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From the Farm to Higher Education: Interpreting the Experience of Students with a Migrant/Seasonal Farm Working Background and Have Participated in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)

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From the Farm to Higher Education: Interpreting the Experience of Students with a Migrant/Seasonal Farm Working Background and Have Participated in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).

Elizbia Xaxni-Capula

Honors Thesis

Lee Honors College

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Mentored by Professor Barry Goetz, Department of Sociology

Abstract

The following thesis presents research on the experience of scholars with a migrant and/or seasonal farmworker (MSFW) background and have participated in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) in a 4-year institution. This research begins the methodology that was used to select the subjects being interviewed individually. This is followed by a literature review of the data that is already available specific about this demographic presenting 3 common barriers. The barriers focused on this are economic constraints, family role in higher education, and the imposter syndrome. An analysis of the respondents' answers will contribute to the sections of this thesis, as well as any recurring themes shared during the interviews. The thesis will conclude with an analysis on the positive aspects and areas of growth within the CAMP program from their undergraduate experience.

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Chapter 1: From the Farm to Higher Education

Introduction

The United States has rich soil with the ability to grow an abundance of fruits and vegetables to feed its growing population. There is a shortage of labor to harvest these crops because of low wages, high hours, and a variation of conditions. In the 2013 State of Michigan Interagency Migrant Services Committee reported an estimated population of 94,000 of Michigan migrants and, or, seasonal agricultural laborers including any accompanying non-farmworkers (Larson 2013). The population of Michigan in 2013 was 9.886 million (U.S. Census; Michigan 2020), therefore almost 1 percent of the population had a farm working background or were the children of parents who participated in the agriculture field as employees. The ones willing to take these jobs often follow the harvest season to a different district, another state, or sometimes even across national boundaries. These families are known as migrant or seasonal farmworker (MSFW) families. The migrant stream flows often from Florida, California, Mexico, and Texas as home bases (Branz-Spall, Rosenthal, & Wright 2003). As crops ripen in the north, families migrate during the spring and return home as the season ends before the winter arrives (Branz-Spall, et al. 2003). These migrant families often migrate with their children throughout the U.S. These parents encourage their children to pursue a higher education in order to have a better life. Completing high school, or obtaining their GED, requires the children of migrant laborers to overcome significant obstacles not faced by the majority population. Seasonal working families have been defined by the MSFW Enumeration Profile series as “an individual whose principal employment is in agriculture on a seasonal basis, who has been so employed within the last twenty-four months,” (Larson 2013; Larson 2006). This

means that any family that has moved at least once following a seasonal crop qualifies to achieve a MSFW status. There is no cookie cutter lifestyle when it comes to their occupation. However, these parents wake up early, make their own lunch, get their children to school, get home late from work, and sleep to repeat the same cycle the next day. This is the reality of migrant and seasonal farmworker families.

The children of these families migrate along with, sometimes having to endure an increased number of transfers throughout the school year. The instability caused by the constant transfer of different teachers, peers, and expectations sets them at a disadvantage and dropout rates increase. The lack of a consistent curriculum, and difficulties with credit transfers across local, state, or nation boundaries are other issues for students with a migrant farmworker background (Mchatton, Zalaquett, & Carson-Gingras 2006). Oftentimes schools are not able to accommodate the needs of these scholars because of their unique academic and cultural needs (Ramirez 2012).

Due to the low wages in the agriculture industry, these families rarely have the ability to finance a 4-year university education for their children without federal assistance by federal, state, or independent level. The cost of attendance to IHE is above the average salary a family with a MSFW occupation can afford. This requires them to seek financial assistance either from the Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA), scholarships from the institution they are applying to, or external scholarships. Loans are an option but families' with a MSFW background have different opinions on them. Some families see loans with a negative connotation, or as the only resource as a way out of poverty. Financial literacy is essential and more than often parent's are learning alongside their scholars.

In addition to financial constraints they also lack the knowledge to assist their students in gaining access to a college institution. About 15% of people that work in migrant and, or seasonal labor in the U.S. have completed 12 years or more of schooling (Mchatton, Zalaquett, & Carson-Gingras 2006). On top of the financial strain that it takes to send a student to a university, in most cases the students still bear the responsibilities of taking care of their family one way or another. In some cases students carry the responsibilities of having to bring food to the table (Branz-Spall, et al. 2003). Other responsibilities may include translating documents, making appointments, or watching the youngest of the family members. MSFW families rely on each other and are more close knit than other families because they depend on one another to survive (Court & Arango 1998; Torrez 2014). Everyone has responsibilities that may interfere with their own personal goals, for example, having an interview for a job outside of the agricultural field, but they have to accompany a family member to an appointment and translate at the same time as their own interview. As migrant families are having children and sending them off to a higher education to get a career outside of the fields. Duron (1995) concludes that migrant scholars acquire motivation from their parents to attain a better lifestyle, financial situation, and personal growth outside the agricultural industry. Although parents are seen as the most encouraging towards scholars, they are unable to help them through the application process. This comes in many cases because English is their second language and most of the necessary paperwork, or all, is in English with no translation option. Scholars with a MSFW background more than likely do not have the proper advisors, mentors, or someone to guide them through the pathway to college (Garcia 2010). Due to this, anxiety grows about financial opportunities, class registration, and leads them to walk-in blind to a 4-year university that is linked to higher dropout rates.

Beyond the ability to fulfill all of the applications needed in order to apply for college, migrant students have to learn how to navigate through a higher education system often on their own. Being in a space where the social norms are not familiar to their environment are symptoms of what is called the imposter syndrome. The imposter syndrome is a cycle that begins with a task-assignment, followed by anxiety or self-doubt, turning into over-preparation or procrastination, and when the task is complete the student feels temporary relief (Ahmed, Cruz, Kaushal, Kobuse, & Wang 2020). Self-doubt, and anxiety, eventually eats away all the accomplishments that students have attained. Scholars with a MSFW background enter institutions that are predominately white. They represent a low percentage in institutions of higher education (IHE). They often find themselves being the only one in class that share the same life experience ultimately applying extra pressure on themselves to either fit in or stand out.

In any IHE the majority of professors, faculty, and students are predominately white making scholars with a MSFW background minority. To be able to have professors that resemble the students, and that share similar life experiences, can allow them to feel more cared for, increase interest in school work, and increase communication with professors (Boisrond 2017). Being able to have professors that understand these students beyond the classroom settings allows a personal connection and a better learning environment. Learning to see the challenges faced by these groups of students includes learning about their culture, language, and experiences (DiCerbo 2001).

The College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP) is a government funded program under the Office of Elementary & Secondary Education. Under the office of Migrant Education it is one of 4 programs created to assist this specific group of students. CAMP was created to assist “students who are migratory or seasonal farmworkers, or children of such workers, enrolled in

their first year of undergraduate studies,” (College Assistance 2020). They provide resources including, but are not limited to, “counseling, tutoring, skills workshops, financial aid stipends, health services, and housing assistance to students eligible during their first year of college” (College Assistance 2020; Escamilla & Trevino 2014; Mendez & Bauman 2018). They have staff that are able to identify themselves with the students and understand the challenges that come from having a migrant, or seasonal, farmworking background. In order to qualify, scholars have to meet certain requirements: has an immediate family member or themselves have spent a minimum of 75 days during the past 24 months as MSFW, or has participated in a Migrant Education Program (MEP) (Eligibility). They also have a high school diploma or GED, be enrolled or admitted as a full-time student at a participating IHE, are not beyond their first academic year of program of study, and have applied to FAFSA (Eligibility; Araujo 2011).

Study Overview

The purpose of this study is to better understand the effect, and limitations, of one specific intervention at a public research university located in the Midwest of the United States. The College Assistance Migrant Program’s (CAMP) “goal is to provide support services to migrant and seasonal farmworker or their dependent, to assist them in the successful completion of their first-year of college in persistence toward degree attainment”(CAMP 2022). Services and resources include, but are not limited to, academic guidance, career development, programming for intellectual and cultural enrichment, and need-based financial assistance. Using one-on-one interviews with scholars that participated in the CAMP will provide first-hand perspectives about their CAMP experience, the effect it had on their college success and any limitations of the program they would like to see addressed for future participants.

