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Literacy Practices among Migrant Teachers: Educator Perspectives and Critical Observations

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LITERACY PRACTICES AMONG MIGRANT TEACHERS: EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES AND CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

English

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LITERACY PRACTICES AMONG MIGRANT TEACHERS: EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES AND CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS

Briana Asmus, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University, 2015

This research builds upon scholarship that explores the unique needs of Latina/o migrant students and the teachers who serve them. Situated within the overlapping fields of migrant education, critical literacy, and Latina/o critical theory, this narrative examines the practices and perspectives of three teachers, each with more than a decade of experience teaching migrant students in a summer migrant education program (SMEP) in Michigan. The purpose of this study is to give educators, administrators, and community members who work with migrant students additional insight into the literacy acquisition process and unique challenges of working with this population.

Despite the aim of SMEPs to address areas where migrant students struggle academically, migrant students continue to struggle to frequent relocation and factors such as poverty, discrimination, and access to services. Research has generally shown that migrant students also encounter cultural, linguistic and racial barriers within school systems that can hinder their academic progress (Tatto et. al, 2000; Valencia, 2002; Romanowski, 2002; Green, 2003; Cranston-Gingras, 2003; Vocke, 2007; Torrez, 2013). Literacy is one area where migrant students continue to underperform compared to their non-migrant peers. By offering detailed portraits of teachers who work with the migrant population, this study highlights classroom practices of teachers who are tasked with
increasing the literacy skills of their students. The study also reveals barriers and pathways within the institution of migrant education that impact the needs of migrant students.

While this study revealed pedagogical practices unique to each case study participant, it also revealed ‘common critical practices’ shared by all of the teachers that employ aspects of critical literacy, with a consideration of their student’s knowledge and background. As school systems nationwide continue to experience an influx of migrant students who are expected to perform at the same level on state assessments as their non-migrant peers, the outcomes of this study are relevant for teachers of migrant students in all settings. In addition, this study serves as a model for stakeholders in migrant education to consider how migrant farmworker students continue to be disenfranchised by existing laws, policies and educational practices.
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The First Day

On the first day of school, all the teachers stood outside the building, waiting for the busses. An air of excitement surrounded the entrance to the school building that would otherwise be empty in June. It could have been the first day of school anywhere, but this was the first day of a Summer Migrant Education Program (SMEP), and the students were not coming from their permanent homes, but from a handful of migrant farmworker camps tucked away among the fruit and vegetable farms in Michigan. When the busses went to pick the children up this morning, most of their parents had already left before sunrise to harvest beans, blueberries, squash, and other crops. Now, as the busses pull up to the school building, which would otherwise be empty for the summer, children peer expectantly out the bus windows. Teachers, who would otherwise be preparing for the start of the regular school year, smile back and call the students they know by name. In between exchanges, teachers share plans with each other. From creating class portraits to memory writing, I listened to the many special activities teachers had planned for their students.

I shared in the collective enthusiasm of the day and wondered where my own trajectory would take me. My role at the SMEP was not as a classroom teacher, but as a qualitative researcher. The weeks ahead would take me down several different paths as I considered different directions for my research, but on this day I was confronted with a question that would guide me as a critical researcher: Why migrant education? In the first
few days, I learned that nearly every person at the SMEP had an answer to this question. As I began my work, I was asked this question by nearly a dozen students, teachers, administrators and staff. At first, I wasn’t quite sure how to answer. I recalled a quote from *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*, where Ira Shor writes, “the self and society create each other” (15). In other words, individual growth has the ability to effect social change. Critical pedagogy has taught me the importance of self-exploration as part of the education and research process. I knew what I wanted out of the process, but I had some self-exploration to do before I could honestly answer this question.

In the beginning, I answered the question by citing my previous experience with diverse populations of students. I knew how much I cherished working with these populations, and as I anticipated learning more about the perspectives of the migrant teachers, I readily shared my own. Non-traditional students whose needs were not being met by traditional educational systems held special interest for me. During my first teaching job in South Korea, I worked with English Language Learners (ELLs) at a public school in Korea. I was the first American that many of the students had seen. My second job was at a small university in Tokyo, teaching conversational English. Both of these experiences ignited my interest in working with non-English speakers, well before I knew much about teaching methodologies. My interests also took me to El Salvador, where I heard stories of civil war and migration from guerilla fighters. I began to understand more about the social aspects of language in these instances, where I listened intently to the stories in Spanish. Upon my return to the United States, I began to take an interest in the farmworker population, a population that I was largely unaware of at the
time, even as a Michigan native. Finally, only several weeks before I began my research, I leaned that I had immigrant ancestors who worked in the sugar beet fields of Michigan, near the Pioneer Sugar factory. I shared all of these experiences, but I still struggled to articulate specifically what spurred my interest in migrant education.

At least part of what drove my desire to learn more about migrant student farmworkers (MSFWs) and the teachers who work with them (hereafter, “migrant teachers”), is the simple fact that MSFWs remain “the most undereducated subgroup in the United States” (Romanowski 27). According to a 2012 Michigan Migrant Head Start survey, only about 9% graduate high school, and less than one percent have participated in some type of literacy class (OPRE 11-12). Michigan alone has nearly 94,000 Michigan agricultural workers that return each year to harvest our crops (Larson 39). This population enriches our communities, not only by providing our tables with abundance, but by contributing through service in many industries including food processing, reforestation, nursery and greenhouse work, and field agriculture (6). Despite all of the wonderful things MSFWs and their families do for our economy and community, “the mandate to educate migrant children provokes xenophobia” (P. Green 53). It is my hope that this study will help to eradicate some of the xenophobia that persists within educational institutions and within my home state.

**Overview of this Study**

Over several years of involvement with SMEPs and the broader migrant community, I was able make the transition “from that of an outsider to that of an insider” (Creswell 162). In my initial visits I was seen as a guest with limited knowledge of the many forces at work in migrant education. Continued interaction with the local
farmworker community and with teachers, administrators, and migrant families allowed me to gain the trust of these communities and gain access to possible research populations. As I did, I began to design this qualitative case study around the practices and perspectives of experienced migrant teachers, who became the focus population of this research. By using aspects of critical theory including Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit), and Critical Literacy (CL), I was able to create a theoretical framework that I used to discuss the critical work these teachers were doing with their students with a focus on literacy. MSFWs had a strong influence on the design and outcomes of this study, as I observed teachers working with MSFWs in situations where literacy development was the main focus. In addition to observations, I interviewed teachers about their practices and perspectives. Finally, I analyzed documents that had a bearing on classroom practices or the role of the teacher for additional data.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the focus and trajectory of this study:

- **What is the role of the teacher in migrant education programs?**
  - How is the role of a teacher of migrant students shaped and perceived by those around them, including students, administration, and the teachers themselves?

- **What specific factors, internal or external, do migrant teachers see as barriers or pathways to literacy for migrant students?**
  - How are teacher perspectives of barriers and/or pathways to literacy represented in class instruction, curricula design, and testing materials?
• What do migrant teachers believe about the needs of migrant students and how does this shape their instruction?
  o What have migrant teachers learned from their experiences teaching migrant youth?
  o How might relevant populations inside and outside of the SMEP benefit from knowing the outcomes of this study?

These questions contributed to the primary aim of this study; to contribute to the under-theorized area of literacy learning within the scope of migrant education. Over time, governments, schools and teachers have struggled to provide MSFWs with the tools they need to build their literate knowledge. Despite the aim of MEPs to address areas where MSFWs struggle academically, a “profile of underachievement” still exists, along with low graduation and high drop out rates (Purcell-Gates 70). Generally, research in critical literacy suggests that traditional educational practices often ignore the foundational, cultural knowledge that MSFWs bring with them. Thematically, the research questions of this study seek to understand the extent to which teachers consider the lives and individual experiences of their students in their practices. These questions operate within a highly structured system where teachers play an important role. This chapter will provide a broad overview of the influences that have shaped and continue to shape migrant education and the role of the teacher.

**Migrant Education Programs: A Historical Overview**

The SMEP where this study took place is one part of a web of services offered to migrant students and families year round. Migrant Education Programs (MEPs) were the
first example of the government offering long-term assistance to migrant students and families through federal legislation. Although efforts were made before 1964, they were sporadic and did little to address educational interruption, the main result of the mobile nature of migrant families who relocate several times per year (Gouwens 33). Increased focus on migrants as a population led to the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act in 1964, and one year later, the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA created grants and other services for students who were identified as low-income. Title I, Part C was formed under ESEA for the purpose of allocating funds to support education-based programs for migratory children to help reduce educational disruptions that took place due to repeated moves (USDE). In 1966 the Office of Migrant Education (OME) was formed with the purpose of administering these grants to state MEPs.

In many ways, MEPs were the government response to the growing farmworker movement, which highlighted the disparities that existed between migrant farmworkers and other types of laborers in public and private educational sectors, including education. The efforts of Latino American civil rights activist Caesar Chavez brought the farmworker plight into the public eyes with non-violent forms of resistance. Media attention, such as the documentary *Harvest of Shame*, which aired on CBS on Thanksgiving Day in 1960, brought the migrant plight into the living rooms of millions of Americans. The powerful closing words of the film were, “The people you have seen have the strength to harvest your fruit and vegetables. They do not have the strength to influence legislation. Maybe we do.” Reformers were also discussing issues of fairness in the schooling of Mexican American youth. Issues such as teacher qualifications, access to
bilingual education, and lack of school resources were becoming topics of research (Donato 62). Public dialogue surrounding these events shed light on what was, until that point, an “invisible” minority to many Americans (Gouwens 2001, Vocke 2007, Nevarez-La Torre 2010).

Today, the programming provided by MEPs takes place year-round, with the bulk of services offered during the summer (note the “S” in “SMEP”). This is when Michigan welcomes the majority of its migrant population. The SMEP is responsible for addressing “areas of concern” as they have been identified by the Michigan Migrant Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA). Michigan’s population offers unique challenges based on the population. Areas of concern include, (1) educational continuity, (2) instructional time, (3) school engagement, (4) English language development, (5) educational support in the home, (6) health, and (7) access to Services (Tabrizi and Williams 7-8). According to the OME, these areas of concern are meant to ensure that MSFWs who move from state to state “are not penalized in any manner by disparities among states in curriculum, graduation requirements, or state academic content and student academic achievement standards” (“Programs: Migrant Education”). Since no two states have the same demographic represented in their population, areas of concern may vary from state to state.

With federal grants, MEPs create many types of programs with the purpose of serving MSFWs, including the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), High School Equivalency Program (HEP), and Migrant Education Even Start (MEES). There are also special initiatives such as the student records exchange, comprehensive needs assessment, and the binational migrant initiative that allows for two binational teachers to
participate in the cultural education of students. For these and other programs, MEPs in forty-nine states receive an annual budget collectively of about 400 million federal dollars. Funding for individual sites is based on a formula that takes into account the number of students and families that participate in these services along with the cost of education in that state (“Programs”). I mention these details to show that the scope of these programs is quite broad, and the teachers within the SMEP are one part of a large, interconnected web of services.

Definitions

By federal definition, migrants are defined as anyone who has moved more than once in the past 36 months “in order to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work,” although migrants may participate in a wide variety of other industries (Gouwens 39). The term “agricultural worker” or “farmworker” may also be used to refer to members of this group, but without the inclusion of the word “migrant,” these labels do not necessarily denote movement from site to site. MSFWs travel from different locations around the world (domestic and international) and may move from one place to another, either within a country or sometimes across a national border. Some are born in the United States, while others are born outside the country and relocate to the United States. As a result, some migrants are immigrants and others are not. The term “immigrant,” generally denotes someone who moves from outside the country to a receiving country. Usually this process involves governmental bodies and embassy involvement, or the formal act of being issued some type of visa. About half of all migrant workers in the United State are “undocumented,” meaning they do not hold any type of lawful immigration status (SLPC). The “undocumented” population faces issues
of access to healthcare and other social services because they lack the rights of a legal resident.

For the purposes of this study, I focus on the Latina/o population because they make up the majority of the national population and even more of the Michigan migrant population. The National Agricultural Workers Survey reported that in 2009, seventy-two percent of migrants in the United States were born in Mexico or Central America (NCFH). In Michigan, eighty-eight percent of farmworkers are of Latina/o origin, much higher than the national average (Kossek et al. 4). Although Latinas/os represent the majority of Michigan’s migrant population, MSFWs come from a variety of countries and speak a variety of languages. Indigenous workers also play an integral part in Michigan’s migrant population, including groups from Guatemala, Oaxaca and Chiapas, Mexico. These groups also face unique challenges and additional barriers of access to services. Indigenous workers who speak tribal languages may not speak either English or Spanish, further removing them from the mainstream migrant population and services that may only be offered in English or Spanish.

Although migrant workers of all backgrounds experience many of the same difficulties, including poverty and racism, the history discussed in this and subsequent chapters mainly focuses on Mexican-American migrant groups. This is not meant to exclude other groups of migrants, but rather to focus on the majority student population at this particular SMEP, and in the Midwest generally, which is primarily Mexican-American (Kossek et al. 2). It is problematic to make broad generalizations about the migrant population, in term of race and other factors. All populations of migrants are unique and diverse, including those within Michigan. As Mariella Espinoza-Herold notes
in her study, “The complexities of dominant-subordinated group relationships and intragroup variance are difficult to explain in a single fixed typology” (15). The experiences of each individual group and individual student shape the way they experience school. The diversity of the migrant population is another reason why more research is needed to better understand the multiple cultures and communities that exist within this broad term.

A “migrant teacher” can also be defined in several ways. Under one definition, they can be anyone who is partially funded with Title I, Part C funds from the federal government, which have been provided to individual school districts under the ESEA of 1965. These teachers work with migrant students as librarians, gym teachers, ESL teachers, and in regular school-year contexts, including summer school programs like the one featured in this study. There are also teachers who, regardless of funding source, seek to address the academic needs of migrant students in various contexts and environments. They may or may not be associated with the federal funds provided for migrant education. The participants in this case study, however, are those being supported by Title I, Part C funds during the eight-week summer program. For the purposes of this study, the term “migrant teacher” does not necessarily mean the teacher comes from a migrant background, but only that they teach migratory students who qualify for services based on the federal definition mentioned above. In this study all the case study participants were employed by the school district in which the SMEP took place. Each participant had a regular job during the school year working for one of the schools in the district.
Historical Perspective of the Migrant Narrative in Education

Many of the struggles migrants are faced with today are “echoes” of problems they have faced for many decades (Flores and Hammer 5). Factors that specifically impact school performance are related to mobility, including educational interruption, social prejudice, lack of knowledge of the educational system, and lack of communication between teacher and students (Martinez and Cranston-Gingras 31). Contributing to these factors are the anti-migrant sentiments that persist in our media identified by the United Nations Human Rights Committee as “one of the key obstacles hindering migrants’ integration and equal access to human rights in host societies” (UNHR). These discriminatory attitudes create circular patterns that make it hard for MSFWs, to escape the cycle of poverty and succeed in educational institutions.

Discriminatory attitudes against Latinas/os have roots in the forced segregation and mass deportations that took place before the Mexican War, when the collapse of Mexico’s economy forced many “undocumented” families into el Norte in search of work. Immigrating was not a choice, but a necessity for survival, which is still true for many families today. The journey has traditionally been—and still remains—a dangerous one, made even more dangerous by the increasing amount of border patrol and regulations that restrict access to our country. This crossing is the focus of increasingly popular fiction and non-fiction works by authors such as Robert Rodriguez, Francis Jimenez, Rubén Martínez and Sonia Nazario. These authors detail a few accounts of what is a reality for millions who attempt the perilous journey across the border to seek refuge from corruption, gang-related violence, starvation and other life-threatening factors in their home countries.
Specifically among Latina/o students, discriminatory attitudes persist in the stereotype that they are less likely, or less able to succeed academically compared with other ethnic groups (Sherman et. al 2). Historically, having separate schools for Mexican students reinforced this stereotype. Eighty-five percent of Mexican children were required to attend separate schools or classrooms prior to 1930 (Donato 13). In these schools, students were given a watered-down curriculum with lower standards than predominantly white schools. In special migrant-only schools, reading and writing were often not taught because the schools felt students didn’t need to learn to read or write in order to work manual labor jobs. Upward mobility was not a consideration, and it was generally believed that Mexican students were incapable of higher-level learning. In one example, a high school principal claimed Mexican students were a “backward, indolent race” born with a deficiency that made them incapable of academic achievement (Valdez 47).

Since so much of critical theory looks at the connection “between laws and legal institutions on the one hand and Latina/o communities on the other,” a look at some early court cases will help to frame this introduction (Haney-López 60). School desegregation for Latinas/os actually began several years before the passage of Brown v. the Board of Education, which is the case generally cited for leading school desegregation across the country. In Romo v. Laird (1925), the Tempe Elementary School District was sued by a rancher for refusing to admit his children to a school that had been labeled by the Board of Trustees as a school for white children. Following the “separate but equal” doctrine of Plessy v. Ferguson, the rancher hoped to win his case based on the fact that Mexican children born in the United States were considered “white” by the U.S. Census, even
though their cultural heritage and language was different than white Americans. In his ruling the judge allowed Romo’s children to attend the predominantly white school, but the case had a “limited integration” effect, as the judge determined the real difference in equality between the two schools was the presence of qualified teachers. As such, he ordered qualified teachers to be placed in the “Mexican American” school, thus negating the need for integration (Muñoz 28-9).

Twenty-two years later, several Latina/o families brought a class action lawsuit against four segregated school districts in Orange County, CA in Menendez v. Westminster. This case finally set a precedent for other schools nationwide to desegregate. As schools began this process, many educators were concerned that integration would actually hinder the progress of white students (Donato 14). More conservative educators feared that it would provide migrants access to opportunities that might take them out of the fields and into jobs that were intended for American workers. Although the schools were now technically integrated, Latina/o students were still treated differently, or “tracked” in ways that segregated them from the majority student population, setting students on a course for low-wage jobs or manual labor (Gándara and Contreras 113-114). In one telling instance, a teacher defended herself for allowing a white child to lead a line of migrant children in the hallway because his father owned a farm and he would have to learn how to “handle the Mexicans” (Donato 4).

Desegregation did not change the fact that under the law Mexican Americans were still considered categorically white. The case of Hernandez v. Texas (1951) offered yet another example of where Latinas/os were considered categorically “white” and therefore not protected by the law. In this case, a Latino farmworker was indicted by an
all white jury for murdering a fellow farmworker. At the time in Texas, Mexican Americans were excluded from jury service despite constituting fifteen percent of the population where Hernandez was being tried (Haney-López 57). The motion to include Mexican Americans in what should have been a jury of peers was denied, and Hernandez was convicted of murder. The Texas Court cited the 14th Amendment defining racial discrimination only in terms of black and white. Mexican Americans were not in either of these categories, and therefore were not protected. Although the decision was reversed by the Supreme Court three years later, it was not on the grounds of race, but on the grounds that “equal protection should be afforded to groups who from time to time suffered discrimination in the community” (Haney-López 59).

A similar case marking the simultaneous exclusion/inclusion of Latinos came in the 1972 case of San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez. In this case, Mexican American parents brought a lawsuit against the school district because school funding was based on property taxes. Edgewood Independent school system was 90% Mexican American residents with low socioeconomic status. Property values were low, so funds contributed to the school by the property taxes were low compared to other districts. As a result, Mexican American students were receiving a severely underfunded education compared to nearby affluent neighborhoods whose property taxes were higher and citizens were mostly Anglo (Soltero 77-79). The courts determined at the state level that the Texas school funding system was unconstitutional, making it initially a “win” for Latina/o civil rights. When the case went to the Supreme Court however, legislators ruled that education was not a fundamental right that was given protection under the constitution, reversing the initial ruling by the state (84-86). As the justices interpreted
the case, the Mexican American students were receiving an equal education under the 14th Amendment.

The inclusion/exclusion narrative continues in a 2010 example, when Arizona conservatives fought to remove Mexican American Studies (MAS) from all public schools (elementary, middle and high) as well as institutions of higher education in House Bill 2281. They won on the grounds that the classes “promoted racism and classism toward Anglos, advocated ethnic solidarity and suggested the overthrow of the government” (Robbins). MAS was the first program that was successful in reducing the dropout rate of Latina/o students, and the success of MAS was well documented. An independent curriculum audit noted that not only was the program successful among the students who participated, but that it would be beneficial to expand the program by offering the courses to more students (Cambium Learning 67). Although the program was reinstated in part, the debate over the content of the program continues with increased governmental control over textbook choices and syllabi. More recently, this issue has served as a battleground for teacher and student activists to speak out about the systemic exclusion of a culture that accounts for over 40% of public school enrollments in Arizona, and one-in-five public school students nationwide (Fry and Gonzales).

Increasing Need

This study comes at a time when the United States has experienced a massive increase in the amount of children from Mexico, Central and South America who attempt to enter the country. Although geographically far away from the Texas border, local SMEPs feel the effects of immigration law since families often travel to Michigan from the Texas/Mexico border area in search of work. Although the number of students that
are eligible for services has decreased, the number of MSFWs who participate in MEPs has increased by approximately 500 migrant students from the 2008-2009 school year within the state of Michigan (Tabrizi and Williams 21). The difference between “eligible” and “participating” could be explained by the fact that more migrant families are “settling out” and becoming a part of the community, making them ineligible for migrant-related services. Respondents in the Enumeration Profiles study noted that the change in demographic factors “could be due to immigration issues which might cause people to travel less and settle out of the migrant stream with their families around them” (Larson 15). Among the reasons given for settling out was the desire of migratory families to “provide more educational opportunities for their children who might then not have to do farm work” (16).

As more families settle out, it is likely the number of students with a MSFW background who participate in the public school system during the regular school year in Michigan year will likely continue to increase and additional support services and qualified teachers will be in demand. Nationally due to growth in the Hispanic population, it was projected that Hispanic students would outnumber white students in public schools (Krogstand and Fry). Despite this growth, public schools continue to serve white, middle-class students. Students who do not fit into this demographic continue to be disenfranchised. As the most underserved minority population, migrant students drop out of school at a rate much higher than the national average (Martinez et al. 333). The average level of education completed by a MSFW is 8th grade, with less that ten percent having any college education (NCFH). Migrant students as young as age 13 (by law, although sometimes younger) often have to help their families put food on the table. At
this young age, MSFWs find themselves having to make the choice between education and work, which take place in the same hours of the day (Gouwens 17). Most schools are not prepared to help students choose between school and work, nor are teachers prepared to have honest discussions with their students about these challenges.

What remains is a growing population and a need for informed and highly trained teachers. Each year new data issued by federal and state agencies shows that migrant students continue to underperform compared to their non-migrant peers due to factors such as poverty, repeated moves, isolation, and lack of resources. At least part of the problem is teachers not receiving the training they need to work with this population. Subtle forms of systemic racism still operate in our social systems (López 70). This is where the work of the migrant teacher is important: to bring about systemic change by discussing these issues with the students that are affected by them.

**Documenting the Teacher**

This study uses a critical lens to examine the role of the teacher from multiple sources, including the perspectives of teachers themselves. Focusing on documenting the migrant teacher is an important feature of this research for two main reasons. First, as I will discuss in more depth in Chapter 2, opinions and perspectives of experienced teachers are often ignored by those who make decisions regarding the direction of migrant education (Espinosa-Herold 102). I learned quickly that the perspectives of seasoned educators who spent years working with MSFWs were undervalued and frequently ignored entirely in decisions that would dramatically change how MSFWs were taught. Second, teacher voices were present, but still underrepresented in research about migrant education. Although educational researchers have sought to document the
history of migrant education programs, they have rarely sought out the informed insights of migrant teachers, or focused on classroom activities. Though underrepresented, teacher voices are more important than ever to the field of migrant education and the direction it will take.

When migrant education was in its infancy, teachers lacked the language, the diagnostic tools and the resources to deliver effective instruction to this population (Gouwens 34). Although we now have a deeper understanding of the needs of this population, we still struggle to prepare teachers to work with diverse students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, most teachers feel inadequately equipped to meet the learning needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, with 17 percent of teachers feeling “not at all” prepared (“Teacher Quality”). Perhaps this is because, traditionally, the role of a migrant teacher has been reduced to that of an ESL teacher responsible for a series of tasks: for example, creating lesson plans, delivering instruction, teaching vocabulary and assigning grades. It is easy to prepare teachers to be responsible for these tasks, but more difficult to prepare them to examine deep, cultural elements in themselves and their classrooms.

Historically, critical themes like advocacy and action define the role of a migrant teacher. Caesar Chávez, a former teacher and high school dropout, helped establish the tradition of teacher activism in migrant education. His protégé, Dolores Huerta, was also an activist educator who taught migrant children to read. After teaching at a grammar school attended by MSFWs for many years, Huerta decided to leave the teaching profession to directly attack what she believed were the root causes of injustice her students faced. On leaving the teaching profession, she commented, “I quit because I
couldn’t stand seeing kids come to class hungry and needing shoes. I thought I could do more by organizing farm workers than by trying to teach their hungry children” (“Dolores Clara”). Huerta’s statement in many ways describes the inseparability of social justice and teaching, and the importance of teacher voice in confronting issues that affect student success.

