. At the age of 11, the family moved back to the valley. She stated that she feels that the only reason that they enrolled her in school at that time was because, "back then when you asked for food stamps they would tell you if you don't put your kids in school we won't give you any. So they put me in school." When she finally was enrolled in school, she was placed in the fourth grade.

Unfortunately, since she had not had any formal schooling in the United States or in Mexico, she could not even write her name. She stated that even though she liked school and said, "I started school when I was 11 years. I didn't even know how to write my name, so I had to learn how to write and how to speak English." She stated that she doesn't feel that she really started to do well in school until the seventh grade. In the 9th grade, she made the honor roll for the first time. It was at this time, that she first visited a college campus and thought about going to college some day.

In the 12th grade, she got married and dropped out of school. She and her husband thought that if she dropped out of school, they could both migrate for a longer period of time to make more money. Marisa said, "I had the bright idea that if I dropped out, then we could do better because we would have more money. That was a big mistake, now I see it."

Marisa was a migrant farm worker for eight years along with members of her family. They would follow the crop harvests each year and wind up in Minnesota. It was in Minnesota while working a 12-hour day, picking sugar beets in the heat, that she decided that upon returning to Texas, she would enroll in a GED program again. Marisa started the GED program in May, 2005, dropped out for several months and returned in November, 2005.

Once she returned to the GED class, it did not take her very long to pass all of the tests. Before the end of December, 2005, she had obtained the GED certificate and had registered for classes at South Texas College (STC). Marisa decided that she would enroll in a six month long program. Upon completing, she would be certified as a Patient Care Technician (PCT). As a PCT, she can work in a hospital, doctor's office, as a home health care provider, nurse's aide, or as phlebotomist. She stated that since she was a small child, she's been interested in someday becoming a doctor or nurse. Another reason that she chose the PCT program was because, "I have two small children, ages four and five, and I had to think about my children. I have to be away for so long, I just wanted something a little shorter."

Her sister was already attending STC, then Marisa started, and then a cousin joined them. Not only did her sister motivate her to go to college, her husband and mother made sure that she went, as well. Her mother and her in-laws take care of her children while she is in school. She states that this gives her peace of mind and helps her to concentrate on her classes. Upon completion of the PCT training, she will start classes to become a Licensed Vocational Nurse. She intends to work part-time and attend classes. Although she has made this decision, she worries,

My kids are going to start going to school and I'm going to be going to work and then going to school. It's going to be really hard because I'm not going to be able to be with them. So your children, it's kind of hard because they motivate you, but yet I won't spend enough time with them.

Marisa's parents were not able to attend school past the third grade. They never returned to school because they had to work. The work usually revolved around the migrant harvests. As a result, they consistently advised Marisa to return to school. Although her parents did not have an education and did not support her in her initial years of schooling, Marisa understands. She said that her parents told her, "We didn't go to school because we had to work, but we don't want the same thing to happen to you. We want you to finish school so that you can get a good job." She agrees and believes that the only way to "become something is to complete what I have started." When asked about how she feels about being in college, she responded,

Sometimes when I wake up in the morning, I feel like blessed. I feel like a different person. I was telling my husband that when you get your GED and go to school, it's totally different everywhere because you can do whatever you want and achieve so much. And that's what I intend to do.

Marisa remembered exactly where she was when she first thought about going to college. She recalled,

It was back in May, 2005. I was working up north. I was working 12 hours a day in the fields and it was hot and then I started thinking maybe if I can get my GED I can do something with my life. I was doing the sugar beets. I was cleaning the fields. Once the crop has been picked, the weeds need to be pulled up. Although it was hard work, I still consider myself a migrant. It helps you in the long run, but it's hard because you don't know if there's going to be work or not. If it rains a lot in the fields and you work in the fields, then there's not going to be any work. Migrant work makes you stronger because you have to be prepared for whatever comes along.

Marta

Marta is 24 years old. She is married and has one child, a four year old. She dropped out of high school in the 9th grade because she was pregnant. It was at that time that she began migrating to Minnesota with her husband so that they could earn more money before the baby was born. They have continued to migrate for the last four years along with other family members because they have been unable to find stable employment.

When Marta dropped out of high school, she was devastated. Even before she had obtained the GED, she had already made the decision to enroll in college. She states that the decision to go to college was easy because of how she had felt when she dropped out.

I took it really hard because I wanted to be like all of my friends, going down the aisle and getting my diploma, so it was kind of sad. I wanted to get my diploma at that time and later it became my GED, so that I could go to college and move on. I felt I had missed out on something.

Marta enrolled in the GED program at the beginning of November, 2005 and obtained the GED within 3 weeks. She was an honors graduate, with an average score of 550. The mandatory passing score is 410, but the overall national average must be a score of 450. When she completed the GED program, her sister was already enrolled in college. Although she was unsure of what her specific major would be, she was certain it would be in the medical field.