I would like to use this thesis to emphasize the experience of scholars with a migrant or seasonal farmworker background at a 4-year university. Every year more of them step foot into college classes, not for a tour but as part of the class. They step foot into a whole different lifestyle that they are unfamiliar with, often causing a culture shock. (Hancock 2005; Araujo 2011). They walk-in blind into the college lifestyle, managing not only a financial burden in the back of their minds, but also often being the only one that looks like them. Being a first generation college student is common among these scholars. Their parents often do not speak much English, limiting their understanding on how they can help their scholars. This is understood by the scholars themselves. So who is to guide them? Or how are they able to find the right resources to help them succeed? Through this research I examine the experience of scholars with a MSFW background at a four-year university. I examine three areas that have become common in other studies, and the chapters that follow look at these issues in depth including: economic constraints on scholars, family involvement in higher education, and the imposter syndrome while attaining their bachelors degree. I also cover the importance of CAMP towards scholars with a MSFW background during their undergraduate experience.

Methods

The College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) has been assisting well over 2000 students yearly. This is an attempt to help increase graduation rates for scholars with a MSFW background. As of 2018 there were 56 CAMP programs in the U.S. assisting a capacity of 40 students per institution. The lives and educational pathway of these scholars vary extensively; it is difficult to account for every experience. Every family's story takes a different route telling a different version of the MSFW lifestyle. Therefore it is also challenging to conduct extensive in-depth studies of all these programs outside of a case study. For the purpose of this research I

will be referring to participants as scholars with a MSFW background. This research utilized a case by case study to help emphasize similarities and differences in the experience of 6 scholars with a MSFW background at a four year university that have participated in the CAMP program. This includes in-state undergraduates, alumni, as well as graduates enrolled in masters programs. All the participants identify with a Hispanic background. The selection of the participants was attained through personal connections in the CAMP program at Western Michigan University (WMU) using a snowball sampling method. Participants were contacted via email, and had a one-on-one interview of up to 45 minutes. Interviews were transcribed, and analyzed to highlight similarities of experiences and perspectives during their undergraduate programs.

Participants were interviewed through an open-ended set of questions relating to their experience in financing a higher education, family role in higher education, and the overall experience on a college campus. Open-ended questions allow for information to flow, and expand. This may bring about more details about issues that may not be mentioned in previous research. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed in full, and verified. For the purpose of keeping personal information confidential the names of participants are classified and replaced with a numerical number. The overall analysis of the interviews was focused on finding similarities across experiences. Although this research does not have a huge pool of participants, the participants account for different perspectives of scholars with a MSFW background.

Gender plays an important part in family dynamics which allows for gender differences to shape students. This is why half of the participants identify as male and the other as female. In today's modern day I understand that there are more than 2 genders, however due to the pool of potential subjects it was not possible to obtain other genders' perspectives. Nonetheless, the

intersectionality of a different gender, having a MSFW background, and being a CAMP scholar would be important to highlight in future research.

COVID-19 has played a significant role in higher education between early 2020 and late 2021. The college freshmen class of 2020 and 2021 entered the higher education system through a completely different lens. For the purpose of this research they are excluded from the participant sample. Scholars that participated in the CAMP program during these two years have faced new challenges that will delineate from respondents' answers because of the social isolation standards imposed on them outside of CAMP's control. COVID-19 was an unprecedented event that impacted the world therefore was not exclusive to families with a MSFW background. Nonetheless their experience is important to highlight in future research in order to understand the perspective they adopted when they entered IHE.

Chapter 2: Economic Constraints on Scholars

The agricultural industry in the United States has been contributing roughly \$1.264 trillion to the economy according to the USDA (AG 2021). About 13% of this income comes directly from the farming industry specifically (AG 2021). These occupations can range from field and orchard, horticultural specialties, food processing factories, or reforestation (Larson 2013). It is a very rigorous occupation often debilitating their health for low wages, and may face dangerous working conditions (Branz-Spall, et al. 2003). The work week is usually 6 to 7 days a week, consisting of 10 or more hours per day (Ramirez 2012) with an average salary between \$25,000 to \$29,999 per year (National Farm Worker Ministry 2022). This is compared to the national median income household in 2020 was \$67,521 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. In 2020 Michigan's median income household was almost \$60,000 (Michigan 2020) This means that the salary of a MSFW is not even half of the median income salary. The National Labor Relation Act gives rights to employees to unionize and ask their employers for better working conditions and benefits. Often MSFW employees are “not entitled to overtime pay and are not protected by the National Labor Relation Act” (Branz-Spall & Rosenthal 2003). Farm work demands a lot from employees throughout the harvest season and they get minimal return. In many cases no there's no access to proper health care, paid-leave, or a flexible schedule. MSFW families also lack the financial literacy, opportunities to build capital and invest to make passive incomes like the middle-class.

MSFW families depend on each other. Due to frequent mobility and low-wages, families are dependent on each other for survival (Hancock 2005). It is common for MSFW families to have every member of the family work to supplement the family income (Mendez & Bauman 2018). According to research children of MSFW families worked throughout highschool in order

to contribute to the welfare of their families. This may include working in agricultural fields (Branz-Spall, et al. 2003). This may sometimes backfire and can contribute to drop out rates in highschool before they have time to consider IHE. This makes children of MSFW families less likely to enroll in a 4-year university (Gibson & Bejinez 2012). However, through my research scholars with a MSFW background worked for a variety of reasons. Participant two stated that she would work in high school because her parents wanted her to have her own money in order to pay for gas, and for her own sports gear during high school. Participant five stated that she would work “just to save that money for [things] like shopping, things that I don’t need.” Participant three saved up, “and everything I saved up went to this [a 4-year university].” He stated that he would do minimal spending, and did not have to contribute to the family income because his parents took care of household expenses. One scholar stated that she did not have agricultural work experience during high school because she focused on her school work, and “played sports every season so I[he] was always practicing at school.” Three of the five participants however shared having agricultural work experience themselves.

It is common for parents to encourage their children to attend higher education, but according to Araujo (2011) they may be financially limited to help. Financial assistance was the most prevalent barrier among the parents when encouraging their children to achieve higher education. The average cost of attendance in an in-state 4-year university in Michigan college in 2019-2020 was \$23,033 (CollegeSimply 2022). This excludes unexpected expenses for food, travel (varying the scholar's home), parking passes, etc. The average family income with a MSFW occupation is not able to support the financial burden of paying for a 4-year institution in Michigan without any type of financial assistance.

Under the U.S. Department of Education, there have been programs created to support scholars with a MSFW background to reach higher levels of education. One resource, available to every scholar nationwide, is on a need-based assessment. This application form is known as FAFSA and universities often use this form to determine how much financial aid they will offer incoming and returning students for the academic year. As part of the Johnson Administration's War on Poverty CAMP has been providing financial assistance to scholars with a MSFW background (Araujo 2011). CAMP covers a majority of scholars' tuition, housing, commuter expenses, and weekly stipends (Araujo 2011) during their first year at a 4-year institution.

Mchatton, Zalaquett, and Cranson-Gingras (2006) surveyed 57 CAMP scholars from a large metropolitan university. Repondondents were attending a CAMP meeting during 2004 and 2005. These surveys contained likert-type and open-ended questions. These surveys concluded that most CAMP scholars worked in high school to contribute to their family financially, with 15% stating that work and family matters interfered with their school work. These scholars relied upon school counselors, school staff or their receiving university to share information about financial aid. Nevertheless, 76% of 57 CAMP scholars felt "responsible for overcoming their setbacks," in high school demonstrating their resilience to continue into IHE. Often they were met with the same response of being told to conduct a search for independent scholarship and encouraged to apply to all the ones they meet eligibility for (Mchatton, Zalaquett, and Cranson-Gingras 2006) with assistance stopping there.