Huerta’s vision played out on a national scale as the Chicano movement moved into the classrooms during the 1960’s and 70’s. Issues that are still relevant to the discussion of Latina/o success in education, such as poor school conditions, the lack of Chicana/o teachers, and high drop out rates, were brought into focus. Teachers participated with their students in demonstrations that gained national media coverage. Salvadore Castro, for example, aided and participated in the L.A. Blowouts of 1968 in which ten thousand students walked out of high schools in the L.A. area in protest of school conditions. Chicana/o mobilization was also taking place at all levels of education, and is generally believed to have been started by Mexican American students, many of them first generation college students. These students were inspired by the farmworker movement and the African American freedom struggle, and fought to make a name and a place for all students who chose to identify as “Chicana/o” (Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project). Soon, universities across the west coast were creating courses and departments focusing on Chicano/a studies that were helping to rewrite history from the Chicana/o perspective while teaching language, history and culture, and teacher activists like María Luisa Alanis Ruis stayed at the center of this movement. Teachers from this movement still serve as role models for migrant teachers today and underscore the importance of documenting the efforts of teachers.
Today, the continuation of MAS programming is a great example of places where teacher voices are being heard. The documentary *Precious Knowledge* highlights the activism of Tucson high-school students fighting for their culture to be represented in the curriculum. Curtis Acosta, one of the developers and teachers of the MAS program, said in an interview, “The students are the present-future. It is like blood pumping through our veins, constantly moving. If I know who I am, and I know who my students are, and I know what all of my heroes and all of my ancestors had to go through, how can I not do this?” (Fong). Acosta’s beliefs demonstrate how the personal experiences and lives of the teachers of migrant youth often prompt their advocacy efforts. Hopefully the teacher voices of the MAS movement will continue to demonstrate that teachers are important stakeholders in their student’s educational paths.

**Changing Responsibilities of the Educator**

While many teachers continue to be advocates, there are numerous responsibilities of the migrant educator that have changed over time and will likely continue to change. Watching teachers navigate their responsibilities helped form my second research question: “What specific factors, internal or external, do migrant teachers see as barriers or pathways to literacy for migrant students?” One area where opinions vary wildly among teachers in this program is the degree to which teachers should have control over the content they teach. All over the country a large shift is taking place that may threaten teacher autonomy: the movement toward standardization and the increase in testing. Teachers use increasingly more time teaching to standardized tests and less time creating their own, individualized lessons for students. No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is ultimately behind the increase in standardized testing in SMEPs, just as it is
for the public school system. Poor performance on these tests can lead to a reduction of the SMEP’s bottom line, putting a lot of pressure on teachers to improve test scores, and to spend an increasing amount of time preparing students for the exit exams at the end of the program. As a result, lessons on language or culture often get pushed to the side. For literacy goals specifically, pressure falls on the teachers and support staff to meet the state’s goal of increasing literacy by two measured levels from the beginning of the SMEP to the end.

Generally, standards define skills and knowledge students should obtain by grade level and subject. Curriculum is often based on these standards, which vary from state to state. Standards and curricula in the state where the student plans to graduate are important for the teacher to know so they can help them prepare for successful graduation in their home state. Most of the states that send students to Michigan have different standards and curricula than those used in Michigan’s public schools. Until 2012, Texas used the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards. Now they use the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The phasing out of the TEKS and phasing in of STAAR required that SMEP teachers be familiar with both, in addition to Michigan’s Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Multiple sets of standards and curricula can cause confusion for teachers and students. Concepts that students are expected to know can vary by grade in states with different standards. In addition, how these concepts are taught in the curricula can vary between states. For example, in the area of math, steps for teaching math problems are often completely different. Since students are required to show their work on exams, the SMIP teachers must know the way problems are taught in the home state. In terms of literacy, expectations can also
vary, with different methods for constructing essays and writing structured responses. When multiple and sometimes conflicting learning strategies are presented, students often become confused (Salinas and Reyes 123). The same can be said for teachers.

Time restrictions set forth by individual states are another part of the standards and point of confusion. For STAAR, there are specific time frames for testing that must be adhered to in order for a student to advance to the next grade level. Since migrant students often miss these time frames when they are traveling with their families, they can fall grade levels behind. Teachers at the SMEP in the Secondary Credit Recovery Team spent time preparing students for these mandated tests such as North Star (Texas) and Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). In some cases, teachers are asked to administer the tests and send the results back to the home state. Migrant teachers must be familiar with time restrictions, including assessment and graduation dates. Familiarity with out-of-state systems is just as vital as understanding in-state curricula and assessments for the migrant teacher.

These realities are relevant to this study because the State of Michigan implemented a new set of curricula and testing for all Michigan SMEPs in 2013 that had not yet been aligned with the Common Core or any other state standards. This curriculum, called *Math MATTERS*, attempted to teach math and science using a balanced literacy model as the main focus of the curricula. The curriculum was not targeted toward migrant students necessarily, but toward any population in short-term educational programs, like the SMEP. Teachers at this site received the curricula only four days before the program began. Some teachers reported they didn’t receive their copy of the curricula until several weeks after school started. Others, especially
elementary grades, were not provided with the materials needed for many of the lessons. In general the implementation caused a great deal of confusion. The real change, however, was having such a scripted curricula to follow where before there were only general guidelines. The overall increase in standardization can be considered a current trend in migrant education. It had direct bearing on this study as each case study participant was affected by it. The materials provided to the teachers generally highlighted specific methods or models of delivering literacy instruction that teachers were expected to follow. The use of these materials and the ways in which they shaped the research have various intersections with literacy learning.

**Connections to Literacy Learning**

Research suggests that literacy is a special area of concern for migrant youth (Freeman and Freeman, Gouwen, Vocke). Unfortunately, over half of the migrant population cannot demonstrate a basic understanding of a text written at their grade level (Tatto et al. 9), and lack of reading ability still demonstrates the greatest achievement gap between migrants and other groups of students (Salinas and Fránquiz 210). For MSFWs, research has shown that traditional approaches to literacy instruction, like those found in most schools, are only marginally effective (Hayes, Bahruth and Kessler 18). Literacy skills have a direct bearing on all aspects of life, from finding work to continuing in higher education. In addition, writing allows bilingual students to learn academic language and “express their identities through language and (hopefully) receive feedback from teachers and others that will affirm and further develop their expression of self” (Cummins 98). The multiple environments that migrant students participate in necessitate a model that takes into account literacy outside the classroom as well as the individual
student. This special area of need combined with the knowledge teachers have gained by working with MSFWs over the years helped form my third research question, “What do migrant teachers believe about reading, writing, and language, and how does this shape their instruction?”

As other major studies have found, the beliefs of teachers are important because they have the ability to affect student success (Gándara and Contreras 100). In this study, it became clear that literacy learning was taking place just as much outside of the classroom as inside it, and a literacy model that took into account the daily realities the students were facing, (instances of racism and exclusion, identity issues, mobility, etc.), would be necessary. Although not every teacher in the case study used all aspects of a CL or LatCrit model, or was even aware of the term “critical literacy” itself, observations demonstrated critical instances where teachers were able to use MSFW life in acts of literacy learning. By the time of the second interview when teachers were asked questions about the decisions surrounding their practices, it was clear that teachers were more aware of the importance of critical thought and inquiry. In the best instances of critical literacy taking place in the classroom, teachers provided students with tools that could be useful outside of the classroom as well as in it.

At this SMEP and other all over the country, literacy is being qualitatively measured in the form of quizzes, screeners, and tests being administered by the teachers and other staff. The results are passed on to the state, and then coded for the federal Department of Education. These tests measure specific skills that are quantifiable and generally disconnected from the lived experiences of the students. I was not interested in the types of literacy skills these tests were measuring, because they did not fit with the
definition of literacy I knew. Clearly these tests were not taking different social contexts into account when measuring literacy. As noted critical educator Katie Van Sluys states, schools are social worlds that may or may not share the same norms, values and practices of other communities the students belong to (xv). The communities, camps, fields and homes in different states all played a role, and it was my belief that valuable acts of literacy were taking place in these contexts, and in different languages.

**Language and Literacy**

Research has shown in order for students to develop skills in a second language, they must first acquire basic skills in their native language (Cummins 54). However, many MSFWs come into the classroom without basic skills in their native language. Even though the Equal Opportunity Act federally mandates linguistic support services in all schools, these services are not always accessible to MSFWs. The ruling set forth by *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) stated that the schools must provide LEP students with linguistic support services in order for all children, regardless of background. This case made refusing to accommodate ELL students a discriminatory act. In spite of the Office of Civil Rights passing guidelines for interpreting the act as a result of the Lau case, the needs of LEP students often go unmet. Nationally, as much as sixty percent of the migrant population has limited or no English language skills (NCFH). In addition, migrants show a great variance in their language abilities. The English-speaking ability of students in this and many SMEPs ranges from only knowing a few words in English to students who sound like native English speakers. In some cases, students could fluently speak their native language but were unable to either read or write it. In others, students were able to speak English well, but could not read or write it at the same level of
competence. Although ESL services were offered for students who spoke Spanish, these services were not offered for students who spoke indigenous languages.

Since public schools vary in the scope and types of services offered to LEP students, the amount of linguistic support these students have received prior to their entry into the SMEP varies as well (Gouwens 53). According to quantitative literacy data submitted to the DOE, measured student literacy levels varied in native and second languages, but the majority of students were not on grade level for reading or writing in either language. Although SMEPs do their best to accommodate the needs of each child, this study and others that look at SMEPs have found that linguistic resources are still limited despite great need (Empowering the Invisible 38). All of the teachers at the SMEP are teaching language along with content, but may not have had any experience with ELLs or any professional development in this area, according to the questionnaire administered in this study. In addition, the majority of instruction at this SMEP takes place in English, and the majority of testing and assessment takes place in English. When students are unable to articulate their knowledge on assessments through their first language, low scores are the result (36). Overall, linguistic services offered here and elsewhere are still unable to account for the variety of multiliteracies students bring with them to the classroom.

**Insights Provided by this Study**

By offering detailed portraits of teachers in a summer migrant education program (SMEP) in Michigan, this study highlights classroom practices and critical reflections that reveal both barriers and pathways to the literacy needs of migrant students. It also discusses the varied and complex role of migrant teachers. While this study revealed
pedagogical practices that were unique to each case study participant, it also revealed common critical practices shared by all three participants. These common practices reinforce approaches to migrant education that consider how migrant students live and learn as active participants in several communities. The practices and words of these teachers also provide insights into decision-making processes that is a part of each day. Their considerations also highlight the importance of teacher knowledge in migrant education as they seek to reconcile their own beliefs, the perceived needs of their students, and the changing world of migrant education.

Chapter Overview

Chapter Two, “Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations” describes research and literature that have contributed to framing this study. The views of scholars and scholar-practitioners from various fields including migrant education, LatCrit, and Critical Theory are examined and interrogated. The chapter not only focuses on describing major studies that surround and support this research, but also provides a theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter Three, “Methodology and Teacher Profiles” explains the methodology implemented in this case study of three migrant teachers. It also explores the methods of employing the document analysis, interviews and observations used to determine the findings. The teacher profiles provided background information on the case study participants.

Chapter Four, “Findings” discusses the findings of this study within the theoretical framework. Disparate and well as common critical practices among the case study participants are presented and discussed.
Chapter Five, “Implications” reviews what this study reveals about the teaching of migrant students and how this study might be useful to other groups who work with migrants and MSFWs. Any educator may benefit from this section by examining these implications which will hopefully prompt critical reflection and future study. In addition, the fields of English Education and Migrant Education may benefit from better understanding of how literacy learning takes place with MSFWs. The community of migrant educators may engage in further collaborative and professional conversation as a result of the implications discussed in this chapter.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Theoretical Frame

The theoretical frame of this study draws on important work in Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit, with connections to Critical Race Theory), and Critical Literacy (CL). To narrow the frame, I specifically looked at the ways the literature discusses the education of Latina/o and migrant students with a focus on literacy education. This is a fairly small, but rapidly expanding intersection. This frame was decided upon after looking at the various ways in which LatCrit has intersected with the Marxist idea of critical pedagogy. LatCrit stems from Critical Race Theory (CRT), and both share many similarities, but LatCrit “insists on analyzing race and racism” by using both “historical and contemporary contexts” specifically for the Latina/o population (Grant and Chapman 117). Critical literacy stems from critical pedagogy, but can also be influenced by LatCrit and CRT. In this way, CRT, Critical Literacy and LatCrit are not mutually exclusive but inform and influence each other.

Figure 2.1, Theoretical Frame
As Delgado Bernal states, “LatCrit theory and practice is not supplemental or competitive with CRT. Instead, LatCrit compliments CRT by putting the needs and perspectives of Latinos at the center of the theory in a way that asks questions and produces knowledge not often discussed in CRT” (105). These discussions would be more specific to the experiences of Latinas/os, so issues such as language, immigration, ethnicity and culture can be explored as they intersect with “racism, classism, sexism etc.” (105). Since this study focuses specifically on literacy practices, CL with a focus on the needs of Latina/o migrant students is the theoretical frame is used to analyze the practices and perspectives of the participants.

There are several reasons why this study draws on a variety of sources from multiple fields. First, the studies of teacher as researchers and activists, political movements, governmental reports and discussions of law and citizenship are common in a “critical” study. Critical theories often rely upon a variety of texts to generate discussion. Second, a variety of sources from various fields is fitting because literature about migrants and those who teach them comes from several fields which overlap and intersect. One reason for this overlap is, taken as a demographic, MSFWs and their families represent several different cultural and economic groups. There is not any one field or theoretical framework for research that would be able to fully account for the incredible diversity of migrants. For example, when a specific cultural frame is used, other cultures that exist within the MSFW population are ignored. When a class-based approach is used, the range of classes that exist within this population goes unseen. Linguistic theories may undermine the influence of race and culture and ignore language variance. Finally, race-based theories may minimize the influence of class. Theories of
gender can be found in LatCrit, for example in the work of Julio Cammarota, but are less urgent that theories of race and class for the focus of this study. That being said, in order to represent the vast variety and scope of research discussing migrants as a group, I have picked work in this chapter that I believe to be representative of the findings and populations of my own study; a common qualitative research practice (Marshall and Rossman 81-83). The research discussed here not only takes MSFWs into accounts, but holds relevance for migrant teachers as well.

**Identifying the “Gap” in Research**

There are currently several “gaps” in the literature surrounding the core of this research. The first gap is in instructional strategies. An important literature review on migrant education prepared for the US Department of Education notes, “there is a scarcity of research on instructional strategies and programs specific to migrant students” (NYS Migrant Education 3). In addition, the research that does exist is sometimes outdated. However, research has provided many examples of migrant students encountering cultural, linguistic and racial barriers within school systems that hinder their academic progress (Valencia, 1997; Tattow et al., 2000; Romanowski, 2003; Green, 2003; Cranston-Gingras, 2003; Vocke, 2007; Torrez, 2013). This is why the scarcity of research that focuses on effective instructional strategies is troubling. Due to the changing nature of migrant education and effective teaching methods, this work is needed. There are studies that focus on the barriers encountered by migrant students, which can be useful to teachers and are useful to this study, but research on instructional strategies, programs, and other ways to address those barriers is lacking.
A related gap is the lack of research that focuses on teachers who work with MSFWs. Through my contact with migrant teachers, I realized how many have been working in MEPs since their inception. There are also groups of teachers who have worked with MSFWs in the public school system. The decision to narrow the scope of this study to teachers that have at least a decade of experience demonstrates that there are many experienced teachers who have made it their life’s work to teach migrant students. I believe that these teachers possess a wealth of knowledge that should be documented, studied and shared, through the voices of the teachers themselves. The field of migrant education has identified many of the obstacles to success for MSFWs, but in some respects has failed to discuss how those barriers influence the work of the teacher, and what barriers are faced by teachers themselves.

Finally, there are not many studies that look at literacy development among the Latina/o population specifically. More research is needed with this group, not only to benefit students, but to effectively prepare elementary and secondary teachers. Assuming that most teachers desire to be effective practitioners in their field and provide all of their students with equal opportunities, it is only fair that teacher education courses offer them the type of preparation that will reflect the populations they will work with.

*Figure 2.2, Gaps in Research*
By offering up critical literacy as an effective teaching methodology, this review hopes to introduce some powerful approaches to literacy for students who enter the classroom with varying amounts of cultural capital. I believe that teachers who work in any setting where they come into contact with culturally, linguistically diverse or mobile learners can benefit from reading this study and the surrounding literature.

**Examining the Role of an Educator**

One of the research questions of this study asks about the role of a migrant teacher. This question arose naturally in the research process as I began to read varying opinions and see the many different hats worn by the migrant teacher. In a study of migrant educators by Gibson and Hidalgo, one educator of migrant youth described his role by saying, “Sometimes you're a teacher, sometimes you're a counselor, sometimes you're a social worker, sometimes you're a health consultant. It's so rewarding, the beauty of this job” (684). This study found that at least some of the academic success of migrant students could be attributed to support offered by teachers who created meaningful relationships with their students (691). Studies like this one on the role of an educator often show the great variance within the role. Migrant teachers have complex and varied relationships with their students that sometimes go beyond the more traditional teacher-student dynamic and cross over into the roles of advisor, caretaker, friend or advocate, depending on the circumstances.

The term “advocate” has been used repeatedly to describe the migrant teacher. The following description comes from the SMEP teacher job application where this study took place:

The primary job/goals of the Migrant/Bilingual Teacher are to
advocate for the migrant and/or bilingual students and their families and to assist and provide academic, social, and emotional support services, as necessary to promote success within the educational setting of the migrant and/or bilingual student. (2)

The inclusion of the word “advocate” matched many of the other descriptions I was reading in the research. The migrant teacher-as-advocate was the tradition of some of the first educators, including Dolores Huerta, who found it impossible to teach her students without considering their life circumstances (“Dolores Clara”). It became clear that the advocacy work of teachers could range from acts of emotional and academic support to actions that draw attention to poverty, discrimination and other issues.

The term is also present in studies of teacher-researchers. In a study on successful academic programs for high-school migrant students, Cynthia Salinas and Reynaldo Reyes called successful migrant teachers “advocate-educators.” Here the description moves the role of advocate forward in a description including direct activism. Findings of the study suggested that these teachers were aware of ways they could “alter or circumvent detrimental schooling practices by acting as agents of change, developing alternative schooling experiences, and valuing the human resources found within the migrant educational community” (54). This study suggested that the importance of these educators was to provide an alternative to regular school structures that often clash with the student’s lives and cultures (55). This approach taken by the teachers struck the researchers as an “indispensable duality.” On one hand, these educators must adhere to school policies even though they might not agree with them, but on the other hand they
are expected to provide a community that is mindful of the student’s own life experiences and background. This duality is an apt description of the struggle observed among the teachers in this study.

We see this “duality” continue to play out in another large group of studies that shows the importance of teachers acquiring knowledge about the cultures of their students and using it in the classroom. The works of Cummins, Ladson-Billings, Nieto, and Freeman and Freeman all include aspects of this in their research. Similarly, Luis Moll and others (González, Moll and Amanti, Vélez-Ibáñez) write on the benefits of incorporating this knowledge into the classroom. Generally, funds of knowledge are considered to be the skills, resources and knowledge students enter the classroom with. They are not generally represented or valued by the mainstream classroom. Moll’s theory developed out of a pilot study in the 1990’s in which teacher-ethnographers visited the homes of their students who came from mainly working-class, Mexican, African American and Native American backgrounds (Moll 6). The study was built on the simple premise that the educational process can be more beneficial when teachers learn about and allow students to use their lived experiences. Moll wrote that because the families in this ethnographic study have had to develop coping and survival skills (due to limited economic resources), they are actually great resources for classroom lessons in “mathematics, comprehension and composition” (129). The households where the students lived were places where many different types of learning took place; it was just not the same learning that is generally valued by the school system.

The Continuation of Deficit Thinking

Moll’s work also directly addresses some of the stereotypes about Mexican
families, for example, that they had low-level thinking skills, or did not value education. “Deficit thinking,” a term coined in the 1960’s, “blames the victim for school failure rather than explaining how schools are structured to prevent poor students and students of color from learning” (Valencia iv). It was, and in some cases still is believed that these students were below standard in “socialization practices, language practices, and orientation toward scholastic achievement” (Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti 34). Examples of deficit thinking include “blaming the victim” mentality, perception about a culture being “educable” or not, and educational policies that seek to keep students of color “in their place” (Valencia 4-10). Overall, this school of thought looks at early racist discourses as the roots of a system that continues to promote the economic and cultural interests of the white majority.

One need not look far to find examples of deficit thinking in early studies in migrant education, which often view migrancy as a handicap and hindrance to schools, teachers, and school finance. One early example of is S.J. Homes’ 1929 article “Perils of the Mexican Invasion,” which calls to an end to Mexican emigration based on the “fact” that Mexican immigrants were destroying the white fabric of the United States. In addition, Homes, (who is a zoologist), offers up the argument that the children of migrants “require special attention in schools and are of low mentality” (621). According to Homes, if Mexican “menace,” left the country immediately, much of the economic woes of the country caused by immigrants would be cured. His solution to all of these problems is mass deportation and tighter border control, something that would become realized in 1954 with Operation Wetback.
Later studies like Shirley Green’s “The Education of Migrant Children: A Study of the Educational Opportunities and Experiences of the Children of Agricultural Migrants” (1954) also demonstrated a deficit paradigm. Although this was the first major study of its kind to suggest specific concessions offered by the teacher for the migrant population, the overall tone of the information and proposed solutions was discussed in terms of deficit. “This study sets out to “alleviate some of their [migrant’s] worst handicaps” (vii), it claims. These handicaps are identified as the language “barrier” and “retardation” in reading, writing, and other subjects. This language was common for it’s time, but it only perpetuated the ‘blame the victim’ mentality. Another early study by Elizabeth Sutton (1960), while drawing attention to the migratory lifestyle, mentions that migrant frustrations are often a result of the inadequacy of their background and family life (17). The number of deficits children come to school with seems broadly explored, while the benefits they could bring to the classroom is not as frequently mentioned in these early studies.

The deficit model can be further broken down into two contrasting views of undocumented Latinas/os in the US that we still see represented today: 1) they are criminals, lazy, unwilling to learn English. 2) They are hard working, willing to take on labor intensive jobs, and have strong religious views and family ties (Olivia, Pérez and Parker 141). These seemingly opposing views are both dangerous forms of stereotyping that can impact school curriculum, procedures and policy. The first is what has been referred to as “The Latino Threat Narrative.” The threat narrative argues that Latina/o identity has been defined by the white majority to be something criminal, illegal, and without a place in society (The Latino Threat 3). We often see it play out in the media in
news stories with stereotypes of the Latina/o criminal or drug user. The narrative defines Latinas/os as a group as criminals who are unable (or unwilling) to fully assimilate into society (3). For example, Samuel Huntington’s 2004 article “The Hispanic Challenge” argues there are dangers associated with Mexican immigrants choosing not to assimilate into Anglo-Protestant society, which he believes “came under assault” by waves of Mexican immigration (31). He argues that Mexican immigrants pose unique threats that other immigrant groups did not pose, for example, their refusal to learn English creating a burden on the educational system. Bilingual programs, Huntington argues, further this problem by allowing students to use their native language in school, therefore creating little incentive for students to learn English (38).

The Latino Threat Narrative continues to weigh heavily on the educational system, and teachers who are not familiar with MSFWs may have internalized these damaging narratives. When MSFWs feel the effects of this narrative, they may experience low self-esteem and feelings of seclusion (Romanowski 27). It is also possible for students to lash out, withdraw, or internalize the stereotypes, growing their fears of failure. Lack of social acceptance and social prejudice are one of the main reasons cited by principals, teachers, and migrant advocates for migrant students dropping out of school (Martinez and Cranston-Gingras 31). Overall, the beliefs teachers hold about the abilities of their students tend to be self-fulfilling prophecies (Gándara and Contreras 100). If teachers think their students will do well, they do, and if they think they will not do well, they won’t. Unfortunately research has also shown that “teachers tend to treat Chicano students, compared to White students, less favorably” and hold lower expectations (Valencia 23). Martin Haberman, who has done research on teacher
expectations in diverse settings, gathered data on teachers as they entered diverse classroom settings by asking them to write their expectations of the environments they were about to enter. His findings confirmed that generally the teacher’s expectations, positive or negative, shaped the experiences they actually had in those settings. In his symposium, “Can Teacher Expectations Close the Achievement Gap,” Haberman states, “Teachers’ belief systems not only explain but predict their behavior with diverse children in poverty.”

**Moving Beyond the Multicultural Perspective**

For many years, multicultural teaching was the only theoretical frame for discussing teachers working with diverse populations. In general, there was the idea that each culture provided rules for behavior that everyone in that culture subscribed to. One need only to learn these rules in order to be an effective teacher. This view prevailed through the farmworker movement and through the integration of schools and the Chicano(a) Movement (1940 to 1980, respectively). Cultures had “neat boundaries” under which identifiers of culture (such as food, religion, gender roles, etc.) lived (Gonzales, Moll and Amanti 33). Within the past few decades, anthropologists and educators began to write against culture as a static idea, and accept the many facets of culture (37). In “Toward a Critical Race Theory in Education” Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV offer some critiques of the multicultural approach. One is that multiculturalism does not get at “points of conflict” or address tensions that might exist within one cultural group (62). For example, multiculturalism negates the historical specificity of minority groups, tends to legitimize some groups and homogenize others,
and institutionally displaces the authority of Latina/o scholars by claiming that anyone can teach about any culture (Poblete 7).