Marta's parents have only a ninth grade education, but they were her biggest supporters along with her older sister. Marta's mother works at Wal-Mart and is constantly reminding her that having an education is very important. Her mother tells Marta,

I wish that I could have the GED so that I could have a better paying job. You need it everywhere. There are a lot of people that

didn't finish high school and they're not happy with what they have done with their lives.

In addition to her mother, Marta's sister has had a definite impact on her decisions to go back to school and get the GED and then to enroll in college. She states that her sister would make her get out of bed and motivate her to do something, anything. Her sister told her, "staying at home is not good, get out of bed you need *animo* (motivation) and you're not going to get it in bed."

Now that Marta is in college, her motivation to persist continues to come mainly from her sister, but she states that her teachers provide a great deal of help and guidance. With assistance from her teachers and advisors, Marta has decided to get an Associate's degree in radiology. Regarding the completion of her first semester of college, she states, "It feels good. I just finished my finals barely yesterday and it takes the pressure off. It feels good to say I'm in college. I feel better about myself. Better than I ever thought I would feel."

Marta was planning to migrate to Minnesota one last time this summer to work. She had been migrating every summer for the last three years. She related that,

We worked on a potato farm. I would cut the seeds and plant them in little cartons. It wasn't hard, but it was kind of boring.

Sometimes I would do something different, but it always had to do

with the potato. Migrant work is a positive experience. I never knew that upstate they paid good money. It's nothing like the \$5.15 here. They paid us \$10 per hour. Last year we were there for six to seven months and made about \$18,000.

Although Marta and her husband had planned to migrate in early May, they changed their plans. When I spoke with her, I mentioned that if she left, she would miss the GED graduation ceremony. She told me that she would speak with her husband because she really wanted to participate in the ceremony. On graduation day, she was there along with her family. She stated that she did not want to miss this ceremony because she remembered how sad she had felt when she saw her high school friends graduate without her.

Summary

This chapter provides an analysis of the data collected for this exploratory case study. The data were collected using a 25-item structured interview protocol and follow-up structured interviews with participants. The data were presented in relation to the supporting research questions that were used to answer the question, "What do migrant GED graduates from the High School Equivalency Program say motivates them to pursue a postsecondary education?" The data analysis illustrated several patterns or consistencies related to the students' decisions to enroll in college. The supporting questions regarding

educational influences prior to entering college, aspirations regarding the future, questions about self-concept, and questions regarding self-perceptions during entry into college and after entry delineated the motivational factors involved. Questions regarding life as a migrant were also included in the data collection instrument.

Analysis of the data indicate that motivation and encouragement received from family members, friends, and teachers at home and in school are essential elements for the students to be successful at the postsecondary level. The data also indicate that students need a structured, supportive, and positive environment that provides the instruction and guidance to remain motivated.

The most crucial factor, however, was self-efficacy. The data clearly indicate that for motivation to persist, the student must perceive that he is capable of doing the work. All of the students had expressed the desire to go to school, but they had not pursued that option until they felt confident about their abilities. The self-efficacy of each student emerged in the GED classroom and increased with each GED test that they passed. The process to enroll in college did not occur until the students passed the complete battery of GED tests. With each test passed, the students' self-confidence and self-efficacy levels improved.

All of the students dropped out of high school because they felt compelled to do so. They dropped out to help provide for the family, not

because they were failing in school. Several students dropped out in the 12th grade. All of the students mentioned that they liked school. The students asserted that they did not want to drop out, but felt that there was not another alternative. During the interview process, none of the students expressed a fear of receiving failing grades or feelings regarding not being able to graduate, yet they were compelled to drop out due to a personal crisis.

The students recounted the many years out of school, working in the fields. Throughout those years, the self-efficacy for the work that they were doing was high. They felt competent in that environment, as migrant field workers.

The confidence possessed in the classroom had waned, but as soon as they experienced positive results again, the self-efficacy returned. They engaged themselves in the educational process once more, obtained good results, and interpreted those results as positive.

The students' self-efficacy improved and provided the impetus and motivation to accomplish goals and remain persistent, even in the face of future setbacks. Pajares (2002) reported that this is exactly what happens in free-choice situations such as those experienced by the respondents. He states that confidence determines what activities or tasks are chosen while others are avoided. The students felt confident in

the fields, persevered and were resilient. They did not experience the same level of confidence in school and dropped out.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to determine what factors are associated with migrant GED graduates' decision to enroll in postsecondary education. This case study examined the perceptions of migrant GED graduates regarding the decision to pursue a college education, to persist in college, and life as a migrant farm worker. All eight participants were asked the same 23 questions. Three of the eight were selected for the case studies due to the thoroughness of responses.