In 2010 Garcia focused on the experience of the Hispanic community of 124 scholars and called them to offer guidance or assistance at community college. This study serves to emphasize barriers that exist in higher education when little or no knowledge is offered to scholars. Garcia concluded that no knowledge of deadlines for financial aid, and in some cases the financial aid

office was a barrier (Garcia 2010). Scholars through my research affirmed that applying for FAFSA was challenging on their own and could not depend on their parents for assistance other than providing the necessary documents to file. Participant five shared:

“they[her parents] helped me with like providing documents and stuff but even like tax forms, they are really hard to read especially as a first time-reader and I was like there’s too many numbers and lines...subtract this and that... I didn’t even get a number anymore” (participant 5).

To be able to file FAFSA scholars have to provide tax information for both parents, if applicable, but this is often the first time reading a tax form.

Araujo (2011) conducted a study using a participant observation method gathering data through field notes, interviews, focus groups, casual and informal conversations during activities hosted by the CAMP program at Southwest University. Through her research she was able to determine that CAMP was a significant variable in applying to Southwest University because of social capital. She defines social capital as “networks, community resources, and people that can provide support to navigate through institutions” (2011). Social capital has the potential to open doors to financial resources such as employment, education and health care. Bourdieu (2018) defines social capital as the membership in a group that shares information, and the same space. Social capital is transferable to economic capital. In this case CAMP is able to offer economic capital to incoming scholars with a MSFW background. Araujo (2011) concluded that many scholars were unaware of the CAMP program and the assistance they offer, from the lack of information provided by counselors, and some were even considering joining the armed forces to be able to afford attending a 4-year university.

Ramirez (2012) conducted a research study collecting student-level data from six California State University (CSU) campuses to capture student academic achievement. This data consisted of 9,698 participants between fall 2002 and spring 2009 with 3.5% being CAMP scholars, 20.6% being non-CAMP latino students and 75.9% of other students (Ramirez 2012). Through his research, he concluded that CAMP scholars performed better when they had financial assistance (Ramirez 2012).

Mendez and Buaman (2018) conducted a survey at four institutions, consisting of 245 current and former CAMP scholars. Participants in the cohorts between 2014-2018 were recruited by the CAMP directors via email with a response rate of 29%. In their study they concluded that taking out loans decreases retention rates; their low-income status causes them to be more “fearful of accumulating debt,” (Mendez & Bauman 2018). With the financial assistance, and assisting of CAMP to acquire scholarships, scholars had the opportunity to focus on their academic goals and social integration (Mendez & Bauman 2018). Financial literacy is one way CAMP programs aid scholars with a MSFW background.

Through my research three of the six interviewed shared that financing for a 4-year university was considered one of their biggest barriers. They shared feelings of worry about how they were going to pay for tuition or removing holds on their accounts in time to register for classes the following semester every year. Participant number two shared:

“I ended up taking out credit cards and I used them to pay my tuition because...I was really just trying to get the hold off my account so that I can register for classes...I just need[ed] to move that debt somewhere else, so that is what I did my first semester...I do not remember a single year that I did not have a hold on my account a single semester.”

CAMP scholars during their first year receive a scholarship from the program that serves to alleviate the financial burden, however sometimes it is still not enough to cover the full burden of in-state tuition. During participant two's following years, at a 4-year university, depended on other grants and scholarships to help cover tuition because CAMP only serves first year scholars. Not only was tuition a financial burden but other hidden costs mentioned were participating in clubs required money, professional attire, and late fees for not paying tuition on time. Feelings of not having enough money to spread it created stress.

Participant one, a scholar with additional scholarships other than CAMP assistance, shared that financing for tuition was still a barrier every semester. She was unable to apply for FAFSA throughout her undergraduate experience. Not being able to apply for FAFSA was a foundation requirement for many scholarships within the institution. Participant one shared: "the thought that your scholarship could be taken away because you don't file FAFSA every year was something that was mentally...always there." Participant one also mentioned that other costs such as room and board were also of concern because the CAMP program does not fully cover room and board but about 75% of the cost. This caused feelings of fear to arise as she attended a 4-year university.

Participant four shared that without financial assistance, and additional support he would have not been able to graduate. With only having the Pell Grant, CAMP residence hall grant, and some loans he was still not able to cover the costs of tuition alone. He shared that taking summer classes added a tuition cost of about \$4000 dollars and having, "to pay \$2000 dollars for the fall [semester] seemed impossible." When entering higher education sometimes in order to graduate on time summer classes become necessary. Financial aid provided by FAFSA is usually not enough to cover for full tuition let alone for summer tuition. Although CAMP does

not formally assist scholars past their first year, the staff still assisted participant one by connecting him with financial aid to help cover his last semester in order to graduate. This was the last requirement for participant one to be able to graduate from a 4-year university. CAMP's informal assistance in connecting him to other resources on campus was able to create security and remove the burden of financing tuition costs.

Different from other working-class scholars at a 4-year university, CAMP scholars shared experiences of working to pay off their own tuition cost along with other expenses during the academic year. However, of the six participants interviewed, three shared working in migrant or seasonal farm work themselves. Through first-hand experience, they experienced the exhausting long hours that agricultural work requires. Participant three shared that he, "would wake up early in the morning, go to work, come out late, go to sleep, it was kind of like a repetition." He has worked with an abundance of crops from grapes, cherries, blueberries, apples, tomatoes, peppers and even onions. He shares having to work under both hot summers as well as cold weather. When he needed to, he assisted his mom with bills, but always did minimum spending, and saved the rest of his money for his tuition.

Working outside presents harsh working conditions however the work must be done. Working inside such as greenhouses offers different working conditions. In high school participant 4 worked in a greenhouse. He shared that the greenhouse traps the heat within, and they do not have fans which raise the temperature. Participant 4, shares that the work day started at 6 or 6:30 am and often clocking out at 10pm. "You literally go home, shower and you know just wake up to go back to work," he shares. He goes on to say that although agricultural work is physically taxing but also mentally. He had to remind himself that he was privileged over his co-workers and his parents. Participant four:

“I did it [working in a greenhouse] because I needed money and I wanted a job. But for a lot of the older people that were there they did it out of necessity. That’s the only job they have and they can’t quit, and they can’t call off”

Working in the greenhouse allowed him to understand that he had the opportunity to do more than work in a greenhouse for the rest of his life.

Participant five worked both in-field and packing houses for four years; one year in-field and three years in the packing-house. She shares that, “working was really [physically] hard and my back, my hands hurt, my feet, my whole body was always sore at the end of the day.”

However, her agricultural work was “stress-free” and taught her to value money. She shares that she enjoyed her agricultural work experience. Comparing the mental stress that other jobs may bring, or college itself, agricultural work does not. Employees are usually trained on the spot doing the same simple tasks on a daily basis.

Participant five explained that the income from her agricultural employment was enough to cover tuition after financial aid. She shared the following:

“And then for spring semester if I have left over money I will pay for a part of it. If not my parents pay for it because my dad is very big on like not taking loans out so he’s like ill just help you pay whatever you need.”

It is not rare for parents of low-income families to discourage loans. This can be for many reasons anywhere from not wanting to owe someone money or not knowing how loans work. Participant five’s parents were not the only parents that were able to help pay for tuition costs. One other participant shared specifically their parents contributed towards tuition cost while attending a 4-year university. Participant two’s parents gifted her tuition money for her birthday for one semester. This gift came after government aid through FAFSA was distributed and other

scholarships, meaning her parents did not pay a full tuition bill. Unlike the middle-class who have the ability to cover tuition costs for every semester, and in many cases full tuition, low-income parents do not have that opportunity. They do not have the financial literacy needed to navigate higher education.

In summary, Although previous research stated that families with a MSFW background need their children to work to contribute to the welfare of the household my research does not support this. Through my research we can conclude that parents encouraged their children to work to learn the value of having their own money, pay for their own expenses, and only in some cases, when absolutely needed, were they asked to contribute to the welfare of the household.