This is one reason this study chose a critical frame as opposed to a multicultural frame. A critical framework takes into consideration the “how’s” and “why’s” of inequality before attempting to move forward. Relative to teaching, a critical frame allows for a mutual exchange of ideas to take place between the teacher and the student, where both parties occupy a level playing field. Educator Paulo Freire knew the importance of this in his work with migrant adults in Brazil. Despite their age, his theories about liberation theology and direct classroom application continue to influence contemporary research that looks at teacher/student interactions. The goal of many Freirian activities is to think of a course of action that would address the initial issue or problem posed by the students, also known as “problem posing,” which moves students from knowledge and awareness to action. This eventual change is the end result of any critical model, and the path is student directed.

Classroom Studies in Critical Literacy

Definitions of literacy in the field of critical literacy provide the frame for acts of literacy that were observed in this study. These definitions usually put aside specific structural elements (like those being formally assessed) in favor of deep, cultural elements that look at critical connections to the learner and then to society at large. Allan Luke writes on the benefits of this type of literacy method:

“[a] science of literacy education that restricts itself to the efficacy of classroom method and that attempts to control against the variance of …economies of cultures is, indeed, a naïve science—at
best decontextualized, at worst part of a long ideological effort to remove reading and literacy forcefully from its complex social, cultural, and economic contexts” (140).

In this way, literacy learning is social and contextual. Paulo Freire’s description contains a similar, contextual element:

Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words or syllables--lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe--but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context. (*Education for Critical Consciousness* 45).

Freire notes that human beings are capable of being transformed by learning to read and write in this manner. Members of an oppressed group like MSFWs should be lead to question their own historical and social situation, leading to action that will eventually reverse the power dynamic of oppressor/oppressed. It is the teacher’s role to identify obstacles to this process, many of which may stem from the teacher’s own ideas of race, class and other markers of identity (Gay and Kirkland 182).

One current example of research that examines what critical literacy might look like in the classroom is *Literacy con carino: A Story of Migrant Children's Success*. This narrative case study describes interactions between one teacher and twenty-two fifth grade migrant students in a rural setting. The study focuses on literacy specifically as it documents the reading and writing practices of students for one year, giving examples of student work and teacher feedback using a Freirian model as a frame for analysis. In the second year of the study, the teacher made pedagogical adjustments when teaching the
students based on what was observed in the first year (Hayes, Bahruth and Kessler 150). One of these adjustments was simply to convince the students they were capable of learning before attempting to teach any content, the same adjustment made by a case study participant in this study. The researchers were able to recognize the importance of these “adjustments” and document them as instances of successful pedagogy. Additional pedagogical adjustments that took place was creating classroom community, attending to meaning in writing, (rather than grammatical issues), encouraging the students to tell their own stories, and showing students that literacy can be a rewarding pursuit.

This study also illustrates the importance of literacy for MSFWs in particular. It subscribes to the Freirian notion of empowerment as a result of becoming a literate individual. As the conclusion to the study states, “Empowerment will not result unless we address the mechanisms that withhold literacy and academic success from some learners” (122). The study shows that the teacher tried to empower his students by providing opportunities for the students to take control of their own learning, working toward student-directed learning (125). The researchers noted that this approach was working against what the students had already been taught in other school settings by the transmission model of education (or “skill and drill”) in which the teachers directs and the students listen passively. The authors suggest a model where the focus is more on learning and less on teaching to create “pedagogical spaces that are conductive to fostering metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness” (151).

A similar, student-directed teaching model is presented in Negotiating Critical Literacies with Young Children by Vivian Maria Vasquez. This title is written by a teacher-researcher whose own experience with “a discourse of control” influenced her
desire to construct a curriculum built upon the questions her students had about race, class, etc. (Vasquez xii). Perhaps the most relevant part of this research was the teacher’s ability to effectively negotiate a curriculum that she argued surpassed the required curriculum. She gave her students access to “literacies that could make a difference in their lives, allowing them to participate differently in the world” (16). One specific way in which she addresses her administrators’ concerns about an alternate curriculum is by creating a chart showing what was covered in the mandated curriculum and what was covered in the negotiated curriculum that laid out ways students were actually surpassing what was required by the mandated curriculum. For example, where the mandated curriculum required students to “demonstrate some awareness of audience,” the negotiated curriculum listed the ways in which students accomplished this goal through real-world action, by sending petition letters, writing letters to children in other countries, even submitting a proposal to a popular fast food chain to include different menu options (15).

Similarly, Doing Critical Literacy: Texts and Activities for Students and Teachers by Hilary Janks et. al takes CL work into the secondary classroom with more specificity in terms of detailed lesson plans. This text is divided into sections that look at various pieces of critical engagement, for example, “Language and position” (11) and “Grammar as a resource for critical literacy,” (69) among others. Many of the lessons presented here focus on important identity work. In one lesson in this section, students are encouraged to research what happens when people find they belong to an oppressed group (50). The students are given options, including “leave the group,” “construct the group positively,” “work toward equal rights for using language,” and “change the power of the group” (50-
This lesson is representative of others included in the work in that it allows students to use their own knowledge by asking questions based on their own experiences, for example, “Who decides who speaks?” (52). As in other examples, the end of the lesson suggests ways in which students can bring about a change in their immediate environment.

Works like those mentioned above demonstrate the types of “literacies” this study is concerned with and ways in which the work of critical literacy can work in the classroom with migrant and non-migrant students. The teachers that participated in this study were not using a critical literacy framework intentionally, but observations revealed that each teacher was already using aspects of critical literacy without knowing it and with great success. Like in the Hayes study, the non-traditional methods the teachers employed allowed students to explore their literature worlds. For migrant students, LatCrit, adds in another important dimension for teachers who wish to use the critical teaching methods with Latina/o students.

**Themes in LatCrit**

According to Solorzano and Delgado Bernal, the theory behind LatCrit “elucidates Latinas/Latinos’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression” (312). It does this in the classroom by addressing issues like language, ethnicity, culture, immigration, identity and other issues (311). Eduardo Hernandez whose study explores LatCrit in the K-12 classroom noted the shortage of studies that look at models of LatCrit in the classroom. In his study, he asked “How can Latina/o educators use LatCrit to create counter stories specifically in the K-12 classroom to resist nihilism?” (102). His
design laid out specific “LatCrit tools” of testimonio, cultural intuition, autoethnography, and counterstory (105). These tools are only some of the many ways LatCrit can manifest in the classroom.

In her annotated bibliography published in La Raza Law Journal, Jean Stefancic identified 17 themes that can be found in LatCrit scholarship. Scholars from a variety of fields (linguistics, anthropology, education, literary criticism, history, and others) draw on these themes to contribute to this rapidly growing body of scholarship (424). The themes are: 1) Critique of liberalism, 2) Storytelling/counterstorytelling and “naming one’s own reality”, 3) Revisionist interpretations of U.S. civil rights law and progress, 4) Critical social science, 5) Structural determinism, 6) Intersectionality, 7) Gender discrimination, 8) Latino/a essentialism, 9) Language and bilingualism, 10) Separatism and nationalism, 11) Immigration and citizenship, 12) Educational issues, 13) Critical international and human rights law, 14) Black/brown tensions, 15) Assimilation and the Colonized mind, 16) Latino/a Stereotypes, 17) Criticism and response. Although “educational issues” is its own theme, many of these themes can also provide teachers with examples that can be used in the classroom.

Themes like “counterstorytelling” and “resistance” for example have been written about within the field of education by many well-know scholars who believe that the narratives of individual people that have experienced some form of oppression (racism, sexism, etc.) can “analyze and challenge the stories of those in power” (Elenes and Delgado Bernal 70). Familiarity with this aspect of LatCrit can be important for teachers because it allows students to draw on their own “funds of knowledge” as legitimate sources and resists the Euro-centric perspective that is generally represented in
curriculum material (71). Counterstorytelling specifically has been used in scholarship in the field of education and in legal studies. Latinas/os often have a very different experience of school that counters the traditional Euro-American narrative. These stories are also important because they present to a curriculum that moves beyond “food, fun and fiestas” and actively names and challenges racism and provides an alternative view of the experiences of Latina/o youth (70-71). Unfortunately, as Solórzano and Yosso point out, many teacher education programs draw on stories of success told by the majoritarian and stories about students of color are left out entirely. This narrative suggests that racism is either insignificant or a thing of the past (32).

As discussed by Delgado Bernal, “Because Eurocentrism and White privilege appear to be the norm, many people continue to believe that education in the United States is a meritocratic, unbiased, and fair process” (120). White privilege is often invisible to those who have it, and when the knowledge of students of color is viewed as a deficit, students may think the only way to be successful is to assimilate. According to Linda Chavez, resistance to assimilation is the mark of an increasing wave of reform movements lead by Hispanics who refuse to assimilate. Her book, Out of the Barrio: Toward a New Politics of Hispanic Assimilation, opens with a scene of resistance at Stanford University, where Mexican American students gathered in a civil rights protest, shouting “We cannot assimilate- and we won’t!” (1). Acts of resistance formed the beginning of Latina/o studies movement, where students became activists by demanding that their culture be included in the curriculum. Resistance continues as a theme in the intersections of LatCrit and education scholarship and can serve as a catalyst for change outside of the classroom.
Language

Language and its many intersections are always a central concern of LatCrit. Gloria Anzaldúa wrote, “Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity - I am my language. Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take pride in myself” (113). Some scholars stress the importance of validating, affirming, and respecting the student’s first language and culture so greatly that they consider it equally or more important than the teacher’s ability to understand the technical aspects of second language acquisition (Walker-Dalhouse et. al 338). Much of the discussion surrounding the role of educators in migrant education involves discussing the possibilities for navigating the inseparable boundaries of language, identity and culture with their students. This is not an easy task when curriculum tends to reflect white, middle-class values (Vocke 9). In the classroom Latina/o students “have experienced persistent and pervasive language suppression and cultural exclusion” (Valencia 6). Intersections of language are not always given a chance to be explored and instead have a history of being excluded from the classroom entirely.

English Only movements such as those lead by groups like U.S. English have added to cultural exclusion. In five states, “No Spanish” rules were implemented in public schools, and in some cases students were punished with detention or suspension if they were caught using it on school grounds, in the classroom or even on the playground (Valencia 7). Teachers have also been known to implement “English Only” rules in their classrooms. For LatCrit researchers who document teachers, instances of the use of Spanish being punishable offence are common. In a study of a middle school teacher who worked mainly with Latina/o, Spanish-speaking students, researcher Guadalupe Valdés was told to speak only English to the students, despite her personal beliefs. The teacher
being observed feared that speaking Spanish would make the students “lazy” in learning English (57). This remains a common belief.

Major movements in standardization and testing have added to linguistic exclusion and cultural repression. Accountability in the form of testing in elementary and secondary schools has isolated undocumented children who are ill equipped to complete these proficiency tests (P. Green 66). Often these tests are only administered in English and Latina/o students are more likely to attend schools that administer these exams and are also more likely to attend schools with less experienced teachers tasked with preparing them for the tests (Contreras 58). In Texas and several other states, exit exams can mean the difference between passing or failing a class and account for a large part of the student’s grade. Under No Child Left Behind, a diploma can be withheld for not passing an exit exam. The harmful nature of standardized testing for ELLs who need a minimum of seven years to reach the linguistic level of native-English speaking students has now caused policy makers to rethink the two-year time frame currently in place for the testing ELLs. This time frame has caused a disproportionate amount of ELLs to fail these tests (Cummins 16-18).

Standardization is too often the beginning of a track that language learners become “locked” into, keeping them separated from the mainstream where academic rigor takes place (Valdés 17). For some migrants, not learning English can mean being permanently trapped in low-wage jobs (Trotter 15). Learning English is not only linked to jobs, but is inextricably linked to citizenship. Undocumented Latina/o students have been identified as “the most vulnerable student population within the Latino college population” because of their resident status (Contreras 120). Interviews for citizenship are
conducted in English, and one must be able to write and read in English in order to pass the citizenship test. When the economic benefits or learning English are so obvious, narrowing the discussion of educating migrant students to one of educating ELLs is a simplistic way of thinking about migrant students that ignores existing power structures. These power structures have a direct bearing on the choices of the migrant teacher relative to literacy instruction.

LatCrit theorists Erica Davila and Ann Aviles de Bradley sum up the problems associated with existing bilingual education well: “The problem of inappropriate bilingual education models lies deep within class and race issues and it will take a strong grassroots reform to help reshape the current model and perception of bilingual education in our country” (42). The past few decades has presented research that demonstrates how inseparable English is from its sociopolitical dimensions, yet many programs still attempt to teach language as a separate entity (Valdés 155). Forms of “subtractive bilingualism” in which the second language is added at the expense of the first language (and culture) continue to persist, despite research that suggests that development in L1 and L2 languages can actually benefit from access to both (Cummins 39). Additive bilingualism allows for the continual development of the first language and culture while the second language is added in. Research suggests that students working in an additive bilingual environment succeed to a greater extent than those whose first language and culture are devalued by their schools (Cummins 37).

Although many teachers do not consider the political implications of teaching a dominant language, research has shown it is impossible to teach language in isolation from its social and political contexts (Valdés 155). Teachers must deeply consider what
materials to bring into their classroom and what those materials might convey to the student. Freire describes how one’s own worldviews can be transmitted through language in the popular “banking system” of education, in which information is passively deposited into the student by the teacher (Pedagogy 72). Angela Valenzuela defines this concept as “subtractive schooling,” which dismisses student’s cultural knowledge and embraces “assimilationist policies and practices that are designed to divest Mexican students of their culture and language” (20). Likewise, Lisa Delpit notes that learning English about learning a code of power. She describes five truths that go hand in hand with English language learning: 1) that there are issues of power associates with learning English, 2) that there are rules that that are go along with learning the language of power, 3) that there is a code that only certain people (the dominant culture) have access to, 4) if those not in the dominant culture are told that a code exists it can make life easier, and 5) that often those in power are least aware that a code exists, and those not in power are the most aware of it (282). Delpit suggests that instead of denying that there is a cultural code or way of acting and thinking that goes hand in hand with language learning, that students should be made aware that this code exists, and that ways of acting, speaking, dressing and gesturing are all components of language learning.

In the MSFW population, it is likely that each student will have different needs that may go met or unmet by different social contexts. An awareness of these contexts and an open, honest attitude about them would be beneficial to the teacher who wishes to grow their student’s linguistic skills. A great visual representation of this dynamic is Freeman and Freeman’s “Contextual Interaction Model,” which demonstrates the various influences on immigrant students, dividing them into three inlaid circles of influence
including “national, state, community, and family levels as well as school influences” (41). As in language instruction, this dynamic model shows that nothing occurs in isolation of other elements (46). Since culture, language and literacy are inseparable from each other, a teacher’s awareness of these aspects play out in each of the individual lives of their students can only benefit teacher and student.

**Rights and Citizenship**

Another political dimension to LatCrit is through its connection to civil rights and citizenship and it’s connection with courts of law. According to the Office of High Commission of Human Rights, minority rights afforded to non-citizens include the right to enjoy one’s culture, profess and practice one’s religion, and use one’s language (23). Non-citizens are afforded the same rights under the law as citizens are; the right non-discrimination, the right to work, the right to fair treatment and the right to equal education. Unfortunately, this does not always play out in the court system. For example, the Supreme Court case *Plyler V. Doe* (1982) is often cited in migrant education. It ensured that undocumented children were allowed the same free and equal access to education as citizens. One of the major concerns cited by the Supreme Court was that denying disadvantaged children access to school (or charging them fees, as the Texas statute was suggesting), would cause migrants to become a permanent part of the lowest socioeconomic class. Generally, the court believed that it was to the benefit of all of society to educate anyone. While extremely important and beneficial, this case did not set an entirely clear president. Two years later, in the case of *Zavala V. Contreras*, a migrant student was denied the opportunity to participate in an extended day program at his school that would allow him to make up for work missed while his family was traveling.
The school district argued it was because he did not register for this program by a specified date, and the court ruled that the MEP in question had to allow the student to do so (Salinas and Fránquiz 23). Although this seems like a small step, for the students involved it meant the difference between graduating and not graduating from high school and is a form of denying equal education.

**Towards a LatCrit Perspective for Teachers**

In a seminal essay, “Just what is critical race theory and what is it doing in a nice field like education?” Ladson-Billings explains how critical race theory (CRT), the parent of LatCrit, first became concerned with education. It argues that the way Latinos have been categorized historically calls for a reexamining of the educational system to include the voices of people of color, which have largely been absent from educational discussion/debate (58). The author argues that “conceptual” categories of race have defined this group relative to white people. As such, it is necessary to interject cultural viewpoints from a collective history of oppression (13). As a result, we will be closer to understanding the stories of a group of people whose history has not been written by them, but for them.

As teachers think upon notions of race, it can be daunting. Race is sometimes viewed as a ‘taboo’ topic to discuss with students, but without discussing it, teachers are only contributing to a history of oppression. In education, race is generally under-theorized compared to class and gender, which taken together or separate do not account for the school failures of Latinos, particularly of Latino males (Ladson-Billings 51). Keeping race as the central lens for viewing inequality does not mean that LatCrit in the classroom steers away from issues class, gender, and other inequalities. Instead, it makes
room for the realities of class struggle while discussing them within the context of race. Under race, for example, class is simply another form of subordination, which reinforces divisions. For the teacher, the focus on LatCrit does not exclude the educator from addressing other issues.

Within race, discussing issues of hybridity can be one way of addressing intersectionality. Generally considered a postcolonial term, ‘hybridity’ is often used in LatCrit to describe the Latina/o subject who despite a long history of conquest by the Spanish, identifies more with their Native Mexican ancestors. Hybridity is discussed by theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Néstor García Canclini, Stuart Hall, and Gayatri Spivak, and is sometimes used to refer to a blend of eastern and western cultural attributes. In LatCrit, hybridity is personified in the form of the border subject, who metaphorically straddles multiple borders at all times, in many of the same ways MSFWs do. The intersection of these lines in one person creates multiple identities. The result is the term “mestizo/a,” which is often used to describe people of mixed European, African, and Native American descent who live in the United States. Most importantly it has come to symbolize a new, independent identity free from colonial influence or false history.

Gloria Anzaldúa who is an example of this ancestry writes extensively about her search for identity. On straddling these many borders, she writes, “At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes.” (100). Anzaldúa's ability to express her desire for these seemingly conflicting identities to merge in a way that gives her and others like her agency, providing an example of naming one’s own reality. Her request to be
“allowed” to become the intersection of these cultures cannot occur until a fundamental shift takes place in the way society thinks about a culture (44). For teachers who wish to create fair and inclusive classrooms, it is necessary to try to understand where these intersections exist.

**Working Against an Assimilation Model**

As LatCrit theorists note, assimilation is almost always preferred by society over individuality or variation in language and culture (Perea 601). The role of teachers as migrant/immigrant educators has been built on assimilation. During the first waves of Mexican immigration, teachers became responsible for turning them into Americans. This meant students learning English and rejecting their old culture in exchange for the new one (Donato 17). LatCrit theorists often look at the continuation of school programs and policies that promote Americanizing Mexican youth. These include testing policies, the attitudes of teachers and administration, and classroom practices which all have the possibility to reinforce the existing caste system by promoting a separate, often watered-down or more vocational curricula for Latino students (Perea 599-603). In “Occupied America,” Acuna uses a historical perspective to discuss the history of Anglo oppression and the pressure of assimilation: “They administered the schools, and taught in the classrooms, and designed the curriculum not to meet the needs of Chicano students but to Americanize them” (63). The most obvious way this remains true in the public school system is through standardization, which mandates that all students think and articulate their knowledge in the same way.

There is a group of practitioners who encourage students to resist the assimilationist model. For example, In *Teaching for Joy and Justice*, Linda Christensen
teaches a lesson that demonstrates how she brings democracy into the classroom. Christensen works with issues of language and power, educating her students about the devastating effects of colonialism and, specifically, the silencing of the native. She uses the theories of postcolonial scholar Ngugi wa Thiong’o as a base for this concept. In one lesson, she has her students study the Carlisle Indian School, which was set up to turn Native Americans into “proper” citizens. She uses a multimedia approach as students view films, photos and read accounts of the school and the students. As they do this, Christensen’s students realize the true meaning of “assimilation.” To connect the lived experiences of the students with the lesson, the students produce illustrations and discuss how their own voices might be silenced by the world around them (128). Like other subordinated groups, Latina/o populations form part of the have often internalized the negativity mainstream groups have assigned to their culture (Espinosa-Herold 20). Christensen’s work is one example of a teaching model that can bring an awareness to subordinated student groups through critical pedagogy.

Responding to Needs of a Mobile Population

There is also some literature that addresses the emotional needs of migrant students, which spans several different fields. More is needed, as “there is a noted scarcity of research on the emotional needs of (im)migrant children, including their adjustment to the school environment” (Lasso and Soto 4). There is some information in this area that is relevant to teachers. One point is that adjustment to a new school environment several times per year can be hard on a migrant student who must face new teachers, friends, and environments. Frequent relocation can inhibit the ability of students to form permanents bonds with others (Vocke 6). Although most migrant families are
aware of the hardships, lack of jobs in one area often forces them to move to an area where work is more of a guarantee. The success and timing of crops can be another unpredictability. Relocation for economic reasons has been found to be the most stressful compared to relocation for other reasons, such as seeking a better school district or higher wages (9).

These stressors make the teacher’s role as a caring individual even more necessary. Multicultural educator Sonia Nieto describes a caring, supportive environment as one where students can thrive and teachers can learn from their students. Nieto writes, “I’d like to suggest that the so-called ‘achievement gap’ could just as legitimately be called the ‘resource gap’ or the ‘caring gap’ because the gap is often a result of widely varying resources provided to students based on their ZIP codes” (3). A caring environment has a strong link to student learning. In Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice, Geneva Gay found that in order for students of various cultural backgrounds to succeed, they must be provided with an “Ethic of Caring” (Noddings). This means creating an environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves. To extend this idea into theories of literacy, Hayes, Bahruth and Kessler express that with migrant students specifically, literacy is achieved “through a nurturing process” (8). Once an environment of caring is established, teachers are able to lead their students on a path to learning independence and self-discovery.

Caring translates to the MSFW as the attitude held by the teacher. As teachers create classroom environments that serve a variety of cultures, they must examine their own attitudes toward diversity. Attitude is central to creating an environment where students full and free expression of themselves takes place through “culturally centered
ways of knowing, thinking, speaking, feelings and behaving” (Gay 45). A teacher’s attitude has the ability to increase or decrease a student’s self-esteem; a topic widely identified as an area of concern for migrant students (Martinez, Morse, Cranston-Gingras, Platt). Low expectations are often the result of commonly held attitudes by teachers that migrant students are not meant for a college education, or that work in the fields is an acceptable excuse for not completing homework (Martinez and Cranston-Gingras 32). Judith Gouwens, writes that migrant students will often learn lessons “about hard work, about being tired and cold, about blisters and bruises, about missing home and friends and school” (2). However, they often miss lessons about academic success and those that encourage them to think about their future. This study and others like it suggest that a crucial part of the teacher’s role is to provide migrant students with the lessons they need to be academically successful, but also to place value in the lessons migrant students have already learned themselves.

**Summary**

In the field of English Education, it has become more and more common to see texts developed for other teachers by practitioners of critical literacy. Texts such as those written by Hillary Janks, Linda Christensen, Ira Shor, Peter McLaren and Vivian Maria Vasquez translate critical theory into meaningful activities designed for teachers of any population. Development of literacy skills is one of many areas where migrant students need specific tools that require teachers who hold a deep understanding of their needs. Teachers of migrants are charged with providing their students with multiple ways to decode the messages they are receiving, which are often steeped in cultural attitudes and values. By using a CL/LatCrit model, teachers can create different “frames of reference”
for students so that their own knowledge has a place in academics that is meaningful and
relevant (Gay 46-49). The extent to which the teachers at this SMEP adhered to these
roles will reveal a connection to student success. When the migrant experience is
undervalued, students may feel embarrassed or ashamed, leading to other behavioral or
psychological issues, and ultimately drop out. In this study I often recorded observations
of the teacher acting as placers of value in the classroom that allowed students to develop
their own self-worth. The methods used to observe and record these valuable practices
will be discussed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY AND TEACHER PROFILES

Preliminary Work

The preliminary work of this study was done over several years. It included several site visitations for three consecutive summers, gathering general information about multiple area SMEPs, and visitations to rural high schools statewide where migrant students make up a large portion of the student population. In addition to these visitations, I attended local and national conferences on migrant education in order to better understand the general structure and the influence of state and federal agencies on local programs and to network with teachers and administrators. These included the Michigan State University Migration/Education Conference, the Michigan Regional Migrant Conference, and Texas Migrant Education Conference.

Conferences

In addition to understanding the overarching structure of migrant education, the conference in McAllen, Texas afforded me valuable contacts, including teachers who work with many of the same students SMEPs in Michigan see in the summer. It also allowed me to experience the influence of the migrant community in the Rio Grande Valley, specifically in McAllen, a city that at the time of the 2010 census was 84.6% Latino (USDC). I was also able to see migrant housing and several public schools in the region, allowing me greater insight into the living and working conditions of students and teachers. At all of these conferences the special concerns of migrant educators were represented in the presentations given and the discussions that took place. I took care to
record observations and ask questions that would eventually guide the trajectory of this study.