The research findings indicate that the decision to enroll in college was made at the time that they became eligible to do so by obtaining a GED. The research data shows that the greatest motivating factor for enrollment and persistence was self-efficacy. Other findings indicate that the migrant lifestyle both hindered and encouraged matriculation. Additional findings detail a predisposition for the medical field due to the shortage of medical personnel and the growing number of health facilities in South Texas.

Generalizations and Discussions

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

The first set of questions relates to the motivational factors that affected college enrollment for this group of students. Motivation is what induces someone to engage in an activity. Motivation entails not only commencing an activity, but also the intensity of effort and persistence (Garris, Ahlers, & Driskell, 2002).

Intrinsic motivation is an innate phenomenon that occurs because of the value placed on a certain activity. The specific activity is performed out of a sense of commitment or interest. The result is a higher quality of engagement in the learning process (Ryan & Deci, 2000). For example, one of the informants in this study stated that, “this is something that I’ve always wanted to do, continue my education.” Another student added, “I just want to complete, that is all that I want.” The cognitive and social development that emerges from an activity that is intrinsically motivated, ultimately leads to a feeling of competence.

As Malone and Lepper (1987) stated, intrinsically motivational activities are performed for no reward other than the interest and enjoyment that they bring. Two of the respondents made corroborating statements. One said, “College is fun and I’m going to learn stuff.” Another respondent stated going to college was something that I had always thought I should do.”

Decisions are also extrinsically motivated. Extrinsic motivation occurs when perceived expectations exist such as food, money, or social reinforcement such as praise (Malone, 1980; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). The respondents in the current study were extrinsically motivated to enroll in college because they all expressed the desire to obtain a degree that will ultimately lead to better paying jobs or advancement in their careers. Three of the interviewees in this study had part-time jobs in retail and expressed the desire to find something better with benefits and with the ability to advance.

The respondents in the current study demonstrate that they are both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. Some want to learn for the sake of learning, others want to achieve a lifelong goal, and everyone wants a degree and a better job. The combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators found in the current study is what Malone and Lepper (1987) recognize as highly desirable processes.

Extrinsic motivators alone are not recommended as they may lead to completion of short-range goals thereby reducing the interest in the long-term goal. Malone and Lepper (1987) continue by stating that for extrinsic motivators to succeed, intrinsic motivators must be present. Although the students in this study were compelled to drop out of high school, they never lost sight of their goals. Accordingly, if both factors are not present there is a greater risk for failure.

The data show that the respondents in this study demonstrated a balanced motivational approach to education. Throughout the study, the students described the distinctive elements that forced them to abandon school. While doing so, they also related their acknowledgement of the education that they lost. Several students mentioned their desire to complete high school because doing so was something that they knew was important. The students related similar thoughts regarding college. One student stated, "It was just something that I wanted to do." Another student said, "I wanted to study. I just wanted to go to school, just go and learn." Although their aspirations for a postsecondary education were based upon fulfilling a dream, they all knew that a college education would lead them in new and better directions.

All of the students are aware of the extrinsic value of a postsecondary education. They know that a better education leads to a better life. As migrants they have already experienced the type of work available to someone with little or no education. They recognize that the decision to stop migrating, to enroll in the GED program, and to obtain the GED has already benefited them. As one student said, "I'm motivated to stay in school because I know that by staying in school, I will have a better job with less hours." Another student said, "I think the pay is from \$30,000 to \$50,000. I went on the Internet and I looked at the differences between the two jobs I was interested in, so I chose

radiology.” Their decisions are grounded on intrinsic motivation combined with the right amount of extrinsic motivation that will provide for them and their families to a greater degree.

Other Motivational Factors

The present study also confirms the important role that other factors have in the decision-making process. The respondents indicated that self-encouragement, parents, spouses, and friends were also essential elements for providing the motivation to pursue a college education. Several of the informants stated that prior to obtaining the GED, self-encouragement was the primary motivational factor. Upon completion of the GED requirements, self-encouragement became an affirming factor rather than a necessity. The students stated that their confidence and self-efficacy increased regarding.

Family

The informants also stated that often parents, spouses, and friends not only provide moral support, but they often assist by providing childcare and transportation. All of the informants, except one, have children, so childcare is vital to the success of those students. The informants stated that they often received daily encouragement from parents and spouses prior to enrolling in college and that they continue to receive it, as in the case of the husband who stayed up with his wife to help her complete a project. Parents often encourage the students by

reminding them how their own lives would have been so much better if they had completed their education. Another example is the friend who brought one of the informants a flyer regarding GED classes. Without that information, the informant would possibly not have enrolled in GED classes, much less be enrolled in college classes.