Parents encourage their children to achieve higher education to benefit from better paying jobs and better life opportunities. Families with a MSFW background do not have the economic resources to cover full tuition costs. Their children have to find funding through scholarships, loans, and other ways of paying for tuition. Parents are not able to provide the knowledge needed to assist their children in applying for scholarships or credit cards. This leads their children to resort to their high school staff such as teachers, and counselors. Through my research we can conclude that high school was not able to provide this information, so scholars had to apply for funding on their own.

As the children of families with a MSFW background enrolled in higher education their parents did their best to contribute to their success. Through my research we can conclude that some families with a MSFW family can contribute towards assisting financing for a 4-year university after financial aid from the state or the institutions themselves has been distributed. In spite of having federal funding, institutions assistance, and a small contribution from parents, money was a common barrier while attending a 4-year university.

Chapter 3: Family Role in Higher Education

Families with a MSFW background, as mentioned earlier, have no specific cookie cutter lifestyle. Each family varies in structure, work experience, housing situations, and financial literacy. Some families might be single-parent households, some may experience constant mobility throughout the year, or some may own a home in their base district. Other families may have both parents contributing to the household income, depend on employers for housing, and travel once a year. In other cases, they may live in a permanent home, commute to work, and work at different agriculture occupations throughout the year. This could be for example, working in the fields during late spring to early fall, then for the rest of the year in a greenhouse. For the most part the migrant child population in 2003 was Mexican descendants (Branz-Spall, et al. 2003). It is for this reason that research of the migrant community is often focused on families with a Hispanic background, with emphasis on the Mexican culture over others. Other minorities included but were not limited to: Haitians, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, poor Whites, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and from other Central American countries (Branz-Spall, et al. 2003).

Whatever the case may be they all share an experience of having a MSFW experience. The conditions of these occupations are harsh and rely heavily on the weather during their planting, pruning and harvesting seasons. Employees have to be available at random times of the day depending on the crop that is being harvested. For example, during the blueberry season it is common to clock-in at early hours of the day in order to beat the heat. Families will clock-in at early hours to harvest as many blueberry buckets as they can, and if it rains sometimes they may have a choice to continue or may be forced to stop. Employees get paid by 'a piece rate' (National Farm Worker Ministry 2022) which means they get paid by the number of buckets filled up. It is rare to get paid on an hourly wage, but if they are it is more than likely minimum

wage. Either way if it rains that limits the amount of income for that day. Profits are low which is why in many cases the whole family has to be working in the fields.

It was previously mentioned that families are not able to make more than a living wage causing a financial burden on them. Children are working members of the family bringing in income, and also a great mediator between their parents and society. Families with a MSFW background often have language and cultural barriers causing culture shocks in social settings (Hancock 2005). Hancock (2005) mentions that as children begin learning English in grade school that they gain the responsibility of translating for their parents both in business and community settings. Other responsibilities may include caring after younger siblings, cooking, and house cleaning (Hancock 2005). Daycare or head start can be expensive, that families with a MSFW background can not afford. Therefore, it is extremely common for the oldest child to stay home and watch their younger siblings. This saves money but also imposes a string of responsibilities on eldest children. There is little research on how this impacts the eldest children overall much less their academic performance.

Parents with a MSFW occupation are not able to financially contribute significantly to the academic success of their children. Neither are they able to comprehend what it takes to attend IHE. This is because parents' educational experience ranges anywhere between grade school and some college experience (McHatton, Zalaquett, & Cranson-Gingras 2006). Thus, they are much less familiar with what proceeds beyond their own grade school experience. In addition, language and cultural barriers exist between parents and the American educational system (DiCerbo 2001; Mendez & Bauman 2018). In Escamilla and Trevino's (2014) study, participants shared that the conversation with their parents about their high school academic experience was nothing more than superficial, simply because their parents could not understand.

However, their parents were significantly supportive in their academic success (Escamilla and Trevino 2014). Parents recognize that sending their children to school will allow doors of opportunity to open. Families see higher education as a chance for a stable and better lifestyle for their children. Mothers are 3 times more likely than fathers to emphasize the importance of an education (McHatton, Zalaquett, & Carson-Gingras 2006; Lareau 2011).

Growing up in these living conditions parents encourage their children to pursue academic success to achieve upward mobility (Arellano & Padilla 1996) and create an opportunity for personal growth (Duron 1995). Scholars recognize the work of their parents in MSFW occupations and the sacrifices made. Parents taught their children work ethic by using phrases such as “you work until the work is done,” and “you go to school to learn” (Escamilla & Trevino 2014). This stressed the importance of encouraging higher education at an early age and creating resilience. This permitted scholars to not allow “setback, academic pressure, or stress hinder their success” (Mendez & Bauman 2018). The children understood that the lesson their parents taught them in the fields came from a place of love and care (Escamilla 2019). At a young age they understood their parents' sacrifice and did not “want to let them down,” (Escamilla & Trevino 2014).

Howard, Nicholson, and Chestnut (2019) conducted a study of 383 undergraduate students from a mid-size research university in the Southeastern United States. Within their study they focus on the role of grit in academic success, which they define as “the tolerance for adversity in the pursuit of goal achievement” (Howard, Nicholson, & Chestnut 2019). Grit was determined to be a positive predicting factor in general academic success among scholars in undergraduate programs. Participants within their study with parents that are accepting and

involved are positively correlated with success in college (Howard, Nicholson, & Chestnut 2019).

Parents with MSFW jobs have little knowledge of IHE systems, but they are able to offer emotional support in certain circumstances. In spite of this parents are not expected to solve their issues (Howard, Nicholson, & Chestnut 2019). This made encouragement the primary form of support scholars had on behalf of their parents creating grit in academic success. Little research is available on the role families play while scholars with a MSFW background go about their undergraduate experience.

All six participants in my research stated their parents were one of their top supporters in higher education from the beginning. They also all stated being first-generation college students. First-generation college students have caregivers, or parents, who have not received a degree in an institution of higher education. Parent's of the participants had anywhere between only grade school education, or some college but did not receive a degree. The education their parent's received was also not under the U.S. education system, so parents had no knowledge on children's performance or expected in class nor how to assist them to continue into higher education.

They did however encourage their children to better their economic situation through education. Participant one shares that her parents lived in poverty, "and they had to, you know, sacrifice their education to go work in order to be able to provide for their family...they all come from like a bigger family so all the siblings had to work." From their life experience of working in harsh conditions her parents encouraged education as a key to success, "to better and bigger opportunities" (participant 1).

Of the six participants four of them shared their mother as a primary supporter in higher education. Participant one shares that she always received support from both parents. However, of her parents she always mentions her mom, “because it was just the connection that I[he] had with her” (participant 1). Participant one shares that her mother was able to provide emotional support. She understands that her parents inability to help does not come from not wanting to but not knowing how to help.

Participant two shares that when it came to applying for higher education her parents did not help her with a single thing, but she “didn’t expect them to” (participant one). First-generation scholars need to explain to their parents how higher education works while attempting to understand themselves. Participant two shared that it was difficult to explain things to her parents on many occasions, but her parents were still very supportive while she attended a 4-year university. She shared that because she was the oldest of her siblings to attend IHE her parents are able to be, “much better and much more understanding and supportive with my[her] sister.”

Participant three shares that his mom told him,

“that as long as I[he] tried it would be okay. She always encouraged me whether she didn’t really help me out like financially because she couldn’t, she always encouraged me to go to college you know pursue a degree so I wouldn’t have to work in the fields my whole life.”

Participant three shared that he felt discouraged by standardized tests in high school and this led him to feel unprepared to attend an IHE. However his mom was able to convince him to not give up, go to college, and get his degree to find a better job outside of the fields. He received nothing more than a “échale ganas mijo [put in all your effort son]” from his mom that went a long way.

Participant four shares that after a few bumps along his path to graduate from a 4-year university his mindset became “to serve as a role model for my [his] younger siblings...as well as my parents to be proud.” He shares that his parents supported him “emotionally and mentally and spiritually.” He felt motivated with the encouragement of his parents to not give up and continue trying.