In my interactions with migrant teachers I grew increasingly curious about the role of the teacher, and how it is shaped and perceived. I was curious as to why these teachers chose to work with migrant students, and some of the inherent challenges of working with this population. My interest even in the preliminary stage became focused on teachers as the population of interest. I observed formal and informal interactions between teachers and students and recorded them in my field notes. I took special care to record different ways teachers approached teaching language, reading and writing. Over the span of the first year, I began to notice just as much literacy learning taking place in “informal interactions” between teacher and student as were taking place in a classroom setting. Hammersley and Atkinson define informal interactions as “unsolicited oral accounts” (99). These types of naturally occurring accounts can be a powerful source of information about the “perspectives, concerns, and discursive practices of the people who produce them” (99). Interactions like took place in hallways, cafeterias and staff rooms of the school building, but also at offsite locations such as migrant camps, field trips, and community gatherings. These accounts added depth and dimension to more structured data gathered in the classroom.

As I pursued this interest trajectory I also traveled to several rural schools in the same district at the SMEP and met with teachers who worked with migrant students during the regular school year. In this way, I was able to gather information about the routines and practices of the teachers as they worked with migrant and non-migrant students in the same classroom. I was also able to see other programs afforded by Title I
that ran year-round. In these initial observations, I was able to see teachers work individually with migratory students and in a classroom setting. Particularly I was fascinated with the work being done by many of these teachers to simultaneously guide their migrant and non-migrant students toward becoming literate individuals. It was here that my interests turned toward the ways these students learn to read and write, and how teachers facilitate the learning process.

**Teacher Trainings**

The teacher trainings marked the beginning of my data collection process. I participated in two subsequent teacher trainings, one at the state level, and one at the district level for SMEP teachers and staff. I gathered data in the form of documents from both of these trainings and I was able to garner a sense of the teacher’s concerns as they were shared with me, and in sessions with the administration. I was also able to understand more about the role and expectations of the migrant teacher. The 2-day statewide training entitled “Planting Knowledge, Cultivating Futures,” took place in Lansing on June 17 - 18, 2013 from 8:00 to 4:00 p.m. and was conducted by representatives from the state Office of Migrant Education (OME). The purpose of this training, as stated by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, was “to provide professional development on the common summer curriculum and assessments,” including the new curriculum, *Math MATTERS.* (January 2013 Update). The assessment materials discussed were Delta Math and DRA2. DRA2 is a literacy assessment used to assess all students who enter the program. Some of these materials would also be used with the struggling readers who participated in literacy interventions with one of my case study participants.
Heavily referenced in this opening presentation was the recently completed Comprehensive Needs Assessment Report for Michigan (CNA), which uses the DOE’s “Seven Areas of Concern” (mentioned in Chapter 2). This report became a part of my document analysis, as one of the areas of concern as identified by the CNA Committee and highlighted at this training was achievement in reading. This document along with the Service Delivery Plan (SDP) highlighted the role of teachers in reaching these goals. These two documents together were instrumental in providing answers to my first research questions and sub-questions. As the training progressed, administrators introduced the teachers to the new curriculum for classroom instruction, *Math MATTERS*, which was also included in my document analysis. This was the first time that those in attendance had seen the curricula.

When the statewide training ended, I went with teachers of this SMEP to the district building where the site-specific training would take place. I chose the site of my research, one of the largest summer migrant education programs in the Midwest, out of twenty-nine total statewide problems in 2013. For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to keep the site anonymous in an effort to protect the identities of the research participants and the students they work with. The two-day, site-specific training was much different from the state training. This training focused more on site-specific functions of the SMEP, such as record keeping, events and field trips, filling out mandated paperwork for state and federal data collection, and conducting assessments. More specific information about the program was provided to the teachers, who were assigned to their classrooms. More questions about *Math MATTERS* were received and discussed. Finally, teachers were given time to set up their classrooms.
Data Collection Methods and Procedures

Educator participants were initially selected via a list of instructors provided by the director of the summer program. When I attended the site-specific training for migrant teachers, I administered a consent form for participation in the case study along with the Questionnaire (see Appendices A and B). The purpose of the Questionnaire was twofold: 1) to gather some general information the teacher population at SMEP, including how long they had been teaching, in what contexts and with what types of students, as well as to try to understand some of the concerns they had about working with migrant students, and 2) to see who would be willing and interested to be a participant in the case study. If willing, participants were asked to read and sign the consent form. Participation in the study was completely optional and anonymity was an option.

Every teacher present at the SMEP training was asked for their willingness to complete the questionnaire and optioning out entirely of the questionnaire and subsequent case study was an option. It was made clear that participation in the questionnaire and subsequent case studies, which would involve submission of course materials, two interviews and extended classroom observations, was completely optional and would not affect the employment status of the educators at SMEP in any way. If the participants wanted to participate in the case study, they were informed they would have to forgo anonymity for my own use, and include their contact information on the consent form. For the case study, participants were assigned pseudonyms. Requirements for participation in both the questionnaire and case study were that the educators must be employed by the ISD and must be listed as instructors of record in the summer program.
Instructors were contacted to confirm their participation in the case study via email and phone calls.

To my surprise, twenty-one out of twenty-eight of the teachers who completed the questionnaire expressed interest in participating in the case study. Knowing that such a large number would not be appropriate for this study, I began to find ways to identify subgroups within this population, facilitating some comparative measures. Figure 3.1 illustrates the ways in which I narrowed down this pool of potential candidates.

### Figure 3.1, Criteria Used to Select Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria 1</th>
<th>Must be employed as instructor of record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 2</td>
<td>Must teach reading/writing in some capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 3</td>
<td>Must have contact with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 4</td>
<td>Must have ten or more years working with MSFWs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 5</td>
<td>Approval of SMEP Director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I found that not all of the positions held by the teachers in program would make them good candidates for participating in the case study. Some teachers were only teaching one subject, for example nutrition or physical education. Studying literacy in these subjects might not produce enough data to fit the scope of the study. Although acts of literacy occur in all subjects, I was hoping to find teachers who would focus on reading and writing in some capacity throughout the day. As a third criteria, there were
several candidates who had little or no interaction with students, for example, lead
teachers, who were removed as possibilities for the case study. Fourth, I looked at the
amount of experience the potential candidates had in terms of working specifically with
migrant students. There were several first-year teachers in the pile, along with teachers
who were working with migrants for the first time. They were eliminated as potential
case studies. Experience and a solid knowledge base was important to me because I
wanted my candidates to speak from prolonged involvement with the MSFW population
and participation in migrant education. This type of sampling is known as “criterion” and
the cases all had to meet the criteria of having more than a decade of experience with
migrant students. Criterion sampling is “useful for quality assurance” (Marshall and
Rossman 111). Finally, I sought the approval of the director of the program, who agreed
that the four participants I selected based on the above criteria would be good subjects for
the case study. The group was narrowed down to three participants when one of the
potential candidates took on an administrative role where she would not be working
directly with students.

In each case study participant, I relied on “multiple sources of information” in
examining each case in order to triangulate my data: interviews, observations and
documents (Creswell 73). I felt that these sources would provide me with different
dimensions, or different vantages for looking at the same phenomena.
All three instructors who agreed to participate in the case study allowed me to conduct two interviews (scripts located in Appendices C and D), 20-30 hours of classroom observations, and collect documents such as curriculum materials, blank handouts, assessment materials and other foundational documents, which underwent document analysis. The questionnaire, interview protocols, classroom observations and documents were the primary means of instrumentation in this study. Evaluative and qualitative data was assessed via these data sources. Further data for analysis was obtained from my field notes on program observations, teacher trainings, testing, events, and teacher/student interactions. A tape recorder, my own computer, and a notebook were used to generate study notes, record interviews, conduct coding, and organize data.

**Data Analysis Processes and Procedures**

Because of the sheer amount of documentation in educational settings, it is necessary for the researcher to “ascertain whether the content of the documents fits the conceptual framework of the study” (Bowen 30). Teachers in this study were using
essentially two types of documents; those that were published and those that were teacher produced. Since these three teachers mainly used published curricula material in their classrooms (as they were required to), and were trained and influenced by published material, the document analysis focuses on this type of material. Documents analyzed provided me “data on the context within which the participant operates,” (Bowen 28), but also informs the participant’s practices to varying degrees. In studying these documents, I asked the following questions, borrowed from Hamersley and Atkinson: “How are documents written? How are they read? Who writes them? Who reads them? For what purposes? On what occasions? With what outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What does the writer seem to take for granted about the reader(s)? What do readers need to know in order to make sense of them?” (173). From this set I chose five core questions that became the framework for my document analysis which housed themes and established in-vivo codes that arose from the documents. These themes were compared to the other two data sources.

After interviews were recorded, I listened to each in succession for themes. I then transcribed the interviews, and “chunked” them by question. After reading the same portions of the interviews for all respondents in succession, I lifted in-vivo codes from chunks of text within the transcripts and then formed initial codes from them from which more patterns and themes emerged. I also used memoing as a way of forming codes and looking for data within those codes. Although there are several different types of memos, I mainly used thematic and theoretical memos, which allowed me to think about patterns in that data that might fall into a school of thought (Marshall and Rossman 213). After each interview was listened to, transcribed and coded, I used cross-case synthesis as an
analytic technique. This interview synthesis table (Table 4.3, found in Chapter IV), displays common themes or patterns of data found in the interviews and themes that were unique to each case study participant.

With over fifty hours worth of observations, I had to decide what types of observed practices fit within the scope of this study. I took observation to mean "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (Marshall and Rossman 79), but to contextualize all that I was seeing, I used an analytical frame to guide my field notes. Looking for an analytical frame based in the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy, perhaps one that had been used with teachers, or within a setting with Latino/a students was a challenge. There have been several frames designed with the intention of looking at critical literacy, including Luke and Freebody’s four resource model (1997), Janks’s synthesis model (2002), and Shannon’s critical literacy framework (1995). As Lewison, Leland and Harste point out in *Creating Critical Classrooms: Reading and Writing with an Edge*, none of the above models are acceptable for representing “the complexity of what it means to implement critical literacy in elementary and middle school classrooms” (xxvii). Since this complexity was what I was hoping to capture through my observations, I looked for an analytical frame that had been used to study teachers (as opposed to students), and that could account for practices in diverse setting with cultural and racial dimensions.

I ended up using Katie Van Sluys’ concept of critical invitations, influenced by the four dimensions of critical literacy to guide my observations. Critical invitations, issued by teachers, have been used to examine the extent to which teachers invite their students to participate in critical inquiry, which is marked by “pedagogy that honors
student voices,” and invites students to participate in social issues relevant to their lives (Allen 2). Generally this concept extends beyond the teacher into and outside of the classroom environment, and includes all members of the class. Within this framework, critical literacy is viewed as “a specific application of a critical stance” (2). In “Taking on Critical Literacy: The Journey of Newcomers and Novices,” Van Sluys, Lewison and Flint synthesize thirty years of research and professional literature from literacy educators, theorists and linguists to create four dimensions of critical literacy:

![Figure 3.3, VanSluys, Lewison and Flint’s Dimensions of Critical Literacy](image)

These dimensions were the result of the authors’ synthesizing 30 years worth of definitions of CL. I used these dimensions loosely and in interrelated ways, because as Van Sluys, Lewison and Flint note, none of these dimensions “stand alone” (382). Thus I was also aware of instances where literacy learning was or was not taking place outside of these dimensions.
Limitations of this Study

This study has several limitations that should be discussed here. The first is that the study looks at the practices and perceptions of teachers through a critical lens. In other words, the teachers discussed here did not necessarily define themselves as “critical educators,” or even claim to be using critical techniques, as they may in other studies. Instead, collecting data on these teachers lead to the use of a critical frame as the best way to interpret what was being seen in observations and heard in interviews. This framework was also selected based on the population being studied, and the population being taught. Even though choosing this framework as a way on interpreting the practices of teachers who don’t necessarily claim to be using CL explicitly can be seen as a limitation, I believe it also can be seen as a benefit since these teachers were picked for their long-term work with the migrant population. The fact that they were already using aspects of CL speaks highly to the effectiveness of the framework itself. Despite the variety of practices, the teachers clearly subscribed to some common, critical views. I believe that this shared perspective speaks to the generalizability of the study.

Since this study assumes that language and literacy learning takes place socially, another limitation arises from the study having taken place mainly within the SMEP. There were some field trips and trips to the migrant camps, the short length of this program makes it hard to see the full picture of the literate life of MSFWs. Shared time between migrant students and teachers is brief, although meaningful. Since critical literacy is also concerned with what takes place outside of the classroom, a more lengthy study would look at the many environments migrant students participate in. With more time and resources, this study could be extended to include work these teachers do with
their mixed migrant and non-migrant classrooms during the regular school year, as well as any work they do at the migrant camps.

Finally the other major limitation of this study is that the three case study participants are all male. The fourth participant, who ended up taking on an administrative role and was dropped from the study, was the only female. Although the practices of these teachers are not necessarily gender specific, I consider this to be a major limitation and something to be taken into consideration.

**Participant Profiles**

In order to better understand the *why* of this study, it is necessary to provide some contextualization for the case study participants. These participants come from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds and have different teaching experiences. Their practices and perspectives are equally varied. One broad uniting factor that was obvious at the beginning of the study—other than their many decades of combined experience—was their passion for teaching MSFWs as a population. In addition, each teacher expressed a strong desire to deeply understand their students and the best methods for teaching them. This was expressed on the questionnaire and in interviews, as well as in conversations with the teachers. Each teacher saw my participation and research as an opportunity to reflect on their own practices and as a way of learning more about their student’s needs.

As these teachers embark on their summer teaching journey every year, they start to see a variety of different reading and writing techniques in the classroom as students come in with a collection of skills from different parts of the country. Salinas and Reyes add that in addition to different curricula, differing approaches to teaching subjects such
as algebra or writing can occur, causing students to become confused in learning
strategies (123). Olivia, Pérez and Parker note that the need to align all of the differing
state educational structures under one governance would be one way to promote college
access, especially for undocumented students (149), however, this has yet to occur. A
comparison of the curricula for the two major receiving states for the SMEP, Texas and
Florida, reveal different standards, curricula and methods of assessment. Since the SMEP
teachers use Michigan’s Common Core Standards and Benchmarks during the regular
school year, they are often using these as a point of comparison. As teachers work to sort
out what their students have learned and what they may need to learn, they strive to align
standards and plan lessons around existing gaps, all while using the *Math MATTERS*
curriculum provided by the state.

For secondary students who have missed assessments or in some cases entire
classes, there are a variety of options housed under the Secondary Credit Program.
Students often take advantage of the preparatory courses for Florida and Texas state-
mandated tests, such as North Star and Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).
An online course completion called “Florida Virtual” is an option for Florida students, as
well as Portable Assisted Study Sequence (PASS) for students who may be working in
the fields. University of Texas offers the Migrant Student Graduation Enhancement
Program allowing students to earn credit through distance learning classes. ESL courses,
home instruction, GED classes and special programs for out of school youth are also
available. The main focus of the Secondary Credit Program is to offer students
opportunities to earn credits toward graduation. Since credits in states like Florida and
Texas are awarded after successfully passing an exit exam for each class, the secondary
credit team helps to prepare and in some cases administer tests. A team of several
teachers, one teacher aide and one program administrator form this team. Many of my
observations were in some way connected with this program. One of my case study
participants, Jamie, was a part of this team as a math instructor and writing coach. He
wore many hats, teaching both math and English, and participated in the home tutoring
program where he met his students at night in the camps.

The other two case study participants include a “Reading Specialist,” who worked
with students in small groups with a specific focus on reading and writing, and a regular
4th grade classroom teacher who taught all subjects. Both of these participants were
former migrants themselves. In order to account for the great diversity in each of the jobs
as well as the diversity in teacher backgrounds, I will explain each of their teaching
contexts, their professional journey (including various roles they have held over time),
and some of their perspectives on teaching literacy. This information was mostly
gathered by the questionnaire and verbally discussed in conversations with the teachers
during the two trainings. Gathering this background information on each of the case study
participants was vital to this study because it allowed me to have a more objective view
of the decisions being made in the classroom. Since multiple realities are occurring
simultaneously in the classroom (the teachers, the students, my own), I knew that I must
juxtapose these in a way that gives the most accurate account of what was taking place.
An ethnographer’s job is “to understand that there is never a completely objective
account…to realize multiple perspectives” (Frank 4). I wanted to make sure I understood
as much as possible about the teachers prior to conducting interviews and making
classroom observations.
Jamie’s Professional Journey

Jamie began his teaching career in Mexico, where he taught at an English Language school and at a bilingual primary school for three years. He was immediately plunged into the world of ESL while simultaneously learning Spanish himself. After teaching overseas, Jamie returned to the United States with his fiancée whom he met while he was teaching in Mexico. He secured a job teaching Spanish and math at a high school in the same ISD as the SMEP. This high school, like many others in the area, has a large population of migrant students, allowing him to put his bilingual skills to work assisting migrant students in his Spanish language classroom during the regular school year. In addition to his regular job, he stayed active in adult education programs that often attracted migrant parents who desired to learn English. He also taught citizenship and computer courses to support himself and his family. On the side, he worked for Michigan State University’s High School Equivalency Program, preparing migrant students for the GED and other vocational or academic pursuits.

For twelve consecutive years Jamie worked for the SMEP in various capacities. He took on roles outside of the classroom as a cook, school recruiter and teacher assistant. As a recruiter, he worked at both state and local levels recruiting migrant families for Title I services from all over the state of Michigan. In his capacity as a classroom teacher, he worked with all levels of students from elementary to high school to adult education. For the majority of his years at the SMEP, he served as an 8th grade classroom teacher. His multiple roles allowed for him to interact with students at all levels and in various capacities. It also allowed him to become familiar with families who return year after year to the SMEP. Furthermore, his continued interest and investment in
migrant education both at the local and state levels made him a trustworthy ally in the
eyes of the migrant community.

**Jamie’s Teaching Context**

Jamie teaches Spanish and math at the rural high school he has worked at since returning to the United States. At the time this study was completed in the summer of 2013, he worked with the Secondary Credit team teaching various subjects determined by the needs of the students that were participating in the program. Jamie was clearly a trusted member of the team and often was asked by the Secondary Credit Administrator for his input. Some of the programs Jamie assisted with were online, some face-to-face, and some were delivered via videoconference. In all cases, a curriculum of some type was provided to Jamie and his colleagues to follow. In some cases, testing packets arrived from the home states and the team was expected to deliver them. In other cases, the student was expected to complete the assessments at their home school, and Jamie was tasked with preparing the students to take an exam upon their return.

Jamie and other teachers in this program had to familiarize themselves with requirements and services offered by the student’s home states, which are often changing. Texas and Florida are test-heavy states. In 2013, Texas was in the process of phasing out one type of standardized testing system for another. The new testing system (STAAR) as opposed to the old system (TAKS) is generally believed to have harder exams, is timed, and is not cumulative in that it only focuses on what the student leaned in that year (Weiss). Jamie, like other secondary credit teachers who were just becoming familiar with these new standards, noted the ways in which this test had more of a tendency to burden mobile ELLs with its time limit and more strenuous material. In Florida, the
FCAT exam is designed to measure the Sunshine State Standards. This group of assessments is also arguably harder than what came before it, with only 39% of 4th graders passing the reading portion of FCAT 2.0 in 2011 (Central Florida School Board Coalition). Jamie sees many migrant students who are taking some of these tests for the second or third time. Since passing these tests can affect which grade students enter in the fall, Jamie and the rest of the team had their work cut out for them.

When the students started to arrive, one of Jamie’s tasks was to determine which courses students have completed in their home states. On site, there were several ways to obtain this information: 1) interviewing the student, 2) contacting the student’s home school, and 3) checking the Migrant Student Information Exchange (MSIX) or another database. As I learned from my data collection, no method is totally reliable. For example, in interviews students often don’t know which courses they have completed because they left before they could know the results of a final assessment, which are often mailed to them. Contacting the home school does not always yield results because the SMEP takes place during the summer when many schools are closed or have limited staff. The third option is to look in MSIX, a federal database set up to allow states to share “educational and health information on migrant children who travel from State to State and who as a result, have student records in multiple States’ information systems” (“Programs: Migrant Student”). However, this database is not always current or correct.

Jamie’s other role in the summer of 2013 was as a member of the Home Program, which provides academic assistance to migrants of all ages at their place of residence, usually in the camps, after they come in from the fields. This is often the only time many migrant workers have to themselves during the day. During the long summer months the
sun often does not set until 9p.m. or later, causing workers to return to the camps late at night. At this time Jamie would go to the camps to teach English in private or small group lessons. He told me that some nights, he clocked out after midnight. Jamie notes that the sacrifice of his personal safety and what would otherwise be a teacher’s down time is worth the effort, mentioning that his students as young as 14 are putting in even longer hours of backbreaking labor before meeting with him. Jamie appreciates that his students are willing to spend the few, tired hours they have at the end of the day learning from him.

**Jamie’s Critical Perspectives**

When asked why he decided to start working with migrant students on the questionnaire, Jamie answered, “I personally see the struggles our students go though and want to help.” He also wrote that the impact on the kids is one of the main reasons he continues to take part in the SMEP. Without being a migrant himself, Jamie’s understanding of the migrant condition from his continued contact with this population is partially what makes him an effective educator. Time spent with this population in various capacities had allowed him to develop the understanding that the literate lives of his students are best developed by an empathic, participatory method of instruction. Jamie’s honesty about the necessity of high-stakes tests, for example, and about the multiple reasons behind learning, is appreciated by the students he serves. Jamie’s ability to become a learner and invite students to participate in learning with him is one of the main ways he helps students to see themselves as holders and creators of knowledge. This practice ties in with Jamie’s professional goal, “that students will see themselves as being graduate material and consider some (any) type of secondary education.”
Alex’s Professional Journey

Alex’s twenty years of teaching experience led him to his position as a Reading Interventionist in 2013. His professional journey began not as a teacher, but as a MSFW in the same SMEP who loved reading and soccer. As a child, Alex and his family traveled from Aguascalientes, Mexico to San Antonio and then back and forth to Michigan. They picked blueberries, cherries, raspberries, eggplant and peaches, and also budded trees in three different locations. From the year he was born until 1991 his family migrated at least once every year, sometimes more frequently. In 1991 they became permanent residents of the town where the SMEP is located. Stories of Alex’s struggles and triumphs inside and outside of the classroom often make their way into his instruction. Alex’s professional journey began as a teacher’s aide in the SMEP where he assisted in middle and high school classrooms. Deciding that he wanted to be a teacher, he attended a public university and obtained his teaching license, and soon after obtained his first teaching job at a rural school with a larger-than-average population of migrant students. He taught Spanish and History and personally helped many migrant students to get into college and pursue their careers.

Alex’s history with the SMEP was one of the main reasons he decided to continue on as a teacher. He felt his experience as teacher, student and migrant was something that could help him relate to the students. In addition, he “loved the staff and what the program offers the students.” In his summers prior to 2013, Alex had worked as a regular classroom teacher, as a part of the assessment team, as a lead teacher, and as a literacy consultant. Like Jamie, Alex was placed in many different roles that demonstrated he had the confidence of the administration. He was also seen as a versatile educator capable of
taking on new tasks as they were assigned. As a trusted member of the migrant community and the community at large he told me he felt he was able to see things from multiple perspectives.

**Alex’s Teaching Context**

During the regular school year, Alex continues to teach at a local rural high school as a history and Spanish teacher. The summer of 2013 was the first time he worked as an interventionist. This job entails administering literacy assessments to determine reading level and comprehension, providing individualized instruction with the intention of increasing the student’s abilities to read, and providing students with the tools they need to decode of piece of writing. When all students first enter the program, they are given a pretest and a posttest using the Developmental Reading Assessment 2nd Edition (DRA2) by Pearson to determine their literacy level. Alex and his assistants administer this assessment and record student scores. At the minimum, this test takes 10 minutes per student, but at the maximum, it can take up to one hour, making the first week of the program entirely devoted to assessment. Students must be pulled from their classrooms to take the test. Although this assessment is a four-step process intended for a regular school year, in 2013 only parts of the assessment, those that check oral comprehension and fluency, were administered. Leveled books and worksheets are included with the DRA2 for use during the program. Since students enter and exit the program at various times, administering, collecting, scoring and recoding this data are a large part of his job.

Alex’s daily work involves meeting with the students who fall two or more grade levels behind in reading comprehension. However, since reading comprehension is only
assessed in English (although the test may be administered in Spanish), may ELs fall well below two grade levels. As such, many of the students who attend interventions are there because of their limited capabilities in reading and writing in English, not necessarily in their native language. The obvious deficiencies associated with assessing a student in a language other than their home language were well known to Alex, who often took matters into his own hands and administered his own informal assessment for the student in their native language. Once Alex had an idea of what the student’s reading and writing abilities were in their native language and in English, he created an individualized plan for that student. Alex understood the limitations of only using materials in one language, and of only using the heavily scripted materials provided to him. In the 55-minute intervention period, Alex enthusiastically delivered his lessons in English and in Spanish. Although Alex was expected to use the DRA2 materials, he would try to diversify the materials and his instruction as much as possible with the use of supplemental or visual material.