For many of the informants, the greatest motivation they received came from their own children. By obtaining a GED, then enrolling in college, the parents demonstrated the importance of an education. Just like any other parents, migrant parents want the best for their children. An innate understanding exists regarding the vital role of education. The parents want their children to acknowledge the value an education. The literature relates the importance of parental involvement in the schools (Ascher, 1988; Baker & Soden, 1998; Chavking & Gonzalez, 1995; Lopez, 2001). The current study demonstrates that the support and motivation received from children is as significant as what parental involvement does for the children.

Teachers

An additional and vital source of motivation comes from school personnel at the GED and postsecondary level. All of the students recognized the strong support and positive feedback they received in the GED classes prior to enrolling in college. The teachers and advisors provided test taking strategies and instruction, as well as the guidance

and assistance for choosing a college, choosing a major, and completing admissions and financial aid requirements.

The informants indicated that they feel comfortable with their college instructors and advisors. They stated that if problems arise, they are confident that their questions will be answered and problems resolved. Aragon (1996) and Sanchez (1996) both conducted studies to determine the relationship between culture and learning styles in Hispanic and Native American students. They found that both groups were motivated by the same type of classroom environment and instructors that allowed questions and time for feedback and assistance.

According to Sanchez (2000), minority students are more motivated to learn when they encounter instructors who acknowledge and are familiar with a student's culture. Instruction that is culturally relevant and validates identity produces a successful student. The informants in the current study related exactly that sentiment. They are comfortable in their classroom environments and they feel that their instructors understand them.

The informants in this case study are probably not any different from other migrant or non-migrant GED graduates. All of the sources of motivation were necessary for them to access entry into a postsecondary institution. I believe that those sources were significant, but that the most salient motivational factor in this study is self-efficacy.

As I compared interviews, one phrase or sentence stood out. Each student made it clear that they did not feel good about themselves, positive about their career goals, or confident about their abilities until they enrolled in the GED class. Once enrolled, they began to see good results from their class work, the practice tests, and eventually the actual GED tests. Bandura (1986) found that self-efficacy is determined by how competent one feels in a certain environment. It is quite clear that these students began to feel more confident and more competent with each assignment and as they began to pass the GED tests. Their self-observations lead to generalizations regarding their general abilities. This appraisal process provided the motivation to accomplish goals. The belief in themselves became self-regulated and allowed the students to remain persistent in the face of setbacks.

Self-efficacy influenced the students in the GED classes and continues to do so in their college classes. Self-efficacy enables students to become academically and socially integrated in the rigors of higher learning. When students feel positive and confident about completing a task and in their ability to do so, their self-efficacy is higher and the likelihood of persistence increases (Pintrich, 2003).

The results of this study indicate that self-efficacy is one of the most prominent forms of motivation for these students. Initially, they lacked confidence in their abilities, but their success in the GED

classroom allowed them to regain motivation to proceed. Attaining a GED certificate affirmed the self-efficacy necessary to excel at the next educational level. All of the students expressed similar thoughts of confidence and competence for pursuing and persisting at the postsecondary level.

Other Findings

Positive and Negative Aspects of Migrant Life

The interviews produced student recollections of the positive and negative aspects of life as migrant farm workers. They gave emotional and provocative renderings of the years that the students spent on the road traveling from state to state while working in the fields, sometimes alone, and at other times surrounded by family members. One student recalled, "It's not bad being a migrant. You have some advantages because you're working together with your family." Some of the students cleared the land of rocks, others did the hoeing in order to rid the land of weeds, some picked vegetables and fruits, while yet others loaded and transported the produce. Some described eating their favorite fruit while working. One student described her work,

I picked cucumbers, pickles, apples, and strawberries.

Strawberries were my favorite and they were easier to pick because you could sit and do it. The worst was picking asparagus because it was cold, we picked it in November, and we had to pick them in

the morning. The plant was like a little stick and it would cut your fingers.

Neither the students nor the parents chose this lifestyle. It was an inevitable occurrence brought on by the necessity that sometimes passes from one generation to another because there is not anything else. Some students were first generation migrant farm workers, while others remembered their grandparents amid the excitement of their safe return from *el norte*. Another student recalled the fact that she did not particularly like the work, but felt that she had to do it because the last two generations of family members were migrants. She remembered,

When I was in the fields, I remember the first time I was picking onions and I just cleaned and cleaned the onions. My thinking did not let me work as hard as the others. My grandma and my mother would say *apurale* (hurry up) and don't do it like that. But it's like there was something in me that didn't care for the job. I was like rejecting that inside of me.