Participant five shared that initially college was not in her plans. During her senior year of high school her parents encouraged her to achieve for higher education. She shared that her parents believed a degree would bring better opportunities to live and work in better conditions.

Participant six shares that beyond his mom being a primary motivator to obtain a higher education so did his extended family from a young age. He shared that his extended family became a primary support system during his journey at a 4-year university. He leans on them when he struggles with emotional support. This can be anything between providing a warm meal, a place to reset, or sometimes financial support when needed (participant 6).

A few things that stood out through my interviews was that parents were able to provide a small contribution to help cover the expenses of their children while attending a 4-year university. However of the six participants only two stated their income was needed to contribute to the family income overall. In terms of supporting the household only the females within my participation pool shared having responsibilities within their household beyond the normal chores. Participant one shared being responsible for her grandmother since she can remember assisting her anywhere between taking her to appointments or simply being a caregiver at home. This did not change much when she enrolled into a 4-year university. She stated that “whenever I did have class I wouldn’t take her but if I did have a gap in my day I would go.” The middle-class has the financial liberty to send the elderly to a home or pay for caregiver assistance

at home. The working-class however does not; leaving the responsibility to someone in the family.

Participant two shared that her parents expected her to come home every weekend. She was required to assist her parents in anything they needed. Participant two:

“I am the first one [first child] so I help my parents. I help when my parents need anything they come to me so if they needed me to go somewhere, to translate, or call somewhere, pay a bill...I was still expected to do that here [a 4-year university]. Which I mean it wasn't bad but it was like another task.”

Being a first-generation college student is stressful enough for scholars, but to be the oldest is another level of stress. Having an expectation of having to help simply for knowing English applied to other responsibilities and it continues as scholars attend a 4-year university. Participant five shares the same experience. However her responsibilities included going “home and cook for my[her] siblings, clean the house, do my chores and do my homework.” She shared that the responsibilities when enrolling into a 4-year university only increased. She recognized that she is a role model for her younger siblings.

Families with MSFW jobs have endured harsh conditions while working to support themselves. The children of these families see the sacrifices their parents, or caregivers, have put in to provide a better life for them and their siblings. From my research we can conclude that parents of scholars with a MSFW background provide emotional, spiritual, and encouragement to achieve bigger and better things while at a 4-year university. As scholars with a MSFW background learn to understand what it takes to attend a 4-year university, they comprehend that their parents, or caregivers, are learning about the experience through them. Through my research, we can also conclude that it is common for females to have more responsibilities than

males when it comes to attending the household. However the females did what they could to balance all their responsibilities with the emotional support of their families.

Chapter 4: The Imposter Syndrome/Marginalization

Leaving the safety of their homes, scholars with MSFW background, for the first time and living in the middle of *college culture* can be a complete cultural shock. Their parents are not able to fully support them once they step foot on a 4-year university. Although scholars with a MSFW background have grown up in the grade school educational system, *college culture* is not taught within this system. McClafferty, McDonough, and Nunez, (2002) determined that *college culture* begins before attending college. It begins with an encouragement of considering attending an institution of higher education. For scholars with parents that are not familiar with what is necessary to enroll in higher education, high school staff is the only available resource of basic information (McClafferty, et al. 2002). McClafferty, et al., (2002) theorize that there are nine principles to *college culture*: college talk, clear expectation, information and resources, comprehensive counseling model, testing and curriculum, faculty involvement, family, college partnerships, and articulation.

Prior to thinking about enrolling to college there has to be basic information provided to students, and often their high school is their main source of information. *College culture* is closely related to the white middle-class (Araujo 2011). White middle-class scholars have the financial resources, access to private tutors, with parents that were able to help through the transition between high school and college. From these principles we can conclude faculty, family, and information are the key to an easy transition into college. McClafferty, et al., (2002) concluded that parents of first-generation college scholars were eager to learn about opportunities of getting involved with their children's education. Building rapport in a safe and understanding environment was pivotal when connecting with families.

Once they are accepted to college, make a commitment to attend, and arrive on campus, scholars with a MSFW background in particular need a sense of community. It can be

intimidating, for example, to sit in a class where you are the only minority and feel like you don't belong. Ahmed, et al., (2020) finds that people of color in a professional environment, including universities, often have self-doubt when they are forced to integrate into white-dominated IHE causing fears of not belonging.

Self-doubt and lack of belongingness are symptoms of the imposter syndrome (Ahmed, et al. 2020). The imposter syndrome was coined by Clance and Imes (1978) as the belief that one's achievements are due to luck, over-preparing, or the help of others. Despite their achievements they often undermine their skills and intellect (Clance & Imes 1978). The imposter syndrome varies throughout demographics, but family environment and parental attitudes during their childhood are predictors. Scholars with a MSFW background have parents, as previously stated, who serve to encourage and motivate their children towards higher education. They also need this support when they step foot in a college-campus, especially being away from home. The imposter syndrome is a cycle that may include procrastination in a fear of completing an assignment wrong, or overpreparing to get the assignment perfect (Ahmed, et al. 2020). The imposter syndrome can create a mentality that their success is fraudulent, fearing they may become exposed (Ahmed, et al. 2020; Clance & Imes 1978).

Scholars attend IHE needing to adapt to a different cultural capital. Bourdieu (2018) coins cultural capital in three forms: embodied, objectified, or an institutionalized state. The cultural capital within a four-year university is embodied by the investment of time, commitment, and financial quantity in order to be successful. It is a means of self improvement by sacrifice of one's own (Bourdieu 2018). The objectified state can be displayed by material objects that have a relationship with cultural meaning. Objects can be economically valuable or have a symbolic value (Bourdieu 2018). At a four-year university this can be anywhere from an

application fee, high priced textbook, or paying for a parking pass. An institutionalized state can be embodied through agencies with market value in society. For example attaining academic certifications can bring respect from others within the general culture such as a degree, certifications or a title through a recognized institution.

Culture capital can be converted to economic capital. In this example a degree from a four-year university is seen as a way out of working in the MSFW fields. In order to navigate between cultures, someone needs to guide these scholars, answer questions they have, and create a sense of belongingness. The CAMP program aims to assist scholars by providing resources such as tutoring, networks, and a sense of community with faculty that understand the background, or life experience, they bring into a four-year university. The CAMP program provides personal, academic, and social support during their transition from high school to higher education (Willison & Jang 2009); and during their first year of college (Reyes 2009).

Prior to attending an IHE, CAMP assists scholars during the application process, financial aid forms, and other documents that may cause confusion among scholars (Araujo 2011). This can become a huge relief among CAMP scholars with some participants saying, “it was a big help” (Araujo 2011). Within Araujo’s study, CAMP offered accommodation related assistance through hospital visits, the relocation of a scholar, among other things (Araujo 2011). Students felt comfortable asking CAMP for help and if they could not, they directed them towards someone who could help (Araujo 2011). The CAMP program also assisted scholars in creating new friendships and decreasing isolation while attending IHE (Araujo 2011). This allows scholars to see the CAMP program like a second family or a family away from home.

According to Bourdieu (2018) there needs to be a mark, “in order to produce and reproduce lasting, useful relationships that can secure material or symbolic profits.” The CAMP

program hosts orientation with an array of activities to help scholars become familiar with campus resources, become acquainted with the staff and create bonds with other CAMP scholars. Orientation varies among programs with some being a day, and others being a full week before the beginning of classes (McHatton, Zalaquett, Cranson-Gingras 2006). Creating a positive learning environment for them to adapt and grow (Ramirez 2012).

Escamilla and Trevino (2014) had participants who saw the CAMP staff like second mothers, or even as sisters. They not only shared concepts of similar background but they shared the same languages (Escamilla & Trevino 2014). CAMP staff is also able to provide support in areas where scholars' parents have no way of assisting. For example, issues with roommates were more likely to be reported to CAMP staff and not mentioned to their parents (Escamilla & Trevino 2014). CAMP requires scholars to live on campus, be roommates with one another, attend a first-year experience course together, and attend gatherings throughout the year (Araujo 2011). They were able to motivate each other when they felt hopeless, homesick, and with low energy.