**Alex’s Critical Perspectives**

Alex’s main reasons for wanting to work with migrant students are: 1) because he feels like he can empathize with their lives, and 2) because he wants to “empower” them to attend college. In Alex’s words, “I was once a migrant student, so I know how hard it can be.” His students know and respect his intense determination, which provides an encouraging example for his students. Because Alex has a sense of how difficult it can be for a migrant student to make the decision to attend college, he often seeks to address student’s fears of failure, or of moving far away from home. He admits his approach often involves “tough love” when he feels a student is not working to their full potential.
Although it is technically not a part of his job, Alex spends a lot of time trying to encourage his students to “be successful in their lives,” in whatever way is best for them. Pep talks are common in his room. To connect his approach to literacy learning, Alex tells his students that learning to read and write can help them to achieve whatever goals they have, from working in the fields to pursuing higher education.

Furthermore, Alex has a great love of Latino/a literature and culture. Friends, students and co-teachers often ask him for book recommendations. He believes that a greater understanding of one’s own culture through literature can affirm a student’s identity and lessen resistance to learning, and is especially important for high school students. During the regular school year, Alex has his students participate in cultural investigations that stem from themes in Latina/o novels. Although there isn’t time for an undertaking like this in the SMEP, Alex provides as many opportunities as possible to invite students to participate in cultural discussions and lessons.

**Jordan’s Professional Journey**

As the veteran of the group, Jordan has been working in migrant education, and with this particular SMEP in particular, for thirty-seven years. Also a former migrant, Jordan’s family moved with the crop circle much in the same way as Alex’s family did, although he is nearly twenty years his senior. His first contact with the summer program was also as a student. After noticing his talents, the Migrant Program Director recruited him as a teacher aide. When he went away to college to become a teacher, each summer he would return to the ISD and work as an aide in the SMEP. After receiving his teaching certificate, Jordan applied for a job at an elementary school within the district and continued on as a 3rd and 4th grade teacher in the SMEP. At various points in his career he
has taught Spanish at the elementary, middle and high school levels. He has taught in monolingual and bilingual settings, and individually tutored MSFWs.

Jordan had a way of always expressing gratitude for what he has when discussing his journey. He made it clear to me that he had been afforded many privileges during his life that many others of a similar age and background were not. Without these opportunities and his own drive, he believed would have ‘sunk’ when it came time to ‘sink-or-swim.’ As the oldest of all three case study participants and as someone who had experienced the very beginning of MEPs he was sensitive to the many obstacles before his students. He had the sense that it was his duty to “contribute” to migrant education, and specifically to his students through his work as a teacher. He mentioned that because he was “given the opportunity to attend college,” he continues to make the decision to work with migrant students as a way of giving back.

**Jordan’s Teaching Context**

Currently, Jordan continues to teach Spanish at the elementary level during the regular school year. For the summer of 2013, he served as the 4\textsuperscript{th} grade homeroom teacher. In this particular year, the 4\textsuperscript{th} grade was consistently the largest grade at the SMEP, providing a challenge. Jordan’s classroom experienced a large surge of students after the first 2 weeks of school with eleven additional students. This was mainly due to the fact that the blueberry crop was late in 2013; so many families did not arrive until after the start of the program. Fortunately, Jordan was given one teacher aide and one teaching assistant. Both aide and assistant were actively involved in the classroom, which was frequently split into “stations” or groups to accommodate the large number of nearly 40 students present at the height of the season.
The average day in the 4th grade classroom is split into seven 50-minute periods with breakfast, lunch and a snack offered to all students. The day can be hectic with students moving in and out of the class at different periods. For example, some fifth grade students may come to the room if they test at a 4th grade level in a particular subject, like reading or math. In addition, students come and go as families relocate around the state. Because of the transient nature of the classroom, routines and rules become important, but must be flexible. In addition, Jordan had to be organized in his record keeping and lesson planning. The large amount of students meant additional paperwork for Jordan. Attendance records, grades, IEPs, and Priority for Service forms, must be kept on each student. Since the program is so brief, teachers like Jordan have less than one day at the end of the program to prepare records.

In addition, Jordan is charged with using the Math MATTERS curriculum mandated by the State for the first time this year. Based on my observations, about 75-80% of the typical day involves Jordan teaching from this curriculum. The other time in the day is spent in silent reading or in community reading or some type of writing activity. A classroom library was set up to facilitate these activities, and students were allowed to choose their own books for reading period. Watching Jordan decide which parts of the curriculum to use, modify, or simply skip was a part of the observation process. He was one of the many migrant teachers in the state having to make these decisions for the first time.

Jordan’s Critical Perspectives

Helping his students decide to attain a higher level of education and to keep pursuing their goals is important to Jordan. Teaching at the 4th grade level, he sees many
students drop out in the years that follow to help their families in the fields. Since a MSFW may be old enough to work in the fields as early as 5th grade, Jordan knows the importance of making an impression on his 4th grade students to “attend school daily and to do their best” (Questionnaire 2). His deep ties to the migrant community in this area are useful when talking to parents and encouraging them to keep their children in the school system for as long as they are able to. He spends a great deal of time coaching students academically inside and outside of the classroom, making frequent trips to the camps. His encouraging attitude comes through inside and outside of the classroom.

Jordan’s own love of learning revealed his desire as an educator to keep growing. He often asked me for my opinions on a lesson plan, or a new technique he was testing in his classroom. He took a deep interest in my research and in research on critical approaches to literacy. Jordan’s efforts to connect his students to reading and writing was only heightened by his love of learning. He was always considering new frames of reference for teaching and new approaches. During the training, Jordan surveyed his colleagues about effective practices they were using. During the member check, Jordan was eager to explain issues that he had more time to think on since the interview, or areas where he felt he was unclear. He noted that his thinking on teaching was constantly evolving, and in his classroom he kept a running memo book with notes to himself. Here again, the administration took note of his efforts and often involved him in special projects outside of his regular duties.

**Closing Thoughts**

It is my hope that this chapter provides a framework for understanding the influence of the setting, the data collection and procedures, and the social and
environmental influences surrounding the teachers. I believe that the backgrounds of the teachers influence the choices they make with their students. The teacher profiles also provide the reader with an idea of the multiple roles of a migrant teacher and the many hats they wear each day. In the next chapter, the findings of the interviews, observations and document analysis are presented with the profiles as their backdrop.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Overview of Data Analysis

Since this study is concerned with how the role of a teacher is shaped and perceived by staff and administration, I began with the document analysis to try to outline a teacher’s role. I chose the three types of documents that were most often encountered by the teachers in this setting, 1) literacy models, 2) reports, and 3) curricula. Interviews allowed me to develop a baseline understanding of what kinds of methods/models teachers identify as being influential to their practice, as well as discuss the trends I was seeing in the classroom and ask teachers to reflect on their practices. Observations allowed me to develop an understanding of how the documents were being used in the classroom, and how teacher beliefs about the needs of migrant students were being carried out through pedagogical strategies. In addition they allowed me to compare what I was seeing with what I was hearing in the interviews. After coding interviews, observations, and document analysis I was able to make further comparisons between the sources. This chapter will report on the findings of individual data sources and those that arose when sources of data were compared.

Overview of Document Analysis

The results, which were organized under questions from the Hammersly and Atkinson model, were then compared to the other sources of data, interviews and observations. Three types of documents were analyzed: 1) Literacy models that teachers were given by the state and expected to adhere to or use in the classroom, 2) Reports that
outlined the role of a teacher in helping students to meet literacy goals created by the state, and 3) Curricula documents used in the classroom with the intent of aiding in literacy development. Since this model follows the critical tradition of asking questions about authorship and about audience, the first part of this analysis looked at these aspects. Table 4.1 gives an overview of these documents, who they were published or produced by, and intended use as identified by administration and presented to teachers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Models</th>
<th>Published By</th>
<th>Intended use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WIDA ELL Can Do Booklet</td>
<td>WIDA Consortium</td>
<td>Teachers, informally assess English language level, on occasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced Literacy</td>
<td>Fountas and Pinnell</td>
<td>Teachers, in classroom, every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math MATTERS</td>
<td>ProjectSMART</td>
<td>Teachers, in classroom, every day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>Published By</td>
<td>Intended use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNA</td>
<td>CNA Committee</td>
<td>FYI to teachers, identifies needs of regional population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>MDOE Members, Special Pops. Unit</td>
<td>Teachers are responsible for how SMEPs reach goals based on needs stated in CNA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricula</td>
<td>Published By</td>
<td>Intended use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math MATTERS</td>
<td>ProjectSMART</td>
<td>Teachers, in all SMEPs in MI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRA2</td>
<td>Pearson</td>
<td>Teachers, for entrance and exit assessments or all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home state curricula (FL, TX)</td>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>Secondary credit teachers for testing/preparation purposes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1, Documents, Published By, and Intended Use

Technically, the Math MATTERS curricula falls into two of these categories since it follows a type of literacy model that attempts to integrate literacy and math, and claims to use a “balanced literacy” model. It was also used in the classroom as curriculum. Table 4.2 shows how these documents were actually used by the teachers in observations or referenced in interviews. The phrase “Not directly used” means that teachers were not
using these models intentionally although parts of them may have fit with some aspects of their teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Models</th>
<th>Actually used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WIDA ELL CAN DO Booklet</td>
<td>Not directly used/referenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced Literacy</td>
<td>Not directly used/referenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math MATTERS</td>
<td>Used via curricula</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reports</th>
<th>Actually used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNA</td>
<td>Not directly used/referenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>Not directly used/referenced</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curricula</th>
<th>Actually used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math MATTERS</td>
<td>By classroom teacher, in parts (Jordan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRA2</td>
<td>Entrance and exit assessments (Alex)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home state curricula</td>
<td>Out of state testing/prep (Jamie)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2, Documents and How They are Used

In the classroom, the above literacy models were not used purposefully, despite intentions for their use. *Math MATTERS* was used as a model in the sense it made cross-curricular ties between books read by the students and math problems guided by the plots of those books. After the state training where outcomes of the CNA and SDP were presented, these reports were neither used nor referenced by the teachers in either interviews or observations. Parts of each type of curricula were used by the teachers to the extent described. In the following section, I will describe these documents in greater depth.

**Literacy Models**

The state training provided teachers with a folder containing several different documents relative to literacy instruction. These documents were also reviewed during the training with the intent of teachers using them, though to what extent was unclear. The first document was the “English Language Learner CAN DO Booklet,” developed by the WIDA Consortium. The purpose of this document is to provide teachers with some
idea of how to assess the linguistic abilities of ELL students as they enter the classroom. The descriptors provide the teacher with levels of language learning in four areas: listening, speaking, reading and writing. There are also markers at each level that indicate to the teacher what level the student might be at, and what that student might be capable of producing in the non-native language. Within five levels of language learning the booklet attempts to identify specific makers that teachers can use to determine the language capabilities of their students. At the state training, this document was distributed and introduced as a reference for teachers who may be struggling to understand exactly how to assess student capabilities. Several teachers mentioned their familiarity with this model.

Another document provided was the “Balanced Literacy” model. There are many of balanced literacy models out there, but the one presented to teachers at the state training was an illustration of five pillars of reading, writing and oral comprehension. These included comprehension, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonics and fluency. During the discussion of the model, stress was placed on the importance of using it to provide students with various strategies: for example, if a teacher uses ‘find the main idea,’ the teacher must make students name the strategy they are using. Students should be able to first, name the strategy, and second, give an example of it. According to the model, these activities are planned and specifically structured. Traditionally, this model has had conflicting reviews. Supporters claim it is a tool for closing the achievement gap, but critics claim that original research on the model only showed that it worked for certain demographics of students in wealthy areas of New York who were not members of marginalized groups (Ravitch 40). This model was referenced several times in the
training and identified as one component of *Math MATTERS*. A copy of the model was made available to teachers who were encouraged to use it in their classrooms, but observations proved this model was not being used by any of the case study participants.

**Reports**

The State Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) and Service Delivery Plan (SDP) provide additional clues as to the role of the migrant teacher. Although teachers were not provided with full copies of these documents, they were summarized and reviewed at the state training. In addition, teachers were directed toward the full versions which are available on the Michigan OME website. The CNA Advisory Committee that created and assembled the CNA included “parents, teachers, district administrators, local community organizations including the Department of Human Services, the Hispanic Center of Grand Rapids, Telamon, the two Identification and Recruitment State Centers, and Department of Education staff from Migrant Education Program and Early Childhood” (CNA 19). The document was prepared at the request of the OME as part of a pilot study. This report notes that as the committee looked over data that had been collected on migrant students over the years, they were asked what types of data was missing, or “What don’t we know that we should know in planning supports and services for Michigan’s migrant students?” (32). The committee determined that the missing data was that of “the voices of the students, parents, and teachers” (32). As a result, the committee surveyed these groups and considered their perspectives when creating their areas of concern. Unfortunately, the smallest survey demographic was teachers, a mere 29 out of the total 196 survey respondents (32). In the results, it was noted that teachers were concerned that “migrant students were below grade level in reading and writing”
and that “limited comprehension [was] within the top two challenges faced by migrant students” (43).

The CNA offered concern statements, for example, “We are concerned that migrant students are below grade level in reading and writing” (38). The report also offered “needs statements” and specific goals with objectives based on these concerns. The first objective holds relevance to this study: “The achievement gap in reading and writing between migrants and their non-migrant peers will narrow by at least 2% annually at each grade level” (44). While thorough in identifying needs, goals, and areas of concern, this report did not include specific ways of reaching these goals in the form of classroom models or practices. This was addressed in the Service Delivery Plan (SDP). In this document, the state laid out a plan for meeting the two reading objectives: 1) The achievement gap in reading and writing between migrants and their non-migrant peers will narrow by at least 2% annually at each grade level on the MEAP/MME, and 2) Migrant English Learner (LEP) students will develop their English Language and meet the state Annual Measurable Achievement Objective 1 target (AMAO #1) each year (SDP 14-16). These two objectives came with “Service Delivery Detailed Activities,” which outlines the role of the teacher in attaining these goals. The most frequently referenced activities for teachers of reading were 1) attending professional development in over ten different areas, including academic vocabulary, WIDA, sheltered instruction methods and higher order thinking (Bloom) and 2) providing vocabulary instruction by creating, sharing, distributing or attending training on the use of academic vocabulary lists (16). As such, this document along with the SDP painted a very limited picture of the role of a teacher.
Curricula

At the state training, the teachers were also presented with a sample unit of the *Math MATTERS* curriculum. The curriculum strives to deliver literacy learning alongside math. Each lesson contains math and language objectives. A text is paired with each unit, and generally the units follow a pattern that requires students to read a book, complete mathematical equations that somehow fit the theme of the book, and along the way use different writing activities that incorporate vocabulary words. The language objectives often ask students to “read, write, and discuss (RWD)” why or how they arrived at a certain answer. Some examples of language objectives include “write a description of how a unit rate is more specific than a rate,” (Unit 1 Lesson 2) or, “create sentences using vocabulary words” (Unit 1 Lesson 3). Overall, the lessons are vocabulary heavy and heavily scripted to the point where teacher dialogue is scripted in the lesson plan. The most common of these scripts asks students to infer meaning based on their vocabulary words, for example, “What do you think the word *mentoring* means?” It is not uncommon for individual lessons to be over fifty pages long. Unit 1, Lesson 1 was sixty-three pages long. Each lesson also contained black line masters in English and Spanish, most of them containing some type of chart or diagram for the students to fill in.

The DRA2 materials were the other materials given to teachers for use in assessment and to a limited extent in the classroom. These included leveled books with corresponding handouts as well as assessment materials. These materials were widely distributed and used throughout the school; leveled books and handouts were housed in the classrooms up through 8th grade and assessment materials were housed in the intervention rooms. The DRA2 materials and *Math MATTERS* Curriculum only went
through the 8th grade, but these materials were also sometimes used in the homerooms of the high school-aged students. The DRA2 assessment materials were also used to assess high school students to determine if they were on grade level. This created an issue when students came to the SMEP with skills beyond the 8th grade level. The DRA2 materials such as books and handouts were also used by Alex during many of his interventions.

Teachers from the Secondary Credit Program, like Jamie, used a wide variety of materials from different sets of curricula all over the country. What Jamie used depended on what the student needed, so he was expected to be familiar with several different sets. Common sets of curricula or testing materials included those of FCAT, PASS, Florida Virtual and STAAR. Several of the same students who participated in Secondary Credit were also participating in literacy interventions. In their homeroom SMEP classrooms, these same students could also be using the Math MATTERS curriculum, so it was possible for one student to encounter several different sets of curricula as well.

Findings of Document Analysis

Independent of the other two forms of data analysis, the document analysis revealed several key findings central to the work of this study. What was present in the documents was equally important as what was missing. Firstly, a look at the authors, publishers, and stakeholders of these documents reveal a lack of consideration of teacher voices. In all of the materials examined, the CNA was the only document that made an effort to use the opinions of teachers, and it did so to only a small degree. Although little information was available on the creators of Math MATTERS, except to say it was created by a CIG grant, the teacher voices were scripted and inauthentic. The curricula not only silences but rewrites the voice of the teacher, opting to script each step the teacher makes,
down to the words they use with their students. The DRA2 assessment materials were also heavily scripted, providing an assessment script for the teachers to follow. Teachers were told at the state training that they should “try not to deviate from the script too much” because it could affect the student assessment scores. They were not allowed, for example, to substitute words the teacher believed the students might know for words they didn’t know. The assessment was meant to give an accurate picture of the level of student competence in reading, but since the assessment itself was only in English, Alex and others debated the accuracy of this assessment.

After examining the codes from all of these documents and examining the contexts under which they operated, commonalities were found between all of the documents. First, the coding process revealed a heavy focus on vocabulary between reports and curricula. This lead me to believe that the role of a migrant teacher was reduced by these documents to a teacher of vocabulary. This was conclusion was reached by highlighting the number of times teachers were asked to aid students by teaching vocabulary specifically in all the documents. Math MATTERS, DRA2, and state reports all coded the role of the teacher heavily as one who works to increase the student’s lexicon more than anything else. In addition, the SDP notes that the way to reach the goals on increasing student reading levels is for the teachers to receive more professional development in the areas of vocabulary, Sheltered Instruction (SI) and WIDA. This view of the role of a migrant teacher did not match what was observed or what was said by the teachers in interviews.

Perhaps the most notable issue with the curricular documents was their lack of cultural consideration. Only two units in Math MATTERS referenced Latina/o heritage in
a topical way. The major lesson that featured aspects of Latino heritage was one that used the story of Ricardo Romo in the book *Ricardo’s Race*. The book highlights Ricardo Romo’s success story coming from an immigrant family with limited means. Ricardo experiences race-based discrimination in one part of the book when he is encouraged to go to technical high school instead of one that would prepare him for college. Although an interesting part of the book, discussions of race and discrimination were absent from the curriculum materials, which asked students to complete math problems to determine how far and fast Ricardo ran. Although *Math MATTERS* provided bilingual materials for students and parents, any discussion of Latina/o culture was entirely absent from the middle school and secondary curriculum. Literacy models were developed without cultural consideration or consideration of mobile students. State reports revealed that while they did consider research on mobility and migration, discussions on Latina/o or other groups of students were largely absent.

The sheer volume of literacy models and curricula can also be considered an outcome of this document analysis. However, when teachers were asked what models or methods they subscribe to in the interviews, none of these models were mentioned. In observations, only models that were already written into the curricula were used. Also despite the volume of models and curricula, teachers did not cite any when asked about practices they believe to be successful for MSFWs. Although their every day literacy practices were influenced by these documents, the effective, “critical” practices took place outside of what was dictated or suggested by the documents. There was clearly a disconnect between the presence of all of these documents and their implementation. To summarize, when compared with the other two forms of data, document analysis revealed
two major findings: 1) the role of a migrant teacher was reduced to tasks, like teaching vocabulary, and did not match evidence gathered in interviews and observations, and 2) that practices of critical literacy were taking place outside of the use of documents intended for classroom use.

Developing a Baseline: Teacher Expectations

The disconnect between the documents and their use prompted me to find a baseline that could provide me with an understanding of the types of experiences teachers had with migrant students, and their expectations about working with them. In this way, codes and chunks of text found in the first interview allowed me to develop a starting point. What I found was, although all three teachers went into migrant education with different expectations, these expectations were mostly based on their own experiences. Alex, for example, reflected on his own MSFW experience, and noted that the instruction he received was not as “specialized” as the instruction he is expected to deliver today, because his students come into the classroom with many different needs. In addition he notes, “all of the baggage that some of his students carry with them and bring to school…even though I was a migrant, we didn't move as much as many of this kids and camp life in my opinion is very different from today.” He notes that MSFWs today need more support than perhaps he needed in his youth:

I see migrant students that want to succeed but lack the support and guidance that would allow them to break this vicious cycle of being a migrant and being content with it. I see students that can do much more and give back to their community. Students that can have better lives and become even more productive members of society.
Jordan echoed some of Alex’s sentiments, making a link between his own experiences and the experiences of students today. He said, “I knew that teaching migrant students would not be easy, because they have already experienced a lot and sometimes they act tough, but inside they are actually asking for help.” Jordan mentioned that when he was a student, he really relied on himself for inspiration, and was expected to “sink or swim.” He believes that contrary to what he thought, based on his own experience as a student, working with migrant students can no longer work as a “sink or swim” operation. In the beginning of his teaching experience, Jordan realized he had to show much more “empathy and patience” than he expected. In his opinion, if these two qualities are present there is a far greater chance of student success.

Jamie also drew on his background to discuss his expectations, but Jamie came from a non-migrant background. He linked his experience of teaching in Mexico with the expectations he had for working with migrant students, since this was the first exposure he had to what he assumed would be a similar population. However, he was surprised at some of the differences. He stated, “I assumed a lot of the kids would be like the students I taught in Mexico, but in reality, I found most of our students were from Texas, Florida, etc. and many had never gone to school in Mexico. It is a very different population.” To him, the surprising part of teaching this population was that no two students were ever the same, and the only similarity between many of them was the gaps they had in their education. Jamie mentioned that as a teacher of this population, “you have to push them along. You have to show them that it’s worth it.” He believes most students do not come with an understanding of why education can be valuable.
I found the perceptions these teachers had to be a sharp contrast to the “Latino Threat Narrative,” which would portray students as criminals who are incapable or unable to learn. None of the teachers of this case study made assumptions like this before embarking on their teaching journey with MSFWs. Instead, all three chose to base their expectations on what they themselves had experienced in their own lives. Although all three had different responses to the question, they all realized that a hard, authoritative approach would not work with MSFWs. All three teachers also noted the range in the population in terms of need. These themes continued in discussions throughout the interviews, and in observations, where it was interesting to see the different ways teachers showed empathy and made decisions relative to student’s needs.

**Interview Themes Unique to Each Case Study Participant**

The first interview allowed me to get an idea of practices that were important to the teachers, while the second interview allowed me to question the teachers about what I observed in their classrooms. The table below displays individual themes that emerged from the individual participants, as well as “shared themes” between the interviewees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared Themes</th>
<th>Alex</th>
<th>Jordan</th>
<th>Jamie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Connections between literacy and life</td>
<td>• Teaching culture</td>
<td>• Validating student knowledge</td>
<td>• Varied student experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-esteem and motivation</td>
<td>• Critical thinking</td>
<td>• Confidence</td>
<td>• Modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Opinions on testing/curricula</td>
<td>• Individualized instruction</td>
<td>• Earning trust</td>
<td>• Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gaps in education</td>
<td>• Professional growth</td>
<td>• Listening</td>
<td>• Being understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Specific techniques</td>
<td>• Bilingualism</td>
<td>• Community</td>
<td>• Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Empathy</td>
<td>• Self-expression</td>
<td>• Curricula- against solid teacher knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Curricula- making it “fit”</td>
<td>• Curricula- needs space for student intelligence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.3, Interview Synthesis Table*
The interviews identify many of the same themes as the observations, with a few differences. The main difference between the interviews and observations was the attention given to details by the teachers. The first interview provided much of a general frame or profile of the educator, while the second interview asked more specific questions as a follow up to what was noticed in the observations. In addition, during the first interview teachers had just begun their summer teaching and during the second interview they were nearly finished. This allowed for some variance in scope and focus.

There were several times in the interviews when teachers paused to think about why they were making the pedagogical decisions I observed. Although none of the teachers seemed surprised or argued with what I saw in my observations, it was clear that the interview process allowed them to reflect more deeply on the reasons behind their practices. In at least two of the cases, I was informed without asking that the interviews allowed them to think more deeply about the principles they subscribe to and of various possibilities for helping their students. I mention this because I consider it to be an important outcome of this research. In the following section, I will provide a narrative that unites information gathered in interviews and observations as these two forms of data were inextricably linked.

**Narrative Synthesis of Interviews and Observations**

The narrative descriptions that follow attempt to highlight both the perspectives and critical practices of the teachers. They also highlight barriers and pathways to student literacy, while further defining the role of each migrant teacher. The scenes that are mentioned here serve as examples of teachers issuing “critical invitations” to their students to think beyond what is on the page and become active participants in issues of
social justice. The descriptions seek to unite what was observed with quotes from the interviews, when teachers were asked to explain their decisions and expand upon their teaching methodologies.