Some of the students dropped out of school to join family members on the yearly migrant trek while others dropped out due to extenuating circumstances. Many of the students remembered liking school and doing well in school. Several of the students described the day they made the decision to leave school. Although it was an inauspicious recollection,

the students were glad to have had the opportunity to attend as many of their parents were not able to do so.

Yet, the migrant students all remain true to their heritage. They all are proud to have been migrants and they acknowledge that they will always consider themselves as migrants. One student stated, "I'm not the kind of person to quit. Having been a migrant is kind of like my roots. I feel proud. It was hard work, but it was a way to show my family that I could be persistent." All of the participants related some degree of thankfulness for having had work and for learning what hard work is. For them, the difficult days have passed. The students stated that the migrant lifestyle has prepared them for the rigors of a postsecondary education and they all expressed an eagerness to meet the challenges. As one student said, "I feel better because I'm going to school and I know that I don't have to go anywhere." Another stated, "I'm real happy now. I did migrant work because I had to, but going to school is better."

Predisposition for Medical Field Careers

As the students begin to graduate from college, seven out of the eight initial study participants will start their careers in the medical field. The number of health care facilities in the Rio Grande Valley has steadily increased. These facilities provide medical services not only to the valley residents, but to those from Mexico as well. According to the Rio Grande

Valley Chamber of Commerce (2003), health care technicians at all levels are in great demand.

The Rio Grande Valley's job market is growing steadily due to its proximity to Mexico and other factors. In fact, employment has increased at a higher level and steadier pace than any other area of the United States, Texas, and Mexico. In 1990, the unemployment rate for McAllen was at 25.1%, but as of December 2005, it had fallen to 6.6%. The two biggest sources driving the economy are the government and health sectors. Currently, the health care industry produces 20 percent of the earnings (Lopez, 2006).

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study that decrease its generalizability to the overall population of GED graduates. The study was conducted between semesters limiting the sample size. Since the study related to HEP graduates already enrolled and attending college, the investigator could not include the graduates who had not yet matriculated into college.

The participants selected for the study obtained the GED between July, 2005 and December, 2005. They started college classes in January, 2006 and were in the process of completing the first semester when I approached them about participating in the study. The number of graduates has doubled since the study began, but those graduates will

not begin classes until the fall semester, 2006. A larger group of graduates to select from would have been more favorable and may have provided additional or extensive data.

Another limitation to this study was that it was conducted among migrant GED graduates and not the general GED population. Migrant GED graduates have different employment, educational, and family experiences compared to the general GED population, resulting in distinct motivational factors. Additionally, the study was conducted in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The results may have been different in another area of the state or nation.

A third limitation to this study that decreases its generalizability of the study is the age of the informants. The average age of the informants is 32 years, a direct reflection of the average age of students in the High School Equivalency Program. The results of this study may not reflect similar motivational factors for students in other GED or HEP programs due to the age differences in the populations served.

Prior to conducting the case study, as administrator of the HEP, I had little contact with the students who participated in the study. My primary responsibility is to examine documents submitted on behalf of the HEP students to ensure eligibility. I am not present at the time of registration process nor do I conduct the instruction or counseling of these students in the classroom.

When I met the students to conduct the interviews for the current study, we were meeting for the first time, which could be considered to be either a benefit or a limitation. The benefit of meeting for the first time may have allowed for more straightforward responses to the interview protocol. As sole investigator bracketing of my relationship to the program could come into question and be considered a limitation.

Implications for Practice

The findings presented in this study provide constructive information regarding what motivates migrant GED graduates to enroll in college. The current study provides insight for practitioners who work specifically with the migrant population. Other GED and HEP programs may find this study to be an effective tool for their advising and counseling staff, too. Knowing what motivates GED graduates to pursue a college education and persist in college is essential for programs that must demonstrate success rates. HEP programs are evaluated yearly in terms of the number of graduates that enroll in postsecondary education. The findings from this study provide an additional tool for ensuring that the HEP graduates access a postsecondary education. The High School Equivalency Program is funded by the Department of Education (DOE) and DOE requires all grantees to report the number of graduates, and the number of graduates that access a postsecondary education. The current study provides this program and others with valuable

information that could be used to reinforce existing program plans of operation.

I will use the findings from this study in professional development sessions to initiate discourse among the HEP staff regarding how to improve the services that are offered. The results of this study can also be applied to any other GED class. Doing so will demonstrate a concerted effort to know what motivates students that may be at risk for dropping out of the program. Often program staff is not aware of existing research that offers viable strategies and techniques to use in the classroom. This study and other similar research will bolster the capacity to recognize, and the significance of inherent factors such as motivation and self-efficacy.

Implications for Research

Although this study provides useful information to the educational community in general, it is of special significance for those who work on behalf of migrants. Because this is one of a few studies specifically about migrant GED graduates, the implications for additional research are extensive.