Being a minority in a room full of white people can be intimidating. McHatton, Zalaquett, and Cranson-Gingras (2006) concluded that CAMP scholars felt competitive, worried for their mistakes, and could easily cope with rejection which may be interpreted as symptoms of the imposter syndrome. Internally wanting to win, aim for perfection, and prepared to feel like one is doing something wrong are symptoms of the imposter syndrome. Teachers engage in this cycle by either affirming their fears or boosting their confidence in the work they submit. Teachers that seemed to pay no mind to scholars discouraged them from the urge to continue into higher education (McHatton, Zalaquett, and Cranson-Gingras 2006).

Reyes (2009) conducted a qualitative case study with five CAMP scholars. Through their experience, background, and familiarity of community they all held a sense of empowerment as a CAMP community through public spaces they had on campus. His key findings illustrated the key interactions between students, professors, and members of their community as sources of empowerment (Reyes 2009). These key interactions can be a simple compliment, the acknowledgement of good performing academic work, or words of motivation in a brief encounter. After receiving praise for a written personal assignment Ruben felt a confidence boost when his professor acknowledged his well written paper, and felt inclined to help others of his community (Reyes 2009). The CAMP program Reyes studied also incorporated guest speakers that shared a similar MSFW background to motivate these scholars to continue and graduate from college. These speakers were well received with students' feelings of pride (Reyes 2009). Staff within this program became a fundamental component of integrating into a four-year university. The CAMP staff is composed of people that have shared backgrounds as the students which created interpersonal connections that are used to assist scholars on an academic and social level (Reyes 2009). Advisors are able to create rapport allowing CAMP scholars to open up and relieve the stress they carry, and in some cases are able to find words of wisdom through them. They also serve to keep scholars accountable in keeping up with tasks and deadlines (Genareo, et al. 2021). Applying all their knowledge, effort, and time but then are met with self-doubt that their accomplishments were due to luck or over-preparation (Ahmed, et al. 2020). The people around have an influence on this and can offer insights of their own experiences.

Student engagement with their college campus is important for academic success (Caruth 2018). Scholars with a MSFW background do not know what the *college culture* entails. The

CAMP program's social and cultural events serve as a mediator into school connectedness (Mendez & Bauman 2018). Between "peer interactions, peer mentoring, cultural events, and leadership training," a stronger sense of connectedness grew between the scholars and the institution (Mendez & Bauman 2018). This is through social, emotional, and health support (Ramirez 2012; Genareo, et al. 2021). Check-ins with peer mentors and CAMP staff are mandatory in order to establish room for open communication (Genareo, et al. 2021). Other methods could be through personal text messages, walk-in or scheduled meetings (Genareo, et al. 2021).

Through my research scholars with a MSFW background shared being intimidated in a predominantly white institution. Participant two shared that because she was in a space of predominantly white students it was difficult to ask for help. In many cases she felt "the pressure to blend in with the rest of the crowd" (participant 2). She felt discouraged to ask questions when she felt lost in class. She goes on to share an experience of her first time attending a tutoring session:

"I went because I was struggling with science class, but when I got to the tutoring it seemed like they were already on a lesson and everybody understood what was going on and I was like I don't even know what that first sentence you started with" (participant 2). She shared that in the most of being lost in class made her uncomfortable which only drove her to sit alone. Reflecting now on her experience she shares that asking for help would have made a great difference. She shares that the CAMP program was able to give her a sense of security by opening doors that included the job she holds today.

Being a minority can often discourage them from sharing because of the idea of saying the wrong thing. In the case of participants four and five, they both shared moments in class

where they felt the pressure from their professors to voice their opinion on sensitive topics.

Participant five shares:

“We were talking a lot about...the hispanic/Latino population and I know it wasn’t being said towards me but it just kind of felt like it was being towards me because I was the only Hispanic in that class...it just felt awkward speaking about it. And then when like the professor would ask for like opinions on what they were saying I could feel people looking at me.”

She goes on to say that although she does identify with the Hispanic community not everyone lives through the same experiences so she had nothing to comment on the topic. Like previously stated, not one story is the same and to feel the pressure of having to share in a class that she did not feel comfortable only intimidated her and discouraged her from speaking up.

Participant four shared a similar anecdote. In 2016, the presidential election of Trump was very controversial. To be specific around this time Trump was very adamant upon sharing negative comments when referring to people from Mexico. Trump stated:

“When Mexico sends its people they are not sending their best. They are sending people that have lots of problems and they are bringing those problems with us. They are bringing drugs, they're bringing crime, they are rapists” (C-SPAN 2015)

The day after Trump was elected, participant four shared that his professor at the time brings the topic as a class discussion. His class was predominately white and the majority of the class was in favor of the elected president which he respected.

“I did not want to speak and people were sharing. And there was other people raising their hand but no she came up, she saw me and she was like ‘what do you think, what do you think about this election?’ And I was so embarrassed because I did not want to say

nothing. I was like in my mind I [felt] attacked because I know all these people at that time it looked like all these people they didn't want me here" (participant 4).

He felt the pressure to voice his opinion in class where he believed the class was against him. He goes on to say that this bothered him to the core. This bothered him enough to use this as a motivator to never want to feel like that again.

Through the adversities faced in classrooms, four of the six participants shared that being wrong discouraged them from class participation. This was either through assignments or answering questions in class. Participant five shared that she felt her answers may be seen as dumb because she felt her classmates often shared the same idea so her ideas seemed out of place. Participants three and six shared asking for help was difficult for them because they liked doing things on their own. However participant three shares he was able to get over this as the years went on. He does not share what helped him make this change but he shares that today he has no problem sending follow-up emails to the professor and has overcome his fear of asking for help. This has increased his confidence, increasing the possibility of going for his master and possibly even his doctorates.

As previously stated professors, and staff play a role in the imposter syndrome. When scholars put in the effort in the work and professors fail to acknowledge the work it can take a toll on them. Participants two and four shared feelings of microaggressions from professors. This was through subliminal messages either through nicknames appointed to them or something simple like not smiling at them but smiling at other classmates. This opened the door to feeling like their presence not being valued and feeling like they do not belong. Participant four shared that later he came to the realization he was paying the same amount as his classmates and deserved to be in these spaces.

Participant one shares that she felt the imposter syndrome often blocked her from flourishing in a predominantly white institution. However she had the opportunity to be able to receive coaching and mentorship with the help of the CAMP staff. She shares that being able to talk to people that have similar backgrounds and understand where she comes from served as a great motivator to believe in herself. She shares that becoming involved on campus activities helped increase her confidence. Being able to interact with organizations on campus increases a feeling of belonging and decreases self-doubt in oneself. Participant one is a perfect example of this. She shares that her experience at a 4-year university was wonderful. She held positions of leadership, worked alongside many organizations on campus including deans, and this helped her overcome her fears of failure.

Through my interviews all six participants did show some symptoms of the imposter syndrome. This could be either through the lack of confidence in one's work, over preparation, or procrastination. All the participants felt at one point feelings of intimidation in class because they were almost always the only person of color in their classrooms. I would like to point out that in order to be admitted in the CAMP program scholars with a MSFW background first had to be admitted to an accredited institution of higher education. Although they felt inadequate to be in class they put in the work and were admitted on their own efforts. They slowly were able to overcome these feelings of self-doubt and lack of belongingness creating resilience. They have been able to overcome obstacles and shared to now aiming beyond a bachelor's degree. Five of the six participants shared that they had begun their masters program or were on the path to apply for their masters. As previously mentioned, a strong support system is a great boost of confidence and a reduction of self-doubt. With the support of their families, and the assistance of

CAMP scholars with a MSFW background they had the space to thrive and adapt to *college culture*.