Alex

When I began my observations of Alex in the first week of the SMEP, he was assessing incoming students by administering the DRA2 assessment for the first time in the history of the program. A typical assessment included an individual student sitting down with Alex in the intervention room. Alex would look to see if the student had participated in the SMEP in the past, and if so if there was an assessment score from the previous year. This would give Alex an idea of what level to assess the student at. Then, he would pull out a short reading passage for that student. The student was asked to read the passage as Alex recorded the amount of oral mistakes the student made while reading, as well as the time it took them to read the passage. Once this information was recorded, the student was asked to respond to three comprehension questions about the main idea of the passage and several supporting details. Alex was told to assess all students in English although he could provide directions for the assessment in Spanish. For this reason, results for ELL students were often recorded at a very low reading level representative of their ability to speak English, not necessarily their abilities to use their literacy skills. In addition, some students were able to read very quickly and with good pronunciation, but with low levels of comprehension. Alex called these students “word callers,” a common term for students who can read well but have lower levels of comprehension. The time it took the students to read the passage, the number of mistakes they made while reading, and their ability to answer the comprehension questions were all factored into one score,
which was recorded as the pre-test score. If students fell two or more grade levels below where they were expected to be, Alex was to meet these students on a daily basis in literacy “interventions.”

During the first couple of weeks, assessment was Alex’s main responsibility. When students entered who had never participated in the SMEP before, Alex often had to guess what their level might be. Since Alex was told not to “skip” levels when assessing students, he sometimes had to give them several assessments to determine their level. In at least three cases, a single student had to take three assessments. This was obviously very frustrating to the students, who often complained of feeling tired and frustrated. Alex tried his best to keep them motivated. If the student’s level was above where Alex was assessing, Alex would say, “You must have studied hard this year. We have to give you another test because you did so well on that one!” However, if Alex had to give the student an easier test because the assessed level was too hard, it was harder to explain, and the student often felt disappointed that their level had dropped. In these cases Alex would let the student know how important it was to know exactly what they needed help with, so the interventionists could help the student become better.

The DRA2 was only one of two major assessments the student was required to take the first day. Many teachers, including Alex feared that the barrage of assessments upon entering the program might discourage some students from coming back. Even several administrators voiced this concern to me. For this reason, Alex often used encouragement and reassurance to keep the drive of the students high. As Alex transitioned from the assessment period to conducting literacy interventions, he was faced with keeping students motivated enough to return every day when they may have the
opportunity to work. In addition, older students are often asked to watch younger siblings at the camp, so he was careful to realize that it was often not the choice of the students to miss school. Instead, Alex used encouragement as a tool to motivated students to come every day and to “create a routine.” Since the rewards of learning are not as immediate as receiving what may be a much needed paycheck, Alex has to help his students understand why learning to read is worth their time in the long run. Where other methods fail, Alex often takes the stance that there are things in life that you simply must do, even if you don’t like them or they seem difficult.

Another unique feature of Alex’s work with students is his ability to help students “make connections” to texts that build on existing student knowledge. This is an important dimension of his interventions because the books and leveled materials he is using often fall short of connecting with student knowledge or culture in any way. Two scenarios illustrate this technique particularly well. In one observation, Alex was working with students to identify supporting details in a story they had just read. As he often tries to do, Alex picked a story he knew the students could relate to: a story about a kid who wanted to play soccer. Alex asked the students to list items they would need to play this sport, and then rank them in order of importance. This was asking students to recall details from the text, a common DRA2-style question. They create their lists, and are asked to read them aloud. Then, Alex begins his critical questioning, a component not included in the materials:

**Alex:** Okay, so you both listed cleats, but do you really need cleats to play soccer? Think about it.
**Student 1:** Um, no.
**Alex:** When I was a kid we didn’t have enough money for cleats, but I still played soccer every day. You said a uniform. Can I play soccer without a uniform?
Student 2: Yeah, technically.
Alex: Yeah, so what is this question really asking? The story isn’t about professional teams with lots of money, it’s about kids who don’t have a lot of money to get all those things. You have to be smarter than the question. Now what do YOU really need to play soccer?
Student 1: Just a ball.
Student 2: Maybe any ball, not even a soccer ball….

This exchange demonstrates how Alex used a lesson that otherwise would have stopped at a list and gave it a critical dimension by discussing issues of access. It also demonstrates how uncomfortable students are using their own knowledge in academic situations. In this case, although both students had played soccer without equipment in the migrant camps and knew all the rules of the game, they still associated the proper way of playing with having access to costly equipment. The fact that they had played without this equipment was not considered by them to be the ‘right way,’ even though it was what they had experienced. Consequently, they assumed the question was asking for the way to play soccer that is only afforded to a certain group of people. With Alex’s use of his own experience he assured his students that they already had the answer, and that their own experience was real and valid. The students realized it was okay to use their own knowledge. This scenario ended with Alex giving some examples of famous soccer players who learned to play with little or no equipment under conditions of poverty.

In another scenario, Alex was working with two ELLs, one who was still in the very beginning phases of learning English having recently moved from Mexico, and one who was in the beginning, intermediate phase. This student from Mexico was incredibly shy about speaking English, and constantly feared making mistakes. Alex learned later that this student had an experience with a teacher who tended to over-correct, resulting in her reluctance. Alex taught both students in a mix of English and Spanish, whenever
possible making linguistic and cultural connections between languages. On this particular
day, both students were reading aloud from a book about Rosa Parks. The book briefly
touched on the issue of citizenship. It defined the term “citizen” as any person who lives
in a city, state or country as a citizen of that country. Both girls looked up from the
reading, somewhat confused. One of the girls asked in Spanish, “What are you when you
cross the border?” The other student added, “My aunt says we are ‘residents’ because we
cannot be citizens if we don’t have papers.” Pausing, Alex told them that they are
citizens, but that the government and other groups of people define the word “citizen” in
different ways. Alex wrote the word “citizen” on the board with several different
definitions in English. He used a mixture of English and Spanish to explain them, using
the experiences of his students and the experience of Rosa Parks as examples. Alex told
the girls that even though Parks was an official citizen, she did not have the same rights
that other citizens had because of her race. The girls saw the connections between their
stories and the story of Rosa Parks and in order to practice some of the new English
words, Alex asks them to try to articulate the similarities and differences in English.

Alex’s Reflections on his Practices

When I questioned Alex about methods that guide his practices, he noted the
importance of using multiple strategies, but above all the strategy of bringing something
to the attention of the students that they already have some connection with:

Bringing material to the kid’s attention that they might have a
connection with makes it easier for them to understand. For
example, the topic of immigration. I’m sure they probably don’t
know all of the politically correct terms, but they know what’s
going on. Also if they read something that they can relate to, maybe stories about farmers or migrants.

The Rosa Parks lesson is one example of this method. Alex also touched on using methods like reading aloud and visualization, two techniques he believes allows the student to better experience what the main character of a story may be feeling. Alex also allows the students to write about themselves or about things they like whenever possible. He uses student polling to find out more about their academic interests, asking the students what subjects they like the best. He then pulls from not only the DRA2 resources but from his own resources and internet resources to plan his lesson.

Alex’s own resources often include something with a cultural dimension. I asked him why he often choses a cultural focus for his lessons:

They [migrant students] could benefit from culture a lot, because a lot of these kids, even though they are Hispanic or Mexican, know the basics about their country but when it comes to culture they have no idea. They’re stuck in between two generations and three cultures: the Mexican culture, as in pure Mexican, Mexican American culture and then the American culture. When you’re stuck in between those three, which one do you put more emphasis on or which one do you want to adopt? It can be hard.

This quote touches on the notion of hybridity in students and teachers who act as agents as they help students to explore their identities. Alex chooses to present cultural information in a meaningful way that goes beyond historical facts and allows students an opportunity to become more connected to cultural dimensions of their identities.
For example, in a folktale lesson I observed Alex use the legend of Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuat in combination with the Iraqi folktale of the Enchanted Storks (present in a leveled book). In the lesson, Alex compared the use of folktale as a genre in both cultures. He started by remembering what he was told of Popocatépetl when he was young, and how it was different than what he read about the legend. He told his students there is no “official” version of the tale because it was created by the Aztec people and passed along, as many other folktales. This lesson was also an example of Alex truly knowing the students before him, as all four students present were familiar with Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuat. As students shared the versions they knew, Alex told them that even though the many versions are different, there is no ‘right’ one, again validating student knowledge and acting as a placer of value. When asked about this lesson in his interview and the choice to allow students to use their stories, Alex said, “I think they feel a sense of pride, that someone is actually talking about their culture and not in a negative way but more in a positive way of trying to compare cultures.” In this way, Alex invited students to explore these aspects on a personal level.

**Reflections on Alex**

As an educator, Alex enjoys navigating paths of language and literacy with students who are actively involved in determining the direction of a lesson. Observations reveal that students enjoy this freedom as well. When Alex is using his cultural knowledge to drive his lessons he is the most vibrant and excited as a teacher. I believe that this excitement rubbed off on the students in interventions. On the other hand, there were often times when students seemed bored or listless in observations. Although this cannot be attributed to one factor alone, the use of the DRA2 fill-in-the-blank style
handouts, which were often disconnected from the experiences of the students, may be to blame. Since these materials were what Alex was told to use by the state, he continued to use them, but often let his own style come through. At the end of the summer, Alex was required to post-test his students to see if their levels had gone up. Despite the demands required by his position, Alex believes that the real value of literacy learning is in seeing his students use things he has taught them to become whatever they want to be. As Alex said in the second interview, he is looking for more long-term achievements, such as students graduating from high school or moving on to college. To help them achieve these goals, observations revealed that Alex himself models hard work, dedication and a genuine love of literature and culture.

Jordan

My observations of Jordan’s classroom also began on the first day of the SMEP. A look around his classroom revealed motivational posters, posters on using description in writing, and a classroom library with books divided by subject as well as books divided by level of difficulty (leveled books). Tables were arranged in groups and students were each given writing notebooks for collecting their thoughts and daily writing. A prompt on the board read, “Describe the best thing that ever happened to you.” This is a writing prompt Jordan chose based on his idea of classroom community—a accessible topic used as a way for all classroom members to get to know each other. He allows the entire first period for writing and sharing, and although some students are shy, a few share with the class. Jordan himself shares his own college graduation as an example. When the period ends, students are generally in good spirits. In the second period, Jordan had to deliver the first math assessment.
This is where many students become frustrated for the first time in his classroom. Some of them encountered problems on the assessment that they had never seen before and started to become nervous. To overcome their frustration, Jordan stressed the idea of said, “It’s okay if you don’t know. We are a community and we will put our heads together.” This was Jordan’s way of dealing with the anxiety of his students, induced by the assessments and tests. Jordan believed that if a student’s self-esteem is affected negatively, it will “make them less of an individual who wants to be part of a community.”

The theme of creating a classroom community continued during many subsequent observations. In interviews, Jordan stressed that he considers it his number one priority as a teacher to create a place where all students feel safe and valued. “We also have a philosophy that it’s okay to make a mistake and learn from it,” Jordan mentioned in his first interview. He adds:

What it does is it helps them relax and not feel nervous or feel anxiety because if they do, they will just tend to withdraw and not really say a lot. They don’t want to take any risks because they feel like they will be ridiculed if they make a mistake.

He believes that negative self-esteem also functions as a “mental block” that prohibits students from learning in the classroom. For ELL students, he said that it is especially problematic as they are often scared to speak, and when they do, are rejected for saying something “wrong.” For this reason, Jordan paid close attention to the facial expressions of all of the students in his community, which is especially important for those who have a greater fear of speaking up. He would often comment on what he saw, for example, “I
see a lot of positive facial expressions,” or, “I am seeing some confused faces.” I believe this was a way of encouraging the students to use verbal and non-verbal ways of communication, based on how comfortable they felt. In observations, smiles, nods, and eyes up are ways the students showed him they understood. Jordan was extra sensitive to students looking down or casting glances to their neighbors for help, and when students seemed unsure he would personally approach them and ask how he could help. In this way, teacher and student were closer to equals in Jordan’s classroom community.

In terms of literacy, Jordan had several methods he used with his students. Similar to Alex’s method, Jordan found ways to connect his students to what they are reading, even if it’s a stretch. He listens to their interests and their experiences and plans accordingly. He also gives them choices. Jordan’s classroom has a library that contains many different types of non-leveled texts that he lets students choose from freely. Each day, Jordan dedicates thirty minutes of free time to a community read. This was Jordan’s choice of a way to use instructional time which otherwise would have been assigned to Math MATTERS.

For the community read, Jordan chose a novel about a fifth grader who wanted to join a baseball team but had trouble fitting in. Every day Jordan or one of his classroom assistants would read out-loud to the class. I observed that the classroom level of engagement was high during this time. Students were absolutely silent and seemed focused on the action of the novel. When the period came to a close, students would often readily shout-out questions they had about the book, which Jordan would discuss with them. As they walked to lunch, they would talk to each other about what happened. I overhead one student talking to Jordan about the book in the cafeteria during lunch time.
The use of the common read offered the students something they could collectively engage in and enjoy that was a clear departure from leveled texts and assessments. When asked about this time in the interview, Jordan told me how much he valued the listening process for his students: “Listening is being able to receive and then process it and know the message.” He believes that students need this experience to be able to process the messages they receive in life, a recognition of the importance of this skill outside of the classroom.

In terms of other critical literacy practices, Jordan prefers to use open-ended questions with his students that allow them to display a range of answers. Like Alex’s techniques, the student answers usually help direct the lesson. However, scripted curricula can sometimes hinder this process. The following scenario illustrates how Jordan modified a lesson based on his student population. The lesson used a leveled book that presented a very nuclear and homogenous family dynamic (parent as most influential person), which kept students from speaking up when Jordan asked them who the most influential person was in their lives:

**Jordan:** Who are influential people in your life?  
(Class is silent)  
**Jordan:** Well, the author shows us that a parent can give you support, but maybe the most influential person is not your parent and that’s okay.  
**Student:** I think it’s my cousin, because he takes care of us when my parents are working, and he wants us to get a good education, like that.  
**Jordan:** [with enthusiasm] Yes! Sometimes you may spend more time around influential people other than your parents when your parents are working. The author just has a different experience, so your cousin can be an influential person!

At this point, other students spoke up about influential people in their lives, some of them parents and some of them siblings, parents or friends. After the class, Jordan told me that
due to demanding work/life schedules of migrant families, MSFWs often have more contact with extended family members (cousins, aunts, family friends) than they do with their parents. It was Jordan’s knowledge of this fact that allowed him to make change to the lesson that would allow students to use their own experiences, which would have been invalidated by the use of the curricula alone. Jordan’s ability to recognize and adjust was the key to inviting his students to participate in this lesson.

Related to the above scenarios is Jordan’s unique ability to earn his student’s trust through direct and honest communication. This is similar to the Freirian concept of speaking on the same level as students without displays of power. When asked about successful techniques for migratory students, he replied, “Not being overly strict. Be sincere and make your point that it [the undesired behavior] is not what you are supposed to do. It’s not acceptable. Just say it in a firm, friendly, fair manner.” Jordan rarely experienced behavioral problems in his classroom of thirty-five students, but when he did, he was clear and direct and avoided power-plays. In one observed instance, a student was running around the classroom making loud shrieking noises. Jordan quietly pulled the student aside and asked, “Why were you running? You know why I don’t want you doing that?” The student shrugged his shoulders. In a calm voice, Jordan said, “You know I don’t want you doing that, because if you run, you’re going to fall flat on your face and hurt yourself. I don’t want you to hurt yourself.” When the student realized Jordan’s desire to have him stop was because he cared about him, he apologized and told him he would not do it again.

A more specific way Jordan is honest with his students is by telling them exactly why they are doing certain activities. In response to a student asking “why” during a
lesson on using descriptive words, I observed Jordan explain, “As you progress, using words like this will make you a better student. It will make your writing more interesting.” Even for preoperational activities such as counting off for groups, Jordan explains, “We are doing this so you can prepare for your reading groups.” Where this technique is most interesting is when Jordan explains to students the reasons behind assessments. For the first math assessment that caused so much frustration, Jordan explained, “We are doing this because the state wants to know where you are at.” He does not pretend these activities are related to his own teaching or even for his own purposes when they are not. This seemed to be a relief to some students who feared being graded on it or judged in some way. Because Jordan made sure to tell his students the reasons behind everything they did, the students learned to trust him.

**Jordan’s Reflections on his Practices**

It was clear in interviews that Jordan had a history of thinking deeply about his practices and how they relate to literacy development among his students. Jordan considered creating a tolerant and inclusive classroom community a pathway to growth in all types of learning. When asked why this was so important to him, he responded:

> The reason for that is to make sure they [students] feel safe and comfortable. That’s the whole idea of that approach. So they know I am not here to make them feel worthless.

I asked him if this practice was something that is only important to migrant students, and he replied that it was important for all students, but for migrant students it was important because “you can’t exercise your rights if you can’t express yourself.” Like Alex, this is where Jordan sees the larger picture of his students being active participants in society
who stand up for their beliefs. Jordan mentions that migrant students have experienced a lot early in life with having to work, take care of siblings, or experiencing poverty, but sometimes they need help understand the experiences they have had in the world. According to him the best way to do this is to create the kind of environment where students feel they can talk about these experiences.

This is also the reason why Jordan said that the most important literate act for a migrant student to learn was to “speak publicly with confidence.” When students share writing in his classroom they are practicing this ability. When asked why he thought speaking aloud was important, he responded that migrant students need to be given opportunities where they can feel “like they are a part of things.” If they are not able to do this, Jordan mentioned it will create a “complacent” student who is “less the individual who’s going to be a part of a community.” Jordan believed that writing complements the process by allowing the student to become more confident:

Basically, I’m seeing that a lot of students, they’re just kind of hesitant to share what they know, but they can’t really put it into words. What we’re doing is adding the part of writing. Writing helps tremendously!

Since self-esteem is a known issue among MSFWs, it’s not surprising Jordan experienced success with a model that allows students to continually practice self-expression in multiple forms. Other aspects of Jordan’s classroom that demonstrated this model were the three literacy stations, which allowed students to read at one station, write at another and discuss at the third. Jordan also allows for discussion in small group work, giving students the opportunity to practice self-expression on a smaller scale.
**Reflections on Jordan**

Jordan’s holistic approach to his classroom is unique. Like Alex, Jordan believes that much of his students’ ability to learn relies on the relationship he develops with them and their ability to feel comfortable in the classroom environment. In his interview, I asked Jordan if he thought that making students feel safe and comfortable was unique to teaching migrant students. He replied, “It applies to any child. If we bombard them, they are going to be made to feel that they don’t know.” Jordan sees the hindrance to the learning process when students are bombarded by a lot of material they don’t have a context for or aren’t prepared to absorb. Even though Jordan and other teachers at the SMEP feel they have so much curriculum material to cover, Jordan is more concerned with creating a space within the learner and within the classroom before launching into academic content.

**Jamie**

In the first few days of observing Jamie, he was assisting the Secondary Credit Program with preparation and individually assessing incoming students. As secondary students enter the program, Jamie and his three other colleagues under the supervision of the Program Director use whatever resources are available to determine what each student needs in order to graduate from high school or to get to the next grade level. First, each student is individually interviewed for basic information including home school, educational history, credits needed to graduate, and last completed courses. Since students are often unsure if they passed, or what courses they need to graduate, Jamie and his colleagues spend a lot of time online in the Michigan Migrant Education Database System (MEDS) and Migrant Student Information Exchange (MSIX), the two migrant
education databases that allow teachers to see the educational history of a student. They also place phone calls to individual schools all over the country, requesting information that will help them determine what courses have been completed.

On the first few days of school, I watched Jamie and the Program Director place phone calls and interview individual students, and gather materials together in preparation for teaching math and writing inside the classroom as well as at the migrant camps. Listening to the phone calls I was able to understand how difficult it can be to elicit this information. Some school representatives refused to look up records, and in some cases asked why he would want them anyway. In some cases Jamie was confronted by racist attitudes and struggled to maintain calm on the phone. In interviews with students, Jamie set his own frustrations aside as he was confronted with student frustrations. Several students cried upon finding out they didn’t pass classes in the previous school year. Like Alex and Jordan, Jamie spent a great deal of time at the beginning of the program assuring the students of the ways in which he would be able to help them.

One of the first assignments Jamie gave in his high-school writing classroom was on using description to create a 26-line narrative. The purpose of this assignment was mainly to get students writing on the first day about something familiar. Many of the students were daunted by this task and felt that it was too much for them to handle. Several students agreed it would be the most they had written in several months. To motivate them, Jamie told the students to consider what they already knew. He said, “Think about conflicts. Use what you know.” He walked around the classroom, picking up on conversations between students and offering individual advice, which they seemed
grateful to accept. He continued to encourage them to use things that happened to them in their lives, or the lives of people they knew. Occasionally Jamie would validate his student’s experiences further by making an announcement to the entire class, for example, “Alma is writing about her brother’s wedding in Orlando when the bride lost one of her shoes. That’s probably going to be a good story.” He continued to do this until the entire class was writing. Then, instead of watching the students write, Jamie sat down to write himself.

In this and many other instances I became aware of Jamie’s ability to play the role of teacher and student, sometimes simultaneously. Jamie’s confidence in the classroom gave him the ability to role-play as a learner providing the student with a model of what being a student looks like. When asked about this tendency, he noted:

Honestly, I like to model what it looks like to be a good student, because they sometimes don’t know what it means to be a good student. You take notes; you pay attention to the person talking. If you don’t get something you keep trying. Sometimes I play the part very well. I wasn’t always the person with the right answer.

In the last sentence, Jamie was referring specifically to a situation when he was working on a math problem with another student. As they simultaneously entered the problem into their calculators, they both came up with different answers. Upon checking, the student had the correct answer while Jamie did not. Jamie allowed the student to truly enjoy the moment by saying that obviously the problem was too difficult for him. “People make mistakes,” Jamie said in his interview, “You move on. I am the teacher but I still make mistakes. Letting them see it is part of the learning process.” When students are doing
problems longhand or writing, Jamie always lets students examine and correct his work, sometimes using the doc cam to display it to the entire class. If Jamie feels the student outperformed him on an assignment, he allows that student to become the teacher by explaining their technique to the class. Switching up the roles makes students feel they are on the same level as Jamie, a similarity to Jordan’s observations. In Jamie’s classroom, learning is more of a shared, self-directed responsibility rather than something that comes directly from the teacher.

As the weeks went on, the secondary students in the writing and the math classes became fewer. As a result, the amount of time Jamie spent on coaching increased. In one class, there were only two students left out of an original eight about four week into the program, and it was clear they were having trouble staying focused. In one instance, both students talked openly in Spanish about how they should have worked that day as they had for the past few days—they need the money and many of their classmates were working. In this case, Jamie explained to them that since they were present, they will work their hands by writing instead of picking. They joked about the similarities and differences between the two activities, which lead to a more serious conversation. One of the students said that picking yields immediate cash, but does not require a lot of thinking. Writing on the other hand requires a lot of brainpower, but doesn’t yield any cash. Jamie tells them in Spanish that eventually writing can make them richer as they will be able to get higher paying jobs. The students both laughed but Jamie used the opportunity to ask, “Do you know what intrinsic motivation means?” When the students shook their heads, Jamie explained, “It means you have to have your own reasons to be here. If you want to go, then go.” One of the two students left, but later in the afternoon
returned and announced he is ready to work. The other student chose to stay the entire afternoon.

As an observer, I was initially surprised that Jamie offered students the option of leaving the room, but I came to understand his reasons behind it in the second interview. High school students are daily faced with the decision to come to the SMEP or to work in the fields. Sometimes, it is not a decision but a necessity. Since the rewards of learning how to read and write are often delayed, the decision to come to the SMEP isn’t always appealing to students. As Jamie notes, “A lot of kids are short sighted and see the immediate result. You heard one kid say, ‘One day, no one is going to pay me for writing this essay, so why do I have to write this essay?’ They want immediate gratification.” Because of this reality Jamie believes that part of his plan for students is helping them find good reasons for sticking with their education, not just telling them they have to. This means having conversations with students about what they want to do going forward in their lives, and then providing them with some motivation. Like his students, Jamie wasn’t always provided with this motivation from people in his life:

I worked my way through college. I know I had a lot of people telling me ‘you need to quit going to school and just work.’ People who didn’t graduate college would be the first to tell you, ‘Going to college will get you nowhere.’ Well, I think I did all right by going to college. I can always be doing something else besides going to school, but at the end of it all, it’s going to pay out a little bit better.
Observations demonstrated that Jamie is not shy about sharing this story with his students. He mentioned to me that sometimes students hear this story but then see his beat-up pickup truck and question how much better off he really is. However, by discussing the way in which he reached this decision with his students he hopes students will make similar decisions for their own reasons, leading them toward personal success.

**Jamie’s Reflections on his Practices**

When asked about other teaching techniques that could improve literacy, Jamie mainly pointed to individualized techniques that he believes “students are not getting during the school year.” He emphasizes that one-on-one and small group instruction is important for migrant students specifically, to determine where the learning gaps are. In a regular school year classroom of twenty or more students, Jamie said that many migrant students may not directly ask for help resulting in the existing gaps to be overlooked. He also noted that other linguistic gaps may exist. Like Alex, Jamie believes that most students “are kind of in between” when it comes to language learning:

> It might be yes, this kid knows English but when they are at home they speak Spanish all the time. Learning in English might be a problem, but you can’t teach in Spanish because they don’t know academic Spanish.

They are kind of in-between.