Of great interest would be future studies that not only replicate the current study, but that also look at other non-traditional GED student populations to determine what factors motivate them to seek higher education. In addition, a longitudinal study regarding this cohort would

also be useful. A longitudinal study would provide additional data regarding other motivational factors or look more closely at the significance of existing factors over time.

Equally as significant would be studies that investigate how self-efficacy affects postsecondary enrollment and persistence among other migrant students as well as the general population in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. Additionally, a study that compares self-efficacy amid different age groups, within the migrant population would add to the limited number of studies concerning minorities. Similar research using the attribution theory as a framework for future study would also add another facet to existing migrant and minority literature.

Relevant research would also include a more in-depth study to determine existing goals prior to commencing a GED program. The possibility exists that self-efficacy was not as significant in the current study as the results indicate. A more thorough investigation could clarify the relevancy of the results.

I found that none of the students perceived being a migrant as a barrier. They acknowledged the hardships, but did not consider them to be barriers. They accepted everything as a part of life and did what they needed to do to help their parents or their own families. When I asked the question regarding barriers prior to enrolling in college, they all responded that the only barrier they had was not having their GED. To

clarify this, I should have asked them to describe the barriers that they had to overcome as migrants. The literature categorized the descriptors associated with the migrant lifestyle as barriers, but the migrants did not. Research with other migrant groups would provide additional viewpoints regarding barriers.

Summary

This exploratory qualitative case study was conducted to answer the following central research question, “What do migrant GED graduates say motivates them to pursue and persist in postsecondary education?” Two supporting research questions were used to answer the central research question. The purpose of the study was to determine what factors motivate migrant GED graduates from the High School Equivalency Program in South Texas to pursue and persist in postsecondary education. This chapter provided a discussion of the results based upon the research literature.

The data analysis indicated that the barriers that the students had encountered as migrants were no longer evident. Although the migrant lifestyle consists of many barriers, for most of the respondents, the difficulties were short-term. The respondents reported that the GED classroom provided a positive and practical learning experience. Their most recent classroom experiences have also produced positive results at the postsecondary level.

The data analysis revealed several factors that motivated the GED graduates to pursue a postsecondary education. Self-efficacy was the most prominent motivating factor for graduates to enroll in college. The feeling of competency that they experienced upon completing the GED requirements persisted as they matriculated into college. The students expressed satisfaction with what they have accomplished to date and they expressed confidence in their ability to persist and overcome any potential problems.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation also played a significant role as the students contemplated not only enrolling in college, but entering the GED program as well. Other essential motivational factors included self-encouragement and the influence of family, friends, the GED program staff and the counselors and teachers at the postsecondary level. The primary reasons that these students enrolled in college were to gain knowledge, for self-development, to enhance job opportunities, and to provide a better life for their children.

This chapter includes several implications for practice as it relates to the research findings. Based upon the finding that self-efficacy is a prominent motivational factor, it is recommended that other programs, schools, and institutions take measures that focus on self-efficacy topics.

This chapter also includes recommendations for future research. It is recommended that this study be replicated with a larger sample

population of GED graduates from the HEP program, but also with GED graduates from the population at large.

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Appendix A
Informed Consent Form

Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT/CONSENT TO RELEASE INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH (NOTE: When a language and/or literacy problem may prevent an individual subject from understanding the informed consent statement, the informed consent statement, the informed consent statement is to be read and explained to the subject by the individual(s) requesting the consent.

1. The project director for this study is Dr. Emily Miller Payne, Associate Professor of Educational Administration and Psychological Services at Texas State University - San Marcos. The researcher is Susie M. Castillo with the Developmental and Adult Education Program at Texas State University - San Marcos.
2. The title of the research study is "Exploring Factors that Motivate Migrant GED Graduates to Pursue and Persist in Postsecondary Education."
3. The objective of the study is to interview GED graduates from the High School Equivalency Program (HEP) that are currently pursuing postsecondary education in order to determine the factors associated with pursuing and persisting in postsecondary educational programs.
4. The study has a tentative start date of May 8, 2006, and a tentative ending date of May 8, 2007.
5. The results of the study will be available to HEP students and other educational programs throughout the United States.
6. The results of this study will provide HEP programs with information that may lead to an increase in postsecondary admission and persistence thereby increase the likelihood of successful number of degrees conferred on Hispanic students.
7. This is a non-medical study. Therefore, participants can expect no physical discomfort by participating in this study.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary.

I understand that there is no penalty or prejudice of any kind for withdrawing from or not participating in the study.

I understand that my participation in this study will involve answering interview questions in an interview format?

I grant permission for the project researcher to audio-tape all interviews with me. I understand that I will not be identified by name in any of the audio-tapes.