Chapter 5: Importance of the College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP)

The College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP) is a federally funded 5-year grant distributed to 4-year universities, and 2-year colleges, across the nation (Genereo, Meyer, Burgess, & Ramirez 2012). It is a program under the office of Elementary & Secondary Education that serves to, “assists students who are migratory or seasonal farmworkers (or children of such workers) enrolled in their first year of undergraduate studies at an IHE” (CAMP 2022). This program is dedicated entirely to providing resources to first year students. Some programs have a few differences between institutions. The majority of the programs are clustered on the west coast of the nation, and in 2021 there were only five programs in the midwestern area. In the year 2022 there is only one federally funded CAMP program at Michigan State University (MSU). Unfortunately Western Michigan University (WMU) was not funded during the last cycle of grants. However, the CAMP program is being supported for the freshman class of 2022 by the commitment of the university. This CAMP program at WMU, unlike a few across the nation, has incorporated housing and board as a necessity. Housing and Residence Life was asked to help with retention rates by partially funding CAMP scholars with about 75% of the cost of living. This also included the meal plan during CAMP scholars’ 4-years at the university. Participant three shared that this scholarship allowed him to live on campus so he would not have to make the drive everyday. This saved him “time [for] studying (participant 3). Services, in many cases, are still available throughout 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th year, but they are not “explicitly included in [the] CAMP grant funding,” (Genareo, et al. 2021).

Scholars were asked how the CAMP program assisted them as they attended a 4-year university. As you have read they have assisted scholars in diverse ways: financially, job opportunities, connections to mentors etc. Participant five shared that having leaders during her

first year was of great assistance. The concept of a leader is composed of weekly meetings with a former CAMP scholar to help guide them through their first year. She goes on to say that leaders are able to provide advice that can be taken for granted but very important to first-generation scholars. One example she shared:

“You know how room numbers are a bunch of numbers and he [her leader] was like the first number on the list is what floor it’s [classroom] on... you don’t really think is important but when you’re telling someone new it's like wow you saved my life from going up and down all those stairs” (participant five).

Scholars that have gone through this first year experience have a better opportunity of helping those that are barely starting (Escamilla & Trevino 2014). Therefore, CAMP leaders play a crucial role in teaching the incoming classes about *college culture* even if it is something simple like learning how to find your classroom. Participant five shared that having a leader made the transition into college a lot easier than she imagined. Participant four shared the same idea by saying, “leader meetings were so important because I was able to get a lot of tips and skills that I needed to pass.” Being able to interact with people that share similar life experience and are able to identify within gives scholars confidence they can do great things in institutions that are predominately white.

Participant four shares that through the CAMP program “it got me closer to my roots meaning my culture, it gave me that culture identity that I needed to understand what it meant to be a person of color in college.” Like previously stated, intimidation can arise when the rest of your class does not look like you, much less the professor. However the CAMP staff shared similar backgrounds to the scholars. Participant two shared that, “CAMP staff was my biggest

support...the people I met through CAMP, the services I received...I really leaned on it because they were relatable.”

Of the six participants five shared explicitly that CAMP staff was one of their greatest resources on campus even after their first-year. This is specific to WMU and I cannot account for other CAMP programs. Although the CAMP program only assists first-year scholars, this specific program’s staff assisted scholars during all their four years through other resources available as you have read a few. The staff does not “cut you off, they still help me find other scholarships” (participant five). Participant five shares to this day she is “still really connected with them and whatever I need help especially with like FAFSA” CAMP staff is her go to. CAMP “help[s] me register for classes, you know there is always someone to talk to if you want” shared participant six. He also shared that when he needs to register for classes, find information about his degree, create a resume, or assistance navigating for resources on campus the CAMP staff is his go to source. He continues by saying that “if I am not in the right mindset I can go tell them [CAMP staff]” (participant 6). He says that just like he would with his family, CAMP gives him a sense of security and the space to reset to keep going.

Scholars shared that “the sense of family is always nice” (participant six) and that was something CAMP offered. This sense of family did not just come from the staff but their cohort members, and even other cohorts. “I still talk to some of my friends from our first year and I met like other people from other cohorts” participant three shares. Like previously stated CAMP scholars go through an orientation in order to help connect with each before classes start. Participant five shares that throughout this experience she was able to create great connections with her cohort members. Participant five:

“When I came into CAMP that first week just spending it with everyone in my cohort, I was like you know what these people are kind of cool, I kind of like them... I am still cool with them... I have people to say hi to on campus, I don’t feel lonely, and then they were always there to help you with just kind like anything you needed.”

Being able to see people on campus and know them gives a sense of belongingness on campus. This is extremely important to be able to feel less of an outcast at a 4-year university. Participant two shares that CAMP “give[s] you your friends and people you can really count on.” This is an important component in creating stability and confidence, as they attend a 4-year university.

Scholars with a MSFW background within this study graduated or are close to graduating. They have completed their first and second year of their undergraduate program and were asked what could be done to better the CAMP program. Scholars shared that recruiting can be improved. The participants of this study were recruited in diverse ways. One was recruited through his mother’s employment, three by the recruiter at the time, another by going on college visits, and one by CAMP staff. No matter how they were recruited, scholars felt that it could be improved.

Participant two shared, “I definitely met a lot of Hispanic farm working people throughout my time and they have never even heard of CAMP.” Being able to inform people about the program is the first step to be able to help more scholars navigate through a 4-year institution. Participant five emphasized “outreach it [CAMP] has on high school” should increase. She goes on to say that through the recruiting process it would be helpful to provide basic information about “who you are, who you can call, or like kind of just having those basic questions” (participant five). This can be interpreted with the simple fact that often high school

students feel intimidated by the thought of a 4-year university. Not knowing what to ask can be a barrier to believing they can go to college.

Increasing the number of scholars admitted and amount of funding are other ways mentioned to improve the CAMP program. Participant two states, “if they could expand in general, I guess it is not really something that they [have] a choice for because they only have [a] certain number.” She recognizes that under federal assistance CAMP has a capacity of 40 scholars, but being able to expand would be greatly beneficial. Funding not just for more scholars but “potentially hiring more staff on board” (participant four). This can better the experience of first year scholars by having more staff that looks like them and knows their background increasing belongingness. Participant three shared that having clear explanations about all the expenses they will endure throughout their first and following years. So many small expenses that end up adding up should be explained to not catch scholars off guard and search for funding last minute.

Scholars understand that CAMP is a first year program, and have received informal assistance from CAMP staff in their 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and even 5th year. However scholars stated that receiving formal assistance through CAMP is something that can better the experience during undergrad. Participant six:

“If CAMP was expanded to like 4 years and each year you still have a leader...as you progress through your college career that leader isn’t quite as involved as it was in like freshmen year. You know freshman year you meet with your leader every week but maybe your senior [year] you know you meet every month”

He shares that meeting with a leader monthly and just sitting down to keep yourself on track could improve performance. I believe this also goes toward just simply having someone there to listen and identify with. Especially in those moments scholars may feel helpless.