When asked what teachers could do to help these students, Jamie added that it’s important for teachers to be accommodating and flexible. He voiced his frustration with standardized tests that tested students in a language they didn’t understand. He was also frustrated by teachers who hindered the academic progress of their students in one way or another. In one instance during the regular school year, Jamie was told he was not
allowed to translate some questions on an exam for a MSFW because it was considered helping her too much. In another example, Jamie recalled a heated exchange with a teacher who refused to change anything about her instructional methods to assist two migrant students, one who just transferred from a school in Mexico. With frustration, he added:

This lady. It’s her choice. You are the teacher and you have the choice to modify or change around anything you want to change. It wasn’t that she couldn’t do it; it was that she really wouldn’t do it. I don’t really get why you wouldn’t want to do that other than you just don’t want to help these [migrant] students.

Jamie believes that this type of refusal stems from racist attitudes that may be helped by teachers trying to understand what home and life situations exist for MSFWs. He said that he hears other teachers comment that migrant students often don’t care about school, or that their families don’t value education. Jamie is offended by these stereotypes. “You can’t just assume the kid wants to be difficult,” he says. “Maybe this kid hasn’t eaten since 4 o’clock yesterday afternoon. Maybe they were at the clinic all night because their sister was sick and they had to translate.” He adds, “These students are pretty smart and they know it. People don’t realize the experiences these students have had, what they bring with them, what they see and what goes on.” He believes that if teachers find a way to use these experiences, their students will succeed. He cited one incident he had with a struggling writer who was not doing well on standardized writing tests, but when given the opportunity to write a self-directed narrative for his class the student wrote a
strong piece about joining a gang. Jamie said, “It was an eye-opening essay to read from this girl because she was only in ninth grade and had all this stuff going on.”

**Reflections on Jamie**

Jamie’s wide range of experiences in his life has allowed him to relate to his students, but it is his approach as a perpetual learner that allows his students to trust him. As a learner, he interrogates the ways materials choose to present concepts, and as a teacher he decides if those ways make sense for his students. He admits that in many cases, “A lot of stuff is explained poorly. I’m an adult, and a teacher, and [sometimes] I can’t understand the book when I’m reading it.” Jamie believes that things are often explained poorly to students in the curricula from the home states of the students. Jamie believes that if he uses his instincts as a migrant teacher that he can find a better way to teach his students concepts of writing, or anything else he may be teaching.

**Common Critical Practices**

Figure 4.4 summarizes these critical practices within the framework of “critical invitations” by VanSluys, Lewison and Flint.

| Disrupting the commonplace | • Treating student experience as an important source of knowledge
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>• Rejecting ‘sink-or-swim’, threat narrative or deficit mentality</th>
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</thead>
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| Interrogating multiple viewpoints | • Critically examining and modifying classroom curricula
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>• Interrogating views of other teachers, selves, administrators and others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Focusing on sociopolitical issues | • Addressing issues like race, class, etc. in their classrooms
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>• Addressing social justice issues relevant to MSFW lives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Taking action and promoting social justice | • Allowing students opportunities to speak up, make change
|                          | • Being teacher activists, supporting human rights |

*Figure 4.4, Common Critical Practices*
These common critical practices are instances where all three participants were observed engaging in acts of critical literacy, although not always in the same way. As a way of further explaining these practices, I present four common critical practices that I believe to be especially useful for practitioners.

### #1: Overcoming Frustration and Resistance

Observations and interviews both revealed that part of a teacher’s job is often dealing with a large amount of frustration and resistance to learning. Frustration can come from the student feeling behind because they missed some instruction while their family was in transit. Or, it can come from high-stakes tests, the pressure to learn a new language or lexicon quickly, or from work/life conflicts. From observations of teacher/student exchanges, I noticed that frustrations often come to the surface when students are being tested or assessed. Here is one example that took place in Jordan’s class:

**Jordan:** “Are you done with your test?” (Seeing that it was blank)  
**Student:** [hangs head, starts to cry] “I don’t understand.”

Situations like these seemed to happen all too frequently, and when they happen it has a deep effect on the teachers as well.

While some students cry in frustration, others act out. Frustration can lead to resistance or refusal to learn. This was observed on several occasions. In Alex’s room one student just put her head down on the desk for the entire period and refused to respond to Alex in any way. I observed an instance with Jamie where a student simply walked out and didn’t return for most of the day. Herb Khrol writes, “‘Not-learning’ is a conscious choice made by children who observe, sometimes very early, that the school system is trying to impose on them values and behavior that are foreign and sometimes repugnant
This resistance often causes students who are not learning disabled to be labeled as such, or to engage in deviant behavior and experience disciplinary problems. Each teacher I observed had a different way of dealing with resistance: in some cases, through direct engagement with the student, and in others, with no engagement at all. All three teachers realized that student frustration and resistance were often the result of experiences students had inside and outside of the classroom that somehow made them feel inferior. It’s possible that these experiences were rooted in acts of discrimination experienced by the student.

Despite these experiences, some people continue to have a ‘sink or swim’ mindset for MSFWs. All three teachers mentioned this mindset as something that has a negative effect. In Jamie’s class, the student whom Jamie saw walk out later told Jamie a story of an English teacher in Texas who would circle all of his mistakes in red pen but not comment on his paper. When he asked for help from that teacher, she told the student that her help would not make any difference because he was leaving in two weeks anyway. When students enter into the SMEP, instances like these have sometimes jaded their perceptions of school, and more importantly make them feel unworthy of receiving assistance or an education. The teachers and other team members at the SMEP must find a way to convince their students that they genuinely care about them as people, students, and learners, and that their success matters. This common critical practice highlights the importance of the next.

**#2: Fostering Motivation**

As teachers at the SMEP will tell you, it’s not that migrant students are unmotivated, but rather that there are often so many more barriers on their path to
educational achievement. As Alex and Jamie empathetically state in their interviews, the SMEP takes place during the summer, when most other students are going on vacation with their families and taking a break from school or work. The migrant lifestyle does not afford this luxury, and the summer is the busiest time of the year for most of these families. So, as Jamie puts it, “You have to give them a different experience, because it’s supposed to be fun. It can’t be punishment to come to summer school.” Since the plan for secondary students is generally determined by their home state, many students need to prep for high-stakes tests or find a way to recover lost credits. In these cases, teachers like Jamie have to be really creative in keeping their students motivated. Without a clear end in sight, especially for students who fall semesters and sometimes grade levels behind, it becomes part of the teacher’s job to show them the value in spending the summer studying. The teachers try to do whatever they can to keep the motivation levels high, including offering rewards, incentives and making individual promises to the students, but learning to read and write is by nature a frustrating task, especially when instruction occurs in a language other than one’s home language.

For Alex, the intense instruction in small group and one-on-one literacy interventions often caused students to totally shut down. Several times I recorded instances of students complaining that the material was too hard, or that they were embarrassed to read, followed by a period of silence. Usually, Alex would respond to situations like this by reminding the student of what they had achieved so far. For example, “Come on, you are not embarrassed. I have heard you read before. You have read things much harder than this.” If the student still refused to read, Alex might ask the student what happened that made them so upset. In one case after refusing to read, one of
his high school students admitted she was up late because her brother and some of her friends were partying in the camps. She couldn’t sleep because of the noise. If a student didn’t have the answer to Alex’s caring inquiries, he would sometimes allow them to sit and listen while he instructed another student. For students that were in the beginning stages of language learning, or the “silent” stage, this approach often worked well, and within five or ten minutes the student would jump back in. In cases where he felt he could, Alex would push the student a little harder.

Although I have talked at length of Jamie’s motivational techniques, I will compare them to Alex’s by saying that he, too, relies on his memory of what he knows of that student and what they are capable of, while considering the circumstances in their life that might cause them to feel unmotivated. In a much larger classroom and with a much younger population, Jordan also experiences motivational issues. Observations of Jordan reveal that usually these problems are in some way linked to home. In one case, a student told Jordan that his parents had recently divorced, and his mother was dating someone else that he didn’t like. For this student, writing about something unrelated to what was happening in his personal life was hard for him, so Jordan encouraged him to write a personal letter to him about it, assuring the student that he would respond and not tell anyone about it. This is also an example of my next common critical practice—connecting literacy to life.

#3: Connecting Literacy to Life

As in the above case, once the teacher assists in connecting student’s “funds of knowledge” to the learning process a space for learning is created. This is something the leveled materials cannot do. Observations of all three teachers revealed that even when
these materials were being used, the teachers had to use their own talents and abilities to foster connections between the students and the material in the text. In Jamie’s interview, he pointed out how he saw this as one of the greatest challenges to migrant education today. “I think education is really fast to hop on the trend wagon,” he said. “It’s about whole language. No, it’s about phonics. It’s all about a blend. It’s about none of that. Every time I turn around they are just kind of rehashing things.” Jamie laments the days in migrant education when teachers were able to create their own curriculum, which he believes was a better way to maintain student interest. In reference to the current trends to further standardize curriculum, he said “It goes against everything that you’re taught as a teacher going to college; you differentiate, everyone is different, you make things fit. This [curriculum] is, we take our little cookie cutter and everyone gets one of those.”

When asked what types of challenges Jordan faced with the curriculum, he similarly admitted he had trouble trying to pick what lessons to teach that would benefit all of his students of different levels and needs, “because you can’t do the whole thing.” His strategy involved using his own instructional strategies to teach the same broad concepts in the curricula, and then supplementing with other resources from the Internet as well as his own stories. In the interview, when asked how he connects his students to the material, he said:

You tell a little story of your own. Once you tell a little story of your own, then of course everyone wants to tell their own. ‘Oh! Me too! I can share!’ That doesn’t stop, and then it connects; it makes sense to them.
Alex followed in a similar tradition in his classroom telling stories of his youth and experience, as illustrated by the soccer story discussed earlier. Although Alex was using DRA2 materials to assess, he didn’t always use the worksheets or leveled books in his day-to-day interventions with students. When he did, he often heard from his students that the books were “boring.” Half way through the SMEP, Alex went out in search of some books that students might have more interest in, or that they might connect with more readily. Due to times and a small budget, he eventually gave up the search for Latina/o YA literature but made a plan to start the search again next year.

As all of the teachers in the building negotiated whatever curricula they were using, it was inevitably clear that the teachers had to work harder to open up new and interesting pathways to literacy learning. Critical questions and discussions came from the teachers themselves, not from these materials. Time and time again I watched teachers turn topics that seemed to have seemly no connection to the students at all into something they took control of and were excited to talk about. Discussions of race and language came from a leveled book on Spanish exploration, discussions of gender from a book depicting a girl with short hair, and many more. With so little to go on, and so little support from the curriculum, it was encouraging to see these discussions still taking place where time allowed.

#4: Encouraging Student Language and Voice

All three participants demonstrated nuanced ways of freeing up students to use their own language(s) and their own voice. Alex used a unique combination of Spanish and English in the classroom. In private conversations with students, he often spoke to them in Spanish, especially if the topic was of a sensitive or personal nature. However,
not all of Alex’s students were as comfortable speaking in Spanish as they were in English, so each case was different. One case in particular illustrates this concept. In one period for the entirety of the SMEP, Alex had two students who were in the very beginning stages of learning English, Alex spoke English for about fifty percent of the class period for them, and focused on a few “new” words in each intervention. He allowed both students lots of time to speak a few words in English. In the beginning, one of the two students was particularly shy and even embarrassed about her language ability. She would rely on the other student in the class for answers and try to avoid speaking in English at all costs, even when Alex knew she was able to. Alex used Spanish words of direction and encouragement to ease her into reading in English. When she finished a difficult passage, he asked her comprehension questions in Spanish, allowing her to answer in Spanish so he had a clear idea of what she understood or did not understand. He would then review the parts she didn’t understand in Spanish, and then pick out some key words or concepts from the passage and discuss them in English.

Perhaps more importantly is what Alex didn’t do, which was scold or otherwise force any student to speak English when they didn’t feel comfortable. Jamie and Jordan also were aware a more comfortable approach was needed when working with ELLs. Jamie mentioned a teacher needs to take into consideration a student’s comfort level with language learning. He mentions a specific instance when he was proctoring an exam to a migrant student during the regular school year and was told to simply translate the assessment orally for the student from English to Spanish. Jamie knew the student did not have a good command of academic Spanish, and if he translated it directly the student “would just be confused in another language.” However, when he attempted to explain
the assessment directions in a more conversational Spanish that the student would understand, another teacher scolded him for "helping" the student. This example shows just how taking away a student’s ability to express the knowledge they have can lead them to test lower than they can actually perform. Jamie believes in letting the student use their language and voice whenever possible to express what they know. “It’s just how they are comfortable, sometimes they know the word in Spanish quicker than English,” he notes.

This was certainly true in observations of Jordan’s classroom, where students would often count aloud in Spanish, or even write pieces of their journal in Spanish. Jordan encourages the students to write in any language in their journals and he would usually respond to them in English, but sometimes he would reply with a mixture of English and Spanish. As Jamie said, “Sometimes the teacher can break out little Spanish words. Those are encouraging and make [students] feel comfortable.” Jordan did this in conversation as well inside and outside of the classroom. Encouraging student language and voice was part of each interaction for all three teachers, inside and outside of the classroom.

**Conclusion of Data Analysis**

It is my hope that I was able to clearly present the most important and relevant findings of my data. In Chapter 5, I hope to present tangible ways teachers can use the findings of this study to implement critical practices in their own classrooms with diverse as well as homogenous groups of learners.
Why Study SMEPs?

I was often asked the relevance of studying such a short program. There are many benefits to studying Summer Migrant Education Programs. The first is simply that these education programs were created with equity in mind (Gouwens 67). There are groups of invested educators and administrators working with migrant students that gather each year at state and national migrant conferences to discuss creating a more equitable world for MSFWs. Although in our educational system “equity is still only a dream” for migrant students, there are strides being made toward this dream by people who care about MSFWs (69). For example, policy recommendations in the form of “equity index ratios,” consider a student’s family, economic, school and linguistic background when attempting to prepare them for post-secondary institutions (Contreras 142). College Assistance Migrant Programs (CAMP) often have institutional ties to MEPs and focus on equity by providing support to MSFWs admitted to college, especially first generation college students. Strides are being made at the elementary and secondary levels as well with programs like Migrant Head Start and Secondary Credit Recovery Programs. Although no program is perfect, successful attempts at educational equity should be celebrated.

Unfortunately, SMEPs are also places to study inequities. Teachers still enter the program with limited knowledge of their student’s backgrounds, and too frequently their “attitudes, beliefs, practices and their own culturally mediated interpretation of success
affect the access to academic achievement of the very same students they are trying to serve” (Espinoza-Herold 15). Institutional inequities are also present as mandates come down from the state and federal governments and are often enacted without consideration of teachers or students. At this research site, many teachers seemed unaware of societal and governmental issues in migrant education. The majority of educators I spoke with were not familiar with issues of power inherent in teaching English as a language, and were unaware of institutional inequalities or had not given them much thought. The ones that were aware of these forces often expressed a sense of powerlessness over the decisions that were being made, and too few teachers were willing to speak up for fear of losing their jobs or simply being ignored. Watching one teacher silently sob to herself at the introduction of the new curriculum, I felt the frustration she and others were experiencing as they watched “someone else” who is unfamiliar with the students they serve make decisions about their classrooms. As Linda Christensen points out, the arrival of packaged curriculum is accompanied by the deskilling of teachers as they watch “someone else” choose their classroom literature, “someone else” write guiding questions, and “someone else” make the writing assignments (163). It’s no wonder these teachers, many of which have been honing their craft for decades, feel as though their life’s work is being devalued and they are powerless to stop it.

On the other hand, I believe this study can offer some hope to educators who are feeling cornered by forces outside of their control. I believe this research demonstrates it is still possible for teachers to enact meaningful change in the lives of their students and within themselves. Since SMEPs deal with several different populations all gathered together based on their mobility, teachers are confronted with challenges unique to these
groups of students. Studying Title I funded programs like this SMEP offer many different opportunities for ethnographic studies of mobile populations, Latinas/os, or even indigenous populations who migrate. All of these groups are understudied and underserved. In the remainder of this chapter, I will attempt to draw on some of the broader issues that arose during and after the completion of this study. I will offer some critical literacy lesson plans, based on the observations completed for this study. I also provide thoughts and suggestions for the future of literacy programs in migrant education and for any programming that wishes to address the specific needs of migrant students.

**Keeping the Heart of Migrant Education Beating**

One of the major concerns for myself, teachers, and administrators at this SMEP was the increasing amount of testing and standardization. This was occurring all over the state, and from attending national conferences I understand this to be a national trend in migrant education. A recent study (May 2015) of one of the oldest SMEPs in the Midwest confirms that one of the major challenges to integrating the life experiences of migrant farmworker children into the classrooms of SMEPs is curriculum where language barriers and deep cultural aspects are ignored. Torrez writes, “Even if teachers expressed a desire to include migrant children’s funds of knowledge into the classroom, they were given a culturally and linguistically desensitized curriculum and materials to implement in their classroom” (J. Torrez 39). She adds that although this program had a good standing in the community, curriculum like this can pose a threat to that good standing and can lead to increased student and family marginalization. This SMEP also had a good standing in the community, but it has yet to see the outcomes of this level of standardization on its reputation.
In a program that relies on the choice of families to be involved in the SMEP, reputation is important. Each year, recruiters for the program go to the camps to ‘sell’ the program to migrant families. In addition, teachers are encouraged to visit the camps during events. At these visits, one administrator is tasked with presenting the benefits of the curriculum to parents. While the SMEP has a lot to offer other than education, including three meals for each child, a supervised area while parents are working, field trips and other special programs, the heart of the program has always been its focus on academics. Standardization is a threat to the original intention of migrant education as a way to meet the unmet needs of a mobile population and give students who may not otherwise have a chance an opportunity to succeed. As one Texas program administrator said to me, the standardization of curriculum for a program like the SMEP makes it “just like everything else.” She explained that instead of a unique program meant to address individual students’ needs, standardization makes the SMEP become similar to students’ experience in the public school, where the inability of the curriculum to meet their needs often causes them to fall further behind. Making the SMEP more standardized takes away much of what makes it special. I share the concern with many other educators that the heart of migrant education is changing.

Teachers were the focal population of this study, but it was also clear that standardization was a concern of the administrators, at least at the local level. The director of the program expressed his concern to me about the amount of testing the SMEP was doing now as opposed to several years ago. He and another administrator expressed the risk of doing so much assessment during the first day of school. These same administrators expressed to me the same helplessness felt by the teachers at the
changes. It seemed that in some cases local administrators seem to empathize with the teachers. This may be part of the reason why the new curricula was presented in two different ways to SMEP teachers. State administration presented the curricula as something to be closely followed and used every day, while local administrators announced during the local training that the curricula was meant to serve as more of a “guide.” One local administrator said during the training, “it’s up to you how much you use Math MATTERS. Use your best judgment.” This created some confusion amongst teachers who were unsure of how closely to follow the new curricula.

Opinions among administration also seemed to vary when addressing the question of using home language in the classroom. There was no formal discussion at either of the trainings on ways to incorporate the student’s home language into instruction. The concept and various benefits of additive bilingualism, wherein the second language is gradually added while students continue to learn concepts in their native language, was not broached (Cummins 37). Through my discussions with teachers at the SMEP I found that several had the idea that the program was meant to be more of an ‘immersion’ program wherein the native language is used rarely, if at all. Other teachers, like those featured in the case study, sometimes expressed reservations about using Spanish too much, even for purposes of clarification. For other teachers, it was an issue of not being able to speak Spanish in any capacity.

At one of the teacher meetings, the gap in linguistic abilities among teachers was all too clear. The lead teacher, a former migrant herself, noticed an error in one teacher’s attendance list. In this case, the last name of the family was one letter off from the Spanish word “puerco,” which means, “pig,” or a person who is rude or swine-like. The
teacher had misspelled the student’s last name as “Puerco.” The lead teacher addressed the issue as one of cultural sensitivity; if the parents or the student were to see this misspelling they may have taken great offense. This example shows the unfortunate result of not having discussions about language and cultural sensitivity with these teachers. If the student had noticed this misspelling, they could have been adversely affected by it. Even high-achieving Latina/o students are more likely to have low self-esteem in certain content areas, and could possibly receive less positive affirmation in schools that their white peers (Contreras 68). A mistake as simple as a misspelling demonstrates the need for teachers to have an awareness of the links between language and culture.

Although basic knowledge of the primary language spoken by students at the SMEP would be helpful, it’s possible that through teacher training at least some of these situations could be avoided. The importance of highly qualified teachers with deep cultural knowledge cannot be understated. Latinas/os are already more likely to attend schools with less qualified teachers. In high-minority schools, more classes are taught by out-of-field teachers and there is greater teacher turnover (Contreras 69). If migrant families have the ability to send their children to an SMEP, the hope is that the school will provide qualified, multilingual teachers who have a greater understanding of the barriers faced by MSFWs. Unfortunately this is not necessarily true even for teachers who have worked with Latina/o students for many years. In some cases, student failure continues to be blamed on the student. Teachers continue to view school as the great equalizer among all races, and expect all students to act in a similar manner. They also
tend to subscribe to the outdated ideologies of race like the ‘melting pot’ ideology that favors assimilation (Espinoza-Herold 134).

By discussing shortcomings in teacher preparedness, I do not mean to criticize the teacher. Instead, I mean to criticize those who do not consider training that addresses issues of culture important. Meeting state goals and providing the federal government with the numbers they demand has become much of what drives classroom instruction. Time is an issue in all aspects of the SMEP due to these demands. In my daily conversations with migrant teachers, many teachers told me they felt as if they didn’t have time to talk about critical or cultural issues, despite a strong desire. Some stated that they thought discussing culture with their students would be going against what they were told to teach. Many of the teachers came to the program with varying amounts of experience with teaching students of color, impoverished populations, ELLs, or culturally diverse populations, and many had no knowledge of critical forms of pedagogy. This is something I believe needs to change if we are to close the achievement gap.

**Critical Lessons Grow out of Scripted Materials**

My research allowed me to understand the competing forces at work in the life of a migrant teacher. I empathized with them, and yet knowing possibilities for enhancing their instruction, I wondered how I could suggest adopting a critical framework that would enhance student learning without creating stress for the teacher. I did my best to share my own knowledge of the ways in which forms of standardization were damaging to MSFWs, but I also pointed out the ways in which it was damaging to teachers. Since most teachers agreed with me but were unable to articulate why, I asked the teachers to share their opinions and specific concerns with me. I also made book recommendations
and provided them with articles when applicable. In true critical pedagogy fashion, we drafted letters together, and even role-played discussions in instances where I knew they would be meeting with administrators. Many of these concerns, jointly articulated, were passed along to state and local administrators. The following year, many of the discussions we had are still taking place. In the summer of 2014, I drafted a letter of concern and sent it to state administrators. The letter outlined the concerns teachers had about using scripted curriculum and standardized forms of assessment, specifically the DRA2. It is my hope that we can continue to carry this dialogue forward and use it to change problems the teachers may have previously considered outside their sphere of control.

At the classroom level, we were able to achieve additional accomplishments. In the 2014 SMEP, I worked with several teachers to develop critical literacy lessons for their students that meet the same learning outcomes as the heavily scripted lessons. Teachers in all areas of education are already in a battle of creativity using the materials they are given to do what they know is best for their students. In “Engaging with Critical Literacy: Reflections on Teaching and Learning” Piazza and Hall write, “If texts and curriculum are decentered from the lives of our students, then many may not see the relevance in engaging critically with the ideas they are presented.” I believe that this observation effectively sums up one of the main challenges going forward for teachers in migrant education. I believe that migrant teachers are not the only teachers who can benefit from this type of exercise. What follows are some examples of how critical lessons can grow out of scripted materials and not only meet, but exceed the learning outcomes. In the following section I present some lessons that were originally born out of
standardized materials to become lessons in critical literacy that could be used with all students.

**Israeli and Aztec Folktales**

The ideas for this lesson stem from a DRA2 screener that asks students to recall details about a shortened and watered-down version of an Israeli folktale. The main outcome of the lesson was that students would be able to describe certain details of the story and a few vocabulary words. The rewritten, critical version uses the Aztec tale "Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl" along with a fuller version of the Israeli tale, “The Enchanted Storks.” Under a critical lens both of these tales demonstrate powerful lessons on the value of oral histories authored by a culture and with multiple, almost intertwined interpretations. The tales can be used as a starting point for a genre-based writing assignment or simply as a means of discussing the value of oral histories, prominent in many Mexican cultures and rarely celebrated in educational environments.

Some students may know or have some recollection of the Aztec tale, which has several different interpretations. Allowing students to share what they remember of this tale at the beginning of the lesson can yield many different results that keep the focus on student knowledge and allow teachers to validate the varying interpretations. This can lead to a discussion on the genre of folktales and folk telling with a focus on the oral tradition. Other texts and forms of media can be brought in. Students may mention they have seen this commonly depicted story in artwork that shows the protagonists by each other’s sides. Since the tale of the two lovers is linked to landmasses that are said to depict them (a mountain and volcano), geographical sources can be introduced. Some students may have their own photos of the landmasses as they can be seen on the
outskirts of Mexico City. There are also poems and songs that mention the tale. Some students may only know the main premise of the tale--that two lovers meet their demise, each out of deep love for the other. Of course, it’s also possible that some students will have never heard of it.