I understand that all information obtained will be used for research purposes only and handled in the strictest of confidence, so that only the researcher will have access to information that is traceable to me. My participation will not be individually identifiable in any reports.

By signing below, I understand all of the above statements regarding the study entitled "Exploring Factors that Motivate Migrant GED Graduates to Pursue and Persist in Postsecondary Education" as explained above, and I consent to participate in the above mentioned study.

Please Print-Name of
Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Witness

Date

Appendix B
Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Regarding decision to go to college:

1. When did you first think about going to college?
2. Why did you want to go?
3. What were some of the barriers that you faced that prohibited you from enrolling? Describe them.
4. How have your family members affected the decisions you've made so far about your education? Please give some examples or stories that illustrate this.
5. How have your friends and other peers affected your educational decision? Examples or illustrations.
6. How have teachers, counselors, or other program staff affected your educational decisions? Examples and stories.
7. What within yourself helped you decide to go to college?
8. If you had to choose, which of the above factors- family, friends/peers, school personnel, or self-related factors most influenced your decision to attend?

Regarding persistence in college:

9. How has the educational level of your parents affected your choice to go to and your college experience?
10. How do you feel about being in college?
11. How did the High School Equivalency Program prepare you for college? If it didn't, why not?
12. In general, what do you think it takes to be successful in college? What has led to your own persistence in college? (What motivates you to stay in school?)
13. What were some of the barriers you encountered prior to entering college and are there any barriers that will keep you from persisting in college?
14. What, if any are your educational goals beyond your associate's or bachelor's degree?

15. Have you considered graduate school? Why/Why not?
16. What do you see yourself doing as a career?
17. How do you think that your parents/family would react if you decided to transfer to an institution outside of the valley?
18. How do you see yourself (as a student) now that you are in college?
19. Has your choice to attend college affected the decisions of family or friends to do the same?

Regarding being a migrant:

20. How long have you lived in the Rio Grande Valley?
21. Do you still consider yourself part of the migrant culture?
22. How many years have you migrated?
23. What did you learn from your migrant experience that continues to influence you now?

Appendix C

Matrix

Decision To Go To College

Supporting Questions	Responses (duplicate)	Generalizations
1. When did you first think about going to college?	Passed GED tests (5) Working in the fields (2) High School Counselor (1)	Success on GED tests
2. Why did you want to go?	Obtain better job (8)	Career prospects
3. What were some of barriers that you faced that made it challenging for you to enroll?	Lacked GED (8) Children (6)	Educational and logistical barriers
4. How have your family members affected the decision you've made so far about your education?	Supportive (8) Provided childcare (6) Provided transportation (1)	Emotional and logistical support
5. How have your friends and other peers affected your decision about pursuing higher education?	Encouragement (8) Provided information about GED classes (3)	Emotional and logistical support
6. How have teachers, advisors, or other HEP staff affected your educational decisions?	Provided counseling and encouragement (8) Admissions process (6)	Emotional and informational support

7. What within yourself helped you decide to go to college?	Desired better future (8) Personal Goal (7)	Quality of life and intrinsic motivation
8. If you had to choose, which of the above factors – family/peers, school personnel, or self-related factors most influenced your decision to attend?	Children (7) Self (1)	Self-efficacy (personal) and external motivation (family influences)

Persistence in college

Supporting Questions	Responses	Generalizations
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9. How has the educational level of your parents affected your choice to go to college and your college experience.	Limited literacy has encouraged my choice to attend. (8) College experience has been a great motivator (8)	Intrinsic motivation
10. How do you feel about being in college?	Feel better about myself (8) Feel optimistic about future (6) Feel better about my children's future (5)	Self-efficacy: Personal accomplishment For self and family
11. How did the High School Equivalency Program prepare you for college? If it didn't, why not?	Provided good instruction and guidance (5) Program has good teachers (6) Program has a good advisor (4)	Supportive academic setting

12. In general, what do you think it takes to be successful in college?	Patience (6) Persistence (7) Studying (6) Time management (7) Attend class daily (8)	Personal responsibility
13. What are some of the barriers that you encountered prior to entering college and are there any barriers that you may have to overcome to stay enrolled in college?	Lack of GED (8) Children (6) No foreseen barriers for completion (8)	Educational and prior logistical barriers
14. What, if any are your educational goals beyond your associate's degree or bachelor's degree?	Will enroll in additional classes for supervisory role (radiology/hosp) (1) LVN/RN (5) Child Psychologist (1)	Career enhancement
15. Have you considered graduate school? Why or Why not?	Only interest at this time is radiology. (1) Not at this time, due to children. (3) Yes (1)	Generally not considered
16. What do you see yourself doing as a career?	Radiologist (1) LVN/RN (5) Speech Therapist (1) State Trooper (1)	Primarily medical
17. How do you think that your family would react if you transfer to another institution outside the valley?	Would not approve (7) Would approve so that I could experience change (1)	Generally not approved