“Everyone told me, ‘get the degree’ but no one’s teaching me what should I do after I get the degree,” shared participant four. After graduating himself and being told education is the key to success, and that it would increase his income he found himself confused. When he obtained a job he was lost when confronted with what retirement or health insurance plan he was to choose. He shares that having programs “where it shows you what post graduation is, [and] how to deal with all that” (participant 5). Just like the idea of encouraging college should come with information, post graduation should come with information about what that looks like. He shared that if scholars want to apply for their masters there should be a way of assisting them through the process. Participant five shared that the creation of a CAMP Alumni Association would be a great resource for incoming scholars. He illustrates that this association can help scholars through donations of money, time, or knowledge. Today there are hundreds of CAMP alumni in professional fields that can offer insight about what it has been like after graduating that can help scholars go even farther and prevent them from making the same mistake they did.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The experience of a scholar with a MSFW background in an institution of higher education is unique, empowering, important, and deserves to be told. They have grown up seeing their parents work long hours, in harsh conditions, and may have experienced it for themselves. They are often bilingual, serving as translators for their parents at a very young age. They contribute to the everyday life of the family with income, cleaning the house, or caring for younger siblings. They learn how to take care of themselves and their family in order to survive. They attend grade school, and in many cases experience frequent mobility that interrupts their academic year. They have parents that serve as prime motivators to pursue higher education and create a better life for themselves, their current and future family. They are believed to be one of the most underrepresented groups of students in IHE; the number of scholars with a MSFW background enrolling at IHE is increasing (Garcia 2010). They are part of the working-class that values education. They see education as a pathway to a better life outside of the harsh conditions of the fields, or greenhouses. However they often lack the information or resources needed to be successful. Their parents are not able to provide information needed to succeed in IHE so they often rely on high school staff. More than often it is a high school teacher or a counselor. If they get lucky they will get a teacher that will help them step by step, if not they are left to take the journey on their own. More than often children part of the working-class do not attend schools that are able to provide more than a simple “go to college it will help you.” However families that encourage college have the resilience needed to succeed in IHE. Although families of the working-class may not have full economic stability to help pay tuition costs out-of-pocket, from this study we can conclude that a small portion of scholars with a MSFW background do have

parents that can help contribute towards tuition after financial aid. Or they work all summer to be able to cover their remaining tuition bill.

From this study we can conclude that positive parent encouragement, a small contribution financially, and emotional support from parents are positive indicators in the success of scholars at a 4-year university. With this being said I would like to restate that families with migrant and or seasonal farm working backgrounds are not all the same. They can differ in culture, language, or family structure. Within this study all participants were in-state residents so I can not speak for scholars that attend a 4-year university out of their home state. I would like to believe being from out-of-state brings a completely different undergraduate experience overall. I would also like to state that CAMP does have a percentage of dropouts within the program, as well as scholars that do not return after the 2nd, 3rd or even 4th year. This program is not perfect and has a lot of room for improvement, CAMP is doing what they can with the resources they have to assist scholars with such a unique perspective. Families with MSFW jobs feed America everyday sweating, exhausted, and tired but they thrive through their children. They are demonstrating that even through the barriers of economic constraints, lack of knowledge, or self-doubt of their abilities, with the proper support system anything is possible. Scholars with a migrant seasonal or farmworking background have shown resilience and great work ethic to overcome the adversities of attending a 4-year university.

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Appendix 1

From the Farm to Higher Education: Interpreting the Experience of Students with a Migrant Farm Working Background and Have Participated in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).

Introduction Questions:

How did you hear about the College Assistance Migrant Program?

How far have you gone in terms of achieving your bachelors degree?

What is the highest level of education that your parents, or caregivers, have achieved?

How do you identify in terms of your race or ethnic background?

What type of work did your mother, father, or caregiver do that allowed you to qualify for CAMP? (or even you)

Honors Thesis Questions:

What motivated you to go to a 4-year university?

How well would you say your high school prepared you for navigating college?

Did you feel emotional, or mentally, ready to go to college? Why or why not?

Was your transition from high school to 4-year university difficult, if so why?

How would you describe your parents' involvement in you attending a 4-year university?

For example, did they help you out fill out your FAFSA application?

Did they help you choose university?

If they say their caregivers did not, who did?

What types of support systems do you count on?

How are you, or were, paying for your education?

Other than financial support, what types of support would you need in order to thrive in a higher education system?

Can you tell me about one of your biggest barriers while attending a 4-year institution?

How has your everyday life changed being at a university compared to being at home? For example, are you still expected to work to help support your family and in what ways?

Given your lifestyle change how does that make you feel?

Do you still have responsibilities with your family?

The imposter syndrome has been defined as despite your successes of getting into a 4-year university that you somehow do not deserve to be where you are. I am going to be reading a few examples that can help measure the imposter syndrome. I would like you to comment on the extent to which you experienced any of the following:

Being ignored, or dismissed by a professor you admire?

Not feeling confident to speak up in class?

Feeling or knowing you are not performing well on class assignments?

A feeling like you do not belong or that you stand out either in classes or in the university as a whole?

Facing derogatory, or demeaning, comments by faculty or other students having to do with your gender, race, or ethnicity? Can you elaborate without identifying particular people or classes?

Knowing what you know now, what would you do at a 4-year university if you were to do it all again?

Thinking about what we talked about today, how do you feel the CAMP program helped you during the completion of your bachelor degree.

What CAMP resources did you take advantage of and helped, or is helping you, attain your bachelor's degree?

Is there anything you believe CAMP should improve to better accommodate scholars with migrant and/or seasonal background?

Appendix 2

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: November 8, 2022

To: Barry Goetz, Principal Investigator
[Co-PI], Co-Principal Investigator

Re: Initial - IRB-2022-307

From the farm to higher education: Interpreting the experience of students with a Migrant Farm Working background and have taken part with the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "From the farm to higher education: Interpreting the experience of students with a Migrant Farm Working background and have taken part with the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)" has been reviewed by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (WMU IRB) and **approved** under the **Expedited 7**. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application. **Please note:** This research may **only** be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes to this project (e.g., **add an investigator, increase number of subjects beyond the number stated in your application, etc.**). Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation.

In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the IRB or the Associate Director Research Compliance for consultation.

Stamped Consent Document(s) location - Study Details/Submissions/Initial/Attachments

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Sincerely,

Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair
WMU IRB

Appendix 3

Western Michigan University Department of Sociology

Principal Investigator: Barry Goetz
Student Investigator: Elizbia Xaxni-Capula
Title of Study: From the farm to higher education: Interpreting the Experience of Students with a Migrant Farm Working Background and Have Participated in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP).

You are invited to participate in this research project titled "From the farm to higher education: Interpreting the Experience of Students with a Migrant Farm Working Background and Have Participated in the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP)."

STUDY SUMMARY: This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide information that will help you decide whether you want to take part in this study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The purpose of the research is to better understand the effect the College Assistance Migrant Program has on scholars with a migrant and/or farmworker background in a 4-year university and will serve as Elizbia Xaxni-Capula's honors thesis for the requirements of the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College." If you take part in the research, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the student investigator regarding your experience in the CAMP program. Your time in the study will take approximately 45 minutes for the interview. Possible risk and costs to you for taking part in the study may include sharing personal information about your experience in the CAMP program. Pseudonyms will be used to replace identifying information. You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose. Potential benefits of taking part may result in providing information to benefit future scholars within the CAMP program or institutions themselves. Your alternative to taking part in the research study is not to take part in it.

The following information in this consent form will provide more detail about the research study. Please ask any questions if you need more clarification and to assist you in deciding if you wish to participate in the research study. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by agreeing to take part in this research or by signing this consent form. After all of your questions have been answered and the consent document reviewed, if you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form.

What are we trying to find out in this study?

We are trying to better understand how participation in CAMP affects scholars at a 4-year university.

Who can participate in this study?

CAMP scholars who participated in the CAMP program in the 2019 cohort or prior.

Where will this study take place?

Via online platforms (e.g., Webex) or in-person.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

Up to 45 minutes.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?

To participate in a one-on-one investigator Elizbia Xaxni-Capula

What information is being measured during the study?

The one-on-one interview will be recorded to ensure accuracy of their responses.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?

Risks will be the sharing of their personal experiences about participating in the CAMP scholar program. Risks will be minimized by use of the pseudonyms in all public uses.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

Potential benefits of taking part may result in providing information to benefit future scholars within the CAMP program or institutions themselves.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?

Forty-five minutes of your time.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?

No

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

Only the primary and student investigator will have access to data collected.

What will happen to my information or biospecimens collected for this research project after the study is over?

The information collected about you for this research will not be used by or distributed to investigators for other research.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose. The investigator can also decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact Dr. Barry Goetz at Western Michigan University at 2693875287 or barry.goetz@wmich.edu or the Elizbia Xaxni-Capula at Western Michigan University at 2694872073 or elizbia.xaxni-capula@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research and Innovation at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Western Michigan University Institutional Review Board (WMU IRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the lower right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

Participant's signature

Date