It’s likely that most students will not be familiar with the tale of “The Enchanted Storks,” more commonly knows as “The Calif Stork.” The written version was originally published in a 19th century collection by a German writer, making this a nice discussion point for students on authorship in the oral versus written tradition. There are also varying interpretations that can be found online. I found a beautiful version of the folktale authored by Aaron Shepard and illustrated by Russian illustrator Alisher Dianov. The tale itself tells the story of a ruler in the city of Bagdad who is duped by a peddler and put under a spell that turns him and his Vizier into storks, allowing the ruler’s brother to temporarily usurp the throne. Like "Popocatépetl and Iztaccíhuatl" there is a princess who is caught up in the family drama. Both tales also share strong elements of morality, nature, and connections to landmarks, magic, and belief in a higher power. Pairing the familiar text with the unfamiliar text allows students to use their own knowledge while also being exposed to an unfamiliar culture. The test pairing is great, and there are many directions this lesson can take.

The Cost of Soccer

This lesson idea grew out of lessons I observed in both Alex’s and Jamie’s classes, again stemming from a leveled book that lacked complexity. The originally lesson which was mentioned in Chapter IV asked students what materials they needed to play soccer. This lesson idea builds on that premise. Sports, especially soccer, were a
natural interest of many of the students. There was even a large soccer tournament that took place in the final days of the program. Combining soccer with issues of access, power and poverty provides a good means of critical discussion that I believe can have a lasting impression on how the students think about what it means to play or host a sport under different socioeconomic conditions.

One way to start the lesson might be to show the students pictures of people playing soccer under various global conditions and discuss the differences between the photos. Students will likely recognize players and this is a good way to generate excitement, but a variety of pictures would be best to show how the game can be played under different socioeconomic circumstances. There are also plenty of texts that can accompany this type of lesson as there are many players from Central and South America who have shared their experiences coming from impoverished conditions and working their way into professional leagues. Angel Di Maria, Luis Suarez and Edson Arantes Do Nascimento (Pelé) are a few examples. Stories of the lives of these players talk about patching up balls dozens of times because they couldn’t afford a new one, or playing ball without shoes. Some of the players faced hunger before they made it big. Some players remain active and involved in the communities where they grew up after they secure a professional position as a way of giving back.

On the other side of professional soccer is FIFA, the governing body of professional soccer responsible for the World Cup. The organization has received its share of criticism, most recently for allowing Brazil, a country with high rates of poverty to host the 2014 World Cup. Although many argue that hosting the World Cup can bring revenue into a country, Brazil spent millions building up its infrastructure to host the
large amount of people attending the game. Many communities protested the amount of money being spent on marketing, construction, etc. as opposed to other, more pressing social causes, like hunger and poverty. This disparity caught the attention of street artist Paulo Ito who painted his protest in a mural depicting a crying, starving child with nothing but a soccer ball on his plate, another wonderful image to discuss with students. The image went viral in a matter of hours. Despite over half of the country’s beliefs that the World Cup would ultimately be bad for Brazil, it took place, with a slew of stereotypical “Carnavale” style ads for marketing. Showing Ito’s artwork and the ads (available on YouTube), could provide a nice juxtaposition.

**Celebrating Influential People**

This is less of a lesson and more of a suggestion for presenting something to counter nuclear family relationships. Family is often cited as one of the main elements forming Latina/o identity, but in some Latina/o communities and in the migrant community “family” can have a broader definition. The nature of migrant life allows different types of bonds to form inside and outside of the nuclear family. Even non-family members will sometimes refer to each other as family. Adding to this dynamic, the migrant camps are usually isolated environments in very rural areas with limited access to the outside world. Homes or trailers are small and often situated very close together with limited privacy. Common areas like bathrooms and washrooms are often shared by members of the camp. These elements make the camp a tightly knit community. When adults (or anyone over 12, if accompanied by an adult), leave for the fields, children who are not participating in the SMEP may stay at the camp with a cousin, brother, or non-family member. In one conversation I had with a 5th grade student, she had to look after
her siblings as well as the siblings of another family (a total of six children) during the workday, which often lasts for twelve or more hours. Because families often return to the same worksites year after year, they form strong attachments inside and outside of their nuclear families.

Obviously there are many reasons why it would be important for teachers of migrant students to have an awareness of these dynamics. In Jordan’s classroom, students were asked to write about an influential family member but felt constrained by the nuclear definition of family presented by the curricula. Some students spent so much time with non-family members, they felt more like family then actual blood relatives. Presenting students with examples of different types of families, including non-nuclear relationships would continue to enhance what Jordan was already doing. There are a growing number of books about migrant and immigrant issues, and many of them feature these types of non-traditional bonds. For ideas, I often turn to the Colorín Colorado’s website which offers an extensive booklist with reading levels and basic descriptions, found at http://www.colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/migrants/. After his lesson on family, Jordan informed me that one of the students who felt put out by the original lesson plan spent more time with non-family members than he did with his parents, who worked many hours to provide for him and his brother. Allowing the student to pick a non-nuclear family member to write about was a validation of his reality.

**Life is a Movie**

Inspired by Jamie’s ability to allow his high school students to imagine starring in their own movie, we sat down together and both gave this exercise some critical thought. Hilary Janks writes, “We grow up unconsciously absorbing the discourses of people
around us.” These discourses shape our own identities, and those who have been told their identities are “inferior” must actively “rename themselves and their place in this world” (6). Starting with this theoretical concept, we considered an exploratory way students could begin to imagine a world where their identity was fluid and valued. When Jamie first asked students to imagine their lives as movies, he saw several students who had been struggling with how to start begin to write down some ideas. I recall one student saying, “My life is boring! Why do people want to read about this?” Jamie assured them that people did, and then pointed out my presence in the room. Suddenly, I was bombarded by students asking me if I was taking notes about them, what was I writing, and if they could read it. Jamie noted that this was proof that others found their lives interesting, and in fact wanted to know more.

As students began to write, Jamie also encouraged them to use “creative license.” What he meant by this was to let students creatively adapt from films they had seen, putting themselves in different roles and scenarios. It also gave them the opportunity to imagine themselves in scenarios they wouldn’t otherwise be in. It occurred to me that this isn’t something students would normally get to do, especially in standardized writing. This exercise gave them the opportunity to take control of a part of their identity, real or imagined. To add to the identity-forming aspects, since language is a major part of identity, Jamie and I discussed how wonderful it would be to allow students to use their home languages at any time in the writing assignment, but especially in dialogue scenes. This would give students even more creative license to play with language and to show off their bilingual skills. To this end, we discussed using movie and TV show clips that use English and Spanish in their presentation of memory.
Unfortunately, lessons like those presented here are getting pushed aside in favor of more formal, structured writing activities. Even Jamie’s exercise was what might be considered a divergence from a writing exercise intended to prepare students for an exam question on a writing test. However, with some creativity, it might be possible to keep the original intent of a lesson and make it better without contributing to what Vivian Maria Vasquez calls “a discourse of control” (xiii). Compared to the discourses that shape and surround these students, this type of discourse only reinforces existing power relations without considering the individual student. I hope that migrant education will continue in the vein of giving students the opportunity to explore who they are. Without this exploration, the SMEP is doomed to become “just like everything else.”

**Relevance to English Education**

There are many ways in which this study holds relevance for the field of English Education. Specifically I am reminded of a seminal event in English Education: the Dartmouth seminar of 1966, which in turn formed the International Federation of The Teaching of English (IFTE). The seminar moved the field forward by eliciting two publications, one of which discussed the movement from content-based pedagogy to process-based pedagogy, which centers on the student’s own learning process. The seminar was one of the first times that an issue like social justice was discussed by a large group of English Educators (Harris 631-636). Democracy in the classroom was discussed and concern for the student expressed, down to how much dialogue should be included in the classroom. Four years later, Paulo Freire introduced the notion of “dialogism,” as a learning process where teacher and students operate on a level playing field free of claims of power. Ideas are being exchanged in a way that allows for the student to freely and
openly express him/herself thus contributing to a democratic classroom environment where students have a voice.

This study demonstrates that the type of learning that is student directed and centers on the student’s own learning process should continue to be valuable and valued, and in fact has reached a point where we can no longer pretend anything else is working. As the field of English Education continues to change based on the teachers and students we serve, we can no longer ignore how our different populations of students learn. For students who come to this country with a desire to learn how to read and write and for the teachers who want to teach them, we owe it to both parties to continue to redefine the field based on the changes taking place in our country. I am reminded of a more recent (2003) gathering of CEE Educators. This gathering of teacher educators and researchers resulted in a collection of articles asking, “What is English Education?” These articles were later formed into a CEE Position Statement in 2005 (CEE Executive Committee). The statement outlines three major dimensions of English Education, which I believe help to summarize why studies like this one are beneficial to the field and to teachers who work with migrant students.

The first dimension is that “literacy is a double helix of reading and writing competence.” This dimension shows the importance of both reading and writing in a student’s literacy development. The article points out that this dimension can be tricky because not everyone is in agreement on what literacy actually means and how much attention to give to each part of the helix. I believe that all teachers struggle with how much time to devote to these activities, but the teacher of migrant students often does not have the luxury of allowing these two dimensions to be separate at all, and “competence”
can mean different things to different populations (teachers, administrators, students). In the end, it is truly the numbers (test scores) that matter the most as funding for SMEPs is now totally based on this data.

The second dimension of English Education according to the summit is the continual support of teachers and teacher educators. As we continue to serve increasingly more migrant students in our school system, studies like this one owe it to elementary and secondary educators to help teachers meet challenges with migratory populations head on. As teachers encounter students who experience poverty, are ELL, Latina/o or a combination of these elements, taking a look at some of the ways seasoned teachers work with their students can be extremely helpful. As each administration calls for better or more experienced teachers, it is my hope that studies like this one will allow for teachers to expand their pedagogical knowledge. The need for teacher support is now greater than ever, and this dimension notes that support should not just be for new teachers entering the field, but for those who are already in it.

The third dimension is “systematic inquiry.” This dimension denotes action in the form of teacher research and scholarship. There needs to be more research by and for teachers who work with MSFW youth. Teacher perspectives have the ability to deepen the field and change public policy, yet they are not valued as much as qualitative studies. Dipardo et. al note the inherent difficulties in all of these categories as teachers are up against federal legislation (specifically NCLB) that mandates that research in the field must be scientifically rigorous and replicable (296). In addition, legislators seem to favor quantitative studies that produce hard data as opposed to the qualitative or mixed-methods studies that make up the majority of research published in the field. Since each
student comes to the classroom with different skill sets, knowledge, values, and socio-economic background, it is difficult for research to be replicated in a different location with a different teacher and different student population. The article mentions that the term literacy itself “is increasingly contested as educators and test makers endeavor to keep pace with a broadening array of literate challenges” (296). It is these complexities that necessitate teacher research to inform public policy. It is my hope that teachers in migrant education will more frequently share the knowledge they have, and that this knowledge will be heard.

**Importance for Different Populations Within the SMEP**

There are many other populations that I believe can benefit from this study, in whole or in part. To start with, there are many spokes in the wheel of the SMEP that were not featured in this case study, but which might benefit from knowing the outcomes. Those who identify and recruit migrant students for example are generally tasked with locating, mapping and identifying migrant families in the area of the SMEP to encourage their participation in the program and inform them of other services available to them (Gouwens 80). In this particular SMEP, all of the recruiters spoke Spanish and most were former migrants themselves. This staff builds a great rapport with the families and oftentimes families and recruiters develop a trusting bond. Teachers often turn to recruiters for deeper knowledge of the student’s home and family life, critical pieces of information for a teacher who wishes to better understand their students. It’s also important for the recruiter to have an understanding of what takes place in the classroom. When students drop out of the program or miss days in school, recruiters will often carry messages from the school to the home, or give the teacher an idea of why the student
stopped coming. Recruiters form the link between the home and the classroom, and having some idea of teacher practices could be a great asset to their recruitment processes and encourage more students to participate.

Another group housed within this particular SMEP is the assessment team. This group of administrators was charged with delivering state-mandated assessments to groups of students. Often, these assessments were delivered in large groups making it difficult to individually assist students or provide accommodations. My observations demonstrated that due to the large number of students and limited times frames for testing, translation services were only sometimes available when needed. I understand this team was simply following instructions from the state on how and when to deliver assessments, but I believe that they could benefit from this study by better understanding how teacher practices and perspectives are altered as a result. Standardized assessments greatly alter the direction of student learning in the classroom. It is my hope that this group also will be advocates for the students and speak up if they believe the tests are not working in the best interest of the students.

I believe that change needs to come from within the walls of SMEPs statewide, making it important for local administrators to fully support their teaching staff and to view them as “professional decision makers who draw upon multiple resources in determining appropriate courses of action” (DiPardo et al 297). This study and ones like it paint teachers as competent professionals with deep knowledge of their students. It reveals that the conscious choices they make are in the best interest of their students. Administrators have difficult decisions that cannot be made without considering the teacher and the knowledge they possess. Although I talked to many administrators who
agreed with my ideas about the infusion of more language and culture into the classroom as well as the basic tenants of critical literacy, I found it difficult to have conversations about systemic changes. Many of the administrators felt as if their hands were tied—the same feeling many of the teachers had. These similarities might be a good starting point for discussions that attempt to achieve more concrete reforms.

**Importance for Populations Outside of the SMEP**

Teachers of any population that is attempting to learn English can benefit from seeing the ways in which these teachers explore the intersections of language and culture with their students in this study. Navigating these intersections is difficult and dependent on many factors, and this study only provides a small window for viewing some of these exchanges within a specific population, but it points to another area where additional research could influence public policy and create lasting change. For example, when students enter public schools they are expected to assimilate quickly into the mainstream classroom and by their third year be taking the same tests (on grade-level) as their native speaking peers (Curtin 8). These expectations ignore the fact that it can take seven to nine years for a student to be proficient in academic English in a successful learning scenario. The pressure on teachers to help their students learn English as quickly as possible, and often with limited linguistic resources, is a reality for new and seasoned teachers alike.

As a result, the market is saturated with materials meant to assist teachers who work with ELLs. Where time and human resources fall short, teachers often turn to these materials to fill the gaps. Unfortunately, many of these materials are divorced entirely from cultural aspects, make broad claims for many different groups of language learners,
or are not based in sound research. Many believe that being culturally sensitive equates to translation. In the case of this SMEP, many teachers were able to translate but fell short in cultural competence. The Math MATTERS curriculum was translated, but devoid of culturally sensitive material. In Between Worlds: Access to Second Language Acquisition, Freeman and Freeman approach the idea that grammatical competence is only one of the many competencies needed to communicate effectively. The incentive for using critical approaches is that they allow teachers to use a student-centered approach that values the student as the holder of cultural and linguistic knowledge that the teacher does not necessarily have. This may be daunting to some teachers and certainly cannot be scripted, but it can be planned. Still, the shortage of ESL staff and the limitations of the teachers in terms of research on linguistic learning strategies leaves much room for improvement at this SMEP and one way in which this study could add another drop into the bucket.

The realities of teachers and students, including those mentioned above, are not always reflected in educational legislation. This is where educators need the help of lobbyists, lawyers, and other members of the legal system who can take the next steps to change harmful legislation and create new legislation to support MSFWs and their families. Legislation that supports the long-term education of migrants regardless of status is needed. Voters also need to pay attention to laws that could lead to systemic discrimination, like the recent stalling of Obama’s executive action for immigration reform. Recently, President Obama took executive action in the form of programming to expand visa options for migrant farmworkers, as well as offer deferred deportation to thousands who were eligible. A federal judge from Texas appointed under George W.
Bush recently halted the bill. He will have to prove that the bill could cause “irreparable harm” to the state of Texas, but is claiming “harm” as something monetary: the cost of the state to provide immigrants with drivers licenses (Dubose). In the meantime the bill has been stalled, leaving four million undocumented immigrants in limbo.

A Hopeful Future

To end on a hopeful note, I mention that despite the many pressures in the life of a migrant family, migrant families remain extremely resilient, attracting the interest of researchers in migrant education as well as those in psychology and anthropology fields. Despite the fact that migrants live in extreme poverty, most without healthcare, earn meager wages and lack access to support services, they are generally positive about juggling the demands of work and family (Kossek et al. 51). Their resilience in the classroom is also cause for consideration. Despite the many engrained attitudes working against them, mainly that they are “less competent, less intelligent, less capable, and less motivated” than white students, there are still those, like Alex and Jordan for example, who are able to experience successful completion of high school and move on the college (Garza, Reyes and Trueba xii). Not much attention has been given to stories of successful Latina/o students, but their stories are important to the field, and serve as important models to the students they serve (xi).

Through the experiences of teachers, this study has shown how students at times have been led to believe they are “intrinsically inferior” (Garza, Reyes and Trueba ix). It has also shown the ways in which the teachers must help them to see how much potential they actually have. When their students succeed, teachers feel validated. Although the SMEP teachers only have a few weeks to undo the years of blame placed on the
shoulders of MSFWs, there are many success stories to be shared. When they are shared, these stories can “raise the expectations of educators about the talents, capabilities, and competence of migrant students” (x). SMEPs are a small part of a larger system, and although they are impactful, they need the cooperation of the public schools and other educational settings to make a paradigm shift away from attitudes and stereotypes that can hinder student success. Migrant teachers are at the forefront of leading this shift into a place where the resiliency, knowledge, bilingualism and so many other assets are not only valued, but celebrated.

Next Steps for this Study

I plan to seek publication of parts of this study in academic journals across the fields of English Education, Cultural Studies, Latina/o Studies, and Literacy Studies. I also plan to distribute final copies to members of the SMEP, including teachers and administrators, in an attempt to spark dialogue about the outcomes of this study. In this case, I have made presentable outcomes with recommendations that can be implemented at the state and local levels. I will continue to keep in contact with all of the connections I have made at the SMEP in the hopes of maintaining the supportive, professional relationships I made there and possibly conducting more research in the future. I also plan to continue the critical aspects of this work by continuing my advocacy efforts in the migrant community.

There is also a possibility that future studies could come out of the already existing data from this study, or that the study could be expanded to include other research sites or locations. This study can serve as a starting point for other research that explores the practices of educators working with MSFWs. For example, changing the
focus to different populations within the SMEP could provide additional perspectives. Or, a more in-depth look at the students and inclusion of their voices could provide a highly beneficial offshoot of this study. The inclusion of the perspectives of administrators, parents, or other groups could be considered as well. This study could also be expanded to SMEPs in other states or to include rural classrooms with large populations of migrant students. My overarching vision of this work is that in some way it can contribute to significant and lasting change within the migrant education community.
Appendix A
Consent Form

Western Michigan University
English Department

Principal Investigator: Karen Vocke
Student Investigator: Briana Asmus
Title of Study: Educator Perspectives of Literacy Practices in Migrant Education

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled “Educator Perspectives of Literacy Practices in Migrant Education.” This project will serve as Briana Asmus’s dissertation for the requirements of the Doctorate in English Education. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose of this study is to explore the common and distinguishing features of migrant education as they relate to literacy acquisition. The pedagogical practices of migrant educators will be observed and examined as they relate to literacy acquisition with migrants specifically.

Who can participate in this study?
Participants must be adult educators who are employed by _______ and are participating as instructors in the summer migrant education program of 2013.

Where will this study take place?
This study will take place at _______.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
The time commitment for participating in the case study portion of the study is at least two, 1-hour tape-recorded interviews, 1-3 hours collecting and emailing class and curricular documents such as lesson plans, handouts and activities, and 20-30 hours of classroom observations conducted by the researcher occurring over 5-7 weeks.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
For this portion of the study, you will be asked to participate in at least 2 one-hour interviews. Interview One will focus on your experiences and methodological beliefs in regards to building literacy with migrant students. In addition, this interview will collect data regarding the context in which you teach. Interview Two will focus on the classroom itself, soliciting information regarding your experiences, materials and techniques as well the instructor’s perspectives regarding challenges to literacy development among migrant youths. In this interview, the researcher will draw on her classroom observations as a
possible source for questions. In addition to the interviews, you will be asked to allow the researcher to observe your regular classroom behaviors in the classroom observations. You may also be asked to email the researcher regular curricular documents such as lesson plans, handouts and activities.

What information is being measured during the study?
This study will measure pedagogical practices of migrant educators as they relate to literacy acquisition in the classroom. From interviews and observations the researcher will look for common themes and practices in instruction.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
One potential risk of participation in this project is that you may feel uncomfortable answering some questions in the interview; in this case, you are free to skip any question or you may refuse to do the interview and withdraw from participation in the study. You may refuse to participate or quit at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
You may benefit from this opportunity to share your experiences and reflect upon your own practices. The results of this study will provide a base for literacy practices with migrant students and provide recommendations to school districts and other migrant education programs.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
Aside from the time spent in interviews and emailing classroom documents, there are no monetary costs to participating in this study.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
Only the researchers will have access to the information collected during this study. We can’t guarantee complete confidentiality for case study participants, as detailed demographic and specific professional information may lead readers of this study to recognize the participants. However, these steps will be taken to protect your identity:
• Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality.
• Recordings of interviews will be used for coding and analysis. After coding and follow-up, all recordings will be destroyed.
• You may choose to bypass any interview prompt you choose.
• At any time, you may decline the invitation to participate in the case study.
• All written materials from this study will be stored for 3 years in a locked cabinet in the office of Dr. Karen Vocke at Western Michigan University.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?
You can choose to stop participating in the study at anytime for any reason. You will not suffer any prejudice or penalty by your decision to stop your participation. You will experience NO consequences either academically, professionally or personally if you choose to withdraw from this study. 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 the primary investigator, Briana Asmus at 269-547-7129 or briana.m.asmus@wmich.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research 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 Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper 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 ______________________________
Appendix B
Questionnaire

1. Briefly describe your teaching history. Include grade level(s) and subjects taught.

2. Have you had any involvement you with other specific populations of students? If so, please describe.

3. How long have you been involved with migrant education specifically?

4. What are your reasons for deciding to work with migrant students?

5. What grade level(s) and subjects will you be teaching this summer (2013) at______?

6. What are your reasons for becoming involved with ______’s summer migrant program specifically?

7. What is one goal you hold for your or your students this summer?

8. Would you be willing to participate in a case study? See details for the case study on pages 2 and 3. If interested, please provide your name and contact information on the consent form.
Appendix C
Interview Script 1

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview, which should take no more than one hour. The aim of today’s interview is to find out more about your experiences and methods when it comes to working with migrant students with a focus on methods related to literacy. If at any time you would like to bypass a prompt, please feel comfortable doing so without question or judgment from [the researcher.] This interview will be tape-recorded for my purposes only. Are you ready to begin? May I start recording now?”

1. How many years have you been working in migrant education as an educator of migrant youth, and what were your expectations of migrant students when you began teaching?

2. In that time, what have you come to understand about the needs of your students when it comes to literacy development?

3. In your opinion, are there any differences or similarities between literacy development designed for migrant students as a population and literacy development for any other population?

4. Are there any methods or frameworks that guide your own practice when it comes to teaching reading or writing?

5. Based on your own experiences, what are some techniques you have used or are currently using to increase literacy among your students?

6. In your own opinion, which of the techniques you have used to increase literacy do you believe to be the most successful among your students?

7. In your own opinion, which techniques were/are the least successful?

8. Have you or do you currently use specialized texts or curriculum to assist you in teaching reading and writing? If so, describe how these tools are used in your classroom.

9. If your use these materials in your classroom, provide your thoughts on their effectiveness or ineffectiveness for migrant students specifically.

10. In your classroom, are there any other types of "literacy based" activities your students participate in that have not been mentioned? Please explain.
Appendix D
Interview Script 2

“Thank you for agreeing to participate in this second interview, which should take no more than one hour. If at any time you would like to bypass a prompt, please feel comfortable doing so without question or judgment from [the researcher.] This interview will be tape-recorded for my purposes only. Are you ready to begin? May I start recording now?”

1. I noticed that some of the literacy activities taking place in your classroom include (list from observations). Is this correct?

2. (If correct), of these activities, which would you say is the most beneficial for migrant students? (If incorrect, clarify which activities are incorrect and amend question #1)

3. I noticed that when you communicate with students individually during a literacy-based activity such as reading or writing, you (observation about how educators communicate with students). Could you tell me more about this technique, or your reasons (if applicable) for using it?

4. I noticed that when you communicate with students as a whole class, you (observation about a whole-class literacy activity). Could you tell me a bit more about this technique?

5. I also noticed that you (observation about any other literacy activity noted in classroom observations). Can you tell me a bit more about this?

6. I noticed that students seem to be the most/least engaged when (observation about any literacy activity noted in classroom observations). Do you agree? In your opinion, how is student engagement related to successful literacy practices?

7. Over the course of the classroom observations, have you gained any self awareness about your own methods?

8. What evidence, if any, have you gathered about the success or lack thereof of your students? In other words, how have you been able to tell if your students are either improving or regressing?

9. What do you view as the biggest challenges facing migrant literacy today?

10. What do you think are and the most effective way(s) to address these challenges inside and outside of the classroom?
Appendix E
Approval Letter from HSIRB

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: June 11, 2013

To: Karen Vocke, Principal Investigator
   Briana Barnett, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 13-06-03

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "Educator Perspectives of Literacy Practices in Migrant Education" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. 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 in this project (e.g., you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under "Number of subjects you want to complete the study"). 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 HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

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

Approval Termination: June 11, 2014


*Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)*. Florida Department of Education. Web. 21 August 2014.


Martinez, Yolanda G., John Scott, Jr., Ann Cranston-Gingras and John S. Platt. “Voices from the Field: Interviews with Students from Migrant Farmworker Families. *The


Noddings, Nell. “An Ethic of Caring and Its Implications for Instructional