18. How do you see yourself now that you are in college?	Feel Proud (8) Feel I'm a role model for my children (7)	Self-efficacy
19. How has your choice to attend college affected the decision of family or friends to do the same?	Sons have enrolled (1) Sister and cousin have enrolled (3) Friends have enrolled in GED classes (4)	Motivated significant others to enroll

Regarding being a migrant

Supporting Questions Responses Generalizations

20. How long have you lived in the Valley?	8 years (1) Lifelong resident (5) 10 years (2)	A decade or more
21. Do you still consider yourself part of the migrant culture?	Yes (8) Part of my roots (2) Proud to be a migrant (4)	Proud
22. How many years have you migrated?	6 years (2) 8 years (4) 3 years (1) 10 years (1)	5 – 10 years
23. What did you learn from your migrant experience that continues to influence you now?	Importance of education (8) To be persistent (2) How to work hard (4)	Value education and hard work

Appendix D
HEP Student Application

**Texas State University - San Marcos
High School Equivalency Program**

Site: _____
Referred by: _____

NAME: _____ SOCIAL SECURITY #: _____

ADDRESS: _____
City State Zip Code Country

PHONE: _____ DATE OF BIRTH: _____ AGE: _____ Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Marital Status: ☐ M ☐ S Ethnicity: ☐ Hispanic ☐ Anglo ☐ African-American ☐ Other

Last Grade Completed: _____ Last School/Year Attended: _____

Have you taken an Official GED test? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, where? _____ Year: _____

Who paid for GED fees: ☐ Self ☐ Program If program, list name _____

Texas Driver's License or Texas Identification Card # _____ Expiration Date: _____

Place of Employment: _____ Phone: _____

Emergency contact's name: _____ Phone: _____

Name of person who in the last 2 years has worked at least 75 days in migrant and/or seasonal farm work:

Name: _____ ☐ Self ☐ Spouse ☐ Parent ☐ Guardian

Migrant Work History:

Mo./Yr. Began	Mo./Yr. Ended	Type of Work	Location City/State	Employer

Will you need special testing accommodations due to a physical or mental handicap, visual impairment, or attention deficit disorder? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Tiene algún impedimento, físico o mental que requiera facilidades especiales para tomar los exámenes? ☐ Si ☐ No

I am aware that the HEP program will collect GED test and practice test scores and will use these scores in evaluating the project. I hereby give permission to the High School Equivalency Program (Texas State University) to use my record of enrollment and progress as statistical data in the evaluation of adult education programs. I also give HEP permission to request and obtain the Certificate of Eligibility (COE) form or Texas Migrant Council worksheet as proof of my migrant/farmworker status. I affirm that all of the information that I have documented on the HEP application is true and accurate.

☐ Please check box if you have read & agree with statement.

Estoy conciente que el Programa de Equivalencia de Escuela Superior (Universidad de Texas State) tomara los resultados de los exámenes de practica y los resultados de los exámenes de GED para evaluar el proyecto. Por medio de la presente, doy permiso al programa HEP que use la informacion contenida aqui y que avance como datos estadísticos en la evaluación de programas de educación para adultos. También doy permiso que el Programa de Equivalencia de Escuela Superior pida y obtenga el Certificado de Elegibilidad (COE) como comprobante de mi trabajo de agricultura. Yo afirmo que todos los datos que se encuentran en esta aplicacion son verdaderos. ☐ Indica aquí si está de acuerdo

Signature

Date _____

PRACTICE GED TEST SCORES

Test Administered:

Subject	Score	Date
Writing		
Follow-up		
S.S		
Follow-up		
Science		
Follow-up		
Lit/Art		
Follow-up		
Math		
Follow-up		

(FOR OFFICE USE ONLY)
OFFICIAL GED TEST SCORES

Subject	Score	Date
Writing		
Re-test		
S.S		
Re-test		
Science		
Re-test		
Lit/Art		
Re-test		
Math		
Re-test		

Approved ☐ Yes ☐ No

Date. _____

Initials. _____

VITA

Susie Méndez Castillo was born and raised in Seguin, Texas. She graduated from Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, with a B. A. in Sociology. She was an adult education instructor for over 15 years, teaching English as a Second Language in an Adult Education Cooperative. She also directed an employment and training project for the Alamo Area Council of Governments. Susie is currently the Grant Director for the High School Equivalency Program at Texas State University-San Marcos. She resides in Seguin, Texas.

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This thesis was typed by Susie Méndez Castillo.